

## *The Concept of Framers and their Role in Value Change*

In order to understand better how new ideas filter through society and change values, it is useful to consider at individuals we have identified as “framers” — people who articulate and promote a community’s environmental values. Framers possess a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of a community and its conflict, the competing claims, and the different values and priorities in which those claims are grounded. The framer is able to negotiate these claims, and recast the debate in terms that are unthreatening to either party to the conflict. The framer (with a few exceptions) is neither an insider nor an outsider; in a sense, she or he is a “marginal” individual, sometimes seen by both community insiders and outsiders as threatening.

As an analytic concept, our notion of the framer takes its place within the existing literature on mass opinion and attitude formation.<sup>1</sup> To suggest that there are social forces and institutions—from the government to the media, from corporate advertising to academic elites—that influence and manipulate the reception of ideas or events in a given culture (and even now, in the emerging ‘global culture’) is nothing new. However, we have used the term framer here because the role of the individual playing this role signals a peculiar phenomenon for Japanese society. There is an old Tokugawa expression in Japanese: “The nail that sticks up will be hammered down” (*Deru kui wa utareru*), which reflects the long standing normative emphasis in Japanese culture on being part of a group and not disturbing harmony. When an individual stands out and draws attention to her/himself, s/he displays a fundamental cultural norm, as many sociologists and anthropologists have pointed out. Our interviews revealed that individuals play a greater role in social movements than has been acknowledged. Our notion of framers, therefore, centers on those individuals who sought to influence the attitudes toward and reception of environmental awareness in our case studies.

In Minamata, the framers included activists such as Ishimure Michiko, the novelist and activist, who articulated the suffering and social injustice done to Minamata disease victims and their families, when many victims’ families were unable to communicate their plight. They also included Ogata Masato, the fisherman/activist who framed the issues of disease certification, and is credited with first applying the boating phrase *moyau* (in which two boats link up with one another at sea) to the Minamata victims’ movement. There were many other framers during the decades of the Minamata tragedy (from scientists such as Jun Ui, victim/activists such as Kawamoto Teruo, lawyers such as Dr. Togashi, and doctors such as Harada Masazumi) who advocated on behalf of victims. More recently, Mr. Kamakura, the official entrusted in the 1990s with the task of revitalizing the communities and neighborhoods that had been bitterly divided over Minamata disease, has been a framer, an “outsider” promoting the values of healing and communication (compassion values) through the *Moyainaoshi* campaign. Minamata City official

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Yoshimoto became an effective framer in the early 2000s when he started the *Jimotogaku* (community study) Movement as a part of the process of *Moyainaoshi*.

In Shiga prefecture, Governor Takemura's strong leadership catalyzed a number of new government initiatives, including the promotion of environmental research, and sparked the interest of the mass media. In 1977 freshwater red tide outbreaks appeared, and in response Shiga prefecture developed a series of policies focusing on Lake Biwa's water quality. Mr. Hosoya, who took up the issue of synthetic detergents at Lake Biwa is a particularly revealing example of a framer. He was responsible for shifting the frame of reference for the housewives movement from the original concern about the impact of phosphates on health to the narrower issue of the lake's eutrophication and water quality control. In so doing so, Mr. Hosoya was able to secure broad public recognition of the lake's problem.

In the Nagara River case, Amano Reiko wrote and spoke eloquently for nature conservation. Her tactics embraced all the types of values we've been discussing. At the early stages of the movement, she argued for preserving the sakura trout (*masu*) and sweetfish (*ayu*), thereby promoting intrinsic values. She eventually made opposition to public works projects the center of the opposition movement, and carried the movement nationally. By basing her arguments on the "useless aspects of public works," she added the element of "instrumental value" to the movement. The strategies she brought in to advance the environmental movement on the national level (bringing together cultural luminaries such as writers and celebrities) are an example of "compassion values," promoting communication, identification with victims of injustice, healing. (For more on "compassion values" see pp. 170-176 of the book.)

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