

**THE POWER OF GOOD: MICRO LEVEL OUTCOMES FROM CORPORATE SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY AND SOCIAL MISSION ORIENTATION**

by

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**DISSERTATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE POWER OF GOOD: MICRO LEVEL OUTCOMES FROM CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SOCIAL MISSION ORIENTATION**

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**The University of Texas at Arlington, 2021**

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What happens to employees on an individual level when they see their organization doing good things for society? Whether the manifestation of good be in the form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) or social mission orientation (SMO), this paper seeks to explore the micro level outcomes from employee perceptions of these organizational attributes. Considered together, these three articles provide significant insight into the individual level outcomes from doing good as an organization, as well as the mechanisms through which those relationships flow. Specifically, CSR and SMO result in positive individual outcomes including increased organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and organizational attractiveness, as well as decreased turnover intent. Additionally, organizational commitment and purpose both play mediating roles in these relationships. This paper contributes to the organizational behavior and entrepreneurship literature by furthering research into the micro level outcomes from CSR and SMO, as well as by introducing purpose as a critical mediator in these relationships and adapting a scale to measure purpose.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, who led me down this path into academia. To spend the rest of my life researching interesting questions and teaching the next generation of business leaders how to lead is a dream for me, and I truly feel like I've found the reason that I was placed on the earth.

Thanks also to my wife, Amanda, and children, Luke and Shannon. You were my biggest cheerleaders, supporters, and encouragers, and even pretended to be interested when I insisted on talking about my research!

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my wife, Amanda. You have been my strength and motivation. Thank you for encouraging me to follow my calling.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Although corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social mission orientation (SMO) have both been linked to positive macro level outcomes for organizations, the research into micro level outcomes is still sparse. This paper explores the positive outcomes from CSR and SMO at the individual employee level.

In the first article, “The Power of Good: CSR’s Relationship with Commitment and Turnover Intent, and the Moderating Effect of Size”, I investigate CSR’s effect on commitment and turnover intent. Although many of the outcomes of CSR have been thoroughly examined, much work remains to be done on the micro effects that perceptions of CSR activity have on individual employees. This study examines the relationships that perceptions of CSR have with affective organizational commitment (AOC), and in turn, AOCs role as a mediator between perception of CSR and turnover intentions. Additionally, the relationship between perception of CSR and AOC is examined in terms of the moderating effects of person organization (PO) fit and organization size. Results indicate that organization size does moderate the positive relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC while PO fit does not, and that AOC does act as a mediator between perceptions of CSR and turnover intentions. This article contributes to the CSR and small business literature by looking at moderators in the relationship between CSR and AOC including PO fit and organizational size, which have not been considered in the literature.

In the second article, “The Power of Purpose: How Perceptions of Social Mission Orientation Influence Individual Outcomes”, I explore the effect of SMO on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and individual performance. Although individuals join social

entrepreneurship ventures because they appreciate the organization's social mission orientation (SMO), it is possible that for-profit businesses can also be perceived as having a social mission orientation. If that perception exists, what micro-level effects will that perception have on individual members of the organization, and what mental and emotional mechanisms translate that perception into positive outcomes? This study describes the scale adaptation process for a construct called perception of purpose, and then explores how perception of purpose could act as a mediator between SMO and the individual outcomes of individual performance and OCBs, and whether fit might moderate those relationships. Results indicate that perception of purpose is a mechanism through which perception of SMO results in increased OCBs, but not individual self-reported performance ratings. Additionally, person organization (PO) fit moderates the relationship between perception of SMO and OCBs such that high levels of PO fit strengthen the positive relationship. This study contributes to the literature by creating a scale for perception of purpose that has been called for but not provided. Additionally, it introduces perception of purpose as a mechanism between SMO and individual outcomes, helping to explain why perception of SMO results in individual outcomes.

In the third article, "The Power of Mission: Perceptions of Social Mission Orientation and its Relationships with Purpose and Organizational Attractiveness", I explore the effects of SMO on organizational attractiveness for prospective employees. While it may be assumed that individuals join social entrepreneurship organizations to fulfill a psychological need (social justice, altruism, etc.), little has been done to identify which mechanisms make social entrepreneurship organizations more attractive to prospective members. In the second article, perception of purpose was studied as a mediating mechanism in the relationships that SMO has with individual level outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) for existing



organization members, but what effect will perception of purpose have on prospective organization members? This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the effect of purpose on organizational attractiveness to job seekers, the mediating role that it plays between SMO and organizational attractiveness, and whether person-organization (PO) fit and moral identity might moderate those relationships. Following interviews with job seekers, participants are then randomly presented with descriptions of hypothetical companies that represent high and low levels of corporate citizenship and SMO, utilizing experimental vignette methodology (EVM). Results indicate that SMO is positively related to perception of purpose, that the relationship between SMO and purpose is strengthened by PO fit, and that perception of purpose is the mechanism through which SMO results in increased organizational attractiveness. This study contributes to the literature by exploring perception of purpose as a powerful mechanism between SMO and organizational attractiveness, helping to explain why SMO increases job seekers' intent to join an organization.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE POWER OF GOOD: CSR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITMENT AND TURNOVER INTENT, AND THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SIZE

## **The Power of Good: CSR's Relationship with Commitment and Turnover Intent, and the Moderating Effect of Size**

### **ABSTRACT**

Although many of the firm level outcomes of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been well studied, much work remains regarding the micro effects that perceptions of CSR activity have on individual employees. This study examined the relationships that perceptions of CSR have with affective organizational commitment (AOC), and in turn, AOC's role as a mediator between perception of CSR and turnover intentions. Additionally, the relationship between perception of CSR and AOC was examined in terms of the moderating effects of person organization (PO) fit and organization size. Using a time lagged design with two separate surveys, 136 employed adults completed both questionnaires. Results indicate that organization size does moderate the positive relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC while PO fit does not, and that AOC does act as a mediator between perceptions of CSR and turnover intentions. This article contributes to the CSR and small business literature by looking at moderators in the relationship between CSR and AOC including PO fit and organizational size, which have not been considered in the literature.

Keywords: CSR, commitment, turnover, PO fit, organization size

**Article 1**  
**The Power of Good: CSR's Relationship with Commitment and Turnover Intent, and the Moderating Effect of Size**

**INTRODUCTION**

The word “employ” can be traced back to the middle French “emploier”, but its etymological origins actually stem from the Latin “implicare”, which involves folding or weaving parts into a whole. Employers, then, are those who weave employees into the organization as a whole. This paper explores the role that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays in weaving employees into the organization--helping employees feel that they are a good fit with the organization, are committed to the organization, and have fewer intentions to leave the organization.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been well-researched in management literature, and interest is increasing as more employees enter the workforce looking for an employer that offers a pro-social impact rather than just a paycheck (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008; Cone, 2007; McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011). While there are dozens of articles on how increased participation in CSR initiatives increase organizational level outcomes such as attractiveness to investors (Graves & Waddock, 1994), competitive advantage (Greening & Turban, 2000), and financial performance (Margolis, Elfenbein, & Walsh, 2007), studies including employee level outcomes have been less prevalent in management literature. In their review of CSR research, Aguinis and Glavas (2012) concluded that only 4% of articles focused on the individual level of analysis. Although the number of micro level studies has increased sharply from 2012 to 2016 (Wang, Fu, Qiu, Moore, & Wang, 2017), the benefits of CSR at the employee level of analysis provide extra incentive for organizations to engage in CSR, and so

more work needs to be done to quantify those benefits. Additionally, since very few studies have looked at indirect effects on these relationships, more exploration needs to be done into potential mediators and moderators between CSR and individual outcomes (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). This will help further explain the mechanisms that underpin the relationships, and will give employers a better understanding of how to foster the positive outcomes that CSR activities should provide.

I begin by reviewing the literature on CSR, organizational commitment, PO fit, and turnover intent, and then review the hypothesis development for a moderated mediation model. In the first half of the model, the positive relationship between perceptions of CSR and affective organizational commitment is moderated by PO fit and firm size. In the second half of the model, AOC mediates the negative relationship that perception of CSR has with turnover intentions. I conclude by presenting the results of a time lagged correlational study.

Research into moderators and mediators in the relationship between CSR and turnover intentions will help explain the psychological mechanisms that alter and/or enable the relationship. Practically speaking, this research will also give employers guidance on how to maximize the positive impact of CSR activities on their employees, and will encourage CSR initiatives in small businesses since the effect is even stronger in smaller organizations. This article contributes to the CSR and small business literature by looking at moderators in the relationship between CSR and AOC including PO fit and organizational size, which have not been considered to the best of my knowledge. It also contributes to the literature by providing further evidence supporting AOC as the mediating mechanism through which perceptions of CSR impact turnover intentions, which has produced mixed results in previous studies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

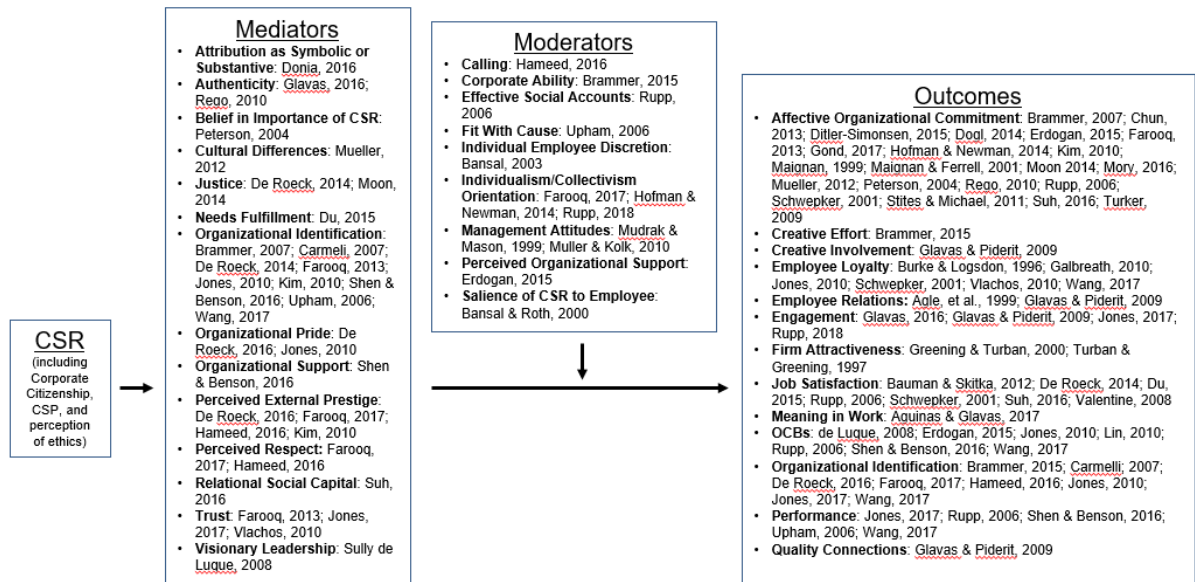
### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Simply defining Corporate Social Responsibility can itself be a challenge, since the term seems to include anything from legal responsibility to ethics to charitable contributions (Votaw, 1973). Indeed, Dahlsrud (2008) found 37 distinct definitions of CSR, and that did not even include every definition that has been advanced. However, one definition that has found wide use is recorded by Aguinis and Glavas, stating that CSR is comprised of organizational actions that consider stakeholders' expectations and the "triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012: 933). In the Aguinis and Glavas (2012) review based on 588 journal articles and 102 books and book chapters, the authors developed a framework that explains mechanisms of CSR to outcome relationships, and contingency effects that explain the situations wherein the relationships between CSR and its outcomes may vary. Their review found that the CSR literature remains highly fragmented as scholars study it through different disciplinary lenses and at different levels of analysis. Some of the many outcomes from CSR participation include competitive advantage (Walsh & Beatty, 2007), customer satisfaction (Mulki & Jaramillo, 2011), firm performance (Wang, Dou, & Jia, 2016), innovation (Gallego-Alvarez, Prado-Lorenzo, & Gracia-Sanchez, 2011), retention (Bode, Singh, & Rogan, 2015), and employee willingness to accept lower salaries (Burbano, 2016).

Researchers have noted that organizations tend to view CSR either from a value driven approach, a performance driven approach, or a stakeholder driven approach, and that drivers of CSR include internal drivers, competitive drivers, external drivers, regulatory drivers, and other

pressures (Marfo, Chen, Hu, & Ghansah, 2016). Regardless of why organizations pursue CSR initiatives, there are many individual employee level outcomes that can benefit the organization. For example, employees who perceive high levels of CSR in their organization have been found to increase their levels of creative effort (Brammer, He, & Mellahi, 2015), creative involvement (Glavas & Piderit, 2009), ethical decision making (Beaudoin, Cianci, Hannah, & Tsakumis, 2018), and engagement (Glavas, 2016; Glavas & Piderit, 2009; Jones, Willness, & Glavas, 2017; Rupp, Shao, Skarlicki, Paddock, Kim, & Nadisic, 2018). Additionally, those organizations experience positive employee relations (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999; Glavas & Piderit, 2009) and potential employee attractiveness (Greening & Turbin, 2000; Turban & Greening, 1997). CSR has also been linked to job satisfaction (Bauman & Skitka, 2012; De Roeck, Marique, Stinglhamber, & Swaen, 2014; Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2015; Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, & Williams, 2006; Schwepker, 2001; Suh, 2016, Valentine & Fleischman, 2008), meaning in work (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019), organizational citizenship behaviors (de Luque, Washburn, Waldman, & House, 2008; Erdogan, Bauer, & Taylor, 2015; Jones, 2010; Lin, Lyau, Tsai, Chen, & Chiu, 2010; Rupp, et al., 2006; Shen & Benson, 2016; Wang, et al., 2017), organizational identification (Brammer, et al., 2015; Carmeli, Gilat, & Waldman, 2007; De Roeck, El Akremi, & Swaen, 2016; Farooq, Rupp, & Farooq, 2017; Hameed, Riaz, Arain, & Farooq, 2016; Jones, 2010; Jones, et al., 2017; Wang, et al., 2017), individual performance (Rupp, et al., 2006; Shen & Benson, 2016; Wang, et al., 2017), and quality connections (Glavas & Piderit, 2009). Figure 1 provides a partial review of individual outcomes from CSR, in addition to the mediators and moderators that have been identified between CSR related constructs and those outcomes.

**Figure 1**  
**Partial Review of CSR's Individual Level Outcomes**



CSR's negative relationship with turnover intentions has been well documented (e.g., Chaudhary, 2017; Galbreath, 2010; Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011; Kim, Song, & Lee, 2016), however, inconsistent CSR activity can lead to increased turnover (Carnahan, Kryscynski, & Olson, 2017; Scheidler, Schons, Spanjol, & Wieseke, 2018), and some studies have found no significant direct relationship (Hollingworth & Valentine, 2014). For example, when researchers compared volunteers to non-volunteers, they found no significant relationship between those who volunteer for CSR programs and those who don't when it comes to turnover intentions (de Gilder, Schuyt, & Breedijk, 2005). These inconsistent results suggest the potential of mediating and/or moderating variables.

Several mediators between CSR and turnover intentions have been documented, including fulfillment of ideological and developmental job needs (Du, et al., 2015), on the job embeddedness (Ghosh & Gurunathan, 2014; Ng, Yam, & Aguinis, 2019), work engagement (Chaudhary, 2017; Lin & Liu, 2017), burnout (Lin & Liu, 2017), organizational identification



(Wang, et al., 2017), trust (Farooq, Farooq, & Cheffi, 2019; Hansen, et al., 2011), organizational pride (Ng, et al., 2019), and organizational commitment (Farooq, et al., 2019; Hollingworth & Valentine, 2014). Several moderators in the relationship have also been found, including the employee's proximity to the CSR activity (Du, et al., 2015), meaningfulness at work (Carnahan, et al., 2017), and moral identity (Wang, et al., 2017). Although a few of the studies mentioned above have explored the mediating role that AOC plays in the CSR to turnover intentions relationship, effect sizes have varied, so further investigation will provide evidence to strengthen the assertion.

### **Affective Organizational Commitment**

According to Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979), organizational commitment is “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (p. 226). Research on commitment began with the side-bet perspective which states that employees devote themselves to their organization based on expectations of return on hidden investments or side-bets (Ghosh & Swamy, 1979). More recently, the contemporary multidimensional approach (Reichers, 1985) has been used. This approach states that employees’ commitment in the workplace and subsequently, their display of desirable behaviors such as reduced absenteeism and turnover, cannot be explained by just commitment to the organization alone given that the nature of interactions in the workplace is multilevel. With this approach, the foci and bases of commitment matter in determining the level of commitment an employee displays. Becker (1992) provides support for this approach through his finding that commitment to job management, supervisors, and the work group were important predictors of job satisfaction and intention to quit, over and above the commitment to the organization in general.

Various antecedents have been proposed for organizational commitment including trust and job satisfaction (Gregory, Way, LeFort, Barrett, & Parfrey, 2007). Also, organizational commitment has also been shown to be related to individual outcomes such as performance (Brown, McHardy, McNabb, & Taylor, 2011), organizational citizenship behaviors (Uçanok & Karabatı, 2013), and organization-relevant outcomes like attendance (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002a). Commitment can be broken out into three different components - affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective organizational commitment is defined as “an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization”, continuance organizational commitment includes “the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization”, and normative commitment “reflects a perceived obligation to remain in the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990: p. 1). However, this paper explicitly focuses on the affective component of commitment.

### **Person Organization (PO) Fit**

Person-organization fit has been defined in the literature as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or b) they share similar fundamental characteristics or c) both” (Kristof, 1996: 5-6). PO fit based on values congruence is positively related to organizational commitment (Finegan, 2000), in that an employee’s perception of shared values with his or her organization fosters perceptions of person-organization fit, which leads to higher levels of organizational commitment. Values such as openness, fairness, logic, and moral integrity have been positively linked to organizational commitment (Kumar, 2012), and trust is the strongest moderator between values (both organizational and individual) and outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational identification, and intent to stay (Cooper & Wagman, 2009; Edwards & Cable, 2009).

Additionally, values within the organizational vision have been positively related to affective organizational commitment (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009), and the three types of fit (objective, perceived, and subjective) are predictive of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011; Piasentin & Chapman, 2007).

### **Turnover Intent**

As Cotton and Tuttle (1986) found in their meta-analysis and review, turnover has been well studied, and the 120 data sets they analyzed found that turnover was correlated with multiple variables including pay, job performance, role clarity, task repetitiveness, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with the work, supervision, co-workers, and promotional opportunities. While turnover intent naturally tends to precede turnover, turnover intent does not always result in actual turnover, since employees occasionally decide to remain with the organization despite their desire to leave. However, generally speaking, variables tend to be related to both (Meyer, et al., 2002). For example, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found that organizational commitment is negatively related to intention to leave and turnover, however, the relationship tends to vary depending on the level of the organization the employee occupies (Cole & Bruch, 2006) and the level of performance the employee exhibits (Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009).

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) theorized eight motivational forces that contribute to the turnover decision, including affective, calculative, contractual, behavioral, alternative, normative, moral/ethical, and constituent forces. Employees who experience person-organization fit via value congruence tend to experience lesser degrees of turnover intention (Moynihan & Pandey, 2008), and work engagement partially mediates the negative relationship between OC and turnover intention, though that relationship is weaker when person-supervisor fit is closer

(Zhang, Ling, Zhang, & Xie., 2015). Additionally, entrepreneurial leadership is negatively related to turnover intentions, with affective organizational commitment partially mediating and person-job fit moderating the relationship (Yang, Pu, & Guan., 2019).

## **HYPOTHESIS DERIVATION AND HYPOTHESIS STATEMENTS**

Evidence supporting the positive relationship between CSR and commitment is abundant. Brammer, Millington, & Rayton. (2007) used social identity theory to explain this relationship, finding in their study of 4,712 employees of a financial services company that employee perceptions of all four subdimensions of CSR were positively related to affective organizational commitment. Turker (2009) espoused a multifoci perspective on CSR that includes CSR toward social and nonsocial stakeholders, employees, customers, and government, and found that all dimensions except for the legal (government) dimension were positively related to organizational commitment. This study also showed that employee belief in the importance of CSR moderated the relationship.

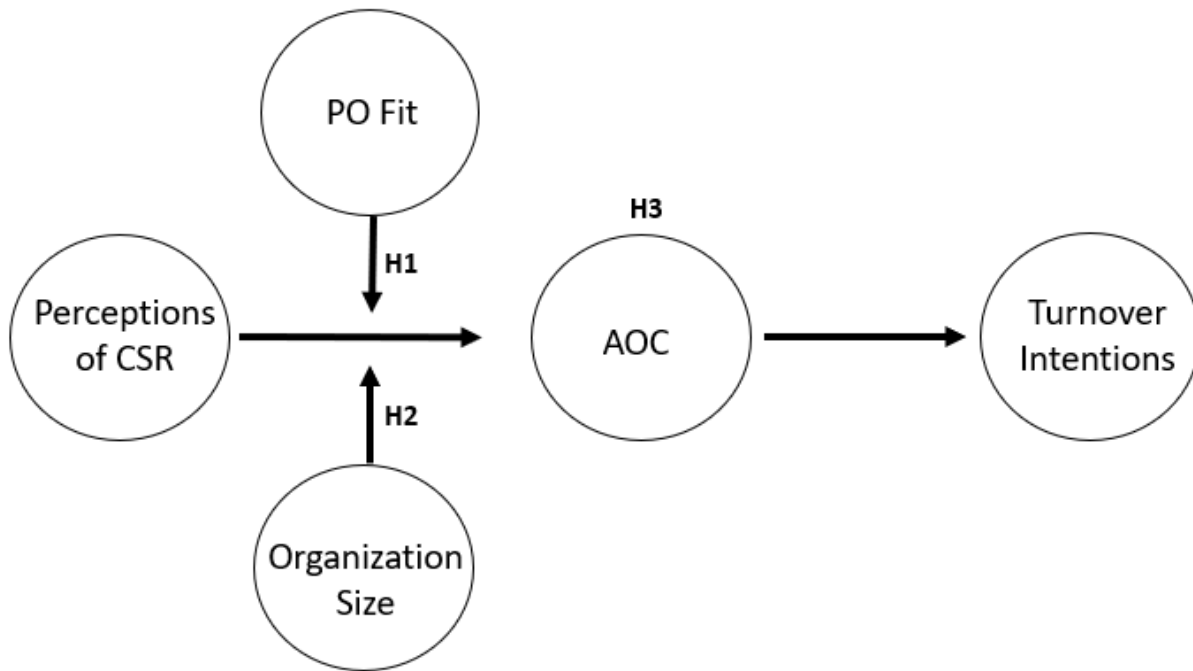
Gond, El Akremi, Swaen, & Babu (2017) provided an excellent review of the psychological microfoundations that help explain the relationships that CSR has with its outcomes, including social identification theory, organizational identity theory, signaling theory, social exchange theory, causal attribution, organizational justice, and psychological needs. The relationship between CSR and organizational commitment as seen through the lens of social identity theory asserts that individuals feel better about themselves when they are associated with an organization that is seen in a positive light for doing good things (Brown, 2000), so corporate social responsibility fosters affective organizational commitment (Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2014; Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Moon, Hur, Ko, Kim, & Yoon, 2014; Mueller,

Hattrup, Spiess, & Lin-Hi, 2012), which in turns affects other individual outcomes. However, that relationship between CSR and AOC is only as strong as the individual employee's perception of the corporate social responsibility (Hofman & Newman, 2014) and the employee's perception of the motives for that CSR (Jones, Farooq, De Roeck, & Farooq, 2018).

Researchers have categorized mediating and moderating variables that affect the CSR/outcomes relationship into three categories: care-based, self-based, and relational-based (Jones, Newman, Shao, & Fang, 2019). Since elements of PO fit have been related to commitment and turnover (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Lawrence & Lawrence, 2010; Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011; Moynihan & Pandey, 2008), and since PO fit has been isolated as a mediator between CSR and organizational attractiveness (Jones, et al., 2014), and proposed as a potential moderator in the relationship between organizational charity and employee performance (Upham, 2006), I expect that PO fit should influence the relationship between CSR and AOC. An organization's participation in CSR activity will only affect individual employees to the extent the employees are aware of and appreciate the participation based on their own identity in relation to the organization. If the individual employee perceives a lack of fit based on values incongruence between the individual and the organization, the employee may not appreciate the organization's CSR efforts and the relationship between perception of CSR and AOC will be weakened. Figure 2 illustrates the hypothesized relationships.

*H1: The positive relationship between individual perceptions of CSR and AOC will be moderated by PO Fit such that the relationship will be strengthened by high levels of PO Fit and weakened by low levels of PO Fit.*

**Figure 2**  
**Hypothesized Model**



There is evidence that relationships between antecedents and individual outcomes can vary depending on the size of the organization, with many studies leveraging social information processing theory to explain their findings. Social information processing theory asserts that individuals use social environment cues to help them interpret experiences (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), and since larger organizations will tend to have less social network density (Burt, 1992), there may be less conformity of opinion and less impact on individual outcomes in larger organizations.

However, empirical evidence supporting organizational size's effects on individual outcomes has been mixed. For example, Coetzer, Inma, and Poisat (2015) found that job embeddedness predicted turnover intentions in large firms but not in small firms. Similarly, Bergen and Weaver (1988) found that job satisfaction among newspaper employees varied depending on the size of their organization, with the highest satisfaction levels at larger

organizations. However, large organizations also tend to have lower member participation rates in the form of absenteeism and resignations (Indik, 1965). Other studies have found that organization size has no effect on individual outcomes, such as the study by Marc (2014) that found that size did not moderate the relationship between perceptions of justice in the work environment and commitment.

Several studies have looked at the relationship between firm size and CSR activity (e.g., Bansal 2005; Eilert, Walker, & Dogan, 2017; Orlitzky 2001; Sharma 2000), but again, results have been mixed. Large firms have more resources to invest and more stakeholders to satisfy, but they also tend to face greater financial scrutiny. As mentioned above, relationships between CSR and individual outcomes will vary. Some authors expect that large organizations will be more likely to engage in CSR activities, but information on those activities may only be found on obscure pages within the organization's website and/or annual reports, and individual employees may not have knowledge of the activities or be able to participate in them. Whereas in small organizations, due to tighter social networks, employees are more likely to know of the CSR activities, and may even participate in them personally. Since contact with beneficiaries has been shown to strengthen the positive relationship between transformational leadership and individual performance (Grant, 2012), I expect that a similar effect will happen in the relationship between CSR and AOC, which will be strengthened in small organizations where employees are more likely to know of and perhaps even be personally involved with the CSR activities, and able to see the impact they have on beneficiaries.

*H2: The positive relationship between individual perceptions of CSR and AOC will be moderated by organization size such that the relationship will be strengthened by small size and weakened by large size.*

Among the many benefits of CSR at the macro level is reduced turnover (Galbreath, 2010; Bode, et al., 2015). A natural extension of that research is to look at micro level outcomes such as turnover intention that might come from perceptions of CSR, and several authors draw upon social identity theory to explain how employees see their organization's CSR efforts as an extension of their own identity, and how the associated pride they feel leads to positive commitment and loyalty outcomes (Peterson, 2004). Tajfel and colleagues (1979) defined social identity as "the part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63).

Many researchers also employ social exchange theory to explain how employees repay the benefits they receive from a company with outcomes like commitment and loyalty (Jones, 2010). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1968; Emerson, 1976) describes how relationships develop through interdependent exchanges between parties over time. As one organization member receives treatment from another, a sense of obligation to reciprocate builds based on positive or negative norms.

In studying the relationships that CSR has with its outcomes, researchers have found several mediators through which the relationships flow. Some of those mediators include employee attributions of the CSR as symbolic or substantive (Donia & Sirsly, 2016), needs fulfillment (Du, et al., 2015), organizational identification (Carmeli, et al., 2007; De Roeck, et al., 2014; Shen & Benson, 2016), organizational pride (De Roeck, et al., 2016), organizational support (Shen & Benson, 2016), perceived external prestige (De Roeck, et al., 2016, Farooq, et al., 2017, Hameed, et al., 2016), perceived respect (Farooq, et al., 2017, Hameed, et al., 2016),



perceptions of authenticity (Glavas, 2016), perceptions of justice (De Roeck, et al., 2014), trust (Jones, et al., 2017), and visionary leadership (De Luque, et al., 2008).

Drawing upon organizational justice, which is based on the ethical assumption of normative treatment, the relationship between CSR and turnover intentions should be mediated by AOC. Essentially, if employees view the organization's CSR efforts through the lens of fair treatment to internal and external stakeholders, whether it be embodied as ethical behavior, philanthropy, legal compliance, or fair economic treatment, it should improve the employees' attitudes about the organization (Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001) as long as the CSR efforts are perceived to be balanced between internal and external stakeholders (Scheidler, et al., 2018). Outcomes from those improved attitudes should result in increased commitment, which in turn should lead to decreased levels of turnover intentions (Cohen, 1993).

However, studies have shown mixed results for the relationship between CSR perceptions and turnover. Some studies show a negative relationship (Galbreath, 2010; Kim, et al., 2016; Wang, et al., 2017), while others have found no direct effects. For example, Carnahan and colleagues (2017), found that there was no direct relationship between CSR and turnover, (although CSR did have a moderating effect where it attenuated the positive relationship between traumatic events and turnover.) These mixed findings illustrate the discontinuity in the research stream that prompted Aguinis and Glavas (2012) to call for more investigation into mediating mechanisms and potential moderators. Hollingsworth and Valentine (2014) found that CSR and continuous process improvement are both negatively related to turnover intentions through organizational commitment, however, their sample was a single financial services firm, and so generalizability could be questioned. Farooq, et al. (2019) found that perceptions of CSR were related to reduced turnover through trust and AOC, however, this article also had a limited

sample (one hotel in south Asia). Based on these findings, I expect that the negative relationship between CSR and turnover intentions will flow through AOC in a much more heterogeneous sample.

*H3: AOC will mediate the negative relationship between individual perceptions of CSR and turnover intentions.*

## **METHODS**

### **Sample and Procedures**

Respondents were recruited via Facebook and LinkedIn and were provided a link to the first wave survey that included the independent variable and all moderators. Recruiting and testing via social media have been shown to provide equivalent results to in-person settings (Berg, Buller, Schauer, Windle, Stratton & Kegler, 2015; Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013) and is the electronic equivalent of using one's personal contacts, which is a common recruiting tactic for studies (e.g., Kopaneva, 2019; Yuan, Barnes, & Li, 2018). Data was collected from employees at organizations ranging from startup to some with over 10,000 employees. 203 respondents completed the first wave of surveys, however, only 185 provided email addresses so they could receive the second survey. Since very little longitudinal research has been done on the hypothesized relationships, the surveys were time lagged, with DVs measured at least one month after IVs and moderators. 142 participants responded to the second wave survey that included the mediator and dependent variables. Although this level of attrition seemed high, the two surveys were 40 and 60 items respectively, and participants were not compensated beyond their chances in a raffle, so attrition was expected. Several reminders were sent to participants in the first

survey to have them complete the second survey, but the attrition rate remained high. However, one-way ANOVA analysis indicated no significant difference in control variables or independent variables between the group of participants who only filled out one survey compared to the group of participants who filled out both.

Since respondents were recruited via social media and hence may be connected to each other or even from the same organization, I performed a frequency analysis on the question, “what is the name of your company” to evaluate potential nesting effects in the data. However, the largest frequency response only had 3 members, so that assuaged my concern over potential nesting effects. Of the 142 participants, the majority (58%) were female, the average age was 43 years, 52% had been with their organization five years or less, and 51% reported belonging to organizations with less than 500 employees.

## **Measures**

Perception of CSR was measured by a 7-item scale developed by Turker (2009b) with  $\alpha = .87$  on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items included “our company participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment”, “our company makes investments to create a better life for future generations”, “our company implements special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment”, “our company targets sustainable growth which considers future generations”, “our company supports nongovernmental organizations working in problematic areas”, “our company contributes to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of society”, and “our company encourages its employees to participate in voluntary activities”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.82.

AOC was measured by the 4-item scale developed in 2014 by Klein and colleagues ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Items included “how committed are you to your organization”, “to what extent do you care about your organization”, how dedicated are you to your organization”, and “to what extent have you chosen to be committed to your organization”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.95.

PO Fit was measured by the 3-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue ( $\alpha = .91$ ) in 2002. Items included “the things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values”, “my personal values match my organization’s values and culture”, and “my organization’s values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.93.

Turnover intentions were measured by a 3-item scale adapted from the 4-item scale for intention to leave developed by Nissly, Mor Barak, and Levin in 2005 ( $\alpha = .76$ ). Items included “in the next few months I intend to leave this organization”, “in the next few years I intend to leave this organization”, “I occasionally think about leaving this organization”. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.84.

Organization Size, a moderator, was measured by total number of employees as self-reported by the respondent, where 1 = < 100, 2 = 101 – 500, 3 = 510 – 1,000, 4 = 1,001 – 10,000, and 5 = > 10,000. Because there are no standard definitions of large versus small businesses, I chose cutoff points based on several government publications. For example, the European Commission defines small businesses as organizations with less than 50 members, medium size businesses as less than 250 members, and large businesses as organizations with more than 250 members (European Commission, 2015). Alternatively, the U.S. government varies its upper limit for small businesses from 100 to 1,500 employees depending on the

industry (<https://osec.doc.gov>). Scales for size vary in academic studies as well. Coetzer and colleagues (2015) categorized company size by less than 50 employees, 50 – 199 employees, 200 – 249 employees, and 250+ employees, but that scale's focus on the small businesses segment would discount potential variance in the many large businesses in my sample. Other studies have measured size by customer base (for newspapers, Bergen & Weaver, 1988) or number of students (for universities, Eilert, et al., 2017), but given the wide variety of businesses represented in this sample, that method would be difficult. Also, although some studies have asked for exact numbers of employees (e.g., Ohana, 2014), that level of specificity may cause respondents who do not know the exact answer to skip the question (de Leeuw, Hox, & Boeve, 2016). Therefore, I chose to use categories that could be easily estimated but that would also clearly differentiate between startup, small, medium, large, and very large organizations.

Controls. Age, gender and tenure with the organization were self-reported. Social desirability bias was controlled for with the 10-item social desirability bias short form developed by Strahan and Gerbasi in 1972 ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Items included “no matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener”, “there have been a few occasions when I took advantage of someone” (R), “I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget” (R), “when I don’t know something, I don’t at all mind admitting it”, “there have been occasions when I felt like smashing things” (R), “I never resent being asked to return a favor”, “I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off”, “I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me” (R), “I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved” (R), and “I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone’s feelings”. Cronbach’s alpha for my sample was 0.72.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables. Listwise deletion was used in developing the correlation matrix. There was strong positive correlation between CSR and AOC as well as with PO Fit, and a strong negative correlation between CSR and turnover intentions. There was also a strong negative correlation between AOC and turnover intentions. Among the significant control variables, age, gender, tenure, and social desirability all had a strong positive correlation with AOC, and age had a strong negative correlation with turnover intentions.

**Table 1**  
**Correlations and Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Age	--								
2 Gender	-.02	--							
3 Tenure	.49**	.02	--						
4 Social Desirability	.12	.18*	.06	--					
5 Corporate Social Responsibility	.14	-.01	.02	.14	--				
6 Affective Organizational Commitment	.32**	.19*	.23**	.20*	.35**	--			
7 Organization Size	.12	-.02	.13	.14	.08	-.02	--		
8 Person-Organization Fit	.09	.04	-.10	.02	.57**	.42**	-.14	--	
9 Turnover Intentions	-.23**	-.05	-.06	-.13	-.33**	-.59**	.04	-.42**	--
Mean	42.87	1.60	6.84	3.31	3.70	4.14	2.76	3.85	2.46
Standard Deviation	13.78	0.49	5.65	0.55	0.71	0.99	1.55	0.88	1.06

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Notes:

N = 131

Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female

Organization Size: 1 = <100, 2 = 101 – 500, 3 = 501 – 1,000, 4 = 1,001 – 10,000, 5 = >10,000

### Hypothesis Testing

For direct effects, all independent variables exceeded .20 tolerance levels and had variance-inflation factor (VIF) values less than four. In *Advanced Diagnostics for Multiple Regression: A Supplement to Multivariate Data Analysis* by Hair and colleagues (1998), the

authors suggest that VIF values may become at four and above. Since all of the VIF values in this sample were less than four, I do not believe that multivariate multicollinearity was a concern (Hair, et al., 1998). As shown in Table 2, after controlling for age, tenure, gender, and social desirability, PO Fit was not significant as a moderator between CSR and AOC, so H1 was not supported. However, the moderating effect of organization size was significant, indicating that larger organizations weaken the relationship between CSR and AOC ( $b = -.14, p < .05$ ), supporting H2. Additionally, simple slopes analysis indicates that the relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC is significant at average and low (-1 SD) levels of organization size, but not at high (+1 SD) levels.

**Table 2**  
**Regression Analysis and Interaction**

	AOC				Turnover Intentions		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Age	0.02**	0.02*	0.01*	0.01*	-0.02*	-0.02*	-0.01
Gender	0.33	0.34*	0.30	0.26	-0.09	-0.11	0.10
Tenure	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.02
Social Desirability	0.24	0.18	0.23	0.25	-0.18	-0.11	0.00
Perception of CSR		0.42**	0.14	0.22		-0.44**	-0.19
AOC							-0.60**
PO Fit			0.39**	0.06			
Organization Size			-0.03	0.48*			
CSR x PO Fit				0.09			
CSR x Org Size				-0.14*			
$R^2$	.16**	.25**	.33**	.36**	.07	.15**	.38**
$\Delta R^2$		.09**	.09**	.03		.08**	.24**

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

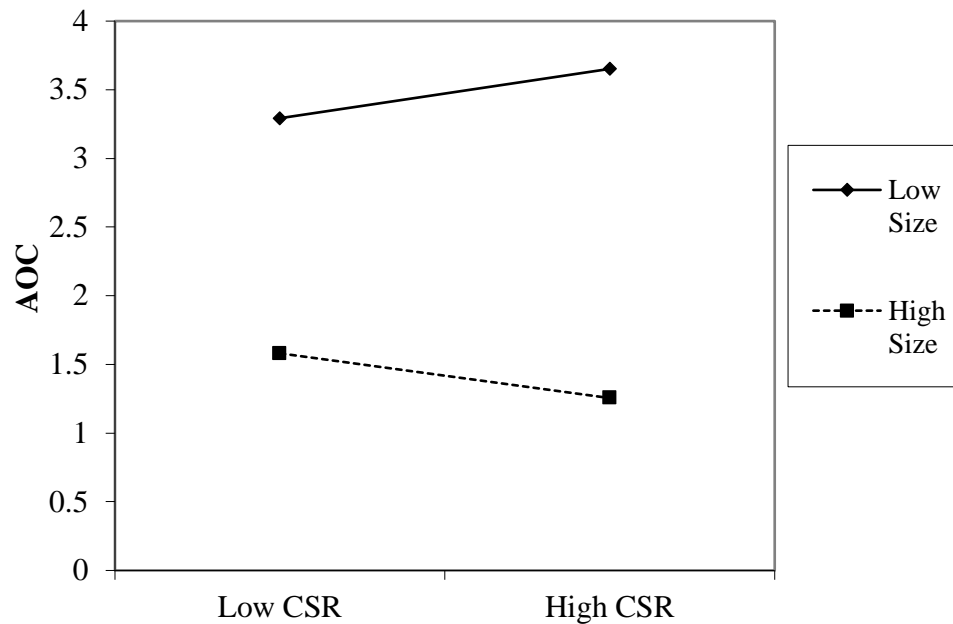
Notes:

$N = 131$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported. All tests are two-tailed

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

AOC: Affective Organizational Commitment

PO Fit: Person-Organization Fit



As shown in Table 2, the relationship between CSR and turnover intentions is negative and significant ( $b = -.44, p < .01$ ), but when AOC is added, the relationship between CSR and turnover intentions becomes non-significant while the relationship between AOC and turnover intentions is negative and significant ( $b = -.60, p < .05$ ), indicating mediation. The hypothesized moderated mediation model was tested using 5000-sample bootstrapping with PROCESS macro (version 3.4.1) by Hayes (2020) in order to achieve 95% bias corrected confidence intervals. Model 4 was used to verify mediation and model 9 was used to test for moderated mediation. As shown in Table 3, the indirect effects of perceptions of CSR on turnover through AOC were  $-.25$  (95% CI  $[-.41, -.12]$ ), supporting H3 since confidence intervals excluded zero. However, the index of moderated mediation was  $-.05$  (95% CI  $[-.24, .07]$ ) for PO fit and  $0.08$  (95% CI  $[-.00,$



.16]) for organization size, so there was no moderated mediation.

**Table 3**  
**Bootstrap Analysis of the Direct and Indirect Effects of CSR on Turnover Intentions**

	Coefficient	
<b>Panel A: Mediation Results</b>		
Direct and indirect effects of CSR on turnover intentions		
CSR → turnover intentions	-.19	-.41, .04
CSR → AOC → turnover intentions	-.25 *	-.41, -.12
<b>Panel B: Moderated Mediation Results</b>		
Conditional indirect effects of CSR on Turnover Intentions		
CSR → AOC → Turnover Intentions		
Low organization size (-1 SD)	-.24 *	-.42, -.05
Average organization size	-.11	-.25, .03
High organization size (+1 SD)	-.02	-.19, .20

\*  $p < .05$

Notes:

$N = 131$ . Unstandardized coefficients are reported. All tests are two-tailed.

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

AOC: Affective Organizational Commitment

## DISCUSSION

CSR's positive relationship with AOC has been established, but one objective of this study was to examine potential moderating variables in that relationship. Although PO Fit was significant in its direct relationship to AOC, it did not act as a moderator in the CSR to AOC relationship as hypothesized. I had thought that CSR's relationship to AOC would be moderated by PO fit (H1) because the more employees agree with their organization's CSR efforts in terms of values, the stronger the effect should be on commitment. However, I believe the moderating effect did not materialize because any survey respondents who did not appreciate (or agree with) the value of their organization's CSR efforts due to a lack of fit would have reflected that in their answer on perception of CSR, and PO fit would not necessarily have changed the relationship from CSR to AOC.

Regarding the significant and negative moderating effect of organization size (H2), the larger the organization, the weaker the relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC become. This is consistent with social information processing theory and social network density theories, as mentioned above. In larger organizations, networks are less dense and so there is wider variance of opinion as information is processed from person to person. Having personally worked in organizations from startups to Fortune 100 companies, it rings true that larger organization size would weaken that positive relationship. In large organizations, CSR efforts might be something an employee hears about once in a while or reads in an annual report. But in smaller organizations, employees can be much closer to the CSR efforts, see the results, and may even be personally involved in those efforts and meeting the beneficiaries. All of which would strengthen the effect on commitment.

Regarding the mediating hypothesis, the negative relationship between perceptions of CSR and turnover intentions flows through AOC (H3). Essentially, it is not enough to simply appreciate an organization's CSR efforts. Employees must experience a change in their commitment level before turnover intentions are affected. This is consistent with social identity theory, in that perceptions of CSR should increase an employee's desire to adopt the organization as part of his or her own identity, and once adopted, should lead to higher commitment and less desire to leave the organization.

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## **Theoretical Implications**

Two major theories leveraged by CSR researchers are social identity and social exchange theories. Since social identity theory suggests that people see organizational memberships as part

of their own identity, this study expected that the relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC would be strengthened by PO fit. Essentially, greater fit between the individual and the organization should strengthen commitment and a lack of fit should weaken commitment. However, since this study's results indicate that PO fit did not moderate the relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC, social identity theory may not have the effect that CSR researchers tend to expect, or the effect of PO fit may be seen between perception of CSR and its antecedents. Social exchange theory may be a better explanation of this relationship, and should be explored with questions about the value individuals put on their organization's CSR efforts and their resulting feelings of indebtedness. Alternatively, the power of PO fit may be between the CSR activity and the perceptions of CSR, rather than after. It is possible that if an employee doesn't agree with the organization's choice of CSR efforts, they wouldn't rank the organization highly in perceptions of CSR to begin with, so the relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC wouldn't be altered.

The moderating effect of organization size is consistent with social information processing and social networking theories in that smaller organizations should have tighter networks and more similarity of opinion, which should lead to stronger relationships between firm activities such as CSR and individual outcomes. Small business and entrepreneurship researchers should investigate this further to see how business owners can leverage these relationships to improve performance.

This study also expected that, consistent with social identity theory, affective organizational commitment would be the mechanism through which perceptions of CSR resulted in decreased turnover intentions. That prediction was fulfilled, perhaps strengthening the support for social identity theory and social exchange theory in CSR research. Individuals who rate their organization highly for CSR will feel greater identification with the organization and hence more

committed, and so will plan to stay with the organization. Similarly, that same appreciation for the organization's CSR efforts could be seen as a benefit to individuals, who will then repay the organization with more commitment and less intent to leave the organization.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Practically speaking, the results of this study highlight the value of CSR activities, especially in smaller organizations. Besides engaging in CSR because it's the right thing to do, startups and small businesses can improve their employees' commitment and lessen their turnover intentions by extending the organization's focus beyond basic profit and growth motives. The implications of this study are found in the answer it provides to the questions surrounding the micro effects of CSR. Namely, that perceptions of CSR have the power to decrease turnover as employees' commitment levels rise, and that this relationship is even more powerful in smaller organizations. In light of these findings, organizational leaders should amplify their CSR efforts, communicate them well to employees, and give employees the opportunity to get personally involved in the CSR efforts wherever possible.

Although this study used time separated data, a time lag between IVs and DVs does not necessarily prove causation. Future research should consider a cross-lagged panel design to solidify evidence that perceptions of CSR lead to AOC, which in turn affect turnover intentions. Directionality could be in question. It is possible that the feelings of loyalty and fit that contribute to commitment could cause an employee to appreciate the organization's CSR efforts, much like couples who have been married for years continue to find new things to appreciate about each other over time.

Additionally, although respondents came from five different countries, 98.9% came from U.S. organizations. It is possible that the findings from this study may differ or simply change in strength when evaluated outside of the U.S. context. For example, in countries where the government more than the free market is regarded as the solution to societal problems, perceptions of CSR may not have similar effects. Future research should reevaluate these relationships in a more global sample.

Finally, future research should continue looking at why perceptions of CSR lead to individual outcomes. It is possible that participation in CSR activities provides employees with a sense of purpose that goes beyond just their role in the organization or the pursuit of profit. Examinations of prosocial values and perceived prosocial impact could also have an impact on the individual outcomes from CSR.

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## CHAPTER 3

### THE POWER OF PURPOSE: HOW PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MISSION ORIENTATION INFLUENCE INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES

# **The Power of Purpose: How Perceptions of Social Mission Orientation Influence Individual Outcomes**

## **ABSTRACT**

Although individuals join social entrepreneurship ventures because they appreciate the organization's social mission orientation (SMO), it is possible that for-profit businesses can also be perceived as having a social mission orientation. If that perception exists, what micro-level effects will that perception have on individual members of the organization, and what mental and emotional mechanisms translate that perception into positive outcomes? This study describes the scale adaptation process for a construct called perception of purpose, and then explores how perception of purpose could act as a mediator between SMO and the individual outcomes of individual performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and whether fit might moderate those relationships. Using interviews as well as a time lagged design with two separate surveys, 142 employed adults completed both questionnaires. Results indicate that perception of purpose is a mechanism through which perception of SMO results in increased OCBs, but not individual self-reported performance ratings. Additionally, person organization (PO) fit moderates the relationship between perception of purpose and OCBs such that high levels of PO fit strengthen the positive relationship. This study contributes to the literature by creating a scale for perception of purpose that has been called for but not provided. Additionally, it introduces perception of purpose as a mechanism between SMO and individual outcomes, helping to explain why perception of SMO results in individual outcomes.

Keywords: social mission orientation, purpose, OCBs, individual performance

# **The Power of Purpose: How Perceptions of Social Mission Orientation Influence Individual Outcomes**

## **INTRODUCTION**

“The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.” – Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Dostoyevsky’s words point out the power of finding one’s purpose, and that same power can be experienced when organizations clearly define and communicate their purpose. This is especially true in small businesses where employees are more likely to know about and perhaps even be directly involved in contributing to the organization’s purpose. With business startup failure rates exceeding 50% in the U.S. (Shane, 2012), factors contributing to entrepreneurial success are a prime focus of research as the field attempts to isolate variables with predictive significance. For example, Kanchana and colleagues (2013) found 14 common challenges for new entrepreneurs that included developing the vision and idea, raising capital, assembling a team, finding the right location, finding good employees, finding good customers, dealing with competition, unforeseen challenges and expenses, keeping up with changes and trends, exiting the business, down in the doldrums, overestimating, focus, passion and purpose. It is noteworthy that discovering one’s purpose is included on the list of biggest challenges, along with fundamental startup activities such as developing an idea and raising capital.

Generally, studies examining antecedents to entrepreneurial failure and success have tended to focus on external environmental factors and internal factors such as entrepreneurial attributes (Ireland, Webb, & Combs, 2005; Nieuwenhuizen & Kroon, 2002). However, very little

research has been done investigating the startup culture itself and the relationship that it may have with individual employee outcomes, which in turn contribute to company success rates. For example, reviews of literature have found that OCBs are positively related to organizational performance, accounting for 19% of the performance quantity variance, 18% of the performance quality variance, and 25% of the financial efficiency variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Similarly, in a socially responsible organization, individual performance may be affected by an organization's social mission orientation and initiatives such as corporate social responsibility. What can entrepreneurs do, as they build a company culture, to improve critical individual employee outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and individual employee performance?

Grounded in social identity theory, this paper introduces an adapted scale to measure purpose, which is the reason that organizations exist beyond profit. It then explores the role that purpose plays in SMO's relationships with individual outcomes, suggesting that purpose is the mechanism through which SMO impacts individual performance and citizenship behaviors. In this paper I begin by reviewing the literature on social mission orientation and purpose, and then review the hypothesis development for a mediated moderation model wherein purpose mediates the relationship between perceptions of SMO and individual outcomes of performance and OCBs, and where the positive relationships that purpose has with individual performance and OCBs are moderated by PO fit. Additionally, this study includes a scale adaptation process to quantify perception of purpose consisting of qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis of the adapted scale.

This article contributes to the social entrepreneurship literature by introducing an adapted scale to measure purpose and then looking at how SMO is related to purpose, which has not been

considered in the literature. It also contributes to the organizational citizenship literature by exploring perception of purpose as a mediating mechanism through which perceptions of SMO impact OCBs, which has not been performed to date. These findings are significant in that they help explain why perceptions of SMO result in OCBs, which will help social entrepreneurs and small business owners alike foster cultures of helpfulness and positivity. The role of purpose as a mediating mechanism is an important addition to the list of OCB's organization level antecedents, which tend to focus on measures such as organizational flexibility, staff support, group cohesion, perceived organizational support, rewards, and spatial distance from the leader (Podsakoff, et al., 2000). Additionally, the role that PO fit plays in strengthening the relationship between purpose and OCBs provides further evidence supporting fit theories, and practically speaking, illustrates the importance of fit in recruiting and selection processes.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Mission Orientation**

Social entrepreneurship has been defined as “entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose” (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006), and examples can be found both in the non-profit and for-profit sectors (Bacq & Janssen, 2011). The construct can be seen in non-profit organizations like water.org that are created purely to address a social concern, but can also be seen in for-profit organizations such as Noonday ([www.noondaycollection.com](http://www.noondaycollection.com)) that empowers women in underprivileged countries by training them to make jewelry and then selling that jewelry for them in first-world countries. The social entrepreneur's dual focus on generating both economic and social value led to research on hybridity in social entrepreneurship, where organizations are classified as varying in intensity on both social and economic dimensions (Shepherd, Williams, & Zhao, 2019). Social entrepreneurship explores organizations that



leverage entrepreneurial characteristics to address social problems, and consists of five dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness, risk management, effectuation, and mission orientation (Dwivedi & Werawardena, 2018).

Research into social entrepreneurship spans multiple disciplines, and a recent review found examples including anthropology looking at its cultural impact, economics looking at its financial implications, education looking at the role education plays in solving social issues, entrepreneurship exploring how social entrepreneurship is a form of entrepreneurship, ethics looking at why people start social entrepreneurship organizations, finance looking at how these organizations are funded, law exploring how these organizations work within the laws of multiple countries, management looking at the strategic moves these organizations make, marketing examining how social entrepreneurs communicate their products and services to consumers, operations management looking at how social entrepreneurs manage logistics across borders, political science looking at the political ramifications of helping a government solve its social problems, psychology investigating what causes social entrepreneurs to help, and sociology delving into what social entrepreneurship means to the societies it helps. However, the research stream is still relatively new, and although it has been addressed in a variety of fields, of the 152 social entrepreneurship articles in a recent review, the majority were conceptual, and of the empirical studies only 16 used quantitative methods (Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009).

Social entrepreneurs tend to display innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking propensity in their key decision making (Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2002), and tend to be driven by compassion (Miller, Grimes, McMullen, & Vogus, 2012). The social mission orientation, which deals with an organization's intention to address social needs, can be a powerful motivator for employees if the employees identify with the mission, but that

relationship requires further study to quantify the effects, and was included as an area for future research in a recent critique of the research stream (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011). Although social entrepreneurship research is typically constrained to not for profit organizations, the psychological drivers that inspire individuals to start or join a social entrepreneurship organization may have similar effects on employees in for-profit organizations as well, if those organizations have a clearly communicated social mission orientation (Weerawardena & Mort, 2001). However, whether in a non-profit or for-profit organization, it is critical that organizations consider all stakeholder expectations when considering social responsibility initiatives (Nason, Bacq, & Gras, 2017).

The social entrepreneurship scale provided by Carraher and colleagues (2016) shows how the focus of social mission orientation is on creating social value over private value, constantly looking for new ways to serve the social mission, and striving to be a “world changer”. Similarly, the social entrepreneurship scale provided by Dwivedi and Weerawardena (2018) shows how individuals with strong social mission orientation will believe that “our philosophy guides everything we do in the organization” and “we are deeply committed to creating social value”. These scales highlight the difference between social mission orientation and CSR. Social mission orientation has a much stronger focus on the organization’s external social purpose than CSR, which, as seen in the scale provided by Turker (2009b) includes elements of internal responsibility (such as ethics and regulatory compliance) and external responsibility (such as environmental protection) in addition to the more philanthropic factors. In the CSR scales, philanthropy is mentioned as a way the organization can “promote the well-being of society”, but social impact is not described as part of the organization’s purpose as it is in social mission orientation.

## **Perception of Purpose**

As mentioned above, lack of purpose was listed as one of the top 14 challenges faced by entrepreneurs (Kanchana, et al., 2013). Although Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) called for a focus on purpose as a precursor to effective strategic management over a quarter of a century ago, little progress has been made in the stream of research, despite the continued discussion by consultants and practitioners alike (Hollensbe, Wookey, Hickey, & George, 2014). In developing a theory of business, Donaldson and Walsh (2015) propose that the purpose of business is to optimize collective value rather than just shareholder value, and popular opinion seems to support that theory, with numerous surveys showing that the majority of U.S. employees want their employers to support causes or social issues (Cone, 2007). Indeed, some have argued that traditional theories of management (that have largely been borrowed from the field of economics) may be the basis of some of the problems in today's corporate world, and that leaders need to remember that organizations exist to serve people (Jordi, 2010). That is their purpose.

Purpose has been defined as the reason for which an organization is created or exists, and includes elements such as mission, vision, and organizational goals that can contribute to employees' attitudes and also influence outcomes such as performance (Collins & Porras, 1991; Gartenberg, Prat, & Serafeim, 2019; Hollensbe, et al., 2014; McDonald, 2007; Salem Khalifa, 2012; Sinek, 2009). Another definition provided by Hurth and colleagues (2018) is "an organization's meaningful and enduring reason to exist that aligns with long-term financial performance, provides a clear context for daily decision making, and unifies and motivates relevant stakeholders". Sisodia and colleagues (2014) provide 30 case studies of companies that leverage perceptions of purpose to gain competitive advantage and provide value to stakeholders by freely challenging industry dogma, aligning stakeholder interests, breaking traditional

tradeoffs (both/and instead of either/or), operating with a long-term perspective, favoring organic growth over M&A, blending work and play, and rejecting traditional marketing models.

Malnight and colleagues (2019) found in CEO interviews with 28 companies that were growing at 30% or more that purpose helped them “redefine the playing field and reshape the value proposition” which resulted in benefits such as unity, motivation, and increased impact.

Similarly, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) introduced the concept of “conscious capitalism” which encourages organizations to be more conscious of their higher purpose and why they exist.

Hollensbe and colleagues (2014) address six properties that help foster purpose: dignity, solidarity, plurality, subsidiarity, reciprocity, and sustainability. Regarding solidarity, the authors discuss how organizations recognize the communality they share with others in society and the extent to which they consider the needs of the society as important to the organization. These needs are not those that help with generating revenue or profits. Rather, an organization reflects solidarity when it seeks opportunities to “serve the broadest community especially the underprivileged” (Hollensbe et al., 2014: 1230). Collins and Porras (1991) discuss how a statement of purpose should reveal how an organization fills basic human needs, and is the organization’s essence, or its “why”. A well-defined purpose can also help to attract and retain employees whose personal purpose fits those of the organization (Collins & Porras, 1991), however, purpose won’t make a difference unless it alters the way employees operate within the organization (White, Yakis-Douglas, Helanummi-Cole, & Ventresca, 2017), and leaders can most effectively communicate the vision and values that contribute to purpose by descriptive vision imagery and a limited number of values (Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014). An aspect of perception of purpose is evident when seemingly insignificant tasks are executed with energy and care because the employee believes that any small role can contribute to the organization’s

successful pursuit of its purpose or social impact. For example, Carton (2018) examined how leaders at NASA in the 1960s motivated employees at all levels by attaching every task to the overall objective and the grand work that it symbolized.

One document flowing out from purpose is the mission statement, which has been described as a form of communication through which management beliefs and perspectives are transmitted to employees and stakeholders (Hirota, Kubo, Miyajima, Hong, & Park, 2010). The literature on mission statements offers two schools of thought to explain the role of a mission statement – either as strategic or cultural (Campbell, Shrivess, & Bohmbach-Saager, 2001). The effects of mission statements on performance have been investigated at the organizational level (Bart & Baetz, 1998), and findings reveal that mission statements are associated with higher levels of organizational performance, but research on the link between mission statements and individual employee performance is inconclusive (Bart & Hupfer, 2004; Perkins, 2008). However, pro-social mission statements can improve motivation (Fehrler & Kosfeld, 2014).

Although mission statements have been cited as antecedents to organizational commitment that vary in effectiveness (Bart & Hupfer, 2004), and research has shown that organizational commitment acts as a moderator between mission statements and individual performance (Macedo, Pinho, & Silva, 2016), simply drafting a mission statement does not necessarily improve individual outcomes such as organizational commitment (Perkins, 2008). Mission statements can be effective if they contain a “clear sense of purpose that is shared by most members” (Denton, 2001: 313), but they will be ineffective if they are essentially drafted by senior leadership without employee input and then passed down to the rank and file as mandates.

It may be the belief in the mission (or mission statement) that makes the difference in individual outcomes. Peter Schultz, the former CEO of Porsche, told a story about three people doing the same job on a construction site. When asked what they were doing, the first said “breaking rocks”, the second said “earning a living”, and the third replied “helping to build a cathedral” (David, 1989: 96). In every organization, the employee with a clear sense of the work’s significance will probably be more dedicated to the organization and perform at a higher level than the employee who may be committed to the organization but doesn’t believe in its mission. Supporting this assertion, research has shown that performance improves if senior leaders spend time with employees passing on the vision of the organization (Jing, Avery, & Bergsteiner, 2014) and if employees are allowed to interact with the beneficiaries of their work (Grant, 2012) in order to understand the deeper impact of their work.

Purpose is also related to self-efficacy, which has been defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Self-efficacy is the expectation of personal effectiveness that leads to behavioral decisions such as how much effort to put forth on a task, how long to persist when facing obstacles, and what kinds of activities to pursue (Bandura & Adams, 1977). A clear sense of purpose can increase the employees’ self-efficacy as they feel like they are contributing to something meaningful and that they believe in, which then can enhance individual performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

In this study, purpose measures the extent to which employees perceive and believe in a greater mission in their organization, and that purpose is the mechanism through which SMO is related to positive individual outcomes.

## **Individual Performance**

Employee performance is a key consideration for organizations and businesses (Cardy, 2004), which explains the vast amount of research that has been conducted on ways to improve job performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Petty, McGee, & Cavender, 1984). Some of the antecedents of employee performance include employee engagement (Schneider, Macey, Barbera, & Martin, 2009; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010), individual identity and desire to achieve (O'Connor, 2006), job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001; Petty et al., 1984), leadership style (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Ribeiro, Duarte, & Filipe, 2018), Leader-Member Exchange (Mazur, 2012), organizational commitment (Salminen, Vanhala, & Heilmann, 2017), and perceptions of CSR (Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, & Williams, 2006; Shen & Benson, 2016; Upham, 2006). Job characteristics theory has been used to explain these effects on job performance. This theory looks at how aspects of a job can influence employees' perceptions of work in terms of its meaningfulness as well their ownership of the outcome of their work (Fried & Ferris, 1987). Job characteristics theory focuses specifically on individual employees' positions within the organization and considers aspects such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Fried & Ferris, 1987).

## **Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**

Organ (1988: 4) defined organizational citizenship behaviors as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization. By discretionary, we mean that the behavior is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, that is, the clearly specifiable terms of the person's employment contract with the organization; the behavior is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable." Organ (1990b) outlined a five-component model that included altruism, courtesy,

sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Antecedents include task characteristics and leadership styles such as transformational leadership and LMX, however, the relationship between organizational characteristics and OCBs is mixed (Podsakoff, et al., 2000).

## **HYPOTHESIS DERIVATION AND HYPOTHESIS STATEMENTS**

Individual employees tend to experience a greater sense of meaning and purpose when they are given the opportunity to contribute positively to beneficiaries (Grant, 2008). The work as meaning inventory (WAMI) is one measure of this sense of meaning in work, and has been linked to increased levels of job satisfaction and life satisfaction as well as lower levels of absenteeism (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). Although meaning in work seems similar to purpose, the measure includes items such as “I understand how my work contributes to my life’s meaning” and “I know my work makes a positive difference in the world”, and is useful for measuring how individuals have found ways to find meaning in their individual tasks, but not necessarily in the organization’s purpose.

However, since employee psychological needs such as affiliative, esteem, and self-actualization tend to drive their engagement in CSR (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; Tuzzolino & Armandi, 1981), it is possible that the same psychological needs that CSR participation fulfills are also fulfilled by SMO, and that SMO may result in increased perception of purpose when employees perceive and identify with their organization’s SMO. Therefore, I expect that the relationship between perceptions of SMO and perception of purpose will be positive, as SMO meets the psychological needs that an employee’s individual tasks may not, and provides the employee with a greater sense of the organization’s purpose.



*H1: There is a positive relationship between perceptions of SMO and perception of purpose.*

As employees perceive the importance of their organization's SMO and that perception leads to increased perception of greater organizational purpose, employees will respond by supporting their organization through higher levels of personal performance. This is consistent with social identity theory, since employees who see and appreciate their organization's SMO and purpose will adopt those attributes as part of their own identity due to their association with the organization.

Additionally, consistent with social exchange theory, employees who have adopted positive organizational attributes as part of their own identity will strive to repay the organization following the norm of reciprocity. Finally, since motivation has been identified as a strong predictor of new venture performance (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014), connecting employees to the company's purpose should improve individual employee performance.

*H2: There is a positive relationship between perception of purpose and individual performance.*

However, the strength of the positive relationship between perception of purpose and individual performance is expected to vary depending on the individual's level of PO Fit. If an individual joins an organization, but then finds that they don't share the values and beliefs of the organization, individual performance will suffer and the positive relationship between purpose and individual performance will be weakened. For an extreme example, consider an animal lover and PETA member who joins an organization that has a mission to feed the homeless, but one of the ways they do that is by hunting wild deer and providing that venison to homeless shelters.

Although the individual perceives the organization's purpose, a lack of fit with the organization will weaken the normally positive relationship that purpose has with individual performance.

*H3: The positive relationship between perception of purpose and individual performance will be moderated by PO Fit such that the relationship will be strengthened for those who have high PO Fit and weakened for those who have low PO Fit.*

Similarly, when individuals perceive their organization's purpose, it will have a positive effect on their OCBs as they endeavor to support the organization in ways that are above and beyond their official job duties. However, that relationship will also be moderated by PO Fit, since the positive individual outcomes will depend on to what extent they agree with the organization's values and purpose.

*H4: There is a positive relationship between perception of purpose and OCBs.*

*H5: The positive relationship between perception of purpose and OCBs will be moderated by PO Fit such that the relationship will be strengthened for those who have high PO Fit and weakened for those who have low PO Fit.*

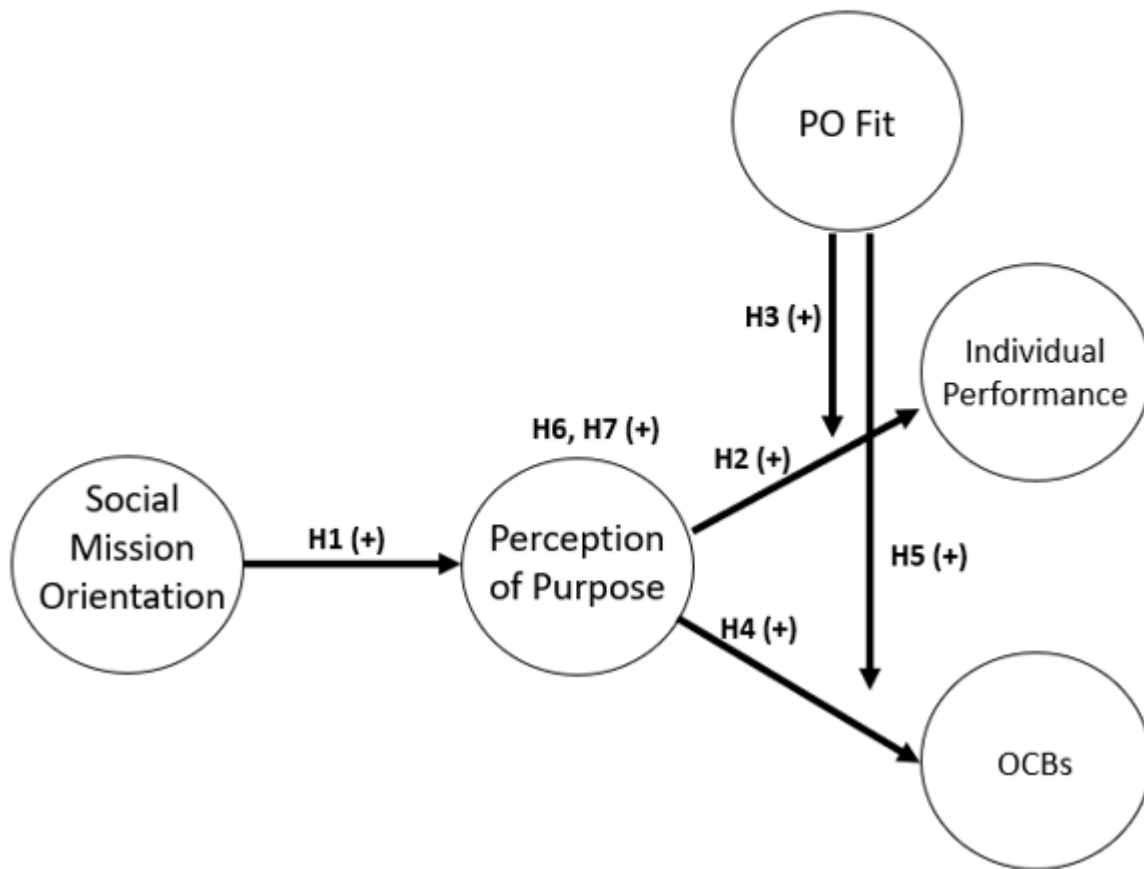
Consistent with social exchange theory, which has been used to explain relationships such as the link between perceived organizational support and performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Sungu, Weng, & Kitule, 2019), employees who attach a level of significance to their organization's SMO and experience an increased sense of purpose will essentially repay the organization by doing their best to support it and make it successful. This support is expected to manifest itself in the form of increased levels of individual in-role performance as well as increased levels of OCBs. Therefore, it is expected that perception of purpose will mediate the positive relationships that SMO has with individual performance and OCBs.

*H6: Perception of purpose will mediate the positive relationship between perceptions of SMO and individual performance.*

*H7: Perception of purpose will mediate the positive relationship between perceptions of SMO and OCBs.*

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized model.

**Figure 1**  
**Model Showing Hypothesized Relationships**



## METHODS

### Qualitative CEO Interviews

In order to explore the construct of purpose, qualitative interviews were performed. I began a few C-level executives and then expanded the interviews to a larger group of junior level employees. First, CEOs of small and mid-sized businesses were contacted via email and asked to describe their background and company. I then prefaced the survey by describing purpose: “Many organizations have an explicitly-stated ‘purpose’, which is its reason for existing. Often this is captured in a mission statement, but sometimes mission statements don’t capture an organization’s true purpose. Employees of the organization may have varying degrees of personal alignment with this purpose. One employee may have a deep personal commitment and connection to the purpose, whereas, another employee might not have any real commitment or connection to the purpose. You could think of it as a continuum of commitment to the organization’s purpose from low to high.” I then asked four questions regarding purpose: Question 1: In your opinion, does it matter where an employee is on this continuum of commitment to the organization’s purpose? Please explain briefly why you think that. Question 2: Now think about an entrepreneurial start up organization still in the first 1-3 years of its initial development. Would employee “mission alignment” matter any less or any more in the case of an entrepreneurial start up? Please explain briefly why you think that. Question 3: Can you think of a specific individual in your most recent company, who shows/showed very strong commitment to your organization’s mission. What specific attitudes and/or actions reveal that person’s strong commitment to the mission? Question 4: Please describe your current company and your role in that company.

Table 1 lists the actual individual responses to all three questions. For question 1, (does it matter where an employee is on this continuum of commitment to the organization’s purpose),

all of the CEOs agreed that it was important (calling it “crucial” and “essential”), but some also mentioned that the relative importance depended upon the individual’s role, job function, and responsibilities. To quote one CEO, “I think it is crucial to have committed and engaged employees, and having that buy-in on whatever explains the reason for the organization they are working for is also crucial.”

**Table 1  
CEO Interview Responses**

<p><b>•Question 1: In your opinion, does it matter where an employee is on this continuum of commitment to the organization’s purpose? Please explain briefly why you think that.</b></p>
<p>I think it is crucial to have committed and engaged employees, and having that buy in on whatever explains the reason for the organization they are working for is also crucial. Call it mission or just culture, long term</p>
<p>Does it matter ‘for what?’ or ‘to what?’ overall, I think it depends on the role and job function and</p>
<p>I run a small start up and for us it is essential that all employees understand where they are on the continuum. We work virtually, have a very highly compensated group, and design innovative products. For us, it is critical that all employees know their value to the organization and why their contributions matter to the long term success of</p>
<p><b>•Question 2: Now think about an entrepreneurial start up organization still in the first 1-3 years of its initial development. Would employee “mission alignment” matter any less or any more in the case of an</b></p>
<p>For a startup I think it depends. I have seen startups that go and grow based on a hunch, and its ok. People like me would perhaps require a little bit of more formality if deciding to be part of one, just to be able to validate that the initial ground rules maintain and if not that the reason for change still makes the organization valuable to</p>
<p>In my own personal experience, I believe it matters more in a startup since times are often tough and you need to believe in what you are doing to be resilient and effective.</p>
<p>We are in year three of a start up and have secured some excellent IP patents on our designs for a growing market. We have added experienced skills to move these products from concept to production. We very carefully vet all new employees to ensure that they fit the team dynamic and meet the mission alignment. Everyone is cross trained on the development products. Certain team members have primary responsibility for specific designs but they act as “devil’s advocate” to critique the other projects. Very honest and open dialog is expected</p>
<p><b>•Question 3: Can you think of a specific individual in your most recent company, who shows/showed very strong commitment to your organization’s mission. What specific attitudes and/or actions reveal that</b></p>
<p>When times are tough, when things get rough, it’s on those who clearly understand the organization where you find the leverage to overcome obstacles. Most important attitudes and behaviors are related to trust,</p>
<p>In our group, our mission and purpose is very much a part of what we do and how we do it, especially when we are in the middle of long-range planning and prioritizing certain initiatives over others. Those that align themselves strongly to the company’s purpose are especially vocal during these kinds of meetings.</p>
<p>My VP of Engineering. He was a highly compensated director at a former company that I worked with and was part of a reduction in force due to his high salary. I specifically flew to Dallas, TX to recruit this individual and offered him 5% of the company for \$500. It was the single best investment I have ever made. While he is an industry veteran, I gave him a white board view to design and build the best platform possible with the only caveat that he not infringe on any IP within the market space. He embraced that broad brief, hired a number of colleagues that he had trust in and within 18 months had designed a platform for hyper-scale data centers that is industry leading. He embraced that second lease in life. Honest individual, strong technical skills but with a</p>

For question 2, (would employee “mission alignment” matter any less or any more in the case of an entrepreneurial startup), one CEO said that mission alignment matters more in an entrepreneurial environment “since times are often tough and you need to believe in what you are doing to be resilient and effective”. Another said that it matters so much that they incorporate it into their hiring process: “we very carefully vet all new employees to ensure that they fit the team dynamic and meet the mission alignment.” However, one CEO did indicate that it may matter more for some startups than it does for others, since some are based simply on a good idea and a hunch, as opposed to lofty purpose and mission motives.

Question 3 asked what attitudes and/or actions reveal to them that an employee is committed to the organization’s mission. One CEO listed trust, engagement, and openness as the most important attitudes, saying “when things get rough, it’s on those who clearly understand the organization where you find the leverage to overcome obstacles.” One said that “mission and purpose is very much a part of what we do and how we do it, especially when we are in the middle of long-range planning and prioritizing certain initiatives over others. Those that align themselves strongly to the company’s purpose are especially vocal during these kinds of meetings.” One CEO mentioned a specific employee who embraced the company’s “singular purpose to design an innovative and flexible platform”, which led to patents and buy-out offers for the company.

### **Qualitative Employee Interviews**

Having explored the CEO perspective on purpose, the next step was to ask individuals at lower levels of organizations. To broaden the scope of my investigation into purpose, I asked 36 junior level employees what impact having a sense of purpose at work has on people. One said, “In my work experience, I have definitely seen people work harder and feel more inspired when

they have a strong tie to the purpose of their work, and I have also seen the complete opposite where people don't work as hard because they don't see a purpose in doing so.” Another said, “In my work experience, I have seen a connection between purpose and positive/negative work behavior. The workers who believe in the purpose of the organization will tend to work harder because they enjoy what they are doing. Those workers want to help the organization achieve its purpose, thus are more inspired to perform better and be more productive. These workers are more tied to the organization because they see themselves working there for a long time. On the other hand, workers who do not believe in the purpose of the company are less inspired to work hard. They do not see a future at the organization, therefore they will not be as productive as other workers. I feel more motivated to work hard and perform well when the company's purpose and values tie to my beliefs.” Another said, “From my experience, there is without a doubt an obvious connection between purpose and positive or negative work behavior. If someone doesn't feel a strong tie to the organization's purpose they tend to feel as if the work they're doing is meaningless. People like to feel inspired to put in the work when there is a strong purpose behind their work. That's where they get the motivation to get up in the morning and do it every day because the motive behind the work is full of meaning.” Although some respondents mentioned that in order for purpose to matter, the company has to clearly communicate it to employees and individual employees have to care about it, overall, there was broad consensus that a sense of purpose beyond just a paycheck is connected with positive individual outcomes.

### **Quantitative Surveys**

For the survey portion of the study, respondents were recruited via social media and business networking platforms, and were provided a link to the first wave survey that included items affecting the first half of the model. Recruiting and testing via social media platforms

provide equivalent results to in-person settings, according to Casler and colleagues (2013) who found that “crowd-sourced participants can provide high quality data and they bring a highly desirable degree of diversity to the researcher’s table.” Social media recruiting is the modern version of using one’s personal contacts, which is a common recruiting tactic for academic studies (e.g., Kopaneva, 2019). For example, Yuan and colleagues (2018) “collected data from 250 participants recruited through various recruitment methods including MBA alumni contact lists, the research team’s professional contacts, word-of-mouth, and research recruitment ads”.

Data was collected from employees at organizations ranging from startup to those over 10,000 employees. 203 respondents completed the first wave of surveys, however, only 185 provided email addresses so they could receive the second survey. Since very little longitudinal research has been done on the hypothesized relationships and to minimize the threat of common method bias, the surveys were time lagged, with DVs measured at least one month after IVs. 142 participants responded to the second wave survey that included variables in the second half of the model. Although this level of attrition seemed high, the two surveys were 40 and 60 items respectively and participants were not compensated beyond their chances in a raffle, so some level of attrition was expected. Several reminders were sent to survey 1 participants, but the attrition rate remained high. However, one-way ANOVA analysis indicated no significant difference in control variables or independent variables between the group of participants who only filled out one survey compared to the group of participants who filled out both.

Since respondents were recruited via social media and hence may have been socially connected to each other or may even have been from the same organization, I performed a frequency analysis on the question, “what is the name of your company” to evaluate potential nesting effects in the data. However, the largest frequency response only had 3 respondents, so



that assuaged my concern with potential nesting effects. Of the 142 participants, the majority (58%) were female, the average age was 43 years, 52% had been with their organization five years or less, and 51% reported belonging to organizations with less than 500 employees.

## Measures

Social mission orientation has been measured with the four-item scale developed by Dwivedi and Weerawardena (2018), which includes the following items ( $\alpha = .80$ ): “Our philosophy guides everything we do in the organization”, “We often ask ourselves - ‘How is this activity achieving the purpose of the organization?’”, “We are deeply committed to creating social value”, and “Whatever surplus funds we generate are re-invested towards fulfillment of the mission.” However, this scale is normally used in the non-profit context, so the fourth item regarding investing all surplus funds back in to the mission may not resonate with respondents who work in for-profit organizations. After removing item four, the Cronbach’s alpha for the three-item scale in my sample was 0.74.

PO Fit was measured by the 3-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue ( $\alpha = .91$ ) in 2002. Items included “The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values”, “My personal values match my organization’s values and culture”, and “My organization’s values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.93.

Individual Performance. Although there can be concerns with measurement error and mono-method bias with perceived performance data, self-reported measures of performance have shown positive correlation with objective measures (Delaney and Huselid, 1996; Robinson and Pearce, 1988). Therefore, individual performance was measured using the three-item self-reported scale developed in 2017 by Salminen and colleagues ( $\alpha = .74$ ) which includes the

following items: “I am satisfied with my work performance”, “My employer is satisfied with my work performance”, “I am satisfied with my work performance compared to that of other employees who do the same kind of job.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.73.

OCBs were measured by the 14-item OCBI and OCBO sections of the performance scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). The Cronbach’s alpha for this combined scale in my sample was 0.82. Sample items include “I help others who have been absent”, “I help others who have heavy workloads”, and “I conserve and protect organizational property”.

Perception of Purpose. Although Gartenberg and colleagues (2019) presented a scale for purpose, it was taken post-hoc from a larger workplace environment survey, the items taken sound similar to affective organizational commitment scales, and the authors did not provide any evidence of discriminant validity. Since one intent of this study is to look at perception of purpose rather than commitment, and since no validated scale exists, I needed to adapt one. Starting with the definition of purpose provided by Hurth and colleagues in 2017 (“an organization’s meaningful and enduring reason to exist that aligns with long-term financial performance, provides a clear context for daily decision making, and unifies and motivates relevant stakeholders”), I adapted items that fit the definition of purpose from several other existing scales. I began with 9 items adapted from the purpose-related questions within the AOC scale by O’Reilly and Chatman (1986), the meaningful work scale developed by Steger, et al. (2012), the mission scale developed by Denison and Neale (1996), and the mission attachment scale developed by Brown and Yoshioka (2003).

1. The reason I prefer this organization to others is because of what it stands for, its values. (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986)
2. What this organization stands for is important to me. (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986)
3. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world. (Steger, et al., 2012)
4. The work I do serves a greater purpose. (Steger, et al., 2012)
5. This organization has a clear mission that gives meaning and direction to its work. (Denison & Neale, 1996)
6. This organization has a long-term purpose and direction. (Denison & Neale, 1996)
7. I am well aware of the direction and mission of the organization. (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003)
8. I like to work for this organization because I believe in its mission and values. (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003)
9. My work contributes to carrying out the mission of this organization. (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003)

I then sent the 9-item scale to selected subject matter experts within the field of management who have expertise in these constructs. The subject matter experts agreed that items three through nine seemed to capture the construct of purpose, but some experts disputed the relevance of items one and two, which seemed more like PO fit and values congruence. The other concern was the use of “mission” and “positive difference” in some of the items, as they may be conflated with other constructs such as mission statements and meaning in work. Therefore, we changed wordings when necessary to more accurately reflect purpose rather than mission. I then looked at correlations, item-total correlations, “alpha if item deleted” statistics, and factor loadings in a one-factor principal components analysis. This analysis resulted in a pared down scale that focuses only on the items that address the individual’s awareness of the organization’s purpose and belief in the purpose.

In the actual survey, the three final items were prefaced by the following statement: “The next set of questions ask about your company's ‘purpose.’ A company's purpose involves leaders' ideas about what they want the company to accomplish, and what kind of organization they want

the company to be. It is the big picture reason the company exists, beyond just making money or profit.” The final scale includes the following: “The organization serves a greater purpose”, “the organization has a long-term purpose and direction”, and “I am well aware of the purpose of my organization”, which had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.88 in my sample. All three items correlate with a minimum of .701 with at least one other item. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy has a value of .744 which is greater than the lower threshold of 0.6 suggested by Hair and colleagues. (2010), and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant (chi-square = 217.549, df = 3, p < 0.000). Also, the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix all exceed the suggested threshold of 0.5 recommended by Hair, et al. (2010), ranging from 0.733 – 0.766. Principal component analysis revealed that all of the loadings ranging from 0.890 – 0.904 are well above the generally accepted threshold of 0.3 (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). All four items resulted in a single component with an Eigenvalue of 2.424 and 80% of variance explained, which is above the recommended threshold of 60% (Hinkin, 2005).

I also needed to establish discriminant validity between the purpose scale and social mission orientation. In order to establish discriminant validity, I compared the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the squared correlation estimate between SMO and the adapted purpose scale. As shown in Table 2, social mission orientation had an AVE of 0.46 and the adapted purpose scale had an AVE of 0.70, which are greater than the squared correlation of the variables (SMO-PURP 0.36).

**Table 2**  
**Average Variance Extracted**

Construct	Items	Standardized Loadings	AVE
SMO	SMO1	0.683	0.463
	SMO2	0.548	
	SMO3	0.789	
Purpose	PUR4	0.693	0.700
	PUR6	0.742	
	PUR7	0.665	

Additionally, factor analysis on SMO and Purpose reveals two distinct factors and that no items cross load, which implies discriminant validity (Hair, et al., 2010). As shown in Table 3, with Eigenvalues of 3.542 and 0.909, the respective variance explained is 59% and 15%. The total variance explained is 74%, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 60% suggested by Hinkin (2005). Additionally, the correlation between the factors is 0.43, which is less than the 0.80 maximum threshold recommended by Bhattacharjee (2002) to indicate discriminant validity of a scale.

**Table 3**  
**Factor Loadings**

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	
		1	2
Purpose	PUR4	.891	
	PUR6	.911	
	PUR7	.879	
Social Mission Orientation	SMO1		.773
	SMO2		.935
	SMO3		.485
<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>		<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.74</b>

Variance explained = 74%. KMO = 0.831. Oblimin with Kaiser normalization.

When comparing SMO and purpose, CFA utilizing Amos 27.0.0 confirms that the two-factor model is the best fit to the data. Table 4 compares the two-factor model with a one-factor model, which indicates that the two-factor model is the best fit. Additionally, a chi-square difference test indicates that the two-factor model fits the data better and so there is a significant difference between the two scales.

**Table 4**  
**Model Comparison**

Model name	Model compared	$\chi^2$ (df)	SRMR	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$ and $\Delta df$ (relative to two factor model)
Two factor	SMO and Purpose on two factors	32.52 (11)	0.06	0.12	0.94	0.94	0.92	-
One factor	SMO and Purpose on one factor	89.35 (12)	0.09	0.22	0.79	0.80	0.74	$\Delta\chi^2 = 56.83$ $\Delta df = 1$

Note:  $\chi^2$  refers to the Chi-square estimate;  $df$  refers to degrees of freedom  
SMO: social mission orientation

In terms of model fit, although chi-square was significant in the two-factor model indicating we do not have perfect fit (Chi-square = 32.524, degrees of freedom = 11,  $p = 0.001$ ), the relative chi-square (CMIN/DF) is less sensitive to sample size and the value of 2.96 is below the threshold of 5.0 suggested by Schumacker and Lomax (2004). Additionally, CFI and IFI are considered suitable for small sample sizes (Fan et al., 1999), and values of 0.95 indicate good model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). This model's CFI was 0.94 and IFI was 0.94, indicating acceptable fit. Other indicators included TLI at 0.92 and RMSEA at 0.12. Although RMSEA doesn't quite meet the upper recommended threshold of 0.08 (Byrne, 2010), Hu and Bentler (1999) noted that "RMSEA tends to overreject true-population models at small sample size and thus are less preferable when sample size is small." Most other indicators, including SRMR of 0.06 which is less than the 0.08 threshold recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999), suggest acceptable fit. Following Hu and Bentler's (1999) recommendation for a two-index presentation strategy "which includes using the maximum likelihood (ML) based standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) and supplementing it with either Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Bollen's (1989) Fit Index (BL89), Relative Noncentrality Index (RNI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Gamma Hat, McDonald's Centrality Index (Mc), or root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA)", SRMR, IFI, and CFI all indicate acceptable fit of the purpose and social mission orientation two-factor model.

Controls. Veteran Status was measured by one item: "Have you ever served on Active Duty in the US Armed Forces (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps or Navy)?" and respondents are offered a "yes" or "no" response (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019). Age, gender and tenure with the organization were also self-reported. Social desirability bias was controlled

for with the 10-item social desirability bias short form developed by Strahan and Gerbasi in 1972. Cronbach's alpha for my sample was 0.72.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 summarizes the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables. There was strong positive correlation between purpose and social mission orientation, individual performance, and OCBs. Among the control variables, age had a strong positive correlation with tenure, individual performance, and OCBs. Gender had a strong positive correlation with veteran status and individual performance. Tenure had strong positive correlation with OCBs. Finally, social desirability had strong positive correlation with individual performance and OCBs.

**Table 5**  
**Correlations and Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Age	--								
2 Gender	-.04	--							
3 Tenure	.49**	.01	--						
4 Veteran Status	-.08	.38**	.11	--					
5 Social Desirability	.10	.16	.04	-.03	--				
6 Social Mission Orientation	.10	.14	-.04	-.10	.13	--			
7 Purpose	.16	.12	.06	-.12	.13	.63**	--		
8 OCBs	.29**	.17	.21*	-.04	.35**	.13	.26**	--	
9 Individual Performance	.25**	.24**	.10	-.08	.29**	.20*	.27**	.51**	--
Mean	42.02	1.60	6.88	1.89	3.32	3.69	4.06	4.16	4.15
Standard Deviation	13.73	0.49	5.64	0.31	0.55	0.74	0.84	0.40	0.61

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Notes:

Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female

Veteran Status: 1 = yes, 2 = no

OCBs: organizational citizenship behaviors

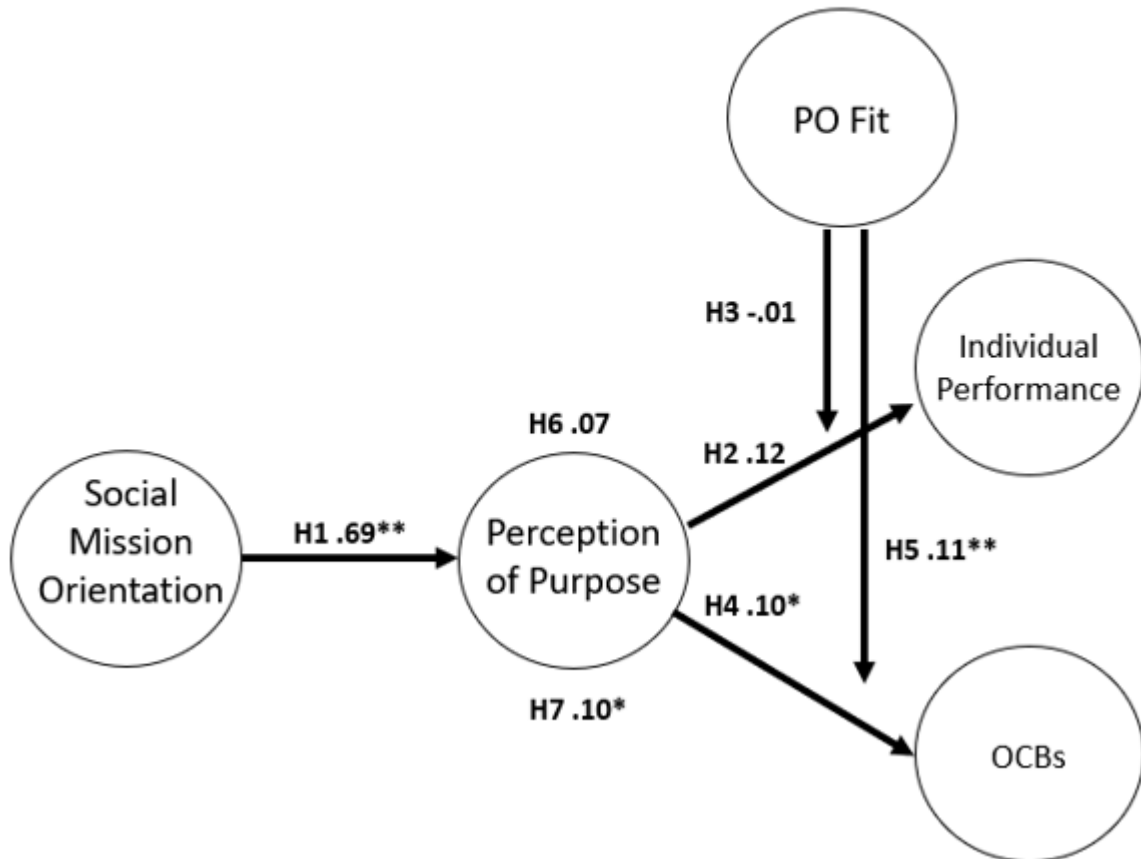


## Hypothesis Testing

For direct effects, all independent variables exceeded .20 tolerance levels and had variance-inflation factor (VIF) values less than four. In *Advanced Diagnostics for Multiple Regression: A Supplement to Multivariate Data Analysis* by Hair and colleagues (1998), the authors suggest that VIF values may become a concern as high as four. Since all of the VIF values in this sample were less than four, I do not believe that multivariate multicollinearity was a concern (Hair, et al., 1998). The hypothesized moderated mediation model was tested using 5000-sample bootstrapping with PROCESS macro model 14 (version 3.4.1) by Hayes (2020) in order to achieve 95% bias corrected confidence intervals.

As depicted in Figure 2 and Table 6, regression results for the model indicate that after controlling for age, gender, tenure, veteran status, and social desirability, social mission orientation has a significant and strongly positive relationship with purpose ( $b = .69, p < .01$ ), so H1 is supported. Purpose is positively related to OCBs ( $b = .10, p < .05$ ) but not to individual performance, so H2 is not supported while H4 is supported.

**Figure 2**  
**Model with Results**

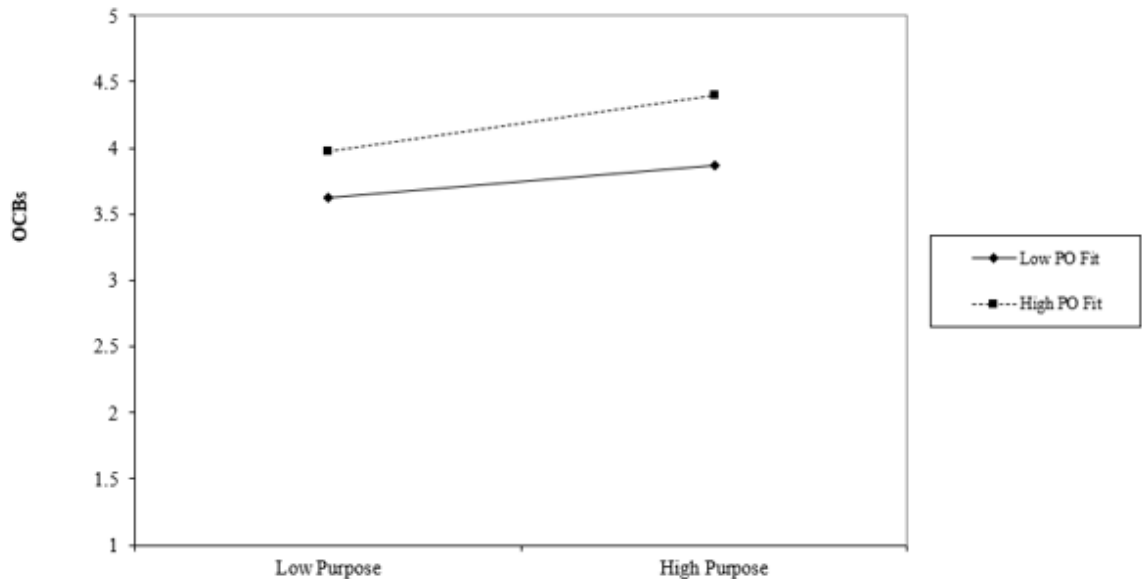


**Table 6**  
**Regression Analysis and Interaction Representation**

	Purpose		Individual Performance			OCBs		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Age	0.01	0.00	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*
Gender	0.30	0.10	0.34**	0.30**	0.30**	0.13	0.11	0.11
Tenure	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
Veteran Status	-0.45	-0.21	-0.30	-0.24	-0.26	-0.11	-0.08	-0.06
Social Desirability	0.12	0.04	0.24*	0.23*	0.21*	0.22**	0.21**	0.23**
Social Mission		0.69**		0.00	0.01		-0.04	-0.05
Purpose				0.12	0.37		0.10*	-0.28
PO Fit				0.00	0.29		-0.01	-0.45*
Purpose x PO Fit					-0.07			0.11**
$R^2$	0.07	0.41**	0.19**	0.22**	0.23**	0.22**	0.25**	0.29**
$\Delta R^2$		0.34**		0.03	0.01		0.03	0.04**

\*  $p < .05$   
\*\*  $p < .01$

Notes:  
 $N = 130$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported. All tests are two-tailed.  
PO fit: person-organization fit



Additionally, as shown in Table 7, purpose does not mediate the relationship between social mission orientation and individual performance, so H6 is not supported, but it does mediate the relationship between social mission orientation and OCBs 0.10 (95% CI [.02, .19]), so H7 is supported. Finally, PO fit does not moderate the relationship between purpose and

individual performance, so H3 is not supported. However, PO fit does moderate the positive relationship between purpose and OCBs such that higher levels of PO fit strengthen the direct relationship, ( $b = .11, p < .01$ ), so H5 is supported.

**Table 7**  
**Bootstrap Analysis of the Direct and Indirect Effects of Social Mission Orientation on Individual Performance and OCBs**

	Coefficient	
<b>Panel A: Mediation Results</b>		
Direct and indirect effects of SMO on individual performance		
SMO → Individual Performance	.01	-.20, .21
SMO → Purpose → Individual Performance	.07	-.06, .21
Direct and indirect effects of SMO on OCBs		
SMO → OCBs	-.04	-.17, .08
SMO → Purpose → OCBs	.10 *	.02, .19
<b>Panel B: Moderated Mediation Results</b>		
Conditional indirect effects of SMO on Individual Performance		
SMO → Purpose → Individual Performance		
Low PO Fit (-1 SD)	.11	-.03, .29
Average PO Fit	.07	-.06, .21
High PO Fit (+1 SD)	.02	-.15, .19
Conditional indirect effects of SMO on OCBs		
SMO → Purpose → OCBs		
Low PO Fit (-1 SD)	.03	-.05, .13
Average PO Fit	.10 *	.02, .19
High PO Fit (+1 SD)	.17 *	.06, .28

\*  $p < .05$

**Notes:**

$N = 130$ . Unstandardized coefficients are reported. All tests are two-tailed.

SMO: social mission orientation

OCBs: organizational citizenship behaviors

PO fit: person-organization fit

Hayes' PROCESS model 14 confirmed that average and high levels (+1 SD) of PO fit do moderate the relationship between social mission orientation and purpose, which acts as a mediator between social mission orientation and OCBs. Additionally, the index of moderated mediation is significant at 0.08 (95% CI [.01, .14]).

## **DISCUSSION**

This study finds that perceptions of social mission orientation are positively related to a sense of purpose, and a sense of purpose is the mechanism through which perceptions of SMO result in OCBs. The positive relationship between purpose and OCBs is strengthened by the employee's sense of fit with the organization. However, surprisingly, a sense of purpose does not necessarily lead to an increase in individual performance. It is possible that while a sense of purpose can increase an employee's OCBs, which are completely within an employee's control, it may not increase self-reported individual performance because of other factors that influence responses to self-reported individual performance questions. For example, the items in the individual performance scale ask not only about the individual's opinion of their own work being satisfactory, but also ask the respondent if their boss thinks the work is satisfactory and how their work compares with other employees, both of which are not necessarily within the employee's control and are subject to the employee's estimation of a supervisor's thoughts and potentially inaccurate comparisons to others. Additionally, an individual's opinion of his or her own performance may vary depending on things like training and tenure more than purpose. More work should be done on this relationship utilizing objective performance measures.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Perception of purpose is a powerful mechanism between social mission orientation and its outcomes. However, further work is required to see if the power of purpose varies based on other individual differences such as prosocial values and justice dimensions. These findings on perception of purpose indicate that positive outcomes from social mission orientation are at least

partly due to the meaningfulness and significance that social mission activities bring to the individual.

### **IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Practically speaking, these results provide a roadmap for organizations that would like to increase organizational citizenship behaviors. Starting with the hiring process, organizations should implement screening and interview tactics that will find candidates who fit the organization's culture and values. Additionally, strong and frequent communication to candidates and employees alike will increase awareness of the organization's pro-social efforts, which will in turn lead to an increased sense of purpose. Giving employees the ability to get personally involved with the pro-social initiatives should enhance the effect. Following these steps, an increased sense of purpose will increase the employee's OCBs and will ultimately improve the organization's culture and performance.

This is the first study to develop an adapted scale specifically to measure purpose and the first to empirically support the power of purpose as a mediator between social mission orientation and individual level outcomes. This essentially opens up a new stream of research surrounding purpose. Future research should explore the psychological underpinnings that cause an individual's sense of purpose as well as more positive outcomes from that sense of purpose. Additionally, future research should examine the potential relationship between justice and purpose.

Although this study used time separated data, a time lag between IVs and DVs does not necessarily prove causation. Future research should consider a cross-lagged panel design to solidify evidence that social mission orientation leads to a perception of purpose, which in turn

affects OCBs. Future research could also explore the lack of relationship between purpose and individual performance and the mechanisms that might need to exist in order to establish a relationship.

Additionally, 98.9% of respondents came from U.S. organizations. It is possible that the findings from this study may differ or simply change in strength when evaluated outside of the U.S. context. For example, in countries where the government more than the free market is regarded as the solution to societal problems, social mission orientation may be perceived differently and may not have similar effects. Future research should reevaluate these relationships in a more global sample.

Finally, future research should continue to explore perceptions of purpose in terms of its potential antecedents and consequences. Once those have been more fully understood, future research should also consider the mechanisms and psychological underpinnings that make those relationships work.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE POWER OF MISSION: PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MISSION ORIENTATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS

## **The Power of Mission: Perceptions of Social Mission Orientation and its Relationships with Purpose and Organizational Attractiveness**

### **ABSTRACT**

While it may be assumed that individuals join social entrepreneurship organizations to fulfill a psychological need (social justice, altruism, etc.), little has been done to identify which mechanisms make social entrepreneurship organizations more attractive to prospective members. Perception of purpose has been studied as a mediating mechanism in the relationships that social mission orientation (SMO) has with individual level outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) for existing organization members, but what effect will perception of purpose have on prospective organization members? This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the effect of purpose on organizational attractiveness to job seekers, the mediating role that it plays between SMO and organizational attractiveness, and whether person-organization (PO) fit and moral identity might moderate those relationships. Following interviews with job seekers, participants are then randomly presented with descriptions of hypothetical companies that represent high and low levels of corporate citizenship and SMO, utilizing experimental vignette methodology (EVM). Results indicate that SMO is positively related to perception of purpose, that the relationship between SMO and purpose is strengthened by PO fit, and that perception of purpose is the mechanism through which SMO results in increased organizational attractiveness. This study contributes to the literature by exploring perception of purpose as a powerful mechanism between SMO and organizational attractiveness, helping to explain why SMO increases job seekers' intent to join an organization.

Keywords: Social mission orientation, purpose, organizational attractiveness

# **The Power of Mission: Perceptions of Social Mission Orientation and its Relationship with Purpose and Organizational Attractiveness**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since more than half of startup ventures in the U.S. end in failure (Shane, 2012), research into potential causes is abundant. Some of the factors contributing to failure include operational issues such as deficiencies in management, vendor relations, competition, and overexpansion (Gaskill, Van Auken, & Manning, 1993). Among the deficiencies in management, Kanchana and colleagues (2013) found that developing the vision, finding a purpose, assembling the team, and finding good employees are among the biggest challenges facing entrepreneurs. If entrepreneurs can communicate a sense of purpose and social mission orientation to prospective employees, will it make the organization more attractive to prospective employees? Heeding the call by Short and colleagues (2009) for more quantitative exploration in social entrepreneurship and the call by Scandura and Williams (2000) for more experimental methods in management research, this article explores how perceptions of social mission orientation are related to perceptions of purpose and organizational attractiveness among job seekers.

I begin by reviewing the literature on social mission orientation, person-organization (PO) fit, perception of purpose, and organizational attractiveness. Drawing from signaling theory and social identity theory, I then review the hypothesis development for a model wherein the relationship between perceptions of SMO and elements of organizational attractiveness are moderated by PO fit and moral identity, and the relationship between perceptions of SMO and organizational attractiveness flows through perception of purpose. I then discuss the results of qualitative interviews regarding purpose and social mission orientation. Finally, heeding the calls for more experimental studies in entrepreneurship (Stevenson & Josefy, 2019; Williams, Wood,

Mitchell, & Urbig, 2019), I conclude by presenting the findings of an experimental study utilizing experimental vignette methodology (EVM) where prospective employees are exposed to hypothetical descriptions of companies with differing levels of corporate citizenship and SMO. Consistent with social identity theory, this paper finds that perceptions of social mission orientation influence organizational attractiveness due to the perception of purpose that social mission orientation provides as individuals imagine themselves working in and identifying with an organization that is perceived as doing good for society.

This article contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by looking at the relationship between social mission orientation and perception of purpose, which have not been considered. It also contributes to the social entrepreneurship and selection literature by examining perception of purpose as a mechanism through which perceptions of social mission orientation influence organizational attractiveness, which has not been explored in the literature. These findings are important in that they help explain why perceptions of SMO result in increased perceptions of organizational attractiveness, which will help social entrepreneurs and business owners alike attract the best candidates to their organizations. The findings are also important in that they add perception of purpose as a key antecedent to organizational attractiveness, which will help inform recruiting and selection practitioners as they consider which organizational attributes to highlight for prospective organization members.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Mission Orientation**

Social mission orientation deals with an organization's intention to address social needs (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011), and has typically been studied in the context of social

entrepreneurship where individuals are driven by compassion (Miller, Grimes, McMullen, & Vogus, 2012) to create organizations to find new ways to mitigate social problems (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2002; Santos, 2012). Organizations with this orientation tend to exhibit entrepreneurial traits such as innovativeness, proactiveness, risk management, effectuation, and mission orientation (Dwivedi & Werawardena, 2018). However, the stream of research is still relatively new, so the majority of articles examining it have been conceptual, with only 16 articles cited in a recent review using quantitative methods (Short, et al., 2009).

Most of the articles examining social entrepreneurship look at antecedents to social entrepreneurship, leadership within social entrepreneurship organizations, and factors that can encourage social entrepreneurship development (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). However, some interesting findings on the outcomes of social mission orientation include the positive effect of social mission orientation on innovation (McDonald, 2007) and the role of social mission orientation in weakening the negative relationship between job insecurity and retention (Lee, 2017). Although social mission orientation is usually studied within the confines of social entrepreneurship, the drivers that cause individuals to join social entrepreneurship organizations may also drive prospective employees to join for-profit organizations if those organizations have a well-communicated sense of social mission orientation (Weerawardena & Mort, 2001).

### **Person-Organization Fit**

Person-organization fit has been defined as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or b) they share similar fundamental characteristics or c) both” (Kristof, 1996: 5-6). PO fit is related to multiple positive outcomes, including organizational commitment (Kumar, 2012), job



satisfaction, organizational identification, and intent to stay (Cooper & Wagman, 2009; Edwards & Cable, 2009).

As pointed out by Leung and Chaturvedi, there are three different types of person-organization fit, and each one includes a different level of belief on the part of the employee. Objective fit is the similarity between the organization's values and the individual's perception of the organization's values, perceived fit is the similarity between the individual's desired work environment and their actual work environment, and subjective fit is the overall judgment about how much the individual feels like he or she fits the environment (Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011). In all three types, the individual's perception of fit may or may not reflect reality, so each requires a level of belief on the part of the individual in order to have the positive effect on outcomes that person-organization fit literature describes.

In the recruitment literature, research on PO fit focuses on the effects of individuals' perceived similarity between themselves and the organizations in which they might work, including similarity in their values (Cable & Judge, 1994, 1996). In this study, PO fit will be evaluated as a moderator that affects the relationship between perceptions of SMO and perception of purpose, which in turn is related to organizational attraction. Essentially, if employees perceive PO fit based on the perceptions of SMO, they should have a higher sense of purpose and be attracted to organizations.

### **Moral Identity**

Moral identity refers to the importance of moral traits to one's identity and has two dimensions: internalization, which has to do with how much moral characteristics help shape one's identity, and symbolization, which involves how much one's morality is expressed publicly (Aquino, 2002). Moral identity has been cited as a motivation for many noble causes,

including social activism, caring volunteerism, philanthropy, and even the rescuing of Jewish victims during the Holocaust (Blasi, 2005), and has been linked as an antecedent to prosocial behaviors such as volunteerism (Aquino, 2002) and willingness to donate to out-groups (Reed & Aquino, 2003). Moral identity has also been identified as a moderator in such relationships as the CSR to OCB relationship (Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013), organizational injustice and counterproductive work behaviors (Mingzheng, Xiaoling, Xubo, & Youshan, 2014), perceived CSR and organizational identification (Wang, Fu, Qiu, Moore, & Wang, 2017), supervisor abuse of customers and employee organizational deviance (Greenbaum, Mawritz, Mayer, & Priesemuth, 2013) and the preference for giving time versus money to charity (Reed, Aquino, & Levy, 2007).

### **Perception of Purpose**

As one of the 14 top rated challenges facing entrepreneurs (Kanchana, et al., 2013), lack of purpose can have a negative impact on many aspects of the new venture. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) called for research into purpose and its contribution to effective strategic management, however, very little progress has been made, leading Hollensbe and colleagues (2014) to propose purpose as an overarching framework within which academics can study contributing elements such as mission and vision.

Purpose has been defined as “an organization’s meaningful and enduring reason to exist that aligns with long-term financial performance, provides a clear context for daily decision making, and unifies and motivates relevant stakeholders” (Hurth, Ebert, & Prabhu, 2018). Statements of purpose should reflect the organization’s “why” and reveal how the organization fills basic human needs (Collins & Porras, 1991).

Perceptions of purpose differ from other constructs that address finding fulfillment in work such as meaning in work, calling, and engagement. While perceptions of purpose involve appreciating the contribution that one's efforts make, no matter how small, towards the organization's fulfillment of its greater purpose, meaning in work involves the sensemaking that people go through to find meaning in their actual tasks. For example, Simpson and colleagues (2014) interviewed butchers and discovered that they find meaning in their work by taking pride in the work's physicality, its identification with an ancient skill, and their distinction as a member of a specific trade. Similarly, calling has more to do with an individual's sense that he or she was always meant to be in a certain profession doing a certain thing, whereas perceptions of purpose could provide more meaning to the menial tasks of any employee (Carton, 2018). Finally, while engagement involves employees feeling more enthusiastic about their work and may be an outcome of perceptions of purpose, perceptions of purpose provide the psychological motivation for employees to care about their small part in the larger organization.

Purpose is increasing in popularity in business publications, with authors describing case studies where companies use perceptions of purpose to reshape the value proposition (Malnight, Buche, & Dhanarai, 2019), increase motivation (Carton, 2018), gain competitive advantage and provide value to stakeholders (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014). However, more progress needs to be made in this stream of research (Hollensbe, et al., 2014).

### **Organizational Attractiveness**

Much of organizational attractiveness research is grounded in social identity theory, exploring the ways that perceived attributes of an organization affect a job seeker's attraction to that organization based on the job seeker's ability to see themselves identifying with the organization. For example, Dutton and colleagues (1994) developed a model to show how job

seekers evaluate an organization based on how the organization's image maintains the continuity of their own self-concept, provides distinctiveness, and enhances their self-esteem. However, the stream of research also draws on signaling theory to explain how job seekers see attributes of an organization as signals regarding the organization's values, culture, and ethics (Greening & Turban, 2000).

Perceptions of CSR have a positive relationship with organizational attractiveness. Albinger and Freeman (2000) asked adults in a midwestern city to rate the attractiveness of 25 companies and found that organizational KLD ratings for CSP were related to attraction for employees with a high amount of choice in the labor market. Evans and Davis (2011) exposed undergraduate students to three hypothetical companies with varying levels of corporate citizenship to see if they would change the students' attraction to the companies. They measured attraction with two items on job pursuit intention, one item on interview attempt intention, and one item on job offer acceptance intention, and found that perceived corporate citizenship is positively related to job applicant attraction, but that the relationship is strengthened for individuals who received prior education on CSR and for individuals who have a higher in other-regarding value orientation. It is possible that SMO has similar relationships.

Greening and Turban (2000) exposed students at a midwestern university to descriptions of hypothetical companies with varying levels of Corporate Social Performance (CSP) and asked them to rate their attraction via two items on job pursuit intentions, one item on probability of attempting to interview, and one item on probability of accepting a job offer. They found that the students were more attracted to socially responsible firms. Jones and colleagues (2014) exposed Canadian college students to company web pages that featured varying levels of CSP and surveyed the students using the organizational attractiveness scale developed by Highhouse

and colleagues (2003). They found that the students were more attracted to organizations with high CSP, but that the relationship was mediated by the signals the students received based on the CSP, including anticipated pride, organizational prestige, perceived value fit, and expected treatment. Finally, Turban and Greening (1997) surveyed college students to see if CSR ratings according to KLD were related to organizational attractiveness, and found that the two items were positively related.

These relationships between measures of CSR and organizational attraction can be seen through the lens of social identity theory as job seekers want to be identified with an organization that is perceived as doing good in society, but also through the lens of signaling theory (Celani & Singh, 2011), as job seekers see organizational philanthropy and ethics as signals that the organization has strong values and takes care of people (Jones, et al., 2014). Given that CSR and SMO both consider an organization's social impact beyond profitability, the relationships mentioned above provided a useful foundation for hypothesis development.

## **HYPOTHESIS DERIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

As job seekers perceive an organization's SMO, they will gain an appreciation for the organization's greater purpose that goes beyond common profit motives. Job seekers will need to have a clear and thorough description of what SMO the organization has, but clear communication will lead to increased perceptions of the organization's purpose.

Consistent with signaling theory, perceptions of SMO will send signals to job seekers about what the organization values, what it stands for, and what it intends to do for society. Those signals will inform the job seeker's perception of an organizational purpose that goes beyond profit, and that includes multiple stakeholders rather than just shareholders.

*H1: There is a positive relationship between individual perceptions of SMO and perceptions of purpose.*

Since very little empirical research has been done on SMO, these hypotheses rely partially on the theoretical similarities that SMO shares with CSR and previous research in CSR. For example, moderators between CSR and organizational attractiveness include the level of job choice (Albinger & Freeman, 2000), communal orientation (Jones, Willness, & Macneil, 2009), justice experiences and moral identity (Rupp, et al., 2013), personal values and education concerning CSR (Evans & Davis, 2011). It is possible that variables like these might moderate the relationships that SMO has as well.

Researchers have categorized mediating and moderating variables that affect the CSR/outcomes relationship into three categories: care-based, self-based, and relational-based (Jones, et al., 2019). Since elements of PO fit have been related to commitment and turnover (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Lawrence & Lawrence, 2010; Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011; Moynihan & Pandey, 2008), and since PO fit has been found as a mediator between CSR and organizational attractiveness (Jones, et al., 2014), I expect that PO fit should influence the relationship between SMO and organizational attractiveness as mediated through perceptions of purpose. An organization's well-communicated social mission will only affect individual employees to the extent the employees are aware of and appreciate the mission based on their own identity in relation to the organization. If the individual employee perceives a lack of fit based on values incongruence between the individual and the organization, the employee may not appreciate the organization's SMO and the relationship between perception of SMO and perceptions of purpose will be weakened.

*H2: The positive relationship between individual perceptions of SMO and perceptions of purpose will be moderated by PO Fit such that the relationship will be strengthened by high levels of PO Fit and weakened by low levels of PO Fit.*

Since moral identity has been identified as a moderator in such relationships as the CSR to OCB relationship (Rupp, et al., 2013), and the perceived CSR to organizational identification relationship (Wang, et al., 2017), it is expected that employees with high moral identity will find more purpose in their organization's social mission orientation. Therefore, moral identity will moderate the relationship between perceptions of SMO and perception of purpose.

*H3: The positive relationship between individual perceptions of SMO and perceptions of purpose will be moderated by moral identity such that the relationship will be strengthened by high levels of moral identity and weakened by low levels of moral identity.*

A well-defined purpose can also help to attract and retain employees whose personal purpose fits those of the organization (Collins & Porras, 1991), so job seekers who perceive an organization's greater purpose should also be more attracted to the organization. Celani and Singh (2011) provide an excellent review of articles that leverage signaling theory to explain attraction outcomes, outlining how job applicants interpret many company attributes, communications, and recruiting activities as signals about the company. Consistent with signaling theory, the perception of purpose should act as a signal of what the organization values and how those values might also affect the organization's members.

Additionally, consistent with social identity theory, the perception of purpose should also inspire prospective members to join the organization if the purpose is something they would

want to include as part of their self-identification. Therefore, I expect that perception of purpose will be positively related to organizational attractiveness.

*H4: There is a positive relationship between perceptions of purpose and organizational attractiveness.*

Mediators between CSR and organizational attractiveness include person-organization fit (Jones, et al., 2009), pride of affiliation, perceived value fit, and anticipated treatment of employees (Jones, et al., 2014, 2016). Just as the perception of prosocial impact mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and individual performance (Grant, 2012), it is possible that purpose mediates the relationship between perceptions of SMO and organizational attractiveness.

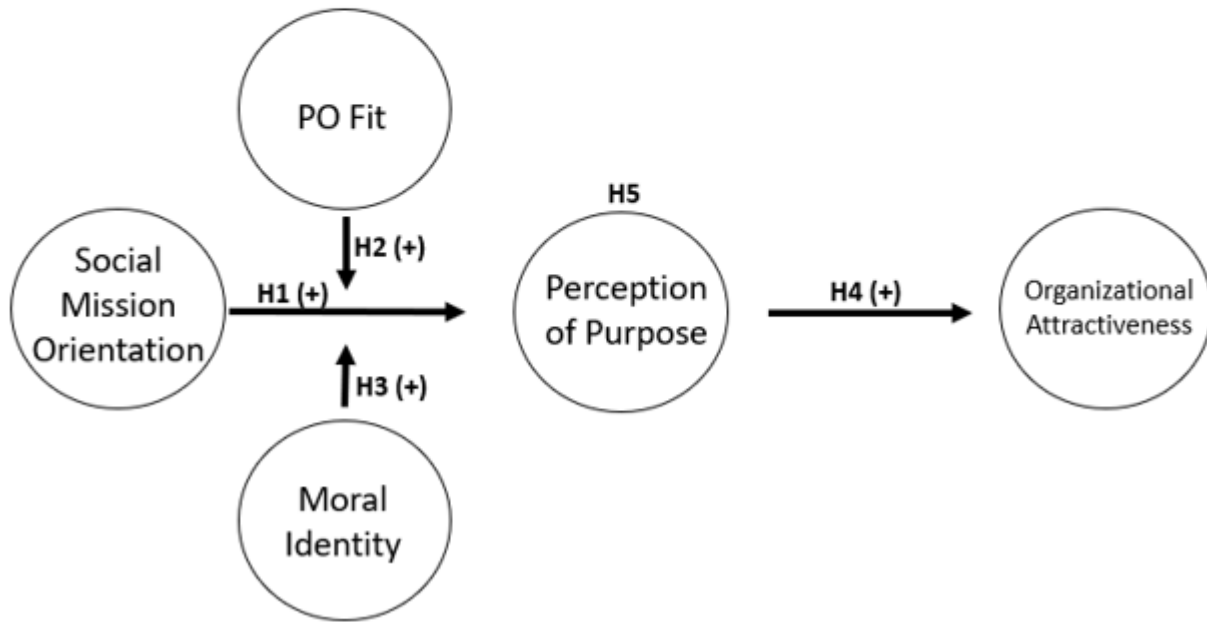
Given that values congruence and PO fit both mediate the CSR to organizational attractiveness relationship, it is expected that job seekers who perceive SMO as an indicator of a greater purpose will also be attracted to the organization. For example, simply contributing to a philanthropic cause may not be enough to increase organizational attractiveness. Attractiveness will only increase when the SMO is perceived as representative of the organization's greater purpose. Consistent with social identity theory, an organization's social responsibility may increase an individual's perception of purpose, which in turn should increase their desire to be associated with that organization.

*H5: The positive relationship between individual perceptions of SMO and organizational attractiveness will be mediated by perceptions of purpose.*

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships.



**Figure 1**  
**Hypothesized Relationships**



## **METHODS**

### **Qualitative Interviews**

Since perception of purpose has been discussed by practitioners and the popular press but is a relatively new construct in research, I interviewed students to gauge their general perception of purpose. Participants were asked what impact having a sense of purpose at work has on people. One said, “In my work experience, I have definitely seen people work harder and feel more inspired when they have a strong tie to the purpose of their work, and I have also seen the complete opposite where people don't work as hard because they don't see a purpose in doing so.” Another said, “In my work experience, I have seen a connection between purpose and

positive/negative work behavior. The workers who believe in the purpose of the organization will tend to work harder because they enjoy what they are doing. Those workers want to help the organization achieve its purpose, thus are more inspired to perform better and be more productive. These workers are more tied to the organization because they see themselves working there for a long time. On the other hand, workers who do not believe in the purpose of the company are less inspired to work hard. They do not see a future at the organization, therefore they will not be as productive as other workers. I feel more motivated to work hard and perform well when the company's purpose and values tie to my beliefs.” Another said, “From my experience, there is without a doubt an obvious connection between purpose and positive or negative work behavior. If someone doesn't feel a strong tie to the organization's purpose, they tend to feel as if the work they're doing is meaningless. People like to feel inspired to put in the work when there is a strong purpose behind their work. That's where they get the motivation to get up in the morning and do it every day because the motive behind the work is full of meaning.” Although some students mentioned that in order for purpose to matter, the company has to clearly communicate it to employees and individual employees have to care about it, there was broad consensus that a sense of purpose beyond just a paycheck is connected with stronger individual performance.

I then asked the students if they have worked for a company that had a social mission orientation, meaning an organization's intention to address social needs, and if so, what effect did it have on them. Most said that a social mission orientation increases their respect for the organization and increases their motivation to do their best at work. One said “it makes me feel good, and happy that I work for a company that cares about more than just the work we have to do.” Another said “the social mission orientation makes me feel good to know that my company

is fighting for the same things that I feel are important in the world.” Another said “it makes me feel proud to be a part of their team. It enhances my work ethic and dedication because I am contributing to a cause bigger than myself.” Additionally, those who said their employer does not have a social mission orientation seemed to resent it. One participant said “it makes me feel like I’m not serving a greater purpose other than just making a profit for the organization.” Another said, “the lack of social responsibility at my company makes me somewhat resentful at it, especially when it tries to claim that it loves to support its community.”

### **Quantitative Methods**

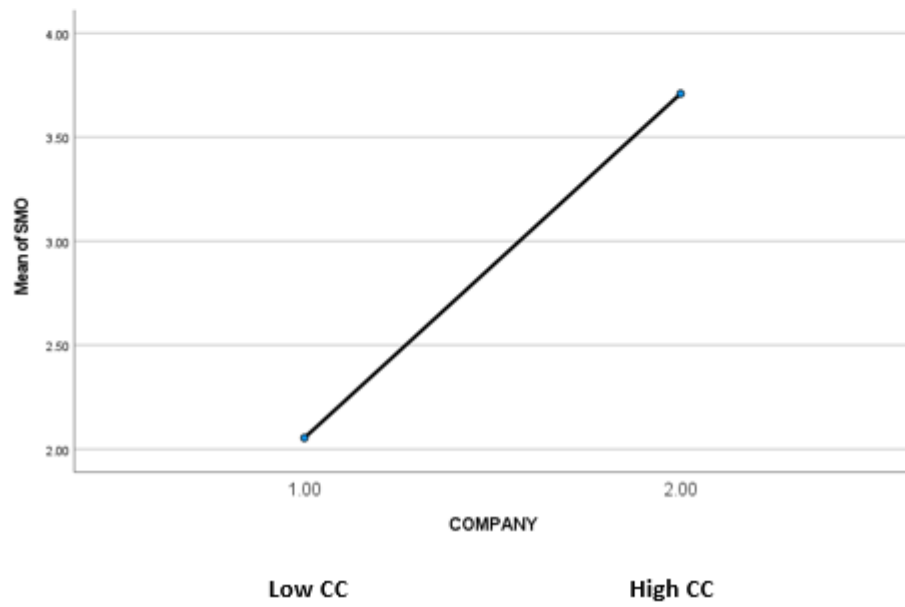
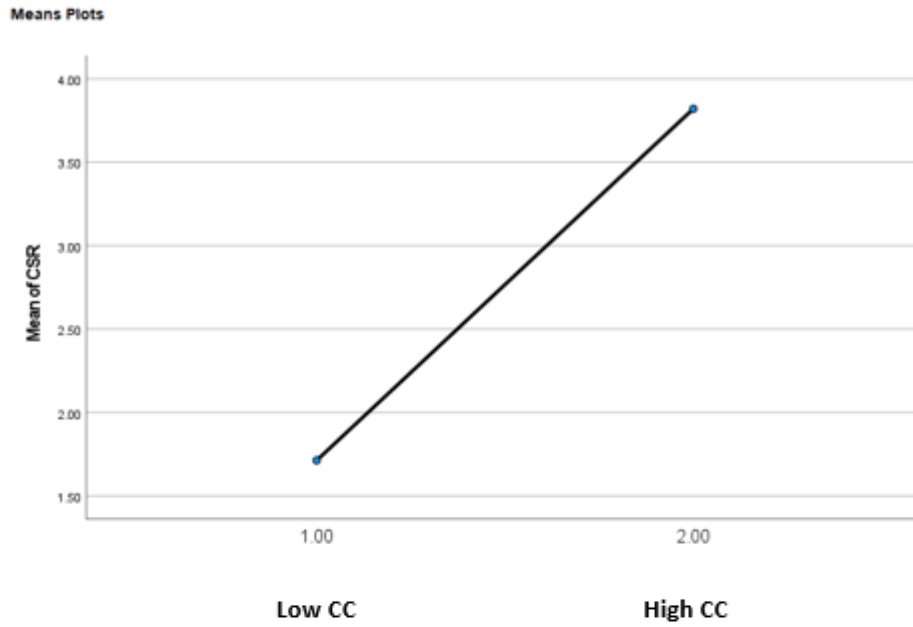
To measure the actual effects of SMO and purpose, data were collected from students at a large southwestern university who were taking the university’s business strategy capstone course and other associated business classes, and who would be entering the job market soon. Since the majority of management research tends to rely on passive observation designs and cross-sectional approaches that limit conclusions about causality (Aguinis & Edwards, 2014; Scandura & Williams, 2000), I used an experimental design to isolate the variables in question. Specifically, I used experimental vignette methodology (EVM) which presents participants with “carefully constructed and realistic scenarios to assess dependent variables including intentions, attitudes, and behaviors” (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014: 352). This approach provides a realistic way to control independent variables, which increases internal and external validity (Atzmuller & Steiner, 2010).

Participants were randomly presented with one of two hypothetical company vignettes (see Appendix 1), and then asked to fill out a brief survey containing the items below. Vignettes are “short, carefully constructed descriptions of a person, object, or situation, representing a systematic combination of characteristics” (Atzmuller & Steiner, 2010: 128). The vignettes used

for this study were designed by Evans and Davis (2011) to reflect varying levels of corporate citizenship. The low condition fulfills none of the facets, and the high condition fulfills all of the facets of corporate citizenship. Although the vignettes were designed to reflect corporate citizenship, they also refer to elements of social mission orientation, so the vignettes were used to evaluate variance in the SMO variable.

One-way ANOVA results provided by Evans and Davis (2011) show that there was a significant difference in perceptions of corporate citizenship between the two groups in their sample. In my sample, the means plots for the two conditions are presented in Figure 2. One-way ANOVA results indicated a significant difference between the two groups for CSR,  $F(1, 128) = 322.91, p < .001$ . To ensure that the hypothetical vignettes also portrayed differing levels of SMO accurately, I also performed one-way ANOVA analysis on SMO for the two groups. With 75 students responding to condition one and 55 responding to condition two, results indicated a significant difference for SMO,  $F(1, 128) = 174.20, p < .001$ . Although there was a slight difference in the number of respondents on each condition, one-way ANOVA analysis found no significant demographic differences between the groups.

**Figure 2**  
**Means Plots for Corporate Citizenship Conditions**



## Measures

*Social mission orientation* was measured with the four-item scale developed by Dwivedi and Weerawardena (2018), which includes the following items ( $\alpha = .80$ ): “Our philosophy guides everything we do in the organization”, “We often ask ourselves - ‘How is this activity achieving the purpose of the organization?’”, “We are deeply committed to creating social value”, and “Whatever surplus funds we generate are re-invested towards fulfillment of the mission.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.90.

*Moral identity internalization* was measured by the five-item scale developed by Aquino (2002) that asks participants to rate themselves on nine characteristics (caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind), using the following items ( $\alpha = .78$ ): “It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics”, “Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am”, “I would be ashamed to be a person who has these characteristics” (R), “Having these characteristics is not really important to me” (R), and “I strongly desire to have these characteristics.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.53.

*Perception of Purpose* was measured by adapting items from several other scales, including the purpose-related questions within the AOC scale by O’Reilly and Chatman (1986), the meaningful work scale developed by Steger, et al. (2012), and the mission scale developed by Denison and Neale (1996). For details on the scale adaptation process, see McDaniel (2021). The three-item scale included the following: “The organization serves a greater purpose”, “the organization has a long-term purpose and direction”, and “I am well aware of the purpose of my organization”, which had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93 in my sample.

*Person-Organization Fit* was measured by the 3-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002). ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.98. Items included "The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that this organization values", "My personal values match this organization's values and culture", and "This organization's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life."

*Organizational Attractiveness* was measured using the 4-item scale that Evans and Davis (2011) adapted from Greening and Turban's (2000) scale. Two items assess job pursuit intention, one asks about interview intention, and one asks about job offer acceptance intention. ( $\alpha = .95$ ). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale in my sample was 0.97. Items included "I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company", "I would be interested in pursuing a job application with this company", "I would be interested in interviewing with this company", "I would likely accept a job offer from this company."

*Controls.* Due to the potential similarities between CSR and SMO, I controlled for CSR using the 7-item scale developed by Turker (2009b). Also, because the participants attend a university with a high percentage of veterans, and because veterans tend to respond with higher levels of commitment to organizational missions (Teclaw, Osatuke, & Ramsel, 2016), veteran status was controlled for by measuring one item: "Have you ever served on Active Duty in the US Armed Forces (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps or Navy)?" and respondents are offered a "yes" or "no" response (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019). Age, gender and tenure with the organization were also self-reported. Social desirability bias was controlled for with the 10-item social desirability bias short form developed by Strahan and Gerbasi in 1972. All controls were entered before the IVs in regression analysis, and were entered as covariates in the SPSS PROCESS macro.

To verify discriminant validity between CSR, SMO, and purpose variables, I performed a CFA utilizing Amos 27.0.0 which confirmed model fit of the CSR, SMO, and purpose model. When comparing a model where all three scales load onto one factor [ $\chi^2(65) = 229.471, p < .01$ ] versus a model where the three scales load onto three factors [ $\chi^2(62) = 126.113, p < .01$ ], a chi-square difference test [ $\chi^2(3) \text{ difference test} = 103.358, p < .01$ ] indicates that the three-factor model fits the data better than the one factor model or any of the two factor combination models.

In terms of model fit, although chi-square was significant in the three-factor model (Chi-square = 126.113, degrees of freedom = 62,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicating that we don't have perfect fit, the relative chi-square (CMIN/DF) is less sensitive to sample size and the value of 2.03 is below the threshold of 5.0 suggested by Schumacker and Lomax (2004). Additionally, CFI and IFI are considered suitable for small sample sizes (Fan et al., 1999), and values above 0.95 indicate good model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999), and this model's CFI was 0.97 and IFI was 0.97, indicating good fit. Other indicators included TLI at 0.96, and RMSEA at 0.09. Although RMSEA doesn't quite meet the upper recommended threshold of 0.08 (Byrne, 2010), Hu and Bentler (1999) noted that "RMSEA tends to overreject true-population models at small sample size and thus are less preferable when sample size is small." Since SRMR values are good at 0.03 and most other indicators suggest acceptable fit, I accepted the three-factor model. Table 1 compares the model fit values.



**Table 1**  
**Model Comparisons**

Model name	Model compared	$\chi^2$ (df)	SRMR	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$ and $\Delta df$ (relative to three factor model)
Three factor	SMO, CSR, and purpose 3 factors	126.113 (62)	0.03	0.09	0.97	0.97	0.96	-
Two factor	SMO and CSR on one factor	157.560 (64)	0.03	0.11	0.95	0.95	0.94	$\Delta\chi^2 = 31.447$ $\Delta df = 2$
Two factor	SMO and Purpose on one factor	177.808 (64)	0.04	0.12	0.94	0.94	0.93	$\Delta\chi^2 = 51.695$ $\Delta df = 2$
Two factor	CSR and Purpose on one factor	205.586 (64)	0.04	0.13	0.93	0.93	0.91	$\Delta\chi^2 = 79.473$ $\Delta df = 2$
One factor	All on one factor	229.471 (65)	0.04	0.14	0.92	0.92	0.90	$\Delta\chi^2 = 103.358$ $\Delta df = 3$

Note:  $\chi^2$  refers to the Chi-square estimate;  $df$  refers to degrees of freedom  
SMO: social mission orientation

## RESULTS

### Quantitative Results: Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 summarizes the mean, standard deviation, and correlations of the variables. Listwise deletion was used in developing the correlation matrix. There was strong positive correlation between CSR and PO fit, social mission orientation, purpose, and organizational attractiveness. Among the control variables, there was a significant negative correlation between age and veteran status.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Age	--									
2 Gender	-.01	--								
3 Veteran Status	-.41**	.15	--							
4 Social Desirability	-.07	-.05	.01	--						
5 CSR	-.12	.10	.01	-.09	--					
6 PO Fit	-.12	.10	-.01	-.06	.91**	--				
7 Social Mission Orientation	-.11	.09	.01	-.08	.86**	.84**	--			
8 Moral Identification	-.14	.12	-.11	.41**	.12	.17	.15	--		
9 Organization Attractiveness	-.16	.06	-.01	-.06	.85**	.88**	.80**	.14	--	
10 Purpose	-.19*	.06	.03	.01	.85**	.86**	.83**	.17	.91**	--
Mean	24.36	1.48	1.93	3.10	2.63	2.54	2.75	3.76	2.72	2.75
Standard Deviation	3.38	0.50	0.26	0.48	1.18	1.38	1.07	0.71	1.29	1.22

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Notes:

Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female

Veteran Status: 1 = yes, 2 = no

### Hypothesis Testing

For direct effects, all independent variables exceeded .20 tolerance levels and had variance-inflation factor (VIF) values less than four, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. As shown in Table 3, after controlling for CSR, age, gender, veteran status, and social desirability, social mission orientation was positively and significantly related to purpose ( $b = .35, p < .01$ ), so H1 was supported.

**Table 3**  
**Regression Analysis**

	Purpose			Organizational Attraction		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
CSR	0.88**	0.28*	0.34**	0.91**	0.67**	0.27**
Age	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01
Gender	-0.04	-0.06	-0.05	-0.04	-0.05	0.01
Veteran Status	-0.04	0.00	0.04	-0.22	-0.22	-0.19
Social Desirability	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.02	-0.02	-0.14
Social Mission Orientation		0.35**	0.35		0.32**	0.01
Purpose						0.72**
PO Fit		0.31**	-0.05			
Moral Identity		-0.02	0.16			
SMO x PO Fit			0.11*			
SMO x Moral Identity			-0.07			
$R^2$	0.74	0.78**	0.79	0.73**	0.75**	0.85**
$\Delta R^2$		0.06**	0.01		0.02**	0.10**

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Notes:

$N = 121$ . Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported. All tests are two-tailed.

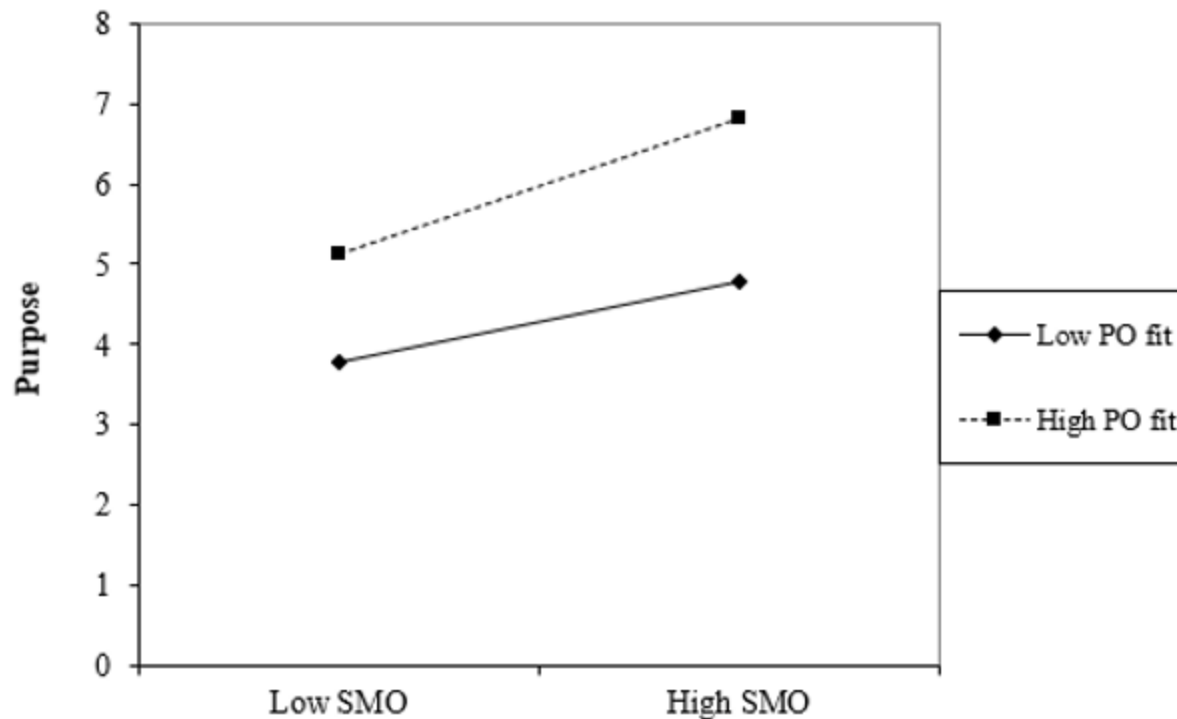
CSR: corporate social responsibility

PO fit: person-organization fit

SMO: social mission orientation

However, while the moderation effect of PO fit was significant ( $b = .11, p < .05$ ), the moderation effect of moral identity was not, so H2 is supported but H3 is not. Figure 3 illustrates the moderation effect of PO fit on the SMO-purpose relationship

**Figure 3**  
**PO Fit Interaction**



Additionally, purpose was positively and significantly related to organizational attractiveness ( $b = .72, p < .01$ ), so H4 was supported.

As depicted in Table 3, the relationship between SMO and organizational attractiveness is positive and significant until purpose is introduced, at which point the SMO to organizational attractiveness relationship loses significance and the purpose to organizational attractiveness relationship gains significance. This indicates the mediating role of purpose and supports H5.

The hypothesized moderated mediation model was tested using 5000-sample bootstrapping with PROCESS macro model 9 (version 3.5) by Hayes (2013) in order to achieve 95% bias corrected confidence intervals. As shown in Table 4, there are significant indirect effects of purpose on the SMO to organizational attractiveness relationship at average and high levels of PO fit and all

levels of moral identity. The index of partial moderated mediation for PO fit is significant at .08 (95% CI [.00, .20]) but not significant for moral identity at -.05 (95% CI [-.17, .03]).

**Table 4**  
**Bootstrap Analysis of the Direct and Indirect Effects of Social Mission Orientation on Organizational Attractiveness**

	Coefficient	
<b>Panel A: Mediation Results</b>		
Direct and indirect effects of SMO on organizational attractiveness		
SMO → Organizational Attractiveness	.01	-.17, .19
SMO → Purpose → Organizational Attractiveness	.25 *	.10, .40
<b>Panel B: Moderated Mediation Results</b>		
Conditional indirect effects of SMO on Organizational Attractiveness		
SMO → Purpose → Organizational Attractiveness		
Low PO Fit (-1 SD)	.08	-.06, .28
Average PO Fit	.25 *	.10, .40
High PO Fit (+1 SD)	.35 *	.15, .59
Conditional indirect effects of SMO on Organizational Attractiveness		
SMO → Purpose → Organizational Attractiveness		
Low Moral Identity (-1 SD)	.29 *	.11, .47
Average Moral Identity	.25 *	.10, .40
High Moral Identity (+1 SD)	.21 *	.06, .35

\*  $p < .05$

Notes:  
 N = 121. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. All tests are two-tailed.  
 Model 9 in the PROCESS macro. Bootstrap resample = 5000. Mean centered prior to analysis.  
 SMO: social mission orientation  
 PO fit: person-organization fit

## DISCUSSION

This study establishes the central role of purpose in the positive relationship between social mission orientation and organizational attractiveness. Essentially, perceptions of social mission orientation are related to a sense of purpose, and that sense of purpose has a strongly positive relationship with levels of organizational attractiveness among job seekers. This is a key finding for employers who are seeking ways to attract high quality employees, especially given

the findings from previous research on purpose that a sense of purpose is also related to organizational citizenship behaviors (McDaniel, 2021). However, it is even more critical for social entrepreneurs who need their organization members to be energetically supportive of the social problem the organization was created to solve.

These findings are consistent with what students expressed during our interviews. When asked specifically about the attractiveness of the company they read about in the vignettes, results were definitive. One participant who read about the company with a low corporate citizenship condition summed it up by saying, “I do not find anything attractive about this company. Declining charitable philanthropic opportunities and lacking an environmental management system reflects that the company has little to no regard for anything beyond itself.” Compare that with responses from participants who read about the high corporate citizenship condition, and said “they seem to be an honest and hardworking company. They seem to care about their employees and what they’re going through outside of work. That is a huge bonus that would make me want to join an organization.” Another said, “socially responsible companies are great to be a part of. Makes me as an employee feel good that my company is doing whatever it takes to help those around us.” Another said “I would be really motivated working for a company that uses their financial and social power for good causes. I find it important for a company to acknowledge their power in society.” Clearly, SMO and purpose are powerful contributors to the attractiveness of an organization.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Communicating an organization’s social mission orientation signals an organization’s purpose-driven nature, which in turn makes the organization more attractive to job seekers. Additionally, the relationship between SMO and purpose is strengthened by good PO fit.

However, moral identity internalization does not seem to have influence on the relationship between social mission orientation and purpose in our sample. Although this finding was unexpected, it may be a function of the psychology behind the moral identity scale itself. The moral identity internalization scale asks respondents to consider adjectives such as caring, compassionate, generous, and helpful before answering about how important those things are, and these could be readily associated with elements of social mission orientation. However, it also asks respondents to think about adjectives such as fair, hardworking, honest, and kind, which may or may not have an effect on an individual's sense of social mission orientation and purpose. An individual's moral identity may impact their perception of SMO, but not the relationship between SMO and purpose. Moral identity symbolization may be a better measure to consider.

This study also provides support for the power of social mission orientation on organizational attractiveness, but it also provides support for social identity theory, showing how an organization's social mission orientation informs prospective members regarding the organization's purpose, which then leads to attraction to the organization as individuals foresee themselves identifying with an organization that stands for socially responsible behavior. It could also be argued that these findings support social exchange theory, if individuals see the organization's social mission efforts as a benefit to themselves or society and then seek to reward the organization with their membership and support.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Practically speaking, organizations that are trying to attract the most talented candidates should focus on highlighting their social mission orientation throughout all communications. Since candidates will likely research the organization in detail before deciding to pursue it,

organizations must present a consistent message about their purpose throughout recruiting materials, annual reports, website presence, and all other media. This is especially important at for-profit companies whose social mission efforts may not be as explicit as they might be at a non-profit organization. Rather than just a page in the annual report, for-profit companies should ensure that their social mission efforts are presented consistently, and that their purpose is stated clearly and referenced regularly in all communications.

Although this was an experimental study, it was based on hypothetical companies. Future research should examine these relationships in actual companies with real job seekers making - real-life employment decisions to bolster evidence that social mission orientation leads to a perception of purpose, which in turn affects organizational attractiveness. While the vignettes in this study provided a stark contrast between a company with no corporate citizenship and a company with a very high level of corporate citizenship, most real companies are not as bipolar. It will be interesting to see how more moderate levels of corporate responsibility affect individual outcomes, and how other factors such as social media presence and communication policies might moderate the relationships.

Additionally, although participants were seniors in college who would soon be on the job market, it would be interesting to see how these relationships may change with older, more experienced job seekers. Since age actually had a significant negative correlation to purpose and to organizational attractiveness in my sample, it may be possible that older employees tend to care less about these constructs than younger employees. Future research should consider a wider age range when looking at these relationships, and may even consider age as a moderator.

Finally, future research should continue to explore perceptions of purpose in terms of other potential antecedents and consequences. Once those have been more fully understood,



future research should also consider the mechanisms and psychological underpinnings that make those relationships work. It is possible, for example, that perceptions of prosocial impact and justice may also impact the relationships that purpose has with its antecedents and outcomes. Future research should also evaluate the potential moderating effects of PO fit and moral identity on perceptions of SMO since those variables may contribute to individuals' belief in and identification with their organizations' SMO.

These findings contribute to the literature by establishing the increased sense of purpose that a social mission orientation provides organization members, as well as the powerful mediating effect of perceptions of purpose between social mission orientation and organizational attractiveness. Although social mission orientation is generally studied in the social entrepreneurship stream of research, any organization can communicate its social mission orientation and benefit from the individual level outcomes that an increased perception of purpose provides.

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## Appendix 1 Hypothetical Company Vignettes

### Vignettes Depicting Three Conditions of Perceived Corporate Citizenship

(Evans and Davis, 2011)

Yellow indicates CSR, green indicates SMO

#### High Corporate Citizenship

“Pat is an employee at Alpha Company (“Alpha”). Alpha manufactures various types of consumer goods that are widely available in most retail stores. Pat has recently been thinking about Alpha and specifically about various aspects of Alpha’s organizational performance. To Pat’s knowledge, Alpha’s business is growing in terms of revenue, earnings, and the number of employees. Many times Alpha reports income that exceeds budget expectations, whereas actual costs are below expectations. In addition, Pat is not aware of any lawsuits, investigations, or fines against the company for improper actions. Recently, Pat attended a meeting in which customers indicated Alpha sales representatives were treating them fairly and that the company seems very forthcoming with information. Alpha has also adopted a professional code of conduct that all employees must read and sign as evidence of their understanding. For instance, Pat sees Alpha as being honest and fair in such activities as time and production reporting, the treatment of employees and business partners, and information disclosure. In general, employees are expected to “do no harm.” Last, Pat believes Alpha seeks to also “do good.” That is, Alpha seems to support charitable activities, recycles much of its production waste, and is involved in the local community. Alpha also allows employees to adjust their work schedule when needed so that they may attend to personal matters.”

#### Low Corporate Citizenship

“Pat is an employee at Alpha Company (“Alpha”). Alpha manufactures various types of consumer goods that are widely available in most retail stores. Pat has recently been thinking about Alpha and specifically about various aspects of Alpha’s organizational performance. To Pat’s knowledge, Alpha’s revenues are down, expenses are rising, and the overall business is losing money. Pat expects Alpha may downsize in an effort to halt a declining stock price, although Pat does not understand the company strategy at this point. In addition, Alpha recently paid a large financial judgment after the company was found guilty of engaging in illegal corporate acts. Pat is also aware of a pending federal investigation concerning discriminatory human resource practices. Pat believes this is related to a recent suit claiming

wrongful treatment filed against the company. 476 Business & Society 50(3) Recently, Pat attended a meeting in which customers indicated Alpha sales representatives had not openly provided all available contract information. Several customers felt they were treated unfairly. There have also been instances in which Pat desired to confidentially report employee misconduct but was unaware how to do so. Pat also recalls an instance where several local organizations solicited resources from Alpha; however, the company declined the request. To date, Alpha has not implemented any type of environmental management programs. A number of fellow coworkers have requested nonstandard working hours to attend to personal matters, although Pat heard that management refused to allow such accommodations.”

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The findings of these three articles present new insight into the powerful relationships between organizational social responsibility and individual outcomes. Specifically, when employees perceive their organization's CSR efforts, affective organizational commitment (AOC) increases and that AOC acts as the mechanism through which CSR leads to reduced levels of turnover intentions. Additionally, the relationship between perceptions of CSR and AOC is stronger in smaller organizations. The second article finds that social mission orientation (SMO) is positively related to purpose, which acts as the mechanism through which SMO leads to increased organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Additionally, the relationship between purpose and OCBs is strengthened by high levels of person-organization (PO) fit. Finally, the second article finds that SMO is positively related to purpose which acts as a mechanism through which SMO increases an organization's attractiveness to prospective employees, and that high PO fit strengthens the relationship between SMO and purpose.

These results are interesting in that they not only point out the positive individual outcomes that happen when organizations have a strong social mission and participate in CSR activities, they also show that those activities actually increase an employee's sense of the organization's purpose which results in those positive individual outcomes. These findings provide further support for organizations that are attempting to justify the time and resources spent on CSR activities. Prior research suggests that those activities will result in positive macro

level outcomes, but these findings show that organizations will enjoy positive results at the employee level as well. Similarly, social mission orientation has positive individual level outcomes as well. However, SMO is not limited to social entrepreneurship organizations. Given the samples used for these articles, any organization (for-profit or not for-profit) can be perceived as having a strong social mission orientation, which can lead to the positive individual level outcomes described above. This should motivate organizations of all types to find ways to positively impact society and to communicate those efforts to all stakeholders.

These articles also address the moderating effects of size and PO fit. These results are interesting in that they suggest that smaller organizations will enjoy even stronger relationships between these constructs and individual level outcomes, so small organizations should endeavor to leverage these findings. Additionally, the strengthening effect of PO fit shows the importance of recruiting and selecting individuals who fit with the organization. Organizations should strive to profile their best employees, find the attributes that fit the organization best, and then use that profile as a screening tool for future hires.

Although these findings are compelling, there is room for further exploration. Articles one and two used a time-lagged design for data collection, but future research should pursue more longitudinal methods in order to strengthen the arguments for causality. Article three used college students in an experimental approach, so future research should look at those relationships in a broader sample of adults. Additionally, all three articles relied on samples that were mostly U.S. based individuals. There is a possibility that the relationships described above may differ in other countries based on different levels of assertiveness orientation, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, and performance orientation. Future research should compare these relationships in multiple countries. Finally, since purpose proved to be so powerful in these

relationships, future research should explore more antecedents and outcomes from purpose so that organizations can enjoy its benefits both at macro and micro levels.