

This article examines the role of social context in corporate social responsibility (CSR) research. The authors direct attention to three major perspectives in organization studies—institutional, cultural, and cognitive—that bear on the social context and explore how these perspectives are used in CSR research. These perspectives are framed as representative of the levels at which CSR may be analyzed, and each perspective is associated with a certain level of social context: the institutional perspective relates to the external social context, the cultural perspective relates to the organizational level, and the cognitive perspective relates to the individual level. The authors demonstrate how the CSR field can benefit by combining or integrating multiple perspectives that bear on the social context, and by engaging in more explicit multilevel analysis of the social context within which CSR practices unfold. Three promising avenues for future CSR research are outlined: social ecology, cross-sector social partnerships, and strategy-as-practice. The authors argue that these avenues transcend levels and perspectives (even allowing for the combination of the three schools) and offer the prospect of more context-sensitive CSR research.

[Read Full Article](#)