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The Framing Perspective on Social Movements: Its Conceptual Roots and Architecture

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Introduction

A two-pronged tenet of social constructionism, and particularly the symbolic interactionist variant, is that human behavior, whether individual or collective, is partly contingent on what the object of orientation means, and that the meanings that objects or events have for us are not intrinsic to them but are formed through interpretive processes that arise in the course of interaction between humans. This does not mean that knowing or establishing the meaning of an object or situation is a continuously problematic issue for social actors, and that we therefore are continuously engaged in the interpretive work of constructing and negotiating meaning *de novo*. To presume otherwise is to underestimate the extent to which meaning is often scripted and thus embedded in and reflective of existing cultural and organizational arrangements and contexts. Yet social life can be laden with ambiguities that beg for interpretive clarification and may thus give rise to interpretive debates, especially when daily routines or taken-for-granted practices are disrupted. In addition, there are moments in social life in which the relevance of existing structures of meaning seem especially fragile, contestable, and open to challenge and transformation. And it is at such moments, or in such situations, that social movements seem especially likely to flourish as agents of interpretation, a view that was concretized in Lofland's (1996: 3) conceptualization of the study of social movements and movement organizations as "a special case of the study of contention among deeply conflicting realities." Thus, it is arguable that social movements, and collective action more generally on the one hand, and the interpretive work of meaning construction on the other hand are closely linked, almost as if there is an elective affinity between them.

During the past quarter of a century, interest in interpretive meaning construction has gained considerable traction within the social sciences and humanities. In this chapter, we focus on the verbal discursive expression of meaning as manifested primarily in framing processes within the context of social movements. There are, of course, other discursive modalities that are just as important as frames as conveyors of meanings in relation to social movements. Narratives, which are storied accounts of happenings that connect the past to the present and to an anticipated future (Polletta et al. 2011), comprise one such alternative discursive modality. However, we give short shrift to narratives because they have received recent elaboration by scholars more familiar with the construction and character of narratives than we are (e.g. Polletta and Gardner 2015) and because of limitations on textual space.

Conceptualizing Framing

The concept of framing in relation to social and object interaction is borrowed from Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), which is beholden in part to the earlier work of Gregory Bateson (1972) and is rooted in the symbolic interactionist and constructionist principle that meanings, as noted above, arise through interpretive processes mediated by culture. For Bateson and Goffman, as well as for other scholars who use the concept analytically, frames provide answers to such questions as: What is going on here? What is being said? What does this mean? And how should I (or we) act or respond?

Frames contribute to this interpretive work by performing a number of core functions. As explained elsewhere (Snow 2004), they function like picture frames, *focusing attention* by bracketing what in our sensual field is "in-frame" and what is "out-of-frame." They also function as *articulation mechanisms* in the sense of tying together the various punctuated elements of the scene so that one coherent set of meanings rather than another is conveyed. And finally, frames often perform a *transformative function* by reconstituting the way in which some objects of attention are seen or understood as relating to each other or to the actor. Given the focusing, articulation, and transformative functions of frames, it is arguable that how we see, what we make of, and how we act toward the various objects of orientation that populate our daily lives depend, in no small part, on how they are framed.

Development of a framing perspective on social movements

Applied to social movements, the idea of framing problematizes the meanings associated with relevant events, activities, places, and actors, suggesting that those meanings are typically contestable and negotiable and thus open to debate and differential interpretation. From this vantage point, mobilizing grievances are seen neither as naturally occurring sentiments nor as arising automatically from specifiable material conditions, but as the result of interactively-based interpretation or signifying work. Framing conceptualizes this signifying work, which is one of the activities that social movement leaders and participants, as well as their adversaries and the media, do on a regular basis.

Although the link between framing and social movements was foreshadowed in a number of works accenting the importance of symbolic transformations in what is seen as just and unjust (Moore 1978; Piven and Cloward 1979; Turner 1969), framing was not used conceptually in a substantial fashion until Gitlin's (1980) examination of the media's framing of the new left (see Chapter 7 by Rohlinger and Corrigan-Brown, in this volume, for discussion of media and movements). A few years later Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina (1982) used the framing concept analytically in their experimental study of the conditions under which authority is defined as unjust and challenged. In their conceptualization, frames consist of "interpretative packages" in which an "organizing idea," or a frame, is central. However, it was not until Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford's (1986) elaboration of "frame alignment processes" and a number of subsequent conceptual extensions (Snow and Benford 1988, 1992) that framing began to secure a foothold as a useful theorized concept for empirically examining the interpretative process through which extant meanings are debated and challenged and new ones are articulated within the context of social movements. Since these initial works, there has been an almost meteoric rise in research on framing and social movements, with most of the work congealing into what is now called the framing perspective on social movements (for overviews, see Benford and Snow 2000; Snow 2004; Snow et al. 2014).

The analytic appeal and utility of this perspective are based largely on the conjunction of three factors. The first is the neglect of the relationship between meaning and mobilization, and the role of interpretative processes in mediating that relationship, by the dominant perspectives on social movements that emerged in the 1970s, namely, the resource mobilization and political process/opportunity perspectives. The second is the rediscovery of culture in conjunction with the so-called discursive turn that occurred during the 1980s and remains prominent today. The third contributing factor is the development of a framing conceptual architecture or scaffolding which has facilitated more systematic theorization and empirical assessment of framing processes and effects, as illustrated by the now common practice of examining framing processes and the resultant frames in terms of variable analyses. Although dimensions of that conceptual architecture were previously outlined (Snow 2013), it has not been fully elaborated in a single essay. We do so in the remainder of the chapter, illustrating and elaborating its analytic utility via reference to a host of relevant works.

Conceptual Architecture

Among the interconnected concepts and processes that have surfaced as the framing literature has expanded, there are at least nine that can be thought of as cornerstone concepts and processes. They build on each other and they provide a conceptual architecture that has stimulated much of the research exploring the relevance of framing to mobilization, both empirically and theoretically. These key concepts or processes include: (1) collective action frames; (2) master frames; (3) core framing tasks; (4) discursive mechanisms/processes; (5) discursive opportunity structures and fields; (6) frame crystallization; (7) frame alignment processes; (8) frame resonance; and (9) framing hazards.

Collective action frames

Collective action frames are the resultant products of framing activity within the social movement arena. They are relatively coherent sets of action-oriented beliefs and meanings that legitimize and inspire social movement campaigns and activities. Like everyday interpretive frames, collective action frames focus attention, articulate, and elaborate the elements within the frame, and often transform the meanings associated with the objects of attention. But collective action frames differ from everyday interactional frames in terms of their primary mobilization functions: to mobilize or activate movement adherents so that they move, metaphorically, from the balcony to the barricades (action mobilization); to convert bystanders into adherents, thus broadening the movement's base (consensus mobilization); and to neutralize or demobilize adversaries (counter-mobilization). Much of the initial research on framing and social movements focused on the identification and naming of collective action frames and specification of their functions with respect to the movements in question, exhibiting what Benford called a "descriptive bias" (1997: 414–415). While the identification of collective action frames contributes to a fuller descriptive understanding of a movement, that focus alone deflects attention from broader questions about movement framings' dynamics and processes, including the ways in which frames can function as both dependent and independent variables (see Snow 2004: 391–393; Snow et al. 2014: 33–35) and the factors that account for frame variation, topics which are among the more recent foci of research on collective action frames.

Master frames

Although most collective action frames are context- and movement-specific, those that emerge early in a cycle of protest (Tarrow 1994) sometimes come to function like master algorithms in the sense that they color and constrain the orientations and activities of other movements within the cycle, such that subsequent collective action frames within the cycle are derivative or reflective (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1992). When the ideational and interpretive scope and influence of a collective action frame expand in this way, such that it is sufficiently elastic, flexible, and inclusive that other movements might employ it in their own campaigns, it can be thought of as a master frame. Examples of master frames in recent history include the civil rights frame, with its emphasis on equal rights and opportunities, in relation to the resurgence of the women's movement and the flowering of movements accenting the rights of the aged, the disabled, indigenous populations, and ethnic groups; the nuclear freeze frame in relation to the peace movement of the 1980s; and the environmental justice frame in relation to various environmental movements.

Caution needs to be exercised, however, in assuming that a master frame previously resonant with some groups will be resonant with all groups who may be targeted with respect to the same issue. For example, as Bloemraad, Silva, and Voss (2016: 1665–1666) found in their innovative experimental survey study of the effectiveness of different frames in influencing Californians' views about immigrant legislation and access to public benefits, the human rights frame, which proved successful for comparable issues previously, was only marginally effective.

Core framing tasks

The relative success of collective action frames in performing their mobilization functions is partly contingent on the extent to which they attend to the three core framing tasks or challenges of “diagnostic framing,” “prognostic framing,” and “motivational framing” (Snow and Benford 1988).

Diagnostic framing entails two aspects: a diagnosis of some event or aspect of social life or system of government as problematic and in need of repair or change; and the attribution of blame or responsibility for the problematized state of affairs. Diagnostic framing provides answers to the questions of “What is or went wrong?” and “Who or what is to blame?” Much research examining the substance of collective action frames suggests that diagnostic framing typically defines or redefines an event or situation as an “injustice” (Benford and Snow 2000: 615; Gamson 1992). Although the word “injustice” may not be directly invoked, it is typically implied, as clearly evident – as are the problematization and attribution components of diagnostic frames – in what is arguably one of the more robust and consequential diagnostic frames articulated over the past half century:

For over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples ... Despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the crusader-Zionist alliance ... the Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres

(Osama bin Laden 1998)

Prognostic framing involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, including a plan of attack and the frame-consistent tactics for carrying it out, and often a refutation of the opponent’s current or proposed solutions. The extent to which correspondence between a movement’s diagnostic and prognostic framing exists might differ across contexts, but sometimes the flow of events in the world yields compelling confirmatory evidence of such correspondence. Graphically illustrative is bin Laden’s prognostic framing of what should be done in response to his diagnosis of the problems plaguing the Arabian Peninsula and its neighboring Muslims, chillingly articulated roughly a year prior to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on NYC’s World Trade Center:

We – with God’s help – call on every Muslim ... to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan’s U.S. troops and the devil’s supporters allying with them

(ibid.)

The final core framing task, motivational framing, involves elaboration of a call to arms or rationale for action that goes beyond the diagnosis and prognosis. In doing such, it can be understood as the “agency” component of collective action frames (Gamson 1992). Motivational framing entails the construction of “vocabularies of motive” that provide prods to action by, among other things, overcoming both the

fear of risks often associated with collective action and the so-called “free-rider” problem (i.e. why contribute to the attainment of some large goal when that goal constitutes a “public good” in the sense of being an indivisible and nonexcludable benefit?). Motivational framing attends to these impediments to action by accenting the severity of the problem, the urgency of taking action now rather than later, the probable efficacy of joining others in the cause, the moral priority of doing so, and the enhancement or elevation of one’s status (Benford 1993a), as when suicide bombers – whether piloting aircraft, driving vehicles loaded with explosives, or wearing explosive vests – are promised various divine favors for their “righteous” deeds (Snow and Byrd 2007). As a Hamas member noted in relation to the recruitment and training of such “martyrs”:

We focus attention on Paradise, on being in the presence of Allah, on meeting the Prophet Muhammad, on interceding for his loved ones so that they, too can be saved from the agonies of Hell ... and on fighting the Israeli occupation and removing it from the Islamic trust that is Palestine.

(Hassan 2001: 40)

Although the link between framing and emotions has not received the attention it warrants (see Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2004, on this neglect), the appeal to or use of emotion appears to be a central feature of motivational framing. Graphically illustrative is Marx and Engel’s famous rallying cry – “Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!” – which has embedded within it the appeals to severity, urgency, efficacy, moral propriety and status enhancement. Although few motivational framings are so famously “hot,” there is increasing empirical illustration of the link between motivational framing and emotion, both as an independent (see Schrock, Holden and Reid 2004) and dependent variable (see Cadena-Roa 2002).

As suggested earlier, all three core framing tasks are essential for participant mobilization. Much like Klandermans (1984) found that consensus mobilization (shared grievances and goals) does not guarantee action mobilization (actual participation), it follows that potent diagnostic framing guarantees neither effective prognostic nor motivational framings. As Sedgwick (2010) found in his research on al-Qaeda’s framing activities, many Muslims may share al-Qaeda’s diagnosis (see above bin Laden’s diagnostic frame), but relatively few are moved by the group’s prognostic and motivational framings.

Discursive processes, framing mechanisms

Snow and several colleagues have suggested two discursive mechanisms through which the generation and modification of collective action frames occur: frame articulation and elaboration (Snow 2004; Snow, Tan, and Owens 2013). Frame articulation involves the connection, or splicing together, and coordination of issues, events, experiences, and cultural items, including strands of one or more ideologies, so that they hang together in a relatively integrated and meaningful fashion. It constitutes a kind of collective packaging device that assembles and collates slices of appropriated, observed, experienced, and/or recorded “reality” so that a particular

event, trend, or issue is framed one way instead of another. The topics that constitute slices of reality can assume various and sundry forms. They may include actual events or happenings – such as disasters, legislative decisions, or auto accidents – and contrived or “pseudo-events” (Boorstin 1961) or what today may be called “fake news” (Tavernise 2016). Topics may also include religious, political, or procedural principles and/or discursive matters or issues – that is, topics or issues brought up for discussion among two or more people or groups. Articulation links topics together in a meaningful fashion.

In contrast, frame elaboration involves accenting and highlighting some events, issues, and beliefs or ideas more than others, such that they become more salient in an array or hierarchy of movement-relevant topics or issues. Elaboration is illustrated by the practice of emphasizing and focusing on some topics or issues, rather than others, so that in time some topics rarely get mentioned. One way to get an empirical handle on elaboration is to operationalize it in terms of the amount of discursive space (the total volume of spoken or written discourse in an interactional encounter or some written forum bounded in time and space, like the total amount of column space in a newspaper) consumed or devoted to a topic, issue or frame (Snow, Tan, and Owens 2013).

Examples of both the articulation and elaboration processes are clearly exhibited in the framings of historically prominent movement leaders, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, as well as in the rhetoric of contemporary populist figures such as Erdogan of Turkey, Le Pen in France, and Trump in the US. Further illustration of the interplay of the articulation and elaboration mechanisms are provided in Zuo and Benford’s (1995) analysis of the mobilization processes in relation to the Beijing Spring student democracy movement, and Snow, Tan and Owens’ (2013) examination of the online, discursive chatter and exchanges of adherents of white racist movements.

Discursive fields and opportunity structures

Framing processes occur during the course of conversations, meetings, and written communications among movement leaders and members within broader enveloping cultural and structural contexts called discursive fields (Snow 2008; Spillman 1995; Steinberg 1999) and discursive opportunity structures, both of which have been found to facilitate and constrain framing efforts (Ferree 2003; Ferree et al. 2002; Koopmans and Statham 1999; McCammon et al. 2007). Discursive fields evolve during the course of debate about contested issues and events, and encompass cultural materials (e.g. beliefs, values, ideologies, myths) of potential relevance and various sets of actors (e.g. targeted authorities, social control agents, counter-movements, media), whose interests are aligned, albeit differently, with the contested issues or events, and who thus have a stake in what is done or not done about those events and issues.

Existing in relation to and hypothetically within discursive fields is the kindred concept of discursive opportunity structures (DOS), which encompass various salient ideas and values that have currency within the ambient political culture and thus make it more or less receptive to some collective action framings over others. In their comparative study of abortion discourse in Germany and the US, for example,

Ferree et al. (2002) found that differences in the abortion frames in the two countries can be explained in part by differences in the beliefs and values associated with their respective discursive opportunity structures. Moreover, they found an institutional component to the DOS that also had to be navigated – namely, the media, which function as gatekeepers by shaping discourse within the discursive field (see also Koopmans and Olzak 2004). More recently, research has identified an array of factors that may affect discursive opportunity structures and thus framing processes. Some of these intervening factors include the existence of multiple public discourses (McCammon et al. 2007) and the salience of emotion or various emotional themes (Bröer and Duyvendak 2009).

Whether one focuses on discursive fields or discursive opportunity structures, both direct attention to the cultural contexts in which movements are embedded and the extent to which a movement's messages, mobilizing frames, and/or narratives are linked to and constrained by dominant cultural schemas or themes, particularly those of contemporary currency.

The previously discussed discursive mechanisms of frame articulation and elaboration draw selectively upon these cultural materials and are conducted in relation to the various sets of actors that constitute the discursive field. This suggests that the development of collective action frames is facilitated and/or constrained by the cultural and structural elements of the discursive field and discursive opportunity structure in which the evolving frame is embedded. This further suggests that collective action frames “constitute innovative articulations and elaborations of existing ideologies or sets of beliefs and ideas, and thus function as extensions of or antidotes to them” (Snow 2004: 401). From this vantage point, social movements are viewed not as carriers of pre-configured, tightly-coupled beliefs and meanings, traditionally conceptualized as ideologies, but as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meanings that are intended to mobilize adherents and constituents, garner bystander support, and demobilize antagonists within their fields of operation. Thus, framing is a dynamic process that can differ across time, context, and targeted audience, which is evidenced even further when we consider frame crystallization.

Frame crystallization

For many publicly experienced or media-accessible events that are not taken for granted or readily explicable in terms of some consensually shared cultural script or narrative, we are likely to find the occurrence of alternative, competing diagnostic, prognostic and/or motivational framings (van der Meer et al. 2014), and this is especially so given that most framings are embedded in a discursive field. Examples of competing and contested framings of events, issues, or persons abound almost daily in the media, especially today with the varied and sharpened political alignments of the numerous media outlets (Berry and Sobieraj 2014) and the proliferation of “fake news” (Tavernise 2016). But as the object of the contested framings becomes less novel or newsworthy and/or there is an increase in the weight of “evidence” marshalled in support of one contested frame over another, there is likely to be a convergence of sentiment around some framings over others. Based on their study of the framing of the 2005 French riots, Snow, Vliegenthart, and Corrigan-Brown

(2007) call this ascendance of one or more frames over competitors “frame crystallization.” As they found with respect to diagnostic framing across a three-week time period, from the inception of the riots on October 27th to their cessation on November 19th, there was a general decline in framing the problem in terms of social categories or groups, such as criminally-oriented youth and over-reactive control agents, and a corresponding increase in framing the problem in terms of structural factors, like the failure of minority incorporation and/or the economy and the public education system.

There has been a good deal of research on frame variation regarding particular events and issues and across time. Applying the idea of frame variation to the context of the women’s jury movement in the US, for example, McCammon (2012) demonstrates how a single movement can shift its framing to a considerable extent over time, and that those shifts can be explained in large part by looking at the broader context in which movements operate. But there has been little comparable research on the factors that account for the crystallization of some frames and the corresponding decline of other frames over time.

Frame alignment processes

Frame alignment processes encompass the strategic efforts of social movement actors and organizations to link their interests and goals with those of prospective adherents and resource providers so that they will contribute in some fashion to movement campaigns and activities. Snow et al. (1986) identified four such basic strategic alignment processes: frame bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation.

Frame bridging involves the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally disconnected frames regarding a particular issue. Bridging can occur between a movement and individuals, through the linkage of a movement organization with an unmobilized sentiment pool or public opinion cluster, or across social movements. Illustrative of such bridging is the mobilization of West German activists against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund by successfully bridging their frames with those of peace, ecology, women’s, neighborhood, and labor movement groups (Gerhards and Rucht 1992). Many instances of coalition formation (see Chapter 14, by Brooker and Meyer, in this volume, on coalitions) are based, at least in part, on frame bridging, as with the 1999 “Battle of Seattle” in which thousands of activists massed to protest the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference. Frame bridging can be considered a specific form of frame articulation, with the specific aim of connecting the movement’s main frame with one which has a wider resonance in society.

Frame amplification entails the embellishment, crystallization, and invigoration of selected values, beliefs, and understandings so that they are more salient and dominant than other existing values. It is arguable that this is the most potentially resonant alignment strategy in that it builds on existing values and beliefs, attempting to elevate them in importance, rather than seeking to extend or change them. Thus, for “rights movements,” the accent is on the value of equal opportunities whereas for movements skewed toward the political right, there may be greater

emphasis placed on individualism unconstrained by the rights of others. In the case of American values, it is likely that both kinds of values will be in the value hierarchy of most citizens, but that one kind or subset of values will have greater salience than the other. The previously discussed discursive mechanism of frame elaboration is a central mechanism through which amplification is affected.

Frame extension depicts movement interests and framings as extending beyond the movement's initial constituency to include issues thought to be of relevance to bystander groups or potential adherents, which often happens in the case of coalition formation. A well-known example is the extension of the environmental movement (Rootes 2004) to groups impacted most heavily by environmental hazards, and the evolution of the environmental justice movement (Taylor 2000).

Frame transformation involves changing prior understandings and perspectives, among individuals or collectivities, so that things are seen differently than before. While such transformations are commonly associated with religious conversions, they also occur readily in more political contexts as shown in Berbrier's (1998) analysis of the reversal and equivalence framing strategies of the New Racist White Separatist Movement and reflected in the goals of the so-called alt-right movement's National Policy Institute to protect the "heritage, identity, and future of people of European descent in the United States, and around the world" (Taub 2016).

Frame resonance

The ultimate measure of the effectiveness of proffered collective action frames and the corresponding alignment strategies is whether they resonate with targeted audiences. Although the occurrence of organized protest mobilization implies some degree of resonance with corresponding problem diagnosis, attribution of blame and/or calls for action, there are a number of unresolved issues that plague the resonance proposition. The first issue, which is primarily conceptual, concerns the difference between frame alignment and resonance (Ketelaars 2016; Ketelaars, Walgrave, and Wouters 2014; Opp 2009). Ketelaars (2016: 344) suggests that "[t]he difference ... is that frame resonance is a frame attribute, as in some frames resonating more than others, while frame alignment can be attributed to" individuals, "as in someone aligning with a certain frame or not." If we conceptualize resonance as a frame attribute in this way, then we are also conceiving of resonance as an indicator of alignment, or even as an outcome of frame alignment processes. This constitutes a kind of conceptual fine-tuning, but in doing so caution needs to be exercised in order not to gloss over the strategic dimension of the four types of frame alignment from an organizational vantage point.

A second issue relates to the charge that resonance inferences are subject to circular-reasoning in the sense that resonance may be automatically conflated with the occurrence of a protest event. It is therefore important to problematize resonance by attempting to identify, theoretically and/or empirically, the factors that account for its occurrence or non-occurrence. This is the direction the literature

has been moving in for some time. Benford and Snow (2000: 621), for example, posed nonresonance as an analytic problem by asking “why some framings seem to be effective or ‘resonate’ while others do not” and suggesting “two sets of interacting factors [that] account for variation in degree of frame resonance: credibility of the proffered frame and its relative salience.” In another piece, it is noted that “framing efforts often fail to inspire or direct collective action because audience resonance was never established or because it withered.” In either case, the framing effort is confronted with the problem of nonresonance (Snow and Corrigan-Brown 2005: 223).

The potential problem of circular reasoning notwithstanding, it appears that it is not as troubling as sometimes presumed, as a growing number of empirical studies have shown the importance of resonance and identified various factors that affect its occurrence. For example, in Ketelaars’ (2016: 341) survey-based study of the extent to which protest participants’ problem diagnoses, as well as their attributions of blame and assessment of what should be done, matched the platform frames of the sponsoring organizations, she found that:

[F]rames that appeal to people’s everyday experiences resonate more than abstract or technical frames ... [and that] resonance is higher when blame for the issue is put on a specific person or organization than when intangible forces or causes are held responsible.

Hewitt and McCammon (2004) and Morrell (2015) have also identified a number of other factors, such as professional expertise, which can affect the prospect of frame resonance.

Other studies have shown that establishing resonance is a dynamic and even sometimes fickle process, especially since the associated framing often occurs within a field of relevant actors. McCammon (2001), for instance, finds a positive relationship between “separate spheres” culturally resonant framing and the emergence of women suffrage organizations. While the use of the ‘expediency’ frame – contending that women should be able to vote because they have special skills and because it would enable them to protect the domestic sphere – had a positive effect on the presence of suffrage associations and the demand for voting rights, the ‘justice’ frame – stating that women are citizens just like men – did not. The latter frame resonated less as it challenged traditional beliefs regarding separate spheres at the turn of the twentieth century. In another study of resonance showing the importance of anchoring frames in current cultural beliefs and patterns, Wooten (2010) examined the framing efforts of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to elicit financial support from wealthy constituents between 1944 and 1954. She found that framing mattered, but not quite in the way we might expect: UNCF stressed that increasing the number of college-educated blacks would help facilitate the “functioning of the black community” but would have few consequences outside the black community. Although this framing risked alienating black targets, it did resonate with potential white donors, largely because of the temper of the times and the discursive opportunity context in which the solicitation efforts were embedded. Oselin and Corrigan-Brown (2010) provide further illustration of the importance of temporality and context in relation to resonance.

These studies also direct attention to another challenge confronting movements seeking to establish resonance with actual or potential adherents: since framing generally occurs within a discursive field consisting of various audiences, both internal and external, framing messages in hopes of resonating with one audience run the risk of undermining the prospect of resonance with another audience (see McVeigh, Meyers, and Sikkink 2004, and Lindekilde 2008, for empirical examples). Taken together, these studies of frame resonance advance our understanding of its character as a frame attribute, of the various factors that facilitate or constrain its occurrence, and of the sometimes unwanted or unanticipated consequences of trying to develop resonant frames within a contested discursive field.

The third issue identified as confronting the resonance thesis concerns the role of emotion in increasing or decreasing the prospect of resonance. The “moral shock” argument (Jasper and Poulsen 1995), with its emphasis on the mobilizing impact of a sudden and deeply emotional stimulus, constitutes, in effect, a resonance hypothesis. Moral shocks may arise because of quotidian disruptions (Borland 2013) or suddenly imposed grievances (Walsh 1981), or frequently because of highly strategic framing. Emotion, then, is at the core of “shock” framing, since its presumed aim is to activate “reflex emotions,” such as fear, anger, and disgust (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2004: 416). In addition to the link between frame-based moral/emotional shocks and resonance, Bail (2012), in his study of the framing efforts of US Muslim and anti-Muslim groups in the post-9/11 era, highlights the importance of the emotional tenor of some framing efforts with the finding that the frames that secured the greatest media coverage were those that were in keeping with the media’s penchant for sensationalistic and emotional narratives or frames (see Vliegenthart and Roggeband’s (2007) similar findings, regarding the Dutch immigration debate; see also McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory’s (2017) more general theorization of cultural resonance, which also accents the role of emotion).

Just as we have seen that collective action frames targeting the mobilization of one audience may unintentionally counter or neutralize the mobilization of another set of potential adherents, the same processes may be at work when playing with emotion in the framing process. Illustrative is Mika’s (2006) examination of the frames used by the animal rights movement to recruit new members. Via focus groups with non-activists, she finds that the campaign ads of the PETA animal rights group were actually not an effective recruiting tool, as many of the frames – supposed to produce moral shocks – were met with strong negative reactions.

Framing hazards

Affecting the credibility and salience of proffered frames are various framing hazards that undermine the prospect of resonance and/or processes of frame alignment. There are at least four sets of such framing hazards: (1) *ambiguous events or ailments*, as when there is uncertainty about the correct application of two alternative framings (Goffman 1974); (2) *framing errors or misframings*, as when a diagnostic frame is inappropriately applied or just wrong, or when a frame is overextended (Snow and Corrigan-Brown 2005); (3) *frame disputes*, as when “parties with opposing versions of events may openly dispute with each other over how to define what has been happening” (Goffman 1974: 322; see also Benford 1993b); and (4)

frame shifts involving the displacement of one frame by another due to a change in the grounds on which the displaced frame was based. In the context of social movements, such frame shifts or displacements are generally preceded by new, often unanticipated, events or the confluence of a number of events (see Ellingson 1995; Noonan 1995; Rothman and Oliver 1999; Snow and Moss 2014).

All four sets of hazards occur in relation to social problems discourse and framing (see, for example, Saguy 2013, on corpulence, and Snow and Lessor 2010), but frame disputes have received the most attention in the context of social movements, because “frame disputes are a pervasive dynamic within social movements” occurring both intra-organizationally and inter-organizationally among two or more movements within a movement coalition or family (Benford 1993b: 468). These disputes, as Benford (*ibid.*) found in his study of the Texas branch of the nuclear disarmament movement of the 1980s, are generally over disagreement and debate about diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings.

It would be reasonable to assume that intra-movement frame disputes are counter-productive in that they are likely to lead to dissension and fictionalization, but a number of studies suggest that this is not necessarily the case (Jessup 1997; Resnick 2009; see Chapter 12 by Ghaziani and Kretschmer, in this volume, on infighting and factionalism within movements). As Benford (1993b: 694) observed, frame disputes can be both “detrimental and facilitative” for mobilization, leading to factionalization in some situations and helping to enable collective action in other situations. (For examples of both, see Balser 1997; Ghaziani 2008; Hewitt 2011; McCammon, Bergner, and Arch 2015.)

Inasmuch as concerted problem-solving is contingent, in part, on some degree of interpretive alignment regarding the diagnosis and prognosis of some problem, then framing hazards constitute potential impediments to concerted collective action. However, since work on framing within the context of social movements has focused principally on frame disputes, we know comparatively little about the degree to which frame ambiguities, errors, and shifts function as mobilization impediments.

Conclusion

Although the connection between framing and social movements has generated considerable theorization and empirical research, there are a number of issues that have not been adequately addressed. One cluster concerns issues specific to conducting frame analysis in relation to movement processes and dynamics. Much research has identified movement-specific collective action frames and how they function as independent variables, but comparatively little research has examined systematically the discursive processes through which frames evolve, develop, and change. The conceptual cluster of frame articulation and elaboration and the theorized discussion of the discursive fields in which these processes are embedded provide a conceptual edifice for research on frame discursive processes, but to date the actual occurrence of systematic, methods-based research on framing processes, particularly in relation to discourse analysis, has not kept pace with calls for more detailed specification of doing such analyses (e.g. Johnston 2002; Lindekilde 2014; Snow 2004; Steinberg 1999).

A second cluster of issues that have not been sufficiently explored concerns the relationship between collective action frames and framing processes and relevant cultural and social psychological factors, such as narrative, ideology, collective identity, and emotion. Clearly, these are overlapping concepts that interact in ways not yet fully understood.

When it comes to frame resonance and the effects of frames, an interesting avenue for further research is the fact that the same framing can have different effects on varying groups. Some of the research cited earlier clearly shows that frames that persuade some people to become active can be counter-productive for winning the support of others. More research is needed to get a better grip on why and how frames have contingent effects. Also the effects of framing efforts by social movements on authorities and indirectly on political decision-making and policy changes deserve more attention. The question whether movements matter politically has become one of the most prominent ones in our field (see Chapter 25 by Amenta, Andrews, and Caren, in this volume) and studies have demonstrated the agenda-setting power of protest (Vliegenthart et al. 2016). Given the centrality of framing in most aspects of the movement's existence, it is likely that effects are not limited to *what* movements protest about, but also *how* they communicate about those issues, which cuts to the heart of framing.

And, finally, our understanding of social movements will be advanced if more attention is devoted, both theoretically and empirically, to how framing intersects with the issues and processes examined via the theoretical lens of resource mobilization, political opportunity, and cultural perspectives. These perspectives should be seen not so much as competing but as addressing different aspects of the character and dynamics of social movements. The framing perspective emerged not as an alternative to other perspectives on social movements, but to investigate and illuminate what these other perspectives have glossed over, namely, the matter of the production of mobilizing and counter-mobilizing meanings and ideas.

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