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Hot Movements, Cold Cognition: Thinking about Social Movements in Gendered Frames*

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Framing theories begin from the assumption that language matters politically. Analyses of gender have suggested that language often carries masculinist assumptions and normative judgments that pass as neutral concepts. In this paper, we connect these two perspectives. In particular, we suggest that gender-conventional conceptions obscure important elements of understanding

political thought at multiple levels of analysis, as well as biasing the process of framing research questions about social movements. We argue that uncovering the gender dimension in political discourse would not only to bring women more fully into the picture but also correct partial and politically biased understandings of "political man." The questions we raise here about the future of framing thus arise from our feminist concerns about the discipline of sociology as a whole.

Our specific objective in this essay is to use critical ideas about gender to address the literature on framing in social movements. By investigating the often-unexamined assumptions

* The authors especially want to thank Marita McComisky for her emphasis over the years on the passionate side of protest, as well as William A. Gamson, Davita Silfen Glasberg, Carol McClurg Mueller, and the editors of *Contemporary Sociology* for their helpful comments on earlier drafts.

about people and thinking that come together in this literature, we hope to clarify both what framing analyses have to offer researchers interested in gender and social change and what gender analyses have to offer students of political ideas. We contend that gender studies could benefit from the conceptual work that has already been done on frames and framing in general, while we can enrich social movement research by recognizing when and how their models may slip gendered concepts in through the back door. We particularly want to foreground concerns that we see as being "framed out" of the standard approaches to social movements. Consequently, we seek to place gender and gender politics in a central position in our thinking about social movements and framing, instead of adding on a concern with women and women's movements and "stirring" these bits into the male-defined "whole."

Framing is a central concept in current social movements research. The 1990s have been the decade of bringing ideas back into the study of social movements. As Oliver and Johnston (1999) argue, recent research on movements frequently has taken the concept of framing as a central point of departure, even though what framing means and what a frame analysis can be used for analytically are still very much points of debate. We do not attempt to review the entire literature on framing, a task already accomplished well both by Oliver and Johnston (1999) and by Benford (1997). Instead, we take up certain points raised in their excellent reviews and relate them to an expanded model of political thinking. We suggest that this model could enrich our capacity to analyze gender politics and also challenge some gendered limitations imbedded in the concepts of discourses, ideologies, and frames.

Framing a Model of Framing

Recent reviews of the framing literature express concern over researchers' tendency to use framing as an all-encompassing concept and to produce long lists of ideas at varying levels of generality that are all called "frames" (Benford 1997). Oliver and Johnston (1999) further suggest that an important distinction exists among frames, framing, and ideology. We agree with Oliver and Johnston on the usefulness of separating these concepts, but also add a fourth analytic category that is also often collapsed into the concept of a frame: discourse. We find it use-

ful to think of these concepts as interrelated in both content and specificity.

Using the image of an inverted pyramid for illustration, we place discourses at the top. Discourses are broad systems of communication that link concepts together in a web of relationships through an underlying logic (e.g., medical discourse is a way to communicate about the conditions of the body that focuses on specifying "diseases" and "cures" as part of its fundamental logic). Discourses also are inherently riddled with conflict, controversy, and negotiation over the meaning of specific words and ideas, because they include a variety of speakers with different interests and orientations who are communicating with each other (Gamson 1992; Steinberg 1999). Discourses may also have a gender logic—that is, they can be organized around and through their focus on specifying and explaining the relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity. Gender discourses include debates about equality and power, rights and privileges, sameness and difference. Gender discourses are thus inherently *political* discourses, not only because they include conflict and diverse standpoints (all discourses do) but because they debate what Harold Lasswell once defined as the core questions of politics: "who gets what, when and how?" (1958).

Ideologies are at the next lower level. Ideologies are considerably more coherent than discourses because they are organized around systematic ideas and normative claims. Oliver and Johnston define ideology as "any system of meaning that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with values and norms relevant to promoting or resisting change" (1999: 7). They stress how framing language fails to acknowledge the political interests connected to belief systems or the extensive thinking and learning that go into ideologies, turning movement ideational work into something that more resembles selling via sound bite than the rich and deep processes of building ideological commitments that carry activists through their entire lives. We particularly emphasize another of their ideas: that the concept of ideology acknowledges not only a cognitive but also a normative or value dimension. Adherents of an ideology understand social events in light of their general theory of society and act, feel, and think as a result of the values they link to these understandings. There are, of course, multiple gender ideologies available,

ranging from the Taliban's restrictive codes through Oprah Winfrey's warm and fuzzy picture of sex roles to deconstructionist feminist theory. The important point here is that ideologies always include values as well as ideas, and consequently imply feelings and actions, not only abstract thinking.

At the bottom of the pyramid are frames. For us, a frame is a cognitive ordering that relates events to one another: It is a way of talking and thinking about things that links idea elements into packages. Any one particular frame can be seized upon by multiple ideologies, but, as Oliver and Johnston argue, redescription of ideology in framing language obscures how and why frames are used. An important distinction Oliver and Johnston highlight between frames and ideologies is the value component in the latter: Frames specify *how* to think about things, but they don't point to *why* it matters. Frames, unlike ideologies, do not ground thinking in what is normatively good or bad about the situation, nor do they imply goals and objectives. Frames merely provide a certain cognitive focus and thus put certain elements or ideas "in the picture" or not. As cognitive social psychologists have shown, some such selective attention is always needed to make sense of what William James called otherwise "a blooming, buzzing confusion" of sensory input. Whether gender is framed as biological sex differences or as social roles, for example, does not answer the question of whether this framing is being used to support a feminist or antifeminist ideology.

We also distinguish frames from the framing process, or the ongoing cognitive activity of picking ideas from discourses and the social negotiations involved in writing, speaking, and composing communications that relate events, ideas, and actions to each other. The framing process is the mechanism by which discourses, ideologies, and frames are all connected. Framing is thus both strategic and social. The outcome of all the multiple activities of people and groups engaged in framing processes is the production of a discourse. While framing as continual process is important, we concur with Oliver and Johnston that often it is the "snapshot" of the frames at any specific point in time that is most amenable to study. However, in regard to gender framing, such snapshots are rarely more than inventories of gender beliefs or normative values in the form of attitude scales. A more complex model of how people organize,

use, and change their frames, discourses, and ideologies about gender is sorely lacking (but see Pratto 1999 for a sketch of what such a nonlinear model of cognition might look like applied to thinking about race).

Attention to the differences among discourses, ideologies, and frames can help sharpen our analysis of how culture, politics, and social psychology are linked in the production of gender, as the above examples indicate. But considering the covert gender biases in each of these concepts can do even more to clarify the analysis of how ideas matter in social movements and in politics more generally. Below, we consider how gender bias operates at each of these three levels as well as in the framing process that connects them.

Gender Challenges to Social Movement Frames

Beginning at the bottom of this pyramid, the concept of a "frame" itself suffers from gendered limitations in the way that social movement theorizing has developed. Framing analysis has developed from social psychological traditions that model cognition as "cold," using the detached and dispassionate observer as the standard actor (see critiques in Fiske 1981; Lawler and Thye 1999). Contemporary social psychologists have challenged this "cold cognition approach" to try to better incorporate values and emotions into their models, and researchers in this tradition have responded (Schwarz 1998). Social psychologists, especially those concerned with studying race and gender oppression, have begun to "warm up" their cognitive models to include the role of emotions in shaping perception for both dominant and subordinate groups (e.g., Sidanius and Pratto 1999).

Concern with integrating emotion and evaluation into analysis of perception has been especially eloquent when coupled with discussions about the separation of "reason" from emotion as expressing an androcentric political bias, which takes a certain historically specific image of "man" as the definition of what is "normal" human behavior. Even though actual men are far more varied in their cognitive and emotional life, the qualities associated with men (unemotional, calculating, individually self-interested, dominant, hierarchical) have often been framed uncritically as "rationality" and then preferred ideologically. As philosopher Alison Jaggar (1989) pointed out, defining rationality as the opposite of emotionality sets up a

gendered dichotomy that can be used to transfer to emotions the lower status of what is seen as feminine. This low status disallows the acknowledgment of values and feelings in both researchers and movement participants (but does not eliminate their actual significance for both). Men, of course, have values and emotions and bring them into their political work, but the gender bias attached to the concept of emotion tends to see it as lowering the quality of discourse and interfering with the ideal political process. Jaggar argues that emotion can also enrich perception, facilitate the discovery of values, and secure interpersonal communication through its expression as trust.

The emphasis in recent social movement theories on frames, the purely cognitive element in political discourse, implicitly excludes the "hotter" concepts of emotion and values from analysis, even when studies of the active process of framing make clear that passionate feelings are often involved in talking about injustice (Gamson 1992). The very idea of social movement activists as emotional human beings has been quite controversial. Social movement researchers from the collective behavior school of the 1950s and the resource mobilization school of the 1970s agreed that good political behavior should be "rational," and they evaluated movements on that basis. The former tended to discredit movements for what they perceived as their lack of rationality, and the latter to credit them with purely rational behavior. A. O. Hirschman's underappreciated book *The Passions and the Interests* (1977) explores the historical process of developing capitalism that allowed "self-interest" to be reframed from being a socially dangerous passion to being the bedrock of all virtues and the very definition of what it means to act rationally.

Imported into social movement research, the model of "cold cognition" combines with the androcentric value on self-interest (a nonpassionate and thus preferred form of motivation) to produce many studies of framing that treat social movement ideas as merely dispassionate thought. This approach thus leaves untouched the whole problem of connecting ideas to motivations for action. Without such a connection, the actors involved in social movements are less acting than acted upon. Thus we find it unsurprising that so much of the coldly cognitive analysis of framing takes a top-down view of ideas being presented to actors by organizations

in an almost manipulative fashion. In contrast, studies, such as Gamson's *Talking Politics* (1992), that focus on ordinary people's thinking show clearly not just "cold" cognitions but hot emotions at work in political judgments, especially in forging links among experiences, perceptions, and actions at the grassroots.

At its core, the problem that framing language presents is that it "cools" the analysis of movement thinking by separating it from the deeply felt passions and value commitments that motivate action. Social movement actors are actually "hot," or passionate about their causes; and studying movement ideas as if they could be isolated from the refining heat of engagement leads social movement researchers to neglect the effects that participation in protest events has on consciousness, as well as to underestimate the importance of finding out where and how passion arises. Verta Taylor (1995) has been among the most active and eloquent in calling for a more serious study of emotion in social movements, but her appeals often have been seen as applying only to the women's movement or to women in social movements because emotion is conceptually gendered as female (but see also Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, forthcoming).

Emotion is universally part of being human, and it is not necessarily a flaw or obstruction to reasoned action. It may indeed be quite the opposite. As Jaggar (1989) demonstrates, emotions and values are closely intertwined. The emotions of social actors are aroused precisely because their understanding of events connects with particular values they possess, and values are formed in a process of experiencing emotional reactions such as attraction, revulsion, love, anger, and fear. Emotions are intimately connected with both the values and ideas of movement actors. Thus, the separation of cognition and emotion is related to the separation of objectivity and values, itself part of an ideology of "value-neutrality" in science. The separation of cognition and emotion becomes part of the way of presenting sociology as science that would allow it to evade fundamental questions about whose perspectives and needs shape its particular relevances (cf. Smith 1999). Part of "warming up" our ideas about cognition in the context of social movements, therefore, may also demand that we take some of the antiemotional chill from how we as sociologists think about the science we do.

Values, Ideology, and Self-reflexive Science

As Oliver and Johnston distinguish them, ideologies—unlike frames—are explicitly about values. Ideologies connect movements and people on the basis of their shared commitments to certain values. However, values have been absent from or portrayed as irrelevant to most social movement research. One important insight from feminist critiques of “objectivity” is that concepts, organizations, and institutions, not just individual people, carry gender meanings. Not only is it important to consider the values of movement actors, but feminist thinking also indicates the need to consider values in the researcher her/himself. The assumptions among social movement researchers often reflect hidden values. Both the American resource mobilization model of individual self-interest and capitalist-like enterprises and the European new social movement approach that privilege class-based movements are operating from premises that are deeply embedded in an androcentric and Western worldview. As Craig Calhoun (1994) demonstrates, the tension between the individual and the collective good is not experienced among Chinese student rebels in the ways that either European or American social movement theory predicts.

Calhoun (1995) also argues that the very notion of “new” social movements, with a distinctive nonbureaucratic form and a stress on collective identity and group solidarity, is an ahistorical version of newness. This idea of the “new” emergence of identity issues erases the construction of a masculine working-class identity in the nineteenth century, through processes of networking and self-assertion similar to those seen today among differently disadvantaged groups. This allows the “identity politics” of today to appear uniquely and problematically emotional in contrast to the “rational” interests of class-based mobilization. Calhoun argues that economic “rationality” as a value held by movement groups is part of a historical shift of concentration of working-class organizations to the shop-floor organization of men at the expense of community-based mobilization. Indeed, feminism and socialism had a conflicted and complex relation from the mid-nineteenth century onward that is made invisible when class issues are defined as “old” and “rational” and gender politics as “new” and “identity-based.”

Because they are about values, ideologies connect movements with the people who study

them. It was not an accident that the social movement theories prominent in the 1950s and 1960s reflected a fear of Nazi and communist totalitarianism. Framed in the aftermath of World War II and in the context of the emergent Cold War, the questions asked tended to denigrate the adherents of movements as irrational and see their responses to their political and economic situation as “short-circuiting” the deliberative processes of liberal democracy. Similarly, it was hardly a coincidence that the students stirred to action by the movements of the 1960s and 1970s would reject these theories and seek to build alternative approaches that would accord better with their experiences of political learning, networking, and organization building. Nor should it be surprising that the movement theories of the 1970s and 1980s that resulted showed an initially sharp division between the European-based analyses that stressed autonomous subcultures of dissident youth alienated from the “old” class politics of their socialist parties (New Social Movement theories) and the American-based models that emphasized the construction of organizations with resources that could be used in the interest group system of representation that characterizes American politics.

In recent years, the rapprochement between the American and European strands of theorizing has accelerated. We see this convergence as due in no small part to the increasing actual globalization of both academia and of social movements, even though bringing in theories grounded in the experience of social movements in the Third World has still been more limited (but see Ray and Korteweg 1999). Both American and European researchers are increasingly part of the same global field in which a specifically transnational form of social movement is becoming ever more prominent. The questions being asked in social movement research today reflect the problems facing activists in these networks no less than the problems tackled and theories developed in the 1950s and 1970s did, and for the same reason—values held in common among activists and researchers.

As Keck and Sikkink (1998) demonstrate, the rise of the transnational issue advocacy network in contemporary politics involves both scholars and activists held together by a commitment to common values for social change. Such networks of activists and researchers inves-

tigating human rights, environmental degradation, gender equality, and other issues on a global scale begin to blur the conventional distinctions among academic studies, protest politics "out on the streets," and formal politics conducted within institutions. International nongovernmental organizations use information generated through funded research to support local activists and bring pressure on national governments. The value commitments shared by the participants in such networks bind them together despite differences in frames that may be employed. Indeed, Keck and Sikkink provide a compelling case study of how the development of human rights frames for incidents of violence against women—from clitoridectomy to dowry deaths—gave local activists a rhetoric that allowed them to challenge the framing of such violence as "local custom" in conflict with "Western norms."

Understanding framing as a tool that can be used to advance certain values, we argue, demands more conscious scrutiny of ideologies as such. There are values and goals at stake, not only for activists but also for the researchers who study them and who may be part of the same transnational issue networks. Reframing social movement research to allow more direct consideration of the normative elements in ideology, without implying that having values is disreputable and discrediting, would be a step forward.

To take that step, we suggest, social movement researchers will need to borrow a page from feminist theories of science and be more honest and self-reflective about their own values. Such a consciously self-reflexive theory of social movements would connect motivation with values, emotions, and frames as well as acknowledge the ties between activists and academics in all of these dimensions. A vision of science that demands that researchers not admit to having values (see Keller 1985 for a classic discussion of gender and epistemology) is unnecessarily limiting, as well as gendered. It is also a distortion of the actual history of how social movement research has developed, and a simple regard for a truthful understanding of our own work should bring activists and academics together to consider what we have learned and can learn from each other.

Discourses, Meaning, and Understanding

At the third level—of discourses as whole systems of communication—gendered assump-

tions and conceptions have also obscured important elements of social reality. A narrow definition of what constitutes public life or politics is one such gendered way of seeing. Such a view allows only the arenas in which men have taken leadership roles to be seen as being public, and it obscures cultural changes that can be just as far-reaching, such as shifts in feminist or environmental consciousness and changes in work or consumption practices within households. Institutional discourses that are deeply gendered often render movement challenges invisible, because they operate outside the realm defined as political. Political change that happens in and through households and families is especially hard to see, because the relationships of the family (gendered female) are separated from the relationships of politics (gendered male). In fact, considering the recent rise of the Religious Right, the political ideology of such organizations as the Promise Keepers, and the centrality of the "family values" debate and abortion politics to electoral campaigns, we find it hard to consider household composition and family relations as in any sense "outside" politics in even its narrowest, most institutional sense.

Even when movements become visible, gendered assumptions may block their vision of possible change. Movement actors and institutional actors often participate in the same discourse, framing specific ideas differently, but without being able to examine and critique the deeper assumptions that they share. Institutional discourses carry important assumptions that affect what even the challengers' discursive logic is able to "see." For example, many researchers have discussed "rights" frames. This type of framing is rooted in a liberal-legal discourse. However, as Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Studies, and feminist legal scholars have shown, these legal discourses are not objective and "free-floating"—they are deeply raced, gendered, and sexualized. Rights to self-determination, a fundamental constitutional principle, for example, were initially defined to allow slavery and exclude all but white men from the vote. As this legal discourse was extended, through struggle, it continued to carry some of its original assumptions—for example, that women are less capable of rational decision making than men, or as not independent because supported by a husband. Consequently, by adopting a legal discourse, a movement is constrained by its discursive logic, even when it struggles against it. In

practice, this leads feminist movements into trying to prove that women are as rational as men in male-defined terms, or making social value and citizen rights contingent on economic self-support. Gordon and Fraser (1994), for example, provide a compelling history of the shifts in the meaning of "dependence" in American discourse that shape the arguments made by all participants, regardless of their specific ideologies, in welfare reform debates.

These historical constraints on a discourse can often be used against the movement by institutional actors, since the latter remain the more powerful actors in the overall field. An analysis of entire discourses, rather than merely separate frames, could help us move beyond the relative separation of institutional politics and social movements as two entirely different fields of study. This separation has produced a further bias in which institutional politics is the arena for the study of effects (social policies and their outcomes) and social movements are studied in terms of their origins and organizations. As sociologists have long recognized, both institutions and social movements are important for explaining social change. However, the actual work being done in and by social movements often does not resemble the work practices of institutional politics, and the actors involved may also differ. In particular, women are much more likely to be grassroots political activists, and the work that they do involves skills of networking, bridging, and organizing people that tend to be overlooked by a framework in which politics is defined as a typically male activity. The gendering of the political as male makes authority more visible than influence and values speech making more than organizational bridge-building (Robnett 1997).

While discourses about social movements are often invisibly gendered, attention to gender would be only the beginning of a set of questions about the political discourse in which both activists and academics participate. Whether one is essentially sympathetic to the capitalist form or deeply critical of it, the overall discourse about social movements revolves around questions that flow from social relations it has already profoundly shaped. A discourse embedded in capitalist social relations is likely to construct individuals as autonomous, relationships as commodities, and organizations as persons. Theories about movements that probe the limits of their own generalizability across time periods,

as Charles Tilly's work has done, recognize how sociological discourse itself tends to privilege the present as the model of the past. But social movement theories also need to ask how their own discourse is related to modes of action and understanding that flow from the social organization of gender, race, nation, age, and sexuality in any given place or period. The separation of public from private, the relation of formal organizations to households and grassroots mobilizations, the new awareness of cultural change as well as policy making in theories of social movements reflect underlying connections between discourses and power relations. Making these questions explicit rather than an invisible background for social movement studies is the challenge that gender theory presents to political discourse analysis.

Bringing the Pieces Together

This brings us to a discussion of how frames, ideologies, and discourses are related, and thus to our fourth analytic dimension, the framing process as a whole. This framing process is about action, not just thought. Actors use frames to elicit an emotional response from adherents of particular value positions, and thus stir motivations to act. The framing of an issue will have profoundly different impacts on two people with oppositional ideologies: Framing the fetus as an innocent human baby for example, exerts a powerful emotional pull on those with a "pro-life" ideological commitments, but can enrage or disgust an activist who values abortion rights. Frames are connected to the emotions through the ideological beliefs and normative commitments of the actors, and the process of making these connections itself deserves attention.

When framing work is understood as a process, it is also more easily recognized as work, and thus as something that real people have to do. Much of the scholarship on care work identifies the ways that caring is framed as an emotional activity that becomes "invisible work" (Daniels 1987; Glenn 2000). Managing emotions in social movements is also work. Constructing coalitions and learning to see common interests (as well as recognizing divergent identities) is built on the emotion work done as part of framing in "old" as well as "new" social movements. "This bridge called my back" describes not only the effort to forge connections between race and gender politics by women of color (to which the phrase originally was applied), but also the demanding but invis-

ble labor that underlies the street-level "frame-bridging" work that is done, often by women, to make coalitions happen.

Doing framing work is also about producing fundamental social change. Framing as a process challenges, even as it is constrained by, discursive logics. Movements confront meanings that are embedded in institutional discourses, but also use innovative framing tactics to challenge and change them. Such "new words" may lead to "new worlds." Successful reframing then constrains the options of other actors by introducing a new discursive logic. For example, in the United States, the successful expansion of the "right to privacy" to women's bodies challenges the relationship between the state and abortion, but it does nothing to change the privatization of child care work within individual families. Conversely, the expansion of the "state's obligation to protect life" to the fetus in German discourse offers a framework for feminists to demand better state support for children and child rearing, but closes off the option to speak of abortion as a private choice (see Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, and Rucht, forthcoming). American antifeminist activists have successfully reframed the issues of gender politics from "patriarchy" to "traditional family values" and made the women's movement seem no longer relevant to "what the debate is about" today.

While radical reframing is rare, political institutions themselves engage in framing work on an ongoing basis. Feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser (1989) proposes studying welfare state policies as not merely about redistribution (or meeting various needs through state action) but also as about need definition—that is, what counts as being a need at all. Fraser argues that rival need interpretations are transformed into "rival programmatic conceptions" and specific policy proposals that are more directly contested in the political arena. Then the policies implemented "provide more than material aid. They also provide clients, and the public at large, with a tacit but powerful interpretive map of normative, differently valued gender roles and gendered needs" (1989: 170). Need definition in Fraser's terms comes intriguingly close to what political scientists have long studied as "agenda setting" when it comes to legislative process, and to the "key nondecisions" that Bachrach and Baratz (1962) long ago identified. The question that the policy studies literature skips in discussing the framing of questions for the political

agenda (as Deborah Stone [1997] does very well) is how such institutional need definition work intersects with the social change work being done outside formal politics, and how both are, as Fraser suggests, deeply gendered.

In sum, looking at framing as a process reveals it to be gendered work. It is work often made invisible in the movements that are doing it and hidden within the policy process in the form of institutional discourses. Making such framing work more visible could begin to undermine the discursive distinction between public and private that acts ideologically to exclude women from "politics" and make gender oppression appear to be private, domestic, and individual rather than part of a political culture that can be challenged and changed.

What Now?

We see the move to bring ideas into a central position in studying social movements as a very important and promising step for the field's future. But approaching all such ideas only in the rubric of "frames" strips them of the emotional color, value commitments, and institutional anchors that make them so significant in both individual and collective action. Frames are "cooled" out of the passionate action and commitment of "hot" social movements, and academic studies of social movements are made to appear more separate from the movements' own activities than they are in practice. By being attentive to the gendered framing of emotion and values as feminine and therefore suspect, and being attentive to the institutional discourses that frame women as apolitical and gender as private, the analysis of ideas could not only add to social movement studies but fundamentally transform them.

How would it do that? Obviously, we think that making gender an explicit part of the discourse of political sociology as men practice it is an important part of the answer. If only women scholars or only studies of feminist movements or of women in other social movements actually pay attention to gender, a large piece of the actual gendering of social movements theory and research remains untouched. We have tried to show how the ideological masculinity in scientific rhetoric and sociological discourse is vulnerable to an analysis that takes discourses, ideologies, frames, and framing work seriously. But we have also tried to demonstrate that gender deeply permeates the discourses, ideologies, and frames that social movement studies have

offered as analytical tools. Although developing a better account of how ideas matter has become the "hot" topic of the 1990s for social movement scholars, we hope we have shown why such improved theory will demand not only an awareness of gender discourses but also an appreciation of the merits of emotion and of the links between scholarship and activism that consciousness of our values provides.

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