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Author(s): Magda B.L. Donia, Carol-Ann Tetrault Sirsly

Interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) has grown beyond traditional macro-level research to also consider employee-level outcomes of CSR. This nascent stream has focused on the relationship between organizational CSR initiatives and employee outcomes within the organization. Distinguishing between substantive and symbolic CSR (i.e. genuine CSR vs. greenwashing), we argue that to understand employee outcomes requires identifying their underlying attributions of their organizations' CSR initiatives and the process by which these differential attributions are formed. Integrating theorizing and findings from the organizational behavior, marketing, and strategy literature, we propose a model of employee attribution formation of organizational CSR initiatives as substantive versus symbolic to differentiate the positive outcomes to organizations when causally evaluated as engaging in substantive CSR, from the null or possibly negative employee outcomes when these initiatives are attributed as symbolic. Implications for practice and applications to management are also discussed.

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