

**A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CSR, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION, COMMITMENT AND EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR**

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**ABSTRACT**

The importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been well-documented in the literature. From a management perspective, CSR has been found to influence organizational attractiveness, employees' commitment, and identification. However, the relationship between these CSR initiatives and employees' attitudes and behaviors needs further examination. Thus, this paper attempts to fill this gap. Specifically, the propose a conceptual model of the relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR initiatives, attitudes toward CSR, organizational identification, organizational commitment, and two outcome variables: citizenship behaviors and personal social action. Implications of the conceptual model are discussed, and directions for future research are proposed.

**INTRODUCTION**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a prominent area of study in organizational research and has assumed importance as organizations engage in socially responsible initiatives beyond those required by law (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). These initiatives may lead to positive social change (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams & Ganapathi, 2007), positive personal social action (Ellis, 2008), as well as to an improvement in the quality of life for stakeholders (Cohen & Greenfield, 1997).

Cohen and Greenfield (1997) and Bhattacharya, Sen, and Korschun (2008) suggested that employees find CSR initiatives emotionally rewarding. For this reason, individuals may be more inclined to work for socially responsible organizations than for organizations that do not integrate CSR initiatives into their operations (Cohen & Greenfield, 1997). Furthermore, Bhattacharya et al. asserted that, when CSR initiatives are planned strategically, they will positively influence the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders, including

employees. In the present paper, the researchers examined the impact of CSR initiatives on a specific group of stakeholders, employees. The existing research that examines the influence of CSR initiatives on employees' perceptions, behaviors, and intentions is limited. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to develop a conceptual model (see Figure 1) in which several relationships are proposed. First, a positive relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR and organizational commitment is proposed. This relationship is said to be potentially mediated by organizational identification. The proposed model depicts a moderating effect of employees' attitudes toward CSR. Finally, the relationship between organizational commitment and two potential employees' behaviors is addressed. Examining the impact of CSR on employees' perceptions, behaviors, and intentions not only extends the research in this area but also can benefit organizations as they can utilize CSR as a way of building identification, commitment, and other important attitudes that positively influence the work environment and overall organizational functioning. The relationships illustrated are discussed in the following sections.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section explains the theoretical foundations of the proposed model (see Figure 1). First, the theoretical foundations of CSR will be addressed followed by an explanation of organizational identification, organizational commitment, and finally organizational citizenship behaviors and personal social action.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

The majority of CSR studies have centered on the relationship between CSR initiatives and organizational (financial) performance, the impact of CSR on consumers, and/or the factors that influence CSR (c.f., Ellis, 2008). Though CSR initiatives became popular when they were mainly directed toward consumers, organizations have learned that these initiatives can also have a positive impact on other stakeholders' attitudes and behaviors. For this reason, organizations such as Ben & Jerry's, Starbucks, and FIFA have implemented CSR initiatives in which their employees are more actively involved (e.g., volunteer days, donations to non-profit organizations, etc.). Organizations in other industries (e.g., banks) have also started to follow this trend. An example of this trend is the partnership between Chivas USA (a soccer team located in California) and Bank of America. Together these organizations created the program "Educate to Activate" which provides free financial education for the Californian Latino community.

The theory most often associated with CSR is stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). Freeman defined a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (p. 46). Carroll (1991) suggested a natural fit between CSR ideals and an organization's stakeholders, as the stakeholder concept delineates the specific groups that organizations should consider when implementing CSR initiatives (Quinn, 2002). Based on Freeman's definition of stakeholders, Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) presented a stakeholder identification theory with three attributes: legitimacy, urgency, and power. Mitchell and colleagues theorized that these attributes affect the degree to which managers prioritize stakeholders' needs and interests. However, according to institutional theory, the degree of priority that managers assign to different stakeholders also depends on how other organizations in the same industry operate in relation to these groups (Campbell, 2007).

Although employees are a powerful stakeholder group, few studies have examined the impact of CSR initiatives on employees. Consequently, researchers such as Peterson (2004), Brammer, Millington, & Rayton (2007), and Ellis (2008) have proposed furthering the theoretical and empirical examination of the relationship between CSR initiatives and employees' behaviors (e.g., OCBs), attitudes (e.g., commitment, identification), and perceptions of corporate image. Thus, following these researchers' suggestion, this paper attempts to further the theoretical understanding of CSR and its potential impact on employees' attitudes and behaviors.

CSR can be defined as a "process by which an organization expresses and develops its 'corporate culture' and social consciousness" (Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera & Williams, 2006, p. 537). This social consciousness appears when organizations engage in social activities that go beyond their financial interests and what is required by law (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Rupp et al. (2006) suggested that organizational acts of responsibility or irresponsibility impact employees' attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, they added, "employees' perceptions of CSR will trigger emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral responses" (p. 539). CSR initiatives can positively impact stakeholders' perceptions of the organization as CSR can generate a positive effect on consumers' commitment to different products or services (Cohen & Greenfield, 1997). For instance, individuals might be more likely to commit to buy products from companies that implement environmentally-friendly policies than from others that do not. Furthermore, CSR initiatives can also have a positive influence on employees' perceptions of the organization, which can lead to organizational identification (Turker, 2009) as well as organizational commitment (Peterson, 2004).

### **Organizational Identification**

Organizational identification has an important place in the study of organizational behavior because researchers have found that employees' identification level is one of the variables that impact overall organizational effectiveness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). However, until the late 1980s, organizational identification was not fully understood and researchers utilized organizational identification as a synonym of other related constructs such as organizational commitment (Ashforth & Mael).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) undertook the task of re-conceptualizing the construct and explained that social identity theory (SIT) could easily restore the coherence of organizational identification and its applications to organizational behavior. SIT posits that individuals tend to classify themselves into various social categories or social groups such as religious affiliation, gender, and/or sport teams (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Based on this assumption, Ashforth and Mael suggested that organizational identification "is a specific form of social identification where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization" (p. 105). The organizational identification framework developed by them is now widely accepted. By using SIT as a premise for organizational identification, Ashforth and Mael were able to provide a concise definition and clarify the applicability of this construct.

A number of studies of organizational commitment and organizational identification have attempted to establish differences between the constructs. Although these constructs have been defined differently, many researchers such as Cheney (1983), Bergami and Bagozzi (2000),

Fuller, Barnett, Hester and Relyea (2003), and Gautam, VanDick and Wagner (2004) believed they are related. Some have proposed that organizational identification precedes organizational commitment, while others have argued the contrary. Fuller et al. (2003) stated that only employees who identify with the organization remain loyal to it. Allen and Meyer (1990) added that if a person feels that other organizations provide similar work experiences, their current work experiences may have little or no impact on organizational commitment, especially on affective commitment. Mir, Mir and Mosca (2002) suggested that organizations should endeavor to include human resources practices that may lead to affective commitment, because younger employees are highly committed to their careers and may therefore never feel obligated to or a need to remain with a specific organization.

The proposed study builds on the literature reviewed above and proposes that employees may exhibit different levels of psychological connection to the organization. These levels of connection are characterized by a level of identification (or lack thereof). An employee is said to be identified with an organization when she/he believes that his/her values and goals are similar to those of the organization (Kelman, 1958; Angle & Perry, 1981; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986;). Employees who identify with the organization develop an emotional bond with it. As this bond becomes stronger, the employee internalizes organizational goals and values, and defines him/herself in terms of the organization. The researchers propose that the different levels of organizational identification are related to the different types of organizational commitment proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990): affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This relationship will be further explained later in this paper.

## **Organizational Commitment**

The study of organizational commitment is filled with contradictory perspectives. For instance, Kanter (1968) was the first to propose different dimensions of organizational commitment: a) continuance commitment—commitment based on opportunity cost of leaving the organization, b) cohesion commitment—person's attachment to the social relationships at work, c) control commitment—attachment to norms and self-conceptions of system values. However, researchers such as Porter, Steers, and Mowday (1974) disagreed with Kanter and stated that organizational commitment is a unidimensional construct. Oliver (1990) argued that organizational commitment is not a psychological construct but a group of behavioral patterns characterized by an engagement with an organization that restricts freedom of action.

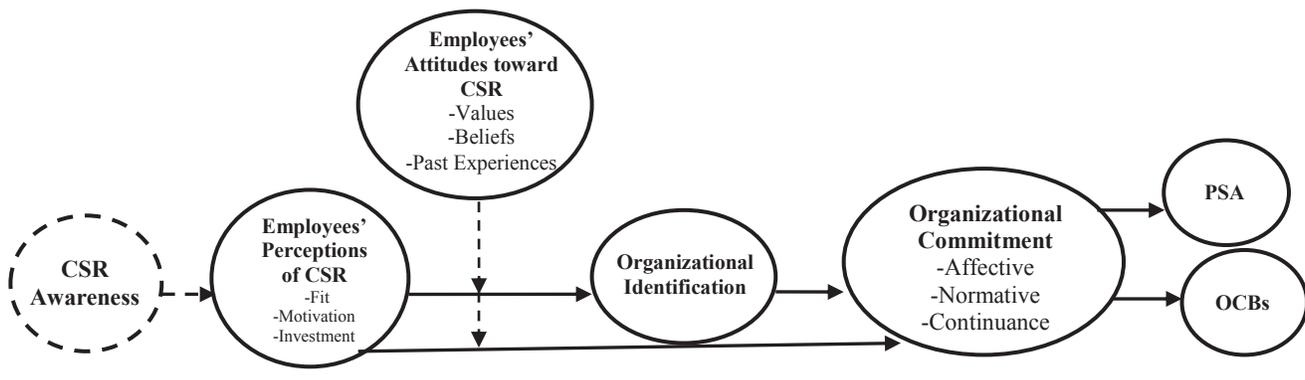
Regardless of the number of contradictory perspectives about organizational commitment found in the literature, the majority of researchers agree that commitment is a multidimensional psychological construct. Although a number of scholars have proposed conceptual models and measurement scales that reflect this approach, a unique theory of organizational commitment does not exist. However, the three-component model (TCM) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) is one of the most widely used.

The TCM suggests that the three dimensions of organizational commitment are affective, continuance, and normative commitment. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), affectively committed employees remain with the organization because they *want* to do so. These employees demonstrate psychological commitment to the organization “through feelings, such as loyalty,

affection, warmth, belongingness, fondness, happiness, pleasure, and so on” (Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, & Sincich, 1993, p. 954). Continuance commitment, on the other hand, is based on opportunity-cost ideas or/and perceive lack of alternatives. For instance, an employee may know that by leaving her current job for a different one, she might be able to work fewer hours; however, she knows that she would lose her health insurance and pension benefits. In other words, employees who develop continuance commitment basically remain with the organization because the costs of leaving are too high (e.g., loss of seniority, health insurance plan, pension benefits, etc.). Their commitment is based on membership instead of on an emotional attachment to the organization. Consequently, “even after the individual decides to continue with the organization, that individual may not put any extra effort for the benefit of the organization” (Chelladurai, 1999, p. 250). Finally, employees whose primary link to the organization is through a sense of obligation (i.e., “the right thing to do”) remain with the organization because they *ought* to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Jaros et al. (1993) explained the concept of normative commitment by stating that,

...this form of commitment differs from affective commitment because it reflects a sense of duty, an obligation, or calling, to work in the organization, but not necessarily emotional attachment. It differs from continuance commitment because it does not necessarily fluctuate with personal calculation of inducements or sunk costs (p. 955).

In the complete conceptual model (see Figure 1), the TCM provides the underlying framework for the commitment construct. The decision to utilize this framework is based on two reasons: there is strong empirical evidence supporting it (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991; and Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002) and it also seems more reasonable to think of organizational commitment as a multidimensional construct as the TCM captures common elements found throughout the commitment-related literature from the 1950s to 1980s (e.g., attachment to the organization, internalization of societal norms, perceived lack of opportunities, among others). The following figure depicts the proposed relationships between the aforementioned constructs.



**FIGURE 1. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

## **CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

### **CSR Awareness**

First, the primary condition that needs to occur prior to examining the impact of employees' perceptions of CSR on organizational identification is awareness. According to Pickens (2009), awareness can play an important role in the perception process. Awareness of CSR initiatives can lead to the development of a bilateral psychological contract between the employees and the organization (Ellis, 2008; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), as well as a decrease in employees' skepticism about the organization's motivation for engaging in CSR. Although employees' awareness of CSR initiatives is as important as the initiatives themselves (Ellis), organizations tend to overlook the process of communicating their efforts to be socially responsible. In this study, awareness functions as a boundary condition. That is, for the proposed conceptual model to be supported (see Figure 1), employees should be aware of the CSR initiatives that their employer organization is engaged in.

### **Employees' Perceptions of CSR and Organizational Identification**

Researchers such as Rupp et al. (2006) suggested that employees' perceptions of CSR can trigger emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral responses that are beneficial to the organization. For instance, CSR initiatives can have positive impact on employees performance (Hickman, Lawrence & Ward, 2005), commitment (Peterson, 2004), satisfaction (Devinney, 2009), and identification (Kim, Lee, Lee & Kim, 2010). However to some extent, researchers have overlooked the indicators that comprised those employees' perceptions or the concept of perceptions has been operationalized as a behavioral variable (e.g., Kim et al). In this paper, it is proposed that employees' perceptions of CSR are comprised of three indicators: perceptions of CSR motivation, perceptions of CSR fit, and perceptions of CSR investment. These indicators were drawn from the literature as explained below.

When organizations engage in CSR initiatives, employees expect the organization to have beneficent motives and be committed to a valued social cause (Handelman, 2006; Turker, 2009). In return, employees will also support the cause even if it involves some sacrifice on their part (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). In the proposed model, motivation is related to the perceived organizational motives for engaging in CSR initiatives. Morgan and Hunt's (1994) trust-commitment theory, explains that trust is generated from substantial communication and shared values between organizations and their stakeholders. These define trust as a sense of confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. Thus, if employees trust in the reliability and integrity of CSR initiatives, such initiatives can have a positive influence on employees' perceptions regarding an organization's motives for engaging in CSR initiatives. If employees' perceive CSR initiatives as sincere efforts to help society, such perceptions can evolve into feelings of sympathy toward the organization which can later develop into sentiments of identification with the organization and an attitude of commitment to their work. This might change if employees perceive such initiatives to be efforts only to gain publicity or to improve organizational image.

Employees and other stakeholders do question the reasons behind organizations' CSR initiatives, and are generally skeptical of the sincerity of organizations' CSR motives (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Bhattacharya and Sen considered that two factors impacting consumers CSR skepticism are the organization's reputation and the fit between the organization and the social cause that it supports. For example, the authors explained that consumers are generally skeptical when organizations are involved in CSR initiatives that are closely related to their line of business (e.g., Phillip's Morris and its campaign against childhood smoking). Thus, trust plays an important role in stakeholders' perceptions of CSR initiatives. Employees may become antipathetic towards organizations' CSR activities if they suspect ulterior motives behind such initiatives (e.g., increase sales, generate publicity) (Haley, 1996; Menon & Khan, 2003). If employees and other stakeholders perceive ulterior motives behind an organization's CSR initiatives, the organization can lose its credibility and severely damage its reputation. When CSR initiatives are perceived as sincere efforts for supporting a social cause, employees are more likely to believe that the motivation for engaging in CSR efforts is the actual message that is being conveyed (e.g., we care about the community) (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000) and such perception can trigger an emotional response in the form of identification.

Organizations seek to create and maintain a positive reputation because it helps them to attract and retain good employees (Turban & Greening, 1996). Although there is evidence suggesting that CSR initiatives can create a good organizational reputation, organizations must be able to demonstrate beneficent motives behind their CSR efforts. One way of doing this is to engage in CSR initiatives congruent with the organizational mission statement and/or organizational values (Cohen & Greenfield, 1997; Porter & Kramer, 2006). In other words, it is important that employees perceive a fit between the organization and its CSR efforts.

In this paper, fit is related to the perceived congruence between the organization and its CSR initiatives. Researchers such as Burke and Logsdon (1996) and Porter and Kramer (2002; 2006) suggested that CSR initiatives should be strategically related to the organization's mission, values, and objectives. Social issues that are highly related to the organization's mission, values, and objectives should receive priority. This concept is also known as centrality (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). CSR initiatives that have high centrality (i.e., high fit) are considered to yield major benefits to the organization in comparison to those initiatives that have low centrality (Burke & Logsdon).

Basil and Herr (2003; 2006) conducted various empirical studies and found that when consumers perceive there is a fit between the organization and the charities that it supports, their attitude toward the organization is more positive than when they perceive that there is not a good fit. Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) also found that when stakeholders perceive a high fit between the organization and the social causes that it supports, they are more likely to develop a sentimental bond with the organization. Likewise, studies conducted by Lafferty, Goldsmith and Hult (2004) found that when consumers perceive that CSR efforts are congruent with the organization's image, they are more likely to perceive those efforts as positive and truthful. Specifically, perceived fit strengthens the relationship that consumers have with an organization (Basil & Herr, 2006) and at the same time has a positive impact on consumers' behavior (e.g., patronage intentions).

Similar to the consumer research mentioned above, Cohen and Greenfield (1997) argued that employees are more likely to support organizational CSR initiatives perceived to be consistent with the organization's mission and values. For instance, Ben & Jerry's teaches its employees the importance of environmentally sustainable business practices. Thus, several of their CSR initiatives are oriented toward programs dealing with this issue. It is important for organizations to engage in CSR initiatives that have high centrality (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). That is, their CSR initiatives should be congruent with their mission, values, and objectives. When stakeholders perceive CSR initiatives to be congruent with the organization's mission, values, and objectives, they are more likely to perceive those initiatives as legitimate (i.e., truthful), to have a positive attitude toward the organization, and to develop a sentimental bond with it (Basil & Herr, 2003; 2006; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Lafferty et al., 2004).

In the proposed model investment is related to the perceived amount of resources (i.e., effort, time, and money) that an organization spends on its CSR initiatives. To our knowledge, the construct perceived investment has not been used in the CSR literature. However, in other fields of study such as marketing (Schlosser, White & Lloyd, 2006), sport management (Kim, Smith & James, 2010), communication (Goei & Boster, 2005), and social psychology (Algoe, Haidt & Gable, 2008) perceived investment has been used as an antecedent of gratitude. Tesser, Gatewood, and Driver (1968) explained that gratitude and perceived motivation are a function of the recipient's perceptions of the intention of the benefactor, the cost to the benefactor in providing the benefit, and the value of the benefit. Thus, gratitude and perceptions of motivation become more positive when investment is perceived to be greater.

Signaling theory can be used to explain the construct of perceived investment. Signaling theory has been used in the management literature to suggest that through their recruitment tactics, organizations send potential employees information in the form of signals or cues about the organizations' working conditions (e.g., Spence, 1974; Turban & Greening, 1996). Marketing researchers also utilize this theory to explain how marketing practitioners commonly use observable signals such as price, warranties, and promotions to communicate to the consumers unobservable qualities of a product (e.g., quality and value) (Kirmani & Rao, 2000; Schlosser et al., 2006). Signals can be defined as the actions that convey an organization's abilities and intentions (Porter, 1980). The amount of resources (e.g., time and money) that organizations spend on their socially responsible initiatives can convey signals to employees that may represent how much the organization really cares about such initiatives. In other words, through the amount of time and money that the organization spends on CSR, the organization is sending signals to its employees about the importance of CSR for the organization. At the same time those signals would impact employees' perceptions of the organization's CSR initiatives.

When organizations engage in socially responsible behaviors (i.e., CSR initiatives), employees look at signals such as time, money, and effort that their employer invests towards the CSR initiatives and make inferences about their employer's reasons for engaging in CSR. For instance, if employees perceive that the organization invests a low amount of resources in their CSR initiatives (e.g., not enough money and effort), they might perceive that the organization does not really care about the social causes it purports to support. On the contrary, if the amount of resources invested in CSR is perceived to be high, employees might then perceive that the organization does care about the social causes that it supports.

## **Employees' Attitudes toward CSR, Perceptions of CSR, and Organizational Identification**

Researchers (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Bohner & Wanke, 2002) interested in the study of attitudes suggested the possibility that individuals' attitudes introduce a cognitive bias into their information processing. According to Pratkanis (1989), attitudes function as a cognitive schema that affects individuals' information processing. When processing information, individuals' schema will affect their expectations about an object, facilitate encoding of information, and will guide inferences that go beyond the information given about a particular object or situation (Bohner & Wanke, 2002). In other words, attitudes—in the form of a cognitive schema—will influence individuals' perceptions and interpretation of particular situations they face. Individuals' perceptions are closely related to their attitudes (Bohner & Wanke, 2002). Perceptions are defined by Lindsay and Norman (1977 as cited by Pickens, 2009) as “the process by which organisms interpret and organize to produce a meaningful experience of the world” (p. 52). That is, when individuals are confronted with a situation or other stimuli, they interpret it into something that is meaningful to them (Pickens, 2009). However, variables such as individuals' past experiences and especially individuals' attitudes will shape how individuals' perceive and interpret the situation. Consequently, individuals' perceptions and/or interpretations may be very different from reality (Pickens, 2009).

In the organizational context, employees' attitudes toward CSR can influence their perceptions of CSR initiatives. For example, employees who tend to have a negative attitude toward CSR initiatives may tend to perceive them as “firm-serving” efforts rather than “society-serving” efforts. When employees perceive CSR initiatives as firm-serving efforts, they perceive that through CSR initiatives their employer organization is simply pursuing its own self-interest (e.g., increase media exposure) (Webb & Mohr, 1998). Contrarily, if employees perceive CSR initiatives as society-serving, they perceive that the organization is genuinely motivated to support a social cause without seeking any return (Webb & Mohr). In terms of investment, employees who have a negative attitude toward CSR may perceive CSR initiatives as a waste of time and money. Conversely, employees who have a positive attitude toward CSR may perceive their organization's socially responsible efforts to be altruistic efforts to aid the local community. Or even they might think that the organization does not invest sufficient resources into CSR programs.

Researchers (e.g., Sims, 2003; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson & Kamins, 2006) suggested that there exists a positive relationship between CSR and stakeholders' identification. The researchers argued that stakeholders will be more likely to identify with organizations that are considered socially responsible rather than with those that are not because, as Cohen and Greenfield (1997) suggested, when an organization is socially responsible “people want to buy from you. They want to work for you. They want to be associated with you. They feel invested in your success” (p. 29). In this paper, however, it is proposed that stakeholders' (i.e., employees) attitudes toward CSR initiatives play an important role in stakeholder identification. The reasoning for this proposition is explained below.

Attitudes are believed to be enduring evaluative dispositions toward an object (Chisman, 1976). Since CSR initiatives can be considered an object, employees will more likely have evaluative dispositions (i.e., attitudes) toward such initiatives. Different factors such as the values and

beliefs that employees grew up with or their past experiences may influence their attitude toward CSR initiatives. For example, Bogler (1994) suggested that past experiences have a strong effect on future attitudes. Consider an employee who worked for an organization whose CSR initiatives were clearly based on ulterior motives. There is a chance that this employee would likely be more cynical towards the CSR efforts of future employer organizations. Similarly, if this employee worked for an organization that was perceived to have society-serving motives, the employee's attitude toward CSR might be positive, based on this past experience.

Researchers in the area of consumer behavior also found that consumers' attitudes toward CSR affect consumers' reactions to organizations' socially responsible or irresponsible behaviors. For instance, in Maignan et al.'s (1999) study, a great percentage of consumers (approximately 88%) stated that they believe that businesses should be socially responsible and that they are more likely to consume product and services from organizations that are socially responsible. Similarly, Mohr and Webb (2005) found that consumers, who believe in and appreciate CSR, tend to evaluate more positively those organizations that engage in environmental CSR initiatives. Maignan and Ferrell (2004) stated that when organizations engage in different social issues they are acknowledging the importance of such issues. Stakeholders who share similar concerns for those issues "are likely to appreciate the organization's initiatives, and a feeling of bonding to the firm may emerge" (Maignan & Ferrell, p. 14). Hence, consumers who care about the environment will be likely to develop an emotional bond with organizations that engage in environmental CSR initiatives (c.f., Mohr & Webb, 2005). Similarly, when employees value and have a positive attitude toward CSR and their employer organization engages in CSR initiatives, such initiatives are likely to play an important role in creating an emotional bond between employees and their employer organization. In other words, CSR can play an important role in developing employees' organizational identification.

### **Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment**

The relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment proposed in this paper is based on the TCM. The researchers propose a partially mediated model in which the level of identification with the organization impacts organizational commitment differently. For example, an employee may continue her/his employment with an organization because the costs of leaving are too high or because she/he does not want to lose the "rewards" she/he currently receives from the organization (e.g., competitive benefit packages, reasonable salary) (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). This does not imply, however, that the employee is emotionally attached (i.e., identified) with the organization. The employee may decide to remain with the organization because the costs of leaving are too high even though her/his level of organizational identification is possibly low.

Not all employees would remain with an organization because the costs of leaving are too high or because they perceive a lack of alternatives; others will remain with the organization because they may tend to behave in a way they think society expects them to. For instance, if an employee has a stable job with a reasonable salary and fringe benefits, she/he may believe that people important to her/him (e.g., family members and friends) expect her/him to stay with the organization, even if she/he is not happy with the job. Although this employee does not identify

with the organization, she/he develops a sense of obligation toward it, and feels that staying with the organization is the right thing to do (i.e., normative commitment).

Lastly, the relationship between identification and affective commitment is characterized by an emotional bond between the employee and the organization (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000) that leads her/him to want to stay with the organization. Identification occurs “when an individual accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group” (Kelman, 1958, p. 53). Employees might perceive that their values are similar to the organizational values, so they want to maintain the relationship with the organization because the organization becomes a part of their identity. The relationship between identification and affective commitment is important because it has been suggested that organizations will be able to reduce employees’ turnover only through the development of a sentimental bond (Mir et al., 2002).

### **Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Personal Social Action**

The conceptual model proposed in this paper also includes two outcome variables that derive from employees’ organizational commitment: organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and personal social action (PSA). The first outcome variable we will discuss is OCBs.

OCBs are defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006, p. 3). According to this definition, although OCBs are important to the effective functioning of an organization, such behaviors are not formally rewarded within the organization. OCBs are not included in job descriptions; therefore, it is the employees’ personal choice to engage or not to engage in OCBs (Organ et al, 2006). Empirical evidence supporting the relationship between organizational commitment and OCBs has been contradictory. For instance, such as Meyer et al. (1993) and Shore and Wayne (1993) found organizational commitment to be a predictor of this type of behavior, whereas William and Anderson (1991) did not find any relationship at all. Wagner and Rush (2000) suggested that engagement in OCBs is not related to employees’ organizational commitment but related to their age. In this article, however, it is proposed that when employees are committed to the organization, they will behave in a way that is congruent with the organization’s objectives (Barney & Stewart, 2000). Therefore, if the organization promotes a cooperative environment among its employees, employees will more likely be cooperative. If the organization engages in socially responsible behavior and promotes this type of behavior among the employees, then the employees will likely behave in the same manner.

Commitment can also have a positive effect on employees’ PSA. This construct was proposed by Ellis (2008) and she defined it as “individual actions supported by and/or sponsored by the organization to support a social good” (p. 29). Ellis explained that PSA includes such actions as charitable donations automatically deducted from employees’ paychecks, paid time off to volunteer, and special activities in support of charitable organizations and/or issues of social interest (e.g., cancer awareness, environmental-related issues). In other words, social activities that are created to benefit a particular group of people or the community as a whole and which “under favorable circumstances, produce actual empowerment, impact or social change”

(Horvath, 1999, p. 221). PSA does not include CSR activities undertaken by the organization that “have no employee involvement such as community grants, donations, corporate-wide sustainability programs, and in-kind donations” (Ellis, 2008, p. 29).

PSA differs from OCBs, because OCBs, as aforementioned, are discretionary (i.e., extra-role) behaviors that are not formally recognized and/or rewarded within an organization. Conversely, PSA is sponsored and promoted by the organization and employees are generally encouraged to participate in such activities (Ellis, 2008). Unlike OCBs, PSA does not improve the organization’s efficiency and effectiveness and more importantly, they are targeted to external individuals or groups (Ellis). Furthermore, Ellis asserted that since PSA can be considered a specific type of prosocial behavior, it is easier to conceptualize and measure the types of behaviors constituting PSA.

## **DISCUSSION**

Although organizations are now developing more CSR programs in which employees are encouraged to participate, only a few studies have examined the impact that such programs have on employees’ identification and commitment. The proposed model (see Figure 1) addresses this gap. Specifically, through the proposed model the researchers attempt to explain the potential impact that employees’ perceptions of CSR initiatives may have on identification and commitment.

The primary condition that needs to occur prior to examining the impact of employees’ perceptions of CSR on organizational identification is awareness. Sometimes organizations devote a lot of money into their CSR initiatives but they tend to forget to communicate that to their employees (c.f., Cohen & Greenfield, 1997). It is imperative that organizations communicate their socially responsible efforts to their employees because awareness of CSR initiatives can lead to the development of a bilateral psychological contract between the employees and the organization, and to a decrease in employees’ skepticism about the organization’s motivation for engaging in CSR (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Ellis, 2008; Kim et al., 2010). Practitioners can use internal communication channels such as internal newsletters, emails, bulletin boards to communicate their CSR initiatives. This way employees awareness of CSR initiatives will likely increased.

As mentioned previously, the variable, employees’ perceptions of CSR initiatives, is operationalized using three indicators: perceived CSR motivation, perceived CSR fit, and perceived CSR investment. In terms of perceived motivation, it is suggested that a feeling of trust toward the organization is generated when employees’ perceive that substantial information is given to them about the CSR initiatives that the organization is engaged in. Because CSR efforts tend to increase following negative media exposure (Werbel & Wortman, 2000), employees may become skeptical about the sincerity of the organization for engaging in CSR. (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Thus, organizations need to consider how their employees perceive their CSR efforts. When CSR initiatives are perceived as sincere efforts for supporting a social cause, employees are more likely to believe that the motivation for engaging in CSR initiatives is the actual message that is being conveyed (e.g., we care about the community) (Goldsmith et al.,

2000) and such perception can trigger an emotional response in the form of identification and commitment.

In terms of fit, it is important for organizations to consider CSR initiatives that are congruent with their mission and objectives, because when employees perceive that there exists a congruency between the organization and its CSR initiatives, they will be more likely to perceive such initiatives as sincere efforts to aid society, to develop a sentimental bond with the organization, and to be highly committed to their jobs (e.g., Basil & Herr, 2003; 2006; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Lafferty et al., 2004, Peterson, 2004). In terms of perceived investment, employees look at signals such as time, money, and effort that their employer invests towards CSR initiatives and make inferences about their employer's reasons for engaging in CSR. From an external evaluation perspective, it is now common for organizations to be evaluated not only based on their financial performance but on their social performance as well (Sims, 2003). The amount of money spent on socially responsible initiatives is considered when assessing the social performance of organizations (Sims). Organizations that perform well financially and socially are considered to be socially valuable (Sims), and as Turban and Greening (1996) suggested: employees tend to find it gratifying to be part of an organization that is socially valuable. These sentiments of gratification can lead to higher levels of identification and commitment.

As observed in the proposed conceptual model, employees' attitudes toward CSR can influence their perceptions of CSR initiatives. For example, employees who tend to have a negative attitude toward CSR initiatives may tend to perceive them as "firm-serving" efforts rather than sincere efforts to help society. In terms of investment, employees may perceive CSR initiatives as a waste of time and money. Conversely, employees who have a positive attitude toward CSR may perceive their organization's CSR efforts to be altruistic efforts intended to help the local community. Because of their positive attitude toward CSR, it is also possible they might think the organization does not invest sufficient resources on CSR programs. In terms of organizational identification and commitment, it can be argued that the influence of employees' perceptions on identification and commitment might change according to their attitude (positive or negative) toward CSR initiatives. Changing employees' attitudes toward CSR might be a challenging task for practitioners. However, through clear communication of the organization's mission, objectives, and the reasons for engaging in CSR, practitioners might be able to persuade employees and to have them "on-board" in their CSR initiatives. If the organization promotes a cooperative environment among its employees, employees will more likely be cooperative. If the organization engages in social responsible behavior and promotes this type of behavior among the employees, then the employees will likely behave in the same manner.

The conceptual model presented in this paper also attempts to further the understanding of the relationship between organizational identification and commitment. It is presumed that employees who identify with the organization demonstrate a higher level of organizational commitment, and are more likely to remain with the organization because they have developed an emotional attachment to it. When employees find that their values are not congruent with those of the organization, their level of identification is more likely to be negatively affected (Bhattacharya, Rao & Glynn, 1995) and their level of commitment changes. For example, instead of remaining with the organization because they want to (i.e. emotional attachment),

employees will be more likely to stay out of an obligation (i.e. normative commitment) or sense of need (i.e. continuance commitment). This notion is very important to the study of organizational commitment because employees committed for calculative reasons (i.e. continuance commitment) or who are normatively committed are considered to be at higher risk of turnover and absenteeism (Blau & Boal, 1989). It is also presumed that highly committed employees are more likely to engage in OCBs as well as PSAs. Both of these behaviors are important because although OCBs are discretionary and not explicitly rewarded, they support the efficient and effective functioning of organizations (Organ et al., 2006). In addition, employees' participation in PSAs is important because they can contribute to the success of social initiatives sponsored by the organization (Ellis, 2008).

Finally, like any other scholarly paper, this paper is not without limitations. One limitation is that the directionality and causality of the constructs is not unquestionable. For instance, it can be argued that if an individual works for an organization that engages in CSR and she/he values and has a positive attitude toward CSR, CSR initiatives are likely to play an important role in creating an emotional connection between the employee and the organization. This relationship, however, can also be reversed. Namely, when employees have a close emotional tie with their organization, they can also view CSR in a positive manner. Therefore, the directionality of the constructs should be further examined in future research.

### **Directions for Future Research**

In the conceptual model it is proposed that employees' perceptions of CSR have a positive impact on organizational identification and commitment. However, all the relationships presented in this paper should be empirically tested. It is also important to consider the inclusion of other moderating variables, such as employees' needs. According to content theories (i.e., need-based theories), different contents (e.g., the work environment) motivate employees to engage in specific behaviors (Chelladurai, 1999). Therefore, if organizational factors or actions (e.g. CSR initiatives) satisfy employees' needs, employees will be more likely to commit to the organization as well as engage in OCBs and PSAs. Future research could investigate the moderating effect of employees' needs between perceptions of CSR, organizational identification, and commitment.

Future research can also consider including other workplace variables that may impact employees' perceptions of CSR. For example, Ben & Jerry's rewards employees for their efforts to collaborate in the company's CSR initiatives (Cohen & Greenfield, 1997). However, other organizations do not do the same. Therefore, employees' perception of and involvement in CSR may be affected by the organization's reward system in relation to employees' CSR involvement. Furthermore, employees' involvement in the organization's CSR initiatives could also be affected by their self-interest, which means that they can see that the money invested in CSR is money that it should be invested in them (i.e., employees). This "dual" role of CSR needs further examination.

Studies conducted in the future should also test if the proposed relationships vary across industries. For example, sport organizations seem to receive greater attention by the media and general public. Consequently, CSR may be a stronger predictor of organizational identification

and commitment among individuals working for sport organizations than individuals working in other industries. Future empirical studies should collect two or more samples composed of individuals working in different industries. Conducting such comparisons will establish empirical evidence supporting whether organizational phenomena can be explained by the same causes or if it varies by organizational context (Hantrais, 1995).

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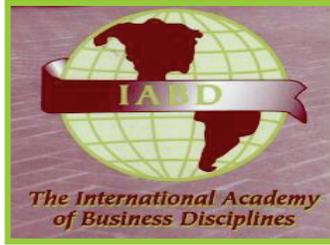
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