

No pressure, no diamonds? Social movement mechanisms of shareholder influence on CSR disclosure

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Giovanna Michelon

Exeter University

Giovanna graduated with a PhD from the University of Padova, and has worked as a visiting scholar at the University of Birmingham (Birmingham, UK), Concordia University (Montreal, Canada) and University of Central Florida (Orlando, USA).

Giovanna's work mainly relates to corporate social responsibility and governance and it has been published in academic journals such as the Journal of Business Ethics, Accounting and Business Research, Accounting Auditing and Accountability Journal.

Giovanna's research focus is at the interface between corporate governance and social responsibility; broadly this involves: building upon a stakeholder-oriented approach to governance; investigating how governance (board and CEO's characteristics) shapes firms' social responsible activities and reporting practices; understanding the business case for CSR and exploring the role of CSR information for market participants and other stakeholders. She has recently been looking at the effects and implications of shareholders' demands for CSR



[Abstract]: Relying on the fundamental notion of 'relevant public' in social and environmental accounting research, this paper investigates the mechanisms through which a relevant public influences CSR disclosure. Focusing on the demands of activist shareholders, we conceptualize the mechanisms through which the demands of this influential group affect CSR reporting using the lens of social movement (SM) theory. We analyze the content of 2,089 CSR-related shareholder proposals filed over the period 2006-2012 and divide proposals that specifically request additional CSR transparency from those that request other CSR-related initiatives. Using propensity-score-matching to reduce the bias of confounding variables and choosing our control group from the pool of firms that are targeted by CSR proposals—and thus are under similar, although not identical, levels of pressure—we show that shareholder activism increases CSR disclosure, and that this effect is exacerbated by the presence of political opportunities and greater disruption of routines. Our study points to the relevance of shareholder activism in driving firms' reporting strategies and speaks to the mechanisms that an influential stakeholder group mobilizes to make their demands relevant for organizations.