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## **Research Statement**

Research enables us to explain, interpret, and affect the world. Broadly, I locate my work within the field of strategic management and entrepreneurship. Specifically, I am attracted to the topics of corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability. My research explains and interprets the management of organizations, especially corporations. I am interested in how decisions made by managers, employees, and other stakeholders affect economic profit generation and appropriation, solve social problems, create social problems, and affect the natural environment. I identify as a member of the global scientific community brought together by using scientific methods to increase understanding through research and teaching. I am a methodological pluralist who prioritizes matching research methods to research questions to make defensible, generalizable inferences.

My research portfolio has two primary streams. In the first stream, I study how stakeholder management affects the financial performance of corporate social responsibility strategies. In the second stream, I examine new corporate strategies to address increasing natural resource scarcity risks in global supply chains, especially related to declining productivity of natural resource systems. My findings contribute to the academic literature on corporate social responsibility, stakeholder management, and corporate sustainability. My findings are useful to managers responding to the interrelated phenomena of increasingly sophisticated stakeholder mobilization and emerging resource scarcity risks related to increased global competition for natural resources and climate change-related changes in resource system productivity, including the threat of resource system collapse.

I have collected a variety of datasets to support my empirical work. These include archival datasets on corporate social responsibility, corporate sustainability, and foreign direct investment, peacekeeping, and state conflict. I am also collecting primary data on the emergence and structure of cooperative strategies to manage natural resource systems.

The following sections detail my primary research streams. I conclude by describing ideas under development and future research plans.

### **I. Stakeholders and the Financial Performance of CSR**

Firm managers use corporate social responsibility strategies to address multiple, often conflicting demands from stakeholder groups. My dissertation contributes to the ongoing integration of stakeholder and social responsibility theory by examining stakeholder-based mechanisms connecting social performance to financial performance.

The main essay of my dissertation uses new CSR data and statistical techniques to test the social-financial performance relationship. Existing research examines whether CSR directly affects financial performance, but the findings on this direct relationship remain inconclusive. I extend

this work with analysis capable of differentiating the social-financial performance relationship within individual firms from the relationship between firms. The within-firm relationship reflects how a firm implementing a CSR strategy to manage stakeholder demands affects that firm's financial performance. The between-firm relationship reflects how CSR strategy affects the firm's performance relative to rival firms. Distinguishing within- from between-firm relationships is an important frontier in strategy research because the effect of a firm's strategy on its own performance might differ from the effect of its strategy on its position relative to other firms. Most prior research conflates these two relationships, potentially causing the history of mixed empirical findings. My preliminary results suggest between-firm associations are much larger in magnitude than within-firm associations. These results imply CSR strategies matter more for differentiating firms from rivals than for improving individual firm performance. These findings align with prior research suggesting CSR matters more for consumer-facing firms because CSR is an effective marketing strategy to separate firms from rivals on quality, increasing performance through price premiums. These findings also align with prior corporate greening research that manufacturing firms benefit from CSR, especially related to sustainability, through improved operational efficiency. While these findings conform to prior research, they also raise important questions about exactly which stakeholders respond to CSR strategy, which I address in the remainder of my dissertation.

My other dissertation essays integrate stakeholder characteristics into the main essay findings. Drawing on recent empirical studies hinting at material differences in the ways stakeholder groups respond to the same CSR strategy, I examine how two stakeholder dimensions affect the social-financial performance relationship. The dimensions are the social issues most relevant to firms, given their operations, and the 'stakeholder industry structure' in which the firm competes. This work builds on recent theoretical advances in stakeholder management theory on the importance of 'organization-stakeholder fit' for the effect of stakeholder management on firm performance. If firm managers focus CSR strategies on social issues that are not important to their stakeholders, CSR strategy could decrease firm performance, providing an alternative mechanism to shareholder theory's emphasis on managerial agency problems. If managers instead adroitly match CSR strategies to issues most important to stakeholders, CSR strategy could increase financial performance in line with stakeholder theory. To test these predictions, I am collecting data on social responsibility, financial performance, and media coverage of social issues most associated with firms and industries.

I also have a non-dissertation working paper in this area. "**Improving the Use of Ratings in CSR Research: Metaratings and the CSRHub Dataset**," responds to recent criticism of standard CSR measures by describing a new dataset capable of overcoming some of the limitations of the KLD data typically used in this research area. I describe an alternative dataset called CSRHub and describe how its construction as a "metaratings" dataset overcomes some limitations of single-measure datasets like KLD. Metaratings, like polls of polls in political science, can offer more robust measures of CSR performance by combining multiple individual measures into a composite measure. Composite measures can reduce measurement error of any single dataset like KLD by averaging over multiple datasets, in the same way polls of polls can produce more accurate assessments of political support by incorporating information from multiple polls. The CSRHub dataset has the potential to become a robust measure of CSR performance, something sorely

needed as deficiencies continue to be identified in datasets like KLD, ASSET4, TruCost, and others.

## II. New Strategies for Natural Resource Scarcity Risks

My second stream of work examines cooperative strategies firms are using to manage the productivity of natural resource systems on which they depend for natural resource inputs. Firms face increasing business risks from changes in the natural environment, especially the declining productivity of natural resource systems. I draw on strategy and polycentric governance theory to examine cooperative strategies in which firms join with activist groups, state agencies, and others to go beyond managing natural resource inputs like timber and cotton to managing natural resource systems like forests and fisheries. Natural resource systems provide critical global supply chain inputs and are coming under increasing pressure from global consumption growth and climate change-related ecological shifts.

I am developing a theoretical paper in this area, "**Extending Resource-based Theory to Common-pool Resources**," which I presented at the 2018 Academy of Management Annual Meeting. The paper draws on polycentric governance theory's separation of resources into four types. I argue resource-based theory remains somewhat limited to consideration of a single type, private resources. However, technological changes have created business opportunities in other types of resources, and these changes are slowly being incorporated into RBT by considering phenomena like open innovation (public resources) and technology platforms (toll resources). I contribute to this conversation by considering whether and how common-pool resources—typically natural resource systems—might affect firm performance within a resource-based logic. This work builds on and extends Hart's Resource-based View of the Firm from its roots in natural resource inputs in the form of private resources (individual inputs like water, timber, fish, etc.) to consideration of natural resource systems.

I also have early-stage empirical work in this area. I am collecting data on the emergence, structure, and performance of cooperative natural resource system strategies. These strategies typically take the form of self-governing, multi-sector partnerships between firms and other organizations with an explicit purpose of managing natural resource systems. I will analyze these data with a combination of quantitative analyses and comparative case study methods to understand the emergence, structure, and performance of these strategies, both for firm economic outcomes and for natural resource system productivity.

## III. Projects in Development: Nonmarket Strategy

I have a backlog of research ideas in the broad area of nonmarket strategy. This is my work with the highest long-term potential for publication in top-tier journals because I am pushing at the boundaries of knowledge in this area. These projects tend to be in the areas of nonmarket strategy, specifically sustainability and political strategy.

I am a co-author on the paper, "**Signaling Calm after Conflict: Multinational Investment in Post-Conflict Environments**," that examines the relationship between foreign direct investment activity, armed conflict and peace agreements, and corporate political strategy. The study

contributes to the international business literature on foreign entry choice and host-country characteristics by considering how the institutional structure of peace agreements relates to changes in FDI flows. The paper is at the data analysis stage and will be presented at the 2018 SMS Conference.

In sustainability, I would like to develop a paper reviewing how strategy scholars have deployed the concept of the "commons." As sustainability challenges become more acute for firms, it seems managers and management scholars increase their discussion of the idea of a "commons." However, there is a vigorous theoretical and empirical debate in natural resource management about effective commons governance that tends to be absent from strategy research using the term commons. I would like to integrate these literatures to contribute an analysis of the roles firms and corporate managers might play in commons management.

In corporate political strategy, I have several datasets on government contracting and corporate political contributions. While there has been significant work on political contributions in strategy, very little work examines government contracting, even though many large firms have significant revenues from contracting with the United States and other governments. I would like to explore the government contracting data and combine it with political contributions data to understand patterns in corporate political influence and the economic returns to political donations through contracts.

#### **IV. Projects in Development: Research Methodology**

My paper, "**A New Type of Research Relevance: Career Relevance and Closing the Relevance Gap**," (presented at the Academy of Management 2017) assesses whether top strategy journals have publication norms and rules supporting open, transparent, and replicable science. I find most top strategy journals lack any norms or rules supporting open science, suggesting the body of work published in these journals might contain a higher percentage of Type 2 errors than would be expected under conditions of openness and replicability. These findings have serious implications for the veracity of knowledge produced through publication in these journals.

Another methods-related paper, "**What Stays Fixed in Fixed Effects Regression? Simulating the Empirical Consequences of Fixed Effects Assumption Failures**," uses computer simulation to highlight critical assumptions required in fixed effects regression models, a popular statistical method used in strategy research. Specifically, fixed effects regression controls for time-invariant confounds of the relationship of interest. However, little attention is paid to the likelihood of confounds remaining unchanged given the period of the data being analyzed. I demonstrate the consequences of failed fixed effects assumptions in terms of bias, and I recommend several ways to counteract the resulting risk of Type I and Type II errors.

Finally, I would like to start a long-term project promoting open science and replication. My vision for this is to start a PhD-led journal—like a law review journal—that publishes replication studies conducted by PhD students in methods seminars. PhD students would be the reviewers, and the project would incorporate student methods training with discussion of the mechanics and ethics of scientific openness. As open science becomes more common across disciplines, I believe this

project would advance student careers and our ability to build a cumulative knowledge base explaining and interpreting the drivers of firm performance.