

# FRAMING PROCESSES AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: An Overview and Assessment

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Robert D. Benford

*Department of Sociology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0324;*  
*e-mail: Rbenford1@unl.edu*

David A. Snow

*Department of Sociology, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721;*  
*e-mail: snowd@u.arizona.edu*

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■ **Abstract** The recent proliferation of scholarship on collective action frames and framing processes in relation to social movements indicates that framing processes have come to be regarded, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes, as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements. This review examines the analytic utility of the framing literature for understanding social movement dynamics. We first review how collective action frames have been conceptualized, including their characteristic and variable features. We then examine the literature related to framing dynamics and processes. Next we review the literature regarding various contextual factors that constrain and facilitate framing processes. We conclude with an elaboration of the consequences of framing processes for other movement processes and outcomes. We seek throughout to provide clarification of the linkages between framing concepts/processes and other conceptual and theoretical formulations relevant to social movements, such as schemas and ideology.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of frame has considerable currency in the social sciences today. References to it, for both descriptive and analytic purposes, and to the more fluid conception of framing processes can be readily found in psychology, particularly cognitive psychology (Bateson 1972, Tversky & Kahneman 1981), linguistics and discourse analysis (Tannen 1993, Van Dijk 1977), communication and media studies (Pan & Kosicki 1993, Scheufele 1999), and political science and policy studies (Schon & Rein 1994, Triandafyllidou & Fotiou 1998). The frame concept and kindred processes have been applied analytically and explored empirically in sociology as well, probably more so than in other areas because of the influence of Goffman's (1974) book on the topic.

Within sociology, not only has the framing concept been applied most extensively to the substantive study of social movements and collective action, but interest in framing processes in relation to the operation of social movements has animated an increasing amount of conceptual and empirical scholarship. Evidence of this trend can be found (a) in recent edited volumes based on papers presented at social movement conferences (Johnston & Klandermans 1995, Laraña et al 1994, McAdam et al 1996, Morris & Mueller 1992); (b) in the almost meteoric increase in articles, chapters, and papers referring to the framing/movement link since the mid-1980s, from only one such reference in the *Sociological Abstracts* in 1986 to 43 in 1998, with almost two thirds of the nearly 250 references during this period occurring since 1994; (c) in the parallel pattern of citations in the three core conceptual articles on framing and social movements (Snow et al 1986, Snow & Benford 1988, 1992) beginning with seven citations in 1990 and increasing to 106 in 1998, with more than half of the over 500 citations appearing after 1995; and (d) in a variety of recent critiques focusing on specific conceptual dimensions of the movement framing literature (Benford 1997, Fisher 1997, Hart 1996, Jasper 1997, Oliver & Johnston 2000, Sherkat 1998, Steinberg 1998, Williams & Benford 2000) or on its relationship to other perspectives (Goodwin & Jasper 1999, Meyer 1999). Clearly there has been a pronounced proliferation of scholarship on collective action frames and framing processes in relation to social movements within the past decade and a half, so much so, in fact, that framing processes have come to be regarded, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes, as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements.

The purpose of this review is to evaluate this burgeoning literature in terms of two general questions. First, does this literature congeal or hang together in a fashion suggestive of a coherent perspective, or can such a perspective be stitched together from various strands of the literature in a way that adds to a more refined and integrated understanding of the relationship between framing processes and the operation of social movements? And second, does this evolving perspective enhance our understanding of social movements, casting analytic light on areas and aspects of the dynamics of social movements that other conceptual schemes or perspectives have glossed over or ignored altogether? What, in short, can be concluded about the analytic utility of the framing literature for understanding the social movement processes it seeks to understand and illuminate, namely the generation, diffusion, and functionality of mobilizing and countermobilizing ideas and meanings? Our approach to addressing these questions is conceptually and theoretically developmental, and selective in terms of the literature we look at most closely. We proceed by organizing the review around four broad fundamental areas of concern that require both elaboration and synthesis if we are to address the above questions: (a) conceptualization of collective action frames and delineation of their characteristic features; (b) identification of framing processes relevant to the generation, elaboration, and diffusion of collective action frames; (c) specification of various socio-cultural contextual factors that constrain and facilitate framing

processes; and (d) elaboration of the consequences or implications of framing processes for other movement processes and outcomes. At various points, we also seek to provide clarification of the linkages between framing concepts and processes and other conceptual and theoretical formulations relevant to social movements, such as ideology. We draw on and evaluate the literature in terms of how it informs one or more of these issues and, in the process, build our answers to the two general questions.

## COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES

Social movement scholars interested in framing processes begin by taking as problematic what until the mid-1980s the literature largely ignored: meaning work—the struggle over the production of mobilizing and countermobilizing ideas and meanings.<sup>1</sup> From this perspective, social movements are not viewed merely as carriers of extant ideas and meanings that grow automatically out of structural arrangements, unanticipated events, or existing ideologies.<sup>2</sup> Rather, movement actors are viewed as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers (Snow & Benford 1988). They are deeply embroiled, along with the media, local governments, and the state, in what has been referred to as “the politics of signification” (Hall 1982).

<sup>1</sup>Although references to meanings, beliefs, values, and the more general notion of ideology have been prevalent historically in the social movement literature, the treatment of these concepts generally has been unsatisfactory because of two tendencies: either they were discussed descriptively and statically rather than analytically and dynamically, as in much of the work prior to the 1970s; or they were dismissed as being largely irrelevant to the development of social movements, as in the early resource mobilization literature (see Snow & Benford 1992:135–36).

<sup>2</sup>Recent investigations of the link between culture and social movements (Kane 1997, Williams 1995) and frames, ideology, and related concepts (Fisher 1997, Oliver & Johnston 2000, Zald 1996) have directly or indirectly called for clarification of the relationship of frames and ideology. Clearly they are not one and the same. Ideology is generally portrayed as a fairly broad, coherent, and relatively durable set of beliefs that affects one’s orientation not only to politics but to everyday life more generally. This conception holds whether one subscribes to a more general and neutral view of ideology (e.g. Geertz 1973) or to a more critical view wherein ideology is seen as functioning to sustain existing class structures and relations of domination (e.g. Thompson 1984). In either case, the reference is to fairly pervasive and integrated set of beliefs and values that have considerable staying power. In contrast, collective action frames function as innovative amplifications and extensions of, or antidotes to, existing ideologies or components of them. Accordingly, ideology functions as both a constraint and resource in relation to framing processes and collective action frames, a relationship we touch upon at several points throughout the article. For an elaborated discussion of the relationship between ideology and framing, see Oliver & Johnston (2000), Snow & Benford (2000), and Snow (2000).

## Framing as Meaning Construction

Social movement scholars conceptualize this signifying work or meaning construction by employing the verb “framing” (Gamson et al 1982, Snow et al 1986, Snow & Benford 1988). This denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as “collective action frames.”

## Characteristic Features of Collective Action Frames

The concept of frame as used in the study of social movements is derived primarily from the work of Goffman (1974). For Goffman, frames denoted “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences within their life space and the world at large (p. 21). Frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action. Collective action frames also perform this interpretive function by simplifying and condensing aspects of the “world out there,” but in ways that are “intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow & Benford 1988:198). Thus, collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimize the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (SMO).

Some scholars (e.g. Johnston 1995, Klandermans 1997, Klandermans et al 1999, Sherkat & Ellison 1997) tend to treat collective action frames in a fashion that is more consistent with psychological concepts such as “schema,” thereby overlooking the interactive, constructionist character of movement framing processes. A crucial feature that distinguishes collective action frames from schema and other related cognitive constructs is that “[c]ollective action frames are not merely aggregations of individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of negotiating shared meaning” (Gamson 1992a:111).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The implied distinction between schemas and frames can be stated more concretely by thinking of schemas as “participants’ expectations about people, objects, events, and settings in the world, as distinguished from alignments being negotiated in particular interaction,” which is what frames do (Tannen & Wallat 1993:60). Frames and schemas interact during the course of interaction between two or more individuals, with frames providing an interpretive “footing” that aligns schemas that participants to the interaction bring with them. Thus, frames and schemas are not different concepts for the same phenomena but are highly interactive, with frames constituting a broader, interpretive answer or definition to “what is going on” or “should be going on.”

Collective action frames are constituted by two sets of characteristic features: one concerns their action-oriented function—an SMO's "core framing tasks" (Snow & Benford 1988); the second refers to the interactive, discursive processes that attend to these core framing tasks and thus are generative of collective action frames (Gamson 1992a, Snow & Benford 1992). We examine the discursive processes later in the review under the more general topic of framing processes and dynamics.

**Core Framing Tasks** Collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change. Building on Wilson's (1973) decomposition of ideology into three component parts, Snow & Benford (1988) refer to these core framing tasks as "diagnostic framing" (problem identification and attributions), "prognostic framing," and "motivational framing." By pursuing these core framing tasks, movement actors attend to the interrelated problems of "consensus mobilization" and "action mobilization" (Klandermans 1984). Simply put, the former fosters or facilitates agreement whereas the latter fosters action, moving people from the balcony to the barricades.

To date, scholars have devoted considerable empirical attention to identifying and analyzing the various types of diagnostic, prognostic, and action mobilization framings specific movements and their SMOs have constructed and proffered (e.g. Benford 1993b, Gerhards & Rucht 1992, Johnson 1997, Marullo et al 1996, McCarthy 1994, Meyer 1995, Nepstad 1997, Weed 1997). Regarding diagnostic framing, several case studies focus on the development and articulation of what Gamson and colleagues (1982, 1992a,b) refer to as "injustice frames" (Anheier et al 1998, Cable & Shriver 1995, Čapek 1993, Carroll & Ratner 1996a,b, Klandermans & Goslinga 1996, Klandermans et al 1999). A plethora of studies call attention to the ways in which movements identify the "victims" of a given injustice and amplify their victimization (Benford & Hunt 1992, Best 1987, Čapek 1993, Hunt et al 1994, Jasper & Poulsen 1995, Jenness 1995, Weed 1997, White 1999). Taken together, these studies support Gamson et al's (1982) initial conceptualization of injustice frames as a mode of interpretation—prefatory to collective noncompliance, protest, and/or rebellion—generated and adopted by those who come to define the actions of an authority as unjust. While the empirical evidence reported in the foregoing studies clearly demonstrates that injustice frames are commonplace across a variety of types of social movements, there is little theoretical or empirical support for Gamson's more sweeping assertion that all "collective action frames are *injustice* frames" (1992b:68, original emphasis); nor is there support for the less ambitious assertion that all collective action frames contain an injustice component (Gamson 1992a). In the case of many religious, self-help, and identity movements, for example, it is questionable whether a well-elaborated collective action frame need include an injustice component. Nevertheless, injustice

frames appear to be fairly ubiquitous across movements advocating some form of political and/or economic change.

Since social movements seek to remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue, it follows that directed action is contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents. This attributional component of diagnostic framing attends to this function by focusing blame or responsibility. However, consensus regarding the source of the problem does not follow automatically from agreement regarding the nature of the problem. Controversies regarding whom or what to blame frequently erupt between the various SMOs comprising a social movement as well as within movement organizations. In his study of the 1980s nuclear disarmament movement, Benford (1987, 1993a) reported that this attributional component of collective action frames was frequently the source of rancorous intramovement conflict, with peace groups divided over whether to attribute “*the* most salient cause of the nuclear threat” to a general decline in morality, runaway technology, the defense industry, capitalism, an anachronistic geopolitical structure, or the United States, the Soviet Union, or both (Benford 1987:67–74).

The import of such attributional processes to collective action had, of course, been noted by a number of scholars well before the emergence of the social movement framing perspective (Ferree & Miller 1985, Turner & Killian 1972, Zurcher & Snow 1981). More recently, movement theorists have called attention to the ways in which activists engage in “boundary framing” (Hunt et al 1994:194; also see Silver 1997) and “adversarial framing” (Gamson 1995)—related attributional processes that seek to delineate the boundaries between “good” and “evil” and construct movement protagonists and antagonists. That movement adversarial framings are not always effective is well illustrated by recent movement comparative research conducted by Klandermands et al (1999) on agrarian mobilizations in the Netherlands and Spain. They found that many farmers who had been the targets of mobilization were not sure whom to hold responsible for their adverse situation. Among Dutch farmers surveyed, there was a disparity between the cognitive and affective components of their adversarial frames. They blamed their adverse situation on the European Union, but directed their anger at the Dutch government or at politics in general.

Prognostic framing, the second core framing task, involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan. In short, it addresses the Leninesque question of what is to be done, as well as the problems of consensus and action mobilization. Although this remains an empirical question, some research suggests that there tends to be a correspondence between an SMO’s diagnostic and prognostic framings (Benford 1987, Gerhards & Rucht 1992, Nepstad 1997). In other words, the identification of specific problems and causes tends to constrain the range of possible “reasonable” solutions and strategies advocated.

Studies have identified additional constraints on prognostic framings. As with other framing activities, it is important to keep in mind that prognostic framing

takes place within a multi-organizational field (Evans 1997, Klandermans 1992; also see Curtis & Zurcher 1973) consisting of various SMOs constituting a movement industry, their opponents, targets of influence, media, and bystanders. Thus it is not surprising that an SMO's prognostic framing activity typically includes refutations of the logic or efficacy of solutions advocated by opponents as well as a rationale for its own remedies. The former has been referred to as "counterframing" (Benford 1987:75), a topic we discuss more fully below. The important point is that opposing framing activity can affect a movement's framings, on the one hand, by putting movement activists on the defensive, at least temporarily, and, on the other hand, by frequently forcing it to develop and elaborate prognoses more clearly than otherwise might have been the case. In the case of the Chinese democracy movement (in 1989), for example, students accurately anticipated the state counterframings of the student movement as "counterrevolutionary," "turmoil," and "upheaval." To deflect these counterframings, the students carefully fashioned and articulated reformist prognoses and employed a tactical repertoire that was consistent with traditional Chinese cultural narrations of community devotion and self-sacrifice (Zuo & Benford 1995).

Case studies reveal that the prognostic dimension is one of the primary ways in which a movement's SMOs differ from one another. In a study of the US anti-death penalty movement, Haines (1996) observed that the movement eventually evolved into two distinct wings: abolitionists and litigators, the former advocating abolishment of capital punishment and the latter focusing on "the more modest task of saving lives of their clients one by one rather than as a class" (p. 118). Although the factions still interact, recognizing one another's indispensability, they differ in terms of their prognostic framings and the techniques they advocate and employ.

Motivational framing, the final core framing task, provides a "call to arms" or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive. Attending to this framing task essentially entails the development of what Gamson (1995) refers to as the "agency" component of collective action frames. In a study of the US nuclear disarmament movement, Benford (1993b) addressed this agency issue by identifying four generic vocabularies of motive that emerged in the course of interaction among movement activists, rank-and-file supporters, recruits, and significant others: vocabularies of severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety. These socially constructed vocabularies provided adherents with compelling accounts for engaging in collective action and for sustaining their participation. When adopted and espoused in particular combinations, and depending on their relative saliency for the participants, these four vocabularies of motive worked in a contradictory rather than complementary fashion. Ironically, activists' framings amplifying the severity and urgency of the nuclear threat contributed to a diminished sense of efficacy among the frame articulators. However, activists overcame this by constructing an elaborated vocabulary of propriety or duty. Further research needs to specify the conditions that affect the construction and adoption of various vocabularies of motive as well as

assess their relative impact on social movement participation, collective identity processes, and other movement framing activities.

## Variable Features of Collective Action Frames

In addition to focusing conceptual and empirical attention on the characteristic features of collective action frames, movement scholars have also identified and elaborated their variable features, including problem identification and direction or locus of attribution; flexibility and rigidity, inclusivity and exclusivity; interpretive scope and influence; and degree of resonance.

***Problem Identification and Direction/Locus of Attribution*** The most obvious way in which collective action frames vary is in terms of the problems or issues addressed and the corresponding direction of attribution. It appears that the bulk of research on the link between framing and movements has focused on this variable feature, yielding a long list of specific types of collective action frames (Benford 1997:414–15). Although we do not question the analytical utility of identifying and elaborating new types of collective action frames, this particular focus appears to have yielded diminishing returns in terms of contributing to the accumulation of knowledge regarding movement framing dynamics.

A few studies have attended comparatively to variations in problem identification and attributions across social movements, SMOs, and/or time (e.g. Benford & Valadez 1998, Berbrier 1998, Ellingson 1995, Evans 1997, Marullo et al 1996, Mooney & Hunt 1996, Taylor 1999). For instance, Gerhards & Rucht (1992) reported differences between two late-1980s West German mobilization campaigns with respect to the number of problems activists identified. They hypothesize that the “larger the range of problems covered by a frame, the larger the range of social groups that can be addressed with the frame and the greater the mobilization capacity of the frame” (p. 580). They qualify their hypothesis by suggesting that it would hold only to the extent that the various problems covered by a frame could be “plausibly connected to one another.”

***Flexibility and Rigidity, Inclusivity and Exclusivity*** Collective action frames may vary in the degree to which they are relatively exclusive, rigid, inelastic, and restricted or relatively inclusive, open, elastic, and elaborated in terms of the number of themes or ideas they incorporate and articulate. Hypothetically, the more inclusive and flexible collective action frames are, the more likely they are to function as or evolve into “master frames” (discussed below).

***Variation in Interpretive Scope and Influence*** The scope of the collective action frames associated with most movements is limited to the interests of a particular group or to a set of related problems. However, some collective action frames are quite broad in terms of scope, functioning as a kind of master algorithm that colors and constrains the orientations and activities of other movements. We have



referred to such generic frames as “master frames,” in contrast to more common movement-specific collective action frames that may be derivative from master frames (Snow & Benford 1992). We also distinguish the foregoing conceptualization of master frames from another common usage of the term as an SMO’s general, central, or primary frame (Gerhards & Rucht 1992, Johnston 1991, Meyer 1995, Voss 1996). This type of collective action frame would seem to be more aptly referred to as an “organizational frame” (Evans 1997:454) or a movement-specific frame. Just because a particular SMO develops a primary frame that contributes to successful mobilization does not mean that that frame would have similar utility for other movements or SMOs. Only a handful of collective action frames have been identified as being sufficiently broad in interpretive scope, inclusivity, flexibility, and cultural resonance to function as master frames, including rights frames (Valocchi 1996, Williams & Williams 1995), choice frames (Davies 1999), injustice frames (Carroll & Ratner 1996a,b, Gamson et al 1982), environmental justice frames (Cable & Shriver 1995, Čapek 1993), culturally pluralist frames (Berbier 1998, Davies 1999), sexual terrorism frames (Jenness & Broad 1994), oppositional frames (Blum-Kulka & Liebes 1993, Coy & Woehle 1996), hegemonic frames (Blum-Kulka & Liebes 1993), and a “return to Democracy” frame (Noonan 1995). Noonan’s study of the mobilization of women against the state in Chile illustrates the importance of both flexibility and inclusivity with respect to variation in the mobilizing potency of master frames and their relationship to specific social movements and their collective action frames. She found, for example, that while the leftist master frame of the 1950s and 1960s was not as robust as it might have been because it focused only on working class issues and did not accommodate feminism, its subsequent repression and the eventual emergence of the more elaborated and inclusive “return to democracy” master frame in the 1980s created space for a variety of movement-specific frames, including feminism. Such findings show that master frames may indeed vary in terms of how inclusive and flexible they are, and thus in their interpretive scope, and that this variability can affect the mobilization of some aggrieved groups in comparison to others. According to Swart (1995), frames that have been adopted by two or more distinctive movements, and thus function as master frames, exist not only because of the aforementioned qualities but also because they are “culturally resonant to their historical milieu” (p. 446).

**Resonance** The fourth major way in which collective action frames can vary is in terms of the degree of resonance. The concept of resonance is relevant to the issue of the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings, thereby attending to the question of why some framings seem to be effective or “resonate” while others do not (Snow & Benford 1988). Two sets of interacting factors account for variation in degree of frame resonance: credibility of the proffered frame and its relative salience.

The credibility of any framing is a function of three factors: frame consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators or claimsmakers. A

frame's consistency refers to the congruency between an SMO's articulated beliefs, claims, and actions. Thus, inconsistency can manifest itself in two ways: in terms of apparent contradictions among beliefs or claims; and in terms of perceived contradictions among framings and tactical actions (as between what the SMO says and what it does). Hypothetically, the greater and more transparent the apparent contradictions in either realm, the less resonant the proffered framing(s) and the more problematic the mobilization. To date, little research has been conducted on this frame resonance factor, although there are some hints of it in the literature. Zuo & Benford (1995) found that one factor that contributed to the rapid mass mobilization of ordinary Chinese citizens in 1989 was the perceived consistency between what the student activists asserted in their public framings and their behavior at Tiananmen Square compared with the apparent inconsistencies between what state elites claimed and their actual policies. In a study of Operation Rescue (an "antiabortion rights" organization), Johnson (1997) found that inconsistencies between the group's framings regarding nonviolent direct action and their tactical actions, which violate traditional tenets of nonviolent philosophy, have created inconsistencies that mute the prospect of broader support.

A second factor affecting frame resonance has to do with the empirical credibility of the collective action frame. This refers to the apparent fit between the framings and events in the world. The issue here is not whether diagnostic and prognostic claims are actually factual or valid, but whether their empirical referents lend themselves to being read as "real" indicators of the diagnostic claims (Snow & Benford 1988; but see Gamson 1992b). Can the claims be empirically verified? Is there something out there that can be pointed to as evidence of the claim embedded in the framing? Hypothetically, the more culturally believable the claimed evidence, and the greater the number of slices of such evidence, the more credible the framing and the broader its appeal. The important point is not that the claimed connection has to be generally believable, but that it must be believable to some segment of prospective or actual adherents. A prime example of this was illustrated in the case of the Heaven's Gate "cult," whose members committed mass suicide predicated on the belief that trailing behind a comet was a space craft in which they would ascend to heaven (Maniscalco 1997). In the case of the more broad-based Chinese democracy movement, student activists were able to point to the political reforms in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev as evidence that calls for similar reforms in the People's Republic were within the realm of possibility (Zuo & Benford 1995). While these examples suffice to lend support to Jasper & Poulsen's (1995:496) assertion that "empirical credibility is in the eyes of the beholder," it also is the case that the difficulties some movements experience in expanding their ranks is likely to be due in part to the empirical incredibility of their framings to more than a small cadre of people.

The final factor affecting the credibility of a collective action frame has to do with the perceived credibility of frame articulators. It is a well-established fact in the social psychology of communication that speakers who are regarded as

more credible are generally more persuasive (Hovland & Weiss 1951, Aronson & Golden 1962). Variables such as status and knowledge about the issue in question have been found to be associated with persuasiveness (Hass 1981, McGuire 1985). Hypothetically, the greater the status and/or perceived expertise of the frame articulator and/or the organization they represent from the vantage point of potential adherents and constituents, the more plausible and resonant the framings or claims. In his study of the nuclear disarmament movement, Benford (1987) observed that peace groups would enlist former members of the defense establishment, such as Admiral Eugene Carroll, Daniel Ellsberg, and John Stockwell, to speak at rallies and press conferences so as to enhance the apparent credibility of the movement's claims. In a related vein, Coy & Woehrlé (1996) report that during the Persian Gulf War, peace movement activists frequently engaged in a "credentialing process" whereby they would highlight the credentials of the organizations they represented.

In addition to issues of credibility, the resonance of a collective action frame is affected by its salience to targets of mobilization. Three dimensions of salience have been identified: centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity (Snow & Benford 1988). Centrality has to do with how essential the beliefs, values, and ideas associated with movement frames are to the lives of the targets of mobilization. Research on values and beliefs indicates that they are typically arrayed in a hierarchy (Rokeach 1973, Williams 1970). Hypothetically, the more central or salient the espoused beliefs, ideas, and values of a movement to the targets of mobilization, the greater the probability of their mobilization. Sherkat & Ellison's (1997) examination of conservative Protestant's organized opposition to pornography provides indirect support for this proposition. And although the literature lacks a direct test of the relative importance of this variable to successful mobilization, a few studies appear to confirm it (e.g. Carroll & Ratner 1996a, Donovan 1995, Evans 1997).

Experiential commensurability constitutes a second factor contributing to a collective action frame's salience. Are movement framings congruent or resonant with the personal, everyday experiences of the targets of mobilization? Or are the framings too abstract and distant from the lives and experiences of the targets? Hypothetically, the more experientially commensurate the framings, the greater their salience, and the greater the probability of mobilization. This proposition has received support from both activists (e.g. Alinsky 1971) and researchers (Babb 1996, Erwin 1993, Zuo & Benford 1995). For instance, Czech women's experiences in the 1980s under state socialism appear to have undermined the resonance of feminist framings in post-Communist Czech Republic in the 1990s. Heitlinger (1996:83) explains:

The conflict between the demands of home and work, the stress and exhaustion caused by excessive obligations, as well as the discrimination against women in the workplace, led many to reject the goal of women's equality itself. These attitudes were reinforced by the fact that women's

paid employment were chosen as goals not by women themselves but were imposed on them by the unpopular communist party-state.

Heitlinger's study is also methodologically instructive for movement framing researchers because it constitutes one of the few studies that examines the failure of framing attempts.

The last factor that appears to have significant impact on frame resonance is narrative fidelity. To what extent are the proffered framings culturally resonant? To what extent do they resonate with the targets' cultural narrations, or what Campbell (1988) would call its "myths," Gouldner (1970) its "domain assumptions," and Rudé (1980) "inherent ideology" in contrast to its "derived ideology"? When such correspondence exists, framings can be said to have what has been termed "narrative fidelity" (Fisher 1984). Hypothetically, the greater the narrative fidelity of the proffered framings, the greater their salience and the greater the prospect of mobilization.

The importance to mobilization of constructing collective action frames that have narrative fidelity—or "cultural resonance," the preferred term of several movement framing researchers—has been confirmed by a plethora of studies across a wide array of social movements, including the Central American refugee sanctuary movement (Park 1998), the contemporary white separatist movement (Berbrier 1998), the liturgical movement in the Vatican II Catholic church (McCallion & Maines 1999), a US antitoxics/incinerator movement (Kubal 1998), the eighteenth-century slavery abolitionist movement in Great Britain (D'Anjou & Van Male 1998), and the aforementioned women's movement in Chile (Noonan 1995) and democracy movement in China (Zuo & Benford 1995). By contrast, Valocchi (1996) found that the civil rights movement's "rights frame" and the associated integrationist ideology emerged from internal battles not over which of the competing frames engendered the greatest cultural resonance but rather from materialist and political considerations regarding "who controlled important sources of funding, which organization was able to court favor with political elites, and which organizations were actively repressed by those political elites" (p. 126). Taken together, the foregoing studies appear to address the frequently repeated criticism of movement framing research for its failure to take seriously the constraints that "culture out there" imposes on social movement framing activity (e.g. Hart 1996, Jasper 1997, Swidler 1995, Williams & Kubal 1999).

## FRAMING PROCESSES AND DYNAMICS

We now turn to a selective review of the literature on framing processes and dynamics. We begin by examining the processes associated with the development, generation, and elaboration of collective action frames, and then we examine how frames are diffused across movements, cultures, and time.

## Frame Development, Generation, and Elaboration

Hart (1996), among others (Fine 1995, Johnston 1995, Steinberg 1998), has correctly noted that, beyond examining how activists select “frame characteristics that will be appealing to potential participants,” little is known about how “frames get made” (Hart 1996:95). The literature now appears to offer extensive insights into a number of the processes associated with frame development and innovation (e.g. Cable & Shriver 1995, Čapek 1993, Gamson 1992a, Gamson et al 1982, Johnston & Snow 1998, Kubal 1998, Neuman 1998, Triandafyllidou & Fotiou 1998, White 1999, Zdravomyslova 1996; DA Snow & J Miller, unpublished data). What this literature suggests is that frames are developed, generated, and elaborated on not only via attending to the three core framing tasks discussed above, but also by way of three sets of overlapping processes that can be conceptualized as discursive, strategic, and contested.

***Discursive Processes*** Discursive processes refer to the talk and conversations—the speech acts—and written communications of movement members that occur primarily in the context of, or in relation to, movement activities. Collective action frames are generated by two basic interactive, discursive processes: frame articulation and frame amplification or punctuation. Frame articulation involves the connection and alignment of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and compelling fashion. Slices of observed, experienced, and/or recorded “reality” are assembled, collated, and packaged. What gives the resultant collective action frame its novelty is not so much the originality or newness of its ideational elements, but the manner in which they are spliced together and articulated, such that a new angle of vision, vantage point, and/or interpretation is provided.

The frame amplification process involves accenting and highlighting some issues, events, or beliefs as being more salient than others. These punctuated or accented elements may function in service of the articulation process by providing a conceptual handle or peg for linking together various events and issues. In operating in this fashion, these punctuated issues, beliefs, and events may function much like synecdoches, bringing into sharp relief and symbolizing the larger frame or movement of which it is a part. Movement slogans such as “Liberte, Fraternite, Egalilte,” “Power to the People,” “We Shall Overcome,” and “Homeless, Not Helpless” illustrate this function.

There are few studies of these processes. One such exception is Gamson’s study (1992a) of how ordinary people discuss and frame political ideas in the context of focus groups. Another is the ethnographic examination (DA Snow & J Miller, unpublished data) of how the discursive processes of frame articulation and amplification have contributed to the development, elaboration, and maintenance of a number of overlapping collective action frames within a radical, right-wing group in Arizona. This research indicates that collective action frames are continuously reconstituted during the course of interaction that occurs in the context

of movement gatherings and campaigns, and that the key to understanding the evolution of frames resides in the articulation and amplification processes rather than in the topics or issues comprising the frames. The problem with such research is that it is highly labor intensive, requiring not only fieldwork over time but access to and retrieval of the discourse that is part and parcel of the framing process.

***Strategic Processes*** Much more empirical attention has been devoted to the strategic processes associated with social movement framing. By strategic processes, we refer to framing processes that are deliberative, utilitarian, and goal directed: Frames are developed and deployed to achieve a specific purpose—to recruit new members, to mobilize adherents, to acquire resources, and so forth. Strategic efforts by social movement organizations to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of prospective constituents and actual or prospective resource providers were initially conceptualized as “frame alignment processes” (Snow et al 1986). Four basic alignment processes have been identified and researched: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation.

Frame bridging refers to the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem. 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. Although there has been little systematic focus on this frame alignment strategy, we suspect that this is among the most prevalent of framing strategies. McCallion & Maines (1999) report that the liturgical movement within the Catholic Church relied extensively on frame bridging by using the Catholic academic world to link sentiment pools of lay professionals and clergy to the liturgical renewal movement. Gerhards & Rucht (1992) found that West German activists mobilizing against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund successfully bridged their frames with those of peace, ecology, women’s, neighborhood, and labor movement groups.

Frame amplification involves the idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs. Given that one of the key factors affecting whether or not a proffered frame resonates with potential constituents has to do with the extent to which the frame taps into existing cultural values, beliefs, narratives, folk wisdom, and the like, it is not surprising to find that most movements seek to amplify extant beliefs and values (McCallion & Maines 1999, Park 1998, Reese 1996, Skillington 1997, Weed 1997, Williams 1995, Zuo & Benford 1995). And while frame amplification seems to be deemed necessary for most movement mobilizations, it appears to be particularly relevant to movements reliant on conscience constituents who are strikingly different from the movement beneficiaries (Paulsen & Glumm 1995) and to movements that have been stigmatized because their beliefs and/or values contradict the dominant culture’s core values (Berbrier 1998). In the case of the latter, Berbrier’s (1998) analysis

of “new racist” rhetoric revealed that contemporary white separatists employed a host of frame amplification tactics in an attempt to transform the stigma of white supremacy by deploying “ethnic affectations” such as “love,” “pride,” and “heritage preservation.”

Frame extension entails depicting an SMO’s interests and frame(s) as extending beyond its primary interests to include issues and concerns that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents. Empirical examinations of frame extension indicate that although movements often employ this alignment strategy (Carroll & Ratner 1996b, Davies 1999), it is subject to various hazards and constraints. McCallion & Maines (1999) and Benford (1993a) report that frame extension activities spawned increases in intramural conflicts and disputes within movements regarding issues of ideological “purity,” efficiency, and “turf.” In their historical analysis of the American Federation of Labor (1881–1955), Cornfield & Fletcher (1998) conclude that the “actions of institutional actors in the market and polity seemed to constrain and compel the AFL to extend its frame among potential adherents” (p. 1317). Babb’s (1996) study of the US labor movement (1866–1886) demonstrates how a movement’s constituents can extend the movement’s frame, which in turn “can lead to instability in the movement” when the extended frame turns out to be “unpalatable to movement leaders” (p. 1046). These studies serve to underscore the fact that movement framing processes are frequently contested and negotiated processes, not always under the tight control of movement elites, and that employing a particular alignment strategy does not always yield the desired results.

Frame transformation, the final strategic alignment process, refers to changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones. Few movement studies deal explicitly with this form of frame alignment. One recent notable exception is White’s (1999) participant observation study of a Black feminist collective’s attempts to overturn various racist and sexist myths regarding rape, and to transform public understanding of the seriousness of rape, especially within an African American community. In addition to constructing a powerful and compelling counterdiagnosis of the problem of sexual assault, the collective “countered rape myths with FBI statistics and social science research in an attempt to lend ‘empirical credibility’ to [their] frame transformation efforts” (p. 86).

**Contested Processes** There is widespread agreement among movement framing researchers that the development, generation, and elaboration of collective action frames are contested processes. All actors within the collective action arena who engage in this reality construction work are embroiled in the politics of signification. This means that activists are not able to construct and impose on their intended targets any version of reality they would like; rather there are a variety of challenges confronting all those who engage in movement framing activities. Thus far the literature elaborates on three forms these challenges tend to take: counterframing by movement opponents, bystanders, and the media; frame disputes within movements; and the dialectic between frames and events.

The very existence of a social movement indicates differences within a society regarding the meaning of some aspect of reality (Benford 1993a). Those who oppose the changes advocated by a movement sometimes publicly challenge the movement's diagnostic and prognostic framings. Attempts "to rebut, undermine, or neutralize a person's or group's myths, versions of reality, or interpretive framework" have been referred to as counterframing (Benford 1987:75). Opponents' counterframes, in turn, often spawn reframing activity by the movement: attempts "to ward off, contain, limit, or reverse potential damage to the movement's previous claims or attributes" (Benford & Hunt 1994). Such square-offs between movements and their detractors have been referred to as "framing contests" (Ryan 1991).

Although the literature is replete with references to and descriptions of counterframing tactics (Benford & Hunt 1994, Freudenberg & Gramling 1994, Zuo & Benford 1995) and framing contests (Coles 1998, Davies 1999, Krogman 1996, Neuman 1998, Williams 1995), these studies fail to shed much light on the factors that tend to shape the outcomes of such contests, other than stating or implying the tautology that those who won employed the most resonant framings. One thing we do know, however, is that these framing contests occur within complex, multi-organizational—and sometimes multi-institutional—arenas (McAdam 1996, Meyer 1995), that movement actors often take this fact into account (Ellingson 1995, Evans 1997), and that social movement framing activity and the extent of its resonance are affected by the cultural and political environment, including the framings/counterframings of institutional elites (McAdam 1996).

Perhaps the most well-studied topic related to counterframing/framing contests is the subject of movements and media framing. Indeed, how the mass media framed movements of the 1960s was the first topic researched by scholars drawing on the framing concept (Gitlin 1977, 1980, Tuchman 1978). Since this topic has recently been the subject of extensive reviews (Gamson et al 1992, Gamson & Wolsfeld 1993, Ryan 1991, Scheufele 1999), we do not review that literature here. Suffice it to say, in the present context of contested meanings, that social movement activists rarely exercise much control over the "stories" media organizations choose to cover (Entman & Rojecki 1993, McCarthy et al 1996) or how the media represent the activists' claims (Baylor 1996, Gamson & Modigliani 1989, Klandermans & Goslinga 1996).

Framing contests not only take place between movements and their opponents, they can also occur internally. Following Goffman's (1974) use of the term, Benford (1993a) referred to intramovement disagreements regarding diagnoses and prognoses as "frame disputes." These are essentially disputes over reality (present or projected). A third type of dispute, referred to as "frame resonance disputes," entails disagreements regarding "how reality should be presented so as to maximize mobilization" (Benford 1993a:691). Analyzing disputes within the Austin (Texas) nuclear disarmament movement, Benford found that frame disputes were a pervasive aspect of the movement's dynamics, shaping the movement's structure, interorganizational relations, and collective identity construction. He concluded



that the intramural conflicts were both detrimental and facilitative of movements and their SMOs. Other scholars have reported similar findings within the US anti-death penalty movement (Haines 1996), the 1920s Ku Klux Klan (Jessup 1997), a Black feminist collective (White 1999), and the US labor movement (Clemens 1996).

The final way in which movement framings can be contested, and thus modified or transformed, concerns the dialectic tension between collective action frames and collective action events. This dynamic was well illustrated by Ellingson's (1995) analysis of public discourse and riots about abolitionism in antebellum Cincinnati. He found that initial framings helped to legitimate and make possible some forms of action and, conversely, how collective action transformed the meaning and the structure of the discourse, thereby limiting subsequent opportunities for collective action. Thus the discourse affects the events which, in turn, "... may change the underlying ideas or beliefs that make up the discourses and frames used by movement actors, resignify which set of collective beliefs are salient, and alter the meaning of actors' interests—all of which affect the power of a particular discourse or frame" (Ellison 1995:136). Ellingson's analysis suggests the need to develop a more complex model of the relationship between collective action frames and collective action than has traditionally been assumed.

## Frame Diffusion

Thus far we have examined the literature concerning the discursive, strategic, and contested processes associated with the development, generation, and elaboration of collective action frames. We now turn to the role of framing in diffusion processes. How do movement ideas, collective action frames, and practices spread from one movement to another, and from one culture to another? How do framing processes affect the diffusion of movement beliefs, objects, and practices? Extrapolating from recent theorizing on cross-national diffusion in the social movement arena (Snow & Benford 1999), framing activity is most relevant to social movement diffusion processes when only one party in the process—either the transmitter or the adopter—takes an active role in the process, or when the conditions of similarity or compatibility between transmitters and potential adopters are not given but are problematic and in need of construction. When these conditions are present, there are two ideal types of social movement diffusion processes in which the objects of diffusion—whether cultural ideas, items, or practices—are framed so as to enhance the prospect of their resonance with the host or target culture: strategic selection or adaptation and strategic fitting or accommodation. Strategic selection encompasses situations in which there is intentional cross-cultural borrowing, with the adopter or importer assuming the role of an active agent in the process, strategically selecting and adapting the borrowed item to the new host context or culture. Strategic fitting encompasses situations in which there is intentional cross-cultural promotion, with the transmitter actively engaged in tailoring and fitting the objects or practices of diffusion to the host culture.

To date, few movement framing scholars have considered diffusion issues. Jenness & Broad (1994) and Jenness (1995) examined how the gay/lesbian movement strategically selected and adapted collective action frames from the women's movement concerning "sexual terrorism" in order to define violence against gays/lesbians as a social problem. Borrowing the assertion from the women's movement that "*all* women are at risk at all times," the movement's "educational efforts and street patrols underscore the notion that gays and lesbians—as well as any one presumed to be gay or lesbian—are at risk at all times" (Jenness & Broad 1994:417).

## CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINTS AND FACILITATION

Taken together, research on the core framing processes indicates that collective action frames are not static, reified entities but are continuously being constituted, contested, reproduced, transformed, and/or replaced during the course of social movement activity. Hence, framing is a dynamic, ongoing process. But this process does not occur in a structural or cultural vacuum. Rather, framing processes are affected by a number of elements of the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded. Although hypothetically any number of such factors might affect framing processes and the character and continuity of the resultant frames, the literature points to three factors that are particularly important: political opportunity structure, cultural opportunities and constraints, and the targeted audiences.

### Political Opportunity Structure

One of the major foci of social movement research and theory over the past 25 years has concerned the relationship between changes in the structure of political opportunities, especially changes in the institutional structure and/or informal relations of a political system, and movement mobilization (McAdam et al 1996). The movement framing literature has also attended to such macro factors by investigating how political opportunity structures constrain and facilitate collective action frames (Anheier et al 1998, Benford & Valadez 1998, Evans 1997, Flam 1996, Johnston & Snow 1998, Marullo et al 1996). In their historical analysis of agrarian mobilization in the United States, for example, Mooney & Hunt (1996) found that some agrarian master frames, such as "agrarian fundamentalism," contained logical structures and fidelity qualities that contributed to their sustained resonance, even during times of contracting political opportunities, in contrast to the "competitive capitalism" and "producer" master frames that were subject to declining resonance among farmers as the agrarian economy changed. Thus, for some frames, changes in material conditions led to changes in frame resonance, which in turn led to reframing; for other frames, they found continuity across several decades of agrarian mobilizations.

## Cultural Opportunities and Constraints

Just as the political opportunity structure constrains and facilitates movement frames and framing activities, so too does the cultural context in which movement activity is embedded. This is a central thesis in the work of Jasper (1997) and Goodwin & Jasper (1999), among others. In their critique of political process theory, and particularly its emphasis on political opportunity structures, Goodwin & Jasper (1999:48) contend that the perspective's proponents have erred in incorporating and privileging "frame analysis as the preferred form, much less only form, of cultural inquiry for the study of social movements" because it reifies culture and ignores the ways in which culture shapes framing processes as well as political opportunities. Since we attended in part to this issue earlier when we discussed "narrative fidelity" and "cultural resonance," here we briefly clarify culture's role with respect to framing processes.

The cultural material most relevant to movement framing processes include the extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives, and the like, all of which can be construed as part of Swidler's metaphorical "tool kit" (1986), and thus which constitute the cultural resource base from which new cultural elements are fashioned, such as innovative collective action frames, as well as the lens through which framings are interpreted and evaluated. From this perspective, movements are "both consumers of existing cultural meanings and producers of new meanings" (Tarrow 1992:189). As Tarrow (1998:118) elaborates:

Then lessons of the civil rights movement is that the symbols of revolt are not drawn like musty costumes from a cultural closet and arrayed before the public. Nor are new meanings unrolled out of whole cloth. The costumes of revolt are woven from a blend of inherited and invented fibers into collective action frames in confrontation with opponents and elites.

Several recent movement studies lend support to this conception of the recursive relationship between extant culture and movement frames (Berbrier 1998, d'Anjou 1998, Kubal 1998, Nepstad 1997, Platt & Fraser 1998, Taylor 1999). Davies (1999) analyzed a contemporary movement in Ontario that had been lobbying the provincial government to fund separate religious schools. In doing so, they drew on extant frames grounded in traditional cultural values and myths and fashioned new frames based on emerging values. Mindful of the changing political cultural supporting "multiculturalism," activists reframed religion as culture in need of protection. But also mindful of the value/myth of individual freedom to choose, they argued that parents should be allowed to choose whether or not their children attended secular or religious schools. Fusing "these two frames—multiculturalism and school choice—is doubly strategic because it allows one to assert the rights of collectivities (to have their cultures accommodated) and individuals (to demand particular schools)" (Davies 1999:9). The lessons drawn from these studies are that changing cultural resonances and collective action frames reciprocally influence one another and that framing processes typically reflect wider cultural continuities and changes.

## Audience Effects

It has long been taken as a given in communication studies that the target of the message can affect the form and content of the message. In the social movement arena, activists and targeted audiences interact. Moreover, movements find it necessary to appeal to multiple audiences who vary in terms of their relative interests, values, beliefs, and knowledge, as well as with respect to which of the various movement or countermovement roles they can potentially play.

The movement framing literature suggests that the audience(s) targeted are one of the major contextual factors that help explain why movements seek, from time to time, to modify their collective action frames. Several researchers have observed how factors relevant to the targets of mobilization can precipitate frame transformations (Coy & Woehrlé 1996, Ellingson 1995, Evans 1997). In his extensive investigation of the civil rights movement, McAdam (1996) noted how various “reference publics,” including segregationists, the media, the public, and the federal government, affected movement framing activities. From their study of environmental controversies related to incinerator settings, Walsh et al (1993) concluded that “early framing of protest ideology to appeal to wider publics (e.g., recycling vs. NIMBY), may be more important factors in determining the outcome of grass-roots protests in environmental disputes” than various “static variables such as a host community’s socioeconomic status, its degree of organization, its level of discontent . . . and the proposed facility’s size” (pp. 36–37). Following Goffman (1959), other movement scholars have pointed out how activists adjust frames depending on whether the audience targeted is in the back or the front region (Benford & Hunt 1992, Kubal 1998). Along similar lines, Jasper & Poulsen’s (1995) research on the animal rights and anti-nuclear movements demonstrates how different mechanisms work to recruit strangers and friends. Such studies clearly indicate that the dynamic relationship between collective action frames and audiences warrants additional analytical attention from movement researchers.

## FRAMING CONSEQUENCES FOR OTHER MOVEMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Having considered how various contextual factors constrain and facilitate framing processes in the previous section, we now turn to a brief examination of the consequences or implications of framing processes. Our focus is not on the effects of framing processes with respect to micro- and meso-mobilization and differential recruitment and participation. These effects, which have been theorized and demonstrated empirically, constituted a central rationale for this review in the first place. Rather, we examine the effects or consequences of framing processes and their resultant collective action frames for other movement-related processes and outcomes. Although this connection could be explored with respect to almost any aspect of the operation and functioning of social movements, the literature, albeit somewhat sparse on this topic, mainly addresses three sets of implications:

one with respect to political opportunity, a second pertaining to individual and collective identity, and the third concerning movement-specific outcomes.

### Framing and Political Opportunity

Although political opportunity structures can constrain or facilitate collective action framing processes, the degree or extent of political opportunity in any society is seldom, if ever, a clear and easily read structural entity. Rather, its existence and openness is subject to debate and interpretation and can thus be framed by movement actors as well as by others. In fact, Gamson & Meyer (1996) suggest that movement actors do this routinely, asserting that “the framing of political opportunity is . . . [a] central component of collective action frames” (p. 285). Indeed, to proffer a collective action frame is to suggest that an opportunity to affect social change exists, and that people are “potential agents of their own history” (Gamson & Meyer 1996:285). Moreover, if “movement activists interpret political space in ways that emphasize opportunity rather than constraint, they may stimulate actions that change opportunity, making their opportunity frame a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Gamson & Meyer 1996:287). Diani’s (1996) research on Italy’s Northern League lends support to Gamson & Meyer’s proposition, as does Goodwin & Jasper’s (1999) critique of the political opportunity perspective.

To argue that framing processes and political opportunity are linked interactively is not to suggest that political opportunities are purely socially constructed entities. It is to argue, however, that the extent to which they constrain or facilitate collective action is partly contingent on how they are framed by movement actors as well as others (Koopmans & Duyvendak 1995).

### Framing and Individual and Collective Identity

One of the major themes permeating the movement literature in recent years is the contention that an understanding of identity processes, and particularly collective identity, is fundamental to understanding the dynamics of social movements (e.g. Jasper 1997, Melucci 1989, Snow & Oliver 1995, Taylor & Whittier 1992). This recent interest in the connection between identity and movements is stimulated in part not only by the rise of identity-based movements during the past several decades, but also by the very real, longstanding connection between identity and movement participation. As Gamson (1992b) has noted regarding this linkage, “[c]leansed of its assumptions about a spoiled or ersatz identity, there is a central insight that remains. Participation in social movements frequently involves enlargement of personal identity for participation and offers fulfillment and realization of the self” (p. 56).

While few would argue with Gamon’s contention, the question of how participation precipitates the enlargement of personal identity, or the correspondence between individual and collective identities, has not been satisfactorily answered by scholars investigating this linkage. In exploring this issue, Snow & McAdam (2000) have suggested that collective action framing processes constitute a central mechanism facilitating this linkage. The reason for this is that identity constructions

are an inherent feature of the framing process. As Hunt et al (1994) have noted, “not only do framing processes link individuals and groups ideologically but they proffer, buttress, and embellish identities that range from collaborative to conflictual” (p. 185). Framing processes do this in two ways: at a general level, “by situating or placing relevant sets of actors in time and space and by attributing characteristics to them that suggest specifiable relationships and lines of action” (Hunt et al 1994:185); and, at a more concrete level, during the course of identity talk among adherents and activists (Hunt & Benford 1994) and other movement activities, such as preparing press releases and making public pronouncements. Framing processes are not the only mechanism that accounts for the correspondence between personal and collective identities, of course, but it can be argued both theoretically and empirically that it is one of several mechanisms that facilitates this alignment and thus the enlargement of personal identity in movement contexts.

### **Framing and Specific-Movement Outcomes**

Social movements presumably emerge in order to advance the interests of their adherents or beneficiaries by securing specifiable objectives typically conceptualized as outcomes. Research on this topic has identified several sets of factors (e.g. organization, tactical disruption, and political mediation) that appear to affect movements’ outcome attainment efforts (see Giugni 1998 for a summary). Although a number of studies have suggested the importance of framing processes in relation to movement goal attainment (Čapek 1993, Diani 1996, Reese 1996, Walsh et al 1993, Zdravomyslova 1996, Zuo & Benford 1995), there have been few systematic studies of the actual contribution of framing processes. The one exception is Cress & Snow’s (2000) investigation of how organizational, tactical, political, and framing variables interact and combine to account for differences in the outcomes attained by 15 homeless social movement organizations active in eight US cities. Of the four sets of independent variables, robust diagnostic and/or prognostic frames were found to be the most persistently present condition across the six pathways leading to the attainment of one or more of four different types of outcomes, with no other condition present in more than three of the pathways. While a single study such as this hardly demonstrates conclusively the importance of framing processes to outcome attainment for movements in general, it certainly suggests that for some movements, framing processes are critical to the attainment of desired outcomes. As well, it calls for further investigation of the relationship between framing processes and the goal attainment efforts of different varieties of movements.

### **CONCLUSION**

At the outset we raised two orienting questions. Does the literature congeal or hang together in a fashion suggestive of a coherent, albeit still evolving, perspective that contributes to a more thoroughgoing and integrated understanding of the

relationship between framing processes and the operation of social movements? And does this evolving perspective cast analytic light on aspects of movement dynamics that other perspectives have glossed over or failed to illuminate altogether? Based on our review and assessment of the burgeoning literature on social movement framing processes, we think the answer to each question is affirmative. To assert this is not to claim that there are not unresolved issues and questions, however. Thus, we conclude with an itemization of a number of the more glaring unresolved issues and concerns, each of which warrants further inquiry: the discursive and narrative processes generative of collective action frames (Fisher 1997, Polletta 1998, Steinberg 1998); the relationship between framing and emotions (Berbrier 1998, Jasper 1997); the relationship between framing processes and movement types (Jasper 1997, Snow et al 1998); the relationship between collective action frames and actual collective action (Ellingson 1995); and methodologies for investigating framing processes and conducting frame analysis (Johnston 1995, Gerhards 1995).

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