

Microfoundations of Symbolic and Substantive CSR: from a Practice Perspective

ABSTRACT

Research related to symbolic and substantive CSR has primarily paid attention to the organizational level and sidestepped the individual level of analysis. Besides, studies attending to the microfoundations of CSR tends to treat individuals as objects, rather than as actors, who experience, think, act, and feel. Our paper addresses these two gaps by relying on a practice perspective to explore how CSR managers contributes to shaping symbolic and substantive CSR in the organization. Our findings show that CSR managers are constrained by the organizational context, but they generate their own space of freedom to create, implement and sustain symbolic and substantive CSR manifested at the organizational level. The contribution of our work is two-fold. It shows the role of individuals in shaping symbolic and substantive CSR, thereby the portraying the link between macro and micro level in this dynamic. It also contributes to the CSR microfoundations literature by providing a person-centric view of how individuals act and interact as active and contextualized actors in operating CSR. With this view, CSR can be portrayed as dynamic and open to continuous development within the heterogeneous daily practices of organizational life.

Keywords:

Microfoundations; symbolic CSR; substantive CSR; practice perspective