

# Department of Marketing



Research Seminar Series | Dec. 13th, 1-3pm | AD.0.090

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### When Taking a Stand on Controversial Social Issues Hurts or Helps the Organization: Anticipatory Self-Threat and Dishonest Behavior

**Abstract:** Organizations are proclaiming their values by taking stands on controversial issues in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. However, prior work largely focuses on non-controversial CSR. We examine a novel way with which individuals respond to an organization's polarizing CSR: dishonest behavior toward the organization. We demonstrate that the effect of CSR on dishonest behavior is moderated by the individual's cause-related identity and mediated by anticipatory self-threat. When the CSR cause is congruent [incongruent] with the individual's self-concept, CSR (vs. no-CSR) decreases [increases] dishonest behavior by increasing [decreasing] anticipatory self-threat (i.e., if I cheat the company, I will feel like I am a bad person). We demonstrate an asymmetric effect such that the effect of incongruent (vs. congruent) CSR is bigger. Building on the anticipatory self-threat mechanism, we identify a theoretical boundary condition in which the backfiring effect of incongruent CSR is attenuated: situational salience of moral values.