

SUPERVISORS AND SUBORDINATES SEEING EYE-TO-EYE: THE EFFECT OF
PERCEPTUAL (IN)CONGRUENCE ON SUBORDINATE TURNOVER

by

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(Under the Direction of Nathan T. Carter)

ABSTRACT

Ample evidence has demonstrated the detrimental effects of turnover on organizational performance, making employee retention a key focus of many organizations. Of the factors that are likely to influence whether an employee will voluntarily leave their organization, a notion frequently discussed in the popular press is that employees leave their manager, not their organization. To this end, scholars have attempted to reduce employee turnover by identifying factors that will strengthen the supervisor-subordinate relationship. While most of the work in this area has focused on embracing deep-level similarity between a supervisor and subordinate (e.g., value congruence), this study highlights the potential influence of similarity in more salient and visible characteristics such as attitudes and perceptions (e.g., perceptual congruence) on a subordinate's turnover. Applying theories of social comparison, person-environment fit, and leader-member exchange, the purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between supervisor-subordinate perceptual (in)congruence and subordinate turnover. Furthermore, I explain the process by which perceptual (in)congruence is related to subordinate turnover by examining the subordinate's turnover intentions as a mediator of this relationship.

Utilizing a sample of 11,338 supervisor-subordinate dyads from a large healthcare organization, I apply polynomial regression with response surface analysis to investigate the influence of perceptual congruence (or incongruence) on subordinate turnover intentions. After testing in-depth the relationship between perceptual incongruence and subordinate turnover intent, I test a moderated mediation model to understand how absolute perceptual (in)congruence between supervisor and subordinate may be distally related to subordinate voluntary turnover behavior via the subordinate's turnover intentions, and how this mediated relationship may be influenced by how favorably the subordinate perceives his/her organization. Results of the current study suggest that while perceptual (in)congruence is not related to a subordinate's turnover intent or voluntary turnover behavior, the subordinate's perceptions of the organization are a critical opportunity for organizations to be proactive in retaining talented employees. Limitations of the current study, considerations for studying the topic of perceptual (in)congruence within the workplace, and directions moving forward are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Perceptual congruence, person-environment fit, supervisor-subordinate relationship, job attitudes, perceptions, response surface analysis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 Introduction.....	1
The Ubiquitous Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship	5
Perceptual (In)Congruence and Subordinate Turnover Intentions	8
The Valence of Subordinate Perceptions of the Organization.....	14
Patterns of Perceptual (In)Congruence and Subordinate Turnover Intentions	16
Perceptual (In)Congruence, Turnover Intentions, and Voluntary Turnover.....	22
2 Methodology	24
Participants and Procedure.....	24
Measures	24
Analysis.....	25
3 Results.....	29
Post-hoc Analysis.....	31
4 Discussion	33
Limitations and Future Directions	34
5 Conclusion	40
REFERENCES	41

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Hypothesized Moderated Mediation Model.....	55
Figure 2: Conceptual Model including Analysis Approach	56
Figure 3: Response Surface for Perceptual Congruence and Subordinate Turnover Intentions....	57

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Perceptions of Organization Items Completed by Supervisors and Subordinates	58
Table 2: Turnover Intentions Items Completed by Subordinates Only	59
Table 3: Discrepancy Analysis for Variability in Organization Perceptions.....	60
Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables	61
Table 5: Results of the Polynomial Regression and Response Surface Analysis.....	62

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Employees create the livelihood of an organization by driving innovation, competitive advantage, and ultimately the profitability of their organization (Singh, 2019). In turn, it is no secret that aside from financial indicators of business performance, employee retention is a key focus of organizations and has received ample attention in both research and practice (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017). When an employee voluntarily leaves their organization, they are often considered a regrettable loss because the exiting employee takes with her the knowledge, skills, and experience that had previously contributed to the organization's success (Agarwal, Ganco, & Ziedonis, 2009). Recently, scholars have quantified the cost of turnover for organizations by estimating turnover-related hiring and replacement expenses to be 90% to 200% of one's annual salary (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). Not only is turnover costly in terms of replacing the exited employee, turnover also reduces financial performance (Heavy, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013), disrupts organizational productivity (Hausknecht, Trevor, & Howard, 2009), can hinder workplace diversity (Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008), and has the potential to spread via turnover contagion (Felps et al., 2009).

Since the early 1900s scholars and practitioners have speculated about why employees voluntarily leave their jobs and have tested various turnover reduction strategies (e.g., Diemer, 1917; Fisher, 1917). In fact, several meta-analyses have demonstrated that turnover intention (i.e., the voluntary inclination to exit one's organization) is the strongest predictor of actual turnover behavior (Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner,

2000), giving organizations a chance to be proactive in retaining talented workers by identifying factors related to turnover intentions while the employee is still active in the organization. In turn, process and content models of turnover have been used to identify the sequence of events that an employee experiences leading up to his or her voluntary leave as well as the specific factors that cause employees to quit (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012; Maertz & Campion, 2004). Among the factors identified, and an area that has received substantial attention, is the dynamic of the supervisor-subordinate relationship as supervisors play a crucial role in their subordinate's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intent (Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursiere, & Raymond, 2015). For example, among a survey of over 27 million employees, nearly half reported having left their job to get away from their supervisor at some point during their career (Gallup, 2015). With this finding, empirical evidence is brought to a notion highly discussed in the popular press (e.g., Goler, Gale, Harrington, & Grant, 2018): *employees leave their manager, not their organization*. Within a world of work characterized by constant interpersonal interactions, this evidence suggests that the supervisor-subordinate relationship is of particular concern for subordinate turnover.

“The supervisor-subordinate relationship is a microcosm of the organizational universe...when supervisors communicate with subordinates their interactions are an observable manifestation of the organization in action” (Bisel, Messersmith, & Kelley, 2012, p. 129; Weick, 2001)

To better understand the psychological impact of supervisors on subordinates, researchers studying person-environment fit have explored the antecedents and outcomes of fit between a supervisor and subordinate. However, most of the work in this area has focused on deep-level similarity between a supervisor and subordinate (e.g., value congruence), while largely ignoring

the potential impact of similarity in more salient and visible characteristics such as attitudes and perceptions (e.g., perceptual congruence) on a subordinate's work experience (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). Here, *perceptual congruence* is defined as similar attitudes, opinions, or perspectives related to aspects of the work environment (e.g., compensation and benefits, senior leadership, communication) between a supervisor and subordinate. For example, perceptual congruence would occur when a supervisor and subordinate dyad reports being dissatisfied (or satisfied) with senior leadership. Conversely, perceptual incongruence would occur when a supervisor and subordinate report dissimilar attitudes or perceptions; for example, when the supervisor is satisfied with senior leadership while the subordinate is dissatisfied. I argue that fit operationalized as perceptual congruence between supervisor and subordinate is a more proximal indicator of a subordinate's turnover intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975); thus, by understanding perceptual (in)congruence we will be better able to predict a subordinate's intent to voluntarily leave the organization.

Applying theories of social comparison (e.g., Festinger, 1954), person-environment fit (e.g., Van Vianen, Shen, & Chuang, 2011), and leader-member exchange (e.g., Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), the purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between supervisor-subordinate perceptual (in)congruence and subordinate turnover. I argue that whether an employee voluntarily leaves their organization is especially susceptible to the extent to which the employee and his or her supervisor hold similar perceptions about various aspects of their workplace. Furthermore, I explain the process by which perceptual (in)congruence is related to subordinate voluntary turnover by examining the subordinate's turnover intentions as a mediator of this relationship.

In general, I expect subordinates to report lower turnover intentions when supervisors and subordinates *share* similar perceptions about their work (i.e., perceptual congruence), whereas subordinates will report increased turnover intentions when supervisor and subordinates feel *differently* about aspects of their work (i.e., perceptual incongruence). However, I argue that the direction of perceptual congruence or incongruence (i.e., the specific patterning of perceptions within the dyad) will influence the predicted relationships between supervisor-subordinate perceptual (in)congruence and subordinate turnover intentions. Specifically, I explore 4 patterns of supervisor-subordinate perceptions (i.e., 2 patterns of congruence and 2 patterns of incongruence) that are predicted to be differentially related to subordinate turnover intent and subsequent voluntary turnover: 1) both supervisor and subordinate report favorable perceptions of various aspects of work (congruence), 2) both supervisor and subordinate report unfavorable perceptions (congruence), 3) the supervisor reports favorable perceptions, while the subordinate reports unfavorable perceptions (incongruence), 4) the supervisor reports unfavorable perceptions, while the subordinate reports favorable perceptions (incongruence) with various aspects of work. After this in-depth exploration of the relationship between supervisor-subordinate (in)congruency and subordinate turnover intentions, I apply the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to hypothesize that perceptual congruence will make an employee less likely to voluntarily leave the organization via its negative relationship with a subordinate's turnover intentions. Furthermore, I apply a job attitude framework to hypothesize that this mediated relationship will in part be influenced by the extent to which the subordinate him/herself perceives the organization in a favorable light.

Utilizing a sample of 11,338 supervisor-subordinate dyads from a large healthcare organization, I apply polynomial regression with response surface analysis to investigate in detail

the influence of perceptual congruence (or incongruence) on subordinate turnover intentions. Next, I examine a moderated mediation model to investigate whether the predicted relationship between absolute supervisor-subordinate (in)congruence and subordinate voluntary turnover is mediated by the subordinate's turnover intentions and moderated by the valence of the subordinate's organization perception itself (i.e., whether the subordinate feels favorably or unfavorably about his/her organization). In doing so, I go beyond studying the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship to offer a theoretical contribution to our understanding of perceptual interactions within the dyad. Additionally, I suggest the study of perceptual congruence between supervisor and subordinate as a logical extension of the person-supervisor fit literature due to the ability of subordinates to detect and be influenced by their supervisor's perspectives, attitudes, and opinions. Finally, I discuss practical implications and offer recommendations for leveraging this type of fit within the supervisor-subordinate relationship to decrease employee turnover.

The Ubiquitous Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship

To better understand the psychological interaction between a supervisor and subordinate, researchers have sought to explore person-environment (PE) fit. Person-individual fit, a component of PE fit, is defined as the compatibility that occurs when the characteristics of two members of a dyad (e.g., supervisor and subordinate) are well matched (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Although this type of PE fit can be conceptualized as any number of dyadic relations (e.g., applicants and recruiters, mentors and proteges), the supervisor-subordinate dyad is the most pervasive in the workplace. Thus, understanding the antecedents and outcomes of supervisor-subordinate fit has been at the forefront of the PE fit literature (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Furthermore, fit between a supervisor and subordinate has primarily been dichotomized as

supplementary or complementary (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Supplementary fit refers to a match in characteristics such that each member of the dyad *shares* the same characteristic (e.g., both share the same values), whereas complementary fit refers to a match in characteristics such that each member of the dyad offers a characteristic that *completes* or *fulfills* the needs of the other (e.g., the supervisor offers the recognition that the subordinate desires) (Cable & Edwards, 2004). Supplementary fit is most commonly applied when considering values or goals, whereas complementary fit is applied when considering needs and demands of the employee or work environment (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that supervisors and subordinates may experience fit contingent upon a variety of characteristics such as goals (Witt, 1998), values (Colbert, 2004), personalities (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002), or job attitudes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Despite the abundance of supervisor-subordinate fit research that has focused on characteristics such as goals and values, Kristof-Brown and colleagues (2005) note that theorizing and empirical work on supervisor-subordinate attitude fit deserves merit despite its lack of presence within this particular stream of literature. At the time their meta-analysis was published, Kristof-Brown and colleagues were only able to include studies of supervisor-subordinate value congruence, personality similarity, and goal congruence due to a dearth of research investigating fit on the basis of perceptions, attitudes, or opinions. In a more recent review, Kristof-Brown and Guay (2011) assert that supervisor-subordinate fit continues to be widely studied; however, again their review fails to mention any focus on perceptual or attitudinal congruence between supervisor and subordinate. Despite the lack of research investigating supervisor-subordinate perceptual congruence, the well-studied conceptualizations of supervisor-subordinate fit most consistently demonstrate a significant link with affective

outcomes such as greater job and supervisor satisfaction and higher-quality LMX (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, supervisor-subordinate fit has demonstrated a weak link at best with behavioral outcomes such as performance (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) and research attempting to link this type of fit to voluntary turnover is particularly scarce.

Within the current study, I present a model considering the role of supervisor-subordinate perceptual (in)congruence in predicting subordinate turnover (Figure 1). To explore the lack of strong evidence for the relationship between supervisor-subordinate fit and turnover, I argue for the importance of considering perceptions, attitudes, and opinions as an appropriate conceptualization when exploring fit between a supervisor and subordinate. Humanistic perspectives of job attitudes cite that attitudes, opinions, and perceptions are largely formed from an individual's underlying values (Judge, Weiss, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Hulin, 2017), which are defined as enduring beliefs by which individuals guide themselves and make choices within their lives (Rokeach, 1973). For example, someone who values interpersonal relationships and collaboration may develop negative perceptions of teamwork in their work unit if their co-workers do not work well together.

Much of the extant literature regarding supervisor-subordinate fit has focused on congruence between a supervisor and subordinates' values (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, whereas values are considered core to an individual's self-concept (Rokeach, 1968; Sherif & Cantril, 1947), attitudes and perceptions are likely more salient and a more proximal indicator of behavioral intentions and behavior because they are expressions of values themselves. Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) early expectancy-value model supports this theorizing by describing the process of attitude development as one that leverages the values people hold about specific targets. For example, an employee is told by senior leadership that she will

provide a significant monetary bonus if the employee is able to reach a specific productivity goal. After being presented with this information, the employee decides that receiving a bonus would be a positive experience and she develops the expectation that reaching the productivity goal will enable her to earn the bonus. In turn, the employee would develop an unfavorable perception of senior leadership and potentially her compensation if she were to reach the productivity goal but was not awarded the bonus. While exploring value fit between a supervisor and subordinate is inarguably important to understand fit at a fundamental level, exploring perceptual congruence may better elucidate the impact of supervisor-subordinate fit on subordinate turnover due to its more proximal nature to behavioral intentions and behavior.

Perceptual (In)Congruence and Subordinate Turnover Intentions

Perceptual congruence. The importance of perceptual congruence has been well-documented in the social and psychological literature and dates back to Aristotle's similarity-attraction principle (1932), Festinger's theory of social comparison (1954), and Byrne's similarity-attraction paradigm (1971). Together these theories posit that individuals have a fundamental need for consensual validation of their perspectives, which is most often achieved by interacting with similar others (i.e., those who share their same attitudes or perspectives). Within the workplace, supervisor-subordinate fit researchers have captured this process with the simultaneous application of supplementary and complementary fit perspectives. Specifically, despite the two perspectives being deemed conceptually distinct (Cable & DeRue, 2002), they have also been noted to work in concert or as a function of one another (Yu, 2016). Van Vianen (2000) explained that complementary fit can be achieved (i.e., needs can be met) when there is supplementary fit (i.e., individuals have similar characteristics). Within the current study, these fundamental social and psychological theories and prior evidence from the fit literature are

leveraged to describe how interacting with a supervisor who shares similar work-related perceptions will meet the subordinate's need for validation and decrease his or her turnover intentions and subsequent turnover.

Exploring the mechanism underlying an individual's fundamental need for validation is critical to understanding the importance of perceptual congruence at work. In 1954, Harry Sullivan defined consensual validation as a therapeutic technique by which a therapist confirms a patient's feelings as valid and true; offering a sense of acceptance and understanding in the process. In broader terms, consensual validation occurs when a significant group or relevant other affirms the experiences of feelings of an individual (Festinger, 1950, 1954). Researchers have since described consensual validation as the fundamental need to feel that one's perceptions, attitudes, and understandings are shared by others (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In fact, research has shown that individuals will go to great lengths to obtain validation and reassurance (Backman & Secord, 1959; Byrne & Wond, 1962).

Drawing from theories of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and in conjunction with Byrne's similarity-attraction paradigm (1971) an individual's inclination to interact with similar others is thought to be derived from this need for validation. To fulfill the need for consensual validation, individuals tend to seek out stimuli that reinforce their own logic in an effort to maintain cognitive consistency with how they view the world (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine 2009). People who share similar perceptions validate one's own perspective, hereby reinforcing one's logic and cognitive consistency. In other words, interacting with people who hold the same perceptions helps corroborate one's own perceptions as true and reduces the likelihood that one's cognitive schemas will be challenged by alternative perspectives. In turn, mutually validated views are considered an important mechanism in explaining why individuals are attracted to one

another (Montoya & Horton, 2013). The consensual validation and reinforcement provided by those who hold similar perceptions is associated with attraction (Byrne, 1971; Sprecher, Treger, Hilaire, Fisher, & Hatfield, 2013), fosters a soothing effect and decreases negative affect (Fruzzetti & Shenk, 2008), instills a sense of relatedness, trust, and stability (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Byrne, 1971), and facilitates social integration, satisfaction with work, and fewer interpersonal conflicts (Chuang, Shen, & Judge, 2016). Applying this theorizing to the workplace, findings from the mentor-protege literature mirror these conclusions by demonstrating that deep-level similarity characterized by shared attitudes is associated with greater career and psychosocial outcomes for the protege (Eby et al., 2013).

Moreover, similarity in feelings between two individuals can promote the development of their relationship. For example, Bell (1978) found that sad employees were more interested in working with others who shared the same negative feelings – a phenomenon that holds true within the context of the supervisor-subordinate relationship as well. For instance, Yu and Chu (2007) found that mood similarity between a leader and follower produced positive effects on their LMX (i.e., mood similarity promoted a higher quality relationship between the two) and Ashkanasy and O'Connor (1997) found that LMX quality was higher among leaders and followers who share various values. Building on the aforementioned social comparison and similarity-attraction literatures, supervisor-subordinate perceptual congruence may be particularly influential in spurring a healthy and effectively functioning relationship between the two. In fact, leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) was built off the premise that the quality of the relationship between a leader and follower develops based on different leadership styles that leaders adopt to attend to the needs of individual followers. For example, a high-quality relationship between the two might develop when the

leader fulfills a follower's fundamental need for validation (Festinger, 1950, 1954) or affiliation (Maslow, 1954), which, as previously mentioned, is most likely to be achieved when the two share similar attributes (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine 2009). In explaining these particular dyadic relationships, LMX theory has acted as the framework for studies finding that similarities in the psychological characteristics between leaders and followers improve the quality of their relationship (Oren, Tziner, Sharoni, Amor, & Alon, 2012; Yu & Chu, 2007). In support, Kristof-Brown and colleagues (2005) reported a moderate to large meta-analytic correlation between person-supervisor fit and LMX ($r = .43$) and between person-supervisor fit and a subordinate's satisfaction with his or her supervisor ($r = .46$).

Not only is congruence between supervisor and subordinate important for relationship development, this particular relationship development is critical in driving positive outcomes for subordinates. Indeed, research has suggested that leader-follower congruence on psychological characteristics can influence a follower's *outcomes* via the development of their relationship (Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012) – a finding that underscores the importance of the supervisor-subordinate relationship in influencing a subordinate's work experience. Supervisors are often regarded by their subordinates as key organizational agents (Zhang, Ling, Zhang, & Xie, 2015) who represent the norms and values of the broader organization (Van Vianeni, Shen, & Chuang, 2011). In support, prior work has demonstrated that supervisors' attitudes may be particularly salient and influential upon subordinates due to the inherent power distance within the relationship (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Snodgrass, 1985) and due to the importance of the relationship in influencing a subordinate's work experience (Zhang et al., 2015). Because supervisors are viewed as significant organizational agents, the degree to which subordinates feel validated by their supervisors is likely to influence the extent to which they feel that they fit in or

are accepted at the organization (Van Vianeni et al., 2011). Moreover, as perceptual congruence is likely to promote a high-quality relationship between the two, those subordinates within high-quality relationships typically perceive greater organizational support and obtain more rewards from their leaders, feel more attached to their workplace (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006), report a higher level of loyalty and engagement, and a lower turnover intent (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013).

Perceptual incongruence. In contrast, subordinates who report incongruent (i.e., dissimilar) work-related perceptions with their supervisor may lack a functioning relationship with their supervisor, and thus develop strong turnover intentions. Within this scenario, the subordinate fails to reap the positive benefits of consensual validation from his or her supervisor because his or her supervisor feels differently about aspects of the work environment. Based on the similarity-attraction principle, individuals with more differences are prone to dislike each other (Bryne, 1971); thus, perceptual incongruence robs individuals of the aforementioned positive effects of consensual perceptual validation. For example, subordinates who do not share the same perceptions as their supervisor are less likely to experience the attraction and relatedness that is experienced when interacting with similar others. Furthermore, perceptual incongruence is likely to establish salient in-group out-group perceptions between the subordinate and his or her supervisor (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Specifically, subordinates might classify either themselves or their supervisors as out-group members who differ in their perceptions of work as opposed to their in-group counterparts who share similar perceptions. In support, subordinates who believe they differ from their supervisor with respect to characteristics such as job attitudes and perceptions are likely to have poorer affective reactions toward their supervisor or organization than those who

believe they are similar and feel validated (Barsade, Ward, Turner, Sonnenfeld, 2000; Cunningham, 2006; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004)

Researchers have noted that attitude dissimilarity is particularly critical in driving repulsion or withdrawal behaviors (Rosenbaum, 1986). For example, Singh and Ho (2000) showed that attitude dissimilarity exerts equivalent and opposite effects on attraction and liking than that of attitude similarity within dyads. Together these researchers concluded that individuals hold an inherent motivation that drives them to avoid social interactions with those who hold dissimilar perceptions - a finding that fuels the popular notion, “*employees leave their manager, not their organization.*” Evidence from the parent-child interaction literature further supports the idea that perceptual congruence may be necessary for positive dyadic relationships; incongruence in perceptions or attitudes related to family functioning may reflect difficulties in the parent-child relationship such as communication issues or other conflict (Guion, Mrug, & Windle, 2009). Furthermore, perceptual incongruence in the parent-child relationship have been associated with negative health outcomes in children (De Los Reyes, Goodman, Kliwer, & Reid-Quinones, 2008; Guion et al., 2009), signifying the importance of understanding the result of incongruence in salient dyadic relationships and how best to handle incongruence when encountered (De Los Reyes, Lerner, Thomas, Daruwala, & Goepel, 2013).

Applying these findings to the current study, it is reasonable to assume that among supervisor-subordinate dyads who do not share similar perceptions of work, subordinates will report greater intentions to leave the organization than those subordinates who do share similar perceptions of the organization. Here, I reason that due to the significant role supervisors play in their subordinate’s work experience, subordinates are likely to seek consensual validation of their own perceptions of work through their supervisors’ perceptions. When subordinates share

the same perceptions as their supervisor, they are likely to experience greater attraction, connectedness, and a more positive relationship with their supervisor because they experience validation of their perceptions from a significant other (i.e., their supervisor). In contrast, due to the lack of validation and poor affective reactions likely to be experienced when members of the dyad report organization perceptions that are incongruent with one another, subordinates are likely to lack a strong relationship with their supervisor, and thus have greater turnover intentions. In turn, I propose:

H1: Perceptual congruence will be negatively related to subordinates' turnover intentions.

The Valence of Subordinate Perceptions of the Organization

Although the employee experience is complex and several factors can influence an individuals' decision to either stay or leave their organization (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979), job attitudes, perceptions of the organization, and overall job satisfaction play a large role in reliably predicting employee turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000) and constitute proximal antecedents of turnover intentions (Mobley et al., 1979). Within the formative years of turnover research, perceptions of the organization and work conditions were noted as critical antecedents to turnover behavior (Fleishman & Harris, 1962; Hellrigel & White, 1973; Karp & Nickson, 1973). Early researchers established a negative relationship between job dissatisfaction and job survival (Weitz & Nuchols, 1955), and Hulin (1968) was one of the first to utilize a quasi-experiment to demonstrate that an increase in job satisfaction led to a reduction in employee turnover. Specifically, those with the intent to leave their organization perceive their leaders (Fleishman & Harris, 1962; Ley, 1966) and environmental conditions (e.g., pay, work schedule, job fit; Hellrigel & White, 1973) less favorably than do those with the intent to stay. To this end, conventional research typically assumes that dissatisfied employees leave their jobs or

organizations, whereas satisfied employees stay (Li et al., 2016). Several mechanisms have been suggested to link an employee's perceptions of the organization to their intent to leave (e.g., Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009). In particular, attitude researchers have demonstrated that an adaptations process leads an employee to approach situations associated with positive attitudes, while withdrawing from situations associated with negative attitudes (Mobley et al., 1979; Hulin, 1991). This theorizing has served as a unifying perspective for much of the job attitude literature (Judge et al., 2017) and can explain how the valence of a subordinate's own perception of the organization may interact with their congruence with their supervisor to influence their turnover intent.

Drawing on research within the job stress literature, Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989) proposed that specific perceptions of the organization (e.g., a high level of organizational politicking) can represent a stressor that is directly related to an employee's attitudinal and behavioral outcomes; unfavorable perceptions of one's organization can trigger a primary stress appraisal. As perceptions induce stress and satisfaction with one's work environment or organization is reduced, a variety of disengagement and withdrawal behaviors are likely to occur (Judge et al., 2017) and the decision to actually leave a job is the result of one's level of job attitudes (Bentein, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg, & Stinglhamber, 2005; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005). Applying this theorizing to the current study would suggest that the direct effect of perceptual congruence on subordinates' turnover intent may differ as a function of how favorably the subordinates perceive their organization. In other words, not only is perceptual congruence predicted to decrease a subordinate's turnover intentions, favorable perceptions held by subordinates should further decrease their turnover intentions because these

individuals are likely to approach their work role or organization rather than withdraw from it.

Thus, I propose:

H2: The predicted negative relationship between perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intentions will be stronger when the subordinate reports favorable perceptions of their organization.

Patterns of Perceptual (In)Congruence and Subordinate Turnover Intentions

Patterns of perceptual congruence. In terms of perceptual congruence, supervisors and subordinates can be congruent at either a favorable or unfavorable level of their organization-related perceptions. To explain, within the dyad whose perceptions are congruent there may be two patterns of supervisor-subordinate perceptual fit: dyads who share favorable perceptions versus those who share unfavorable perceptions. Among the dyads who share favorable perceptions, subordinates are likely to experience positive outcomes such as relatedness, attraction, and social integration engendered by the agreement or consensual validation of their attitudes offered by their supervisor (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Byrne, 1971; Chuang, Shen, & Judge, 2016; Sprecher et al., 2013). As previously hypothesized, this perceptual congruence is predicted to decrease the subordinate's intent to leave the organization.

Furthermore, dyads whose favorable perceptions are congruent not only benefit from their perceptual congruence, they are also likely to benefit from the favorable perception itself. As previously predicted, subordinates who hold favorable perceptions of their organization are likely to demonstrate a stronger negative relationship between perceptual congruence and their turnover intentions compared to their less favorable peers (H2). Considering this theorizing and research from previous scholars (Judge et al., 2017), the predicted negative relationship between

perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intent is likely to be bolstered by the favorable perception reported by the subordinate.

H3: When both supervisor and subordinate report favorable perceptions of work, perceptual congruence will be negatively related to subordinate turnover intentions.

In contrast, the relationship between perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intentions among supervisors and subordinates who share unfavorable organization perceptions is less clear. Although these subordinates report unfavorable perceptions of various aspects of their work, they are simultaneously experiencing the positive effects of consensual validation of their unfavorable perceptions by their supervisor. Applying balance theory and the laws of multiplication to this psychological phenomenon, Heider (1946, 1958) noted that individuals seek balanced relationships with others, and balance can be achieved by sharing perspectives with others; a positive times a positive equals a positive and a negative times a negative equals a positive, but a positive times a negative equals a negative. In this example, sharing either positive *or* negative perceptions promotes psychological “balance” and friendship between individuals, while perceptions that diverge result in psychological imbalance (Heider, 1946, 1958). More specifically, sharing unfavorable perceptions- as opposed to favorable perceptions- has been shown to be particularly effective in fostering closeness between individuals (Bosson, Johnson, Niederhoffer, & Swann Jr., 2006). Supporting this idea, one study by Chen and colleagues (2016) found that LMX relationships were higher when leaders and followers were congruent on workplace loneliness (albeit high or low) than when they were incongruent. To this end, several theoretical perspectives have been formulated to describe how a “common enemy” unites those who share negative attitudes and opinions toward the same target.

Drawing from research on the benefits of having a “common enemy,” unfavorable perceptions may unite individuals through gossip or “venting” within the context of social norms. Gossip is the exchange of either positive or negative information about a third party or other target in its absence (Foster, 2004). A commonly accepted social norm is that people who express positive beliefs about others or ideas are easy to like and be around. When an individual breaks this social norm by disclosing his or her negative beliefs (i.e., negative gossiping or venting) about a person or object (e.g., a recent work project), it communicates to the listener that the listener is trusted and helps “cement and maintain” the social bond between the two (Baumeister, Zhang, & Vohs, 2004, p. 112). For example, a supervisor might disclose to her subordinate that she believes there is a lack of development opportunities offered by the organization. If the subordinate shares this negative perception regarding the availability of career development opportunities, the supervisor and subordinate are likely to bond over their shared negativity.

Additionally, sharing unfavorable perceptions through gossip likely promotes the establishment of in-groups and out-groups which fosters trust and social integration (Foster, 2004; Wert & Salovey, 2004). According to social identity theory, people derive their self-esteem through their associations with valued in-groups (Gagnon & Bourhis, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Two individuals discovering their shared negative perception toward particular aspects of their jobs can foster a sense of in-group solidarity that meets their fundamental needs for validation, connectedness, and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Indeed, negative gossip or negative opinion sharing has been deemed social glue and an important mechanism of social bonding (Dunbar, 2004).

Within the current study, supervisors and subordinates who share unfavorable perceptions are likely to experience the social bonding that occurs particularly in the context of sharing negative attitudes and opinions; thus, even in the context of negativity, subordinates are likely to develop a close relationship with their supervisor. That is, these supervisors and subordinates are likely to bond over their “common enemy,” which in turn promotes their relationship development, and thus should decrease a subordinate’s turnover intent. Accordingly, I expect congruence of unfavorable perceptions to be negatively related to subordinate turnover intentions. However, drawing from Judge and colleagues’ (2017) assertion that job attitudes partially predict employees’ withdrawal behaviors and taking into consideration the hypothesized influence of a subordinate’s own perception on this relationship (H2), the direct effect of a subordinate’s unfavorable perception on their turnover intentions may undermine the aforementioned positive benefits of perceptual congruence. That is, the subordinate’s unfavorable perceptions of various aspects of their job or work environment may increase their turnover intent despite the positive benefits he or she reaps from sharing the same perception as his or her supervisor. Because it is unclear whether the effect of an unfavorable perception on a subordinate’s turnover intentions will be stronger than the social bonding experienced with congruence of unfavorable perceptions, I propose the following research question:

RQ1: Will the predicted negative relationship between perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intentions be observed when both supervisor and subordinate share unfavorable perceptions of work?

Patterns of perceptual incongruence. Much like the patterning expected among the dyads with perceptual congruence, the relationship between supervisor-subordinate perceptual incongruence and subordinate turnover intentions is likely to be influenced by the pattern of

incongruent perceptions. Within one dyad, the supervisor may report favorable organization perceptions, while the subordinate reports unfavorable perceptions. In this instance, subordinates do not experience validation from their supervisor and as such are likely to experience feelings of alienation, poor social integration, and lack of relatedness and attraction (Barsade et al., 2000; Byrne, 1971; Cunningham, 2006; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004). In turn, incongruence between the supervisor and subordinate may lead to a lower quality relationship between the two (Ashkanasy & O'Connor, 1997; Bryne, 1971, Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). To this end, perceptual incongruence is expected to be positively related to subordinate turnover intentions due to the lack of relationship development that is likely to occur between the two (Harris et al., 2011).

Additionally, not only are subordinates who hold unfavorable perceptions while their supervisor holds favorable perceptions lacking the benefits of perceptual congruence, they are also holding negative views toward some aspect of their job or work environment. In this instance, the predicted positive relationship between perceptual incongruence and subordinate turnover intent is likely to be bolstered by the unfavorable perception reported by the subordinate (Judge et al., 2017). Supporting this idea, a study by Chen, Wen, Peng, and Liu (2016) found the most detrimental effects on LMX and turnover intention when a subordinate reported a high level of loneliness (unfavorable) while their supervisor reported a low level of loneliness (favorable). Drawing from theory suggesting that an adaptations process drives individuals to withdraw from situations associated with negative attitudes (Judge et al., 2017), I expect these subordinates to report a greater intent to leave the organization due to both the incongruence with their supervisor and their unfavorable views.

H4: When the supervisor reports favorable perceptions of work while the subordinate reports unfavorable perceptions, perceptual incongruence will be positively related to subordinate turnover intentions.

Finally, the relationship between perceptual incongruence and subordinate turnover intentions when supervisors hold unfavorable perceptions of work while the subordinate holds favorable perceptions is less clear. Although these subordinates report a positive view of various aspects of work, they are simultaneously lacking the experience of consensual validation of their perceptions by their supervisor. Here, because these subordinates do not experience the social bonding experience that is offered from perceptual congruence and are likely to have strained relationships with their supervisors (Bryne, 1971), they are likely to report greater turnover intent (Harris et al., 2011). Specifically, these subordinates may be more inclined to leave their organization due to potential feelings of alienation, poor social integration, and lack of relatedness, attraction, and effective relationship with their supervisor when they don't share the same perceptions of work as his or her supervisor (Barsade et al., 2000; Byrne, 1971; Cunningham, 2006; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004).

However, the direct effect of a subordinate's favorable perception may offset the aforementioned negative effects of perceptual incongruence (H2). That is, the subordinate's favorable view of various aspects of their job or work environment may decrease their turnover intent despite the lack of validation that may occur due to incongruent perceptions. In support, Judge and colleagues (2017) review research demonstrating that job attitudes are only partially responsible for an employee's turnover intent, suggesting that other factors (e.g., consensual validation) might also be at play. To date, there is a lack of sufficient theory and evidence to draw from to formally hypothesize whether the effect of a favorable organization perception on a

subordinate's turnover intentions will be stronger than the lack of social bonding experienced with this particular patterning of perceptual incongruence between supervisor and subordinate; thus, I propose the following research question:

RQ2: Will the predicted positive relationship between perceptual incongruence and subordinate turnover intentions be observed when the supervisor reports unfavorable perceptions of work and the subordinate reports favorable perceptions?

Perceptual (In)Congruence, Turnover Intentions, and Voluntary Turnover

To this point, the focus of the current study has been to unravel the detailed relationship between perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intentions. However, an aim of the current study is also to determine the importance of perceptual congruence in predicting a subordinate's actual voluntary turnover behavior – a key concern for organizations worldwide. To this end, it is critical to consider the intervening role of a subordinate's turnover intentions. The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) is the prominent framework that theorizes how behavioral intentions (e.g., turnover intentions) are assumed to be the immediate antecedents of behavior (e.g., turnover). Across multiple studies and meta-analyses, turnover intent has been demonstrated as the strongest predictor of turnover even when accounting for job satisfaction and organizational commitment (e.g., Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). Within the context of fit, prior research exploring supervisor-subordinate value fit has demonstrated a considerable negative relationship between supervisor-subordinate fit and turnover intentions (e.g., $r = -.62, p < .001$; Zhang et al., 2015), indicating the strong importance of fit in predicting whether a subordinate is likely to remain at the organization. However, research linking supervisor-subordinate fit to actual employee turnover is scarce (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Here, I identify perceptual (in)congruence between

supervisor and subordinate as an antecedent of subordinate turnover intentions and utilize the theory of planned behavior framework to confirm the well-documented relationship between turnover intentions and voluntary turnover. Thus, within the current study I revisit the validity of supervisor-subordinate fit as a predictor of subordinate turnover via subordinate turnover intentions.

H5: Subordinate turnover intentions will be positively related to their subsequent voluntary turnover.

Integrating the previously hypothesized relationship between perceptual (in)congruence and subordinate turnover intentions (H1) and the predicted relationship between subordinate turnover intentions and voluntary turnover behavior (H5), I expect perceptual (in)congruence to be related to subordinate voluntary turnover behavior via its relationship with subordinate turnover intentions.

H6: Perceptual congruence will be negatively related to subordinates' voluntary turnover behavior via its negative relationship with subordinates' turnover intentions.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

Within the current study data were utilized from a large healthcare organization in the United States. The data consisted of 11,338 supervisor-subordinate dyads, with 11,338 subordinates reporting to 809 supervisors. The perceptual data were collected in September of 2017 during an organizational culture assessment conducted by a third-party management consulting firm. Subordinate turnover data was collected approximately 10 months following the culture assessment administration. Of the subordinate sample, 84.0% identified as female and reported an average age of 43.9 ($SD = 12.7$), whereas the supervisor sample shared similar characteristics with 77.1% who identified as female and an average age of 49.9 ($SD = 9.5$). The average tenure was 8.87 years ($SD = 9.66$) for subordinates and 11.2 years ($SD = 10.71$) for supervisors. Additionally, supervisors oversaw on average 14.2 subordinates, with their span of control ranging from 1 to 87 employees.

Measures

Perceptions of the organization. Supervisors and subordinates responded to 23 items measuring their perceptions, attitudes, and opinions toward various aspects of their organization. The items were designed to measure a broad array of perceptions of the overall organization (e.g., career development opportunities, communication, diversity, safety). Among both supervisors and subordinates the single factor measure demonstrated acceptable model fit, $X^2(229, N = 10,292) = 13,787.60$, $RMSEA = .076$, 90% $CI = .075 - .077$, $CFI = .925$, $TLI = .917$,

$SRMR = .038$. Sample items include, “Different work areas in this organization communicate effectively with each other,” “This organization contributes to the community,” and “Issues of misconduct are resolved in this organization.” All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The full list of items completed by both supervisors and subordinates is presented in Table 1.

Subordinate turnover intentions. During the same data collection that was utilized to collect supervisor and subordinate perceptions of the organization, subordinates only were asked to respond to 3 items measuring their intent to leave the organization. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), yet for ease of interpretation each of the items were reverse-scored such that higher scores indicated a greater intent to leave the organization. Sample items include, “I would like to be working at this organization three years from now” and “I would stay with this organization if offered a similar job elsewhere for slightly higher pay.” The full list of items completed by only subordinates is presented in Table 2.

Subordinate voluntary turnover. Approximately 10 months following the culture assessment administration, the organization’s Human Resources department provided a list of the employees who had subsequently left the organization voluntarily. From the full sample of 11,338 subordinates, 950 (8.4%) had left the organization voluntarily and 10,438 (91.6%) still remained as active employees at the organization. For the analyses, employees were coded 1 (*voluntary termed*) or 0 (*still employed*).

Analysis

Two different approaches were used to test my hypotheses and research questions. First, polynomial regression with response surface analysis was used to test my congruence

hypotheses. This approach allows researchers to determine the extent to which combinations of predictor variables (here, the combination of a supervisor and subordinate organization perception) relate to an outcome (i.e., subordinate turnover intentions), and has been deemed appropriate when the discrepancy between the two predictor variables is of central concern (Shanock, Baran, Gentry, Pattison, & Heggstad, 2010). Early work exploring person-environment fit data used polynomial regression with response surface analysis to determine how congruence between perceptions of the employee and characteristics of his or her work environment were related to employee outcomes. For example, Edwards and Parry (1993) explored how the discrepancy between an employee's desired job complexity and actual job complexity as rated by the organization was related to job dissatisfaction, boredom, and anxiety.

Although only a handful of studies had utilized a polynomial regression approach to study the supervisor-subordinate fit relationship at the time of the Kristof-Brown and colleagues' (2005) meta-analysis, more recent work cites this analysis approach as an emerging technique that offers a nuanced view of discrepancy data (Shanock et al., 2010). Broadly, this analysis technique was developed to aid in the issues associated with using difference scores to analyze discrepancy data (see Edwards 1994, 1995, 2007 for an in-depth review). One of the most valuable advantages of this approach over the use of difference scores is in its ability to consider the independent effect of each predictor on the outcome of interest. Difference score analysis lends itself to ambiguous interpretation of results by confounding the predictor effects and not offering insight on the extent to which each predictor contributes to the outcome variable (Shanock et al., 2010).

Edwards (2002) describes several assumptions that must be met to utilize this technique:

- (a) the predictor variables must be commensurate, or represent the same conceptual domain to

allow for differences between the two to be meaningfully interpreted, (b) the predictor variables must be measured on the same numeric scale, (c) all of the fundamental assumptions of a multiple regression analysis must be met. Given satisfaction of these assumptions in the current study, I was able to test hypotheses 3 and 4 and research questions 1 and 2 to explore how the agreement, degree of discrepancy, or direction of the discrepancy between supervisors and subordinate's organizational perceptions are related to a subordinate's intent to leave (Shanock et al., 2010). To conduct this analysis, I first ensured that discrepant perceptions between supervisors and subordinates did exist within my sample following the procedure outlined by Fleenor and colleagues (1996). Results of the preliminary discrepancy analysis are presented in Table 3 and satisfy the 10% discrepant criteria described by Shanock and colleagues (2010). Then, I centered each of the predictor variables around the midpoint of the scale as recommended by Edwards (1994) and proceeded to employ a polynomial regression with each of the corresponding pairs of supervisor and subordinate organization perceptions and the subordinate turnover intentions variable. Next, the regression coefficients from the polynomial regression analysis were used to examine the response surface pattern (Edwards, 1994; Harris, Ansaal, & Lievens, 2008). I then graphed the response surface pattern in three-dimensional space and the slope and curvature of the lines of perfect agreement and incongruence presented in the plot were used to interpret the effect of supervisor-subordinate perceptual congruence or incongruence on subordinate turnover intentions (Shanock et al., 2010).

After investigating the relationship between (in)congruency patterns and subordinate's turnover intentions in my first set of hypotheses (i.e., H3, H4, RQ1, RQ2), I tested the full model to investigate the relationship between absolute supervisor-subordinate (in)congruence and subordinate voluntary turnover via a subordinate's turnover intentions as moderated by the

valence of the subordinate's own perception (i.e., whether the subordinate feels favorably or unfavorably about his/her organization). Figure 2 outlines the conceptual model and the analysis techniques that were used to test different pieces of the model. To test the full moderated mediation model (H1, H2, H5, and H6), I utilized conditional process modeling with the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) in SPSS version 23.0 and estimated Model 7 with 500 bootstraps to test the significance of the indirect effect of congruency on a subordinate's voluntary turnover behavior. To model the congruency variable in this analysis, I calculated the squared difference of organizational perceptions between supervisor and subordinate. Because this squared difference creates an absolute measure of congruence, I was able to take a broader investigation of how perceptual congruency, regardless of the direction of (in)congruency, is related to subordinate turnover.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the study variables are summarized in Table 4. Cronbach's alpha was above 0.80 for each measure and all correlations among the study variables were significant and in the expected direction. As shown in Table 4, there was a strong, significant relationship between subordinate perceptions of the organization and a subordinate's turnover intent. To minimize the effect of potential multicollinearity, the predictor variables were centered by subtracting the mid-point of the scale prior to conducting the remaining analyses (Edwards, 1994).

Results of the polynomial regression testing how all combinations of supervisor's perceptions of the organization (X) and subordinate's perceptions of the organization (Y) relate to the subordinate's turnover intentions (Z) (Figure 3; Table 5) suggested a significant model with the inclusion of the squared predictor terms and interaction, $F(5, 11,547) = 3,614.78, p < .001, R^2 = 0.61$, thus I proceeded to examine and test the slope and curvature of the three-dimensional response surface (Barranti, Carlson, & Cote, 2017). First, a test of the curvature of the line of incongruence did not show support for Hypothesis 1, such that the degree of incongruence was not significantly related to a subordinate's turnover intent, $a_4 = -0.02; t = -1.13, p = 0.26$. Despite this initial finding, further investigation of the surface values revealed important insights for the remaining congruence hypotheses and research questions.

The test of the slope of the line of congruence showed support for Hypothesis 3, such that subordinate turnover intent was higher when supervisors *and* subordinates held congruent

unfavorable rather than congruent favorable perceptions, $a_1 = -0.85$; $t = -25.17$, $p < 0.001$.

Additionally, this same test of the line of congruence provided insight into Research Question 1; contrary to expectations, the predicted negative relationship between perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intentions was not observed when supervisors and subordinates held congruent unfavorable perceptions. In fact, subordinate turnover intentions were highest in this particular condition. Next, the test of the slope along the line of incongruence showed support for Hypothesis 4. Subordinate turnover intent was higher when the direction of incongruence was such that supervisors held more favorable perceptions of the organization than vice versa, $a_3 = 0.97$; $t = 31.16$, $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, this same test of the slope along the line of incongruence shed light on Research Question 2; contrary to expectations, the predicted positive relationship between perceptual incongruence and subordinate turnover intentions was not observed when subordinates held more favorable perceptions of the organization than their supervisor.

After testing my congruency hypotheses and research questions with polynomial regression and response surface analysis, I replicated and confirmed my findings by estimating a conditional process (i.e., moderated mediation) model. The moderation and mediation analyses were examined for significance via their 95% bias-corrected confidence interval and were considered significant if the confidence interval did not include zero. Results of the analysis suggested perceptual congruence was not significantly related to a subordinates' turnover intent (H1), $\beta = -0.001$, $SE = 0.002$, 95% CI [-0.005, 0.003]. Additionally, while there was no significant interaction between perceptual congruence and a subordinate's own perceptions of the organization in predicting the subordinate's turnover intentions (H2), $\beta = 0.002$, $SE = 0.002$, 95% CI [-0.001, 0.004], results demonstrated a significant direct effect of a subordinate's own

perceptions of the organization in predicting his or her turnover intentions, $\beta = -0.930$, $SE = 0.009$, 95% CI [-0.947, -0.912].

Finally, results from the conditional process model analysis demonstrated support for Hypothesis 5, which posited that subordinate turnover intentions would be positively related to their subsequent voluntary turnover, $\beta = 0.450$, $SE = 0.380$, 95% CI [0.376, 0.525]. However, results revealed that there was no direct effect of perceptual congruence on voluntary turnover, $\beta = -0.003$, $SE = 0.012$, 95% CI [-0.026, 0.019], nor was the test for mediation significant (H6), *Index of Moderated Mediation* = 0.001, *Bootstrapped SE* = 0.001, 95% CI [-0.006, 0.002], suggesting that perceptual congruence was not directly related to subordinate voluntary turnover nor indirectly via its relationship with subordinate turnover intent.

Post-hoc Analysis

A post-hoc analysis was employed to determine the extent to which the strong relationship between a subordinates' perceptions of the organization and their turnover intent (Table 4; $r = -0.58$) obscured the results of the polynomial regression and subsequent estimation of the full moderated mediation model. In this post-hoc analysis, I investigated whether perceptual congruence was directly related to a subordinate's voluntary turnover behavior and whether this proposed relationship was influenced by a subordinate's perceptions of the organization (i.e., the mediating role of subordinate turnover intention was removed from the model). Although these particular relationships were not explicitly proposed in the current study, research has shown support for turnover intent being the strongest predictor and a sufficient proxy for actual turnover behavior (Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000); thus, the theory used to propose my a priori hypotheses and the direction of those relationships should be consistent with what would be expected in proposing the direct

relationship between perceptual congruence and voluntary turnover behavior. To test this moderation model, I estimated Model 1 utilizing the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) in SPSS version 23.0.

Results of the post-hoc analysis confirmed the initial findings. Subordinates' perception of the organization was negatively related to their subsequent voluntary turnover, $\beta = -0.241$, $SE = 0.059$, 95% CI [-0.359, -0.124]. However, perceptual congruence was not significantly related to a subordinate's voluntary turnover behavior, $\beta = 0.011$, $SE = 0.012$, 95% CI [-0.014, 0.034], and there was no significant interaction between perceptual congruence and a subordinate's own perceptions of the organization in predicting the subordinate's voluntary turnover, $\beta = 0.012$, $SE = 0.009$, 95% CI [-0.005, 0.029].

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The supervisor-subordinate relationship is a key experience in the traditional workplace (Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursiere, & Raymond, 2015), with research and popular press articles noting employees tend to leave their *manager* rather than their *organization* (e.g., Gallup, 2015; Goler et al., 2018). As such, this particular relationship presents an opportunity for organizations to reduce the costly effects of employee turnover and promote both employee and organizational performance (Allen, Bryan, & Vardaman, 2010; Heavy, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013). In fact, scholars have long-tested various turnover reduction strategies (e.g., Diemer, 1917; Fisher, 1917), with much work focusing on the leader-follower relationship (e.g., LMX; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) and supervisor-subordinate fit (e.g., PE-Fit; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In this study, perceptual congruence between a supervisor and subordinate was hypothesized to result in a decrease in subordinates' intent to leave the organization and subsequent voluntary turnover behavior due to subordinate's need for validation from their supervisor (Festinger, 1950, 1954; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sullivan, 1954).

Overall, results did not support the predictions set forth, but did provide important insight into how powerful an employee's own perceptions of the organization are in influencing their turnover intent and voluntary turnover behavior. Results suggest neither a subordinate's intent to leave nor their voluntary turnover behavior was related to the extent to which s/he held perceptions of the organization similar to those held by his or her supervisor; the experience of

congruency with a supervisor did not necessarily offset subordinate's own unfavorable perceptions, and similarly, the experience of incongruency did not undermine their favorable perceptions. However, regardless of the perceptual (in)congruence between a supervisor and subordinate, a subordinate's *own* perceptions about the organization were shown to be relatively critical in driving his or her turnover intentions and subsequent turnover behavior. Furthermore, the strong relationship between subordinate turnover intentions and turnover behavior found here presents the opportunity for organizations to be proactive in mitigating voluntary turnover by focusing on what drives a subordinate's turnover intentions.

Job attitudes, perceptions, and overall satisfaction are known to be critical components in the decision to leave an organization (Fleishman & Harris, 1962; Hellrigel & White, 1973; Karp & Nickson, 1973), indicating support for the finding of a strong relationship between a subordinate's perceptions of the organization and their turnover intent and voluntary turnover behavior. However, it has long been suggested that several factors influence an individual's intent and decision to either stay or leave their organization (Mobley et al., 1979) and attitudes may only partially predict an employee's withdrawal behaviors (Judge et al., 2017). Despite the relationship between subordinates' perceptions of the organization and turnover found in the current study, there are several additional factors not included in the current model that should be considered to better understand the null results presented here.

Limitations and Future Directions

In light of the lack of support for the predictions set forth, it is important to consider several limitations that may have contributed to the null findings presented here. First, a critical assumption of the current study was that supervisors influence their subordinates. A great deal of research supports this notion and suggests subordinates view their supervisors as key

organizational agents who represent the norms and values of the organization (Van Vianeni, Shen, & Chuang, 2011; Zhang, Ling, Zhang, & Xie, 2015). Moreover, the inherent power distance between a supervisor and subordinate makes the supervisor highly influential upon the subordinate's work experience (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Snodgrass, 1985). Because supervisors are viewed as significant organizational agents and likely hold influence over subordinates, the current study proposed the degree to which subordinates felt validated by their supervisors via their experience of perceptual congruence was likely to influence the extent to which they felt more attached to their workplace (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006) and reported a lower turnover intent (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013).

Within the organization sampled in this study, there may have been low-quality relationships between supervisors and subordinates and thus supervisors may not be particularly influential on their employee's work experiences. When subordinates have a high-quality relationship and are satisfied with their supervisor, they perceive greater organizational support and obtain more rewards from their leader (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006), as well as report a higher level of loyalty and engagement (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013). In contrast, when subordinates feel negatively about their supervisor, their negative feelings may expand to the broader organization and increase their intent to leave (Harris, Kacmar, & Witt, 2005).

Numerous articles written on the topic have suggested subordinate satisfaction with their supervisor is positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance, and negatively related to withdrawal behaviors and turnover (Sturman & Park, 2016). In fact, the relevant literature is ripe with evidence demonstrating the negative relationship between LMX and turnover intentions (e.g., Harris, Wheeler, & Kacmar, 2011). To this end, whether perceptual congruence is influential on a subordinate's turnover is likely dependent on the extent to which

the two have a high-quality relationship. In this study, I drew from theory and prior research to assume perceptual congruence with the supervisor would be indicative of a strong relationship within the dyad; however, future work should disentangle these ideas and explicitly test whether a high-quality relationship precedes perceptual congruence, follows perceptual congruence, or is crucial in linking perceptual congruence to employee outcomes.

Not only might the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship have contributed to the null findings presented here, emerging research suggests the importance of peer relationships (i.e., their social network) in the workplace (Moynihan & Pandey, 2008), especially in the case of influencing one another's turnover (Jo & Ellingson, 2019). In fact, work by Moynihan and Pandey (2007) found of several factors, group culture was the most influential on an employee's job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment. Researchers have investigated social cohesion and social contagion (Burt, 1987; Felps et al., 2009; Hartman & Johnson, 1989) to explain how relationships among coworkers shape one another's work-related attitudes. Strong coworker relationships are particularly important within the healthcare setting, where employees are subject to high pressure workloads and frequent short staffing (Salyers et al., 2017). Future work should investigate whether perceptual congruence among a relevant peer group demonstrates a significant effect on subordinates' withdrawal behaviors. Furthermore, future work could simultaneously test (in)congruence with a supervisor and (in)congruence with coworkers to determine the extent to which each party holds a potentially unique influence over an employee's work attitudes and behaviors.

In addition to these substantive, theoretical factors to consider in future work, there are additional measurement and analysis limitations that should also be considered. First, the ideas hypothesized were predicated on the assumption that supervisors and subordinates hold differing

perceptions about their organization. It was critical that the sample of supervisors and subordinates included a sufficient proportion of dyads in which supervisors and subordinates held the same perceptions (congruent), supervisors held more favorable perceptions (incongruent), and when subordinates held more favorable perceptions (incongruent). While the current sample met the criteria for discrepant perceptions required to perform the analysis (Shanock et al., 2010), the magnitude of the differences between supervisor and subordinate perceptions was not equal across each condition (see Table 3). This characteristic of the study sample is in line with prior research suggesting supervisors have more positive experiences at work and generally have better attitudes toward their work environment (Dukić, 2009; Savery, 1998). To better estimate the intricacies of the effect of perceptual incongruence in various directions (i.e., when supervisors hold more favorable perceptions vs. when subordinates hold more favorable perceptions), a greater representation of dyads in which subordinates perceive the organization significantly more favorably than their supervisor would be ideal.

Next, drawing from the person-environment fit literature (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), researchers have debated the most appropriate measurement of congruence between two entities (e.g., supervisor and subordinate), with three different measurement techniques being most pervasive in the literature: indirect objective, indirect subjective, and direct perceived congruence (Pervin, 1968). This study utilized an indirect, objective measure of congruence where supervisor and subordinate perceptions were assessed separately, and congruence was determined when dyads were equal in terms of their mean score on the perceptions measure. However, some have reported this objective measure of congruence is likely to be more distal to outcomes than the alternative measurement of subjective congruence or direct, perceived congruence (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) because it is independent of the individuals' own beliefs

about potential congruence between the two (French, Rodgers, & Cobb, 1974). In fact, measurements of subjective and perceived fit have demonstrated the strongest relationships to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), with researchers theorizing employees behave as a result of their overall sense of fit (Schneider, 1987). Applying this measurement debate to the current study would suggest the indirect, objective approach to measuring perceptual congruence taken here may be more distal to subordinates' turnover than would a measure of congruence that explicitly asked subordinates to rate the level of perceptual congruence between them and their supervisor. Future research should utilize a subjective approach to determine if perceived congruence plays a critical role in predicting subordinates' turnover.

Finally, while the current study focused on perceptual congruence between a supervisor and subordinate, prior research has demonstrated the importance of other types of similarities between the two. For example, the mentoring literature has demonstrated similarity on the basis of gender, race, and demographics has only negligible relationships with mentoring outcomes, whereas deep-level similarity on the basis of personality and values systems promotes high-quality mentoring relationships (Eby et al., 2013). These findings suggest more surface-level features of individuals may not be as important as congruence on deep-level characteristics. In this study, I proposed perceptions of the organization were more surface level than an individual's values and beliefs since perceptions and attitudes are expressions of values themselves (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Future work should explore the relative importance of congruence on various surface- and deep-level characteristics in influencing employee outcomes. In a similar vein, although the current study utilized a large sample of over 11,000 supervisor-subordinate dyads, the sample was drawn from a single healthcare organization. Future work

would benefit from spanning across several organizations or industries to investigate whether these findings generalize to a broader population.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate how a supervisor may inadvertently influence their subordinate to leave the organization via the perceptions they hold about the organization itself. Although I found no significant relationship between perceptual congruence and subordinates' turnover intent nor voluntary turnover behavior, several directions forward were offered as considerations to further investigate this particular phenomenon. Furthermore, the findings presented here stress the importance of building a positive work experience for employees to reduce their turnover intent and subsequent voluntary turnover. The practical importance of these results emphasizes the opportunity for organizations to be proactive in retaining their talented employees by understanding and addressing an employee's perceptions of specific organizational characteristics (e.g., career development opportunity, perceptions of senior leadership) prior to their voluntary exit.

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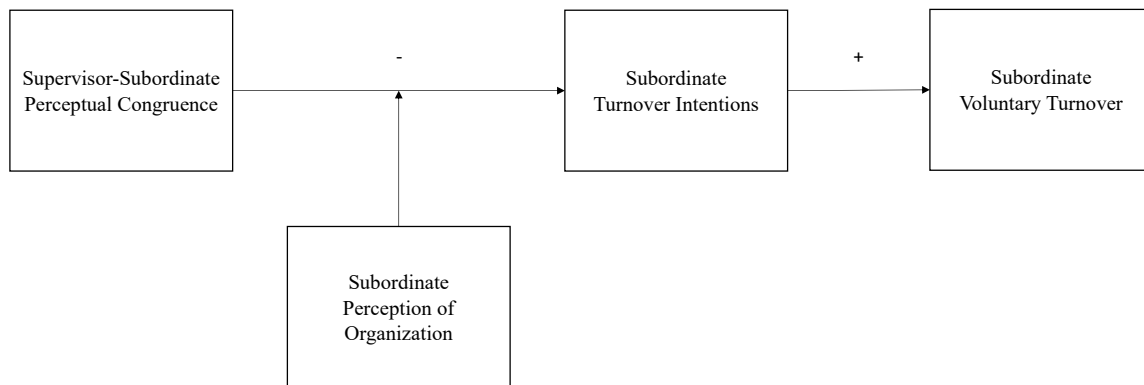


Figure 1. Hypothesized moderated mediation model.

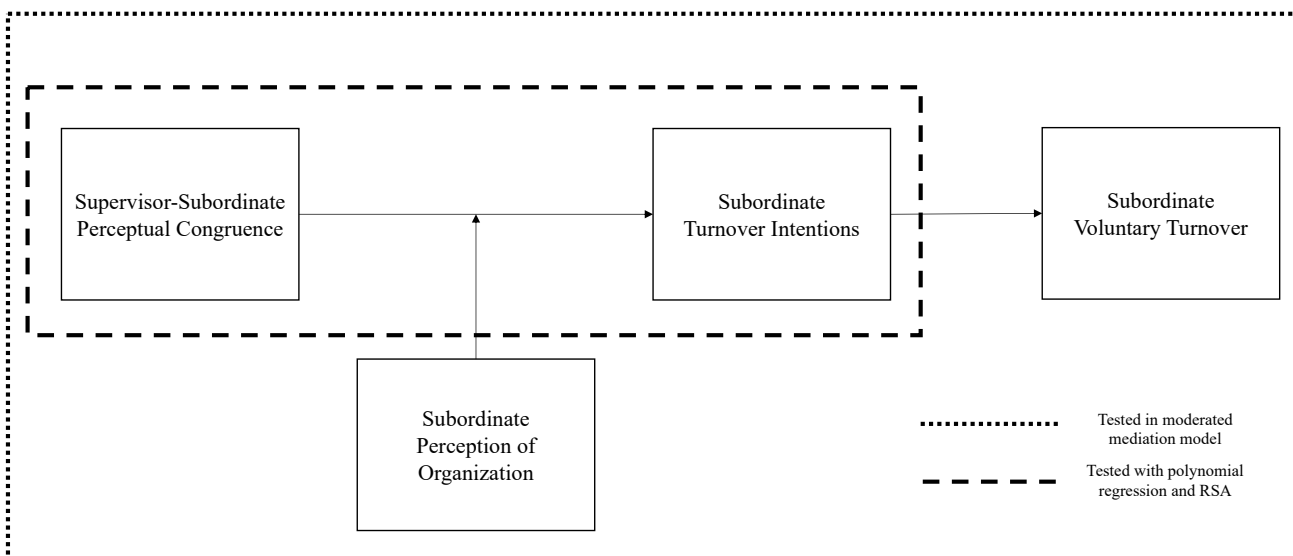


Figure 2. Conceptual model including analysis approach.

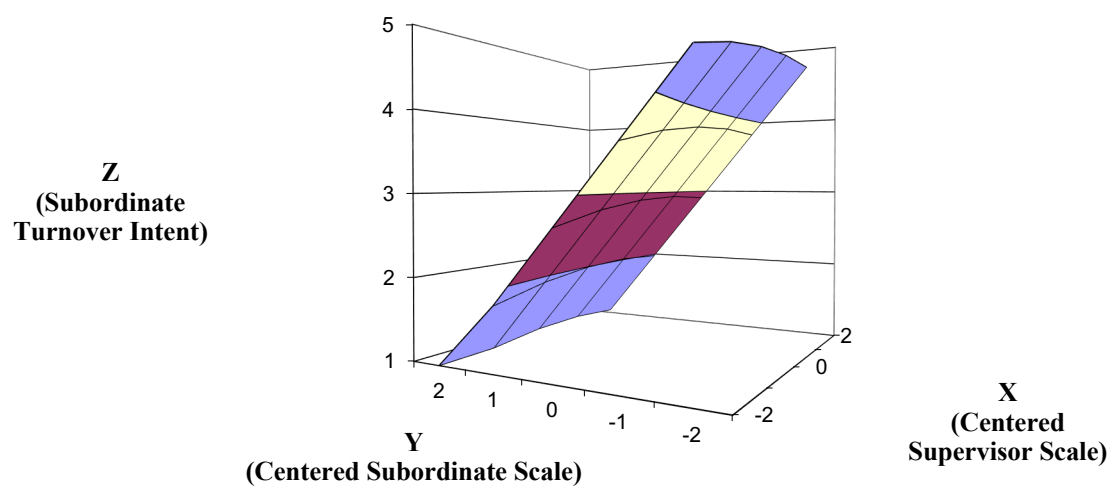


Figure 3. Response surface for perceptual congruence and subordinate turnover intentions.

Table 1.

Perceptions of Organization Items Completed by Supervisors and Subordinates.

Item
This organization provides career development opportunities.
Different work areas in this organization communicate effectively with each other.
Information is appropriately disseminated to employees in this organization.
There is a culture of open communication in this organization.
My pay is competitive with similar jobs I might find elsewhere.
Overall, I am satisfied with the employee benefits (such as medical, etc.) that I receive from this organization.
This organization cares about its customers.
This organization accepts employees with diverse values.
This organization demonstrates a commitment to workforce diversity.
This organization values employees from different backgrounds.
I am proud to say that I work for this organization.
I feel like I belong in this organization.
I would feel comfortable referring family and friends to this organization for employment.
This organization contributes to the community.
This organization cares about quality improvement.
This organization provides high-quality services.
Employee safety is a priority in this organization.
I have confidence in senior management's leadership.
Senior management's actions support this organization's mission and values.
This organization conducts business in an ethical manner.
All staff members have an equal opportunity for promotion regardless of race, religion, gender, age, ethnic background, national origin, or disability.
Issues of misconduct are resolved in this organization.
Senior management places a high priority on business ethics and compliance.

Table 2.

Turnover Intentions Items Completed by Subordinates Only.

Item
I would like to be working at this organization three years from now.*
I would stay with this organization if offered a similar job elsewhere for slightly higher pay.*
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.*

Note. *Items were reverse-scored.

Table 3.

Discrepancy Analysis for Variability in Organizational Perceptions within Dyads.

Discrepancy	Percentage of Sample	Supervisor Mean	Subordinate Mean
Supervisor more favorable	35.3%	4.75	3.25
Congruent	29.2%	4.02	3.93
Subordinate more favorable	35.5%	4.04	4.27

Note. $N = 11,338$ dyads

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Supervisor Org. Perceptions	Subordinate Org. Perceptions	Perceptual Incongruence	Subordinate Turnover Intent
Supervisor Org. Perceptions	4.43	0.54	.94			
Subordinate Org. Perceptions	3.81	0.72	.12**	.96		
Perceptual Incongruence	1.75	2.87	-.33**	-.24**	-	
Subordinate TO Intent	2.17	0.86	-.10**	-.58**	.19**	.82
Subordinate Vol. Turnover	0.08	0.28	-.02*	-.04**	.03**	.12**

Notes. N = 11,388 dyads.; Cronbach's alpha is reported in parentheses along the diagonal. ** $p < .01$, * $p < 0.05$. Perceptual Incongruence = the average squared difference between supervisor and subordinate perceptions of the organization.

Table 5.

Results of Polynomial Regression and Response Surface Analysis.

Effect	Subordinate Turnover Intent		
	b	β	SE
Constant	2.90**		0.02
Subordinate Org. Perceptions	-0.91**	-0.77**	0.02
Supervisor Org. Perceptions	0.06*	0.04*	0.03
Subordinate Org. Perceptions Squared	0.00	0.00	0.01
Supervisor Org. Perceptions Squared	-0.03**	-0.05**	-0.01
Subordinate Perceptions x Supervisor Perceptions	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
R^2		0.61**	
Surface Tests			
a^1	-0.85**		0.03
a^2	-0.04**		0.02
a^3	0.97**		0.03
a^4	-0.02		0.02

N = 11,338 dyads. ** $p < .01$, * $p < 0.05$.