

On Corporate Social Responsibility, Sensemaking, and the Search for Meaningfulness Through Work

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) focuses on many types of stakeholders and outcomes, including stakeholders outside of the organization and outcomes that go beyond financial results. Thus, CSR expands the notion of work to go beyond a task, job, intraindividual, intra-organizational, and profit perspective and provides an ideal conduit for individuals to seek and find meaningfulness through work. We adopt a person-centric conceptualization of CSR by focusing on sensemaking as an underlying and unifying mechanism through which individuals are proactive and intentional agents who search for and find meaningfulness through work. Our conceptualization allows us to understand variability in CSR effects due to variability in employee sensemaking and the meaningfulness employees experience from CSR; highlight synergies across disconnected theories and streams of research originating in different disciplines and at the intraindividual, intraorganizational, and extraorganizational levels of analysis; and propose new research directions for the future in the form of propositions and research questions. By using sensemaking as a unifying underlying process, the proposed conceptualization explains how individuals find meaningfulness through work and, consequently, when and why employees experience CSR in a particular manner—resulting in more or less positive outcomes for themselves, their organizations, and external stakeholders. Our proposed model could also be used in other individual-level research domains that would benefit from (a) placing people and their search for meaningfulness center stage and (b) focusing on the role that same-level

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and cross-level interactions among intraindividual, intraorganizational, and extraorganizational sensemaking factors play in the process.

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Work is a central human activity (Hulin, 2014), and as individuals strive to find meaningfulness in life, they often do so through work (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). The general process through which individuals give meaning to ongoing experiences such as work is called sensemaking (Weick, 1995), and we use the label “sensemaking factors” to refer to the variables that influence how individuals give meaning to ongoing experiences.

Our article addresses how individuals make sense of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and find meaningfulness through work. CSR refers to organizational actions and policies that consider several types of stakeholders and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance (Aguinis, 2011). In other words, CSR focuses on many types of stakeholders, including stakeholders outside of the organization, and on outcomes that go beyond financial results. Because CSR expands the notion of work to go outside of one’s particular job and organization, and beyond an exclusive profit-focused perspective, it is an ideal conduit for individuals to make sense of and find meaningfulness through work. Clearly, the general issue of meaningfulness through work has been addressed in previous research, particularly in streams regarding work redesign and job characteristics, discretionary behavior, and meaning of work. We contribute to this work by linking CSR, sensemaking, and meaningfulness, and in doing so we provide an analysis that goes past the characteristics of the tasks and jobs performed. Our analysis considers choices individuals make about their discretionary behavior at work that mostly target other organizational members and their organizations.

Regarding related research streams, consider research on work redesign and job analysis, which dates back to the 1960s (e.g., Fried & Ferris, 1987; Turner & Lawrence, 1965; L. A. Wood, 2011). This work focused on “experienced meaningfulness of the work” as the “degree to which the employee experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975: 162). The job characteristics model (JCM) posits that meaningfulness of the work is “enhanced primarily by three of the core dimensions: skill variety, task identity, and task significance” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975: 160). Accordingly, the focus of this literature has been mostly on the structure of tasks and features of jobs as well as how individuals perceive their tasks and jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Therefore, Grant (2007) suggested that the JCM model be expanded to include the role of work contexts on the motivation to make a prosocial difference. Given its explicit prosocial goals, analyzing sensemaking regarding CSR allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the process of experienced meaningfulness by going beyond individual tasks and jobs.

A second related stream of research is concerned with discretionary employee behavior (e.g., Belschak, Den Hartog, & Kalshoven, 2015). Engaging in discretionary behavior such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; and its various dimensions, including altruism/helping behavior, courtesy, and sportsmanship), prosocial behavior, pro-organizational behavior, or extrarole behavior may be a way for individuals to find meaningfulness through work

(Grant, 2007). However, similar to the task and job focus of the work redesign and job analysis literature, discretionary employee behavior usually does not include the work context (for notable exceptions, see Jones, 2010; Vlachos, Theotokis, & Panagopoulos, 2010). For example, discretionary behaviors refer specifically to job performance, albeit nontask performance (Shin, Kim, Choi, Kim, & Oh, in press). Moreover, discretionary behavior refers to actions targeting other individuals within the organization (i.e., OCB-I) or the organization as a whole (i.e., OCB-O). Because of its explicit emphasis on external stakeholders, analyzing sensemaking regarding CSR allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the process of experienced meaningfulness by going beyond traditional job and organizational boundaries.

A third relevant stream of research has been produced by scholarship on the meaning of work (Rosso et al., 2010). This body of research refers only tangentially to JCM and the work redesign literature, discretionary employee behavior, and other human resource management (HRM) and industrial-organizational psychology theories and domains (e.g., job analysis). Specifically, “much of the scholarship in organizational studies on meaning has developed from a psychological perspective, in which the individual experience of work takes precedence over social or cultural factors” (Rosso et al., 2010: 118). The meaning of work literature has also focused on individuals and their jobs and, although it often adopts an intraindividual focus, it also addresses intraorganizational phenomena, such as the role of coworkers and an organization’s leaders (e.g., Podolny, Khurana, & Hill-Popper, 2005). Because CSR considers internal and external stakeholders explicitly, analyzing sensemaking regarding CSR allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the process of experienced meaningfulness by considering relationships and interactions between internal (i.e., employees) and external (e.g., family, beneficiaries of CSR) stakeholders.

Thus, our article makes a unique contribution to what we know about CSR by offering a conceptual framework that advances our understanding of how individuals make sense of CSR and seek and find meaningfulness through work. Specifically, we adopt a person-centric conceptualization of CSR (Rupp, 2011; Rupp, Skarlicki, & Shao, 2013; Weiss & Rupp, 2011) and analyze how individuals experience CSR by taking an active role in searching for and finding meaningfulness. In addition, we rely on recent research on the psychological foundations of CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013) but add to this work, which focused primarily on how CSR is implemented (i.e., embedded vs. peripheral CSR distinction). We rely upon the work redesign and job analysis literature mentioned earlier in defining meaningfulness as a psychological construct resulting from how individuals perceive the characteristics of their jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). But we go beyond this literature by considering factors at levels of analysis higher than tasks and jobs. We also build upon the discretionary behavior and meaning of work literatures by going beyond traditional job and organizational boundaries. Our conceptualization allows us to understand variability in CSR effects due to variability in employee sensemaking and the meaningfulness employees experience from CSR, highlight synergies across disconnected theories and streams of research originating in different disciplines and at different levels of analysis, and propose new directions for the future. An important contribution of our model is that by using sensemaking as a unifying underlying process, it explains how individuals find meaningfulness through work and, consequently, when and why they experience CSR in a particular manner—resulting in more or less positive outcomes for themselves, their organizations, and external stakeholders. In addition, we propose implications for practice and how CSR research can answer the call for bridging research and practice (Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001).

Although we focus on how CSR enhances our understanding of how people find meaningfulness through work, our emphasis on the individual experience of CSR, the individual's active role in seeking meaningfulness, and the importance of the intraindividual, intraorganizational, and extraorganizational levels of analysis can be used in other management domains to examine how people experience and make sense of work more generally. Our model addresses the role of CSR in particular in producing meaningfulness and, therefore, includes sensemaking factors particularly pertinent to the CSR domain. However, in spite of our emphasis on CSR, our intention is not to propose a domain-specific form of meaningfulness. Our model relying on sensemaking as the underlying mechanism can be revised and expanded to understand meaningfulness involving other organizational phenomena. For example, future research can extrapolate our CSR-focused model to a wide variety of domains, such as how individuals, through sensemaking processes, search for and find meaningfulness from performance management, coaching, mentoring, being a member of a team, and organizational change efforts, among other topics that have generated a considerable amount of research over the past few decades (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008). Each of these domains involves opportunities to find meaningfulness through work because it allows individuals to engage in work behaviors that matter, are significant for others inside and outside of the organization, and can also serve the greater good.

Our paper also makes a contribution to helping bridge the gap between micro- and macrolevels of analysis in management research (Aguinis, Boyd, Pierce, & Short, 2011; Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007). Our approach to investigating CSR is multilevel in nature because CSR is a macrolevel construct that encapsulates organizational strategy and practices (Aguinis, 2011). But it is actually individuals who shape CSR and are also affected by a firm's CSR policies and actions (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Rupp, Skarlicki, & Shao, 2013). Our approach also goes beyond a more traditional multilevel treatment in that it includes the relationship and interplay between internal stakeholders (i.e., employees) and external stakeholders (e.g., community members and other intended beneficiaries of CSR initiatives who are not members of the organization). Our framework incorporates theories to explain why and how macrolevel CSR affects employees (i.e., top-bottom processes) and also how employees affect the organization (i.e., bottom-up processes) as well as how employees are affected by (i.e., outside-in processes) and also affect (i.e., inside-out processes) external stakeholders.

Next, we identify knowledge gaps in the CSR literature focused on the individual level of analysis. This material serves as a brief introduction and synthesis for those not familiar with the CSR literature addressing the individual level of analysis and, in addition, as a way to highlight knowledge gaps that we address with our conceptualization.

Individual-Level CSR Research: Knowledge Gaps

CSR has a rich history and includes the contribution of many different research streams (Carroll, 1999; Peloza, 2009; Waddock, 2004). To minimize confusion, we define CSR explicitly following Aguinis (2011) and also as adopted by others (e.g., Bauman & Skitka, 2012; El Akremi, Gond, Swaen, De Roeck, & Igalens, in press; Rupp, 2011; Rupp, Williams, & Aguilera, 2011): "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental

performance” (Aguinis, 2011: 855; see related but slightly different definitions by Carroll, 1999, and D. J. Wood, 1991). An important focus of our paper is that although this definition includes policies and actions “by organizations,” such policies and actions are actually created and enacted by individuals. Therefore, we make the role of individuals explicit by focusing on how they experience CSR, which has thus far not been the focus of the literature possibly because it has originated at the macrolevels (i.e., firm and institution) of analysis and accordingly has focused mostly on the business case of CSR (Margolis & Walsh, 2003; D. J. Wood, 2010).

Until very recently, CSR research has largely ignored the individual level of analysis as documented by Aguinis and Glavas (2012), who reported that only 4% of CSR articles examined this level. A more recent development has been a focus on the individual level of analysis, including the publication of special issues of journals (e.g., Morgeson, Aguinis, Waldman, & Siegel, 2013) and edited volumes (e.g., Carr, MacLachlan, & Furnham, 2012; Huffman & Klein, 2013; Jackson, Ones, & Dilchert, 2012; Olson-Buchanan, Bryan, & Thompson, 2013). For example, recent research has examined individual-level variables that may serve as mediators or moderators of the effects of CSR on outcomes. Examples include employees’ exchange ideology (Jones, 2010), cultural values (Mueller, Hatrup, Spiess, & Lin-Hi, 2012), attribution of firm motives (Vlachos, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2013), and the perceived importance of CSR to firm success (Turker, 2009). Interestingly, we conducted a literature review and found that of the total number of CSR journal articles that include the individual level of analysis, about 50% have been published since 2010. Table 1 includes a summary of the many valuable contributions that individual-level research has already made to our understanding of CSR together with illustrative sources for many of the variables and theories that have been studied thus far.

In spite of its growing size, the extant literature summarized in Table 1 has often focused on individual and organizational drivers of CSR engagement, outcomes of CSR, and the relation between drivers and outcomes. In other words, there is a growing and rich research stream that has addressed antecedents, moderators, and mediators of why, how, and when employees engage in CSR. In addition, the emphasis has been mostly on outcomes that result from employee engagement in CSR. For example, several literature reviews focused on what firms should do to maximize positive outcomes from CSR policies and actions (e.g., Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Glavas, 2016a; Peloza & Shang, 2011). Similarly, other work has referred to what the human resources function should do to help maintain an environmentally sustainable organization (e.g., Bauer, Erdogan, & Taylor, 2012; Cohen, 2010; Jackson et al., 2012).

In the next section of our paper, we offer a model that examines how individuals take on an active role in making sense of CSR as they search for and find meaningfulness through work. Before we describe the model, we highlight three important clarifications. First, information in Table 1 suggests that there are many sensemaking factors that could be included in each of the three levels in our model (i.e., intraindividual, intraorganizational, and extraorganizational). So, the factors we included should be seen as illustrations, and we chose them because there is sufficient empirical evidence to warrant their inclusion and also because they are derived from different theories and research streams. Accordingly, our model should be seen as a typology or gestalt that allows us to organize sensemaking factors residing at three different levels of analysis and also clearly allows for the inclusion of additional factors in the future.

Table 1
Illustrative Sources Addressing Corporate Social Responsibility Research Focusing
on the Individual Level of Analysis

Variables and Theories	Illustrative Sources
Individual drivers	
Authenticity	McShane and Cunningham (2012)
Cognition	Basu and Palazzo (2008); Zoogah (2011)
Control theory	Weaver, Treviño, and Cochran (1999a)
Engagement theory	Caligiuri, Mencia, and Jiang (2013); Glavas (2016b); Glavas and Piderit (2009)
Equity sensitivity	Mudrack, Mason, and Stepanski (1999)
Fairness heuristic theory	Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, and Ganapathi (2007)
Individual needs	Aguilera et al. (2007); Bauman and Skitka (2012); Tuzzolino and Armandi (1981)
Managerial choice theory	Weaver et al. (1999a)
Moral and motivated reasoning	Paharia, Vohs, and Deshpandé (2013)
Moral development	Snell (2000)
Morality (including moral identity, self-regulation, ethos, licensing)	Ormiston and Wong (2013); Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki (2013); Shepherd, Patzelt, and Baron (2013); Snell (2000)
Motivation (e.g., self-determination, expectancy theory)	Rupp, Shao, Skarlicki, Paddock, Kim, and Nadisic (2013); Rupp, Skarlicki, and Shao (2013); Rupp, Williams, and Aguilera (2011); Wang (2013)
Norm-activation model	Blamey (1998)
Normative treatment theory	Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, and Angermeier (2011)
Organizational justice (including third-party justice)	Rupp et al. (2011); Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki (2013)
Organizational pride	El Akremi, Gond, Swaen, De Roeck, and Igalens (in press); Jones (2010)
Prosocial sensemaking	Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008)
Self-categorization	Bartel (2001)
Signaling theory	Jones, Willness, and Madey (2014); Luce, Barber, and Hillman (2001); Turban and Greening (1996)
Social comparisons	Bartel (2001)
Social exchange	Cropanzano and Rupp (2008); Glavas and Kelley (2014); Jones (2010)
Social identity and organizational identification	Brammer, Millington, and Rayton (2007); De Roeck and Delobbe (2012); De Roeck, Marique, Stinglhamber, and Swaen (2014); Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2014); Jones (2010); Kim, Lee, Lee, and Kim (2010); Turker (2009)
Social role theory	Leslie, Snyder, and Glomb (2013)
Strategic issue interpretation	S. Sharma (2000)
Trust	Bridoux, Stofberg, and Den Hartog (2016); Farooq, Payaud, et al. (2014); Hansen et al. (2011); Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, and Avramidis (2009)
Value-belief-norm theory	Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, and Kalof (1999)
Values alignment, person-organization fit	Bansal (2003); Chin, Hambrick, and Treviño (2013); Coldwell, Billsberry, van Meurs, and Marsh (2008); Gully, Phillips, Castellano, Han, and Kim (2013)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Variables and Theories	Illustrative Sources
Organizational drivers	
Attraction-selection-attrition	Turban and Greening (1996)
Corporate governance	Aguilera et al. (2007)
Institutional theory	Bansal and Roth (2000); Weaver, Treviño, and Cochran (1999b)
Issues (e.g., issue selling)	Sonenshein, DeCelles, and Dutton (2014)
Leadership (charismatic, strategic, transformational, visionary)	Ormiston and Wong (2013); Robertson and Barling (2013); Sully de Luque, Washburn, Waldman, and House (2008); Vlachos, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2013); Waldman (2011); Waldman and Balven (2014); Waldman, Siegel, and Javidan (2006)
Learning organizations	Ramus and Steger (2000)
Psychological climate	Evans, Davis, and Frink (2011); Glavas and Kelley (2014)
Resource allocation	Lin, Lyau, Tsai, Chen, and Chiu (2010)
Resource-based theory	Glavas and Mish (2015); Liu and Ko (2011)
Social influences	Rupp et al. (2011)
Stakeholder theory	Agle, Mitchell, and Sonnenfeld (1999)
Stewardship theory	Aguilera et al. (2007)
Work design	Grant (2012); Pajo and Lee (2011)

Note: Some of the sources are associated with more than one variable and theory. For example, Jones, Willness, and Madey (2014) adopted a signaling theory approach as listed, but they also tested signal-based mechanisms grounded in identity, value fit, and exchange/individual needs.

Second, although the model is multilevel in nature, we first describe each level separately for ease of exposition. Factors residing at each level of analysis are not isolated from the other factors and levels and, later in our paper, we address same-level as well as cross-level interaction effects (Mathieu, Aguinis, Culpepper, & Chen, 2012). Thus, propositions addressing direct effects must be interpreted within the context of a general statement of holding all other sensemaking factors constant.

Third, following others, we consider meaningfulness as a fundamental human need (Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Hulin, 2014; Williams, 1997, 2007). Accordingly, experiencing meaningfulness through work leads to more positive outcomes than not experiencing meaningfulness or experiencing less meaningfulness. For example, a higher degree of meaningfulness is associated with more positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), organizational commitment (Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Tummers & Knies, 2013), organizational identification (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006), psychological well-being (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007), engagement (W. A. Kahn, 1990; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), and lower levels of stress (Knoop, 1994). Thus, given the vast conceptual (e.g., Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski, 2003) and empirical (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) literature on the positive effects of meaningfulness, our model focuses on CSR as a key antecedent of meaningfulness and selective sensemaking factors that result in meaningfulness. Although we mention outcomes of meaningfulness throughout our paper, the relation between meaningfulness and outcomes is not our focus given the existing literature regarding this link.

Next, we describe our model and derive nine propositions and 10 research questions to guide future research. Then, in the Discussion section, we use the model to understand variability in CSR effects due to variability in employee sensemaking and the meaningfulness employees experience from CSR, offer implications for theory and additional directions for future research, and describe implications for practice.

Sensemaking: Underlying Mechanism Explaining Meaningfulness

As mentioned earlier, sensemaking is the process through which individuals give meaning to ongoing experiences such as work (Weick, 1995). Historically, sensemaking is based in part on the conceptualization by Daft and Weick (1984) addressing the diverse ways organizations may obtain knowledge about the environment.

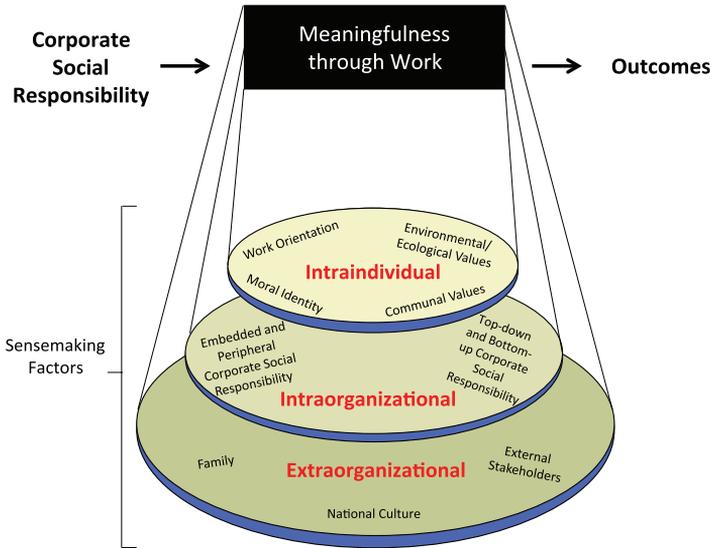
Sensemaking takes place when individuals are faced with ambiguity and complexity (Weick, 1995). CSR is fertile ground for sensemaking because it often creates tension and social dilemmas (Bridoux, Stofberg, & Den Hartog, 2016; Campbell, Provolt, & Campbell, 2013; Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; G. Sharma & Good, 2013). In addition, because CSR expands the nature of work to include making a broader impact (e.g., on community members and other intended beneficiaries of CSR initiatives who are not members of the organization), through sensemaking individuals may have new experiences at work in terms of their place in the world.

Our conceptual model relies on nascent research linking sensemaking and CSR. For example, Basu and Palazzo (2008) explored organizational cues (i.e., cognitive, linguistic, conative) that affect organizational sensemaking and guide CSR activities. Hahn et al. (2014) focused on cognitive frames and determinants that managers make in addressing business and CSR issues. Sonenshein, DeCelles, and Dutton (2014) explored how contextual sensemaking helps with issue selling—how issue supporters seek out clues for diagnosing the degree to which top managers support a particular CSR initiative. We develop this pioneering work further by offering sensemaking factors across three levels of analysis: intraindividual (i.e., within individuals), organizational (i.e., organizational level), and extraorganizational (i.e., outside of the organization and the interplay between internal and external stakeholders). Our examination of the role of sensemaking factors within and across levels of analysis sheds new light on why and how individuals experience CSR differently. As a preview of the material that follows, Figure 1 includes a graphic representation of our model.

We used the following criteria to choose the admittedly selective set of sensemaking factors included in our model. Regarding intraindividual-level sensemaking factors, although *work orientation* has not been studied specifically in the CSR literature, it is a fundamental factor that explains why and how individuals find meaning at work in general (Wrzesniewski, 2003). In addition, on the basis of our review of the literature in preparing Table 1, *values* and *identity* are two of the most commonly studied variables that also serve as sensemaking factors. For intra-organizational factors, organizational drivers in Table 1 can be categorized by the process (i.e., *top down and bottom up*) and structure (i.e., *embedded and peripheral*) of how CSR is implemented. For the extraorganizational level of analysis, on the basis of a review of meaningfulness (Rosso et al., 2010), we included three factors: *external stakeholders*, *national culture*, and *family* (i.e., related to the work-life literature).

Clearly, there are other factors in Table 1 that could be included in our model as well. For example, at the intraindividual level, prosocial identity, which is relational in nature, can also

Figure 1
Sensemaking as an Underlying and Unifying Mechanism Explaining How Individuals Experience Corporate Social Responsibility and Find Meaningfulness Through Work



Note: These particular sensemaking factors are illustrations and were chosen because there is sufficient empirical evidence to warrant their inclusion in the model and also because they are derived from different theories and research streams.

be considered a sensemaking factor. Thus, our model does not aim to include every single sensemaking factor. Rather, it offers a few key examples to show how adopting a sensemaking unifying lens helps improve our understanding of why, when, and how individuals make sense of CSR in order to find meaningfulness at work. Later in our paper, we describe how future research can consider the inclusion of additional sensemaking factors, many of which can be derived from information included in Table 1.

Intraindividual Sensemaking Factors

Figure 1 includes the following four illustrative intraindividual sensemaking factors: (a) work orientation, (b) moral identity, (c) environmental/ecological values, and (d) communal values. Each of these sensemaking factors allows us to understand how individuals experience CSR and meaningfulness differently through work.

Work orientation. Work orientation has been proposed as an important factor affecting meaningfulness (Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Wrzesniewski, 2003). Accordingly, we build on theories of work orientation offered by Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) and further developed by Wrzesniewski (2003) as well as by Pratt, Pradies, and Lepisto (2013). These authors put forward three different work orientations through which employ-

ees make sense of their work. First, those with a strong job orientation focus primarily on the material rewards that, for example, can help fulfill ambitions outside of work and/or contribute to one's self-concept of being a provider for one's family. Second, those with a strong career orientation concentrate more on promotion and advancement, which in turn can improve self-esteem as well as increase social standing and power. Third, those with a strong calling orientation see work as a way to contribute to the common good and improve the world. Although the three work orientations are not fully orthogonal, a stronger orientation on one is often accompanied by a weaker orientation on the other two (Wrzesniewski, 2003).

We consider the three work orientations together with the multimotive framework of CSR offered by Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki (2013) to understand how meaningfulness is affected by an individual's work orientation. Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki proposed that employees' concerns can be influenced by multiple motives. In addition to the motives that prior CSR literature has proposed, such as instrumental, relational, and certainty needs, Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki relied on deontic justice theory to propose that individuals also care about justice because perceptions of fairness are related to their own morals and ethics. Specifically, instrumental motives might influence sensemaking of CSR because those with a job and/or career orientation might find work to be more meaningful if it enables them to have a job and also advance in their careers. Complementary to instrumental motives, CSR could also be experienced as moral as well as relational and therefore align with motives for those for whom calling is important. Moreover, Pratt et al. (2013) proposed that employees for whom calling is important can find meaningfulness through serving the greater good (i.e., CSR). While there is a well-developed literature in organizational behavior and HRM related to job orientation (e.g., pay, job security) and career orientation (e.g., pay equity, work preference, power, prestige), research on the calling orientation is relatively nascent with the majority being related to enacting a calling but not the actual experience of calling (Rosso et al., 2010). In other words, the literature has largely overlooked an important part of how employees find meaningfulness through work. In sum,

Proposition 1: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with a stronger (weaker) calling orientation.

Moral identity. Identity-related constructs are some of the most frequently studied mediators in the CSR literature (e.g., De Roeck, Marique, Stinglhamber, & Swaen, 2014; Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2014; Jones, 2010; Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010). Moreover, one's self-concept (i.e., "Who am I?") shapes what one finds to be meaningful (Rosso et al., 2010). Although there is a vast literature on identity, more work is needed to understand how individuals construe themselves specifically in their work domain (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). CSR expands the work context from being primarily financially driven to also incorporate other components that might be part of a person's identity (e.g., morals and virtues). There are many types of identities (Gecas, 1982), but we specifically address moral identity, which influences sensemaking and the resulting meaningfulness of CSR. Therefore, our conceptual model includes moral identity as a second illustrative intra-individual factor because it influences the sensemaking process of answering the question "Who am I?" (Gecas, 1982).

A moral identity is one in which one's standards of behavior or beliefs concerning what is and is not acceptable are central to one's definition of self (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Morality

has been closely associated with CSR from the earliest stages of the field (e.g., Carroll, 1979; Davis, 1967). In fact, Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki (2013) found that a moral identity strengthens the relation between CSR and job pursuit intentions as well as OCBs. In short,

Proposition 2: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with a stronger (weaker) moral identity.

Environmental/ecological values. As a third illustrative intraindividual sensemaking factor, our conceptual model includes environmental values, which consist of the “desired end state of natural systems integrity and the means of human adaptation to, rather than domination over, the natural environment” (Marcus, MacDonald, & Sulsky, 2015: 464). Others have used the term *ecological values* to also refer to one’s values pertaining to the conservation and protection of the natural environment (e.g., Wiseman & Bogner, 2003). Thus, we use the combined label “environmental/ecological values.”

Values are an important sensemaking factor in our model because they are a fundamental source of meaningfulness (Rosso et al., 2010). However, because values are often ill defined, we focus specifically on environmental/ecological values, given empirical work on their relation with CSR and outcomes such as consumer purchase decisions (Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008), employee creativity (Spanjol, Tam, & Tam, 2015), job satisfaction (Spanjol et al., 2015), organizational attractiveness (Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996; Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014), and perceived value fit (Jones et al., 2014).

A few studies shed light on how CSR may lead to greater meaningfulness for employees with stronger environmental/ecological values. For example, Bansal (2003) found that CSR signals that an organization has pro-environmental values. In addition, Jones et al. (2014) studied the psychological mechanisms of how such signals regarding environmental practices (one of the three facets of CSR) affect prospective employees. They used signaling theory to examine inferences that employees make about organizational attractiveness and concluded that organizations more engaged in CSR are more attractive to employees with stronger pro-environmental/ecological attitudes.

A sensemaking conceptualization provides a common and parsimonious lens to understand variability in CSR effects in previous studies. Because environmental signals are not the norm, individuals in such situations face a tension between pro-environmental and financial logics, which then leads to a sensemaking process (Hahn et al., 2014). Because how employees perceive the world is influenced by their values (Schwartz, 1992), sensemaking stemming from CSR likely leads to increased meaningfulness for those with stronger environmental/ecological values. In sum,

Proposition 3: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with stronger (weaker) environmental/ecological values.

Communal values. Communal values refer to the desired end state of human well-being through protecting basic human rights and fulfilling human needs (e.g., for existence, growth, relatedness; Alderfer, 1972). Jones et al. (2014) studied the influence of communal orientation in addition to pro-environmental attitudes. Results suggested that employees with stronger communal values experienced greater value fit with companies that were more involved in CSR, which in turn led to greater organizational attractiveness. Other studies have also found

that communal values strengthen the relation between CSR and helping behaviors (Clark, Ouellette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987), organizational attractiveness (Jones et al., 2014), perceived value fit (Jones et al., 2014), and pride (Jones et al., 2014).

We expect that, similar to the effect of environmental/ecological values, it is through communal values that information about CSR is filtered and processed, resulting in greater meaningfulness for employees with stronger communal values. However, there seems to be an additional relational component through which communal values act as a sensemaking factor. Glavas and Kelley (2014) employed a bifactor model of CSR and found that both environmental and social dimensions had a common effect on work meaningfulness, with the social dimension having a greater effect above and beyond the common effect. Glavas and Kelley posited that this was due to the relational nature of CSR—in other words, humans find meaningfulness through helping improve the well-being of others. Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008) also found an effect of the relational component of CSR in that CSR increases organizational commitment through what the authors termed a “prosocial sensemaking” process in which employees interpret CSR as caring. In short,

Proposition 4: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with stronger (weaker) communal values.

Intraorganizational Sensemaking Factors

Sensemaking not only takes place within an individual but also is a social process that is influenced by others and the organization (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Therefore, at a higher level of analysis, there are organizational-level sensemaking factors that also affect meaningfulness. In this section, we propose the following illustrative intraorganizational-level sensemaking factors: (a) embedded and peripheral CSR and (b) top-down and bottom-up implementation of CSR.

Embedded and peripheral CSR. Relying on the model of embedded sustainability put forward in the sustainability literature (i.e., Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2011), Aguinis and Glavas (2013) proposed a distinction between embedded and peripheral CSR. Embedded CSR means that it is integrated within an organization’s strategy as well as daily operations. On the other hand, peripheral CSR is implemented as an initiative that is not part of a firm’s core activities, and examples include philanthropy, charity, and a recycling program.

Although it is rare to find an organization that embeds CSR perfectly (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013), most large organizations do engage in CSR to some degree (KPMG, 2013). Therefore, CSR will usually be somewhere on the continuum between peripheral and embedded. In fact, the degree of CSR embeddedness may vary even within the same organization. For example, initially IBM embedded CSR in just part of the company through its Smarter Planet program by using its core competencies in information services (i.e., ability to analyze complex data and then provide solutions to complex societal problems) to address green building, energy (e.g., smart grids and energy efficiency), and hunger (e.g., 30% of food goes to waste, but that number can be reduced through better planning; Aguinis & Glavas, 2013). Therefore, depending on where employees worked at IBM, and the variation in the degree of CSR embeddedness, they were likely to make sense of CSR in different ways ranging from

experiencing it as truly genuine to simple greenwashing (e.g., engaging in only symbolic CSR for public relations purposes). Related to this issue, greenwashing seems to have negative effects on prospective and current employees. For example, a study of job seekers found that some are less attracted because of an employer's CSR practices, which is partially due to the increased skepticism that individuals have about a firm's CSR claims (Jones, Willness, & Heller, 2016). Moreover, building on attribution theory, Donia and Tetrault Sirsly (2016) proposed that when employees perceive that CSR is substantive (e.g., embedded) they will be affected positively, but when CSR is symbolic (e.g., peripheral) there will be a null or negative effect on employee attitudes. In sum,

Proposition 5: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) when CSR is more embedded (peripheral).

Top-down and bottom-up CSR. Most approaches to CSR are top down (Jackson, 2012) because the senior management team, CEO, and president are usually those primarily responsible for creating an organization's CSR strategy (Schmit, Fegley, Esen, Schramm, & Tomassetti, 2012). Not surprisingly, then, prior CSR research has found that leadership often influences employee implementation of CSR through its own vision and values (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999; Bansal, 2003) as well as practices such as guidelines (Weaver, Treviño, & Cochran, 1999a) and training (Stevens, Steensma, Harrison, & Cochran, 2005). In the sensemaking literature, such processes have been referred to as "sensegiving," which is the process by which management influences the sensemaking process of employees (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Employees can then react to, adopt, or reject the narrative they have been given (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

In a review of the sensemaking literature, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) found that most sensegiving processes are actually top down, controlled, and implemented with little input from employees, which in turn actually restricts their sensemaking process. In those situations, CSR could be perceived as being an extrarole task, which then leads to role strain—defined as an employee feeling pressure resulting from extrarole behaviors that are perceived as obstacles to carrying out one's primary work role (R. L. Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). This pressure has been found to be positively related to stress (Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981) and negatively related to well-being (de Jonge, Bosma, Peter, & Siegrist, 2000). As an example, in the CSR literature, many firms organize annual community service days, which for some employees have positive effects on well-being; however, if volunteering is mandatory and there is continued pressure, it could have negative effects (Glavas, 2016b; Grant, 2012). As Glavas (2016b) put forward, if employees are already busy and if CSR is an added task (i.e., extrarole), there could be a curvilinear effect in that those who care about CSR might be negatively affected if CSR creates too much work outside of one's job. Additionally, on the basis of reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), when CSR is pushed upon employees continuously, they could perceive that their freedom is threatened. Although seemingly a surprising result because CSR is usually seen as something good, adopting a sensemaking approach and the role of this particular intraorganizational sensemaking factor allows us to understand this "dark side" of CSR.

In the CSR literature, bottom-up processes are often called social intrapreneurship (Mair & Marti, 2006) or corporate social entrepreneurship (Hemingway, 2013). In literatures related to sensemaking, these processes are often referred to as issue selling (Dutton &

Ashford, 1993) and job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Although these literatures have mostly existed in parallel, Sonenshein et al. (2014) found that, through sensemaking, employees resolve the tension between economic and social logics through issue selling—by influencing the organization to change the narrative to one that embraces both logics. While issue selling tries to influence the narrative throughout the organization by influencing others (e.g., Dutton, Ashford, O’Neill, & Lawrence, 2001), job crafting starts with altering the boundaries of one’s own job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Employees engage in job crafting to find meaningfulness at work because jobs designed in a top-down manner often do not fulfill an employee’s need for meaningfulness (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013). Moreover, job crafting that expands one’s job to include CSR is a path through which employees can find meaningfulness because their job can then contribute to the greater good (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). In sum,

Proposition 6: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) when CSR is more bottom up (top down).

Extraorganizational Sensemaking Factors

Recent studies have highlighted the need to understand the role of the context outside of work in sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). In this section, we describe three illustrative extraorganizational sensemaking factors: (a) family, (b) external stakeholders, and (c) national culture.

Family. Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, and Dunn (2014) proposed that future research should explore the relation between family and work meaningfulness. Specifically, employees might find work more meaningful when the practices at work are aligned with family goals and morals. As noted by Sonenshein et al.,

Segmenting the work self from the nonwork self gives scholars an incomplete picture of the self of social issue supporters who read and react to a variety of organizational and non-organizational contexts in ways that may ultimately shape their sense of self and potentially their behavior. (2014: 10)

Thus, the work-life balance literature helps us understand how employees make sense of CSR and search for and find meaningfulness. In other words, we build on the work-life balance literature (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) to suggest that how family members view the importance of making a positive impact on the world is a sensemaking factor.

As an illustration, consider the case of the late Ray Anderson, founder of Interface Inc., one of the world’s largest manufacturers of modular carpet and a renowned CSR leader. Anderson engaged in CSR when he realized that despite founding and growing the most successful company in his industry, it was not enough to be successful financially but, rather, he had the responsibility to do much more to help future generations (Anderson, 2010). Relevant to family as a sensemaking factor, the transformation of Interface began when the daughter of one of the top managers made it clear that the work they were doing, if not socially and environmentally responsible, would negatively influence her but also everyone else in her generation (Anderson, 2010). As an intriguing result that provides more generalizable

empirical support beyond the Anderson anecdote, Cronqvist and Yu (in press) found that CEOs are more likely to engage in CSR if they have daughters. In sum,

Proposition 7: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with family members who place greater (less) value on CSR.

External stakeholders. The CSR literature has focused mostly on either top-down (i.e., role of leadership) or outside-in (i.e., pressures from external stakeholders, such as customers and governments) influences. However, employee sensemaking shapes strategy and practices and vice versa in an iterative process (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Moreover, individual sensemaking can also shape external stakeholder perceptions as well as markets. For example, consider the case of fair trade. It was employees who believed that markets should value the true social and environmental costs of a product and then educate consumers with the purpose of creating an entire new market where consumers would value fair trade (Glavas & Mish, 2015). Not only do external stakeholders interact with the organization at a macro level but employees also have interactions with external stakeholders, which include the beneficiaries of CSR actions.

Therefore, sensemaking—and thus meaningfulness—could vary depending on interactions with external stakeholders. As previously mentioned, Glavas and Kelley (2014) found that although social and environmental dimensions of CSR have effects on employees through similar mechanisms, the social dimension has an additional positive influence on meaningfulness due to the relational component of CSR. We build on those results and also draw on the work of Grant (2007), who proposed that the relationships with external beneficiaries of CSR have positive effects on employees with higher prosocial motivation (i.e., care about CSR). In other words, the relational component of CSR is strengthened through beneficiary contact, which is the degree of contact with external stakeholders that benefit from an organization's CSR actions and policies (Grant et al., 2008). In sum,

Proposition 8: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) when there is a greater (less) degree of contact with external stakeholders who are the beneficiaries of CSR.

National culture. The CSR literature has been criticized for not being internationally diverse (Carroll, 2004; Cui, Liang, & Lu, 2015). Specifically, the majority of CSR research has been conducted in Western countries, which are typically individualistic, espouse agentic values (e.g., fairness, material success), and are short-term oriented (Hofstede, 1997). However, sensemaking, and meaningfulness as a result, might differ in other cultures, such as those that are collectivist—defined as those that are more caring and relationship oriented (Hofstede, 1997). Because CSR includes caring for others, prior literature has naturally focused on the positive relation between CSR and employee outcomes in collectivistic cultures. For example, Farooq, Farooq, and Jasimuddin (2014) found that the relation between CSR and organizational identification was stronger in collectivistic cultures. Mueller et al. (2012) also found that collectivism positively moderated the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes. Waldman, Sully de Luque, et al. (2006) separated collectivism into two dimensions: (a) institutional collectivism, or the extent to which a collective should believe

in encouraging and rewarding collective distribution of resources and collective action; and (b) in-group collectivism, or the extent to which individuals should express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness to their families, or particular groups within a society. They found that institutional collectivism was related to CSR, but there was no relation between in-group collectivism and CSR. Waldman, Sully de Luque, et al. explained this result by noting that “CSR as an overall construct is more clearly relevant to broader collective or societal-level concerns, as is the case with institutional collectivism” (834). Thus, the relation between CSR and meaningfulness across cultures may be more nuanced than simply asserting that there is a positive relation in collectivistic cultures and a negative relation in individualistic cultures. In fact, Farooq, Farooq, and Jasimuddin found that CSR in individualistic cultures also had a positive effect on employees because employees are treated better, which according to a review of attribution theory and CSR (Donia & Tetrault Sirsly, 2016), would be considered an intrinsic motive of CSR (i.e., benefits are internal to the organization).

We rely on intrinsic and extrinsic CSR attributions (Donia & Tetrault Sirsly, 2016; Vlachos et al., 2013) to explain that the relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness can be high in both collectivistic *and* individualist cultures. As defined by Vlachos et al. (2013), intrinsic and extrinsic attributions take place when employees attribute intrinsic or extrinsic motives to their organization’s CSR, respectively. As stated earlier, collectivist cultures tend to value relationships and caring for others. Therefore, if employees attribute extrinsic motives of CSR, such as caring for others (e.g., stakeholders), it follows that individuals in collectivist cultures might find work more meaningful. On the other hand, and as stated earlier, individualistic cultures tend to value fairness. In turn, if employees attribute intrinsic motives of the organization, such as treating employees fairly, and if they are in individualistic cultures, they might find work more meaningful. In short,

Proposition 9: The relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger for individuals in (a) more collectivistic and (b) more individualistic cultures.

Same-Level and Cross-Level Interaction Effects

Thus far, our discussion of sensemaking factors focused on each level separately. However, sensemaking includes the simultaneous influence of factors at all levels of analysis. Accordingly, there are two types of interaction effects that take place between and among sensemaking factors: (a) same-level interactions and (b) cross-level interactions. Same-level interactions involve sensemaking factors residing at the same level of analysis. For example, Proposition 3 states the relation between CSR and experienced meaningfulness through work will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with stronger (weaker) environmental/ecological values. However, this proposition refers to the direct effect of this particular individual-level sensemaking factor (i.e., environmental/ecological values). We currently do not know whether this relation may be moderated by other individual-level sensemaking factors. For example, some individuals with stronger environmental/ecological values may also have a strong calling orientation, whereas others may have a weaker calling orientation. Thus, we offer the following illustrative research questions to guide future research:

Research Question 1: Will the positive effect of environmental/ecological values on meaningfulness depend on work orientation such that the relation will be stronger for individuals with a stronger compared to those with a weaker calling orientation?

Research Question 2: Will the positive effect of communal values on meaningfulness depend on work orientation such that this relation will be stronger for individuals with a stronger compared to those with a weaker calling orientation?

Research Question 3: Will the positive effect of environmental/ecological values on meaningfulness depend on an individual's communal values such that the relation will be stronger for individuals with stronger communal values compared to those with weaker communal values?

Research Question 4: Will the positive effect of moral identity on meaningfulness depend on an individual's work orientation such that the relation will be stronger for individuals with a stronger compared to a weaker calling orientation?

Similarly, our model points to the possibility of the presence of same-level interactions between sensemaking factors at the intraorganizational and extraorganizational levels. At the intraorganizational level of analysis, the effect of embedded versus peripheral CSR on meaningfulness (Proposition 5) may depend on whether CSR is top down or bottom up. Specifically, consider the following research question:

Research Question 5: Will the positive effect of embedded (vs. peripheral) CSR on meaningfulness depend on how CSR is implemented such that the effect will be stronger when CSR is implemented bottom up and weaker when CSR is implemented top down?

At the extraorganizational level of analysis, consider the following research question regarding same-level interaction effects:

Research Question 6: Will the positive effect of degree of contact with external beneficiaries of CSR on meaningfulness depend on the extent to which family members place value on CSR such that the relation will be stronger for those with family members who place greater value on CSR compared to those with family members who place less value on CSR?

In addition to the aforementioned same-level interaction effects, our model suggests the possibility of cross-level interactions, which can take on three forms: (a) Level 1 (i.e., intra-individual) by Level 2 (i.e., intraorganizational) interactions, (b) Level 2 by Level 3 (i.e., extraorganizational) interactions, and (c) Level 1 by Level 2 by Level 3 interactions. This interactionism lens is useful in terms of understanding variability in CSR effects in previous research because it allows us to capture the concurrent effects of factors residing at different levels of analysis. As an example of a Level 2 by Level 3 cross-level effect, consider the case of an individual who participates in a CSR initiative that was created by employees (i.e., bottom-up CSR; intraorganizational-level factor) and has family members who place great value on CSR (extraorganizational-level factor). This particular situation leads to the following research question:

Research Question 7: Will the positive effect of bottom-up CSR on meaningfulness be moderated by family perceptions of CSR such that the effect will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with family members who place greater (less) value on CSR?

As a second illustration, consider a Level 1 by Level 2 cross-level interaction. Proposition 5 states that bottom-up CSR will have a more positive effect on meaningfulness compared to top-down CSR. However, this relation is likely to be contingent on intraindividual factors. For example,

Research Question 8: Will the positive effect of bottom-up CSR on meaningfulness be moderated by work orientation such that the effect will be stronger for individuals with a stronger compared to a weaker calling orientation?

Finally, our model also leads to research questions involving three-way cross-level interaction effects on meaningfulness. An examination of such effects is logistically difficult given that data need to be collected at each of the three levels of analysis simultaneously (Mathieu et al., 2012). In other words, there would be a need to collect data from individuals (e.g., work orientation), organizations (e.g., bottom-up vs. top-down CSR), and the environments (e.g., relationship with external stakeholders) where those organizations are located. Nevertheless, our model leads to research questions involving such interactions. For example:

Research Question 9: Will the interaction effect on meaningfulness between communal values (individual-level factor) and bottom-up versus top-down CSR (intraorganizational-level factor) depend on the degree of contact with external stakeholders (i.e., beneficiaries of CSR) such that the interactive effect on meaningfulness will be stronger (weaker) for individuals with greater compared to less contact?

Research Question 10: Will the interaction effect on meaningfulness between work orientation (individual-level factor) and bottom-up versus top-down CSR (intraorganizational-level factor) depend on whether individuals have family members who place greater value on CSR compared to those with family members who place less value on CSR (extraorganizational-level factor)?

In sum, sensemaking is affected by factors residing at all three levels of analysis simultaneously. Thus, although our discussion initially included propositions regarding direct effects, our model suggests that a more complete and comprehensive understanding of how individuals seek and find meaningfulness will derive from examining variables within and across levels simultaneously.

Discussion

In spite of the growing literature on CSR focusing on the individual level of analysis, we are still trying to understand why and how individuals make sense of CSR differently. As Hulin stated, “Most organizational researchers have treated within-person variance as random error. This has contributed to a view of workers as relatively passive carbon-based elements whose attitudes and behaviors were stable and determined by organizational characteristics” (2014: 17-18).

We adopt the perspective that individuals are agentic actors who are actively interpreting and shaping the world around them and are not just passive recipients of organizational policies and actions (Weiss & Rupp, 2011). Moreover, we use sensemaking as the underlying mechanism through which individuals actively seek and find meaningfulness through work. Because CSR expands the notion of work to go beyond task-, job-, intraindividual-, intraorganizational-, and profit-focused perspectives, it is an ideal conduit for individuals to make sense of and find meaningfulness through work. By offering this unifying theoretical perspective, we are able to offer a broad and inclusive yet parsimonious framework. Our framework is built upon synergies across disconnected domains and streams of research at different

levels of analysis. Also, our conceptual model goes beyond related research streams on work redesign and job analysis, discretionary work behavior, and meaning of work that have focused mainly on tasks, jobs, and internal stakeholders (i.e., other organizational members or one's organization). In addition to the nine propositions and 10 research questions derived from our model, which serve to guide future research, we next discuss implications for theory.

Implications for Theory

Although finding meaningfulness through work is important to many individuals (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Wrzesniewski, 2003), the issue has been mostly overlooked in the management literature focusing on the individual level of analysis (Grant, 2007; Hulin, 2014). Even within the literature that examined meaningfulness, such as research on job characteristics, discretionary employee behavior, and the meaning of work, exploring multiple sources of meaningfulness outside of one's job, vocation, and organization has been largely ignored (Rosso et al., 2010).

Our conceptual framework for understanding how individuals make sense of CSR and find meaningfulness through work relies on sensemaking as an underlying and unifying mechanism. Sensemaking factors reside at the intraindividual level, such as work orientation, moral identity, environmental/ecological values, and communal values; the intraorganizational level, such as embedded and peripheral CSR and top-down and bottom-up CSR; and the extraorganizational level, such as family, external stakeholders, and national culture. Moreover, these sensemaking factors interact within and across levels of analysis in creating meaningfulness.

Our conceptualization does not examine CSR with an outside lens. Our conceptual framework offers a sort of X-ray picture from inside individuals in terms of how they make sense of CSR and seek and find meaningfulness through work. In addition to the propositions and research questions we derived based on our earlier discussion, our sensemaking lens leads to novel insights.

First, referring back to an intraindividual sensemaking factor, by incorporating work orientation into our model, we can understand variability in CSR effects due to variability in employee sensemaking and the meaningfulness employees experience from CSR. Pelozo (2009) found that 59% of CSR studies reported a positive relation between CSR and financial performance. Moreover, Pelozo found 39 unique metrics used for CSR, and in all cases, all were aggregated to the macrolevel of analysis. By studying CSR at the individual level of analysis and understanding the effects of different work orientations, we gain a more complete picture of how individuals make sense of CSR, find meaningfulness through work, and react accordingly. For example, referring to Proposition 1, employees with a calling orientation are likely to experience CSR more positively compared to individuals with other types of orientations (e.g., job, career). Furthermore, Pelozo and Shang (2011) found that more than 65% of CSR studies involved CSR initiatives that were symbolic and peripheral. This type of CSR approach might have positive reputational effects (e.g., from philanthropy in the community) while at the same time could have varying effects internally on employees, thus neutralizing, or even reverting, the positive external results. For example, the positive relation between environmental/ecological values and meaningfulness may be weakened by a

job orientation (i.e., focus on short-term benefits of the job compared to a calling orientation). In short, our model suggests that the inconclusive evidence for the business case for CSR will remain so unless we consider intraindividual sensemaking factors explicitly.

Second, as an example of an insight derived from an intraorganizational-level sensemaking factor, if CSR is top down, it may be experienced as extrarole behavior, which may explain why so many CSR initiatives do not achieve the intended positive firm-level outcomes.

Employees may perceive top-down CSR as role strain, which in turn can lead to stress and burnout (Pearlin et al., 1981). Moreover, with top-down CSR, sensemaking is restricted (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

Third, as an illustration of an insight regarding extraorganizational sensemaking factors, using an inside-out approach regarding the relationship between employees and external stakeholders allows us to revisit past findings. For example, David, Bloom, and Hillman (2007) found that outside-in pressures actually reduce the effectiveness of CSR. Specifically, many organizations engage in symbolic and easily implemented CSR activities with the goal of appeasing external stakeholders as quickly as possible (e.g., community members, governments). Our model allows us to understand that the relationship between employees and external stakeholders plays an important role in the sensemaking process, resulting in different degrees of meaningfulness.

Additional Directions for Future Research

Our model also serves as a guide to direct future research. In addition to the propositions and research questions offered earlier, consider the following empirical and conceptual issues.

First, from a methodological perspective, current design and measurement approaches used in macrolevel CSR research often treat individuals as passive actors with the goal of generalizing and aggregating individual responses to the organizational level of analysis (i.e., organizational-level outcomes). In other words, variance across individuals is often ignored. Our model suggests that the use of qualitative approaches, including narratives, stories, and histories, is likely to yield interesting insights on the individual experience of CSR and the resulting meaningfulness. Surprisingly, we were able to locate only six studies focusing on CSR at the individual level of analysis of incumbent employees that have adopted a qualitative methodological approach (i.e., Bansal, 2003; McShane & Cunningham, 2012; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008; Rupp & Bell, 2010; Shepherd, Patzelt, & Baron, 2013; Sonenshein et al., 2014).

Second, future research on CSR could focus on positive experiences but also on negative ones. For example, does CSR lead to burnout and stress if it is forced upon employees as an extrarole task while employees already have a heavy workload? Also, if CSR is not embedded in the organization, might it be perceived as greenwashing (i.e., inauthentic), which could lead to a negative experience of CSR resulting in disengagement and deviance?

Third, as Basu and Palazzo (2008) warned, CSR research has primarily focused on CSR in and of itself. Our framework giving center stage to meaningfulness opens up new opportunities because CSR is a context within which we can explore many questions about cognitive, motivational, affective, and behavioral phenomena that have not been considered in the CSR literature. For example, with the pursuit of trying to make the business case for CSR and the focus on demonstrating advantages in terms of resulting performance, productivity, and other financial outcomes, the extant macrolevel literature on CSR has largely ignored the impact of

CSR on employee well-being. On the other hand, well-being is one of the most studied phenomena in several microlevel subfields, such as organizational behavior/HRM, and we know that well-being is directly related to meaningfulness (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Thus, our model leads to future research addressing conditions under which CSR can lead to the win-win outcomes of business value *and* employee well-being at the same time.

Fourth, as noted earlier, our model clearly does not include a comprehensive list of all sensemaking factors. The choices we made should be considered illustrations and were selected because there is sufficient empirical evidence to warrant their inclusion in the model and also because they are derived from different theories and research streams, thereby illustrating the flexibility and broadness of our conceptualization based on sensemaking. But there are additional factors that we could have considered. For example, what is the role of one's immediate supervisor and peers in the sensemaking process? Future research can address this issue and examine the relative effect of this as compared to other sensemaking factors.

Fifth, understanding how employees experience CSR can address gaps in the work meaningfulness literature. Specifically, Rosso et al. (2010) concluded that the majority of research about meaningfulness has focused on a single meaningfulness source, such as the self or work context, but each source has been studied in isolation from others. Our multilevel model describes how multiple sensemaking factors at different levels of analysis can influence how employees find meaningfulness. In addition, Rosso et al. concluded that the work meaningfulness literature has mostly focused on self-oriented mechanisms (e.g., self-efficacy, self-esteem), but more research is needed on how work oriented towards others can lead to meaningfulness. Our examination relying on sensemaking addresses this knowledge gap.

Finally, in terms of the availability of methodological tools, there are specific measures that can be used in future research to assess some of the variables in our model. Specifically, we refer readers to measures for work orientation by Wrzesniewski et al. (1997); for calling by Bunderson and Thompson (2009), Dik, Eldridge, Steger, and Duffy (2012), and Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011); and for meaningfulness by Spreitzer (1995), Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012), and Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006).

Implications for Practice

Our conceptual framework leads to several implications for practice. We specifically contribute to the idea that CSR can be particularly beneficial when it is used as a means for employees to bring more of a sense of purpose and their whole selves to work. In addition, our framework has implications in terms of particular practices that may have less positive effects.

Specifically, our model offers a perspective that is counter to many current corporate strategies that are top down and treat CSR as "one size fits all," which has led to the documented variance in outcomes of CSR ranging from positive, to neutral, and even to negative. Our framework suggests different experiences of CSR across individuals as well as organizational and social contexts. Moreover, although some individuals might not be aware of CSR, what is interesting for practice is the process once they do become aware of CSR and how they make sense of it. Accordingly, organizations can use HRM practices and systems such as training and development to make employees aware of CSR (Dilchert & Ones, 2012; Shen & Benson, 2016)—which as a result could lead to employee reengagement due to

finding more meaningfulness through work (Fox, 2014). Because most organizations that engage in CSR are not founded on a CSR mission but are in the process of implementing CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013), CSR can offer an opportunity to reengage individuals who are facing work depletion, boredom, or even career stagnation. For example, a team of engineers at General Electric may think they are just tackling an aspect of engineering and approach work as a series of specific tasks to be done. But they may not be aware that they are contributing to solving some of the biggest environmental challenges in the world. Once they become aware of their contribution to positively affecting the world, they may become reenergized and find new meaningfulness through their work. As noted by Fox, “Connecting the organization to the individual’s sense of purpose refuels depleted energy wells like nothing else” (2014: 40).

Our model also has implications for practice in that it addresses the “dark side of CSR.” For example, consider a situation where CSR is forced top down on employees, it is not embedded, and employees are disconnected from external beneficiaries of CSR. Top management could be pushing for employees to engage in CSR as extrarole behavior while, on the other hand, performance management systems encourage a focus on short-term and exclusive financial and other bottom-line results. In such situations, employees could face a social dilemma and confusion regarding their role (i.e., role conflict and role ambiguity leading to role strain). In addition, if CSR is peripheral, symbolic, and pushed top down on employees, it could backfire on the organization. Employees who just came to work before without being aware of CSR now might start asking why they work for an organization that is not helping the world. They might start feeling as if they are contributing to problems by working in such an organization, which then leads to organizational de-identification, turnover intent, and other negative outcomes. Therefore, our framework suggests that organizations should be cautious in engaging in large-scale public relations efforts to broadcast CSR if it is mostly peripheral. In contrast, our framework suggests that a bottom-up and inside-out approach to CSR begins with understanding how employees make sense of CSR, their work, and what is meaningful and valuable for them. As noted earlier, this is counter to current practices in which CSR has been treated as an organizational-level strategy (i.e., mainly top down) or as a reaction to pressures from external stakeholders (i.e., outside in).

Conclusion

Research on CSR has traditionally focused on the firm and institutional levels of analysis and on assessing the relation between CSR and firm-level outcomes (e.g., financial performance). A more recent research stream is now focused on the individual level of analysis and, parallel to the existing macrolevel research, has emphasized the role of CSR as a predictor of individual-level outcomes, including attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors such as organizational commitment, OCBs, and job satisfaction, among others. Our paper offers a conceptualization that opens up new perspectives by putting the individual center stage and focuses on sensemaking. By using sensemaking as an underlying and unifying mechanism, our conceptualization explains how individuals experience CSR and seek and find meaningfulness through work and, consequently, when and why employees experience CSR differently—resulting in more or less positive outcomes for themselves, their organizations, and external stakeholders. Thus, we offer a shift in how individual-level research conceptualizes CSR

research from looking at individuals as reacting to their organization's CSR actions to looking at individuals as proactive and intentional agents who engage in the process of making sense of CSR as they seek and find meaningfulness through work. Our approach to CSR also offers new insights into the management literature in general because it can be used to understand the meaningfulness of work in general and possibly as an exemplar in other individual-level management domains that would benefit from placing people and their individual sensemaking process center stage at work.

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