

11-3-2016

# Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Beliefs in Motives, First- and Third-Person Effects and Behavioral Consequences

Nianyuan Cheng

*University of South Florida*, [nianyuanc@mail.usf.edu](mailto:nianyuanc@mail.usf.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

---

## Scholar Commons Citation

Cheng, Nianyuan, "Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Beliefs in Motives, First- and Third-Person Effects and Behavioral Consequences" (2016). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.  
<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/6480>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Beliefs in Motives, First- and Third-Person  
Effects and Behavioral Consequences

by

Nianyuan Cheng

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
School of Mass Communications  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Scott S. Liu, Ph.D.  
Kelly Werder, Ph.D.  
Roxanne Watson, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:  
November 1, 2016

Keywords: third person effect, first person effect, perceived influence of CSR communication

Copyright © 2016, Nianyuan Cheng

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my family members and friends for always supporting and encouraging me to go further both in college and in life. I dedicate to my parents, grandparents and husband especially for their encouragements since I decided to study abroad.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First, I would like to acknowledge my major professor, Dr. Liu, for his great help during the whole process of writing this study. I really appreciate his patience, encouragement, and professional instructions in this year especially when I met some problems and difficulties. Without his help, the completion of this thesis would have been impossible. I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Werder and Dr. Watson. In Dr. Werder's class, I found CSR communication was very interesting and she gave me a lot of encouragements for exploring this topic. I really appreciate Dr. Watson joined my committee when she was very busy. Dr. Watson and Dr. Werder also gave me many valuable advice and comments for revising and improving my thesis. Finally, I would like to thank my family and husband for their support in life.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	ii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	3
Corporate Social Responsibility .....	3
Attribution Theory and Persuasion Knowledge.....	6
First-Person Effect and Third-Person Effect.....	9
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH HYPOTHESES.....	14
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY .....	18
Design and Sample .....	18
Survey Instrument.....	19
Measures .....	19
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS .....	25
Measurement Model Results.....	27
Structure Model Results.....	29
Hypotheses Testing.....	30
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION .....	33
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION .....	37
REFERENCES .....	40
APPENDIX.....	47
Survey Questionnaire.....	47
Approval of IRB .....	51

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Sample Gender .....	18
Table 2 Sample Academic Status .....	19
Table 3 Other-serving Belief: Reliability Statistics .....	22
Table 4 Self-serving Belief: Reliability Statistics .....	23
Table 5 First-Person Effect: Reliability Statistics .....	23
Table 6 Third-Person Effect: Reliability Statistics.....	24
Table 7 Behavior Reaction: Reliability Statistics .....	24
Table 8 Descriptive Statistics.....	25
Table 9 Other serving vs. Self-Serving Motives: Means and Standard Deviations.....	26
Table 10 Paired Samples T-tests: Other-Serving vs. Self-Serving Motives.....	26
Table 11 Third-Person Effect and First-Person Effect: Means and Standard Deviations .....	27
Table 12 Paired Samples T-tests: Third Person Effect and First-Person Effect .....	27
Table 13 Measurement Model Results.....	29
Table 14 Structure Model Results.....	30
Table 15 Model Fit Summary .....	30

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1 Positive Attribution.....15

Figure 2 Negative Attribution .....16

Figure 3 Combined Model .....17

Figure 4 Structural Equation Model .....28

## **ABSTRACT**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a competitive corporate marketing strategy and gained increasingly more attention among organizations. Drawing from attribution theory, persuasion knowledge model and the first- and third-person effects, this study outlined a survey study designed to examine the relationships among consumers' beliefs in CSR motives, perceived effects of CSR communication on self and others, and behavioral consequences. Also described is a structural equation model which allows for the testing of the research hypotheses. Data was collected from 202 college students via survey. The results supported that when consumers believe the motives of CSR are other-serving, perceived effects are more positive on self than other and they are able to take action to join. Results also showed that when consumers believe the motives are self-serving, perceived effects are negative on self.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a citizenship function with moral, ethical, and social obligations between a corporation and its publics (David, Kline & Dai, 2005). CSR has emerged as a competitive corporate marketing strategy (Pomering, Johnson & Nobble, 2013) that goes beyond economic criteria, such as creating products and profits, which pursues broader social and environmental goals. Results from previous research indicate that consumers are influenced by corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives of businesses if they are aware of them. Prior research also noted that many companies face a dilemma, or “catch 22”, in communicating CSR since consumers may be skeptical about the true motivations of CSR (Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen, 2008).

In explicating the dilemma, researchers have relied on the attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973) which states that consumers may perceive the motives of CSR as either other-serving and other-serving (e.g. contributing to society; protecting the environment; helping people in need) or self-serving and self-serving (e.g., improving corporate reputation and image, increasing purchase and profits). Such perceptions may eventually be internalized as beliefs about the true purpose of CSR and subsequently determine consumers’ behavioral reactions toward CSR communication (Bartlett, 2011; Elving, Golob, Podnar, Ellerup-Nielsen and Thomson, 2015; Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen, 2008).

Furthermore, media effects and research on public opinion suggest the possibility of additional mediating factors between CSR beliefs and consumer attitude or behavior. Specifically, studies on the first- and third-person effects point to the need to differentiate the perceived influence of mass communication on oneself (first-person effect) and on others (third-person effect). The third-person effect is likely to manifest itself when media message advocates behavior that will not be beneficial for the self. It may also initiate the perception that it is not smart to be influenced by the message. The end result is that people surmise others to fall victims to media's influence while they do not. The behavioral aspect suggests that people will favor restricting messages that may negatively affect others. In contrast to the third-person effect, the first-person effect has been found to occur when there is high potential benefit from a message. It suggests that when media messages are positive and advocate beneficial outcomes, people tend to consider themselves just as influenced as others; while in some cases, they may anticipate even more effect on themselves (Davison, 1983; McLeod, 2000; Perloff, 1997).

The purpose of this study is to examine the CSR dilemma by testing the relationships among three sets of variables: beliefs about the other-serving and self-serving motives of CSR, perceived first- and third-person effects, and behavioral responses to CSR communication. A structural equation model, which incorporated all hypothesized relationships among the key constructs, was then presented and followed by a survey study designed to empirically test the hypotheses.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, we present a review of the literature pertaining to the key theoretical constructs of the study: CSR, Attribution Theory, Third- and first person effect and PKM.

#### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has a long and varied history; however, formal theorizing and research on the concept since the 1950s have most informed today's practice (Werder, 2008). CSR is a citizenship function with moral, ethical, and social obligations between a corporation and publics (David et al., 2005). As an ethical business philosophy, CSR might be thought of as the minimization of negative externalities of a firm's operating activities and the maximization of beneficial impacts on society (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009). Corporations have the social responsibility to comply with the ethical standards considered appropriate by society and publics since, besides the economic profits, "businesses also have to follow the rules of behavior considered appropriate by society, whether these rules are stated in laws or are defined by ethical standards, discretionary responsibilities reflect society's desire to see businesses participate actively in the betterment of society beyond the minimum standards set by the extent to which businesses assume the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities imposed on them by their various stakeholders" (Maignan & Ferrell, 2001, p. 459). Also, Kotler and Lee (2005) state that corporate social initiatives are major activities which are undertaken by a corporation to support social problems and to realize commitments to corporate

social responsibility.” According to Pomeroy and Dolnicar (2009), “awareness” plays a major role in previous research into CSR effectiveness. This awareness should include information about social issues, particularly their gravitas, in order to allow firms’ CSR initiatives to be seen in the context of their contribution to reducing a social problem. Thus, Epstein and Roy (2001) suggest that a key performance driver of a successful CSR campaign is communication and promotion of the CSR practices. Studies have found that exposure to news coverage can significantly influence public opinion toward corporations (Manheim & Albritton, 1984). Thus, most people are heavily dependent on news media for gathering corporate information (Wang, 2007).

Projecting good practices of CSR presumably influences a corporation’s image since corporate image is the result of interactions between organizational members and publics as well as a corporation’s attempts to engage in impression management (Balmer, 2001). Kotler and Lee (2005) identify six initiatives under which most social responsibility related activities fall: (1) cause promotions, provide “funds, in-kind contributions, or other corporate resources to increase awareness and concern about a social cause or to support fundraising, participation, or volunteer recruitment for a cause” (p.3) (2) cause-related marketing, to make a contribution or donate a percentage of revenues to a specific cause based on product sales (3) corporate social marketing, aim to the development and/or implementation of a behavior change campaign intended to improve public health, safety, the environment, or community well-being (4) corporate philanthropy, (5) community volunteering, and (6) socially responsible business practices, such as a corporation adopts and conducts discretionary business practices and investments that support social causes to improve community well-being and protect the environment (p. 24). Research indicates that creating positive perceptions of CSR rests heavily on a corporation’s ability to create in publics’

consciousness linkages between a corporation's CSR practices and its corporate image (Wang, 2007). Similarly, Maignan and Ferrell (2001) mention that CSR communication could affect publics' judgments of corporate citizenship. Incorporating CSR initiatives with financial, marketing, and communication objectives can increase a company's visibility, enhance customer satisfaction, and lead to positive financial returns (Lou & Bhattacharya, 2006). Therefore, specifically, the convincing and meaningful messages from CSR communication are very important.

However, there are still some heated debates on the motives of CSR and its ability to benefit stakeholders and consumers. For example, Maignan (2001) argues that CSR information can differentiate authentic CSR programs from those firms merely paying CSR lip service. Moreover, the value of corporate social responsibility as a consumer marketing tool remains uncertain for there is very limited evidence that consumers are indeed willing to give their support. Also, corporate social responsibility has been investigated mostly in the U.S.; Pirsch, Gupta and Landreth (2007) research concerns the institutionalized versus promotional CSR, but Pomeroy, Johnson and Noble (2013) suggest that, as responses to a firms' CSR initiatives are information-dependent, the quality of CSR communication is critical. They conclude, "Some firms may be expecting too much of their CSR communication, especially if such positive, pro-social claims are out of character with stakeholder perceptions of the firm's identity" (p. 258). To sum up, it is necessary for more researchers to conduct relevant studies in specific context for testing the influence of CSR. This research focuses on one phenomenon — "catch 22" dilemma of communicating CSR: consumers have mixed beliefs in the motives of communicating CSR. That is, when company exposures too much CSR communication in public, it might lead to consumers'

assumption of the original motives of doing so. When consumers suppose that the company's motive of CSR is self-serving, the result would lead to negative influences on consumers. It is important for practitioners to consider this phenomenon.

### **Attribution Theory and Persuasion Knowledge**

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973) illustrates how people perceive reasons and causes of others' behaviors as naïve scientists (Lee, Moon, Yang & Kim, 2009). Heider (1958) finds that people like to discuss the causes of others' behaviors through two categories: internal causes (e.g., personal disposition) or external causes (e.g., one situation). Therefore, Attribution Theory guides researchers to understand corporations' motives by conducting marketing communications. Particularly, consumers tend to attribute corporations' motivations while addressing CSR to the other-serving motives, in which consumers believe that the firm has either altruistic and honest motives (e.g., in order to help people in need, support the environment protection or assist with non-profit organizations) or merely the self-serving motives which correlate to the strategic or financial aims (e.g., improve firms' reputation, increase consumers' awareness of the brand and increase firms' profits) (Karen, Cudmore & Hill, 2005; Habel et al., 2016).

Based on the pre-existing research (Boush, Friestad & Rose, 1994; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Barone, Miyazaki & Taylor, 2000), specific attributions from consumers are likely to influence their attitudes and judgments of a corporation in addition to their behavior intentions. For example, specific studies have empirically observed that consumers' beliefs and opinions about corporations' motives for CSR engagement will lead to a behavioral level (Ellen, Webb & Mohr 2006). Karen,

Cudmore and Hill (2006) posit that when motivations are considered firm serving or profit-related, attitudes toward firms are likely to diminish; when motivations are considered socially motivated, attitudes toward firms are likely to be enhanced (p.48). Moreover, Sallot (2002) uses an impression management experiment to verify that public relations become less well-regarded when the practitioners are seen as acting with intentional behaviors for self-serving purpose compared to practitioners who are not appearing to be overt in self-serving. In a particular practice, the effect of CSR engagement on perceived price fairness is moderated by customers' attributions of the corporation's motivations for engaging in a social cause (Habel, Schons, Alavi & Wieseke, 2016); the researchers propose that when the company performs other-serving motivations in engaging CSR activities, the consumers are more likely to accept the price fairness in a positive manner. In turn, the customers would express more negative attitude if the company's motive is viewed to aim toward its own profits.

Similarly, when consumers doubt corporations' motives for CSR communication, it is important to consider one helpful model — Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). According to Friestad and Wright (1994), PKM, which focuses on how people cope with the persuasion attempts, has been used in business, advertising and public relations areas widely. Thus, this is a model to explain how consumers' persuasion knowledge influence their responses and analyses to these persuasion attempts. The PKM includes three elements: 1) Targets, which refers to the people at whom persuasion attempts are aimed toward; 2) Agent, which refers to whoever the targets perceive as the source of persuasion attempts; and 3) Persuasion episode, which refers to a situation when agents and targets communicate with each other.

Practically, many researchers have used the PKM as a theoretical framework in public relationships area (Wood, Michelle, Nelson, Lane & Atkinson, 2008; Bae & Cameron, 2006). Consumers' suspicions toward corporate CSR activities may play an important role in consumers' usage of persuasion knowledge (Campbell& Kirmani, 2000). Bae and Cameron (2006) state, "It is clear that publics (perceivers) become suspicious of a for-profit company's motives when the company donates money to social causes because a for-profit company's main objective is to maximize corporate profits..." (p. 146). Specifically, the researchers found that low suspicions toward corporate charitable giving shows positively effects on consumers' attitude toward a company. Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill (2006) found that profit-motivated CSR led to less favorable thoughts on the firm's motive, negative attitudes toward a company, and lower purchase intentions. Therefore, the attribution theory and the persuasion knowledge model could be used together to explain consumers' different beliefs in motives for communicating CSR.

When companies overly exploit platforms, such as media, to communicate CSR, they may risk to achieve the exact opposite, such as causing consumers to doubt their motives (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Therefore, Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen (2008) suggest that companies need to be cautious of the "Catch 22" in communicating CSR; they conclude that although stakeholders expect companies to engage in CSR they nevertheless distrust disclosures about it. Similarly, Bartlett (2011) considers this kind of dilemma is like a nutshell from a PR perspective and implies that companies are damned if they do (CSR communication) and damned if they don't. She thus recommends analysis of the "tension that nestles between the accusations of 'spin' and 'green wash' around persuasion models, and a demand for transparency, disclosure and engagement" (Bartlett, 2011, p. 81).



In order to explore further about consumers' beliefs in mixed motives of CSR, it is important to recognize their different attitudes that stemmed from those beliefs. Thus, theories on both first-person and Third-person effects could mediate consumers' attitude.

### **First-Person Effect and Third-Person Effect**

Third-person effect was proposed by Davison (1983), the hypothesis originally sketches out an idea that people perceive others to be more affected by media messages than they are and that they may act based on such a perceptual disparity. To date, this perceptual phenomenon has been researched a number of times in a range of different media messages such as news (Price & Tewksbury, 1996; Price et al., 1997) and public relations (Gunther & Thorson, 1992; Price, Tewksbury & Huang, 1998; Youn, Faber, & Shah, 2000). In a variety of media message topics, several studies suggest this phenomenon exists. For example, Gunther (1991) posits that people prefer to over-estimate the extent to which other people are influenced by mass media but they are likely to under-estimate the media effect on themselves.

Numerous researchers have pointed out that it is important to understand when, how and especially why the third-person effect occurs (e.g., Gunther, 1991; Lambe & Mcleod, 2005; Paul, Salwen & Dupagne 2000). Specifically, Paul, Salwen and Dupagne (2000) discussed varying sociological and psychological theories that had been used to explain the Third-person effect and its consequences, including ego involvement, the elaboration likelihood model, the social categorization theory, attribution theory, and biased optimism. Several researchers focus on the third-person effect by applying attribution theory including the fundamental attribution error and egotistical differential attributions (Rucinski & Salmon, 1990; Gunther, 1991). The authors

mention that in terms of the fundamental attribution error, people are more likely to underestimate others' awareness of external factors such as the persuasion of media messages while they overestimate others' susceptibility to the content. However, when they judge themselves, they believe they are quite aware of the role of situational causes like persuasive intent. Thus, they trust that they are affected by the media messages less than other people. Apart from that, ego-enhancement explanation is also used by Gunther and Mundy (1993): the comparison between self and other people consist of unrealistic and biased optimism that is motivated by the need for the ego-enhancement. Third-person effect implies that individuals are engaged in estimating media effects on multiple referents, which can be considered as comparative social judgments on media effects, that is, comparing self versus others in the domain of media effects (David, Liu, & Myser, 2004). In addition, Gunther and Mundy (1993) proposed a self-enhancement explanation. In their view, people hold the belief that others are more strongly influenced by media messages than they are because they want to bolster their self-esteem. Two means of reinforcing their self-esteem are available to subjects: first, to think of oneself as more resistant to persuasion and, therefore, smarter and better than others, and second, to see oneself as less susceptible to negative outcomes and, thus, better off than others.

Moreover, many researchers find that people suppose that the negative message is perceived more by others than themselves based on the third-person effect. Eveland and McLeod (1999) infer that the more negative a message is perceived, the wider the gap between its perceived influence on self and others. Especially, when a persuasive message is deemed negative or unintelligent, people believe that the message has more influence on others in order to enhance their own perception of personal invulnerability and smart control (Gunther, 1991). On the other

hand, when a message is considered positive, they attribute more influences on themselves since they are intelligent enough to figure out and recognize the value (Gunther & Thorson, 1992). Similarly, Detenber and McLeod (1999) argue that the magnitude of the third-person effect is influenced by the social desirability of the message—the lower the social desirability of the message, the stronger the Third-person effect. Further, the extent of biased perceptions may increase as the hypothetical others become progressively more psychologically distant from the respondents (Gunther, 1991).

Besides the perceptual component, Davison (1983) proposed that the behavioral result is also important since it focuses on the real-life consequences that may result from these perception gaps. Therefore, such behaviors would be aimed at restricting messages with negative influence, correcting messages with ambiguous influence, and amplifying messages with positive influence (Sun, Shen & Pan, 2008). Sun, Shen and Pan (2008) also studied the possible behavioral consequences of the self-other perceptual gap and concluded that “various actions can be differentiated with three basic elements: the agent (who acts on the perceived message effects), the course (in what way), and the target (toward whom or what). As for as agents’ concerns, most third-person effect studies examine how members of the general public may respond to perceived message effects (p.258)”.

In recent research, a First-person effect has also been identified when individuals like to perceive a stronger effect for self than others from mediated messages which are socially acceptable to be persuaded by (Golan & Day, 2008). When media messages show more beneficial effects, individuals prefer accepting them more positively than others. Thus, the First-person effect is appeared to be as a reverse third-person effect. The First-person effect occurred because

respondents considered it socially acceptable to be influenced by product commercials judged as pleasant, emotional, and moving (Gunther and Thorson, 1992). Eveland and McLeod (1999) posit that ego enhancement is responsible for the observed First-person effect where people view themselves as more persuaded by the desirable media content.

Several researchers pay attention to socially desirable media content such as public service announcements (PSAs) to test the perceptual component of third-person effect. Some of them (Duck, Terry & Hogg, 1995; Henriksen & Flora, 1999) found a similar phenomenon in which individuals attributed a greater influence to themselves when the advertising campaign for an issue that they view is valuable or prudent to be persuaded. Since the year 2000, increasingly more researchers began to observe the First-person effect in different contexts of media messages. For example, White and Dillon (2000) tested young adults' perceptions of media influence over themselves and others in the context of a PSA that concerned organ donations. They found strong support for the first- person hypothesis and argued that ego enhancement may account for these findings. Practically, the majority of research on the behavioral component of the third-person effect deals with behavioral consequences such as censorship and support for government regulation, however, the behavioral consequences of the First-person effect are limited or unsuccessfully verified. Thus, Golan and Banning (2008) advise that PSAs would lead to a higher likelihood to engage in socially desirable actions such as CSR activities based on the theory of reasoned action ((Fishbein & Azjen, 1975).

Therefore, there is no doubt that the First-person effect has a strong relationship with the Third-person effect research. To avoid issues of internal validity, it is important for both third-person effect and first- person effect researchers to ascertain respondents' attitudes toward such

persuasive messages to some extent to understand which message would influence desirability for self when compared to others (Golan & Day, 2008). Thus, in current research, when consumers perceive the different influence (positive or negative attributions) of CSR messages, it may lead to different assessment of the effect on themselves and other consumers.

This study provided a model to test consumers' beliefs in mixed motives of CSR, analyze their varying attitudes that produce first and third-person effect and finally, to determine whether consumers are willing to change some of their behaviors afterward.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

As discussed earlier, the attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973) and the PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994) may be used to analyze the “catch 22” phenomenon in CSR communication. The present study goes further by using the first- and third-person effect (Davison, 1983; McLeod, 2000; Perloff, 1997) to explore consumers’ differing attitudes. It is particularly interesting to test whether the different attributions (other-serving vs. self-serving motives of CSR) will lead to the different influences on self and others and the subsequent behavior intentions.

Therefore, according to the theoretical frameworks, this research proposes an integration of three models to test consumers’ attitudes and behavioral response toward CSR communication. At first, the model will use the first-person and Third-person effect to mediate consumers’ attitude from different beliefs in the motives of communicating CSR. Thus, beliefs about the other-serving or self-serving motives of CSR will lead to different first person and third-person effects because consumers will think differently when they analyze the influence on self and others. Then, it is important to explore the behavior intention which results from the different perspectives for practitioners.

Model A (Figure 1) shows that, based on the positive attribution theory, consumers’ beliefs about other-serving motives would enhance the perceived influences of CSR communication on both themselves and others. That is, both path a and b are positive. Then, according to third-person

effect and first-person effect, the stronger the beliefs in CSR's positive motives, the greater perceived influence of CSR on self and others.

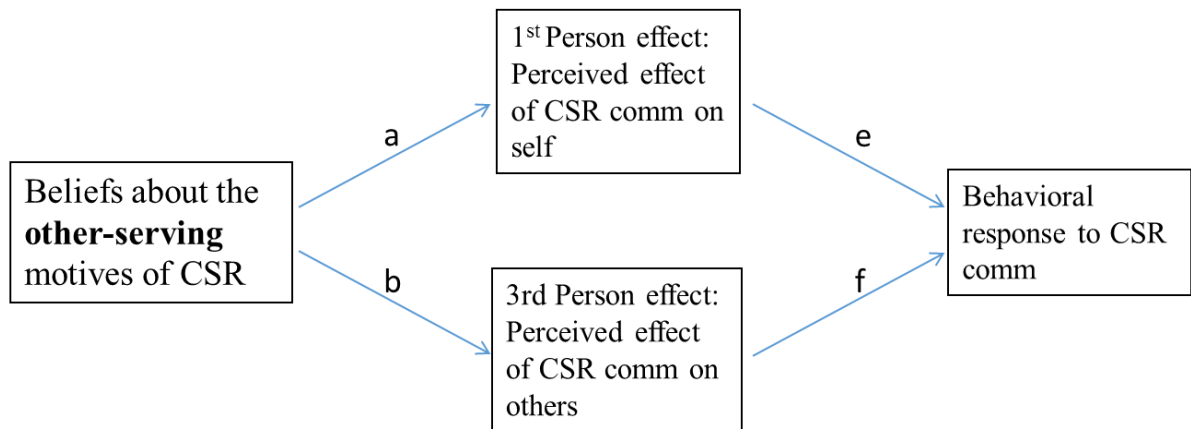


Figure 1. Model A: Positive Attribution

**H1:** The stronger (weaker) the beliefs in the other-serving motives of CSR, the stronger (weaker) the perceived effect of CSR communication on self (path a).

**H2:** The stronger (weaker) the beliefs in the other-serving motives of CSR, the stronger (weaker) the perceived effect of CSR communication on others (path b).

In contrast, when it comes to the negative attribution model (see Figure 2), this research proposes that the consumers' beliefs about self-serving motives would reduce the perceived influence of CSR on self and others. Consequently, both path c and d would be negative.

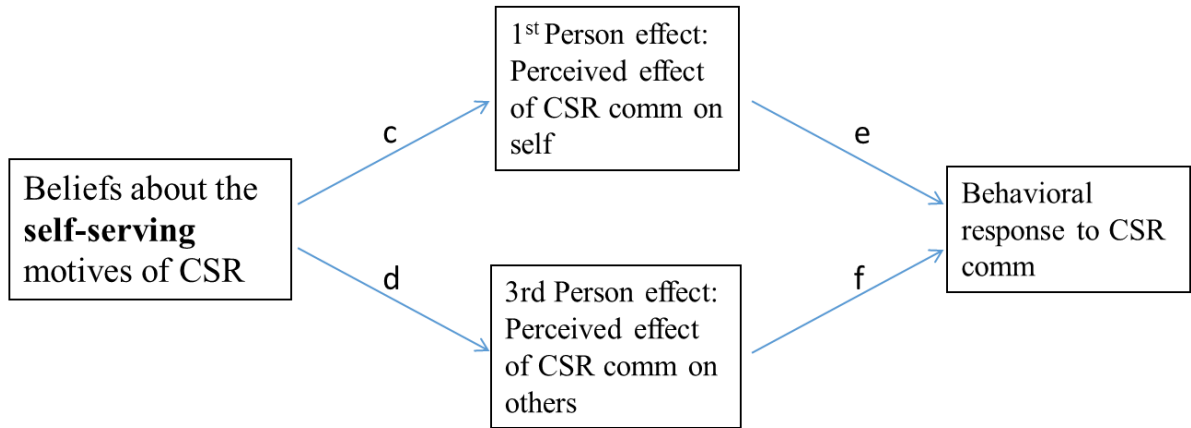


Figure 2. Model B: Negative Attribution

**H3:** The stronger the belief in the self-serving motives of CSR, the weaker the perceived effect of CSR communication on self (path c).

**H4:** The stronger the belief in the self-serving motives of CSR, the weaker the perceived effect of CSR communication on others (path d).

Many researchers emphasize the behavioral consequences of both third- and first-person effects (Davison, 1983; Sun, Shen & Pan, 2008). It is important to explore these effects on behavioral responses to CSR communication (e.g., whether consumers would like to find more CSR information), In order to test the behavioral consequences of the third-person and first-person perceptions, a combined model (Figure 3: Model C) is also presented for the coexistence of positive and negative attributions of CSR motives. Model C shows all the hypotheses as follows.



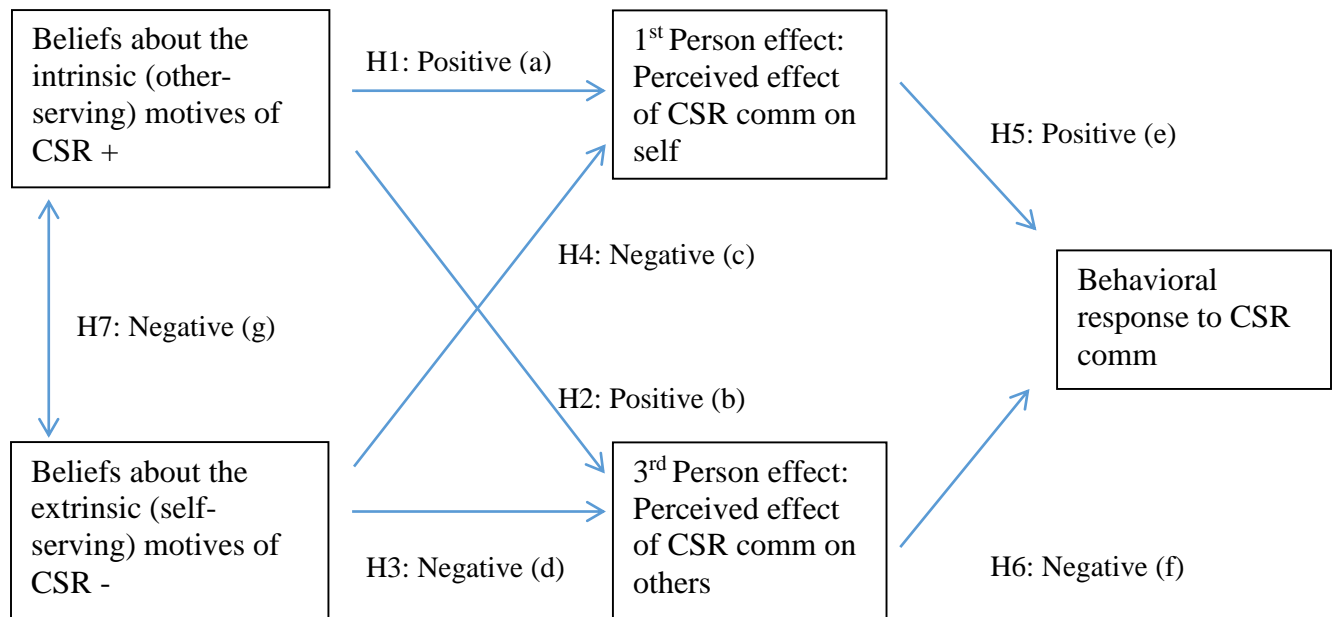


Figure 3. Model C: Combined Model

**H5:** Perceived first-person effect induced by beliefs in other-serving motives of CSR would be positively related to favorable behavioral responses toward CSR communication. That is, both path and path e are positive and significant.

**H6:** Perceived third-person effect induced by beliefs in self-serving motives of CSR would be negatively related to favorable behavioral responses toward CSR communication. That is,

-- Path f is negative and significant

-- Both path d and f are significant

**H7:** The stronger (weaker) the belief in the other-serving motives of CSR, the weaker (stronger) the belief in the self-serving motives of CSR. (Path g is negative)

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**METHODOLOGY**

This chapter explains the research design and methods that were used in the study.

**Design & Sample**

A survey was conducted among 423 mass communications students at the University of South Florida during October, 2016. Several classes of undergraduate students in mass communications college were invited to answer the questionnaires voluntarily. Before the survey, the researcher asked the professors' permission for around 5-10 minutes of class time and then went to classrooms to distribute the questionnaires. Of the 423 students who participated in the survey, 221 responded that they had not heard, read or seen CSR communication, resulting in an effective sample size of 202 students who had had heard, read or seen CSR communication. The distributions of their gender and academic status are shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1. Sample Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	141	69.8	69.8	69.8
Male	61	30.2	30.2	100.0
Total	202	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Sample Academic Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Freshman	49	24.3	24.3	24.3
Sophomore	38	18.8	18.8	43.1
Junior	74	36.6	36.6	79.7
Senior	38	18.8	18.8	98.5
Graduate	3	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	202	100.0	100.0	

### Survey Instrument

To ensure that the same messages are being comprehended by all participants, the questionnaire provided an introduction and some instructions before the questions, including a brief description of the research’s purpose and what corporation social responsibility is to help respondents who are not familiar with the proper terminology — CSR. The questionnaire had 16 questions and all of the questions referred to general CSR. The Appendix provides the questionnaire in detail.

### Measures

All questions were measured by the Likert-scale (5=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree). Specifically, beliefs in self-serving or other-serving motives of CSR communication were measured by 6 questions:

1. In general, American companies engage in CSR communication to serve the interests of the public.
2. In general, American companies engage in CSR communication to serve their own interests.
3. American companies engage in CSR communication to demonstrate their altruistic service to society.
4. American companies engage in CSR communication to improve their own reputation and image.
5. American companies engage in CSR communication to publicize their contributions to solving environmental, social or community problems.
6. American companies engage in CSR communication to increase sales of their products.

The perceived influence of CSR communication on oneself (First-person effect) were measured by 3 statements:

1. CSR communication has a positive influence on my attitude towards products made by American companies.
2. CSR communication has a positive influence on my purchase of products made by American companies.
3. CSR communication has a positive influence my consumption of products made by American companies.

Then, three statements were used to measure the perceived effect of CSR communication on others (Third-person effect):

1. CSR communication has a positive influence on other people's attitude towards products made by American companies.
2. CSR communication has a positive influence on other people's purchase of products made by American companies.
3. CSR communication has a positive influence other people's consumption of products made by American companies.

For behavioral consequences, 5 questions were used mainly concerning whether the consumers would take delight in knowing more information about CSR and share or participant in these positive CSR activities:

1. I'd like to know more about American companies' CSR activities.
2. I'd like to receive more CSR information from American companies.

3. I'd like to share CSR information with others.
4. I'd like to participate in CSR activities run by American companies.

Table 3 through table 7 present the Cronbach's alphas, which indicate the internal consistency of the measures. All alphas in the present study were greater than .70, indicating acceptable levels of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 3. Other-serving belief: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.720	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Other-serving belief 1	6.9851	2.134	.467	.471
Other-serving belief 2	6.8713	1.834	.461	.474
Other-serving belief 3	6.5396	2.270	.366	.605

Table 4. Self-serving belief: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.770	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Self-serving belief 1	8.4802	1.783	.369	.494
Self-serving belief 2	8.1485	1.570	.380	.467
Self-serving belief 3	8.2822	1.258	.407	.435

Table 5. First-person effect: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.789	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
First-person effect 1	7.0198	2.388	.564	.782
First-person effect 2	7.1139	2.121	.689	.646
First-person effect 3	7.1931	2.276	.637	.704

Table 6. Third-person effect: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.795	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Third-person effect 1	7.2525	1.891	.614	.746
Third-person effect 2	7.3366	1.906	.644	.716
Third-person effect 3	7.3812	1.680	.660	.699

Table 7. Behavior reaction: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.803	4

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Behavior reaction 1	9.7871	6.059	.606	.759
Behavior reaction 2	9.9604	5.581	.673	.726
Behavior reaction 3	10.1584	5.547	.682	.721
Behavior reaction 4	10.3267	6.181	.514	.803



## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS

Table 8 displays the means and standards deviations of individual items used to measure other-serving belief, self-serving belief, first-person effect, third-person effect and behavior reaction.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Other-serving belief 1	202	3.2129	.82210
Other-serving belief 2	202	3.3267	.95270
Other-serving belief 3	202	3.6584	.85061
Self-serving belief 1	202	3.9752	.64982
Self-serving belief 2	202	4.3069	.74969
Self-serving belief 3	202	4.1733	.88361
First-person effect 1	202	3.6436	.85325
First-person effect 2	202	3.5495	.86388
First-person effect 3	202	3.4703	.84147
Third-person effect 1	202	3.7327	.75166
Third-person effect 2	202	3.6485	.72635
Third-person effect 3	202	3.6040	.81135
Behavior reaction 1	202	3.6238	.93948
Behavior reaction 2	202	3.4505	.99752
Behavior reaction 3	202	3.2525	.99782
Behavior reaction 4	202	3.0842	1.00142

Table 9 and Table 10 show results from a paired samples t-test that compared respondents' beliefs in other-serving motives and self-serving motives. Test results indicated that respondents' beliefs in self-serving motives of CSR communication (Mean = 4.15, SD =.56) were greater than their beliefs in other-serving motives (Mean = 3.40, SD = .66) ( $t = -12.652$ ,  $df = 201$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 9. Other-serving vs. Self-serving motives: Means and Standard Deviations

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 OTHERSERVING	3.3993	202	.66087	.04650
SELFSERVING	4.1518	202	.56236	.03957

Table 10. Paired samples t-tests: Other-serving vs. Self-serving motives

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
OTHERSERVING - SELFSERVING	-.75248	.84531	.05948	-.86975	-.63520	-12.652	201	.000

Table 11 and Table 12 show that a paired samples t-test that compared respondents' perceived influence of CSR communication on themselves and on other people. Test results indicated that respondents perceived that CSR communication had slightly more influence on other people (Mean = 3.66, SD = .64) than on themselves (Mean = 3.55, SD =.72) ( $t = -2.09$ ,  $df = 201$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 11. Third-person effect and first-person effect: Means vs. Standard Deviations

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 FIRSTHIRD- PERSON EFFECTRRSON THIRDPERRSON	3.5545	202	.71512	.05032
	3.6617	202	.64344	.04527

Table 12. Paired samples t-tests: third-person effect vs. first-person effect

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
FIRSTHIRD- PERSON EFFECTRRSON N - THIRDPERRSON	-.10726	.72927	.05131	-.20844	-.00608	-2.090	201	.038

### Measurement Model Results

To facilitate clarity, the following acronyms will be used to represent the variables under study.

OB: Beliefs in other-serving motives of doing CSR

SB: Beliefs in self-serving motives of doing CSR

FIRST: Perceived influence of CSR communication on self

THIRD: Perceived influence of CSR communication on others

BR: Behavior responses

Figure 4 shows the structural equation model of the relationships among latent variables and their indicators.

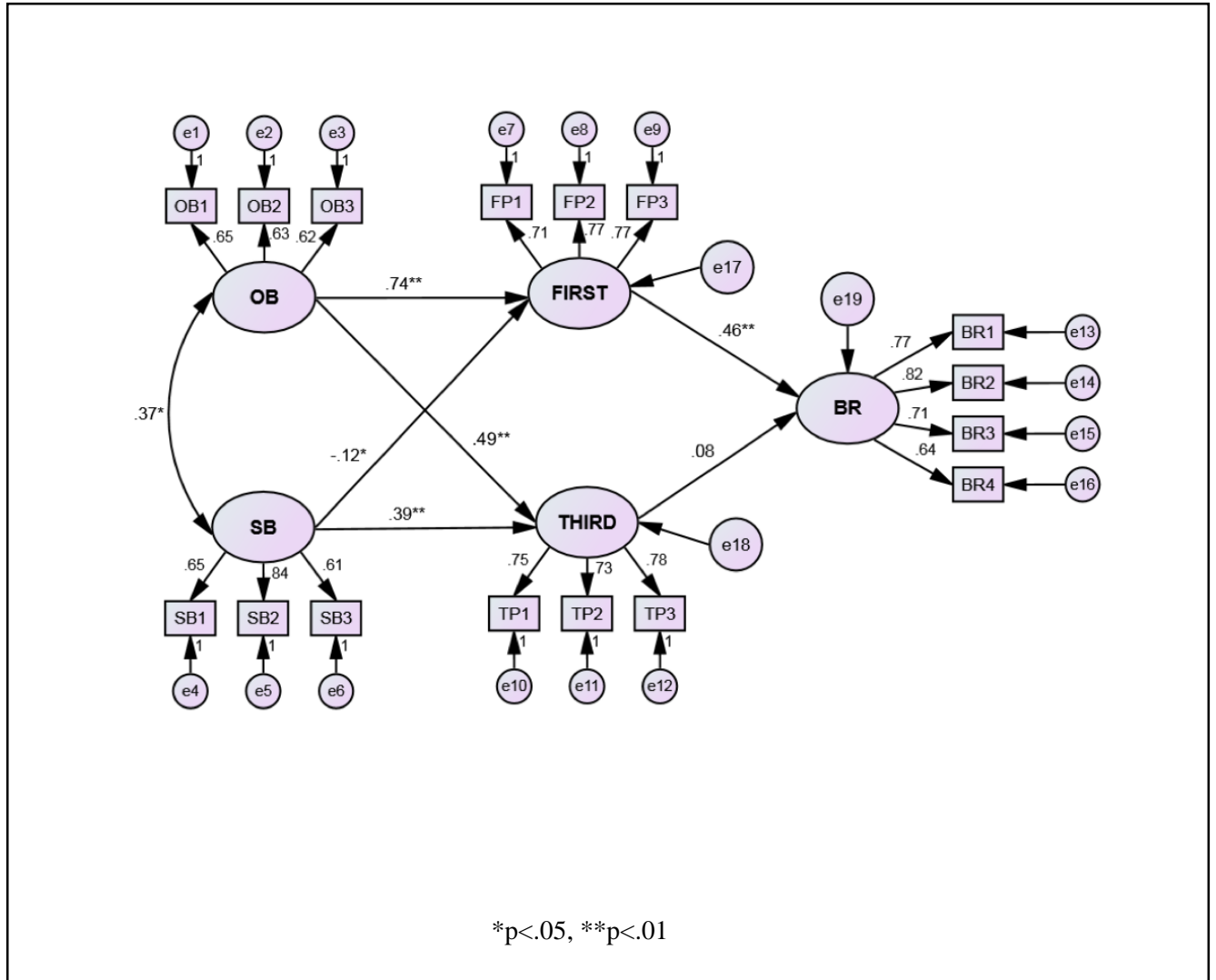


Figure 4: Structural Equation Model

The measurement model results are presented in Table 13. All standardized regression weight estimates ( $\beta$ ), as the Table shows, reached statistical significance at  $p<.001$  level.

Table 13. Measurement Model Results

Path	$\beta$	p
OB1 → OB	.649	--
OB2 → OB	.628	<.001
OB3 → OB	.619	<.001
SB1 → SB	.650	--
SB2 → SB	.839	<.001
SB3 → SB	.610	<.001
FP1 → FIRST	.707	--
FP2 → FIRST	.773	<.001
FP3 → FIRST	.765	<.001
TP1 → THIRD	.748	--
TP2 → THIRD	.727	<.001
TP3 → THIRD	.779	<.001
BR1 → BR	.769	--
BR2 → BR	.821	<.001
BR3 → BR	.711	<.001
BR4 → BR	.641	<.001

### Structure Model Results

The results of the structural model are displayed in Table 14 and Table 15. An initial question is to determine whether the structural equation analysis estimates for the model provides an adequate fit to the data. Although the Chi-square test indicates a lack of model fit ( $X^2 = 265.698$ ,  $df = 97$ ,  $p = .000$ ), it should be noted that the Chi-square test is sensitive to large sample sizes, like the one employed in the present study. Assessment of the model's fit thus relies on other goodness-of-fit indices. Bryne (2001) suggests that models with GFI, AGFI, and CFI values greater than .90,

and a RMSEA less than or equal to .10 to be utilized as providing a reasonable fit to the data. Similarly, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend RMSEA values below .06. In this study, all these goodness-of-fit measures (GFI = .91; AGFI = .90; CFI = .93, RMSEA =.042) indicated that the model provides adequate fit to the data.

Table 14. Structure Model Results

Path	$\beta$	p
OB $\leftrightarrow$ SB	.369	<.05
OB $\rightarrow$ FIRST	.742	<.001
OB $\rightarrow$ THIRD	.494	<.001
SB $\rightarrow$ FIRST	-.124	<.05
SB $\rightarrow$ THIRD	.392	<.001
FIRST $\rightarrow$ BR	.464	<.001
THIRD $\rightarrow$ BR	.076	.467

Table 15. Model Fit Summary

$X^2$	df	p	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
265.698	97	.000	.914	.904	.933	.042

### Hypotheses Testing

This section presents hypotheses testing results, starting with the hypothesized relationships among the belief variables (OB and SB).

H1 states that there is a positive relationship between the belief in other-serving motives of CSR (OB) and the perceived effect of CSR communication on self (FIRST). The hypothesis was

supported by the path OB to FIRST ( $\beta_{OB \rightarrow FIRST} = .742, p < .001$ ): The stronger the belief in the other-serving motives of CSR, the stronger the perceived effect of CSR communication on self.

H2 supposes that there is a positive relationship between the belief in other serving motives of CSR (OB) and the perceived effect of CSR communication on other people (THIRD). The hypothesis was supported by the path from OB to THIRD ( $\beta_{OB \rightarrow THIRD} = .494, p < .001$ ): The stronger the belief in the other-serving motives of CSR, the stronger the perceived effect of CSR communication on self. Therefore, it is in line with the First-person effect.

For the self-serving motives, H3 states that there is a negative relationship between the self-serving motives (SB) and the perceived effect of CSR communication on self (FIRST). Results of the SEM analysis showed that the relationship was significant and negative ( $\beta_{SB \rightarrow FIRST} = -.124, p < 0.05$ ). That is, the stronger the belief in the self-serving motives of CSR, the weaker the perceived effect of CSR communication on self.

H4 states that there is a negative correlation between SB and the perceived effect of CSR communication on other people (THIRD). However, results showed that the relationship is significant but positive ( $\beta_{SB \rightarrow THIRD} = .392, p < 0.01$ ).

For behavior response to CSR communication (BR), H5 states that perceived First-person effect (FIRST) induced by beliefs in other-serving motives of CSR would be positively relatedly to favorable behavioral responses toward CSR communication. The hypothesis was supported by the significant FIRST  $\rightarrow$  BR path ( $\beta_{FIRST \rightarrow BR} = .464, p < 0.01$ ).

H6 states that perceived Third-person effect induced by beliefs in self-serving motives of CSR (THIRD) would be negatively related to favorable behavioral reactions toward CSR

communication (BR). However, the SEM results showed that this hypothesis is not significant ( $\beta_{\text{THIRD} \rightarrow \text{BR}} = .076, p = 0.467$ ).

Finally, H7 states that there is a negative relationship between the beliefs in the other-serving motives of CSR and the self-serving motives of CSR. The result showed that the relationship is significant but positive ( $\beta_{\text{OB} \rightarrow \text{SB}} = .369, p < .05$ ).



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the CSR dilemma by testing the relationships among three sets of variables: Beliefs about the other-serving and self-serving motives of CSR, perceived first- and third-person effects, and behavioral responses to CSR communication. Through the use of a questionnaire designed to measure these variables, seven hypotheses were tested through respondents who heard about CSR communication before.

Firstly, based on the “Catch 22” dilemma phenomenon in CSR communication (Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen, 2008), consumers would produce negative beliefs in motives of CSR since they might suppose the corporations’ purpose is self-serving. This study found the existence of consumers’ different attributions in CSR. The results showed that respondents’ beliefs in other-serving motives and self-serving motives of CSR communication are not in negative relationship but positive. That is, perhaps the more consumers think the motives of doing CSR are other-serving, the more they would believe that the motives are self-serving. Consumers would not ignore the self-serving purpose of corporations even if they agree with the other-serving motives of doing CSR communication, ( $\beta_{OB \rightarrow SB} = .369, p < .05$ ). In other words, when consumers deal with CSR in positive beliefs, they perhaps doubt it at the same time and vice versa. It was not surprising to find consumers believing that the other-serving motives and the self-serving motives exist correspondingly since it confirmed the dilemma might appear.

Secondly, the results pointed to the existence of third-person effect and first-person effect of CSR communication as well.

On the one hand, the beliefs in other-serving motives produced different influences on respondents' self ( $\beta_{OB \rightarrow THIRD} = .494, p < .001$ ) and others ( $\beta_{OB \rightarrow FIRST} = .742, p < .001$ ). Because the other-serving motives are related to positive attribution, according to third-person effect and first-person effect, the stronger the beliefs in CSR's positive motives, the greater perceived influence of CSR on self and others, the study found that both the two paths are positive and proved the assumptions.

On the other hand, the beliefs in self-serving motives lead to different influences on respondents' self ( $\beta_{SB \rightarrow FIRST} = -.124, p < 0.05$ ) and others ( $\beta_{SB \rightarrow THIRD} = .392, p < 0.01$ , too. According to third-person effect and first-person effect, the stronger the beliefs in CSR's self-serving motives, the weaker the perceived influence of CSR on self and others. The results supported that the stronger belief in self-serving motives of CSR, the weaker the perceived effect of CSR communication on self. However, when it comes to other people, respondents supposed that relationships are positive. That is, the stronger the belief in the self-serving motives of CSR, the stronger other people perceive effect of CSR communication. It is not surprising to receive this results since according to Gunther (1991), when a persuasive message is deemed negative or unintelligent, people believe that the message has more influence on others in order to enhance their own perception of personal invulnerability and smart control. Thus, people might believe that others are not smart enough to distinguish the negative motives.

For the behavioral consequences, the results showed both first-person effect ( $\beta_{FIRST \rightarrow BR} = .464, p < 0.01$ ) and third-person effect ( $\beta_{THIRD \rightarrow BR} = .076, p = 0.467$ ) which would lead to

positive behavioral response to CSR communication. However, the path between third-person effect and behavioral response was insignificant. That is, it was supported that perceived first-person effect induced by beliefs in other-serving motives of CSR would be positively related to favorable behavioral responses toward CSR communication. For instance, the respondents agreed that when they believe the corporation's motives are other-serving, they are willing to spread the positive information about CSR. While, perceived third-person effect induced by beliefs in self-serving motives of CSR would be positively related to favorable behavioral but insignificant. Respondents might ignore the negative influences on other people's behavior since they believe they are able to control themselves. Based on third-person effect, when people identify something has negative influences, they might take actions stopping other people to do that. But the results indicated that, even though respondents deemed corporations' motives of doing CSR are self-serving and others are easy to be "fooled", they will not take any actions to change something. In fact, it is not surprising to end up with this result. Because as previous statements mentioned, respondents' beliefs are mixed so they might admit the other-serving motives' existence even if they initially think of the other-serving motives. Because of the two beliefs coexist, the respondents could have supposed that the self-serving motives are not bad enough to resist CSR or stop others supporting CSR communication. In addition, the respondents of this study are undergraduate students who are deemed with "me" generation, it is possible that they would care more about themselves.

Together, based on the Attribution Theory and the PKM, this study proved the existence of positive and negative attribution. Thus, it is important to take "Catch 22" phenomenon into account since previous researchers have stated the problem before (Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen,

2008; Bartlett, 2011). In addition, the third-person effect and first-person effect provide an important mediation to understand consumers' thoughts about the perceived effects on self and others. For consumers, they believe that they have the smart view to judge the motives of CSR and the intelligence to accept the "correct" influence. In summary, this study supported the main idea of third-person effect and first-person effect when it is used in CSR communication. The structural equation model showed all the paths clearly and the results were almost significant.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION**

Corporation social responsibility communication has continued appearing on kinds of media to spread information about what corporations are doing and have done for CSR. This thesis represents perhaps the first empirical study of the first-person and third-person effects of CSR communication based on different attributions. The general results showed that due to the existence of different beliefs in motives of CSR (other-serving motives vs. self-serving motives), the two motives are not opposed and have positive relationship. Next, positive and negative attribution beliefs will produce corresponding perceived effect of CSR communication on self and others. The results generally match the theoretical frameworks; therefore, the design of the study is significant for research.

Findings of the present study emphasized the different beliefs in motives of CSR (other-serving motives vs. self-serving motives). The results suggest that consumers, who are aware of the CSR communication before, have different points of view in motives of CSR already. Surprisingly, respondents think the two motives have positive relationship. That is, consumers would not ignore the self-serving purpose of corporations even if they agree with the other-serving motives of doing CSR communication, and vice versa. Therefore, if the target audiences have the positive attitudes toward motives of CSR at the beginning, it is important to notice whether the following CSR communication would lead to negative effect or “Catch 22” phenomenon. This shows positive and negative attributions could be used significantly in this phenomenon.

Moreover, the present study also provided the third-person effect and first-person effect to mediate consumers' perceived effect in order to explore the different influences on consumers themselves and other people. The perceived effects from different beliefs in motives of CSR were different as well in the results. Specifically, when consumers deem that corporations like to do CSR because corporations are willing to contribute a lot to society, they will support to do CSR communication for spreading positive information and take other actions to support it. But on the other hand, consumers demonstrated their confidence when they consider the motives of doing CSR is self-serving; they supposed that the negative influences would be perceived by others but not themselves. Thus, it is interesting to find the match of some previous findings in third-person effect research, for instance, when a persuasive message is deemed negative or unintelligent, people believe that the message has more influence on others in order to enhance their own perception of personal invulnerability and smart control (Gunther, 1991). In addition, consumers thought the negative beliefs in CSR will influence other people more but they would not care about whether other people would take actions to support the "not smart" stuff because it is possible that younger generations have more confidence or, since they believe that when corporations' motives of doing CSR are other-serving (self-serving), the corporations still have self-serving (other-serving) motives at the same time, and the CSR communication is not bad enough to make respondents resist them.

The present study suggests a structural equation model to analyze consumers' beliefs, attitudes and behavioral responses, the using of the structural equation model would display the relationships of each variable clearly. It helps the readers to understand the design and results easily. The message to CSR communicators and practitioners is that corporations should pay

attention to their target audiences or general consumers' beliefs in their motives of doing CSR. The practitioners could use the method to analyze the true influence when they meet the "Catch 22 dilemma" or when they find consumers have different attributions because at some point, the negative motives would not affect consumers who support to do CSR based on the results of the present study.

Although the results of this study showed that consumers will not take actions stopping other people supporting CSR, notwithstanding its contributions, the current study bears several limitations. First, the study was based on a survey among undergraduate students, and consequently its results have limited generalizability. More research based on different populations of consumers and larger sample sizes are therefore needed and different populations might concern different social problems. Our respondents are undergraduate students who might represent the young generation, so it is necessary to invest other populations. Second, the study focuses on general CSR, respondents' comprehension of CSR communication are indeed different. It is necessary to make the CSR more specific in the future, such as different CSR initiatives to see if the results have changes or, future studies could focus on a specific company and what the company did for CSR. For instance, if this study uses an oil company which would affect our environment when it operates, the CSR of this company still advertise that what they always try to protect the ocean. Perhaps the results would be different since the credibility of this kind of CSR communication will cause consumers' suspicions.

## REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2005). The influence of attitudes on behavior. In D. Albarracín, B. T. Johnson, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The handbook of attitudes* (pp. 173-221). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Gibbs, B. W. (1990). The double-edge of organizational legitimation. *Organization Science*, 1(2), 177-194.
- Bae, J., & Cameron, G. T. (2006). The conditioning effect of prior reputation on perception of corporate giving. *Public Relations Review*, 32(2), 144-150.
- Balmer, J. (2001). Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing-seeing through the fog. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35, 248-291.
- Barone, M. J., Miyazaki, A. D., & Taylor, K. A. (2000). The influence of cause-related marketing on consumer choice: does one good turn deserve another?. *Journal of the academy of marketing Science*, 28(2), 248-262.
- Bartlett, J. L. (2011). Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility. In Ø. Ihlen, J. L. Bartlett & S. May (Eds.), *The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility* (pp. 67-86). Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Becker-Olsen, K. L., Cudmore, B. A., & Hill, R. P. (2006). The impact of perceived corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(1), 46-53.



- Becker-Olsen, K. L., Cudmore, B. A., & Hill, R. P. (2006). The impact of perceived corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior. *Journal of business research*, 59(1), 46-53.
- Becker-Olsen, K. L., Cudmore, B. A., & Hill, R. P. (2006). The impact of perceived corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior. *Journal of business research*, 59(1), 46-53.
- Boush, D. M., Friestad, M., & Rose, G. M. (1994). Adolescent skepticism toward TV advertising and knowledge of advertiser tactics. *Journal of consumer research*, 21(1), 165-175.
- Brown, T. J., & Dacin, P. A. (1997). The company and the product: Corporate associations and consumer product responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, 68-84.
- Byrne, B. (2001), *Structural equation modeling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Campbell, M. C. & Kirmani, A. (2000). Consumer's use of persuasion knowledge: The effects of accessibility and cognitive capacity on perceptions of an influence agent. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(1), 69-83.
- David, P., Kline, S., & Dai, Y. (2005). Corporate social responsibility practices, corporate identity, and purchase intention: A dual-process model. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17, 291-313.
- David, P., Liu, K., & Myser, M. (2004). Methodological artifact or persistent bias? Testing the robustness of the third-person and reverse Third-person effects for alcohol messages. *Communication Research*, 31(2), 206-233.
- Davison, W. P. (1983). The Third-person effect in communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47, 1-13.

- Duck, J. M., Terry, D. J., & Hogg, M. A. (1995). The perceived influence of AIDS advertising: Third-person effects in the context of positive media content. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 17*(3), 305-325.
- Ellen, P. S., Webb, D. J., & Mohr, L. A. (2006). Building corporate associations: Consumer attributions for corporate socially responsible programs. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 34*(2), 147-157.
- Epstein, M. J., & Roy, M. J. (2001). Sustainability in action: Identifying and measuring the key performance drivers. *Long Range Planning, 34*, 585–604.
- Eveland, W. P., & McLeod, D. M. (1999). The effect of social desirability on perceived media impact: Implications for third-person perceptions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 11*(4), 315-333.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of consumer research, 21*(1), 1-31.
- Golan, G. J., & Banning, S. A. (2008). *Exploring a link between the Third-person effect and the theory of reasoned action: Beneficial ads and social expectations. American Behavioral Scientist.*
- Golan, G. J., & Day, A. G. (2008). The First-person effect and its behavioral consequences: A new trend in the twenty-five year history of Third-person effect research. *Mass Communication and Society, 11*(4), 539-556.
- Gunther, A. (1991). What we think others think cause and consequence in the Third-person effect. *Communication Research, 18*(3), 355-372.

- Gunther, A. C., & Mundy, P. (1993). Biased optimism and the Third-person effect. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 70(1), 58-67.
- Gunther, A. C., & Thorson, E. (1992). Perceived persuasive effects of product commercials and public service announcements: Third-person effects in new domains. *Communication Research*, 19, 574-596.
- Habel, J., Schons, L. M., Alavi, S., & Wieseke, J. (2016). Warm Glow or Extra Charge? The Ambivalent Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility Activities on Customers' Perceived Price Fairness. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(1), 84-105.
- Heider F. *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: Wiley; 1958.
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). *Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. Structural equation modeling: a multidisciplinary journal*, 6(1), 1-55.
- Kelley HH. *The process of causal attribution*. *Am Psychol* 1973;28(2):107-28.
- Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2005). *Corporate social responsibility: Doing the most good for your company and your cause*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lambe, J. L., & McLeod, D. M. (2005). Understanding Third-Person Perception Processes: Predicting Perceived Impact on Self and Others for Multiple Expressive Contexts. *Journal of Communication*, 55(2), 277-291.
- Lee, H., Park, T., Moon, H. K., Yang, Y., & Kim, C. (2009). Corporate philanthropy, attitude towards corporations, and purchase intentions: A South Korea study. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(10), 939-946.
- Lou, X., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2006). Corporate social responsibility, customer satisfaction, and market value. *Journal of Marketing*, 70, 1-18.

- Madden, T. J., Ellen, P. S., & Ajzen, I. (1992, February 1). A Comparison of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action. *Bulletin Personality and Social Psychology*, 18 (3), 3-9.
- Madden, T. J., Ellen, P. S., & Ajzen, I. (1992, February 1). A Comparison of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action. *Bulletin Personality and Social Psychology*, 18 (3), 3-9.
- Maignan, I. (2001), "Consumers' perceptions of corporate social responsibilities: A cross-cultural comparison", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 57-72.
- Maignan, I., & Ferrell, O. C. (2001). Corporate citizenship as a marketing instrument. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35, 457-484.
- McLeod, D. M., & Detenber, B. H. (1999). Framing effects of television news coverage of social protest. *Journal of Communication*, 49(3), 3-23.
- Morsing, M., Schultz, M., & Nielsen, K. U. (2008). The 'Catch 22' of communicating CSR: Findings from a Danish Study. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 14(2), 97-111.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Assessment of Reliability. In: Psychometric Theory (2nd ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.)
- Pirsch, J., Gupta, S. and LandrethGrau S. (2007), "A framework for understanding corporate social responsibility programs as a continuum: An exploratory study", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 70, No. 2, pp. 125-140.
- Pomeroy, A. & Dolnicar, S. (2009). Assessing the prerequisite of successful CSR implementation: are consumers aware of CSR initiatives?. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85 (2s), 285-301.

- Pomering, A., Johnson, L. W., & Noble, G. (2013). Advertising corporate social responsibility: Results from an experimental manipulation of key message variables. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 18(2), 249-263.
- Price, V., & Tewksbury, D. (1996). Measuring the Third-person effect of news: The impact of question order, contrast and knowledge. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 8, 120–141.
- Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Huang, L.-N. (1998). Third-person effects on publication of a holocaust-denial advertisement. *Journal of Communication*, 48(2), 3–26.
- Rucinski, D., & Salmon, C. T. (1990). The ‘other’ as the vulnerable voter: A study of the Third-person effect in the 1988 US presidential campaign. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2(4), 345-368.
- Sallot, L. M. (2002). What the public thinks about public relations: An impression management experiment. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79(1), 150-171.
- Southey, G. (2011). The Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour Applied to Business Decisions: A Selective Annotated Bibliography. *Journal of New Business Ideas & Trends*. 9 (1), 43-50.
- Sun, Y., Shen, L., & Pan, Z. (2008). On the behavioral component of the Third-person effect. *Communication Research*, 35(2), 257-278.
- Wang, A. (2007). Priming, framing, and position on corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(2), 123-145.
- Werder, K. P. (2008). The Effect of Doing Good: An Experimental Analysis of the Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives on Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behavioral Intention\*. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 2(2), 115-135.

with persuasion attempts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 1-31.

Wood, Michelle L. M., Nelson, M. R., Lane, J. B., & Atkinson, L. J. (2008). Social utility theory: guiding labeling of VNRs as ethical and effective public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 20(2), 231-249.

Youn, S., Faber, R. J., & Shah, D. V. (2000). Restricting gambling advertising and the Third-person effect. *Psychology and Marketing*, 17(7), 633-649.

**APPENDIX**  
**Survey Questionnaire**  
**[Informed Consent]**

Researchers at USF study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called: Corporate Social Responsibility Communication. The Principal Investigator of this study is *Pearl Cheng*.

You are being asked to participate because you are a USF student. The purpose of this study is to understand how you think and feel about corporate social responsibility communication. If you take part in this study, you will be asked to answer some questions via this survey.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer and should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. This research is considered to be minimal risk. We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

We will NOT ask you questions about your name, address, contact information or student records. All such personal information will therefore remain confidential.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the Principal Investigator by email at [nianyuanc@mail.usf.edu](mailto:nianyuanc@mail.usf.edu). If you have question about your rights as a research participant, please contact the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or by email at [RSCH-IRB@usf.edu](mailto:RSCH-IRB@usf.edu).

**Would you like to participate in this study?**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Yes**      \_\_\_\_\_ **No**

**Important! Please read carefully.**

The purpose of the survey is to better understand how people think and feel about corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication.

*Business Dictionary* defines CSR as “A company’s sense of responsibility towards the community and environment (both ecological and social) in which it operates. Companies express this citizenship (1) through their waste and pollution reduction processes, (2) by contributing educational and social programs, and (3) by earning adequate returns on the employed resources.” Companies are incentivized to engage in CSR programs because of the potential benefits to business, which include brand enhancement, market differentiation, and employee satisfaction.

**CSR communication aims at spreading information about CSR efforts through the company’s annual reports, press releases, newsletters, websites, social media, and traditional marketing channels such as advertising and packaging.**

**Please circle your answers to the next two questions.**

Q1. Have you seen, read, or heard about CSR before?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*

Q2. Have you ever seen, read, or heard CSR communication from companies?

1. *Yes (Please continue to the next question)*
2. *No (Please skip to Question 19 on the last page.)*



**Let's begin with some statements people made about CSR communication. Please tell us the extent that you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the numbers 1 through 5.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Q3. In general, American companies engage in CSR communication to serve the interests of the public.	1	2	3	4	5
Q4. In general, American companies engage in CSR communication to serve their own interests.	1	2	3	4	5
Q5. American companies engage in CSR communication to demonstrate their altruistic service to society.	1	2	3	4	5
Q6. American companies engage in CSR communication to improve their own reputation and image.	1	2	3	4	5
Q7. American companies engage in CSR communication to publicize their contributions to solving environmental, social or community problems.	1	2	3	4	5
Q8. American companies engage in CSR communication to increase sales of their products.	1	2	3	4	5

**Next, please tell us the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the influence of CSR communication on YOU.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Q9. CSR communication has a positive influence on my attitude towards products made by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5
Q10. CSR communication has a positive influence on my purchase of products made by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5
Q11. CSR communication has a positive influence my consumption of products made by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5

**Now, please tell us the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the influence of CSR communication on OTHER PEOPLE.**

Q12. CSR communication has a positive influence on other people's attitude towards products made by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5
Q13. CSR communication has a positive influence on other people's purchase of products made by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5
Q14. CSR communication has a positive influence other people's consumption of products made by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5

**Please tell us to extent that you agree with the following statements about general reactions to CSR communication.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Q15. I'd like to know more about American companies' CSR activities.	1	2	3	4	5
Q16. I'd like to receive more CSR information from American companies.	1	2	3	4	5
Q17. I'd like to share CSR information with others.	1	2	3	4	5
Q18. I'd like to participate in CSR activities run by American companies.	1	2	3	4	5

**Finally, two questions about yourself.**

Q19. What is your gender?

- 1. Female      2. Male*

Q20. What is your academic level:

- 1. Freshmen   2. Sophomore   3. Junior   4. Senior   5. Graduate student*



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX(813)974-7091

10/7/2016

Nianyuan Cheng  
School of Advertising and Mass Communications  
2221 University Lake Drive  
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: **Exempt Certification**

IRB#: Pro00028044

Title: Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Beliefs in Motives, First- and Third-  
Person Effects and Behavioral Consequences.

Dear Dr. Cheng:

On 10/7/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets criteria for exemption from the federal regulations as outlined by 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:  
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF HRPP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF HRPP Policy, once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARC. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application.

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARC. This does not limit your ability to conduct your research project.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University

of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board