

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION ON CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL ISSUES AND ITS
EFFECTS ON ATTITUDE CHANGE AND ATTITUDE CERTAINTY

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ABSTRACT

Corporations are increasingly communicating about controversial social issues, including gun control, LGBT rights, confederate flag use, and immigration policies. The purpose of this dissertation was to understand how this corporate communication affects society members in two main ways: First, this study investigated how corporate communication on controversial social issues changes individuals' attitudes toward the controversial social issue. Second, this study investigated how corporate communication on controversial social issues affected how confident individuals were that their attitudes toward the controversial social issue were correct. Additional influencing factors were explored, including the perceived fit between a corporation's business and the controversial social issue it was advocating for (advocacy fit), the perceived credibility of the corporation (corporate credibility), the amount of agreement other corporations shared with the corporate statement (bandwagon heuristic), and how relevant an issue was to one's goals, values, and impressions (involvement).

A fully crossed 2 (advocacy fit: low, high) x 2 (corporate credibility: low, high) x 2 (bandwagon heuristic: low, high) x 2 (position advocated: for, against) factorial design was used. Participants (N = 677) read a description of a corporation with low or high credibility, a statement from a corporation on a controversial social issue (for/against gun control, for/against transgender rights), and a statement that told participants most corporations were highly favorable (or unfavorable) to the corporation's statement on the controversial social issue.

Findings indicate differences in attitude change and attitude certainty depending on (a) each participant's degree of involvement with the social issue and (b) how a corporation communicates about the social issue. The fit of an issue mattered for both attitude change and attitude certainty, but only for issues that were relevant to one's personal goals and personal

values. Having a large number of corporations agree with the corporate statement mattered only for attitude change, and only when the issue was relevant to one's personal goals. Corporate credibility did not have any significant impact on the whether individuals changed their attitudes or became more confident in their attitudes. These findings are discussed, and limitations, practical implications, future research, and concluding remarks are also described.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Corporations use many forms of communication—such as advertisements, blogs, social media posts, brochures, and websites—to influence individuals to buy their products and services. On average, an individual is exposed to thousands of corporate messages each day (Gibson, 2005), and these corporate messages tell individuals to buy a new car, get another set of golf clubs, purchase beauty products, eat at a particular restaurant, or purchase the newest “as seen on TV” gadget. As a specific example, nearly three fourths of married U.S. American women wear a diamond engagement ring (Friedman, 2015). Engagement rings became popular because of De Beers’ “A Diamond is Forever” advertising campaign (Connolly, 2011)—a campaign so effective that from 1939 to 1979 diamond sales for the corporation rose from 23 million to 2.1 billion (Friedman, 2015). The influence of corporations on individuals is so pervasive that it has led Robert McNamee—an early investor in Facebook and Google—to compare large corporations to heroin and gambling because they “create addictive behaviors” through their “huge power to influence you, to persuade you to do things that serve their economic interests” (McNamee, 2017, para. 6).

That corporations influence individuals for economic reasons is undebated. However, corporations are no longer persuading individuals only to buy their products and services, but also are increasingly using their platforms to influence individuals on controversial social issues (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016). For example, in January of 2012, Starbucks (2012) wrote on its Facebook page that it was “proud to support Marriage Equality legislation in the Washington State Legislature.” In 2016, Target supported transgender rights by stating, “We welcome transgender team members and guests to use the restroom or fitting room facility that corresponds with their gender identity” (McClean, 2016, para. 2); in 2014, Hobby Lobby stood

against specific types of birth control (Davis, 2016); and in 2012, Chick-fil-A supported marriage between one man and one woman (Davis, 2016). These corporate stances are a “significant shift” (Sachs, 2015, para. 7), a “change in posture” (Halzack & Harwell, 2015, para. 3), and something that would be “hard to image a decade ago” (Davis, 2016, para. 4). Corporations “used to avoid hot-button social issues” (Peters & Silverman, 2016, para. 1), but now these corporations are “proactive, even aggressive” in their recent stances on controversial social issues (Halzack & Harwell, 2015, para. 3).

The precise effects of corporate engagement in these controversial social issues are unknown. However, given corporations’ powerful platforms and their increasing tendency to make statements on controversial social issues, it seems likely that what corporations say on these controversial social issues will influence how society in general thinks about these issues. If so, corporations may become leaders in influencing not just who wears engagement rings or buys new cars, but how society thinks about a host of controversial social issues, including abortion, gun control, LGBT rights, the death penalty, religious freedom, and confederate flag use.

Background of the Problem

Corporations are influential institutions that have expanded their corporate responsibility to include making statements and taking stances on controversial social issues. These corporations can influence individual attitudes; however, whether this influence also applies to individuals’ attitudes toward controversial social issues remains unknown. This section provides an overview and summary of these ideas.

Corporations as Power/Value-Laden

Deetz (1992) famously stated that corporations are the dominant force in society. In addition to intersubjective agreement with Deetz's statement by other scholars (e.g., Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2014; Krumsiek, 1997), Deetz's claim—by itself—is hard to argue against. Corporations invade everyday experiences of people around the world. Corporations provide millions of people with work (e.g., factories all around the world), provide food and clothing to millions of people (e.g., Wal-Mart operates in 28 different countries), donate millions of dollars to social initiatives (e.g., educational programs and public health issues), and volunteer time (e.g., employees volunteer their time to help nonprofit organizations). Corporations advertise their businesses on billboards, TV commercials, and in the naming of sports stadiums, and they communicate with a wide variety of individuals on their social media accounts, through stakeholder letters, and on their websites. Buying groceries, sipping coffee, depositing a check, or watching a baseball game all reveal that everyday experiences are brought to individuals through corporations.

In the past, corporate power was confined to issues related to the corporation's business. For example, corporations have often promoted the free market (Ihlen et al., 2014; Wettstein & Baur, 2016), where economic progress has long been central to corporate values. After all, corporations are businesses in need of profits to survive. However, as Wettstein and Baur (2016) argued, "What is new, perhaps, is that today we are seeing businesses embracing other types of ideologies and values and that they are promoting them overtly and through novel channels rather than exclusively behind [closed doors]" (p. 208). The fabric of a corporation's promotion of values is stretched now to include social issues not directly tied to economic considerations, and this is evident in the changing nature of corporate responsibility.

The Expansion of CSR to Include Controversial Social Issues

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as corporate practices and statements done to show responsibility in business operations (O'Connor & Shumate, 2010; O'Connor, Shumate, & Meister, 2008;). At its core, CSR is what Howard Bowen (the "Father of CSR" per Carroll, 2008) wrote about in 1953, when he asked, "What responsibilities to society may [businesspeople] reasonably be expected to assume?" Ihlen et al. (2014) claimed that Bowen's question forms the foundation for contemporary CSR scholars.

Following Bowen's statement, research in CSR has centered on how CSR benefits the corporation financially (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Van Oosterhout & Heugens, 2008; Vogel, 2005). In particular, the business case for CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Smith, 2007)—where corporations try to match their social initiatives with their business situation in an effort to create a win-win situation for both society and the corporation—has become a popular focus of research since the turn of the century (Carroll, 2008). From this standpoint, corporate engagement in controversial social issues is a distraction from enhancing the corporation's bottom line (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016).

Although much of the research conducted on CSR has focused on the financial outcomes of CSR engagement, CSR research also investigates the ethical and legal considerations of a corporation. One of the most widely cited ways to understand the complete picture of CSR is through Carroll's (1991) 'pyramid of CSR,' which outlines four foundational aspects of CSR: economics, legality, ethics, and philanthropy. Carroll argued that framing CSR this way provides a means of understanding CSR that cuts across all aspects of business, not just those focused on economic considerations. Carroll acknowledged that businesses are supposed to make a profit, and thus must be economically parsimonious to be considered responsible. However, Carroll also

argued that corporations should follow the laws of the land (legal component), be just, fair, and do what is right (ethical component), and give time and money at their discretion (philanthropy component). Carroll later (i.e., Schwartz & Carroll, 2003) removed the criterion of philanthropy from his model, claiming that philanthropy was best subsumed under ethics and/or economics.

Corporate stances on contemporary controversial social issues unrelated to their business considerations are known as corporate social advocacy, and corporate social advocacy represents a new part of ethical CSR communication (Dodd, 2014; see Wettstein & Baur, 2016, for a review). Corporations take these stances not for economic reasons (and definitely not for legal reasons; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Instead, corporations take these stances because it represents the right thing to do and it shows that the corporation has the integrity to stand up for the values it believes in even if that means losing customers in the process (Wettstein & Baur, 2016; see also Basu & Palazzo, 2008). Several examples illustrate how more and more corporations are beginning to view corporate social advocacy as a responsible business practice: Speaking on corporations' role in controversial social issues, Whole Food's CEO Walter Robb argued, "Government has shown its limits, and its inability to act in many cases; it's really incumbent on business to step up to a broader view of responsibility" (González, 2015, para. 20). Starbucks' former (2008 – 2017) CEO Howard Schultz—whose tenure saw Starbucks take stances on marriage equality, gun control, income inequality, and race-relations (González, 2015; Sachs, 2015)—stated that Starbucks is "try[ing] to redefine the role and responsibility of a public company" (González, 2015, para. 6). Target specifies its support for transgender individuals to use the bathroom of their choosing on its website and tags the article with "corporate responsibility" and "corporate social responsibility" (Target, 2016).

As corporations take more ethical stances, legal requirements also begin to expand (Carroll, 1991). In this manner, corporations are influential in pushing the boundaries around what is and is not considered a legal practice. Many practices that were once illegal (e.g., same-sex marriage) are now considered legal in many parts of the world, in part due to the influence of corporations (Winston, 2016). CSR communication has become more than corporations acting in accordance with social norms; instead, corporations now influence these social norms, and this happens sometimes before other institutions (e.g., government) have caught up with the corporate stance (Winston, 2016).

The argument thus far has shown how corporations have influence in everyday experiences, how they have expanded their influence beyond economic considerations, and how they are redefining their responsibilities to include voicing their beliefs on controversial social issues. An explanation is now provided for how corporations are persuasive in changing individual attitudes.

Corporations are Persuasive

Corporations have the ability to be persuasive (O'Connor, 2006). Corporations use communication—for example, social media posts, advertisements, and websites—in hopes of increasing positive outcomes for the corporation, including increasing individuals' purchase intentions and positive opinions toward the corporation. For example, alcohol corporations use advertising to show that they care about responsible drinking habits (Haley, 1996). Another example is when oil corporations use advertising to try to change individuals' opinions about how environmentally conscious these corporations are (Argenti, 1996).

It is clear that corporations can influence individuals regarding issues relevant to their business, but it is not clear whether this influence transfers to controversial social issues. A

corporation's communication on social initiatives is intended to be persuasive (May, 2014), and it does have the potential to "generate favorable stakeholder attitudes" (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010, p. 17); however, several elements—including the message content, stakeholder characteristics, and company characteristics—influence the persuasiveness of the corporation's communication (Du et al., 2010), and may affect whether the persuasion is more ephemeral or enduring. This study investigates some of these characteristics to determine when corporate persuasion on controversial social issues fails or succeeds to affect individual attitudes toward those issues.

Summary Statement of Problem

Corporations are persuasive, are a dominant force in society, and individuals depend on these corporations in their everyday lives. Corporations have previously made their voices heard on issues relevant to their business, while remaining silent on controversial social issues. However, corporations have become more and more involved in taking a public stand on controversial social issues¹, including gun control, abortion, marriage equality, transgender rights, and healthcare reform. Because corporations are persuasive and powerful, it is expected that their statements on these issues will affect how individuals think about these issues. If corporations can persuade individuals on controversial social issues, and if this persuasion is likely to be enduring, then corporations may play a central role in changing what society values. However, we do not know enough about how corporate communication on controversial social issues affects individuals' attitudes toward those issues. To understand this unknown, this project investigates how corporations persuade individuals on controversial social issues.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand how corporate communication on controversial social issues influences how society members think about these issues. Specifically, this study first investigates how corporate statements on controversial social issues change individuals' attitudes toward those issues. Attitude change is broadly defined as the "change in the evaluation of an object of thought [i.e., more or less favorable or unfavorable]" (Bohner & Dickel, 2011, p. 392). Specifically for this study, attitude change is defined as change in how favorable or unfavorable an individual is towards a corporation's position on a social issue.

The study investigates three main factors that could influence attitude change. The first factor is advocacy fit, which is defined as the degree of congruence between a corporation's promoted controversial social issue and the corporation's business operations (Du et al., 2010). The second factor is corporate credibility, which is the perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill of the corporation (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; Westerman, Spence, & Van Der Heide, 2014). The third factor is the bandwagon heuristic, which is the perceived agreement others share with the position advocated (Sundar, 2008).

This study also examines how corporate social advocacy affects an individual's attitude certainty. Attitude certainty is defined as "the degree to which an individual is confident that his or her attitude toward an object is correct" (Krosnick, Boninger, Chaung, Berent, & Carnot, 1993, p. 11; Luttrell, Petty, Brinol, & Wagner, 2016). Even when an attitude does not change in evaluation (e.g., the object of thought is still viewed as un/favorable by the same amount), one might become more or less certain in the correctness of the attitude (e.g., an individual becomes less confident that his/her un/favorable position is indeed correct) (see Luttrell et al., 2016). Accordingly, to better understand attitudes, it is important not only to understand how

unfavorable or favorable the attitude is, but also to understand how certain one is that one holds the correct attitude. For example, if a corporation makes a statement arguing for stricter gun control, and an individual is unfavorable towards the corporation's statement, the individual may remain unfavorable to stricter gun control by the same amount. However, the individual may lose or gain confidence that their attitude is indeed correct, depending—for example—on if this statement comes from a corporation with high credibility or a corporation with low credibility. This means that even if corporations are unsuccessful in changing how un/favorable an individual is to a controversial social issue, they may be able to weaken how certain the individual is about his/her attitude.

This study is guided by the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). ELM predicts that the effects of persuasion vary depending on whether an individual processes messages via a more central route (i.e., high elaboration where much thought is given to the persuasive message) or a more peripheral route (i.e., low elaboration where heuristic cues influence persuasion more than the actual message). Often, scholars have examined how corporate communication can change individuals to view the corporation more positively, including gaining better reputation, legitimacy, financial returns, and better attitudes toward the corporation (see May, 2014; Crane & Glozer, 2016). However, this study uses ELM to test how attitudes toward the issue itself are affected based on messages received from the corporation.

One key variable of ELM which influences the amount of elaboration—and hence, which processing route will be taken—is involvement (Carpenter, 2015). Involvement is broadly defined as how personally relevant an issue is to an individual (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This study first replicates findings that show that there are three types of involvement (i.e., outcome-relevant involvement, value-relevant involvement, and impression-relevant involvement) (Cho &

Boster, 2005; Johnson & Eagly, 1989; Park, Levine, Westerman, Orfgen, & Foregger, 2007), and this study then explores how each type of involvement affects attitude change and attitude certainty. These individual differences in involvement are important to understand because different audiences respond in various ways to corporate communication, yet scholars know little about how different individuals process corporate communication (Bögel, 2015). However, the degree of elaboration employed to process corporate communication, which is determined to some degree by involvement, may affect the impact of the message on the individual (Du et al., 2010).

In combination, this study reveals both when attitudes change and when they become more or less certain depending on how a corporation communicates about controversial social issues. Corporations often are unsure whether they can communicate about controversial social issues because they are uncertain how their stakeholders will receive this communication (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016). This study provides a model for corporate communication on controversial social issues. It also carries practical value because it deepens understanding of the factors that lead to corporate persuasion on controversial social issues. Accordingly, this study reveals an optimal way in which corporations can become agents for society's good by influencing individual attitudes. Of course, it is not the goal to place a value-judgment on any of these attitudes; rather, this study should reveal elements of a corporation's communication on controversial social issues that impact the evaluation and certainty of attitudes in individuals. Whether corporations advocate for prosocial issues is beyond the scope of this study.

Summary and Preview

As a dominant force in society, what corporations say matters. The days when corporations only made statements related to their business success seem to be a past reality.

Corporations now operate by what Whole Foods CEO Walter Robb called “conscious capitalism” (González, 2015, para. 20)—capitalism that is consciously engaged in both economic issues and controversial social issues. For this reason, this project explores how attitudes toward controversial social issues may change depending on communication from a corporation on the issues.

Table 1
Names, Abbreviations, and Definitions of Key Concepts

Concept Name	Abbr.	Definition
Advocacy Fit	--	The perceived congruence between a corporation’s business and the controversial social issue it is advocating for (see Du et al., 2010)
Attitude Change	--	Change in how un/favorable an individual is towards an issue (Bohner & Dickel, 2011, p. 392)
Attitude Certainty	--	How certain an individual is that their un/favorable attitude is correct (Krosnick et al., 1993; Luttrell et al., 2016)
Bandwagon Heuristic	--	The perceived agreement other corporations share with the position advocated (Sundar, 2008)
Corporate Credibility	--	The perception that a corporation possesses expertise, goodwill, and trustworthiness (Buda & Zhang, 2000; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Pompitakpan, 2004; Westerman et al., 2014)
Corporate Social Advocacy	--	Controversial, contemporary, and overt statements made by a corporation on a social issue that is unrelated to its business considerations (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Dodd & Supa, 2015; Wettstein & Baur, 2016)
Corporate Social Responsibility	CSR	Corporate practices and statements done to show responsibility in business operations (O’Connor et al., 2008; O’Connor & Shumate, 2010)
Impression-relevant Involvement	IRI	How much the target cares about what others think about his/her opinion of an issue (Johnson & Eagly, 1989)
Outcome-relevant Involvement	ORI	How much an issue personally affects the target (Johnson & Eagly, 1989)
Value-relevant Involvement	VRI	How much an issue is connected to what the target values (Johnson & Eagly, 1989)

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are organized in the following manner:

Chapter Two is a review of literature that examines the key concepts used in this dissertation. An argument is advanced for hypotheses and research questions throughout Chapter Two. Chapter Three explains the design and method of this study. Chapter Four reports the findings of this study. Chapter Five discusses these findings, study limitations, directions for future research, practical implications, and the study's conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review of the main concepts used in this study. Corporate social advocacy, ELM, attitude change, advocacy fit, corporate credibility, the bandwagon heuristic, involvement, and attitude certainty are explained, and hypotheses are proposed and research questions are asked.

Corporate Social Advocacy

Corporate social advocacy (sometimes referred to as corporate political advocacy) refers to controversial, contemporary, and overt statements made by a corporation on a social issue that is unrelated to its business considerations (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Dodd & Supa, 2015; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Corporations are increasingly engaging in corporate social advocacy, but few studies have investigated how individual attitudes toward social issues change based on corporations making a statement about a controversial issue.

Although corporate social advocacy and its impact on individual attitudes has not been studied much, the general concept of corporate advocacy is not a new phenomenon. During the 1970s and 1980s, corporate advocacy became an important part of business operations (Fox, 1986). Examples of corporate advocacy include how Chrysler used advertising to argue against modified laws from the U.S. Department of Transportation or how tobacco companies took out ads to fight against the stigma of smokers (see Fox, 1986; Sethi, 1978).

These examples of corporate advocacy are known by the term advocacy advertising, which is defined as the “propagation of ideas and elucidation of controversial social issues of public importance in a manner that supports the position and interests of the [sponsoring corporation]” (Sethi, 1978, p. 56). Advocacy advertising has been found to affect individual attitudes, including attitudes toward the advertisement (e.g., Sinclair & Irani, 2005; Lee, Haley,

& Yang, 2013), attitudes toward the corporation (e.g., Miller & Sinclair, 2009; Sinclair & Irani, 2005), attitudes towards CSR (e.g., Menon & Kahn, 2003), and attitudes toward the issue being advocated (e.g., Burgoon, Pfau, & Birk, 1995; Salmon, Reid, Pokrywczynski, & Willett, 1985).

Advocacy advertising is similar to corporate social advocacy except that advocacy advertising is often done with the intent to “directly and immediately promote the corporation’s own economic interest” (Wettstein & Baur, 2016, p. 2041; see also Fox, 1986; Sinclair & Irani, 2005), whereas corporate social advocacy is not. For example, tobacco corporations used advocacy advertising to persuade individuals that smoking was safe (Salmon et al., 1985); Another common example of advocacy advertising is when Mobil Oil used advertising to condemn oil-production regulations (Sethi, 1978; see also Haley, 1996). Most advocacy advertising aligns with previous understandings of CSR where there was an economic justification for the engagement in CSR.

In contrast, the topic of corporate social advocacy messages has no clear relationship with the corporation’s business objectives (Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Although corporate social advocacy cannot completely be divorced from economic considerations, these advocacy messages are not primarily about a corporation’s bottom line (Dodd, 2014; Wettstein & Baur, 2016).

Corporate social advocacy also prioritizes certain groups of individuals at the expense of other individuals (Wettstein & Baur, 2016). This feature of corporate social advocacy works contrary to stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Melé, 2008) because stakeholder theory argues that corporations cannot just be concerned with the opinions of their shareholders, but must also be concerned with incorporating and valuing the opinions of a diverse set of stakeholders. In contrast, corporations that engage in corporate social advocacy are not concerned with alienating

some stakeholders. For example, when Target stood for transgender rights by stating that customers can use the bathroom that aligns with their chosen identities, over 1 million people signed a petition to boycott Target (Starnes, 2016). Corporate social advocacy is thus defined in part by corporations taking a stand on controversial social issues because they believe it is the right thing to do, not because it is expected to appeal to a broad customer base.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) is a dual-process model that theorizes about the factors that lead to attitude change when an individual is presented with a persuasive message. The key to ELM is the amount of elaboration an individual engages in. Elaboration is defined as “the degree to which [an individual is] likely to engage in issue-relevant thinking” (O’Keefe, 2013, p. 137). Examples of engagement in issue-relevant thinking include deliberating on the evidence of the message or thinking about counter arguments that could be levied against the message advocated (O’Keefe, 2013).

ELM argues that two different routes to persuasion can occur: the central route or the peripheral route. In the central route, high elaboration takes place, with individuals engaging in high amounts of issue-relevant thinking. After engaging in a careful issue-relevant thought process, persuasion happens when an individual experiences more positive thoughts than negative thoughts (O’Keefe, 2013). If a message “evokes predominantly negative thoughts about the advocated view, then little or no attitude change is likely to occur” (O’Keefe, 2013, p. 139). The central route often leads to attitudes that are more long-lasting than peripheral route persuasion (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). As an example of the central route, a target of persuasion may listen to a corporation’s social advocacy message, making sure to think carefully about the presented message. The target weighs the arguments presented by the corporation against

previous knowledge that the target has about the issue, and is careful to observe any inconsistent or illogical arguments presented by the corporation. That is, the target engages in high elaboration of the argument. If the target has a positive elaboration, it is predicted that he/she will be persuaded by the corporation's arguments and change his/her attitude.

In the peripheral route, low elaboration takes place, with individuals engaging in low amounts of issue-relevant thinking. Here, individuals engage in heuristic thinking; instead of thinking carefully about the issue advocated, they are persuaded by cues that are non-issue-relevant, such as source credibility or communicator likability (O'Keefe, 2013; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The peripheral route leads to attitudes that are more ephemeral than those formed through central route persuasion (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). As an example of the peripheral route, a target may not think carefully about a corporation's social advocacy, and instead resort to peripheral cues. If the corporation has strong credibility, the individual listening to the advocacy may think that because the corporation has high credibility, what the corporation is saying must be correct. Here, the individual takes a mental short cut in the persuasion process, thereby engaging in low elaboration, and is persuaded by a cue (source credibility) that is external to the relevance of the issue presented by the corporation.

Involvement is one of the most important variables to determine whether an individual is motivated to engage in issue-relevant thinking (Carpenter, 2015; O'Keefe, 2013), and it is important for this study because it can be used to predict whether a persuasive message will be centrally or peripherally processed. ELM predicts that highly involved participants will be less persuaded by peripheral cues such as source credibility and the bandwagon heuristic than those with low involvement. However, this effect may vary depending on the type of involvement (Johnson & Eagly, 1989): outcome-relevant involvement (ORI), value-relevant involvement

(VRI), and issue-relevant involvement (IRI). ORI refers to “the relevance of an issue to [one’s] currently important goals or outcomes” (Johnson & Eagly, 1989, p. 292). If transgender individuals were allowed to use the bathroom of their choosing at one’s work, this would be an example of ORI for employees in that workplace because it would have a personal effect on something that every employee does (i.e., use the bathroom). VRI refers to the “psychological state that is created by the activation of attitudes that are linked to important values” (Johnson and Eagly, 1989, p. 290). An example of VRI is if one supported transgender rights because it is linked to one’s important value of equality. This would lead to high VRI regarding transgender rights because attitudes about equality are activated when the subject of transgender rights comes up. Finally, IRI refers to the degree to which an individual is “concern[ed] with holding an opinion that is socially acceptable to potential evaluators” (Johnson and Eagly, 1989, p. 292). An example of IRI would be an individual that is afraid of holding an opinion against transgender individuals because this individual is concerned about what others will think of this opinion.

ELM is used in this study to make predictions about how an individual’s involvement in a controversial social issue interacts with advocacy fit, source credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic to affect attitude change and attitude certainty. The following sections provide an overview of the three factors (i.e., advocacy fit, source credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic). After this, involvement is examined in more detail. Specific hypotheses and research questions are advanced in each section.

Attitude Change

Advocacy Fit

Researchers have examined the effects of the fit between a corporation’s business considerations and the issue the corporation promotes as part of its social responsibility. This is

referred to as CSR fit, which is specifically defined as the “perceived congruence between a social issue and the company’s business” (Du et al., 2010, p. 12; see also Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; de Jong & van der Meer, 2015). Similarly, advocacy fit is defined here as the perceived congruence between a corporation’s business and the controversial social issue it is advocating for. These two definitions are nearly identical, except CSR fit often deals with uncontroversial social issues, such as an orange juice manufacturer donating to a healthy eating research association (high congruence) compared with a “Traffic Safety Research Association” donating to the same healthy eating research association (low congruence) (Nan & Heo, 2007; for similar manipulations, see also Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Du et al., 2010; Menon & Kahn, 2003; Sohn, Han, & Lee, 2012). The current study, however, differs from these studies because it examines the perceived fit of corporations making statements on *controversial* social issues.

Advocacy fit can be understood as a parallel term to CSR fit.

Advocacy fit can be characterized as having high or low fit. High advocacy fit is advocacy on a controversial social issue that is perceived as related to the corporation’s business considerations, and low advocacy fit is advocacy on a controversial social issue that is perceived as unrelated to the corporation’s business considerations. An example of high advocacy fit would be if Smith & Wesson, a corporation that manufactures firearms, promoted more or fewer gun control measures. Here, there is a clear connection between Smith & Wesson’s business and its advocacy for or against more gun control measures. An example of low advocacy fit would be Smith & Wesson making a statement for/against LGBT rights because there is no clear connection between Smith & Wesson’s business and LGBT rights. Both issues (i.e., gun control and LGBT rights) are controversial social issues, yet the advocacy fit is different.

It seems likely that if a corporate message demonstrates high advocacy fit, the message may have a positive direct effect on attitude change because—in the eyes of the target—the corporation has the “right” to argue for something that is related to its business (e.g., Smith & Wesson has the “right” to fight for/against gun control). What these corporations say on these issues will thus be taken more seriously. If a corporation has low advocacy fit with an issue, this low fit may not influence attitude change because the company does not have a “right” to comment on the issue. What the corporations say on these issues will thus be taken less seriously. Alternatively, low advocacy fit might also have a positive direct effect on attitude change because the disconnect between the issue and its business might show that the corporation really cares about the advocated issue, and hence cause individuals to view the corporation and issue more favorably (see Menon & Kahn, 2003). These conflicting logics lead to the following research question:

RQ1: How does advocacy fit affect attitude change toward the corporation’s position?

Source Credibility

Source credibility is defined as the believability of the source (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). The dimensions of “believability” often include expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and goodwill (see Pornpitakpan, 2004; Westerman et al., 2014). Expertise refers to “the degree to which a perceiver believes a sender to know the truth” (Westerman et al., 2014, pp. 172-173); trustworthiness is how much an individual believes that a source will share the truths it has; goodwill is how much faith an individual has that a source is genuinely concerned and wants the best for the individual; attractiveness refers to the “familiarity, likability, and similarity of the source to the receiver” (Yoon, Kim, & Kim, 1998, p. 156; see also McGuire, 1985).

Several research examples show how source credibility affects individuals. Johnson, Torcivia, and Poprick (1968) had participants read statements from a high credibility source (“medical authority”) or a low credibility source (“medical quack”) who were advocating for the participants to increase/decrease either getting an annual X-ray or brushing their teeth more. They found that source credibility significantly influenced the participants’ attitudes toward the message, with the highly credible source having more ability to persuade participants than the low credibility source. Yoon et al. (1998) conducted a study using samples from the U.S. and Korea and found that source credibility (sources were presented as having or not having a doctoral degree and were described as either biased or honest, reliable, and trustworthy) positively influenced purchase intentions, regardless of nationality. More recently, Yoon and Kim (2016) found that source credibility influenced participants’ attitudes toward an ad; specifically, source credibility (operationalized as a “celebrity spokesperson” or “noncelebrity spokesperson”) positively affected participants’ attitude toward the ad.

These examples illustrate that source credibility is an important factor affecting the persuasiveness of a message. In a review of over 50 years of source credibility research, Pornpitakpan (2004) concluded that higher source credibility leads to “more persuasion in terms of both attitude and behavioral measures” (p. 247). This conclusion makes practical sense because if an individual perceives a source to be trustworthy, attractive, an expert, and to have goodwill, the individual will be more persuaded by this source than a source low in those criteria. To translate to terms relevant here, a corporation may be perceived as either high or low in source credibility. If an individual views the corporation as credible, it seems likely that the corporation will be more persuasive than another corporation that is viewed as less credible.

Corporate credibility. Corporate credibility is a specific type of source credibility and is examined because communication from a corporation is the focus of the current study. Corporate credibility is consistently defined as the perception that a corporation possesses both expertise and trustworthiness (Buda & Zhang, 2000; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Although goodwill has not been included in the definition of corporate credibility, it is relevant to corporate messaging on controversial social issues because individuals are often skeptical that corporations have their best interests in mind (Waddock & Googins, 2014). For example, when a corporation makes a statement on a controversial social issue, individuals might think that the corporation has done this only to benefit its bottom line. Accordingly, given that goodwill is often included as a component of source credibility (Westerman et al., 2014), and given that corporations can be perceived as having or not having the best interest of their stakeholders in mind (Suchman, 1995; Waddock & Googins, 2014), it is included in this study's conceptualization of corporate credibility.

Despite defining source credibility to include notions of attractiveness, Goldsmith et al. (2000) pointed out that attractiveness should not be included in definitions of corporate credibility because perceiving an individual to be attractive means something different than perceiving a corporation to be attractive. Further, Goldsmith et al. argued that there is a difference between corporate credibility and an individual who endorses a corporation (e.g., Dwayne Johnson endorses Ford by being its spokesperson). Finally, attractiveness can easily be confused with other concepts, including attitude toward the corporation. For these reasons, it is not used as a part of the conceptualization of corporate credibility in this study.

Corporate credibility has been found to positively influence individuals' purchase intentions (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999), is positively related to positive attitudes toward the

corporate brand (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2004), and is positively related to positive attitudes towards a corporation's advertisement (Goldsmith et al., 2000). However, limited research has examined the effects of corporate credibility on individuals' attitude toward a controversial social issue. Similar to corporate credibility, high source credibility leads to more positive attitudes toward corporate advertising than low source credibility (Braunsberger, 1996), and source credibility has been found to be positively associated with more attitude change toward the source's position (Clark & Maass, 1988). Because source credibility and corporate credibility have similar effects on attitudes, and because they share the dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill, it is expected that—like high source credibility—high corporate credibility will be more persuasive than low corporate credibility. Therefore:

H1: Low corporate credibility will create less attitude change toward the corporation's position than high corporate credibility.

Bandwagon Heuristic

The bandwagon heuristic is defined as thinking something (e.g., an idea, issue, or story) is good because others, such as peers (Sundar, Xu, & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2009) or other organizations (Sundar, Knobloch-Westerwick, & Hastall, 2007), think it is good (Sundar, 2008). Chaiken (1987) described it as a "consensus heuristic," in which individuals make judgments based upon the assessments of others. By definition, the bandwagon heuristic operates as a mental shortcut, facilitated by low elaboration processes. For example, some coffee corporations have engaged in purchasing Fair Trade coffee, which is supposed to provide a fair wage to coffee farmers for their products (Fair Trade USA, 2017). An individual may read online that the majority of coffee corporations support Fair Trade coffee, and therefore this individual may decide to purchase coffee from corporations that support Fair Trade. Instead of learning about

the pros and cons of Fair Trade coffee, relying on the consensus of other corporations makes the decision to support Fair Trade much easier. Because this individual based his/her decision on the corporate consensus, the individual was influenced by the bandwagon heuristic.

Specifically for this study, the bandwagon heuristic may influence how individuals view a controversial social issue. It is known that the bandwagon heuristic increases the perception of credible information (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Sundar, 2008), increases the likelihood that web videos will be watched (Fu & Sim, 2011), and increases the liking of news stories (Sundar et al., 2007). Based upon these studies, and because individuals often “blindly rely on the collective opinion of others without adequate assessment of their own [opinions]” (Sundar et al., 2009, p. 4232), it seems likely that a large number of corporations agreeing about a particular social issue will be more persuasive than only a small number of corporations agreeing about the social issue. For example, if only Target supports transgender rights, it may be easy for people who disagree with Target’s position not to change their attitudes toward transgender rights because it is easy to reject the opinion of only one corporation. However, if a large number of corporations came out in support of transgender rights (e.g., Amazon, Wal-Mart, Target, Netflix, Sam’s Club, and Costco), it may be harder to keep an anti-transgender attitude because it may be harder to reject the collective opinion of multiple corporations. Therefore:

H2: High bandwagon heuristic will result in more attitude change toward the corporation’s position than low bandwagon heuristic.

Involvement

According to ELM, involvement is a main determinant in the type of processing targets use when evaluating persuasive messages. ELM has focused on a type of involvement called “issue involvement,” which is defined as “the extent to which a particular attitudinal *issue* under

consideration is of personal importance” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979, p. 1915; emphasis in original). Petty, Cacioppo, and their colleagues (e.g., Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984) have conducted numerous studies of how issue involvement affects persuasive outcomes. High issue involvement focuses on an issue that directly affects the target, and an example would be if a new work policy was enforced at the place where one works (e.g., the inclusion of a transgender bathroom policy at one’s work). Low issue involvement focuses on the same issue that does not directly affect the target, and an example of would be if a new work policy was enforced at a place where one does not work (e.g., the inclusion of a transgender bathroom policy at someone else’s work). Overall, ELM predicts that higher issue involvement increases the level of elaboration in individuals. That is, the more important an issue is to an individual, the more time they will spend processing the message (O’Keefe, 2013).

That involvement influences the persuasion process is undebated. However, based on a meta-analysis of existing research on involvement, Johnson and Eagly (1989) proposed that there were three different types of involvement, with each having a different effect on the persuasion process. These three involvement types were outcome-relevant involvement (ORI), value-relevant involvement (VRI), and impression-relevant involvement (IRI). As previously noted, ORI is how much an issue personally affects the target; VRI is how much an issue is connected to what the target values; IRI is how much the target cares about what others think about his/her opinion of the issue. Johnson and Eagly claimed that ELM’s predictions and evidence are based on ORI and not VRI or IRI. In other words, they claimed that issue involvement as studied by ELM scholars was basically the same concept as ORI.

In a response to this meta-analysis, Petty and Cacioppo (1990) agreed with Johnson and Eagly's (1989) claim that ELM is not testing IRI. However, Petty and Cacioppo disagreed with Johnson and Eagly that ORI and VRI were conceptually different concepts, arguing instead that (a) the meta-analysis performed by Johnson and Eagly excluded studies they should have included, and (b) ORI and VRI operate very similarly, with any differences due to confounded factors. Petty and Cacioppo specifically claimed that ELM's issue involvement was both outcome-relevant and value-relevant, and that the "categorical distinction between outcome and value involvement is premature" (p. 367). In response, Johnson and Eagly (1990) defended their meta-analysis and the distinction between ORI and VRI. Empirical research following this debate has tended to side with Johnson and Eagly, showing that ORI, VRI, and IRI are unique types of involvement (e.g., see Cho & Boster, 2005; Marshall, Reinhart, Feeley, Tutzauer, & Anker, 2008; Park et al., 2007). Considering the debate occurring in previous research and the value of testing in a new context for scientific inquiry (Singleton & Straits, 2005), this study will replicate a test of the conceptual distinction of the three involvement concepts in the context of CSR:

H3: ORI, VRI, and IRI are empirically different concepts.

Presuming they are indeed conceptually distinct, this study will examine the effects on the persuasion process of all three types of involvement identified by Johnson and Eagly (1989). ORI is first discussed, followed by VRI and IRI.

Table 2
Non-Involvement Hypotheses and Research Question

IV(s)	DV	Statement	RQ/H
Corporate Credibility	Attitude Change	Low corporate credibility will create less attitude change toward the corporation's position than high corporate credibility.	H1
Advocacy Fit	Attitude Change	How does advocacy fit affect attitude change toward the corporation's position?	RQ1
Bandwagon Heuristic	Attitude Change	High bandwagon heuristic will result in more attitude change toward the corporation's position than low bandwagon heuristic.	H2
ORI, VRI, IRI	--	ORI, VRI, and IRI are empirically different concepts.	H3

Outcome-relevant involvement. ORI is often manipulated in ELM studies (Johnson & Eagly, 1989; Park et al., 2007). Individuals who have higher ORI process a message with more elaboration than those with lower ORI (Cho & Boster, 2005). Because these individuals believe their current goals or outcomes are being affected, they will pay more attention to the message being presented than will lower ORI individuals, who will engage in low elaboration and use peripheral cues to judge the message. This means that corporate credibility (a peripheral cue) should have more of an effect on attitude change for individuals with lower ORI. Specifically, when corporate credibility is high, individuals with lower ORI should be influenced by the high credibility more than individuals with high amounts of ORI. When corporate credibility is low, however, the relationship between ORI and attitude change will not change. This is because those with lower ORI rely on peripheral cues—they see low corporate credibility and are unpersuaded. Those with higher ORI do not use peripheral cues—they are also not persuaded by the credibility of a corporation. Therefore:

H4: There will be a negative relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position when corporate credibility is high and no relationship when corporate credibility is low.

Similarly, the bandwagon heuristic is also a peripheral cue, and hence should affect attitude change at lower amounts of ORI. When there is high bandwagon heuristic, individuals will be more persuaded when ORI is lower because lower ORI indicates lower levels of elaboration. As ORI increases, the high bandwagon heuristic should become less and less of an influence on persuasion because the targets will increasingly engage in higher levels of elaboration. Alternatively, when there is low bandwagon heuristic, the relationship between ORI and attitude change should not change. This is because those with lower ORI rely on peripheral cues, and will be unpersuaded by a low bandwagon heuristic. Those with higher ORI do not rely on peripheral cues, and will also not be persuaded by the bandwagon heuristic. Therefore:

H5: There will be a negative relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position when the bandwagon heuristic is high and no relationship when the bandwagon heuristic is low.

Because advocacy fit is a parallel term to CSR fit, it is expected that advocacy fit and CSR fit will operate similarly; that is, studies that have examined CSR fit can be used to approximate predictions for advocacy fit. However, because advocacy fit deals with controversial issues, perhaps the advocacy fit effects will be even more pronounced than the CSR fit effects; individuals may care more about the fit for a controversial social issue than for a noncontroversial issue. Because the only difference between advocacy fit and CSR fit is whether or not the issue is controversial, it is expected that advocacy fit will mimic CSR fit effects.

Specifically, because CSR fit has been found to matter more when individuals are engaged in high elaboration compared to low elaboration, advocacy fit may also affect individuals' attitudes depending on the amount of elaboration in which they engage. For example, Nan and Heo (2007) found that attitudes toward the corporation's advertisement and brand were more favorable when there was high "brand/cause" fit, but only for individuals who cared about whether the brand reflected their own image (these individuals were highly motivated to think carefully about the cause the brand was supporting). If they did not care about how well the brand reflected their own image, then brand/cause fit did not matter to them (these individuals were not as motivated to think carefully about the cause the brand was supporting). Similarly, Menon and Kahn (2003) found that CSR fit influenced perceptions of CSR only for individuals who were able to engage in high amounts of elaboration. The expectation is thus that advocacy fit will influence attitudes more when there is higher ORI than lower ORI because individuals with higher ORI engage in more message elaboration.

However, it is not clear whether advocacy fit will influence attitudes more favorably or unfavorably at higher amounts of ORI. On one hand, high advocacy fit may influence attitudes more favorably toward the corporation's position than low advocacy fit. For example, Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) found that high CSR fit led to more favorable thoughts than low CSR fit. On the other hand, low advocacy fit may also influence attitudes more favorably toward the corporation's position than high advocacy fit. High CSR fit might not always lead to more favorable thoughts toward both the corporation and the social initiative it is promoting because individuals may become skeptical that the corporation is only doing these high-fit initiatives for economic reasons (Bloom, Hoeffler, Keller, & Meza, 2006). Similarly, a lack of fit might signal to individuals that the corporation cares deeply about this issue, and hence produce more

favorable thoughts in these individuals (see Menon & Kahn, 2003). Thus, it is not clear whether high advocacy fit is better than low advocacy fit. Therefore:

RQ2: How will the relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position differ when advocacy fit is high rather than low?

Value-relevant involvement. This type of involvement might be of particular importance because the current study examines social issues that may represent important values for individuals. Scholars have examined the effects of VRI in two ways: first, how VRI affects an individual's elaboration, and second, how VRI directly affects attitude change. Both of these arguments are examined in the following paragraphs.

First, the amount of elaboration may change depending on how valuable an issue is to an individual. This is important for the current study because if VRI is positively related to an individual's elaboration, then the degree of VRI can be used to make predictions about whether or not an individual is more likely to peripherally or centrally process a persuasive message. For example, if VRI and elaboration are positively related, then it would be expected that individuals with high amounts of VRI would not be persuaded by peripheral cues such as corporate credibility because they are engaged in high elaboration.

ELM would suggest that those with high amounts of VRI will process a message relevant to their values with high amounts of elaboration. That is, the more important a value is to someone, the more he/she will think about messages that discuss that value. For example, if pro-choice is an important value for someone, that individual may spend more time attending to arguments that discuss the topic of pro-choice than someone who does not value the issue of pro-choice. This aligns with Petty and Cacioppo's (1990) argument that as VRI increases, message elaboration increases. Supporting this argument, Blankenship and Wegener (2008) found that

values perceived as important positively affected the elaboration of messages—participants were careful to think more about messages that were related to things they valued (see also findings from Worthington, Nussbaum, & Parrot, 2015).

However, Stanchi (2012) argued that VRI does not always lead to high message elaboration because those with high VRI do not always spend time paying attention to the message argument. Stanchi argued that instead of thinking closely about the logic of an argument, high VRI individuals are likely to quickly agree or disagree with a message depending on if it aligns or misaligns with their important values. In other words, if a message is advocating for something that is important to an individual (e.g., for/against pro-choice), this individual may spend very little time thinking about the message because they already have an established opinion.

Because there are opposing arguments as to how VRI influences an individual's elaboration, it is hard to predict how VRI will interact with advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic to affect attitude change. That is, it is hard to know if individuals with lower (or higher) VRI will process a message more peripherally or centrally because it is not clear how VRI affects elaboration. The following research question is posed:

RQ3: How does VRI interact with each of advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic to affect attitude change toward the corporation's position?

Perhaps because it is unclear how VRI influences elaboration, some scholars have examined how VRI directly affects attitude change. One reason why VRI's direct effect on attitude change is examined is because Johnson and Eagly's (1989) meta-analysis found that VRI was strongly related to attitude change. However, empirical research following Johnson and Eagly's study has often not found support for a direct effect of VRI on attitude change (e.g., see

findings from Park et al., 2007; Quick & Heiss, 2009). Thus, it is unclear whether VRI has a direct effect on attitude change. Therefore:

RQ4: Does VRI have a direct effect on attitude change toward the corporation's position?

Impression-relevant involvement. Although IRI is typically not examined in ELM research (Carpenter, 2015), it is important for this study because whether or not an individual changes his/her attitude toward a corporation's stance on a social issue may depend on the degree to which the individual perceives his/her stance to be socially acceptable. Further, corporations may be one of the sources that indicate socially acceptable attitudes, so IRI is important for corporate messaging about social issues. Because IRI is based on concern about how others view one's social stances, individuals with high amounts of IRI may be persuaded by sources that are positively perceived. If a corporation with high corporate credibility makes a case for a social issue, and if an individual with high amounts of IRI disagrees with the stance made by the corporation, he/she might be inclined to change his/her position towards the corporation's position; because the corporation has high corporate credibility, the current attitude the individual carries is in jeopardy to what is deemed socially acceptable. This persuasive impact of a corporation with high credibility is not expected to influence those with lower IRI because these individuals are not concerned with aligning their opinions with what is socially acceptable. Therefore:

H6: The relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position will be positive when corporate credibility is high.

Alternatively, it is less clear how a corporation with low credibility will impact the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty. On the one hand, if a corporation with low credibility makes a case for a social issue, and if an individual with higher IRI disagrees with the

stance made by the corporation, he/she might be inclined to not change his/her position; because the corporation has low corporate credibility (and is perhaps viewed as not holding values that are socially acceptable), the current stance by the corporation may be judged by this individual as not socially acceptable. On the other hand, this same individual may be inclined to change his/her attitude toward the corporation's position because he/she might think that this corporation with low credibility made this stance *because* it is what society views as the socially acceptable thing to do; the individual might think that the corporation made this stance in an effort to gain credibility by aligning its values with what is socially acceptable. Therefore:

RQ5: What is the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position when corporate credibility is low?

For the bandwagon heuristic, if more corporations support the issue (i.e., high bandwagon heuristic), then those with high amounts of IRI may be inclined to change their attitudes toward what seems socially acceptable because a vast majority of corporations believe it. Those with higher IRI will not be persuaded by what the argument says or how well composed the argument is; instead, they will be persuaded by who agrees with the message, because who agrees with the message reveals whether the message is socially acceptable or not.

Alternatively, when a limited number of corporations support the issue (i.e., low bandwagon heuristic), then there will be no relationship between IRI and attitude change. Those with lower IRI will not be concerned that only a limited number of corporations support the issue (and hence, not be persuaded to change their attitude toward the corporation's position), and those with higher IRI will not be persuaded to change their attitudes toward the corporation's position because only a limited number of corporations support that issue. Therefore:

H7: The relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position will be positive when the bandwagon heuristic is high and no relationship when the bandwagon heuristic is low.

As argued previously, it is not clear whether advocacy fit will help or hinder attitude change because it depends on whether the advocacy fit is interpreted favorably or unfavorably (Bloom et al., 2006). It is also not clear whether the amount of IRI will affect the interpretation of advocacy fit. Therefore:

RQ6: How will the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position differ when advocacy fit is high rather than low?

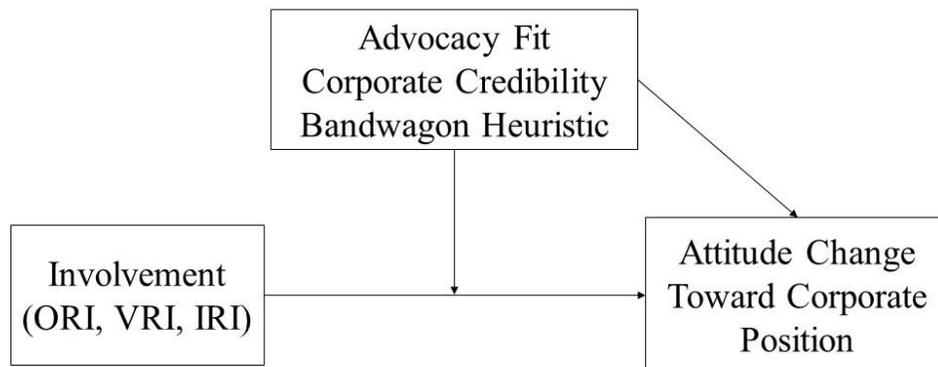


Figure 1. Attitude Change Model

Table 3

Involvement Hypotheses and Research Questions for the Dependent Variable of Attitude Change

Relationship Between	Interaction With	Expected Relationship	RQ/H
ORI and Attitude Change			
	Corporate Credibility		
	High	Negative	H4
	Low	No Relationship	H4
	Advocacy Fit		
	High	Unknown	RQ2
	Low	Unknown	RQ2
	Bandwagon Heuristic		
	High	Negative	H5
	Low	No Relationship	H5
VRI and Attitude Change			
	None (Direct Effect)	Unknown	RQ4
	Corporate Credibility		
	High	Unknown	RQ3
	Low	Unknown	RQ3
	Advocacy Fit		
	High	Unknown	RQ3
	Low	Unknown	RQ3
	Bandwagon Heuristic		
	High	Unknown	RQ3
	Low	Unknown	RQ3
IRI and Attitude Change			
	Corporate Credibility		
	High	Positive	H6
	Low	Unknown	RQ5
	Advocacy Fit		
	High	Unknown	RQ6
	Low	Unknown	RQ6
	Bandwagon Heuristic		
	High	Positive	H7
	Low	No Relationship	H7

Attitude Certainty

In addition to attitude change, this study examines attitude certainty to understand if attitudes changed through corporate statements on controversial social issues will be enduring

(i.e., attitude change that lasts) or if they will only be ephemeral (i.e., attitude change that does not last). Recall that attitude change refers to how un/favorable an individual is towards an issue, whereas attitude certainty refers to how certain an individual is that their un/favorable attitude is correct. Attitude certainty can indicate how long-lasting persuasion achieved through a corporate message may be. If an individual's attitude is changed through a corporation's social advocacy, yet their certainty in that newly changed attitude is low, then it is likely that this individual will not maintain that changed attitude over time; hence, the corporate persuasion will be less effective. Alternatively, if this individual has high certainty that their newly changed attitude is correct, the persuasion from the corporation will be more effective because the persuasion will last longer.

Certainty is one of the most commonly used indicators of the strength of an attitude (Luttrell et al., 2016). The certainty of an attitude indicates the strength of an attitude because it indicates how stable the attitude will be over time. Accordingly, it is expected that attitude certainty will behave similarly to attitude strength because certainty is a proxy for strength (Rucker & Petty, 2006). Similarly to how involvement's effect on attitude change varies, involvement's effect on attitude certainty may vary depending on advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic.

The Relationship Between Involvement and Attitude Certainty

ELM predicts that individuals have stronger attitudes the more they engage in elaboration of the message (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). According to ELM, when low elaboration takes place in persuasion, the changed attitudes are weak and likely to break down when presented with counter persuasion. In contrast, when high amounts of elaboration take place in persuasion, the changed attitudes are likely strong and able to withstand counter persuasion. Supporting ELM's

predictions, a “large body of research has demonstrated that high levels of elaboration are associated with attitudes that are more persistent, resistant, and predictive of behavior” (Rucker & Petty, 2006, p. 42; see also Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995 for a review).

ORI and attitude certainty. According to ELM, the higher an individual’s ORI in a particular issue, the more likely this individual will elaborate on a message discussing that issue (Cho & Boster, 2005; O’Keefe, 2013; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In other words, when someone has a personal investment in an issue, the person is more likely to put in cognitive effort when evaluating the evidence. Because ELM predicts that higher ORI is associated with higher elaboration, and higher elaboration is associated with stronger attitudes, it is expected that ORI and attitude certainty will be positively associated.

H8: ORI and attitude certainty will be positively associated.

Corporate credibility may moderate this relationship. When corporate credibility is high, individuals with high amounts of ORI will still have high attitude certainty because the credibility of the corporation (a peripheral cue) will not impact their evaluation. Individuals with lower ORI will engage in less elaboration (per ELM); when corporate credibility is high, these individuals will have more attitude certainty because the credibility of the corporation will provide them with an additional peripheral cue to support their evaluation.

When corporate credibility is low, individuals with high amounts of ORI will still have high attitude certainty because the credibility of the corporation (a peripheral cue) will not impact their evaluation. Individuals with lower ORI will engage in less elaboration (per ELM); when corporate credibility is low, these individuals may have less attitude certainty because the credibility of the corporation is an additional peripheral cue that factors into their evaluation (see Figure 2 for an illustration of this argument).

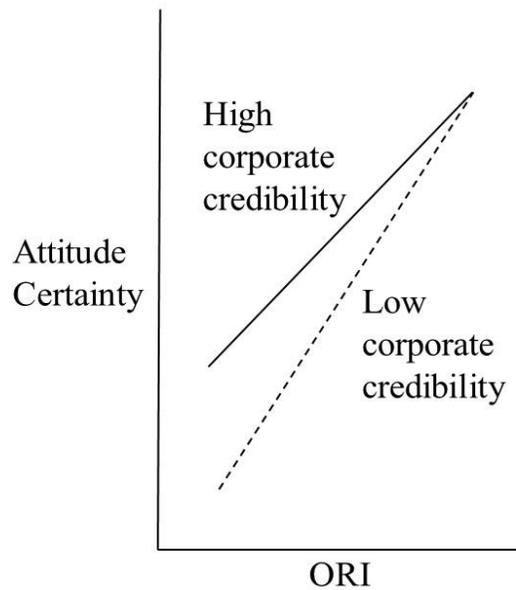


Figure 2. Illustration of Corporate Credibility Effects on the Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Certainty

However, although it seems possible that the addition of the peripheral cue of corporate credibility will factor into an individual's attitude certainty at low amounts of ORI, this is not entirely clear. Per ELM, peripheral cues matter for attitude change at low amounts of ORI, but whether these cues will matter for attitude certainty is less clear. It is possible that corporate credibility has no effect on attitude certainty at these lower levels of ORI. Therefore:

RQ7: How does corporate credibility affect the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty?

A similar situation is expected to happen with the bandwagon heuristic. When the bandwagon heuristic is high, individuals with high amounts of ORI will still have high attitude certainty because the peripheral cue of the bandwagon heuristic will not impact their evaluation. Per ELM, individuals with lower ORI will engage in less elaboration, and when the bandwagon

heuristic is high, these individuals will have more attitude certainty because the bandwagon heuristic will provide them with an additional peripheral cue to support their evaluation.

When the bandwagon heuristic is low, individuals with high amounts of ORI will still have high attitude certainty because the peripheral cue of the bandwagon heuristic will not impact their evaluation. Per ELM, individuals with lower ORI will engage in less elaboration, and when the bandwagon heuristic is low, these individuals will have less attitude certainty because the low bandwagon heuristic is an additional peripheral cue that will weaken their evaluation.

As with corporate credibility, although it seems possible that the addition of the peripheral cue of the bandwagon heuristic will factor into an individual's evaluation of attitude certainty at low amounts of ORI, this is not entirely clear. Per ELM, peripheral cues matter for attitude change at low levels of ORI, but whether these cues matter for attitude certainty is less clear. It is possible that the bandwagon heuristic has no effect on attitude certainty at these lower levels of ORI. Therefore:

RQ8: How does the bandwagon heuristic affect the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty?

It is not clear whether advocacy fit will influence the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty because it is not clear whether high or low advocacy fit is perceived positively or negatively (Bloom et al., 2006; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Therefore:

RQ9: How does advocacy fit affect the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty?

VRI and attitude certainty. The predictions for VRI are less clear because ELM's predictions are based on ORI. That is, whether message elaboration increases or decreases depending on the relevance of the social issue to one's values is not clear (Blankenship &

Wegener, 2008; Stanchi, 2012). If the relationship between VRI and message elaboration is positive, then higher VRI should lead to higher attitude certainty, yet if VRI has a negative relationship with message elaboration, then VRI should decrease attitude certainty (Rucker & Petty, 2006). Therefore:

RQ10a: What is the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty?

Because the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty is unknown, it is also not clear how corporate credibility, the bandwagon heuristic, and advocacy fit will moderate this relationship. Therefore:

RQ10b: How do advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic each affect the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty?

IRI and attitude certainty. Similar to VRI, the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty is not clear. It is suspected that those with lower IRI will have high attitude certainty because these individuals do not care about holding an attitude that is socially acceptable; they will be confident in their attitudes because they do not need their attitudes approved by others (Cho & Boster, 2005). However, for those with higher IRI, it is not clear whether these individuals will have high or low attitude certainty. On the one hand, they may have high attitude certainty because these individuals are concerned with what others think, and so they will most likely try to align their attitudes with what is socially acceptable. Because they align their attitudes with what is socially acceptable, these individuals may be confident that they hold the correct attitude (see Figure 3, Possibility #1). On the other hand, these individuals may have low confidence in their attitudes because they are nervous that they are misjudging what is socially acceptable (Figure 3, Possibility #2). For example, they may think that their pro-LGBT attitude is socially acceptable, but they may lack confidence that they have properly assessed that it is

socially acceptable to be pro-LGBT. Even though it seems clear that individuals with low amounts of IRI will have high attitude certainty, it is not clear whether attitude certainty will be high or low for individuals with high amounts of IRI. Therefore:

RQ11a: What is the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty?

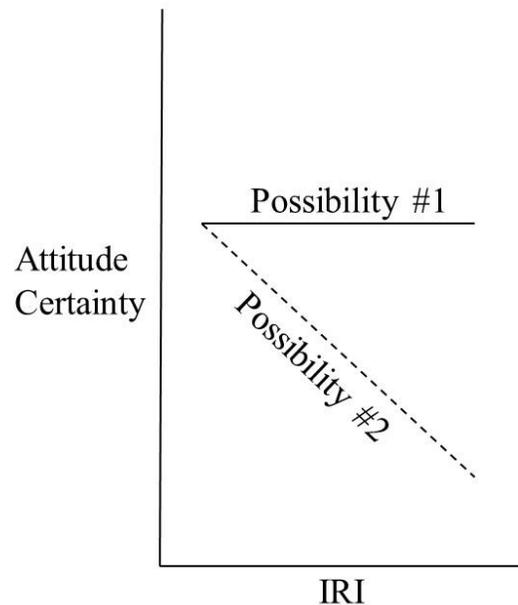


Figure 3. Possible Ways IRI and Attitude Certainty Are Related

Because the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty is unknown, it is also not clear how corporate credibility, the bandwagon heuristic, and advocacy fit will moderate this relationship. Therefore:

RQ11b: How does advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic each affect the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty?

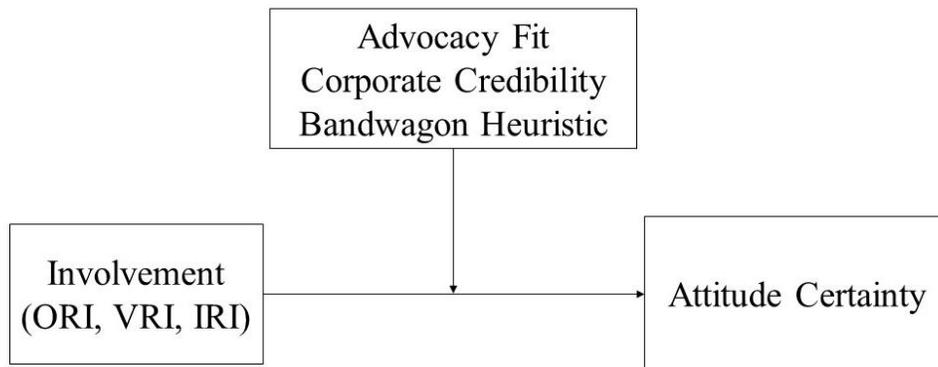


Figure 4. Attitude Certainty Model

Table 4

Involvement Hypotheses and Research Questions for the Dependent Variable of Attitude Certainty

Relationship Between	Interaction With	Expected Relationship	RQ/H
ORI and Attitude Certainty			
	None (Direct Effect)	Positive	H8
	Corporate Credibility		
	High	Unknown	RQ7
	Low	Unknown	RQ7
	Advocacy Fit		
	High	Unknown	RQ9
	Low	Unknown	RQ9
	Bandwagon Heuristic		
	High	Unknown	RQ8
	Low	Unknown	RQ8
VRI and Attitude Certainty			
	None (Direct Effect)	Unknown	RQ10a
	Corporate Credibility		
	High	Unknown	RQ10b
	Low	Unknown	RQ10b
	Advocacy Fit		
	High	Unknown	RQ10b
	Low	Unknown	RQ10b
	Bandwagon Heuristic		
	High	Unknown	RQ10b
	Low	Unknown	RQ10b
IRI and Attitude Certainty			
	None (Direct Effect)	Unknown	RQ11a
	Corporate Credibility		
	High	Unknown	RQ11b
	Low	Unknown	RQ11b
	Advocacy Fit		
	High	Unknown	RQ11b
	Low	Unknown	RQ11b
	Bandwagon Heuristic		
	High	Unknown	RQ11b
	Low	Unknown	RQ11b

CHAPTER THREE. METHOD

An experiment was used to test the hypotheses and research questions. The experiment was a fully crossed 2 (corporate credibility: low, high) x 2 (bandwagon heuristic: low, high) x 2 (advocacy fit: low, high) x 2 (position advocated: against, for) factorial design, resulting in 16 different persuasive messages. Participants were randomly assigned to read and respond to one of the 16 message manipulations.

Participants

Participants were sampled from the public speaking course at a large Midwestern university. This sample was appropriate for this study because (a) the public speaking course is a required course at this university, which means that a diverse set of students from a variety of majors will potentially be sampled (diversity in sample helps with external validity [Singleton & Straits, 2005]), and, more importantly (b) this age demographic cares about corporate social responsibility issues more than older generations (Nielsen, 2014) and thus should be more psychologically involved in the study.

A total of 853 individuals opened the first page of the survey. Of those, 155 did not respond to any part of the survey questions, 14 filled out only one measurement scale or less, and 7 were missing significant data (e.g., missing all responses to the dependent variables). These participants were removed, resulting in a total of 677 participant responses.

Participants' average age was 19.16 years old ($SD = 2.30$; Range: 18 – 53 years old; 8 did not specify their age). The sex of the participants was 46.4% female and 52.9% male (1 identified as asexual and 4 did not specify their sex). Participants' ethnicities were White (85.8%), Mixed (3.4%), Asian (3%), Black or African American (3%), Hispanic or Latino (3%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.6%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.3%), or

another ethnicity not listed (0.6%); 3 did not specify ethnicity. Participants had school status of First-year (64%), Sophomore (25%), Junior (8.1%), Senior (2.5%), or Graduate (0.1%); 2 did not specify year in school. Participants' political affiliations were Republican (40.9%), Democratic (24.8%), Independent (17.4%), Libertarian (6.8%), or other (10%; includes those unsure, those who had no affiliation, and those who did not specify political affiliation).

Tables 5 through 7 provide demographic information on number of guns owned, number of transgender individuals personally known, opinion on whether corporations should voice their opinions on controversial social issues, and opinion on whether corporations have the power to influence society on social issues. These additional demographics—participants political affiliations and opinions on corporate involvement in controversial social issues—were collected because the experimental manipulations were based on either (a) gun control issues or (b) transgender rights issues, and these issues seem significant depending on the political affiliation of the participants. Additionally, these issues are controversial, so understanding participants' opinions about corporate involvement in these issues will be useful when discussing the results. All demographic information was collected at the end of the survey.

Table 5
Number of Guns Owned by Family and Personally

Guns Owned by Family	Number of Participants	Percentage	Guns Personally Owned	Number of Participants	Percentage
0	79	23.93%	0	215	64.37%
1	26	7.88%	1	41	12.28%
2 or more	225	68.18%	2 or more	78	23.35%
Total	330	100%	Total	334	100%

Note. Only participants in the gun control conditions were included in this table (N = 339). In the guns owned by family, 9 participants did not provide specific answers or were unsure (e.g., one participant said “enough for protection”). In the guns personally owned, 5 participants did not provide specific answers (e.g., one participant said “not saying”). These participants were excluded from this table and percentage calculations. Some participants provided an approximate answer (e.g., “~5”) or provided an answer where it was assumed to be two or more (e.g., “many”). These participants were included in the table: the approximate number was used (“~5” become “5”), and answers such as “many” were coded as “2 or more.”

Table 6
Number of LGBT Known and Transgender Known

LGBT Known	Number of Participants	Percentage	Transgender Known	Number of Participants	Percentage
0	63	19.03%	0	216	65.45%
1	40	12.08%	1	58	17.58%
2 or more	228	68.88%	2 or more	56	16.97%
Total	331	100%	Total	330	100%

Note. Only participants in the transgender rights conditions were included in this table (N = 338). In the number of LGBT individuals known, 7 participants did not provide specific answers (e.g., one participant said “all of them”). In the number of transgender known, 8 participants did not provide specific answers (e.g., one participant said “less than 3”). These participants were excluded from this table and percentage calculations. Some participants provided an approximate answer (e.g., “~5”) or provided an answer where it was assumed to be two or more (e.g., “many”). These participants were included in the table: the approximate number was used (“~5” become “5”), and answers such as “many” were coded as “2 or more.”

Table 7

Opinions on Corporate Involvement in Controversial Social Issues

Do you think corporations should voice their opinions on controversial social issues?	Number of Participants	Percentage	Do you think corporations have the power to influence society's opinions about controversial social issues?	Number of Participants	Percentage
Yes	185	27.30%	Yes	441	65.10%
No	154	22.70%	No	95	14.00%
Not Sure	169	25.00%	Not Sure	78	11.50%
Don't Care	169	25.00%	Don't Care	63	9.30%

Procedure

Participants completed a survey online. A link to the survey was posted on the course homepage with permission of the instructor. The survey link opened to an Institutional Review Board-approved (IRB) consent form (IRB Approval HS18083). Participants clicked through to indicate consent and begin the survey. The survey opened with a brief description of the study (see Appendix A). This brief description explained to the participants that they would be asked to read a description of a company and a statement from the company on a current social issue. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the 16 message conditions (for a complete example of one of these conditions, see Appendix B).

In each condition, the participants first read a description of a corporation ostensibly from an article published in the *Wall Street Journal* last summer (following the manipulation of Lafferty, 2007). This description of the corporation was designed to manipulate corporate credibility. Following this, participants read a statement from the corporation on a controversial social issue (i.e., for/against gun control, for/against transgender rights) that included the manipulation of advocacy fit, position advocated, and the bandwagon heuristic. The message manipulations are described in detail below and provided in full in Appendices C, D, and E.

After reading the description and company statement, participants completed the survey items for the message manipulation checks (i.e., advocacy fit, corporate credibility, the bandwagon heuristic, and position advocated), the other independent variables (i.e., ORI, VRI, IRI), and the dependent variables (i.e., attitude change and attitude certainty). Finally, participants filled out demographic survey items.

Message Manipulation

Corporate Credibility

Participants read a description of the NNT Corporation, a gun manufacturing company. A fake corporation was used so that participants' perceptions were not influenced by past experiences with the corporation; rather, they started with a blank slate. Corporate credibility was manipulated by describing the experience, growth, social responsibility, and financial status of the NNT Corporation (the same pseudonym used by Lafferty [2007]). Expertise and trustworthiness were manipulated in the following way: Expertise was established using statements referring to amount of experience, financial gains/losses, and market size, whereas trustworthiness was established using statements referring to social consciousness, environmental and community investment, and Security and Exchange Commission investigations. This manipulation is similar to those used in other studies of corporate credibility (e.g., Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Lafferty, 2007; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). Because this study also includes goodwill as a dimension of corporate credibility, an additional line was added to the corporate description which states that the corporation has (does not have) the best interest of its consumers in mind. All of these elements together indicated either a highly credible corporation or a corporation without much credibility at all. Below is an example of the high credibility description of NNT Corporation.

NNT Corporation was established in 1951 and is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The company was one of the first companies to begin manufacturing gun products for consumers. Their research and development of new products is considered by financial analysts to be above average compared with other gun product companies. With 66 years of experience, NNT Corporation is one of the oldest manufacturers of gun products in the country. Its U.S. sales have achieved record sales last year of \$50 million. Exports to Europe and Asia have grown steadily since entering these markets fifteen years ago. Business Week has named NNT Corporation one of American's top socially conscious corporate citizens. The company has been a source of support to community and environmental issues in the areas where its plants are located as well as in Denver. NNT Corporation also contributes to scholarship funds at several universities.

Additionally, it has been cited in industry publications as having above average products. NNT Corporation has never been investigated by the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) because it has never been found to violate the SEC's guidelines on how company stocks should be sold. Finally, it has been reported by the Better Business Bureau that NNT Corporation often has the best interest of its consumers in mind.

Corporate Statement: Advocacy Fit and Position Advocated

Participants read a statement from the NNT Corporation that varies advocacy fit and position advanced. Advocacy fit was manipulated by varying the topic that NNT Corporation was advocating for: either gun control or transgender rights. NNT Corporation exemplifies high fit with the topic of gun control because it is a gun manufacturing company, but low fit with the topic of transgender rights. Position advocated was manipulated by NNT Corporation arguing either for or against gun control or transgender rights (see Table 8 for all combinations of advocacy fit and position advocated). Position advocated was included to ensure that a variety of participants would disagree with the corporate statement (and hence, have the potential to be persuaded). The statement used in this study was based on corporate social advocacy statements from Amazon, Starbucks, Apple, and Chick-fil-A (Blume, 2012; Cook, 2015; Shear, 2012; Starbucks, 2012; Starbucks Newsroom, 2015). Here is an example statement showing high advocacy fit and “for gun control” position.

Here at NNT Corporation, we understand that the topic of gun control is a debated issue. However, as a corporation, we are for gun control. We stand strong in our stance for gun

control. In fact, we have decided to donate money towards initiatives and nonprofit organizations that are for gun control. We are proud of the legacy of NNT Corporation, and feel we must voice our support for gun control because it represents an issue for which NNT Corporation has always advocated. NNT corporation is fully in support of this stance.

Table 8
Advocacy Fit Between Corporation and Social Issue

Corporation Type	Position Advocated	Advocacy Fit
Gun manufacturer	For gun control	High
Gun manufacturer	Against gun control	High
Gun manufacturer	For transgender rights	Low
Gun manufacturer	Against transgender rights	Low

Bandwagon Heuristic

Following the corporate statement paragraph, participants read the following statement. This statement manipulated the bandwagon heuristic by telling participants that most corporations are either favorable or unfavorable to the stance that NNT Corporation is taking on the given social issue. The manipulation is based on Nadeau, Cloutier, and Guay’s (1993) manipulation of the bandwagon heuristic.

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, most corporations are highly favorable (unfavorable) to the previous corporate statement. Additionally, this favorable (unfavorable) opinion is getting even stronger among corporations.

Pretest

A pretest was conducted to make sure that the manipulations work as intended. Pretest participants (N = 57) were recruited from upper-level undergraduate courses in communication to eliminate the possibility that a pretest participant would later get into the main study data (which was drawn from the introductory public speaking course, a prerequisite for several of the upper-level courses). These participants read one manipulation message each and filled out survey items for the scales measuring advocacy fit, corporate credibility, position advocated and

the bandwagon heuristic (see Table 9; the measurements are described in detail in the main study measurement section). Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to test each manipulation. (For all *t*-tests, Levene's test was used to determine if variances of each group were equal. If the variances were not equal [i.e., Levene's test was significant], the "equal variances not assumed" output was reported. If the variances were equal [i.e., Levene's test was not significant], the "equal variances assumed" output was reported.) As intended, low advocacy fit ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.71$) was rated significantly lower than high advocacy fit ($M = 4.50, SD = 1.45$), $t(55) = -2.64, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$; low corporate credibility ($M = 3.69, SD = 0.99$) was rated significantly lower than high corporate credibility ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.38$), $t(55) = -2.91, p = .01, \eta^2 = .13$; and position advocated against ($M = 2.33, SD = 1.43$) was rated significantly lower than position advocated for ($M = 4.83, SD = 1.57$), $t(55) = -6.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$. These manipulations worked as intended.

However, low bandwagon heuristic ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.05$) was not significantly different from high bandwagon heuristic ($M = 4.02, SD = 1.40$), $t(55) = -1.75, p = .09, \eta^2 = .05$. Because of this, a change was made to the manipulation for the main study. In the original manipulation, participants were told that "most corporations" were either "unfavorable" or "favorable" to the corporate statement on transgender rights or gun control. This manipulation might not have been statistically different because an individual may think that "most corporations" represents a high bandwagon heuristic regardless of whether or not the corporation is favorable or unfavorable toward the controversial social issue. Thus, the original manipulation may have confounded (a) the amount of corporations with (b) the position the corporations took toward the controversial social issue. The issue was fixed by stating that either (a) "over 100 corporations agree" with the corporate statement or (b) "fewer than 5 corporations agree" with the corporate statement. Here,

both sets of corporations agree with the controversial statement, but the amount of corporations who agree with the controversial statement varies according to condition. This change was implemented after reading Sundar and colleagues (e.g., Kim & Sundar, 2014; Sundar et al., 2007), who manipulated the bandwagon heuristic in a similar manner. Below is a complete example of the revised high bandwagon heuristic manipulation:

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, over 100 corporations agree with this statement.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics of Measurements Used in Pretest

Measure	# of Items	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
Realism	5	4.56	0.76	0.86	0.71	.51
Advocacy Fit	8	3.98	1.67	-0.10	-0.45	.96
Corporate Credibility	18	4.18	1.29	0.18	-0.06	.96
Bandwagon Heuristic	7	3.72	1.25	-0.12	0.87	.95
Position Advocated	7	3.47	1.94	0.24	-0.93	.98

Note. For the main study measures, two items from the Advocacy Fit measure and one item from the Position Advocated measure were deleted. This was done to minimize participants' fatigue from answering a large number of survey items.

The bandwagon heuristic manipulation check measure was also changed to account for the manipulation modification. The original and modified bandwagon heuristic items are identified in Appendix G.

Main Study Measures

The measures used in this study are described in detail below and provided in full in Appendices F, G, and H. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA; completed using AMOS 23) and

reliability analysis (see Table 10) were conducted to establish validity and reliability of all measures. For each CFA, the modification indices were examined to determine which measurement items should be removed to improve fit. For each measure, a CFA was rerun each time an item was removed and modification indices were reexamined until good fit was achieved for that measure. Good fit was established when the relative chi-square (χ^2/df [chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom]) was less than 4 (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008; Hansen, Dunford, Boos, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011), the comparative fit index (CFI) was greater than .95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was less than .08 (Brown & Cudeck, 1992).

Manipulation Checks

Advocacy fit. Six 7-point semantic differential items were used to check the manipulation of advocacy fit. Four of the items were written for this study, and two of the items were from Becker-Olsen et al. (2006). These items ask participants to report how related the promoted social issue is to NNT Corporation's business (e.g., "unrelated" to "related"). Higher scores indicate more advocacy fit. The initial fit was $\chi^2 [9, N = 677] = 71.13, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 7.90; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .10$. The modification indices revealed that item 4 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [5, N = 677] = 16.35, p = .01; \chi^2/df = 3.27; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .06$. Using the remaining items, an independent samples t-test was run to test the manipulation, revealing that low advocacy fit ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.41$) was significantly different from high advocacy fit ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.32$), $t(671.40) = -15.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$. The manipulation worked as intended.

Corporate credibility. A modified version of McCroskey and Teven's (1999) scale was used to measure the expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill dimensions of corporate credibility.

This scale asked participants to indicate their impressions of the NNT Corporation through 18 (six for each dimension) 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., expertise: “uninformed” to “informed”; trustworthiness: “dishonest” to “honest”; goodwill: “self-centered” to “not self-centered”). Two of the items from this scale were modified to better measure corporate credibility instead of source credibility (e.g., “unintelligent” to “intelligent” was changed to “unskilled” to “skilled”). Higher scores indicate more corporate credibility. A second-order CFA was run for all three dimensions (i.e., expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill) and had initial fit of $\chi^2 [132, N = 677] = 716.50, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 5.43; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .08$. The modification indices revealed that items 5 and 6 from the goodwill dimension and item 5 from the trustworthiness dimension should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [87, N = 677] = 337.59, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 3.88; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .07$. Using the remaining items, an independent samples t-test was run to test the manipulation, revealing that low corporate credibility ($M = 3.97, SD = 1.10$) was significantly different from high corporate credibility ($M = 4.61, SD = 1.18$), $t(675) = -7.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$. The manipulation worked as intended.

Bandwagon heuristic. Five 7-point semantic differential items written for this study were used to check the manipulation of the bandwagon heuristic. These items asked participants to rate how many other corporations agree with NNT Corporation’s stance on the social issue (e.g., “a little” to “a lot”). Higher scores indicate more of the bandwagon heuristic (i.e., more corporations are perceived to agree with the corporate statement). The initial fit was acceptable: $\chi^2 [5, N = 677] = 12.42, p = .03; \chi^2/df = 2.49; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .05$. An independent samples t-test was run to test the manipulation, revealing that low bandwagon heuristic ($M =$

3.08, $SD = 1.52$) was significantly different from high bandwagon heuristic ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.35$), $t(666.29) = -11.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$. The manipulation worked as intended.

Position advocated. Six 7-point semantic differential items written for this study were used to check the manipulation of the position advocated by NNT Corporation. These items asked participants to rate how favorable NNT Corporation is to the social issue (e.g., “unfavorable” to “favorable”). Higher scores indicate more favorability for NNT Corporation toward the social issue. The initial fit was $\chi^2 [9, N = 677] = 110.19$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 12.24$; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .13. The modification indices revealed that items 2 and 4 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [2, N = 677] = .38$, $p = .83$; $\chi^2/df = .19$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA < .001. Using the remaining items, an independent samples t-test was run to test the manipulation, revealing that the position advocated against ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.78$) was significantly different from the position advocated for ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.43$), $t(644.20) = -15.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .28$. The manipulation worked as intended.

Measured Independent Variables

ORI. A modified version of Cho and Boster’s (2005) ORI scale was used to measure participants’ ORI. The original scale discussed the issue of abortion; it was modified to discuss either gun control or transgender rights (depending on the experimental condition). The scale contained seven items (e.g., “It is difficult for me to think of the ways the laws concerning [social issue] impact my life”). Participants rated these responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate more ORI. The initial fit was $\chi^2 [14, N = 677] = 214.06$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 15.29$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .15. The modification indices revealed that items 2 and 6 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [5, N = 677] = 6.88$, $p = .23$; $\chi^2/df = 1.38$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .02.

VRI. A modified version of Cho and Boster's (2005) VRI scale was used to measure participants' VRI. The original scale discussed the issue of abortion; it was modified to discuss either gun control or transgender rights. The scale contained seven items (e.g., "The values that are the most important to me are what determine my stand on [social issue]"). Participants rated these responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate more VRI. The initial fit was $\chi^2 [14, N = 677] = 109.14, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 7.80; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .10$. The modification indices revealed that item 2 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [9, N = 677] = 32.34, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 3.59; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .06$.

IRI. A modified version of Cho and Boster's (2005) IRI scale was used to measure participants' IRI. The original scale discussed the issue of abortion; it was modified to discuss either gun control or transgender rights. The scale contained five items (e.g., "Talking about my beliefs concerning [the social issue] has little effect on what others think of me"). Participants rated these items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate more IRI. The initial fit was $\chi^2 [5, N = 677] = 130.97, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 26.20; CFI = .73; RMSEA = .19$. The modification indices revealed that item 3 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [2, N = 677] = 6.13, p = .05; \chi^2/df = 3.07; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = .06$.

Dependent Variables

Attitude change. A scale from Luttrell et al. (2016) was used to measure participants' attitudes toward the position on the controversial social issue promoted by the NNT Corporation. Participants were asked about their opinions on (a) increasing gun control, (b) decreasing gun control, (c) increasing transgender rights, or (d) decreasing transgender rights, depending on the

position the corporation took in its corporate statement. For example, if the corporate statement advocated against gun control, participants were asked about their opinions on decreasing gun control. Participants rated their attitudes on six 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., “negative” to “positive”). Higher scores indicate more attitude change toward the corporation’s position. As argued by Petty and Cacioppo (1996), randomly assigning participants to different experimental groups assumes that all of these participants have the same initial attitudes; change in attitude can then be determined by measuring attitudes only after participants have been exposed to the experimental treatment. If there is a difference between the randomly assigned groups, this difference in can be understood as attitude change because each group is assumed to have equivalent initial attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). The initial fit was $\chi^2 [9, N = 677] = 77.85, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 8.65; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .11$. The modification indices revealed that item 6 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [5, N = 677] = 11.70, p = .04; \chi^2/df = 2.34; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .05$.

Attitude certainty. A modified version of the scale from Pullig, Netemeyer, and Biswas (2006) was used to measure participants’ attitude certainty. This scale asked participants to report the extent to which they are sure their attitudes toward the controversial social issue are correct through six 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., “not sure” to “very sure”). Five of the items were originally in Pullig et al.’s scale, and one item was added. Higher scores indicate more attitude certainty. The initial fit was acceptable: $\chi^2 [9, N = 677] = 8.77, p = .46; \chi^2/df = .97; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA < .001$.

Realism check. Five items measured participants’ perceptions of the realism of the corporate statement (e.g., “A corporation could make this statement, or has made this statement”). Participants rated these items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly

disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate more realism. The initial fit was $\chi^2 [5, N = 677] = 60.67, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 12.13; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .13$. The modification indices revealed that item 2 should be removed; this improved the fit to an acceptable level: $\chi^2 [2, N = 677] = 3.82, p = .15; \chi^2/df = 1.91; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .04$. A one sample *t*-test with a comparison value of 4 (the midpoint of the scale) was conducted. The mean of realism ($M = 4.65$) was significantly higher than the midpoint, indicating that the corporate statement was perceived as real, $t(676) = 16.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .29$.

Table 10
Descriptive Statistics of Measurements Used in Main Study

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
<i>Manipulation Check Scales</i>					
Advocacy Fit	3.93	1.58	-0.09	-0.47	.91
Corporate Credibility	4.30	1.18	-0.19	-0.02	.95
Bandwagon Heuristic	3.74	1.58	-0.10	-0.52	.96
Position Advocated	3.99	1.88	-0.19	-0.99	.94
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
ORI	3.96	1.45	-0.01	-0.55	.87
VRI	4.27	1.11	-0.05	0.27	.81
IRI	4.05	0.96	-0.01	0.46	.58
<i>Dependent Variables</i>					
Attitude Change	3.88	1.87	0.06	-0.98	.97
Attitude Certainty	5.05	1.40	-0.24	-0.62	.94
<i>Realism Check</i>					
Realism	4.65	1.02	-0.37	0.71	.78

Note. Removing any one item from IRI's scale would only improve the scale's reliability to .59, so the scale was not modified further.

CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS

A 2 (corporate credibility: low, high) x 2 (bandwagon heuristic: low, high) x 2 (advocacy fit: low, high) ANOVA on attitude change was conducted to test RQ1, H1, and H2. RQ1 asked how advocacy fit affects attitude change toward a corporation's position. Attitude change of participants in the low advocacy fit condition ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.88$) did not differ from attitude change of those in the high advocacy fit condition ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.87$), $F(1, 669) = .36$, $p = .55$, $\eta^2 < .001$. H1 predicted that low corporate credibility would create less attitude change toward the corporation's position than high corporate credibility. Attitude change of participants in the low corporate credibility condition ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.91$) did not differ from attitude change of those in the high corporate credibility condition ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.83$), $F(1, 669) = 2.02$, $p = .16$, $\eta^2 = .003$. The data were not consistent with H1. H2 predicted that high bandwagon heuristic would result in more attitude change toward the corporation's position than low bandwagon heuristic. Attitude change of participants in the low bandwagon condition ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.86$) did not differ from attitude change of those in the high bandwagon condition ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.89$), $F(1, 669) = .19$, $p = .67$, $\eta^2 < .001$. The data were not consistent with H2.

H3 predicted that ORI, VRI, and IRI were empirically different concepts. To test this, a second-order CFA was run for all three involvement dimensions (i.e., ORI, VRI, IRI) and had acceptable fit of $\chi^2 [87, N = 677] = 261.13$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.00$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .05. Because this three-factor model fits the data well, involvement is composed of these three empirically different variables; that is, dividing the data into these three factors is the best fit to the data because each factor is measuring a specific dimension of involvement effectively. The data were consistent with H3.

Before testing the interaction effects of advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic, three direct relationship research questions (RQ4, RQ10a, RQ11a) and one direct relationship hypothesis (H8) were first answered. One multiple regression analysis (with ORI, IRI, and VRI as predictors and attitude change as the dependent variable) and Pearson's correlations were conducted between each of the involvement factors (ORI, VRI, IRI) and attitude certainty (see Table A5 for all correlations between continuous variables). ORI did not have a direct effect on attitude change toward the corporation's position, $\beta = .03, p = .47$. RQ4 asked if VRI had a direct effect on attitude change toward the corporation's position; the results showed that VRI did not have a direct effect on attitude change toward the corporation's position, $\beta = -.04, p = .43$. IRI did not have a direct effect on attitude change toward the corporation's position, $\beta = -.03, p = .49$. H8 predicted that ORI and attitude certainty would be positively associated; the results showed that ORI and attitude certainty were positively associated, $r = .24, p < .001$. The data were consistent with H8. RQ10a asked about the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty; the results showed that VRI and attitude certainty were positively associated, $r = .42, p < .001$. RQ11a asked about the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty; the results showed that IRI and attitude certainty were positively associated, $r = .10, p = .01$.

Moderated Regression Analysis

Moderated regression analyses were used to answer the remaining hypotheses and research questions. To do this, the continuous predictor variables (i.e., ORI, VRI, IRI) were centered; dummy variables were then created for each categorical predictor variable: corporate credibility (low corporate credibility = 0; high corporate credibility = 1), advocacy fit (low advocacy fit = 0; high advocacy fit = 1), and the bandwagon heuristic (low bandwagon heuristic

= 0; high bandwagon heuristic = 1); interaction terms were then created by multiplying each centered predictor variable by each dummy variable. Six separate moderated regression analyses were then run: three predicting attitude change (see Appendix J for unstandardized coefficients, standard errors, and *t*-values) and three predicting attitude certainty (see Appendix K for unstandardized coefficients, standard errors, and *t*-values). Pearson's correlations were also run to enhance the interpretation of the results; these correlations and their significance levels are identified in Appendix L for attitude change and Appendix M for attitude certainty. In the following pages, the simple slopes of the regression lines for each moderator variable are examined, and a comparison of these slopes is provided.

Attitude Change

Corporate credibility. H4 predicted that there would be a negative relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position when corporate credibility is high and no relationship when corporate credibility is low. When corporate credibility was high, there was no significant relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .01, p = .86$). When corporate credibility was low, there was no significant relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .06, p = .40$). The data were partially consistent with H4. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high corporate credibility and low corporate credibility on the relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.05, p = .63$).

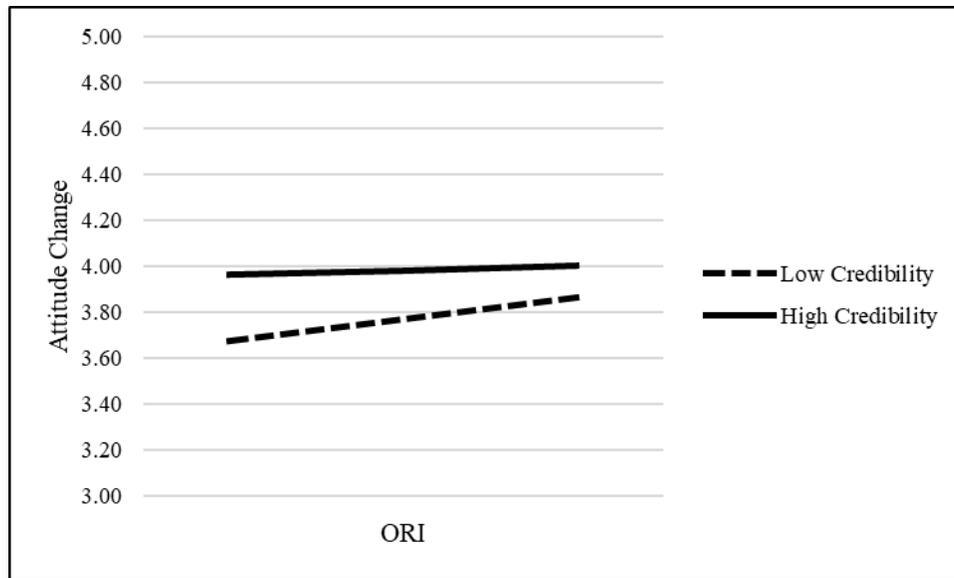


Figure 5. Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Change Moderated by Corporate Credibility

RQ3 asked how VRI interacts with corporate credibility to affect attitude change toward the corporation's position. When corporate credibility was high, there was no significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.03, p = .75$). When corporate credibility was low, there was no significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.10, p = .32$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high corporate credibility and low corporate credibility on the relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .07, p = .63$).

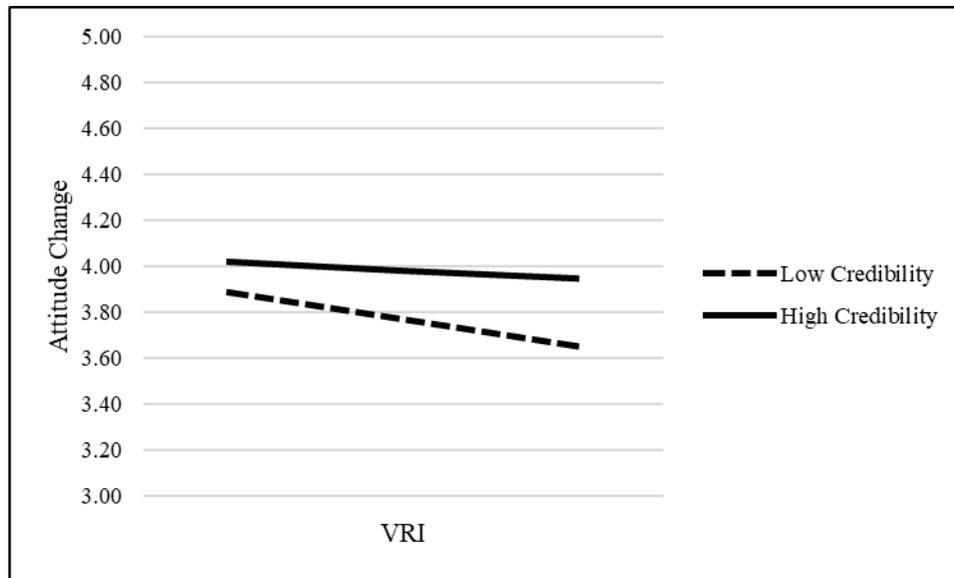


Figure 6. Relationship Between VRI and Attitude Change Moderated by Corporate Credibility

H6 predicted that the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position would be positive when corporate credibility is high, and RQ5 asked about the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position when corporate credibility is low. When corporate credibility was high, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .02, p = .88$). The data were inconsistent with H6. When corporate credibility was low, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.12, p = .27$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high corporate credibility and low corporate credibility on the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .14, p = .38$).

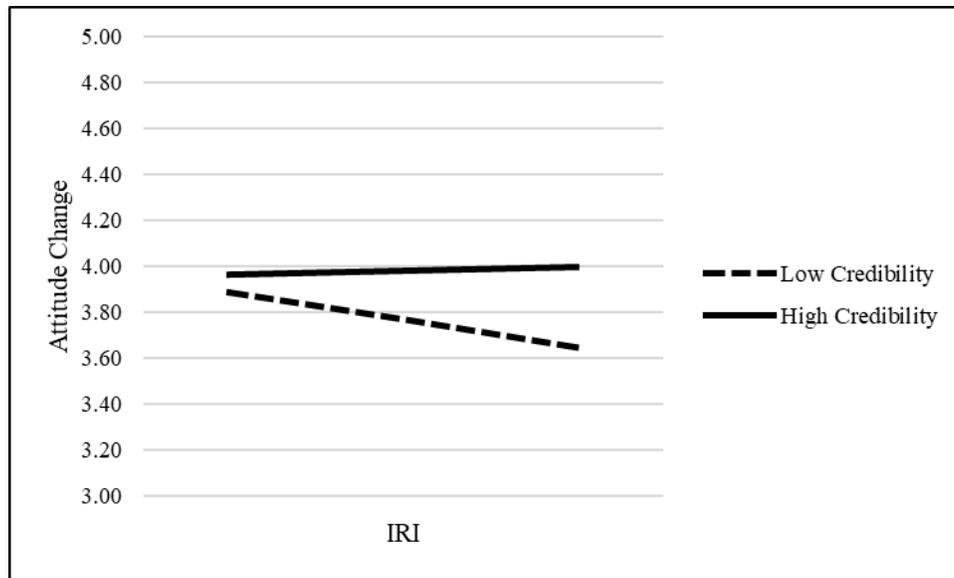


Figure 7. Relationship Between IRI and Attitude Change Moderated by Corporate Credibility

Advocacy fit. RQ2 asked how the relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position would differ when advocacy fit is high rather than low. When advocacy fit was high, there was no significant relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.13, p = .13$). When advocacy fit was low, there was a significant relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .19, p = .02$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between high advocacy fit and low advocacy fit on the relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.32, p = .01$).

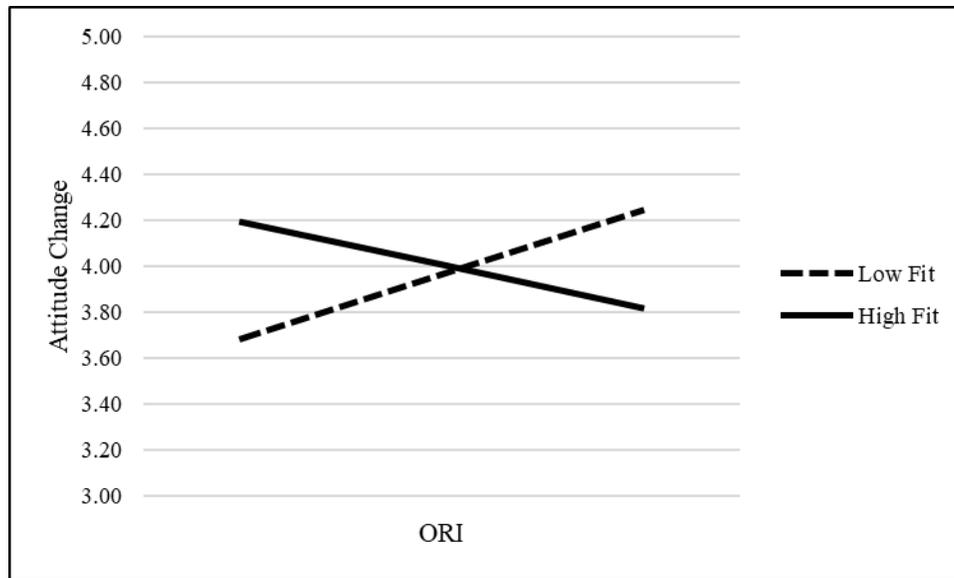


Figure 8. Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Change Moderated by Advocacy Fit

RQ3 asked how VRI interacts with advocacy fit to affect attitude change toward the corporation's position. When advocacy fit was high, there was no significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.01, p = .93$). When advocacy fit was low, there was no significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.07, p = .47$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high advocacy fit and low advocacy fit on the relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .06, p = .68$).

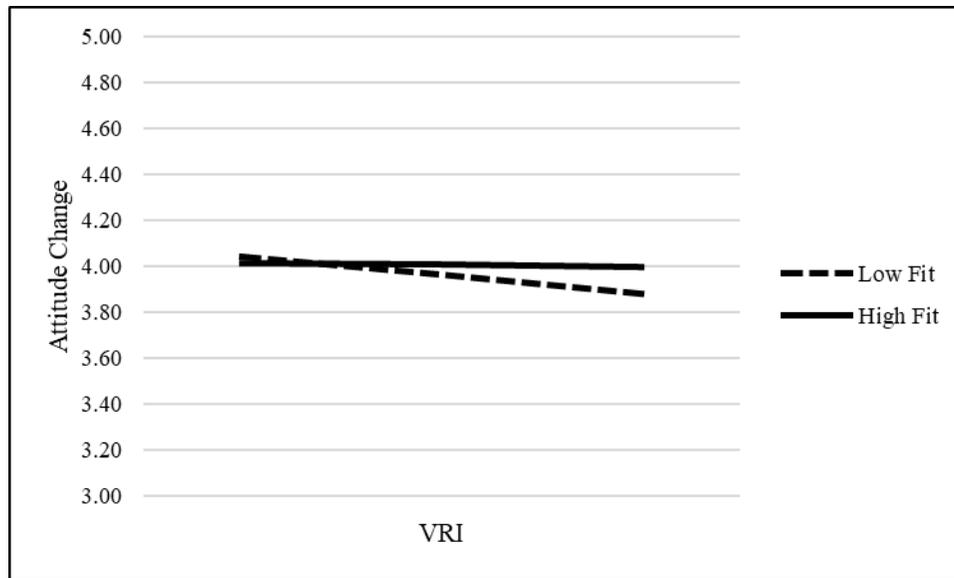


Figure 9. Relationship Between VRI and Attitude Change Moderated by Advocacy Fit

RQ6 asked how the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position would differ when advocacy fit was high rather than low. When advocacy fit was high, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.04, p = .75$). When advocacy fit was low, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.10, p = .41$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high advocacy fit and low advocacy fit on the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .06, p = .72$).

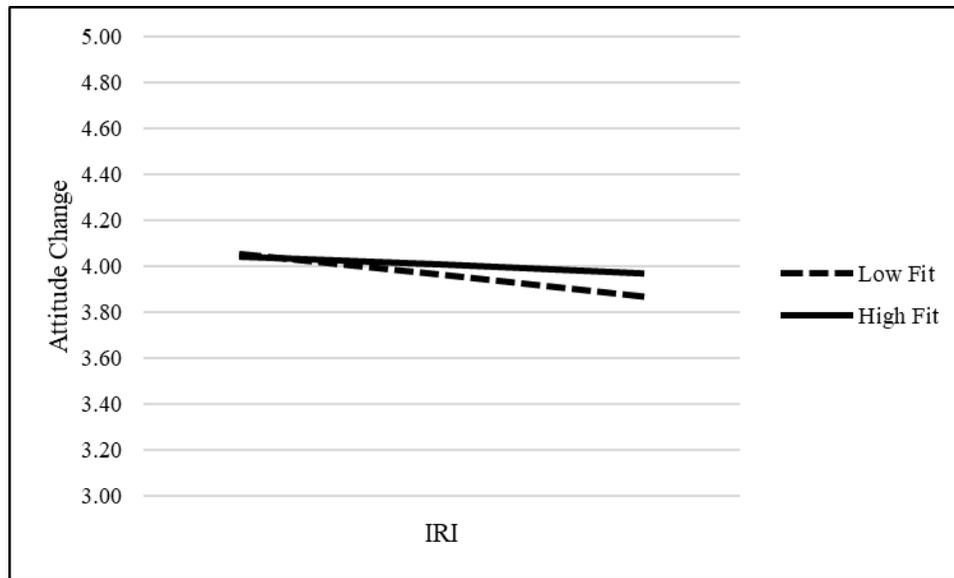


Figure 10. Relationship Between IRI and Attitude Change Moderated by Advocacy Fit

Bandwagon heuristic. H5 predicted that there would be a negative relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position when the bandwagon heuristic is high and no relationship when the bandwagon heuristic is low. When the bandwagon heuristic was high, there was a significant relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .22, p = .003$). When the bandwagon heuristic was low, there was a significant relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.16, p = .03$). The data were inconsistent with H5. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic on the relationship between ORI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .38, p < .001$).

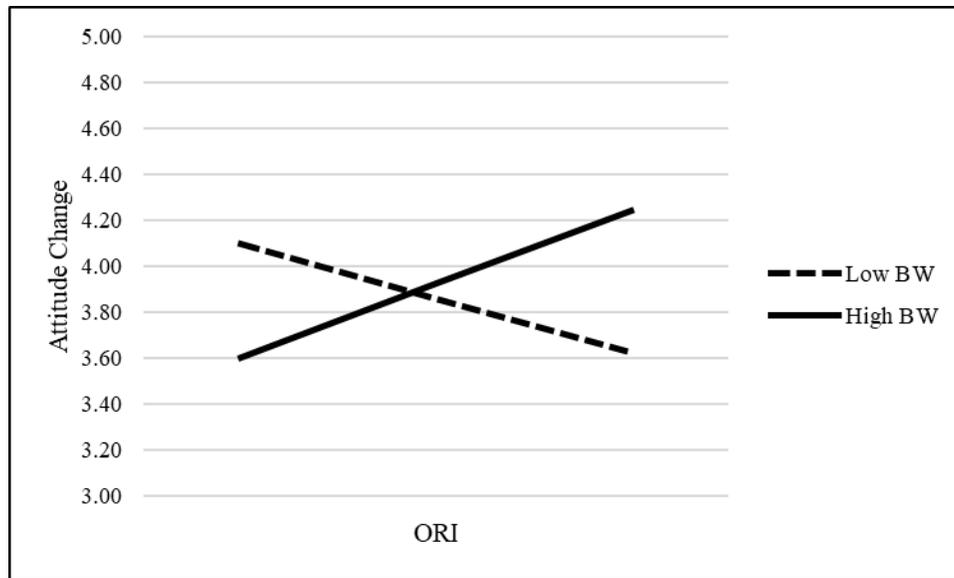


Figure 11. Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Change Moderated by the Bandwagon Heuristic

RQ3 asked how VRI interacts with the bandwagon heuristic to affect attitude change toward the corporation’s position. When the bandwagon heuristic was high, there was no significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation’s position ($b = .06, p = .56$). When the bandwagon heuristic was low, there was no significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation’s position ($b = -.20, p = .06$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic on the relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation’s position ($b = .26, p = .08$).

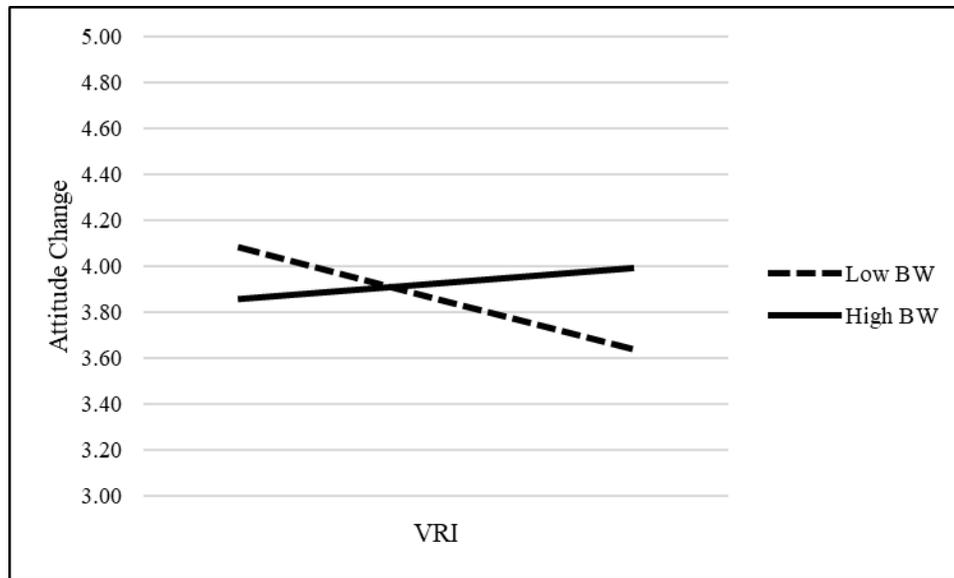


Figure 12. Relationship Between VRI and Attitude Change Moderated by the Bandwagon Heuristic

H7 predicted that the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position would be positive when the bandwagon heuristic is high and there would be no relationship when the bandwagon heuristic is low. When the bandwagon heuristic was high, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.04, p = .73$). When the bandwagon heuristic was low, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = -.08, p = .49$). The data were partially consistent with H7. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic on the relationship between IRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .04, p = .82$).

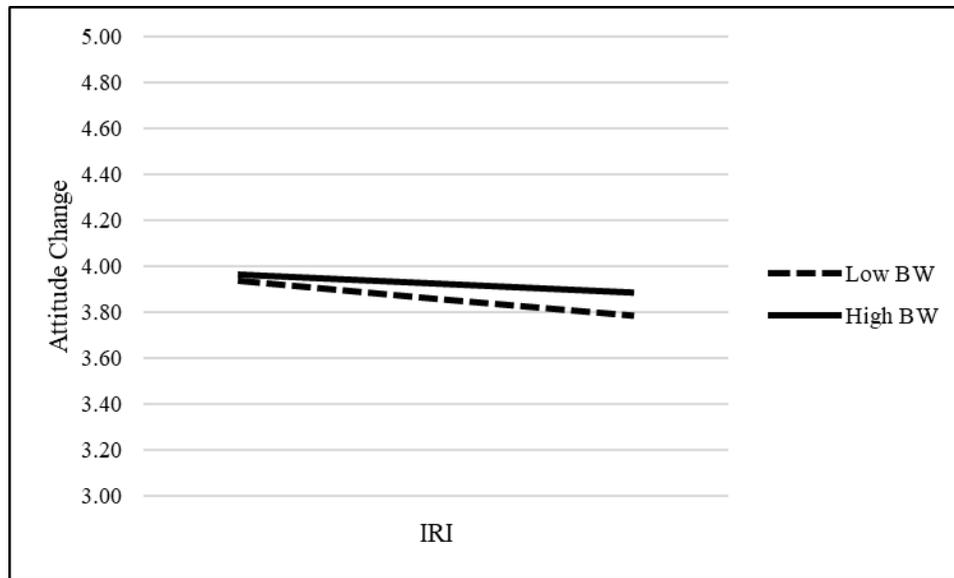


Figure 13. Relationship Between IRI and Attitude Change Moderated by the Bandwagon Heuristic

Attitude Certainty

Corporate credibility. RQ7 asked how corporate credibility affects the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty. When corporate credibility was high, there was a significant relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .13, p = .01$). When corporate credibility was low, there was no significant relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .10, p = .06$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high corporate credibility and low corporate credibility on the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .04, p = .60$).

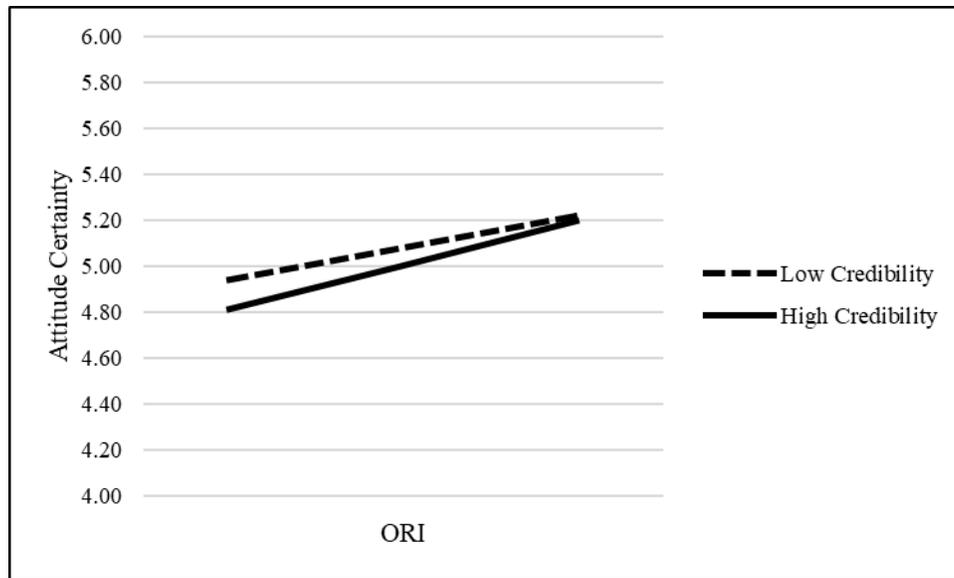


Figure 14. Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by Corporate Credibility

RQ10b asked how corporate credibility affects the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty. When corporate credibility was high, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = .57, p < .001$). When corporate credibility was low, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = .47, p < .001$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high corporate credibility and low corporate credibility on the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = .10, p = .34$).

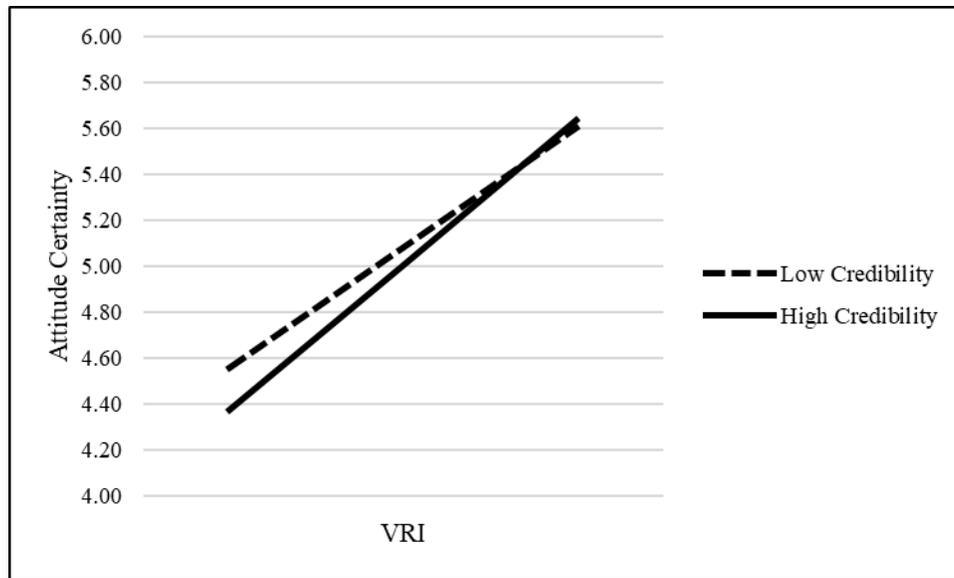


Figure 15. Relationship Between VRI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by Corporate Credibility

RQ11b asked how corporate credibility affects the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty. When corporate credibility was high, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.08, p = .33$). When corporate credibility was low, there was a significant relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.15, p = .05$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high corporate credibility and low corporate credibility on the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = .07, p = .51$).

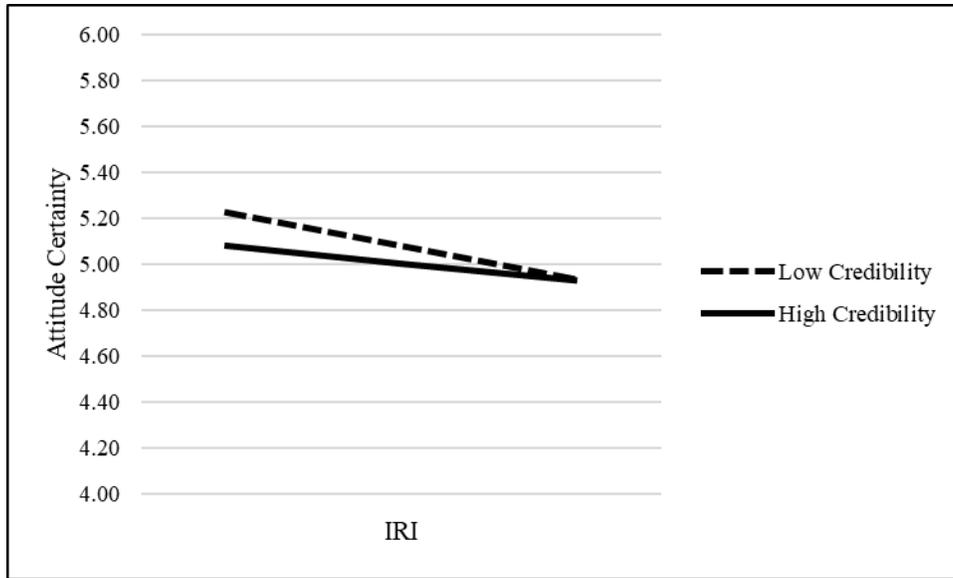


Figure 16. Relationship Between IRI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by Corporate Credibility

Advocacy fit. RQ9 asked how advocacy fit affects the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty. When advocacy fit was high, there was a significant relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .32, p < .001$). When advocacy fit was low, there was no significant relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = -.002, p = .98$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between high advocacy fit and low advocacy fit on the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .32, p < .001$).

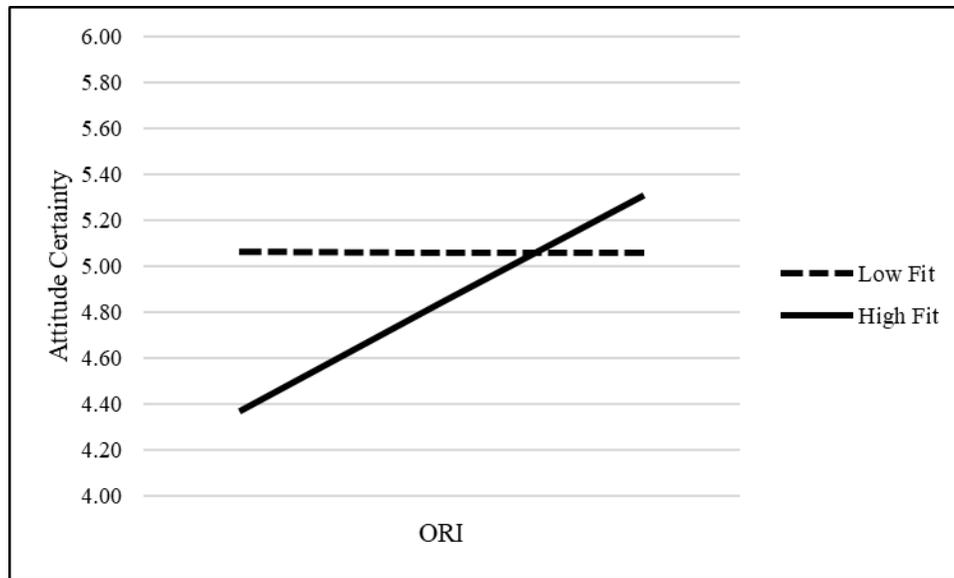


Figure 17. Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by Advocacy Fit

RQ10b asked how advocacy fit affects the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty. When advocacy fit was high, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = .36, p < .001$). When advocacy fit was low, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = .61, p < .001$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between high advocacy fit and low advocacy fit on the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.26, p = .01$).

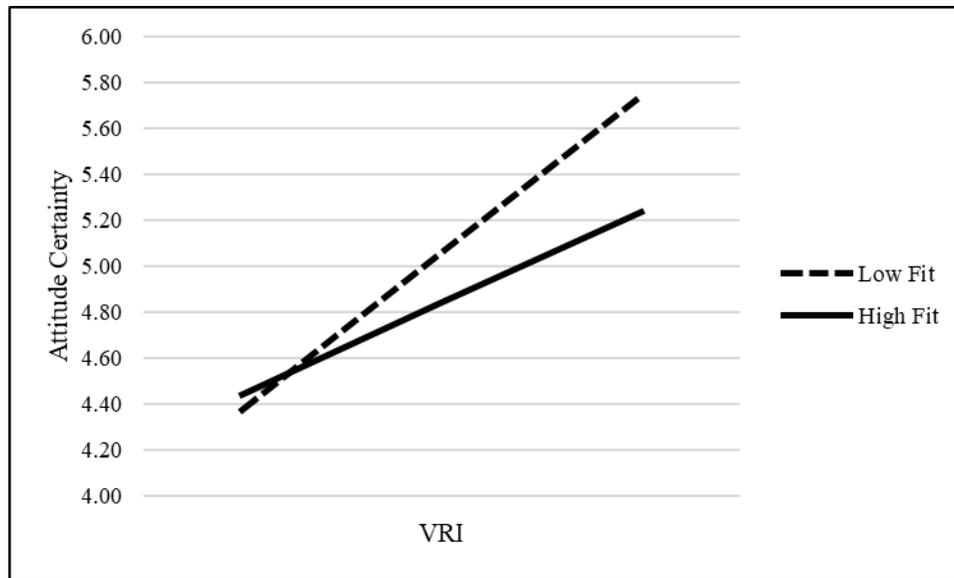


Figure 18. Relationship Between VRI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by Advocacy Fit

RQ11b asked how advocacy fit affects the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty. When advocacy fit was high, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.01, p = .87$). When advocacy fit was low, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.21, p = .01$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high advocacy fit and low advocacy fit on the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = .20, p = .07$).

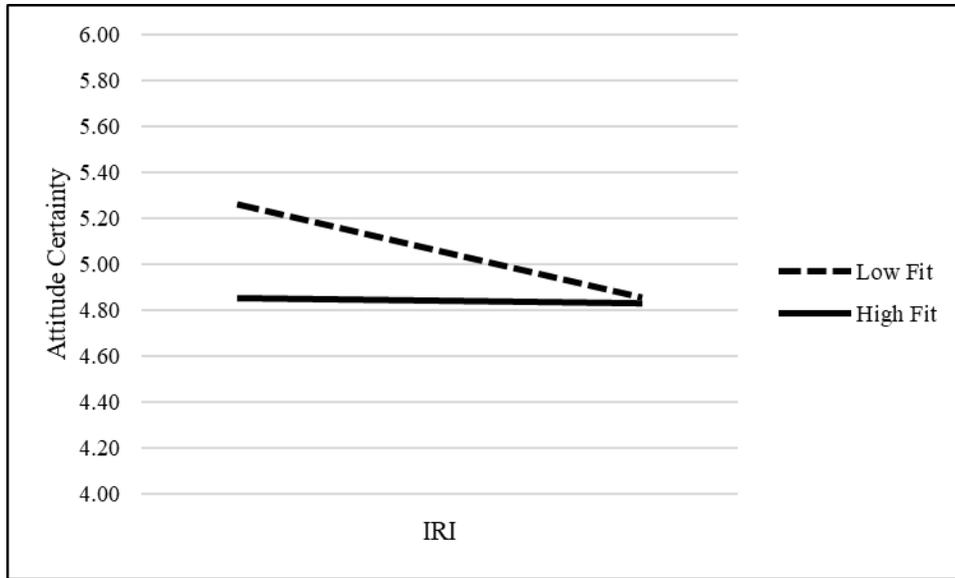


Figure 19. Relationship Between IRI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by Advocacy Fit

Bandwagon heuristic. RQ8 asked how the bandwagon heuristic affects the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty. When the bandwagon heuristic was high, there was a significant relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .18, p < .001$). When the bandwagon heuristic was low, there was no significant relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .05, p = .32$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic on the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty ($b = .13, p = .07$).

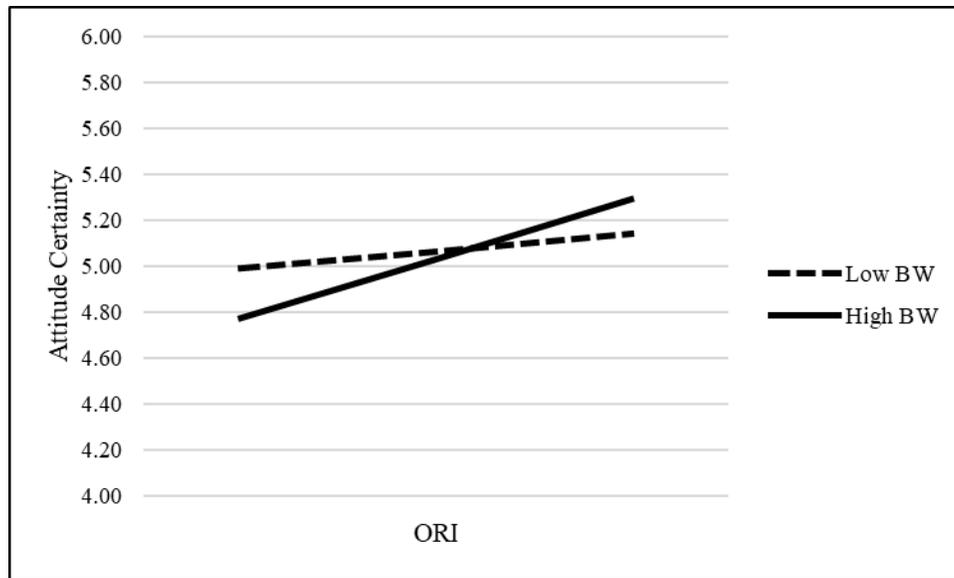


Figure 20. Relationship Between ORI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by the Bandwagon Heuristic

RQ10b asked how the bandwagon heuristic affects the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty. When the bandwagon heuristic was high, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude change toward the corporation's position ($b = .50, p < .001$). When the bandwagon heuristic was low, there was a significant relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = .52, p < .001$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic on the relationship between VRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.02, p = .84$).

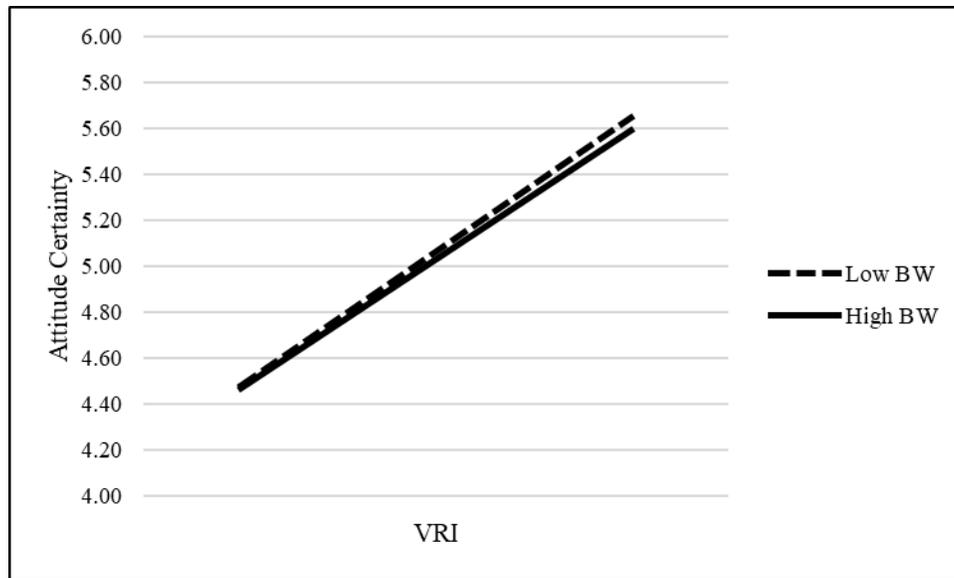


Figure 21. Relationship Between VRI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by the Bandwagon Heuristic

RQ11b asked how the bandwagon heuristic affects the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty. When the bandwagon heuristic was high, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.12, p = .13$). When the bandwagon heuristic was low, there was no significant relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.10, p = .17$). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic on the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty ($b = -.02, p = .88$).

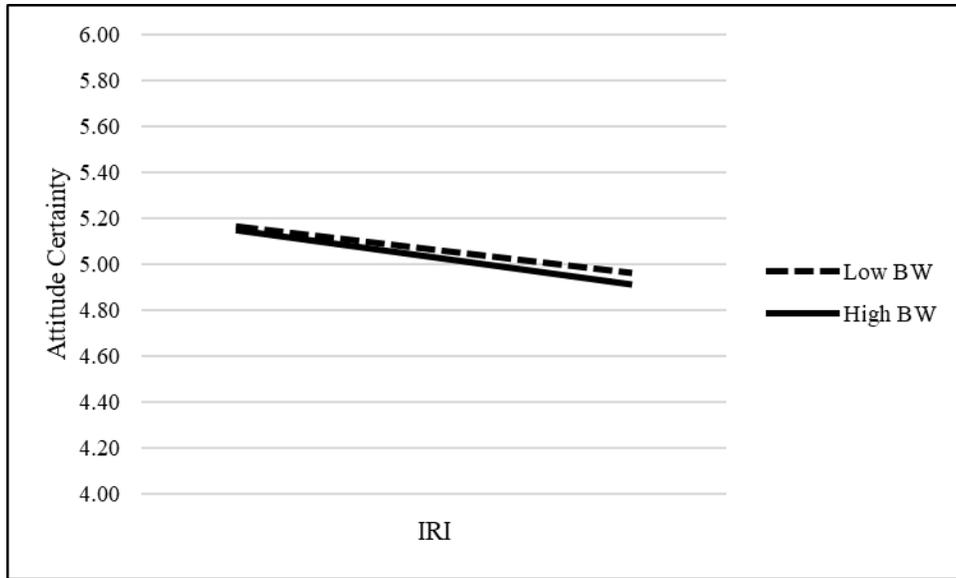


Figure 22. Relationship Between IRI and Attitude Certainty Moderated by the Bandwagon Heuristic

CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how corporate communication on controversial social issues affects individuals' attitudes toward those issues. The study took into account various types of involvement in the issue, the credibility of the corporation, the fit between the corporation's business and the issue, and the amount of agreement other corporations shared with the corporate stance. The goal was to see how these factors affected (a) change in how un/favorably an individual felt toward the issue (i.e., attitude change) and (b) how much the individual felt his/her un/favorable attitude was correct (i.e., attitude certainty). The results indicate that both attitude change and attitude certainty are affected by corporate communication on controversial social issues. The specific effects on attitude change are first examined, followed by the effects on attitude certainty.

Attitude Change

Non-Involvement Effects

Advocacy fit. Advocacy fit did not influence whether or not individuals changed their attitudes more toward the corporation's position. Scholars (e.g., Bloom et al., 2006; Du et al., 2010; Menon & Kahn, 2003) have argued that a mismatch in fit (i.e., low fit) might be beneficial for a corporation because the mismatch signifies that the corporation is interested in the issue for the right reasons (e.g., reasons that extend beyond the corporation's bottom line). Alternatively, high fit may also "produce a more positive effect on consumer brand judgments and feelings than initiatives with weaker fit" (Bloom et al., 2006, p. 52). This is because high fit indicates that the issue is relevant to the corporation, and it makes sense to individuals why the corporation would be involved in the social issue. The data were not consistent with either of these two arguments. Instead, the findings of this study support the argument of de Jong and van der Meer

(2015), who stated that a direct effect of fit on individuals' attitudes is unlikely because "CSR activities [that] have a low fit or a high fit does not necessarily imply that they will be judged negatively or positively" (p. 73). Other characteristics—such as an individual's level of involvement in a social issue—might influence whether an individual judges the fit more positively or negatively.

Corporate credibility. Although high source credibility is often more persuasive than low source credibility (see Johnson et al., 1968; Pornpitakpan, 2004), the same conclusion may not apply for corporate credibility. High corporate credibility is generally found to be beneficial for a corporation (see Goldsmith et al., 2000; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999, 2004), but its impact on whether or not an individual changed their un/favorable attitude toward a controversial social issue was null. Similar to advocacy fit, the credibility of the corporation might not matter when the corporation is discussing a controversial social issue. The credibility of the corporation matters for other outcomes, such as purchase intentions or attitudes toward the corporation (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999), but individuals may be apathetic to the credibility of a corporation when thinking about particular controversial social issues.

Bandwagon heuristic. It was expected that attitudes would change more toward the corporation's position when the number of corporations in agreement with the corporate statement increased. This is because previous research has demonstrated that the bandwagon heuristic can increase credibility perceptions (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Sundar et al., 2007; Sundar, 2008), thus making the information more likely to be persuasive because it is viewed as credible. However, the current study did not find any direct effect of the bandwagon heuristic. Sundar et al.'s (2009) argument that individuals "blindly rely on the collective opinion of others" might only apply when "others" is limited to our peers. In fact, Sundar et al. (2007) conducted a

study where the type of user (either a “news editor, the computer, or other users”) had a different effect on the influence of the bandwagon heuristic; the “other users” were the most influential. Similarly, in the current study, because corporations are not the individual’s peers, the effect of the bandwagon heuristic might be minimized; there may be different types of bandwagon heuristics (e.g., peer bandwagon, corporation bandwagon), with each having a different effect.

Involvement Effects

ORI. ELM suggests that as ORI increases, so does an individual’s amount of elaboration on a message. It was thus expected that the peripheral cues of corporate credibility and the bandwagon heuristic would be more persuasive for individuals with lower ORI than higher ORI because peripheral cues are effective when an individual is not thinking closely about the message itself. In the current study, corporate credibility did not have a significant impact on attitude change in combination with ORI, but the bandwagon heuristic did. This section also examines the impact of advocacy fit on the relationship between ORI and attitude change.

The finding that corporate credibility did not have an effect on attitude change depending on the level of ORI is surprising. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) have argued that “simple source cues are more important determinants of persuasion when personal relevance is low rather than high” (p. 156; see also Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). However, the findings of this study do not support this conclusion. Perhaps one explanation for this is that corporate credibility did not operate as a peripheral cue in this study. Although the credibility of a source is often understood to be a peripheral cue (O’Keefe, 2013; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984), source credibility may also influence the amount and/or valence of elaboration (O’Keefe, 2013). However, regardless of whether an individual was very involved or not involved at all in terms of outcome-relevance (and by derivative, whether an individual elaborated more or less), corporate credibility had no

significant effect on attitude change, meaning that the credibility of a corporation made no difference in the persuasive processing of the corporate message.

Even more surprising is that the bandwagon heuristic did have a significant effect on persuasion, but the effect was the opposite of what was predicted. The current study found that the more an issue personally affected an individual's outcomes, the high bandwagon heuristic resulted in more attitude change and the low bandwagon heuristic resulted in less attitude change. It may be that the bandwagon heuristic is influencing elaboration valence—that is, at high ORI, the high bandwagon heuristic is perceived more positively than the low bandwagon heuristic. Individuals who are engaging in high amounts of elaboration may observe—in the high bandwagon heuristic condition—that a multitude of corporations agree with the corporate message, and this in turn might have caused them to interpret their thoughts more positively than negatively. Conversely, in the low bandwagon heuristic condition, individuals who are engaging in high amounts of elaboration may observe that there is a low amount of corporations who agree with the corporate message, and this in turn might have caused them to interpret their thoughts more negatively than positively. Thus, the key is that the bandwagon heuristic may be influencing whether an individual's elaboration is positively or negatively interpreted.

However, this does not fully explain why at low levels of ORI, when the valence of elaboration does not matter as much because there are low levels of elaboration, there was still a difference in attitude change between the low bandwagon heuristic and the high bandwagon heuristic. Perhaps the explanation is not that the bandwagon heuristic influences elaboration valence, but instead that the bandwagon heuristic operates as a peripheral cue, yet this peripheral cue is not interpreted in the same way as expected. Perhaps having a low amount of corporations who agree with the corporate message is better than having a high amount of corporations agree

with the corporate statement for individuals with low involvement because it communicates to these individuals that the corporation actually cares about the issue at hand, even if only a few people agree with them. Therefore, the bandwagon heuristic applied to corporations may operate contrary to the bandwagon heuristic applied in other settings (e.g., peer relationships): having fewer corporations in agreement with the corporate statement is better than having more corporations in agreement with the corporate statement because it indicates the corporation is taking a stand; however, this argument only applies to individuals with lower ORI.

For advocacy fit, sometimes having a low fit might be better than having a high fit (e.g., see Bloom et al., 2006; Menon & Kahn, 2003). In the current study, as an individual's ORI increased, low advocacy fit influenced attitude change more than high advocacy fit. Consistent with this, albeit with a different dependent variable, Menon and Kahn (2003) found that "lower congruence [i.e., lower CSR fit] enhances perception of CSR . . . when elaboration is not constrained" (p. 322). The consistency in the current study's findings with Menon and Kahn's findings are important because they support the idea that (a) CSR fit and advocacy fit operate as parallel terms, and (b) that low fit can be better than high fit.

VRI. The direct effect of VRI on attitude change was examined in this study. No significant effect was found, and this supports other similar findings (Park et al., 2007; Quick & Heiss, 2009), yet it contradicts Johnson and Eagly's (1989) finding that VRI and attitude change are negatively correlated. As argued by Park et al. (2007), there is support for the idea promulgated by Johnson and Eagly (1989) that there are three unique types of involvement, yet the specific effects of VRI on attitude change is still not clear. The data in the current study is not consistent with Johnson and Eagly's meta-analysis findings of VRI's effect on attitude change.

None of the three moderation variables—corporate credibility, advocacy fit, and the bandwagon heuristic—affected the relationship between VRI and attitude change. The lack of interaction between VRI and the moderators, combined with the fact that ORI did interact with advocacy fit and the bandwagon heuristic to impact attitude change supports Johnson and Eagly's (1989, 1990) contention that ORI and VRI are unique types of involvement. Further, because none of the moderators affected the relationship between VRI and attitude change, it may be the case that VRI does not impact message elaboration. If VRI did affect elaboration, it would be expected that these moderators would have different effects on attitude change depending on the level of VRI, but this was not observed.

IRI. Similar to VRI, the relationship between IRI and attitude change did not vary depending on the moderation of corporate credibility, advocacy fit, or the bandwagon heuristic. Of these three, that the bandwagon heuristic did not interact with IRI to impact attitude change is perhaps most interesting because those with higher IRI care about the opinions of others more than those with lower IRI. Those with higher IRI would be expected to care about what groups of other people (corporations in this case) think (i.e., bandwagon heuristic). It was thus expected that as IRI increased, there would be an increase in attitude change for the high bandwagon heuristic condition. Although the high bandwagon heuristic and low bandwagon heuristic did have opposite slopes, the difference between these slopes was not significant. Further, in the current study, IRI had a low Cronbach's α (i.e., .58), which casts doubt on the reliability of the IRI analysis.

Attitude Certainty

The current study supported ELM's prediction (Petty & Krosnick, 1995) that attitudes become stronger the higher an individual's involvement is in an issue. The current study found

that ORI, VRI, and IRI were all positively associated with attitude certainty. This means that as individuals become more involved in an issue—regardless of if that involvement is outcome-, value-, or impression-relevant—they will become more confident in their attitude toward that issue. This makes sense because those with high involvement will most likely have thought about an issue (i.e., engaged in high elaboration) more than those with low involvement, and therefore have more assurance that their attitude is indeed correct. Whether the relationship between involvement and attitude certainty changes depending on the moderators of the advocacy fit, corporate credibility, and the bandwagon heuristic is now discussed.

ORI

For ORI, it was expected that both corporate credibility and the bandwagon heuristic would affect attitude certainty at lower levels of ORI. This is because these are peripheral cues and may play a significant role if one's ORI—and hence, one's elaboration—is lower. However, the findings of the current study do not support this argument because neither the corporate credibility nor the bandwagon heuristic had any impact on the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty. A key implication of this finding is that peripheral cues may not affect an individual's attitude certainty; the dual-process predictions of ELM do not seem to apply to attitude certainty.

Advocacy fit did moderate the relationship between ORI and attitude certainty. When the issue was congruent with the company's interests, and a person had higher involvement in the issue (higher ORI), the person was even more certain of their attitude. When the issue was incongruent with the company's interests, there was no relationship between ORI and attitude certainty. The effect of high advocacy fit on attitude certainty compared to attitude change is interesting because high advocacy fit resulted in no attitude change as ORI increased, yet more

attitude certainty as ORI increased. Because high advocacy fit only influences attitude certainty, for a corporation advocating for a controversial social issue, it seems that having low advocacy fit is best for the corporation if the issue is outcome-relevant because it results in more attitude change toward the corporation's position than high advocacy fit.

VRI

Even though VRI had a strong positive relationship with attitude certainty, at lower levels of VRI, the peripheral cues of corporate credibility and the bandwagon heuristic did not significantly impact attitude certainty differently than at higher levels of VRI. That VRI combined with corporate credibility and the bandwagon heuristic did not influence attitude certainty further suggests that predictions about ELM applied to attitude certainty should be made cautiously (if at all). This is because if ELM predictions held, an expectation is that corporate credibility and the bandwagon heuristic would affect attitude certainty at lower levels of VRI differently than at higher levels of VRI because an individual elaborates less on a message at these lower levels (and hence, is more likely influenced by peripheral cues).

VRI's relationship with attitude certainty was affected by advocacy fit. As VRI increased, attitude certainty increased more for low advocacy fit than for high advocacy fit. However, the conclusion about whether low or high advocacy fit is better overall (for a corporation) is less clear with VRI; this is because VRI's relationship with attitude change was not significantly impacted by advocacy fit, yet VRI's relationship with attitude certainty was significantly impacted by advocacy fit. Thus, attitudes become more confident with low and high advocacy fit as VRI increases, but this confidence does not mean more confidence in an attitude that aligns with the corporation's position.

IRI

The relationship between IRI and attitude certainty was positive, yet weak. Consistent with what was previously argued, the findings of the current study support the argument that the level of IRI should not influence one's attitude certainty because those with lower IRI are unconcerned with what others think (and therefore should have high attitude certainty), and those with higher IRI will also have high attitude certainty because they try to keep their attitudes consistent with what they perceive to be the attitude the majority of society has toward an issue (see predictions of Figure 3, Possibility #1). Further, corporate credibility and the bandwagon heuristic did not moderate the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty, again demonstrating that the level of involvement and its relationship to attitude certainty is not affected by peripheral cues. Finally, although the relationships between (a) ORI and attitude certainty and (b) VRI and attitude certainty were affected by advocacy fit, advocacy fit did not influence the relationship between IRI and attitude certainty. Perhaps advocacy fit does not matter when issues are impression-relevant because as IRI increases, these individuals are not concerned with whether an issue has high or low fit as much as they are concerned that their attitudes are socially acceptable.

Practical Implications

This study provides two practical implications for corporations who desire to communicate about controversial social issues. First, corporations should be aware of the involvement their stakeholders have in a particular issue. The findings of the current study showed that corporations are not likely to change individuals' attitudes solely based on the credibility of the corporation, whether multiple corporations agreed with the corporation, or whether or not the controversial social issue had good fit with the corporation's business;

instead, corporate statements on controversial social issues changed individuals' attitudes when mixed with their involvement in an issue. Accordingly, it would be practical for corporations to have a general understanding of their stakeholders' level of involvement in particular issues before engaging in communication on a controversial social issue.

Second, corporations should also communicate about controversial social issues that are incongruent with their business considerations. From the current study, individuals increased their attitude change when the corporation was communicating about a controversial social issue with low advocacy fit. By communicating on a controversial social issue that is not directly related to the corporation, individuals most likely have fewer reasons to question the corporation's engagement in the social issue (i.e., and hence, perhaps less skepticism toward the corporation).

For individuals external to the corporation, one practical implication is to be aware of how much an issue will have a personal effect on oneself. Individuals with higher ORI are susceptible to change their attitudes because of bandwagon heuristics or advocacy fit effects. Thus, if one does not wish to be influenced by corporations on controversial social issues, one should be aware of their ORI level.

Limitations

One limitation of the current study was that the study was a posttest only design. Although this design was intentionally chosen to avoid sensitizing participants to the manipulation (Creswell, 2014), a case can be made to have a pretest-posttest design because this would help detect a change in attitude between the original attitudes and the final attitudes. However, a posttest design is arguably better for this study because participants might

intentionally not change their attitudes in a pretest-posttest design because they do not want to be perceived of as having an easily changed perspective (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996).

Another limitation of the current study was the lack of obtaining a reliable IRI scale (i.e., Cronbach's α was 0.58). Generally, scale reliabilities should be higher than 0.70. Having the IRI scale less than that indicates that the scale is not "measuring something precisely or consistently" (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 643). The findings of IRI should be taken cautiously because of this low reliability.

One reason why the corporate credibility manipulation did not result in any significant effects could be that the mean difference between the low corporate credibility and the high corporate credibility was only about 0.60. This difference was significantly different, yet on a 7-point Likert scale, this difference is minimal and was probably found because of the large sample size. This manipulation is not strong, and should be considered when understanding the non-effects of corporate credibility in this study. In the pretest, the manipulation looked better, as the mean difference between low corporate credibility and high corporate credibility was 0.94, so the low mean difference between the credibility conditions was not anticipated in the main study.

Finally, another limitation is the extent to which the experimental manipulations in this study are transferable to the real world, considering the manipulations used in this study were not "real." This is perhaps most evident in the corporate credibility manipulation. In this manipulation, participants were told that the credibility statement came from the *Wall Street Journal*. But considering that the participants were university students, participants might have not been familiar with this news source. The participants also just read the statement, and this statement was not formatted to appear like it came from a newspaper (i.e., the statement did not have a newspaper backdrop). Additionally, the credibility manipulation contained a lot of text, so

participants might not have read it carefully. To remedy these potential issues, future studies might use a source that college students would be familiar with (e.g., such as the university's newspaper), format the manipulation so that it appears like it was printed in a newspaper, and shorten the corporate credibility manipulation to increase the likelihood that participants read the entire credibility manipulation.

Future Research

Future research should investigate not only corporate credibility (with a stronger manipulation), but also study the industry a corporation comes from. For example, a corporation within the oil industry might have high corporate credibility, but their influence on a controversial social issue might be less effective than a corporation in the technology industry that also has high corporate credibility. The industry of a corporation may influence its communication (e.g., O'Connor & Gronewold, 2012; O'Connor & Shumate, 2010), and should be investigated to see if certain industries are more likely to influence attitude change than other industries. Perhaps it will be found that only certain industries wield power to influence individuals on controversial social issues.

Another avenue for future research is to better parse out the bandwagon heuristic effect. In the current study, the bandwagon heuristic was applied to the corporate setting by stating that a large or small number of corporations agreed with the corporate statement. However, as Sundar et al. (2007) have shown, different types of the bandwagon heuristic may have different effects. Future research should investigate these different effects to understand (a) what are the different types (e.g., number of peers vs. number of corporations) and (b) what are the precise effects of these types.

Future research will also benefit from replicating the current study in different settings and with different participants. Replicating this study in different settings and with different participants is a key way to increase the external validity of the findings (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Additionally, quasi-replications could also be conducted with outcome variables other than attitude change and attitude certainty. For example, Dodd and Supa (2015) have examined the effect of corporate communication on controversial social issues and purchase intentions. In addition to purchase intentions, CSR skepticism might also be another outcome variable that researchers could study. As corporations communicate about controversial social issues, this communication may cause individuals to become skeptical toward the CSR of the corporation because they do not think corporations should be involved in these controversial social issues. Accordingly, it would be useful to know how corporate communication on controversial social issues affects individuals' perceptions of the corporation, and CSR skepticism is one way to accomplish this objective.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to understand how corporate communication on controversial social issues changes individuals' attitudes toward those social issues, along with understanding how this communication affects individuals' confidence in the correctness of their held attitudes. To accomplish this goal, how much an individual is involved in a controversial social issue was examined, along with taking into consideration the credibility of the corporation, the fit between the corporation's business and the controversial social issue, and how many other corporations agreed with the corporate statement.

The findings of this study reveal that corporate communication on controversial social issues can change one's attitudes and one's certainty in those attitudes. Corporations were

effective in changing attitudes when advocacy fit was low: The more a social issue was thought to personally affect one's goals, the more a corporate statement on a low-fit controversial social issue changed an individual's attitude. Corporations were also effective in changing attitudes when the bandwagon heuristic was high: The more a social issue was thought to personally affect one's goals, the more a corporate statement supported by a large number of other corporations changed an individual's attitude. Individuals were most confident in their attitudes when (a) advocacy fit was high and the social issue was thought to personally affect one's goals and when (b) advocacy fit was low and the social issue was central to one's important values.

Corporations are an influential part of modern society (Deetz, 1992), and their communication on controversial social issues expands their reach and impact. Through the current study, it is evident that corporations can use communication in specific ways to change how society views particular controversial social issues, and some of these changed views show signs of being durable. Fully understanding the effects of corporate communication has never been more important because corporations are engaging in controversial social issues—issues previously thought to be outside of a corporation's prerogative (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016). Future research should continue to explore the effects of corporate communication to know precisely when, where, and how corporations are able to change what society values.

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ENDNOTE

¹ There could be a variety of reasons why corporations are currently commenting more on controversial social issues than in times past. Some of these reasons may include: (1) corporate engagement in social media which opens up more opportunities for corporations to voice their opinions, (2) social expectations from stakeholders pressuring corporations to engage in this behavior, (3) CSR activities that are increasingly becoming more and more about the ethical dimensions of corporate behavior, (4) corporations desiring to use the power they have to make society better, (5) corporations engaging in this behavior to keep pace with other corporations who are already taking stands on controversial social issues (see Carroll, 2008; Chipman, 2016; Davis, 2016; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dodd, 2014; Dodd & Supa, 2015; Peters & Silverman, 2016; Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016; Wettstein & Baur, 2016).

APPENDIX A. OPENING DESCRIPTION

Thank you for choosing to participate in this study. In the following pages, you will read information about a gun manufacturing company, including:

- A description of the company from an article printed in the *Wall Street Journal* last summer. The description should give you a good idea of the company and its workings. The name of the company has been changed in this description to avoid bias.
- A statement from the company on a current social issue.

After you read it, we're interested in getting your opinions on the company and the statement from the company. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers; we are simply interested in getting your opinions.

APPENDIX B. EXAMPLE OF MANIPULATION

The following is a complete example of one of the 16 message conditions. This manipulation contains a description of a corporation with high credibility that makes a statement in support of gun control. The bandwagon heuristic is low in this example. The headings for each description are included here for clarity, but they will not appear in the actual survey.

Opening Description

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- A statement from the company on a current social issue.

After you read it, we're interested in getting your opinions on the company and the statement from the company. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers; we are simply interested in getting your opinions.

High Corporate Credibility

The following is a description about NNT Corporation that appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* last summer:

“NNT Corporation was established in 1951 and is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The company was one of the first companies to begin manufacturing gun products for consumers. Their research and development of new products is considered by financial analysts to be above average compared with other gun product companies. With 66 years of experience, NNT Corporation is one of the oldest manufacturers of gun products in the country. Its U.S. sales have achieved record sales last year of \$50 million. Exports to Europe and Asia have grown steadily since entering these markets fifteen years ago. Business Week has named NNT Corporation one of American's top socially conscious corporate citizens. The company has been a source of support to community and environmental issues in the areas where its plants are located as well as in Denver. NNT Corporation also contributes to scholarship funds at several universities.

“Additionally, it has been cited in industry publications as having above average products. NNT Corporation has never been investigated by the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) because it has never been found to violate the SEC's guidelines on how company stocks should be sold. Finally, it has been reported by the Better Business Bureau that NNT Corporation often has the best interest of its consumers in mind.”

Corporate Statement: High Advocacy Fit and For Gun Control

This statement from NNT Corporation is going to appear as part of an ad at the beginning of next year, and we are interested in your opinions on it.

“Here at NNT Corporation, we understand that the topic of gun control is a debated issue. However, as a corporation, we are for gun control. We stand strong in our stance for gun control. In fact, we have decided to donate money towards initiatives and nonprofit organizations that are for gun control. We are proud of the legacy of NNT Corporation, and feel we must voice our support for gun control because it represents an issue for which NNT Corporation has always advocated. NNT Corporation is fully in support of this stance.”

Bandwagon Heuristic: Low

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, fewer than 5 corporations agree with the previous corporate statement.

[Participant will then fill out survey items. See Appendices F, G, H, and I.]

APPENDIX C. CORPORATE CREDIBILITY MANIPULATIONS

These manipulations of corporate credibility are adapted from Goldberg and Hartwick (1990) and Lafferty (2007). The underlined words in the following descriptions identify what differs between the two conditions (in this case, between low and high corporate credibility). The manipulation that the participants read did not have underlined words.

Low Corporate Credibility

NNT Corporation was established in 2005 and is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The company is one of the latest companies to begin manufacturing gun products for consumers. Their research and development of new products is considered by financial analysts to be below average compared with other gun product companies. With 12 years of experience, NNT Corporation is one of the newest manufacturers of gun products in the country. Its U.S. sales have sustained losses last year of \$50 million. Exports to Europe and Asia have not grown steadily since entering these markets five years ago. Business Week has named NNT Corporation one of America's companies that could improve its social consciousness. The company has not been a source of support to community and environmental issues in the areas where its plants are located as well as in Denver. NNT Corporation also recently cancelled its contribution to scholarship funds at several universities.

Additionally, it has been cited in industry publications as having below average products. NNT Corporation has frequently been investigated by the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) because it has frequently been found to violate the SEC's guidelines on how company stocks should be sold. Finally, it has been reported by the Better Business Bureau that NNT Corporation often does not have the best interest of its consumers in mind.

High Corporate Credibility

NNT Corporation was established in 1951 and is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The company was one of the first companies to begin manufacturing gun products for consumers. Their research and development of new products is considered by financial analysts to be above average compared with other gun product companies. With 66 years of experience, NNT Corporation is one of the oldest manufacturers of gun products in the country. Its U.S. sales have achieved record sales last year of \$50 million. Exports to Europe and Asia have grown steadily since entering these markets fifteen years ago. Business Week has named NNT Corporation one of American's top socially conscious corporate citizens. The company has been a source of support to community and environmental issues in the areas where its plants are located as well as in Denver. NNT Corporation also contributes to scholarship funds at several universities.

Additionally, it has been cited in industry publications as having above average products. NNT Corporation has never been investigated by the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) because it has never been found to violate the SEC's guidelines on how company stocks should be sold. Finally, it has been reported by the Better Business Bureau that NNT Corporation often has the best interest of its consumers in mind.

APPENDIX D. CORPORATE STATEMENT MANIPULATIONS

The underlined words in the following statements identify what differs among the advocacy fit and position advocated conditions. The manipulation that the participants read did not have underlined words.

This statement from NNT Corporation is going to appear as part of an ad at the beginning of next year, and we are interested in your opinions on it.

Advocacy Fit: High; Position: For Gun Control

“Here at NNT Corporation, we understand that the topic of gun control is a debated issue. However, as a corporation, we are for gun control. We stand strong in our stance for gun control. In fact, we have decided to donate money towards initiatives and nonprofit organizations that are for gun control. We are proud of the legacy of NNT Corporation, and feel we must voice our support for gun control because it represents an issue for which NNT Corporation has always advocated. NNT Corporation is fully in support of this stance.”

Advocacy Fit: High; Position: Against Gun Control

“Here at NNT Corporation, we understand that the topic of gun control is a debated issue. However, as a corporation, we are against gun control. We stand strong in our stance against gun control. In fact, we have decided to donate money towards initiatives and nonprofit organizations that are against gun control. We are proud of the legacy of NNT Corporation, and feel we must voice our support against gun control because it represents an issue for which NNT Corporation has always advocated. NNT Corporation is fully in support of this stance.”

Advocacy Fit: Low; Position: For Transgender Rights

“Here at NNT Corporation, we understand that the topic of transgender rights is a debated issue. However, as a corporation, we are for transgender rights. We stand strong in our stance for transgender rights. In fact, we have decided to donate money towards initiatives and nonprofit organizations that are for transgender rights. We are proud of the legacy of NNT Corporation, and feel we must voice our support for transgender rights because it represents an issue for which NNT Corporation has always advocated. NNT Corporation is fully in support of this stance.”

Advocacy Fit: Low; Position: Against Transgender Rights

“Here at NNT Corporation, we understand that the topic of transgender rights is a debated issue. However, as a corporation, we are against transgender rights. We stand strong in our stance against transgender rights. In fact, we have decided to donate money towards initiatives and nonprofit organizations that are against transgender rights. We are proud of the legacy of NNT Corporation, and feel we must voice our support against transgender rights because it represents an issue for which NNT Corporation has always advocated. NNT Corporation is fully in support of this stance.”

APPENDIX E. BANDWAGON HEURISTIC MANIPULATIONS

The underlined words in the following statements identify what differs between the two conditions (in this case, between low and high bandwagon heuristic). The manipulation that the participants read did not have underlined words.

Original Manipulation

High Bandwagon Heuristic

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, most corporations are highly favorable to the previous corporate statement. Additionally, this favorable opinion is getting even stronger among corporations.

Low Bandwagon Heuristic

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, most corporations are highly unfavorable to the previous corporation statement. Additionally, this unfavorable opinion is getting even stronger among corporations.

Modified Manipulation (modified due to pretest results)

High Bandwagon Heuristic

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, over 100 corporations agree with the previous corporate statement.

Low Bandwagon Heuristic

According to six national surveys conducted prior to this study, fewer than 5 corporations agree with the previous corporate statement.

APPENDIX F. REALISM CHECK

Think back to the corporate statement on gun control; transgender rights. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements (7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. I didn't have any problem with the realism of the corporate statement.
2. It was difficult to make myself feel that the corporate statement was real.^a
3. A corporation could make this statement, or has made this statement.
4. A corporate statement like this could happen in real life.
5. I can imagine a corporate statement like this one.

^aDropped to improve fit

[^]Reverse coded

APPENDIX G. INDEPENDENT VARIABLE MEASURES

Advocacy Fit (7-point semantic differential items)

How related to NNT Corporation's business is the social issue of gun control; transgender rights?

Unrelated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Related
[^] Strong match	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Weak match
Incongruent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Congruent
^b Unassociated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Associated
[*] Dissimilar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Similar
^a Disconnected	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Connected
^a Unaffiliated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Affiliated
[*] Inconsistent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Consistent

^{*}Items from Becker-Olsen et al. (2006)

[^]Reverse coded

^aDeleted after pretest

^bDropped to improve fit

Corporate Credibility (McCroskey & Teven, 1999) (7-point semantic differential items)

Please indicate your impression of NNT Corporation by selecting the appropriate number between the pairs of terms below.

Expertise

[*] Unskilled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Skilled
Untrained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trained
Inexpert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Expert
[^] Informed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninformed
Incompetent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Competent
[*] Inexperienced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Experienced

^{*}Items changed by current researcher

[^]Reverse coded

Goodwill

Doesn't care about me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Cares about me
Doesn't have my interests at heart	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Has my interests at heart

Self-centered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not self-centered
Unconcerned with me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concerned with me
^a Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Insensitive
^a Not understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Understanding

[^]Reverse coded

^aDropped to improve fit

Trustworthiness

[^] Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonest
Untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trustworthy
Dishonorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honorable
Immoral	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Moral
^a Unethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ethical
Phoney	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Genuine

[^]Reverse coded

^aDropped to improve fit

NNT Corporate Position

Please rate how favorable *NNT Corporation* is to gun control; transgender rights.

Unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favorable
^a Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive
^b Disagreeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agreeable
Disapproving	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Approving
^b Displeased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pleased
[^] Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unsupportive
Unacceptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Acceptable

[^]Reverse coded

^aDeleted after pretest

^bDropped to improve fit

Bandwagon Heuristic (7-point semantic differential items) (Used in Pretest)

Please rate how favorable *other corporations* are to NNT Corporation’s stance on gun control; transgender rights.

Unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favorable
Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive
Disagreeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agreeable
Disapproving	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Approving
^Pleased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Displeased
Unsupportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Supportive
Unacceptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Acceptable

^Reverse coded

Modified Bandwagon Heuristic (7-point semantic differential items) (Used in main study)

Please rate how many *other corporations* agree with NNT Corporation’s stance on gun control; transgender rights.

A little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A lot
A small quantity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A large quantity
A scarcity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	An abundance
A tiny amount	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A big amount
^Many	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Few

^Reverse coded

ORI Involvement (Cho & Boster, 2005) (7-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”)

1. Whether gun control laws increase/decrease; laws supporting transgender rights increase/decrease has little impact on my life.^
2. All in all, the effect of laws concerning gun control; transgender rights on my life is small.^a
3. My life would be changed by the decision to increase/decrease gun control; increase/decrease transgender rights.
4. Laws concerning the legality of gun control; transgender rights have little effect on me.^
5. My life would not change much if gun control; transgender rights laws were changed.^
6. It is easy for me to think of ways gun control; transgender rights affects my life.^a
7. It is difficult for me to think of the ways the laws concerning gun control; transgender rights impact my life.^

^Reverse coded

^aDropped to improve fit

VRI Involvement (Cho & Boster, 2005) (7-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”)

1. The values that are the most important to me are what determine my stand on gun control; transgender rights.
2. Knowing my position on gun control; transgender rights is central to understanding the kind of person I am.^a
3. My position on gun control; transgender rights has little to do with my beliefs about how life should be lived.[^]
4. My position on gun control; transgender rights is based on the values with which I try to conduct my life.
5. The arguments for or against gun control; transgender rights are relevant to the core principles that guide my life.
6. My beliefs about how I should live my life determine my position on gun control; transgender rights.
7. My position on gun control; transgender rights reflects who I am.

[^]Reverse coded

^aDropped to improve fit

IRI Involvement (Cho & Boster, 2005) (7-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”)

1. Talking about my beliefs concerning gun control; transgender rights has little effect on what others think of me.[^]
2. The impressions that others have of me are very much affected when I talk with them about my position on gun control; transgender rights.
3. The kind of opinion that I express in public about gun control; transgender rights has little effect on what others think of me.^{^a}
4. People may judge me on the basis of the opinion that I express in public about gun control; transgender rights.
5. If I express the right kind of opinion on gun control; transgender rights, people will find me more attractive.

[^]Reverse coded

^aDropped to improve fit

APPENDIX H. DEPENDENT VARIABLE MEASURES

Attitude Change (Luttrell et al., 2016) (7-point semantic differential items)

What is your opinion about increasing/decreasing gun control; increasing/decreasing transgender rights?

Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive
Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favorable
Con	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pro
[^] Beneficial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Harmful
^a Foolish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Wise

[^]Reverse coded

^aDropped to improve fit

Attitude Certainty (Pullig et al., 2006) (7-point semantic differential items)

How sure are you that your attitude toward gun control; transgender rights is correct?

Not firm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very firm
Not certain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very certain
Not sure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sure
Not definite	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very definite
Easily changed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not easily changed
^{*^} Convinced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unconvinced

^{*}Item added by current researcher.

[^]Reverse coded

APPENDIX I. DEMOGRAPHIC MEASURES

Age

Please enter your age: _____

Sex

Please select your sex:

- Female
- Male
- Not listed above—please specify _____

Ethnicity

What is your ethnicity?

- Asian
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Two or more (mixed)
- White
- Not listed above—please specify _____

Year in School

What year are you in school?

- First-year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Not listed above—please specify _____

Political Affiliation

What is your political affiliation?

- Democratic
- Independent
- Libertarian
- Republican
- Not listed above—please specify _____

Number of Guns Owned By Family

How many guns does your family own?

Number of Guns Personally Owned

How many guns do you personally own?

Number of LGBT Individuals Personally Known

How many LGBT individuals do you personally know?

Number of Transgender Individuals Personally Known

How many transgender individuals do you personally know?

Opinion of Corporate Advocacy

Do you think corporations should voice their opinions on controversial social issues?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Don't care

Power of Corporations to Influence Social Change (adapted from Global Strategy Group, 2016)

Do you think corporations have the power to influence society's opinions about controversial social issues?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Don't care

APPENDIX J. MODERATED REGRESSION ANALYSIS: ATTITUDE CHANGE

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Corporate Credibility			
ORI	.06	.08	.84
VRI	-.10	.11	-.99
IRI	-.12	.11	-1.10
Credibility	.21	.14	1.46
ORI x Credibility	-.05	.11	-.48
VRI x Credibility	.07	.15	.48
IRI x Credibility	.14	.16	.87
<i>F</i> (4, 672) = 1.00, <i>p</i> = .41, adjusted <i>R</i> ² < .001. <i>F</i> _{change} (3, 669) = .51, <i>p</i> = .68, <i>R</i> ² _{change} = .002.			
Advocacy Fit			
ORI	.19	.08	2.29*
VRI	-.07	.10	-.72
IRI	-.10	.12	-.83
Advocacy Fit	.04	.16	.27
ORI x Advocacy Fit	-.32	.12	-2.70**
VRI x Advocacy Fit	.06	.15	.41
IRI x Advocacy Fit	.06	.16	.37
<i>F</i> (4, 672) = .48, <i>p</i> = .75, adjusted <i>R</i> ² = -.003. <i>F</i> _{change} (3, 669) = 2.50, <i>p</i> = .06, <i>R</i> ² _{change} = .01.			
Bandwagon Heuristic			
ORI	-.16	.07	-2.20*
VRI	-.20	.10	-1.92
IRI	-.08	.11	-.69
Bandwagon	.06	.14	.45
ORI x Bandwagon	.38	.10	3.69***
VRI x Bandwagon	.26	.15	1.77
IRI x Bandwagon	.04	.16	.23
<i>F</i> (4, 672) = .52, <i>p</i> = .73, adjusted <i>R</i> ² = -.003. <i>F</i> _{change} (3, 669) = 8.37, <i>p</i> < .001, <i>R</i> ² _{change} = .04			

****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05

APPENDIX K. MODERATED REGRESSION ANALYSIS: ATTITUDE CERTAINTY

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Corporate Credibility			
ORI	.10	.05	1.89
VRI	.47	.07	6.62***
IRI	-.15	.08	-1.97*
Credibility	-.07	.10	-.76
ORI x Credibility	.04	.07	.53
VRI x Credibility	.10	.10	.96
IRI x Credibility	.07	.11	.67
$F(4, 672) = 40.84, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .19.$			
$F_{\text{change}}(3, 669) = 1.05, p = .37, R^2_{\text{change}} = .004$			
Advocacy Fit			
ORI	-.002	.06	-.03
VRI	.61	.07	9.36***
IRI	-.21	.08	-2.72**
Advocacy Fit	-.22	.11	-2.05*
ORI x Advocacy Fit	.32	.08	4.09***
VRI x Advocacy Fit	-.26	.10	-2.58*
IRI x Advocacy Fit	.20	.11	1.80
$F(4, 672) = 41.83, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .20$			
$F_{\text{change}}(3, 669) = 7.08, p < .001, R^2_{\text{change}} = .03$			
Bandwagon Heuristic			
ORI	.05	.05	1.00
VRI	.52	.07	7.49***
IRI	-.10	.08	-1.36
Bandwagon	-.03	.10	-.35
ORI x Bandwagon	.13	.07	1.81
VRI x Bandwagon	-.02	.10	-.21
IRI x Bandwagon	-.02	.11	-.15
$F(4, 672) = 40.69, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .19.$			
$F_{\text{change}}(3, 669) = 1.13, p = .34, R^2_{\text{change}} = .004$			

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

APPENDIX L. POST-HOC CORRELATIONS: ATTITUDE CHANGE

Independent Variable	Interaction Variable	Pearson's <i>r</i>	<i>p</i>-value
ORI	None (Direct Effect)	.01	.72
	High Credibility	.01	.92
	Low Credibility	.02	.70
	High Advocacy Fit	-.10	.08
	Low Advocacy Fit	.11	.05
	High Bandwagon Heuristic	.18	.001
	Low Bandwagon Heuristic	-.16	.003
	VRI	None (Direct Effect)	-.04
High Credibility	-.01	.81	
Low Credibility	-.07	.23	
High Advocacy Fit	-.05	.37	
Low Advocacy Fit	-.03	.63	
High Bandwagon Heuristic	.09	.10	
Low Bandwagon Heuristic	-.17	.002	
IRI	None (Direct Effect)	-.04	.33
	High Credibility	.003	.96
	Low Credibility	-.08	.15
	High Advocacy Fit	-.03	.55
	Low Advocacy Fit	-.04	.46
	High Bandwagon Heuristic	.02	.66
	Low Bandwagon Heuristic	-.10	.07

APPENDIX M. POST-HOC CORRELATIONS: ATTITUDE CERTAINTY

Independent Variable	Interaction Variable	Pearson's <i>r</i>	<i>p</i>-value
ORI	None (Direct Effect)	.24	< .001
	High Credibility	.26	< .001
	Low Credibility	.23	< .001
	High Advocacy Fit	.41	< .001
	Low Advocacy Fit	.13	.02
	High Bandwagon Heuristic	.32	< .001
	Low Bandwagon Heuristic	.17	.002
	VRI	None (Direct Effect)	.42
High Credibility		.46	< .001
Low Credibility		.39	< .001
High Advocacy Fit		.38	< .001
Low Advocacy Fit		.46	< .001
High Bandwagon Heuristic		.44	< .001
Low Bandwagon Heuristic		.41	< .001
IRI		None (Direct Effect)	.10
	High Credibility	.16	.003
	Low Credibility	.04	.51
	High Advocacy Fit	.12	.03
	Low Advocacy Fit	.09	.12
	High Bandwagon Heuristic	.11	.05
	Low Bandwagon Heuristic	.09	.09

APPENDIX N. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CONTINUOUS VARIABLES

	ORI	VRI	IRI	Attitude Change	Attitude Certainty
ORI	-				
VRI	.33***	-			
IRI	.15***	.39***	-		
Attitude Change	.01	-.04	-.04	-	
Attitude Certainty	.24***	.42***	.10**	.07	-
<i>M</i>	3.96	4.27	4.05	3.88	5.05
<i>SD</i>	1.45	1.11	0.96	1.87	1.40

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