

Content Analysis in Organizational Research

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Introduction

“The content analyst views data as representations not of physical events but of texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted and acted upon for their meanings, and must therefore be analyzed with such uses in mind. Analyzing texts in the contexts of their uses distinguishes content analysis from other methods of inquiry,”

- Krippendorff, 2004

There are a range of more or less interpretive forms of CA:

- 1) Simple counting of words or images
- 2) More interpretive attempts to understand meaning
- 3) Qualitative Content Analysis

Tension between focusing on the text themselves and the context in which they occur.

An Example: The Cartoons Paper

Discourse analysis: structured investigation of systems of texts and concepts, objects and subjects that they constitute

The specific approach is generally referred to as critical discourse analysis. It focuses on the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining power relations

Focus on how discursive activity structures the social space within which actors act through the constitution of concepts, objects, and subject positions

Concepts

Discourse produces sets of concepts—ideas, categories, relationships, and theories through which we understand the world and relate to one another — that are more or less contested and which are culturally and historically situated

Example: the idea of a refugee

Objects

Objects are part of the practical order, which does not mean that they pre-exist *as objects* in some way that is *revealed* by the discourse. Rather, it means that some concepts are discursively attached to particular parts of an ambiguous material world

Example: A particular person determined to be a refugee

Subject positions

Statements within a discourse are not produced by independently acting subjects but, rather, help to position and to produce the subject in the context of the particular discourse. Thus, discourse shapes the subjective experience and the actions of those participating in it and, in so doing, helps to produce their subjectivities.

Example: immigration officers, asylum officers, lawyers, and politicians

Societal level discourses

- 1) Interested in the role of broader discourses, which are constituted by complex macro-societal processes and which evolve over longer periods of time, affect a particular institutional field.
- 2) Interested in how actors in a particular institutional field draw strategically on broader discourses in ways that contribute to the production, modification and dissemination of field-specific discourse

The Canadian refugee system

Canada is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees which define the concept of a refugee. As a result, an institutional field has emerged which encompasses the formation and implementation of policies and practices that relate to the rights of individuals to claim asylum, the procedures whereby claimants are determined to be refugees, and the support provided to them

Examine the struggle between the concepts of **human rights** — which evokes a refugee who warrants protection — and **sovereignty** — which suggests large numbers of 'bogus' refugees or 'economic' migrants whose access to the country must be controlled

The Canadian refugee system

Paternalism promotes a stereotypical view of refugees as helpless, defenceless individuals in desperate need of protection and care

Empowerment projects a view of self-reliant, autonomous, independent refugee, capable of making decision that affect his or her life

In summary, this struggles between **human-rights** against **sovereignty**, and **paternalism** against **empowerment**, influences the refugee identity: as genuine and deserving; as fraudulent and abusive; as needy and helpless; as autonomous and independent

The Canadian refugee system

Strategies in the Struggle:

- White-led NGO: speak and advocate on behalf of refugees -> clients
- Government: heavy investments in setting up and financing the Immigration and Refugee Board; a significant number of refugee claims must be fraudulent
- NGO and refugee organization: the fraud is not good, and they promote a notion of democracy and solidarity with the refugee, instead of the notion of state security and the control of immigration
- NGO and refugees in conflict: paternalism x empowerment

Society-level discourse and the constitution of refugee

The study relies on one form of text – cartoons – to represent **broader discourse** of immigration and to examine how it **constitutes** refugees and other objects

There are several reasons for using cartoons

- Often bring opposing discourses together and speak from multiple subject positions
- Set up a mini-narrative which highlights certain regularities and features of the object of the caricature and suppresses others in order to juxtapose order and disorder, or sense and nonsense

Society-level discourse and the constitution of refugee

127 cartoons were examined from Canadian newspaper between 1987 and 1989

During this period major piece of legislation concerning refugee determination and emergency legislation were passing through the Houses of Parliament

Society-level discourse and the constitution of refugee

The **expected** result was to find a large number of cartoons that would reflect not only the refugee, but also immigrants generally, the immigration system, the government and the public

By using cartoon as a representation of immigrants discourse, it helps to formulate an **image** of the **refugees** and the other **objects involved** into **the process**

Also, this analysis allowed them to consider the relationship between this **broader discourse** and the **discursive activity** (the Canadian refugee system)

Example Cartoons

Societal-level discourses

Actors represented in cartoon	Theme	Actors represented in cartoon	Theme
Refugee	fraud both victim and fraud victim privileged	Public	requiring protection opposed
Government	cruel corrupt incompetent under tension	concept of refugee contracts another issue	first nations (9) political corruptions (9) Quebec separation (3) environment (1)
Immigration system	inconsistent inadequate too tough too lenient too slow gullible honourable		

Societal-level Discourse

Immigration discourse and the institutional field

	Institutional field: strategies	Social discourse: resources
Government	sovereignty	refugee: fraud immigration system: inadequate public: requiring protection
NGOs	human rights paternalism	refugee: victim government: incompetent, corrupt, cruel immigration system: too slow, too tough, inconsistent
Refugees	human rights empowerment	?

Thanks!

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