05/02/22

***Manuscript Title:* Contested Discursive Framing: An Example from a Bank’s Co-optative Collaborative Ventures Model for CSR**

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Dear Magda,

I would like to apologize for the late submission of my manuscript and for any inconvenience this has caused. The main reason for the overdue submission is that I had to deal with some health issues due to Covid-19, which I hope you will understand.

I appreciate the time and effort that you and the reviewers dedicated to providing feedback on my manuscript. I am grateful for the insightful comments on my work and the valuable recommendations for improving my paper. The article has undergone a major revision to address the reviewers’ comments and suggestions. Some sections underwent significant change to incorporate the reviewers’ suggestions, including the abstract, the introduction and the literature review (except for the third subsection). The remaining sections have been partly revised to reflect the reviewers’ observations and recommendations, including the methodology and design, findings and discussion sections.

Please see below, in red, my responses to the reviewers’ comments and concerns. Please note that all page numbers mentioned in them refer to the revised manuscript file. The changes are highlighted within the revised manuscript in yellow.

I trust that this revised version satisfies the reviewers concerns. Please kindly let me know of your decision regarding publishing my manuscript.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Riki Galia

**Recommendations:** Accept with revisions

**Basis for Revision:**

Jargon Not Explained

I refer to this comment extensively later in the body of this response.

Theoretical Contribution is Unclear

The theoretical contribution has been extensively explained in the Contribution to the Literature section (see p. ).

Needs Clarity of Purpose

The purpose of the article and the research questions have been redistilled. Please see discussions of the article’s purpose in the beginning of the introduction (paragraph in yellow, p. ), in the beginning of the methodology and design section (paragraph in yellow, p. ) and in the discussion (p.

For your convenience, a succinct account of the revised research purpose (see, p. ) is as follows:

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the contested dynamics of the discursive framing of a joint CSR model by one of the largest banks in Israel cooperating with NPOs. Using ethnographic methods combined with semiotic analysis, the article addresses two research questions: (1) How is a bank-NPO partnership discursively framed during negotiations between bank and NPO representatives?; and (2) What type of CSR partnership model is discursively framed and what are its implications for emergent joint CSR initiatives?

Key Literatures Are Not Cited

Additional critical CSR literature has been included in the revised manuscript. Additionally, I also respond to this comment later in the body of this response document.

Analysis Not Sufficiently Explained

The main stages of the analysis that guided the inquiry are elaborated at the end of the methodology and design section (see page ).

No Persuasive Theory

I added the relevant CSR literature and entirely changed the structure and substance of the literature review to refine the research questions and justify the article’s analysis. This exercise helped me to define the arguments of the article, which are embedded in the CSR literature and backed by semiotic analysis of the research data.

For your convenience, I present here a succinct account of the research argument (see, p.21):

Inspired by the insights and gaps of critical CSR studies, this article advances a twofold argument. First, the bank’s approach discursively framed and validated CSR as a commodity aimed at serving bank interests by engaging in occasional, superficial and self-serving CSR initiatives that lacked substantive and sustained collaborations in the interests of its NPO partners and their beneficiaries. Second, considering the little research on market-centered CSR in terms of cooptation (Brand et al. 2020; Burchell and Cook 2013), this study shows how the bank’s joint CSR model, discursively framed as a cooptative partnership, is in fact realized through the cooptative relationships between the bank and the NPOs.

**Comments to the Author:**

The paper proposes an analysis of the discursive framing of the partnership between a bank and some NPOs. The Author/s collected a large amount of qualitative data for this study. These data are very rich and allow for a deep analysis of the interplay between the bank and its stakeholders. In spite of these premises, the paper is not very convincing. There may appear some difficulties in following the presentation of the data and their analysis.

First of all, reading the paper and understanding the meaning of a lot of sentences was difficult, because of the massive use of acronyms. Some of them are very similar (e.g., CV and CVM), and thus you often need to go back to the position where they have been introduced to check what do they mean. Although this may look like a minor problem, it provides the impression that, metaphorically, the Author/s are still very close to the field and have not been able to raise the level of their analysis to a dimension that could be more understandable by a reader who does not know the structure of the organizations they analyzed and the implications of the various roles of the actors they refer to.

The acronyms have been removed and the text has undergone an extensive revision to reduce jargon and clarify terms with the goal of making the text more readable and easier to understand.

The analysis of the core topic of the paper is quite hermetic, too. The differences between the interpretations of the notion of adoption are not clear. The major issue is that the reader is not sufficiently informed about the relevance of this notion for the analysis. In the introduction, the Author/s present the concept of adoption as “allowing disadvantaged youth to benefit from social-outreach programs staffed by employee volunteers and financial sponsorship.” Does this interpretation refers to a specific definition provided by the bank or is it a synthetic definition provided by the Author/s?

The relevance of the notion of “adoption” to the analysis was first clarified in the introduction (see at the end of the introduction, p. ). I explained that thesignificance of the term “adoption” in the bank’s CSR discourse contributes to a deep understanding of how the BUS-NPO partnership model is discursively framed and what its implications are.

Then, based on formal and content dimensions of semiotic analysis, I showed throughout the findings sectionhow “adoption,” as a key discursive signifier that underlies the bank’s CSR discourse, had emerged as a multivocal and contested symbol that was changed according to different discursive strategies implemented by the bank representatives and the NPOs and by their efforts to frame the term in line with their interpretations and intentions.

The different renderings of the term “adoption,” including its multivocality and controversial nature, are demonstrated in the findings section following the discussion (see p. )

Moreover, it is suggested that the Author/s provide more insights for justifying the claim that the discursive and contested implication of adoption’s “policies” by the bank is central in their relationships with the NPOs. The literature on CSR is rich in cases that illustrate the superficial and instrumental approaches companies may “adopt” for raising their legitimacy with their stakeholders. While the idea of a co-optative strategy seems plausible, it is not clear whether the actions promoted by the bank hold are necessary for their recipients. A broader description of the environmental conditions that frame the relationships between the bank and the NPOs could reinforce the logic of co-optation.

The structure of the literature review underwent a substantive revision to establish and justify the article’s main argument (especially the first two sections). Accordingly, I added a discussion of critical CSR literature and its relevance to the business case approach toward CSR commodification and the implications of market-centered CSR for the formation of cooptative relationships between firms and NPOs (see in the literature review, p. ).

Furthermore, the methodological section requires more attention. One minor issue is that perhaps table 2 (interviews) should precede table 1 (observations). Additionally, it should be explained how the data have been analyzed (methodology), as well as how the participants have been recruited.

I have changed the location of table 2 (interviews) based on the reviewer’s suggestion.

The method used to recruit the participants has been noted in the methodology and design section (see page).

The epistemological base and the main stages of the analysis that guided the research has been outlined at the end of the methodology and design section (see p. ).

Finally, there are a lot of typos in the text, especially words that have not been separated by a space.

The manuscript has been carefully reviewed for errors and has incorporated these helpful editing suggestions made by the reviewers.