A Picture of the Frame: Frame Analysis as Technique and as Politics

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In this article, the authors make the case for using frame analysis, an analytical tool commonly used in empirical work on social movements and social policy debates, as a strategy for organizational research. Using two sample texts—representing opposite stands on how the socially responsible investing movement should view investing decisions based on corporate handling of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered workplace issues—they illustrate several important methodological and epistemological concerns for organizational scholars considering this technique. They examine four key issues in particular that arise in thinking about how and why to use frame analysis: (a) using frame analysis to sort out underlying logics; (b) situating frames in context; (c) surfacing politics, subjugated voices, and implicit ideologies; and (d) making mindful choices as organizational researchers. They give special attention to the problem of how our reflexive positions and claims about knowledge have implications for conducting and reading frame analyses.

In this article, we argue that frame analysis, an analytical tool commonly used in empirical work on social movements and social policy debates, can and should be adopted as a strategy for organizational research. Our goal is to make the case for using frame analysis and to address several concerns for organizational scholars considering this technique. Recently, there have been increasing exhortations to situate organizations in their societal contexts in a manner in keeping with the foundational works of

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34

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social theorists such as Weber and Parsons. For example, Stern and Barley (1996) decry the discipline’s loss of one of Weber’s and Parson’s mandates for organizational theory, understanding how organizations shape the social systems in which they are embedded. Although Scott (1996) challenges this assertion in the same issue of The Administrative Science Quarterly, arguing that organizational sociologists have held onto this mandate even if management theorists have neglected it, scholars like Schneiberg and Clemens (in press) nonetheless argue that new research strategies are needed for capturing the role of societal culture in the workings of organizations and institutions. Frame analysis offers one such strategy.

Through using two sample texts—representing opposite stands on how the socially responsible investing (SRI) movement should view investment decisions based on corporate handling of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) workplace issues—we illustrate several important methodological and epistemological concerns. We examine four key issues in particular that arise in thinking about how and why to use frame analysis: (a) using frame analysis to sort out underlying logics; (b) situating frames in context; (c) surfacing politics, subjugated voices, and implicit ideologies; and (d) making mindful choices as organizational researchers. We then give special attention to the problem of how our reflexive positions and claims about knowledge have implications for conducting and reading frame analyses.

Why Frame Analysis for Organizational Research?

Frame analysis has been developed in sociology and policy analysis as a way of depicting and engaging the array of arguments and counter arguments that surround complex social issues (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Schon & Rein, 1994). Organizational research can benefit from frame analysis. First, critical approaches to organizations have already considered how societal issues are imported into organizations. For example, the politics of labor in the U.S. affect practices such as worker participation and self-management. These practices are situated in a context rather than existing as stand-alone managerial problems. Frame analysis links these efforts to a tradition and practice of making sense of societal and contextual issues. In turn, the contributions of the social movement theorists who have advanced frame analysis would be furthered by bringing the implications of social movements into the organizational and workplace contexts where they are often played out in terms of livelihoods, policies, and availability of resources.

Second, specific theoretical streams in macro organizational theory are wrestling with how to create richer depictions of “the environment,” including the multiple and often competing forces and logics of action that impinge on organizations. The widespread use of frame analysis in the social movements and policy literatures offers a model for its use in understanding the strategic, regulatory, and cultural dimensions of both intraorganizational and extraorganizational policy debate. Following the lead of this rich tradition, several organizational scholars have recently used frame analysis to advance our understanding of institutional change processes.

For example, Hoffman and Ventresca (1999) employ a form of frame analysis as a means of understanding the institutional forces that shape the framing of a policy debate. In their view, existing institutional arrangements shape how organizational actors frame, respond to, and solve their problems. They argue that attending to the
diverse frames surrounding policy debates enables us to explore opportunities for institutional change along two paths: pragmatic action within existing frameworks, where the innovations sponsored by competing interests are reframed in terms of the frames held by dominant interests, and change efforts that attempt to restructure existing frameworks and to give rise to new possibilities for action. In an exploration of the rendering of legitimating accounts in a contest for organizational change, Creed, Scully, and Austin (in press) contrast the frames used in congressional testimony for and against the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation) with those used within organizations by LGBT employee advocates seeking legitimate standing in this debate. Through frame analysis, they are able to ask how agents in different settings deploy existing cultural accounts in the interest of change at the organizational and societal level and to look for patterns across the levels of discourse. Morrill (in press) uses frame analysis to offer a dynamic picture of how networks of actors coalesced around two competing frames for alternative dispute resolution in a manner that signaled changes in legal ideologies and the emergence of new legitimating accounts for innovative alternatives to litigation. He suggests that an essential mechanism of institutional change is the articulation of frames for alternative practices that resonate with the beliefs of a critical mass of potential supporters.

These examples highlight how frame analysis can be used to span levels of analysis from local legitimations of emergent organizational practices, to the framing of public policy, to the challenging of taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. Institutional theory and stakeholder theory in particular can further benefit from a grounded way to look at the content of institutional forces and stakeholder claims (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

What Is Frame Analysis?

The origins of frame analysis, in the work of Goffman (1974), emphasize how frames sort out and organize the complex stimuli of everyday life. Goffman presents framing as a day-to-day sense-making technique; individuals create and rely on frames to make sense of daily interactions, conventional rituals, discourse, advertising, and other elements of social experience. Just about every aspect of the mundane can be parsed by frames.

In later extensions of Goffman, particularly as advanced by social movement theorists (e.g., Gamson, Fireman, & Rytina, 1982; Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Ryan, 1991; Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986), the sense-making aspect has been retained, but the focus is more on how individuals and groups frame contentious social issues. In this tradition, Gamson and his colleagues describe frames as underlying structures or organizing principles that hold together and give coherence to a diverse array of symbols and idea elements. He offers two common English meanings of the word frame to aid us in understanding this concept. Frames, as in the phrases “picture frame” or “window frame,” define boundaries and direct our attention to what events and texts are relevant for our understanding of an issue or situation. Like a window, we see the world through frames that determine our perspective while limiting our view to only a part of a complex world around us. At the same time, we can think of frames in terms of the “frame of a house,” an invisible infra-
structure that holds together different rooms and supports the cultural building blocks that make up the edifices of meaning.

For Gamson, the underlying assumption of frame analysis is that a frame is a necessary property of a text—where text is broadly conceived to include discourses, patterned behavior, and systems of meaning, policy logics, constitutional principles, and deep cultural narratives. All texts, regardless of how clear or abstruse they may be, are comprised of packages of integrated idea elements held together by some unifying central concept, called a frame (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Discursive productions not containing such integrating structures are not suitable for frame analysis and arguably, do not qualify as texts.1

Of course, to say what is and is not a text is to make an ontological claim. However, we claim it to be only a provisional ontology. In saying this, we claim that a text is coherent, but we do so only within this form of analysis, for this analysis relies on some coherence of ideas.

This notion of a provisional ontology is drawn, in part, from Griswold’s (1990) notion of a “provisional, provincial positivism” (p. 1580). We share the notion of provisional, for as Griswold states, “Reality is a social construction, but the scientist must operate in that reality as though, for now, for this set of experiments or research project, it really exists ‘out there’ with the attributes provisionally assigned to it” (pp. 1581-1582). We do not assume that all written texts necessarily contain coherent sets of ideas bound together by some central unifying theme. However, because of the a priori assumption of what a frame is, we do assume that texts to be analyzed via frame analysis must contain such coherence. Thus, the ontological status we ascribe to texts exists only so long as a frame analysis is in order.

Our ontological claims deal with what a text is and what a frame is. The notion that texts contain related idea elements and that these elements connect to each other through some unifying concept is an ontological claim regarding the nature of text and frames. A functional definition of frame analysis that advances this ontological claim has been developed by Snow and Benford (1988): frames are collections of idea elements tied together by a unifying concept that serve to punctuate, elaborate, and motivate action on a given topic. This ontological status is not set in stone, but it must be recognized as an underlying assumption when utilizing the concept and analytical framework.

Frame analysis, then, is a technique for approaching a text by attending to its diverse idea elements with the following question: What holds these elements together? The goal of frame analysis is understanding how certain idea elements are linked together into packages of meaning, potentially encoded into soundbite-like signifiers that stand for those packages of meaning, and deployed in situated discursive activity.

Frame analysis may sound from its name like it is similar to other approaches that look at issues through multiple lenses or frames, such as Allison’s (1971) three theoretical approaches for analyzing the Cuban missile crisis or Morgan’s (1986) explication of different metaphors for depicting and understanding organizations. Frame analysis is different in several senses. Allison and Morgan address how the researcher or decision maker looks at a situation. In their analyses, lenses or metaphors represent different ways of viewing the same thing that condition analyses and responses. Both Allison and Morgan consider individual cognition and sense making and note views or
metaphors that may be common or widespread (such as the organization as an organism, a machine, or a political system) but not expressly collective in their nature and deployment.

In contrast, frame analysis is explicitly about social actors’ lenses and metaphors as they are deployed, particularly in the service of collective advocacy, mobilization, or public policy. The metaphors used by frame advocates might be considered as part of the analysis of how social actors are anchoring their case or appealing to resonant cultural images (Lakoff, 1985; Morgan, 1986). So frame analysis is one analytical tool for sorting out many viewpoints and stances as the objects of inquiry. The researcher comes in as a player in making sense of these socially enacted frames, but the focus is on the deployment of frames in the social world and not on how researchers or decision makers might use different analytical approaches.

For example, Allison asks how the Cuban missile crisis would look different through rational, bureaucratic, and cultural lenses. Frame analysis, in contrast, would not apply a set of a priori analytical lenses but instead would look at how different players in the crisis evoked different international military policy frames, such as “Show your muscle to keep the peace” versus “Don’t show force and risk escalation.” Eliciting these frames from historical texts helps us understand the contesting interests, the deep logics beneath them, and how they were reflected in discourse and polemics at the time. Seeing which frames were advocated by whom and which ultimately dominated pushes deeper understanding about power, politics, and interests.

Social movement scholars have applied frame analysis to a variety of contentious social issues, including nuclear disarmament, abortion, the death penalty, child labor, and welfare. For example, a prima facie debate about welfare policy and its particulars might really reveal a deeper political contest over whether the poor are lazy or deserving (Gamson & Lasch, 1983). The heat surrounding the abortion debate might trace to deep underlying differences in views about who women are supposed to be in society as wives, mothers, or workers (Luken, 1985).

**A Sample Case**

The use of frame analysis is best introduced through a specific case. So we sought a case with an issue of manageable scope, with sides that are sharply divided, where texts are publicly available and have been used by each side purposefully for framing, and where the issues at stake link to broader societal concerns. Below we present two brief, excerpted texts. It must be remembered that these snippets are part of a larger set of documents and texts. Thus, the frames we present in our analyses may include information that is not necessarily included in the presented excerpts.

We focus on a recent debate in the SRI community. SRI funds distinguish themselves from conventional investment funds by complementing the investment principles of achieving high rates of return at acceptable levels of risk with decision rules based on how a potential investment performs in terms of selected screens for “socially responsible” business practices. At a June 1999 conference regarding SRI, “Making a Profit while Making a Difference,” a public presentation by Genesis Social Fund Management regarding its fund that screens investments using an antigay filter generated a controversy among participants (Torbert, 1991b). An antigay filter precludes investing in companies that provide domestic partner benefits to the same-sex partners of employees or has antidiscrimination policies regarding sexual orientation. The ques-
tion that arose out of this controversy is, What constitutes socially responsible investing? For tractability, we present two written texts stemming from correspondence between conference participants surrounding this issue.²

TEXT 1: EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM LEADERS IN THE SRI MOVEMENT TO CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS REGARDING A PRESENTATION BY GENESIS SOCIAL FUND MANAGEMENT

The principle idea of social investing is to support economic organizations that have a positive impact on society. This means a positive impact on all members of society, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. We support the right of all people to obtain and keep employment based on merit, to live in decent housing, to raise children and live free of violence. We support the right of all people to a healthy life and to obtain health care insurance. In this regard, we think the views expressed by Genesis on gay and lesbian issues are not consistent with the values of social investing. (Letter to the organizer of the Making a Profit While Making a Difference conference, cited in Torbert, 1991b)

TEXT 2: EXCERPT FROM A RESPONSE BY GENESIS SOCIAL FUND MANAGEMENT

Allow me to state that the essence of SRI is to encourage investors to invest around their values. This is a core principle, the basis of the industry. Inherent in this investor-driven industry is the vast array of difference in investors’ values. This diversity of values need not be feared, but addressed with open-mindedness, tolerance, and mutual respect for beliefs that we personally may or may not share. One set of values cannot be imbedded with righteousness, and another set of values should not be misrepresented or cast in a negative light. SRI is the marketplace where these diverse values can come together, be recognized and discussed in an open, mutually respectful manner. Personally speaking, the SRI members I have had the privilege of meeting and working with embody these beliefs. As more and more investors become aware of and embrace SRI, industry leaders must be mindful that a key component to strong industry growth is to be inclusive, not exclusive. (Genesis response to letter to the organizer of the Making a Profit While Making a Difference conference, cited in Torbert, 1991b)

Together, these texts represent a conflict over the meaning of SRI, unfolding in a contest of how to frame the core principles of the SRI movement. It also reveals how social forces impinge on organizations as their members try to figure out what stance to take on LGBT issues. We use this case throughout to illustrate how and why to use frame analysis.

Frame Analysis

Using Frame Analysis to Sort Out Underlying Logics

Gamson and Lasch (1983, p. 399) provide one of the most basic and highly accessible ways of approaching frame analysis by laying out a “signature matrix” for sorting the specific idea elements of a set of texts into categories such as metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, visual images, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle. One goal of a frame analysis, and of a signature matrix as a particular technique, is to direct careful attention to how these diverse idea elements are deployed in integrated ways. This approach enables the analyst to discern the connections among
these elements and to identify and distinguish the different unifying structures or frames that hold them together. A frame analysis not only clusters the texts, it also explains why any single text is meaningful (e.g., Why is this cartoon or phrase a political zinger?).

In the sample signature matrix that follows, the first five elements—metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, visual images—accentuate a given frame, making it noteworthy, vivid, memorable, and easily communicated. For familiar frames, any of these accentuating idea elements can function much like a soundbite, triggering mental associations and rendering a situation quickly interpretable. The last three—roots, consequences, and appeals to principle—serve as argumentative devices to justify or support the preferred perspective of the speaker or frame sponsor. They offer causal attributions and the bases for judging a situation, event, or position. As we demonstrate below, a single text about an issue or event is likely to contain a complex array of idea elements that attach to several frames.

As a first step, we identify idea elements and sort them into a signature matrix, asking what holds the diverse elements together. We then give provisional labels to the primary frames of each of these texts. For example, in Text 1, we find what we will call a Social Justice Frame and, in Text 2, a Marketplace of Values Frame. Each text also contains elements of other frames. For example, implicit in Text 1 are what we might label the “correcting the negative impact of business,” the “universal human rights,” and the “inclusivity” frames. In Text 2, there are the “tolerance/inclusivity” and “no self-proclaimed righteousness” frames. Such labels provide an initial shorthand for the essence of each idea package; they should be grounded in the text and may even be directly quoted phrases. Nonetheless, they should remain provisional because the process of distilling and naming frames is iterative and guides the emerging characterization of the frames. An example of a completed signature matrix is shown in Table 1.

We have found that for more in-depth frame analysis, such as a thorough examination of the entire discourse surrounding SRI, the basic signature matrix suggested by Gamson and Lasch can prove highly useful. For the purposes of this illustrative example, we complement the basic signature matrix approach by incorporating other features of frames emphasized in the social movement and mobilization literatures into a more comprehensive approach.

In looking at how social movement actors engage in framing activity, Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) note that frames serve to punctuate, elaborate, and motivate action around a given issue. In other words, those who are sponsoring a frame will punctuate the issue by attempting to define what a given problem is and why it is important. The elaborative function of a frame serves to attribute responsibility for the issue and to prescribe potential solutions to it. Furthermore, the elaborative function can be broken down into diagnosis and prognosis (Snow et al., 1986). Finally, in social movements, the object of ideational activity is to motivate people to take action. (However, the same can be said of cognitive frames in general; although they do not necessarily have the same purposive and instrumental goals as social movement-sponsored frames, they provide the conceptual signposts that guide action.) As we consider our two texts in terms of these functional categories, their underlying frames and internal contradictions become clearer.

The punctuation, elaboration, and motivation functions of these two primary frames are represented in Table 2.
### Table 1
Signature Matrix for Primary Frames in Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Justice Frame</th>
<th>The Marketplace of Values Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphors</strong></td>
<td>Meritocracy; democracy</td>
<td>Marketplace of diverse values; open, respectful discourse; mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exemplars</strong></td>
<td>Positive: People who value employment, housing, families, healthy lives and health insurance, freedom from violence</td>
<td>Positive: SRI members who embody the values of mutual respect and are a privilege to work with Negative: SRI members who set up their values up righteous and misrepresent other values that they fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catchphrases</strong></td>
<td>The “right[s] of all people”</td>
<td>Tolerance, open-mindedness, mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depictions</strong></td>
<td>The rights of LGBT people</td>
<td>Mindful, inclusive investment; industry leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual images</strong></td>
<td>None noted in this text</td>
<td>None noted in this text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roots</strong></td>
<td>Economic organizations can have negative effects on society; corporate social responsibility</td>
<td>Judging others can have negative effects; conservative Christian theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences</strong></td>
<td>People suffer when investors do not act responsibly; LGBT people will suffer if SRI screens them out</td>
<td>Not accepting diverse values in SRI will hurt the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appeals to principle</strong></td>
<td>The goal is a positive impact for all; LGBT people should have the same basic human rights</td>
<td>Making claims of moral superiority and rejecting others’ values is wrong; inclusivity and tolerance for diverse values will be the key to industry strength</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. LGBT = Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered.*

Policy discourse frames are often if not always polemical—and analysts inevitably bring to their research ideological and political perspectives. To attempt some balance in treating such highly charged and opposing texts, an important first move in frame analysis is to depict frames in a way that is familiar, credible, and has "narrative fidelity" to the sponsors of the frames. For example, applying names like Permissive Frame and Intolerant Frame, which each side might use to deride the other, would not be appropriate, especially in light of how initial labels lay the foundation for subsequent analysis and characterizations. This first move should not be confused with a researcher’s simply confirming frame sponsors’ existing beliefs and understandings, endorsing the interests embedded in their frames, or succumbing to a possible cultural blindness (Alvesson, 1985). This stance does not require that researchers be agnostic. Instead, as we discuss later, this first move is useful, because critiquing and, if necessary, recasting frame characterizations in terms of how they would sound to the frame sponsors facilitates the analyst's revisiting and continually checking for his or her own values and assumptions. For example, in this early stage, it is useful to explore the underlying ideologies that might incline the analyst to label a frame intolerant or permissive, while putting a check on the analyst's own interests and perspectives. At the
same time, it helps to uncover the motivations, interests, and perspectives of the frame sponsors.

In one sense, this sorting is an end in itself, bringing a clearer structure to sets of contesting voices and tracking the thrusts and parries of policy debate to find the deeper logic of contentious arguments. However, in what might be called the second move of frame analysis, we peel away the layers to look for the other projects afoot both in the framing of policy debate and in frame analysis.

Situating Frames in Context

Going a level deeper, the contextualization of framing activity comes into play. For instance, in the discourse about SRI, the meaning of the phrases “socially responsible” and “investing around our values” take on different meanings depending on who is using the terms and in what contexts. Is it socially responsible to channel investments toward what the SRI movement has traditionally defined as more socially just practices, or is it socially responsible to let stakeholders decide whether and which values, if any, they wish to represent in their portfolio? Frame sponsors can make clever jujitsu moves and adopt the very same language of their opponents to coopt, redefine, or reclaim it.
Prior research suggests that a frame sponsor will deploy a frame differently depending on the audience and the medium. For example, in the discourse over LGBT issues in the workplace, framing varies across workplace and legislative settings. Frames about rights and discrimination have different content and valence coming from advocates of the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, who call for the protection of the rights of LGBT people to fair treatment and freedom from discrimination, versus from opponents, who decry “special rights” and allege reverse discrimination against religious people morally opposed to homosexuality (Creed et al., 1999).

Frame analysis allows digging for the implicit meanings and the assumptions (e.g., about the market, about human nature, about morality) that undergird seemingly similar frames as they are variously deployed by different frame sponsors across different settings. Thus, a frame analysis, by considering the “speaker” and forum of a speech act, helps us to decode the meanings of discursive elements. In this case, the texts arise from a conflict among members of the SRI community, in particular among sponsoring organizations of the 1999 “Making a Profit While Making a Difference” conference. In understanding the framing in these texts, it is important to recognize that these texts emerge from a conflict that goes to the guiding principle and identity of various organizations, an industry, and a movement. There are nested levels in which the conflict is embedded.

In addition to looking at the forum in which a framing conflict is occurring, it is important to look at who is sponsoring the different frames. In the case at hand, the Social Justice Frame in Text 1 is put forward by 12 signatories, representing eight major firms in the SRI industry, who were individually and collectively the founders and ongoing leaders of the social investment movement. These people bring a specific version of social justice to the table, one that includes equal protections and rights for LGBT people. Not only do they see Genesis’s antigay screens as antithetical to the principles of their movement, they see allowing Genesis to continue as a sponsor of “Making a Profit While Making a Difference” conferences as signaling an implicit endorsement of the Genesis brand of values-based investing.

In this exchange, a single firm, Genesis Social Fund Management, sponsors the Marketplace of Values Frame. According to the Web site of its partner, Crosswalk.com, a conservative Christian Internet portal, Genesis is “the first institutional manager to offer products using both traditional SRI screens as well as the culturally conservative Values-based Investment screens” that offer “a strategy for social conservatives who want to invest in companies that operate in line with their own personal values” (Crosswalk.com, 1999). As part of its presentation at the “Making a Profit While Making a Difference” conference, Genesis described its “cultural screen” as designed to appeal to conservative Christian investors by eliminating organizations that extend domestic partner benefits to LGBT employees. In the debate that has ensued, Genesis has challenged the dominant definition of SRI. In its view, the “principle idea of social investing” is not, as the self-proclaimed leaders of the movement argue in Text 1, “supporting organizations that have a positive impact . . . on all members of society.” Instead, the “essence of SRI,” its “core principle, the basis of the industry” is “encouraging investors to invest around their values.” These two phrases, by themselves, may not appear incongruent. Standing alone, they are perhaps even relatively meaningless. It is only within the context of who is sponsoring them and the forum in which they are being sponsored that they take on any meaning.
Distinguishing between who is a “challenger” and who has power also requires taking sponsor, forum, and larger context into account. In much of the social movement literature (e.g., Gamson, 1975), the challengers are by definition those challenging institutionalized power structures. This definition is problematic, however, in that it conflates different potential levels of challenge and thereby risks masking institutionalized power. For example, in this case, Genesis appears to be the challenger within the SRI forum, yet its stance against companies that offer domestic partner benefits positions it beside those with institutionalized power vis-à-vis historically oppressed LGBT people. On the other hand, in a forum that emphasizes LGBT issues, it is possible to view advocates of equal protection for LGBT citizens as powerful stakeholders, even as they remain challengers in the broader culture. A sponsor cannot be simply said to have power or not, as sponsors work both in settings where they are in the dominant group and can use their power to get their voices heard and in settings where they are the challengers and use their adversarial stance to push change.

We can break this example down further by looking at how the meaning of a speech element is dependent on this contextual information. One of Genesis’s primary arguments is that SRI is rooted in reflecting the values of investors. Taken as a freestanding statement, such a position appears relatively unproblematic for two reasons. First, the notion that individuals’ tastes and preferences inform their economic choices as they pursue utility maximization is a fundamental tenet of neoclassical economics and is deeply ingrained in the logic and ideology of market capitalism itself. The idea that investors have the right to, and in fact do, rely on their values to choose which stocks to purchase and which funds to invest in seems obvious. Second, even though participants in the SRI movement have tended to share a normative vision of social equity and environmental sustainability, a vision that the sponsors of Text 1 view as antithetical to Genesis’s antigay screen, over the history of the movement, marketing for the SRI industry has “frequently been conducted under the banner of investors ‘investing around their own values’ in choosing the particular social screens they wish to emphasize for their own investing” (Torbert, 1991a, p. 3).

Given this historical practice, a statement like “investing around our own values,” on its face, tells us nothing whatsoever about the underlying meaning of the statement. In this debate, the argument that encouraging individuals to invest based on their values is the essence of SRI is used to justify including antigay funds under the rubric of SRI, even though in its internet promotional materials, the Crosswalk.com/Genesis partnership distinguishes between “traditional Socially Responsible Investing” and “culturally conservative Values-based Investing.” This kind of contradiction or slip in logic can be revealed by a careful reading behind a frame analysis. (At the same time, how such a contradiction or slip is reported also reveals, perhaps only by subtleties in tone, whether the researchers applaud the clever redefinition of social responsibility or seek to catch a contradiction. We discuss this further below.)

In their own terms, the authors of Text 2 appear to see opposition to workplace protections for LGBT people as socially responsible actions designed to protect what they believe to be the fundamental values that undergird a moral society. Thus, they advocate “encouraging investors to invest around their values”—until then an uncontested and perhaps even taken-for-granted frame in the SRI movement—not merely as a marketing tool, but also as an ideological claim put forth in the context of a conflict over the definition of what is “socially responsible investing” and who gets to say. Using the very language and logic of SRI, they set up a frame that seems to ask, Who
could possibly object to what we're saying (without appearing hypocritical)? The perceived hypocrisy trap is a tool for those changing systems from inside (Scully & Meyerson, 1993). We cannot understand the differences between the historical uses of the frame in the SRI movement and Genesis's new use of it without the contextualizing issues of frame sponsor and forum.

In addition, our use of frame analysis reveals how each usage is linked both to other frames and to larger cultural beliefs. In one instance, the Marketplace of Values Frame was used in marketing efforts in a manner that attached uncontroversially to the Social Justice Frame and evoked notions of serving the customer by allowing the customer to determine his or her portfolio mix. In Genesis's usage, it is severed from the original frame and attached to another frame, invoked only implicitly in Text 2, having to do with defense of conservative Christian values. By going to a deeper layer, looking at the sponsor of the frame and the context in which the frame was offered, we obtain even more information about the claims embedded in this use of the Marketplace of Values Frame. A main contribution of frame analysis lies in its ability to unveil highly charged political differences that are typically masked by bland and seemingly innocuous policy statements and discourses that no one could object to. An ethical and epistemological imperative of this second move in frame analysis, then, is to move beyond a concern for an accurate representation of the frames in the sense of presenting the frame in a way that exhibits narrative fidelity to the frame sponsor's intentions. This imperative requires us to pierce the veil.

**Surfacing Politics, Subjugated Voices, Ideologies, and Contradictions**

At this stage, we can analyze which discourses are present in a given forum, which voices are absent, the ideological underpinnings of frames, and the contradictions within and between the frames that make up a text. From an organizational standpoint, sometimes only the accounts of the powerful or those that are attached to resource dependencies are registered (Brown, 1978); less powerful voices do not dare speak, or speak and are not heard. Frame analysis, when used to push deeper, can both expand the range of voices considered (e.g., marginal champions of social change) as well as consider the silences. Rather than focusing on messages that enjoy the sanction of the powerful within organizations, missing voices can be reasserted and underrepresented voices amplified. The question arises of "whose accounts count" (Ryan, 2000). Within any forum, there are certain actors who have standing. Necessarily, then, there are also those who do not have standing. Standing has a critical bearing on who gets to present certain accounts, whose accounts may not be heard, and whose frames may not be presented (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

Returning to our example, SRI is defined, in essence, as a strategy of investing in corporations and funds that represent the values of investors and work toward creating what investors consider a more just society. The voices that have been present over the life of the SRI movement belong to those who view investing within the financial markets as a means of pursuing social ends rather than only financial ones. Implicitly missing from this discourse are the voices of those who might question whether investing in the financial markets is adequate for (or even capable of) creating a more just society. That such voices are excluded from a debate among investment professionals may not be surprising. However, if the goal of SRI is to "have a positive impact on all members
of society" the exclusion of the voices of some of those members of society who are negatively impacted by market mechanisms can be viewed as problematic. For example, one of the common criteria of SRI is the benefits employees are given by their employers. However, the logic of the market is based on a minimization of production costs. Often, when an organization's wage bill rises too high, the financial market responds negatively. Market discipline leads executives to minimize the wage bill, often by eliminating workers or cutting benefits. The apparent connections between investor capitalism and such negative social outcomes as workforce displacement and the migration of jobs to locations with lower labor costs and fewer labor protections may beg the question of whether market mechanisms themselves are capable of creating a just society, or if, at some level, they are opposed to its creation. Such questions are beyond the scope of the framing conflict presented here because those who might advance such arguments are shut out of the conversation. The spirit of frame analysis, however, invites such a rethinking of the logic—and unexamined assumptions—within and between the frames that make up a text.

Our case displays ideologies, normative political positions, and contradictions in both texts. As Torbert (1991b) notes, on first blush the texts offer views of the core principles of SRI that seem confusingly similar in that both are evocative of notions of respect for diversity and inclusivity. In Text 1, the Social Justice Frame enumerates what frame sponsors see as the basic rights of all people, implicitly arguing that investment screens supporting companies that respond to these rights make for a positive impact on society. The emphasis placed on the idea that these are the rights of all people invokes companion frames, which we earlier labeled the "universal human rights," and the "inclusivity" frames. Together these frames bespeak the normative political agenda that has characterized SRI over its history (Torbert, 1991b); on the face of it, these frames appear to construct a coherent text. A relatively unified set of values appears to be at the heart of this text. Ironically, to uphold the principle of inclusion, the frame sponsors are in practice espousing a form of exclusion from the movement. There are two ways this is being practiced. First, the text is expressly designed both to reject Genesis's position on filtering for certain cultural values that these leaders of the SRI movement see as antithetical to affecting a positive social impact and inconsistent with the mainstream thinking of the SRI movement. Second, this is a challenge to Genesis's participation as a recognized sponsor of future SRI conferences. A point of critical entry into Text 1 is this tension between inclusion and exclusion.

In Text 2, sponsors of the Marketplace of Values Frame argue that SRI should denote investing that is based on the values of the investor, whatever those values may be. Because this notion is to some degree already a part of the logic of market capitalism, it becomes hard to see how a form of "socially responsible investing" that is based on the values of the investor is any different than any other type of investment. The ways in which the Marketplace of Values Frame is coupled with what we labeled earlier the "tolerance/inclusivity" and "no self-proclaimed-righteousness" frames in the context of this conflict with the SRI movement may help us provide an answer. The authors of Text 2 deploy these companion frames to cast their mainstream SRI critics' actions both as intolerant of others' different, but legitimately held, beliefs about social responsibility and as contrary to the value of inclusivity manifest in Text 1. As was the case for Text 1, taken together these companion frames present an apparently coherent text.
A point of critical entry into Text 2 is found in the contradictions among the practical implications of Genesis's position, its statements in its internet promotional materials, and its statement in Text 2 regarding respect for others' values: "One set of values cannot be imbued with righteousness, and another set of values should not be misrepresented or cast in a negative light." By implication, mainstream SRI has done just that by articulating a set of progressive norms while rejecting culturally conservative investment screens. Yet, at the same time, the sponsors of the Marketplace of Values Frame engage in exactly that activity. The conservative fundamentalist Christian values that undergird the antigay screens and characterize Genesis's target market are informed by a model of righteousness that condemns homosexuality and opposes the extension of certain political and civil rights to LGBT people. For example, the Crosswalk.com/Genesis partnership's Web site describes Values-based Investing as directing investment dollars away from "companies that are cultural polluters" because it screens companies for the "active promotion of Non-Marriage Lifestyles" (Crosswalk.com, 2000b), which supporters of LGBT rights could see as a misleading reference to domestic partner benefits. It supports this position with a reference to the Christian scriptures: "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11, cited at Crosswalk.com, 2000c). Beneath the surface of Text 2 is an underlying cultural frame that depicts what opponents of LGBT civil rights negatively refer to as the "homosexual agenda" or cultural pollution. Genesis both claims a religiously based righteousness and depicts others' values in a negative light, which contradicts the rhetoric it uses to advance the Marketplace of Values Frame.

When an analysis highlights an underlying political agenda and points to contradictions between practice and rhetoric, a researcher's preferences may be revealed through a particularly resounding "gotcha" when finding a contradiction. We found contradictions, tensions, unexamined assumptions, and rhetorical sleights of hand in both Texts 1 and 2, but our tone may reveal a standpoint. Thus, the question is often asked, Should frame analysts be engaging in such openly political work? The only response we can arrive at is that all data analysis is political in nature. Even that work that is based on a coolly economic, utilitarian rationality is political. It is the ideological basis that is at the core of liberal democratic ideals and market logic and serves to legitimate the idea that the market will produce the greatest good for society even without social investing. In taking its assumptions for granted as the truth about how people act, it simply masks those ideological aspects. In a refrain from Nietzsche picked up by postmodern and post-structuralist theorists, claims to truth conceal the will to power. In other words, all claims to a true understanding of human behavior are also claims as to how people should act and how the social world should be structured. Such statements are inherently political.

By breaking down discourse into these (albeit artificially) discrete components, the contradictions and weaknesses within and between a specific sponsor's frames emerges. For those of us who view our work as politically engaged, these contradictions and weaknesses provide strategic opportunities for intervention. Even those who do not view their work in such a way are always engaged in ideological production, using particular frames to describe their projects (for example, the "wage premium" for union labor instead of the "wage penalty" or "profit premium" for employers of nonunionized labor). Frame analysis shows us that it matters what we name things and
what cultural assumptions are thereby carried. Having said this, as self-reflexive scholars, we still need to ask how political engagement might affect our analyses, and indeed we must take the influence of our standpoints seriously. Are we more inclined to critique one position than another? Does that lead us to be more attuned to the contradictions and inconsistencies in the frames of sponsors with whose political views we disagree? What does it mean for us as scholars, for example, that at some level we found Genesis's use of the themes of tolerance/inclusivity and no self-proclaimed-righteousness within the Marketplace of Values Frame to be offensive, a disingenuous tactical cooptation of those ideas. We raise these potentially self-discrediting questions as a way of highlighting the importance of the next layer of analysis. Hirschman (1995) calls the continued revisiting and questioning of one's own concepts "a propensity to self-subversion." To follow the lead of Goffman (1974, p. 8), how should we ask of our own research, What is it that's going on here?

**Exploring Our Reflexive Positions and Claims About Knowledge**

As we have just stated, all claims to truth deal with interests in constructing the social world in a certain manner. Concomitant to that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is created within a given ideational system. In other words, knowledge is produced from a particular point of view. Although this needs to be recognized for all knowledge production, organizational scholars who use interpretive approaches must confront it as a central problem, because they work in a discipline that has traditionally privileged the count-and-correlate culture while subjecting its interpretivists to intense skepticism.

Indeed, rigorous interrogation is called for. But, it is called for on all fronts. Most of us within the interpretivist camp reject the notion that there is some "objective" reality to which we are attempting to make our own accounts fit. This is not to say, however, that the processes of social research in general or the use of interpretive approaches in particular are opportunities to engage in polemic. It is thus necessary for researchers to engage continually in self-interrogation as to what the results of their research are presenting to them and how they, in turn, are presenting those results.

Questions are sometimes raised as to whether a frame analysis is "correct" or whether there is "intercoder reliability" in identifying idea elements and in discerning and presenting the unifying frames. Although respected scholars in this genre have at times employed such quantitative measures of reliability, these are often the wrong questions for this endeavor, because they assume that the project is one of converging on an objectively right answer. Instead, the interpretive process looks more like the reading of texts in the humanities than like physics (Zald, 1996).3

At the same time, there are better or worse frame analyses in terms of the following: how richly they capture a frame; how deeply they peel away the layers; whether they initially move to present frames in ways that are recognizable and ring true to sponsors of the frame; whether the researchers' interrogation of their own perspective informs the analysis and gives readers further understanding and assurance that the analysis is not packing an ideology covertly; whether the ultimate exposure of contradictions or underlying logics elicits an "aha" from readers; and sometimes whether the frame analysis is a gateway to dialogue, action, policy, or change. The better or worse quality of a frame analysis as well as its narrative fidelity is often posed as a question of valid-
ity. Latour and Woolgar (1986) describe two types of validity: etic validity, or the acceptance of results by members of the agonistic field, or those involved in the same field of inquiry as the analyst; and emic validity, or the acknowledgement by analytical subjects that the analysis accurately reflects their position (p. 38). There is no absolute measure of validity that is an inherent property of the analysis. Instead, analytical validity is a social product.

Recognizing that validity is a social product, we must turn our attention to the balance between etic and emic validity. Because there is no absolute balance that must be struck between the two forms, the question of the analytical project of the researcher enters into the equation. For instance, if the analyst is engaging in a review of arguments over a specific policy, it makes more sense for the investigator to strive for emic validity, to approach the arguments being put forth by partisans in the debate. In approaching an accurate reflection of the underlying logics used by partisans in conflict, points of contradiction and commensurability between the partisans may be noted more easily than if we were only comparing rhetorical presentations. However, if the point of analysis is that of “deconstructing false closure, pry[ing] open present and future social possibilities, detecting fluidity and porosity in forms of life where hegemonic discourses posit closure and a frozen order” (Siedman 1994, p. 120), then a level of etic validity among other analysts may be more in order. The point is that there is no pure measure of validity. Thus, in engaging in a frame analysis, the purpose of the analysis, its intended audience, and the ethical project of the analyst will determine the type of validity for which an investigator strives.

As the acceptance and publication of frame analyses is a socially embedded practice, so too are the actual processes of distilling and representing frames, with both involving some art as well as science. In addition, frame analysis entails some level of tacit knowledge—the “ability to perform skills without being able to articulate how we do them” (Collins 1992, p. 56). This tacit knowledge is acquired through reading and repeatedly performing frame analysis. Finally, frame analysis is enhanced by an in-depth knowledge of the actors and social arenas involved. We have argued that texts are meaningless outside the context in which they are deployed, so the best frame analyses often take place within the context of programs of research focusing on specific actors, settings, or issues. This enhanced understanding of the cultural embeddedness of the actors becomes, however, a feature of our own embeddedness as researchers. Successful frame analysis involves not only iterative rereading of texts to get satisfying closure on a frame, but also an attempt to hear our analysis with the ears both of a frame sponsor and of a self-interrogating social scientist seeking to understand his or her own social embeddedness. Given these facets of frame analysis, it might be argued that it is never complete but is instead an invitation to dialogue and continued unpeeling of layers.

The frames we construct are necessarily created by what we bring to the analysis. For example, each of the three authors disagrees with Genesis’s definition of social responsibility and is in favor of protections for LGBT civil rights. One of us self-identifies as a radical queer, one as gay, and one as a straight feminist. In addition, two of us are liberal Christians whose understanding of theology is sharply at odds with that of Crosswalk.com, while one is a nonbeliever who was raised in a conservative to moderate Protestant household. We hold different views on the relative plasticity of sexual and gender identities and on the implied nature of LGBT individual and collective sociopolitical interests. We have debated the underlying logic in the LGBT movement that sexual identity is inheritable, a logic driven, in part, by making civil rights
claims analogous to race- and gender-based claims but one that leads to problematic (and even patronizing) framings like “it can’t be helped” rather than a joyous embrace of identity. The straight member of the team is as likely as the others to take the radical queer view, partly anchored in the antessentialism of current feminist thinking.

Although laying out these social identities seems like a necessary step in disclosing our reflexive positions, it also lays a trap. The expected next sentence should go something like, “therefore, one of us sees X, one sees Y, and one sees Z.” However, what is most striking is that each of us has raised issues from standpoints other than the one simplistically associated with our own identity. A challenge in current identity based social movements is to move beyond the idea that “women see sexism, gay people see heterosexism, black people see racism, etc.” to the possibility of understanding and moral empathy across differences (Holvino, Proudford, & Scully, 2000). Indeed, some would argue that the best prospects for social change may arise through men’s feminist work, straight people’s work against homophobia, and White people’s antiracism work. Therefore, having our social identities revealed both says a lot and says very little. What may make our frame analysis most distinct is the critical part that looks, not at the identity politics, but at the very roots of SRI in capitalism and markets.

This discussion also points to something we have mentioned above, that of an analyst’s “project.” What we mean by this is the purpose with which analysts undertake their work. None of us is involved in the pursuit of pure knowledge. For instance, part of Weber’s project was an analysis of the dehumanizing aspects of rational means of organization and control, while the project of much of management field has been to maximize the efficiency of these same means. All three of us have both similar and different political and intellectual projects. What we all have in common are projects that stress local participatory democracy and autonomy as well as advance critiques of power inequalities and systems of control and domination. As Griswold (1990) writes, “within the discourses of the day—a certain place, a certain time, a certain pattern of local knowledge within and outside the academy—some theories, provisionally chosen, can get you farther than others” (p. 1582). Because of its underlying attention to context, standing, and power, frame analysis provides us with a linked theory and methodology that get us farther in our projects than other methodologies.

As critical scholars, we often turn our eyes to questions of taken-for-granted rationality and underlying ideology. It is one of the strengths of frame analysis that it allows each of us to look for frames through a critical lens or through other lenses that reflect issues that concern us. Ironically, this strength is also one of the ways in which frame analysis is most vulnerable to critique. Are we getting at what is “really” in the text or “reading into” it? In the capitalist West, the assumption of economic rationality is inherent in discourse about the marketplace, and thus we claim it is really part of the texts in this case. That is, it is impossible to make sense of the text without having this view of the market available to us, even if implicitly as part of our cultural socialization. However, different analysts may completely overlook that aspect, taking it for granted as much as the people offering the texts under analysis.

In addition, because neither of the texts we present makes direct reference to conservative Christianity, some readers may question if we are reading these deeper cultural currents into them, perhaps as part of a liberal political agenda. Of course, including the contextualizing data on Genesis Social Fund Management indicates that Christian values figure prominently in its market strategy, so again, we would claim that the conservative Christian condemnation of homosexuality is really an underlying
and essential part of Text 2. In frame analysis, scholars need not wait for others to pose such challenges. Instead, we can make them an integral part of the iterative process.

As in all writing, we are creating sense and order through our analysis and the subsequent recording of it. This aspect of frame analysis—and of all knowledge creation—points to the need for intensive self-reflection. In frame analysis, we check and recheck how our assumptions are coming into the text. Interestingly, for social scientists, making their values explicit may be more responsible than either pretending they are not there or using the rhetorics of scientific objectivity to mask their presence. The anxiety that some researchers feel when they think that "objectivity" has been lost and values are creeping in may be less than the anxiety that other researchers feel when they suspect that values are lurking in "rigorously objective" research, but have not been adequately owned and examined. This reflexivity becomes a matter for methodological rigor as well as a question of epistemology.

Again, the processes of social research and analysis are attempts to impose some sort of order onto the subjects of our analysis. In the case of frame analysis, we are attempting to uncover and construct a representation of the logical relationships among idea elements. The fabrication of these discrete frames is analytically useful but is also artificial. As our analysis of the multiple frames deployed in each of the two texts suggest, multiple frames are used in conjunction, even to the point of becoming inseparable companions in the creation of the meanings of a text. In Text 1, the meaning of the Just Society Frame can be apprehended only through identifying the implications of its being deployed with the Correcting the Negative Impact of Business, the Universal Human Rights, and the Inclusivity frames, all in the context of a debate over SRI principles. The same can be said for the interaction of the Marketplace of Values, Inclusivity, and No Self-Proclaimed Righteousness frames in Text 2. In a practical sense, frames can consort in ways that alter the meanings of any single frame over time, until understanding the meanings of a text becomes impossible without appreciating how the deployment of one frame is tied to the deployment of another. They are not necessarily the discrete units we make them out to be.

Recognizing that we as analysts are imposing a form of order onto our subjects of study brings us back to the necessity of reflexive approaches. We may reject the notion that there is some objective outside reality to which we must make our analysis correspond. However, it is also important to recognize that the reality that we are analyzing is not simply floating in some meaningless ether, waiting for any interpretation to be imposed on it. For example, the authors of the correspondences we have analyzed here had specific meanings in mind when they were writing those letters.

One of our goals as analysts—again, depending on our overall project—should be to come as close to describing that meaning as possible while uncovering the worldviews and larger systems of meaning that underpin it. This approach is only possible when we reflect on our position as both readers of that information and (re)writers of it.

What Is It That’s Going on Here?
Mindful Choices for Organizational Researchers

Stern and Barley (1996) have argued that striving for scientific respectability has trapped organization studies in an intellectual irony—researchers have enhanced their reputations and furthered their careers by pursuing tractable problems at lower levels
of analysis—leading to a negative correlation between a problem’s scope and a researcher’s academic credibility. (We might add that this is not a problem specific to organization studies.) There is, in their view, hardly a better way to assure the irrelevance of social research in the long run. One particular consequence of this fieldwide problem has been the neglect of a social systems perspective on organizations that fulfills one of the founding mandates of the field—going beyond the instrumental relationships between organizations and their environments to focus on the role of organizations in the larger sociocultural system. To this end, they propose broadening organization theory’s conceptual repertoire by building bridges between mainstream OT and other social sciences.

We opened by suggesting that frame analysis, well known in research on social movements, policy analysis, and the media, might help organizational researchers working on theories, such as institutional theory or stakeholder theory, that require a better way to depict the linkages between social environments and organizations. The traditional emphases of these theories has been on the mechanisms that lead organizations to attend to certain views and logics of action in their environments, although more recent research has considered the ways in which organizations participate in the social construction of their environments. Frame analysis, as an approach, is perhaps unusual in its capacity to move across levels of analysis—from local texts and legitimatizing accounts, to larger policy debates, to deeper institutional orders and underlying cultural narratives—and back again. As a method, it can help macro theories attend to the ways in which environmental factors provide the discursive building blocks of organizations and how organizations alter these building blocks and introduce these innovations back into the environment. It can also add missing elements of power into these theoretical models by considering which voices have the standing to be heard in these cross-level discourses and which do not.

At the same time, this process of embedding organizations in societal issues has implications for micro organizational processes as well. The implicit way in which internal practices like wage setting and allocation are done reflect societal frames to do with merit and distributive justice. Thus, the use of frame analysis has relevance not just for those researchers explicitly trying to theorize about the societal environment of organizations.

As we have noted throughout this article, the process of social analysis and writing is an inherently political and subjective one. For these reasons, the selection of a topic of study is of central importance. There is no shortage of topics available to analysts. If analysts are skillful, and lucky, they do not choose such topics by accident, nor do they engage in trivial analyses, by which we mean studies that offer only a superficial analysis and fail to peel away the layers of meaning we discuss. More importantly, we are also referring to those analyses that may borrow concepts and methods from other fields, without also acknowledging, or even understanding, their epistemological foundations.

Even when theories do not explicitly address a given variable or level of analysis, there is usually an implicit stance toward that variable or level of understanding. In addition, the fact that a variable or level of analysis is ignored or marginalized is itself a theoretical statement on its importance. . . . If synthesis means nothing more than detaching elements from differing organic theoretical frameworks and lumping them together, the resulting “synthesis” is likely to be of very limited value. (Buechler 1999, p. 55)
Sociological concepts like frames carry with them epistemological and ontological underpinnings. To simply borrow the concept without an understanding of the meaning of that concept within its theoretical framework is like performing a frame analysis of a text without attending to the context that gave rise to it.

Benson (1977) warns that much of the history of organizational research has entailed rendering organizational phenomena from their sociohistorical contexts, to the detriment of the field. With such concerns in mind, we have attempted to outline what is at stake in the use of frame analysis in organizational research. To be social is to be political. Perhaps this is why it has been so difficult for the field to live up to what Stern and Barley (1996) say was one of its original mandates and why the field has departed from this original mission of making sense of organizations in the context of pressing societal concerns and hotly contested political issues. Brown (1978) argues that in many of the paradigms of organizational research “the vocabularies of personal agency, ethical accountability, and political community have atrophied,” while social scientists often fail to recognize or even deny that their scientized rhetorics “lend legitimacy and persuasive power to the dehumanized visions their objectivist methods create” (pp. 375, 377). Frame analysis is not just a technique for making sense of complex discourses, but an invitation to reenter, or admit being part of, a politicized project that has far-reaching implications for people’s lives.

Notes

1. Consider the following collection of sentences: “The fox sulked while the women washed the dishes. There was a nuclear war. Penelope waited for Ulysses.” From this perspective, this sequence of sentences does not qualify as an interpretable text, because there is no integrating structure that holds these images and allusions together in a meaningful manner.

2. It should be noted, however, that we need not have limited ourselves to written texts. We might have chosen cartoons or televised images instead. One advantage of frame analysis is that a variety of texts, broadly understood, can be analyzed.

3. Analysts of the practices of physicists and other “hard scientists” have noted, however, that individuals in those fields are engaged in activity more closely akin to interpretivist practices than to the objective scientific methods to which they, and positivist social scientists, claim faculty (Collins, 1992; Latour & Woolgar, 1986).

References


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