What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research

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Abstract

Frame theory is often credited with "bringing ideas back in" to the study of social movements, but frames are not the only useful ideational concepts. In particular, the older, more politicized concept of ideology needs to be used in its own right and not recast as a frame. Frame theory is rooted in linguistic studies of interaction, and points to the way shared assumptions and meanings shape the interpretation of any particular event. Ideology theory is rooted in politics and the study of politics, and points to coherent systems of ideas which provide theories of society coupled with value commitments and normative implications for promoting or resisting social change. Ideologies can function as frames, but there is more to ideology than framing. Frame theory offers a relatively shallow conception of the transmission of political ideas as marketing and resonating, while a recognition of the complexity and depth of ideology points to the social construction processes of thinking, reasoning, educating, and socializing. Social movements can only be understood by genuinely linking social psychological and political sociology concepts and traditions, not by trying to rename one group in the language of the other.

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The study of social movements has always had one foot in social psychology and the other in political sociology, although at times these two sides have seemed to be at war with each other. In the 1950s and 1960s, social psychology dominated, and social movements were theorized by collective behavior theorists as long-lasting panics or crowds. In the 1970s, proponents of resource mobilization criticized collective behavior theory, and stressed the importance of political and organizational factors. In the 1980s, social psychologists criticized resource mobilization and political process theories for treating social movements only in organizational and political terms, and neglecting the problems of social construction. Snow et al.'s (1986) programmatic article on "frame alignment processes" was central in the social psychological turn, and is widely credited with "bringing ideas back in."[1] Framing theory has provided a way to link ideas and social construction of ideas with organizational and political process factors. Over a hundred different kinds of frames linked with specific movements have been identified (Benford 1997).

Not surprisingly, frame theory has itself been criticized. Benford's "insider's critique" (1997) lists several shortcomings in the way the concept is applied in research studies, and asserts that the term has become a cliché (p. 415). "Framing" is often inserted uncritically wherever there is a movement-related idea being defined or debated. It has been pointed out that the concept of frame does not do justice to the ideational complexity of a social movement (Munson 1999); and that it tends to reduce the richness of culture to recruitment strategies (Jasper 1997: 76). Steinberg (1998) criticizes frame theory as too static and stresses the contextual and recursive qualities of frames.

None of these critiques has identified what we consider to be a central problem in frame theory: its failure to address the relation between frames and the much older, more political concept of ideology, and the concomitant tendency of many researchers to use "frame" uncritically as a synonym for ideology. Snow and Benford (1988) are often given credit for insights which they adopted from the older literature on the functions of and constraints on social movement ideologies and renamed as framing tasks and constraints on frames. Their own article clearly credits this older literature and specifically says that they are drawing on the older literature to develop insights about framing processes. In this and their own subsequent articles, they use the terms frame and ideology distinctly and explicitly cite older works. Nevertheless, they neither provide justification for abandoning the term ideology and substituting frame in this context nor explain the relation between frames and ideologies. Subsequent scholars have tended to cite the Snow and Benford article and its framing language as the original work in the area, and to use the terms frame and ideology interchangeably. This turn has led to muddled frame theory, diverted attention from a serious examination of ideology and the social construction of ideology, and silenced the question of the relation between frames and ideologies.

Frames and framing processes are powerful concepts. Frame theory's emphasis on the intentional ways in which movement activists seek to construct their self-presentations so as to draw support from others points to critical processes in social movements. There is no question that this line of theorizing has been extraordinarily productive of new research and new understandings of social movements. In seeking to back up and revisit a particular turn in framing theory, we should not be understood as trying to discount the value and importance of a whole line of work. Nevertheless, the power of frame theory is lost if "frame" is made to do the work of other concepts. Ideology is of central importance in understanding social movements and other political formations, and it is trivialized when it is seen only as a frame. We need both concepts, and we need to understand the relation between them.

The importance of distinguishing these concepts may be seen most starkly in the movements for and against legal abortion. As Kristen Luker argues, these movements are rooted in deeply-held ideologies and understandings of the meaning and purpose of a woman's life, as well as in the professional ideologies of physicians. Strong anti-abortion beliefs were in the 1960s

rooted in Catholic doctrine which links sexuality to procreation, condemns artificial birth control, and condemns killing a fetus even to save the life of the mother (two deaths are morally superior to one murder); people who live according to these doctrines build lives in which pregnancies can be accommodated. As the abortion struggles evolved, conservative Protestants also adopted anti-abortion ideologies which do not necessarily contain all the elements of the coherent Catholic world-view, but strong anti-abortion sentiment remains deeply rooted in religious traditions and religious world-views. Those with strong anti-abortion ideologies reject abortion even for the "strict constructionist" reason of saving the mother from the immediate risk of death, although laws permitting such abortions do not outrage their moral sense. The initial impetus for abortion reform was rooted in physicians' desire to clarify the "broad constructionist" views of the medical necessity for abortion which would include severe deformity of the fetus, and threats to the mother's life and well-being that might include physical strains of excessive pregnancies or illnesses, psychological distress, and financial hardship. For physicians, the issue was the right to practice medicine in good conscience, unconstrained by others' religiously-motivated intrusions. Physicians were not supporting "abortion on demand," but the ideology of themselves as the proper arbiters of medical necessity. As the women's movement energized and joined the abortion debate, feminists developed an ideology stressing women's autonomy and need to control their own bodies. As Luker argues, women who were in the labor force saw pregnancy as capable of disrupting and destroying a person's entire life, valorized sex for enjoyment and intimacy, and believed that women should choose to have children when they could devote proper attention and energy to them.

Simply renaming these three ideological strands as frames (e.g. religious, medical necessity, women's need) would add nothing to the analysis and would, in fact, risk obscuring the depth and complexity of the belief systems underlying these views. But this does not mean that frames are unimportant or irrelevant in these debates. Rather, the frame concepts are most powerful precisely if they are sharply distinguished from ideology. The ways in which actors have self-consciously positioned the issue over time is very different from what one would think from a simple extrapolation of the underlying ideologies. Several examples illustrate this. First, Luker argues that the 1972 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision essentially framed abortion as a church-state issue: those who filed friend of the court briefs against abortion reform were all religious organizations, while those who filed briefs for abortion reform represented a broad spectrum of professional and secular organizations. The decision was constructed in the context of a recent prior decision which had overturned laws against the sale of contraceptives as representing an unwarranted intrusion of the state and particular religious beliefs into the personal lives of people. Beliefs about abortion were seen (framed) as religious beliefs. Secondly, the self-naming of each movement in the politics of the 1970s is a framing turn. From anti-abortion and pro-abortion, the sides proactively renamed themselves as pro-life and pro-choice as the pro-life movement sought to position itself in a secular space to reach out to people who did not necessarily share their religious understandings of the issue, and the pro-choice movement defensively repositioned itself to emphasize its defense of contraception and personal responsibility, with abortion as a necessary backup to failed contraception. Thirdly, and most tellingly, both sides have adopted the civil rights master frame. The pro-life movement stresses the right of the fetus to life, while the pro-choice movement stresses the right of the woman to control a fundamental aspect of her life. If we think of frames as synonymous with ideologies, we will lack the analytic tools, even the very language, for talking about this fascinating instance of the same frame being tied to diametrically opposed ideologies. If we keep the concepts clearly differentiated, we have some vocabulary and tools for talking about how people present their issues in a public space, and we avoid the danger of simply extrapolating ideologies from their public presentations.

If we back up to the turn toward framing theory and away from ideology among social movement scholars, we will need to revisit why the turn was made. We believe that this was largely due to the legacy of pejorative theories of ideology which still laced the social movement writings about ideology in the early 1970s. For this reason, a second agenda of this paper is to

revisit this pejorative legacy and call for a rehabilitated non-pejorative understanding of ideology in the study of social movements. There is, in fact, a huge literature on ideology to which this paper cannot do justice. Our agenda here is simply to revisit the debates that were abandoned by movement scholars in the 1970s, and point to the directions in which we think a rehabilitated theory of movement ideology should move.

The plan of this paper is as follows. First we summarize the history of the frame concept and its roots in linguistics and cognitive psychology; then we review the history of the ideology concept and its roots in the study of politics. We then discuss the advantages of keeping these concepts separate and explore the important issues that are highlighted by considering the relations between frames and ideologies. We suggest that frame alignment theory correctly captures some of the important particulars of United States political culture in the 1990s, but is misleading for other problems, especially for movements in other times and other places.

A Frame is a Frame is a Frame

The frame concept is rooted in the study of communicative interaction. Gregory Bateson introduced the notion of a frame as a metacommunicative device that set parameters for "what is going on" ([1954] 1972). He showed that interaction always involves interpretative frameworks by which participants define how others' actions and words should be understood. Twenty years later, frame analysis was introduced to sociological research by Erving Goffman. In *Frame Analysis* (1974), and *Forms of Talk* (1981) Goffman explored types and levels of framing activities. In *Forms of Talk*, Goffman discussed the several layers of framing in interaction, and shifted his focus to linguistic analysis of conversational conventions that mark the application and changes in interpretative frames. Researchers building on Goffman's work have developed an extensive body of empirical knowledge about how speech occurs, how cultural knowledge is used, and how these interplay with interactional intentions and constraints; but this body of knowledge has not been utilized by social movement approaches to framing.

Within the linguistic tradition, there is divergence between those who treat a frame (or its synonyms, script and schema) as a relatively fixed template, and those who treat it as malleable and emergent. Work in anthropological linguistics views frames as fully formed cognitive structures that constitute part of the cultural tool kit of everyday life. Frames are an aspect of cultural knowledge, stored in memory, that permit social actors to move in and out of different experiences as if they were not completely new. Frames are used to explain speech acts, rituals, and commonly occurring behaviors in other cultures (Hymes 1982, 1974; and Frake 1964). The assumption is that the elements of frames can be elicited through ethnographic interview and reconstituted into a working schema or algorithm. This approach has also been adopted by researchers in artificial intelligence to explain speech behavior in everyday situations such as joking, gossiping, doing business, lecturing, shooting the bull, etc. (Schank and Ableson 1997; Minsky 1974, cited in Tannen 1993).

The other way to view a frame is to see it as an inherently malleable and emergent mental construct, in Bartlett's terms an "active developing structure" (1932), shaped in action and especially face-to-face interaction as additional elements are added and linked to existing structures based on new incoming data. In this sense, frames are the basic tools by which "we live by inference," to invoke Goffman's famous dictum. Frames are the instruments by which we infer "what is going on" with the caveat that they are under constant revision based on new occurrences and unexpected actions by others. Many ethnographic linguists stress the malleability of frames by asserting that the proper unit of analysis is an interactional event or activity. Frake, for example, points out that people are "doing something all the time," and that these activities, not "mental structures," are the proper units of analysis. Gumperz (1982) adds that this is true when we speak, people do things with their words within culturally typical situations of speech and interaction. Frake offers a poignant metaphor for the fluid and interactive view of frames: Rather than providing a few fixed cognitive maps to be unrolled and referenced to make sense of situations, culture gives people "a set of principles for mapmaking and navigation, resulting in a whole chart case of rough, improvised, continually revised sketch maps (1977: 6-7, quoted in

Tannen 1993). Given the tentative nature of these maps, better to see how they are applied in actual behavior than to spend too much time plotting their structure.

As imported into the study of social movements, frames have been treated as both fixed and emergent. Early insights into framing focused almost wholly on the interactive level of analysis. In *Encounters with Unjust Authority,* Gamson, Fireman and Rytina (1982) created artificial focus groups of strangers who gradually were made aware that they were being manipulated into giving false statements on camera that could be used deceitfully in a civil lawsuit. Gamson and his colleagues focused on the interactive emergence of a frame, of a shared understanding of "what's going on" that they labeled an injustice frame, and the way in which a public announcement of this frame was essential for rebellion against authority. In their programmatic statement of frame theory a few years later, Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986) discussed the improvised and processual quality of sketch-map frames by developing the concept of frame alignment processes.

Subsequent elaborations of the framing perspective moved to a more fixed conception of collective action frames, even though the most influential scholars of framing have consistently stressed emergent and processual aspects of framing tasks. This paradoxical effect has occurred for two reasons. First, Snow et al.'s early discussion of frame resonance (1986) gave individual cognitive schemata an organizational dimension level by making their generation a strategic task of the SMO, namely to link the movement's frame to existing belief systems and cultural values. By "strategically framing" movement positions in accord with dominant cultural values and the stock of folk ideas and beliefs, the SMO elicits greater participation. While strategic framing is a process, the emphasis is on the content. When a collective action frame is recast as something that leaders must articulate so that it better "markets the movement," the interactive negotiation of "what's going on here" takes back seat to a one-way, top-down process. The sketch maps are already drawn up, and remain only to be passed on to the grassroots. Simultaneously, the cultural beliefs of the targets of these efforts are also viewed as relatively fixed, with framers merely putting the right "spin" on their issue to tap into these fixed preconceptions. It would be foolish to deny the importance of these processes in the United States in the 1990s, but few scholars with a sense of history would want to say that this is all there is to idea-making in social movements.

The second source of fixity in framing theory is the growing use of the concept of a master frame (Snow and Benford 1992). Master frames are linked to cycles of protest, and work at the most general level of analysis, functioning to "turn the heads" of movement participants and (especially) movement entrepreneurs to see issues a certain way. Movement participants draw upon master frames to portray their perceived injustice in ways that fit the tenor of the times and thus parallels other movements. Snow and Benford cite as one example the psychosalvational master frame which TM, est, Scientology, Silva Mind Control, and other groups drew upon in the 1970s. Another example is "rights frame" which was defined by the southern civil rights movement, picked up by other racial/ethnic movements and the women's movement, and diffused to gay rights, animal rights, abortion rights, fetal rights, and student rights. Master frames are conceptualized as general assemblages of concepts that are often new and ascendant, but relatively unelaborated compared to established ideologies. Typically articulated by early-riser movements, they are idea structures upon which late-comer movements can draw (Swart 1995; Carroll and Ratner 1996; also see Williams 1995, for "rhetorical models" which are utilized rather than master frames).

We draw four conclusions regarding frame analysis as it is currently practiced by social movements scholars. First, frames are individual cognitive structures, located "within the black box of mental life" that orient and guide interpretation of individual experience. Frames "enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences" (Snow et al. 1986: 464); and "selectively punctuate and encode objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of actions within one's present and past environment" (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). They are complex interpretative schemata—not just isolated ideas—which are relevant at different levels of experience. Second, frames become important in analyzing collective action insofar as they are shared by enough individuals to channel individual behaviors into patterned social ones. This

presumes an ideal-typical formulation of a frame that rises above both idiosyncratic differences between participants and the contention, negotiation, and emergence that characterizes discursive behavior about the frames. This aggregated notion freezes the buzzing and swirling confusion of individual cognitive processing at a point in time, enabling comparisons at other points of time. Third, this snapshot of a frame is a methodological artifice that, in the best of worlds, enables an inventory of what cognitive orientations are shared by individual participants. Ideally, there would be some representations of the concepts and their interrelations to show how thinking within the frame occurs, but with very few exceptions (Gerhards and Rucht 1992; Johnston 1995) this kind of plotting is not found in the social movement literature.

Fourth, it is important to distinguish between these "snapshots," which represent the *structure* of cognitive frames, and *framing processes* which capture the emergent, contested, and socially constructed quality of cognitive frames as they are molded in interaction. *Frames* are mental structures or schemata. *Framing* is a behavior by which people make sense of both daily life and the grievances that confront them. Frame theory, therefore, embraces both cognitive structures whose contents can be elicited, inferred, and plotted in a rough approximation of the algorithms by which people come to decisions about how to act and what to say; and the interactive processes of talk, persuasion, arguing, contestation, interpersonal influence, subtle rhetorical posturing, outright marketing that modify—indeed, continually modify—the contents of interpretative frames. Applied to social movement studies, we can see instances of *framing* at the SMO level and, if we looked closely, we would see them in interaction at the membership level.

An Ideology is a System of Ideas

Ideology arose in a revolutionary era from politics and the study of politics. From the beginning, it carried evaluative and politicized connotations. The word ideology was coined in 1796 by the French writer A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy for his own "science of ideas" (influenced by John Locke) which emphasized human senses for verification of knowledge and supported his program to create a democratic, rational, and scientific society (Cranston 1994, Rudé 1980). The word first took on a pejorative connotation seven years later, in 1803, when the "ideologues" were suppressed by Napoleon Bonaparte. Marx and Engels adopted the pejorative meaning when they called ideology the class-motivated deceptions of the bourgeoisie, which they contrasted with the correct scientific understandings of the conscious working class. Of course, opponents of Marxist movements soon countered by labeling Marxism itself as a distorting ideology, which they contrasted with objective scientific theories of liberal democracy and the market. This continuing use of the term "ideology" as a pejorative label for the ideas of political opponents leads most people to be uncomfortable using the term for ideas they agree with.

By the twentieth century, the term "ideology" and its battling political meanings was well established in the lexicon of politics and social science. Despite the long tradition of pejorative usage, there is also a strong tradition, especially in political science, of using the term non-pejoratively or even positively. As Gerring (1997) documents in his extensive and detailed review, ideology has taken on an incredible diversity of specific meanings which are often directly opposed to each other. Among those using the non-pejorative meaning, some political scientists use the term to distinguish people with coherent and well-structured rational belief systems from those with inconsistent or illogical belief systems (Converse 1964), while others use it to refer to any belief system, regardless of its internal consistency (see Nelson 1977 for a discussion of these issues). Additionally, political scientists and many sociologists use the term ideology specifically to refer to the belief system of any social movement. Among those who use the pejorative meaning of ideology, there is a split between those who associate ideology with the defense of privilege versus those who associate ideology with challenges to the system (Weberman 1997). Despite these evaluative and political debates, there is a common thread of shared meaning in the non-pejorative senses of ideology which is captured by no other term. Gerring (1997) concludes, "Ideology, at the very least, refers to a set of idea-elements that are bound together, that belong to one another in a non-random fashion."

Scholars of social movements writing in the old collective behavior tradition drew on these

meanings when they wrote about ideology, and their works suffered from failing to sort out the pejorative and non-pejorative usages in their discussions. Nevertheless, the core of their work provides a solid basis for investigating ideology in its non-pejorative sense as the system of meaning undergirding a social movement. Heberle, in his 1951 text *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology*, defines the ideology of a movement in "a broad, nontechnical sense" as "the entire complex of ideas, theories, doctrines, values and strategic and tactical principles that is characteristic of the movement." (: 23-24) The second edition of Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian's *Collective Behavior* has a very similar conception, saying "Ideologies are prescriptions or maps that tell the individual how to look at events and people, and they provide a simplifying perspective through which the observer can make sense of otherwise overwhelmingly complex phenomena and find definiteness in otherwise vague and uncertain impressions. Ideologies tell the observer how to distinguish figure from ground." (1972: 270) John Wilson's *Introduction to Social Movements* (1973) defines ideology as " a set of beliefs about the social world and how it operates, containing statements about the rightness of certain social arrangements and what action would be undertaken in the light of those statements." He goes on to say, "An ideology is both a cognitive map of sets of expectations and a scale of values in which standards and imperatives are proclaimed. Ideology thus serves both as a clue to understanding and as a guide to action, developing in the mind of its adherents an image of the process by which desired changes can best be achieved." (Wilson 1973: 91-2)

Both Wilson and Turner and Killian take a functionalist approach to ideology, stressing what it does for a social movement in terms of providing an account of reality and justifying and motivating action. Wilson develops the very useful trichotomy of the structural elements of ideology which Snow and Benford adopted: diagnosis (how things got to be how they are), prognosis (which should be done and what the consequences will be), and rationale (who should do it and why). Turner and Killian emphasize ideology as a product of active social construction processes by which people understand their circumstances and their possible courses of action. Much of both discussions emphasizes the continuity between movement ideologies and other forms of meaning-making, and each has passages which suggest that movements' opponents may be no more logical and just as ideological as the movements themselves. Turner and Killian, for example, stress that movement and anti-movement ideologies develop in dialectic with each other, arguing that the ideology of racism developed in response to challenges to racial stratification and the ideology of divine right of kings developed in response to challenges to monarchy.

At the same time, the legacy of pejorative connotations makes its way into all these presentations. Heberle approvingly cites Mannheim's "technical" definition of ideology as the inconsistent and illogical distortions of the ruling class, as contrasted with the challenger's rational, coherent Utopia (1951: 28) Turner and Killian say ideologies "provide a simplifying perspective" and Wilson says "Ideologies create highly simplified images of social process." (p. 99). In context, it is possible these statements are meant to refer to the cognitive process in any abstract thinking in which attention is directed to some elements at the expense of others, and both authors recognize that some ideologies, particularly radical ones, are often highly elaborated and complex systems of beliefs. However, these same contexts have other cues suggesting that this simplification is inappropriate or irrational, especially their citations to Smelser. Smelser (1962) did not use the term ideology, but made simplification and illogic central to the belief systems of movement participants with his notion of a generalized belief as a "short-circuit" which leaves out the complex and multi-determinant steps between general principle and specific change. Turner and Killian cite Smelser and explicitly endorse his claim that movement ideologies inevitably include hostile elements, arguing that " villain and conspiracy themes are universal. . ." and that "The visible effects of their [villains'] evil intent are supplemented by imaginary activities. . ." (272) They do, however, suggest that this mode of reasoning parallels that of the social control agents. Wilson also summarizes Smelser, but his text neither clearly endorses nor clearly critiques Smelser's arguments.

Despite their failure to overcome pejorative connotations, the works of Wilson and Turner and Killian point to a social constructionist view of ideology that has been missing from recent

scholarship. Despite its history of contradictory meanings, the concept of ideology focuses on ideas, on their systematic relations to each other, and on their implications for social and political action for change based on value commitments. A tentative definition (based heavily on Wilson's) would capture this core meaning: *a system of meaning that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with values and norms relevant to promoting or resisting social change.* The "values" element refers to moral, ethical, or solidaristic commitments to some groups or conditions of society as right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, important or unimportant. The "norms" element refers to standards for behavior, especially behaviors which are relevant to promoting or resisting social change. The reference to "assertions and theories about the nature of social life" is meant to encompass both relatively simply descriptive claims (e.g. men have more power than women) and elaborate theories (including social science theories as well as religious or political belief systems) about how society works, and everything in between.

  To study ideology, then, is to focus on systems of ideas which couple understandings of how the world works with ethical, moral, and normative principles that guide personal and collective action. We can ask how these ideas came to be, what the internal structure of the idea system is, whether the ideology accounts adequately for the phenomena it purports to explain, how the ideologies are distributed across populations, and what the variations are among proponents of a common ideology (see Gerring 1997 and Nelson 1977 for further elaboration of these points and others). Significantly, we suggest that an ideology links a theory about society with a cluster of values about what is right and wrong as well as norms about what to do. We use the term "theory" in a broad sense to refer to systems or sets of beliefs that explain how social arrangements came to be and how they might be changed or strengthened. These theories are linked to core values and norms in an ideological system. Value components animate the theory, and go a long way to translate individual grievances into collective ones. If groups have the same values but different social theories, we would tend to think of them as different branches of the same social movement, such as the religious and secular branches of the Civil Rights movement. The socialist movement always contained groups advancing diverse and competing social theories which were nevertheless unified by their positive valuation of the lower strata of society and opposition to capitalism. By the same token, groups with similar social theories may be in opposed movements. For example, there are both pro- and anti-capitalist ideologues who share the same general assumption of rational individualism and the same theory of how a capitalist market economy works, but disagree about whether to support or oppose capitalism, and disagree about whether they attach greater value to the entrepreneur or the worker. Similarly, groups may have similar norms for action (e.g. an ethic of self-sacrifice, advocacy of disruptive protest, or legislative lobbying) around widely different or even opposite values.

  It is often argued that movement activists seem to be resistant to evidence or arguments that challenge their beliefs (Turner and Killian 1972: 249; Wilson 1973: 108-124), and these arguments are part of the pejorative legacy in the study of ideology. But distinguishing the value commitments of an ideology from its theory may clarify some of these processes. Because an ideology links theory, norms, and values in one interconnected system, what may seem to outsiders as an unreasonable attachment to a particular belief or norm can frequently be understood as a defense of core values by defending the whole belief system in which they are embedded. Conversely, what may seem to outsiders to be vacillation in belief or abandonment of prior beliefs may be seen by activists as a realistic reappraisal of their theory of society or their strategies as they seek better ways to pursue their core values. Distinguishing core values of an ideology from its norms and theory, and tracing the interrelations among them, may be helpful strategies for understanding how people construct and reconstruct their ideologies.

  Emphasizing the theory component in ideology points to an element of ideation often neglected in the study of social movements: thinking. People think a lot in social movements, along with the related activities of reasoning, judging arguments, evaluating evidence, testing predictions, recognizing connections, and developing new knowledge. There is a continuity in the theorizing of ideologues and the theorizing of those who study ideologues. Heberle argues "The

ideologies of social movements stand to each other in a twofold relationship: first, as the integrating creeds and immaterial weapons of social groups in conflict with one another. . . . But there is a second kind of relationship between ideologies; that is the relationship between ideas in the realm of intellectual endeavor" (1951, 29-30). It is essential to appreciate the intellectual aspects of ideology (what Heberle calls the debate of ideas over the centuries) as well as their function in motivating action. The theories in ideologies can be understood as part of intellectual history and subjected to the same standards of logic and evidence as any other theories (Nelson 1977). Social relations and networks among people, usually small groups of intellectuals, are central in creating new theories and new ideologies. Rochon (1998: 22-25) calls these networks critical communities, loci of ideological production. He distinguishes this ideological production from movement activities, particularly framing, which promote the ideas to a wider public. In this view, framing does not create ideological change, but can be a way of recruiting people into a context within which ideology can change.

There is a long history in the study of ideology of raising questions of the origin of ideas and their fit with "reality" or "material interests." Snow and Benford (1988) point to these issues when they say frames need "experiential commensurability," but their awkward neologism elides the complexities of this issue. Materialism and the constraints on beliefs were treated with much more subtlety and greater constructionist insight in Turner and Killian, Wilson, and others upon whom they drew. Scholars in the Marxian tradition, such as Rudé (1980), have also developed social constructionist theories of ideology which link material constraints to social processes.

Frame and Ideology Are Not Synonyms

Frames and ideologies are related concepts, of course, and overlap somewhat in their empirical referents, but each points to different dimensions of social construction. Very roughly, framing points to process, while ideology points to content.

The concept of frame points to the cognitive process wherein people bring to bear background knowledge to interpret an event or circumstance and to locate it in a larger system of meaning. Framing processes are the ways actors invoke one frame or set of meanings rather than another when they communicate a message, thereby indicating how the message is to be understood. In everyday interaction, framing is often done tacitly by subtle linguistic and extralinguistic cues. Applied to social movement studies, framing processes mostly refer to the intentional activity of movement entrepreneurs at the organizational level (see Tarrow 1998: 108-112). The frame concept calls attention to the ways in which movement propaganda reflects both the frames of the writers and their perceptions of the frames of their targets. The malleable conception of a frame calls attention to the interactional processes that occur at every level of a movement, both within a movement organization and between the movement and outsiders. The fixed conception of a frame has its greatest power when one frame is contrasted with another, when the question is how and why a person invokes one frame rather than another in a particular context. Clearly the concepts of frames and framing processes point to matters that the older ideology concept dealt with only obliquely, and for this reason they are important contributions to the understanding of social movements.

But there are other ideational processes which are obscured when authors try to make the concept of frame do the work of the concept of ideology. The concept of ideology focuses attention on the content of whole systems of beliefs, on the multiple dimensions of these belief systems, and on the ways the ideas are related to each other. Ideologies as sets of ideas can be abstracted from the thought processes of any particular individual. They can be elicited through interviews with movement participants, or written in books, articles, and pamphlets by movement intellectuals, or declaimed from platforms by leaders. The concept of ideology leads to questions about the origins of those ideas, their interrelations and consistency or inconsistency with each other and with other systems of ideas in the larger society, and to the processes whereby people construct and reconstruct those ideas as they encounter other ideas and accumulate experiences. It leads to questions about the relation between the elaborate systems constructed by intellectuals and the folk ideologies of ordinary people (see Rudé 1980 on derived ideologies) and to questions

about the relation between ideas and material circumstances. The concept of ideology leads us into the large literature which has used the concept and addressed these questions, offering a very wide variety of answers.

One can ask ideology questions while using the word frame, but to do this you have to rework the meaning of frame away from its origin as a mental structure that orients interpretation and make it more like a thin ideology. Consider institutional racism. Frame theory can point to the need to have background knowledge to understand the concept, and to the fact that people who don't have this background may assume that the "racism" component refers to personal prejudice. It could help us study the alternative ways a particular racially-charged incident was framed or understood. For its part, ideology would point us to understanding the whole theory of institutional racism, and the ideology would provide a diagnosis, prognosis, and rationale. Thinking of the ideology of institutional racism would lead to understanding where these ideas came from, to asking whether the theory of society seems correct according to some external standard, and what its value and normative components are. But what happens when we make ideology and frame synonymous? We no longer have a vocabulary for distinguishing between the complex set of ideas and its invocation in a particular instance. Calling the diagnosis, prognosis, and rationale separate "framing tasks" or trying to distinguish among them just obscures their fundamental unity as dimensions of the same coherent system of ideas.

Or, to revisit the abortion ideologies and abortion frames with which we opened this essay, calling the three main strands of abortion ideology abortion "frames" would not necessarily be wrong, but would not add anything to understanding these ideologies, while making it very difficult to talk about the relation between these ideologies and the various ways in which those favoring and opposing abortion rights have framed the issue in public debates, and particularly the way in which the "rights" frame is found on all sides of the issue.

Frame concepts have made great contributions to our understanding of social movements, but sometimes research in a framing perspective would be more illuminating if ideology instead of frames were invoked, when the data seem clearly to point to ideological issues. Benford (1993) develops the concept of frame disputes, distinguishes types of disputes (diagnostic, prognostic, and resonance), seeking to identify the predictors of each.   But the axis along which most of the disputes in his data turned was the ongoing battle between moderates, liberals and leftist radicals, and the disputes were more unified by their ideological underpinnings in competing social theories than distinguished by their emphasis on diagnosis, prognosis, or resonance. In framing terms, Carroll and Ratner's (1996) study of the correlation of cross-movement activism with master frames in different Vancouver SMOs seems quite different from Benford's. Their coding of interviewees' views of "injustice and domination" identified three master frames: political-economy/injustice, liberal, and identity.[2] Those giving the political-economy/injustice frame had the most cross-movement activism, while those giving the "identity" frame had the least.   But in ideology terms, Benford's and Caroll and Ratner's studies seem very similar, with the same three strands appearing in both. Frame theory cannot explain why the frame disputes occurred, or why these master frames lead to different patterns of activism. But interrogation of the ideologies of the liberals and the political-economy/injustice radicals could well explain the results of both studies, showing how the moderates and liberals view issues one at a time, while the political-economy/injustice radicals link different specific issues in an over-arching critique, and showing that the same ideological conflicts were present in both Vancouver and Austin.

Marketing and Resonating versus Education and Thinking

When framing processes are seen as distinct from although related to ideology, frame theory makes real contributions to social movements theory. But as a substitute for ideology, frames are woefully incomplete: they offer too shallow a conception of what is involved in developing ideologies and an one dimensional view of how others to adopt them. Ideologies are complex and deeply held. People learn them or are socialized into them. While a framing effort may successfully persuade someone that a particular issue can be explained by an ideology,

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framing processes do not persuade people to adopt whole new ideologies. At best, they may initiate the journey.

Frame alignment theory and theories of ideology suggest very different accounts of the creation of ideas by movement intellectuals and the transmission of them to those whom they recruit. It is well recognized that intellectuals or "idea specialists" in social movements play different roles from the mass of other participants. In frame alignment theory, people's belief systems are taken largely as givens, and movement intellectuals perform the marketing task of packaging their issue so that it will be accepted by others. Three of the four "frame alignment" processes (Snow et al. 1986) involve taking others' ideologies as largely given and either simply bridging to a new group, amplifying their existing beliefs, or extending the presentation of one's own issues to address others' concerns. The movement activists are never thought to change their actual thinking, just the way they package their thinking to make it more appealing to someone else.[3]

Significantly, this marketing approach to movement mobilization arises precisely when marketing processes have come to dominate social movements in the Untied States. Activists all over the country spend their time trying to figure out how to sell their ideas in advertisements and grant proposals. Frame theory captures the reality of important empirical processes in the era in which it is written. The new left movements of the late 1960s made Daniel Bell seem premature when he proclaimed the end of ideology in 1960, but an emphasis on ideology does seem largely invisible in United States social movements after the 1980s. But ideology and ideological thinking are not really dead, not even in the United States. People still have ideologies, and ideologies still underlie action. What seems out of fashion in the United States right now is overt public discussion in terms of ideology, that is, in terms of theories of society coupled with explicit discussion of values and norms. The most visible ideologues as we write are those advocating unfettered markets and religiously-governed sexual mores, but even their ideologies are rarely discussed as coherent systems. But this feature of current U.S. politics should not blind us to the overt importance of ideology and ideological thinking in other historical eras, and in other parts of the world, nor to the continuing covert importance in our own society of ideology.

Although ideologies vary in their complexity and consistency, to use the concept of ideology is to evoke the image of people as thinkers. They are not just resonating with a frame, not just reacting to quick impressions while holding a TV remote, and not even just interpreting the cues from their social interactional situation. When people are thinking ideologically, they are explicitly concerned with a theory of society, values, and norms, and with creating a comprehensive and consistent understanding of the world. Not everyone thinks this way, and no one thinks this way all the time. But some people do some of the time, and especially in social movements.

Ideologies cannot just be "resonated with," they have to be learned. Systematic ideologies are generally developed by the more educated members of a group, and are generally developed in intellectual dialogue with prior ideas and ideologies and cultural values (see Rochon 1998, chapter 3). "The masses" come to adopt systematic ideologies through processes of education and socialization. As Portes (1971) and Wood and Hughes (1984) and others have argued, systematic ideologies are typically not something individuals create for themselves or fall into from accidents of daily life, but are rather belief systems that people are educated or socialized into. The process of education or socialization takes time and involves social structures and social networks. Sometimes, when people seek to inculcate ideologies, they create classes or study groups. Other times, people are socialized into an ideology more informally through personal contact with activists and ideologues. Ideological and valuational conversion may be slow and unnoticed because there is no strong commitment to legitimating systems of meaning. Ideologies are complex systems of thought that cannot be communicated accurately in stock phrases or sound bites. A stock phrase can invoke intimations of an ideology for those who only know its bare outlines, or it can invoke the richness of the ideology for those who know it well and have studied it. Persuading other people to take on an ideology is an education or socialization process: it is expected to take time, to involve repeated contact between the educator/socializer and the target,

and to require substantial effort on the part of both the educator/socializer and the target. The process of education or socialization is understood as being reinforced by membership in social groups and networks in which other people share the same meanings and learn new ideas together.

What Snow et al. call "frame transformation" is really "ideological transformation," either the transmission of an ideology to a new believer, or the reconstruction of an existing ideology. Frame theory has inadequate conceptual tools for describing what happens in the process of ideological change. Snow himself has written elsewhere (Snow and Philips 1980, Snow and Oliver 1994) about the socialization processes involved in conversion, when an individual adopts a new ideology. Conversion involves a reconstruction of a meaning system in the context of intense encounters with socializers and a heightened emotionality. Once conversion occurs, the new ideology can function as a frame, but the concept of ideology better describes the whole new system of meaning involved and the social processes involved in adopting it.

Less has been written about the processes that occur when a group of committed activists reconstructs their ideology. This is a weakness in extant theories of ideology, but frame concepts do not contribute much understanding. Detailed accounts of these processes reveal periods of intense interaction and discussion as people talk over new ideas or their experiences in practice, and self-consciously develop new ideas, often writing them so that they can have an existence apart from their author (see Rochon's 1998 discussion of the philosophes). While outsiders might not agree with the ideologues' conclusions, it is obvious to observers that people reconstructing ideologies are doing active intellectual work pulling out the logical consequences of ideas, weighing evidence, and discussing how these ideas might be received by others. For example, it can correctly be said that Brazilian anti-dam activists in the 1980s shifted from a land-struggle frame to an ecology frame, but calling it a frame shift implies that it was a relatively superficial problem of renaming. In fact, detailed case study materials revealed a long process of self-conscious discussion, debate, and political education before the shift could be accomplished (Rothman and Oliver 1999). People had to reconstruct their entire theory of society, holding on to some core values while molding new ones, and all the time dealing with the changing political context which weakened old alliances and created the possibility of new ones. The process took a lot of time, and involved the creation of new intellectual products. The activists themselves changed their ideology, they did not just superficially repackage themselves to a new market.

Similarly, Johnston (1991) identifies frame alignments that occurred in the resurgence of Catalonian national opposition as formerly conservative Catholic ethnic Catalans became increasingly militant and adopted Marxist and orientations, while leftist militants and non-Catalan immigrants adopted nationalism. While new opportunities and options were opened by general Marxist and Catalan nationalist frames, these openings led to ideological syntheses at a deeper level of learning and change in personal beliefs. This "intellectual work" and not the frames provided a basis for concerted action by formerly disparate groups. The following quote from a Catalan activist, a member of the Socialist Movement of Catalonia (MSC), is a clear example of the thinking, reasoning, studying, and intellectual debate that went into Catalan left-nationalist ideology:

> For example, let's take Carlos. I would say that he made me into a Marxist and I made him into a nationalist. . . . We went out at night in Barcelona for hours, me trying to convince him that they should contact our party and accept political pluralism. . . and him, evidently resisting because of what then was very important for these young men, Castroism and the Cuban revolution. They were absolutely fascinated, bewitched, by Fidel Castro. Us, for us older ones, we took him with what we Catalanists say, *grànuls salís* [grains of salt]. . . . . So of course the Marxist history of Catalonia came to me through these kids. They showed an extraordinary intellectual inquisitiveness, and you don't know what they did to get a hold of those books.

Debates between friends, personal influence, arguing points of logic and fact, struggles to get a hold of prohibited texts, these are not the activities of movement marketers or spin doctors. We

have here an poignant example of the differences between a frame as an orientating principle that points one in a direction of seeing things, and an ideology as a system of ideas arrived at through education, socialization, and debate.

Master Frames and Ideologies

At a superficial level, ideologies and master frames may seem to be equivalent concepts, as both are broad ideas within which more specific ideas are understood. However, we believe that theorizing will be improved if they are clearly distinguished as analytic concepts. The master frame concept was introduced by Snow and Benford (1992) to explain the clustering of rhetorical strategies of social movements during cycles of protest. Master frame is akin to Blumer's (1955) concept of a general social movement that captures an epoch's major streams and tendencies regarding social change. As examples Snow and Benford suggest the psychosalvational master frame (p. 139), the nuclear-freeze master frame (p. 143) and the civil-rights master frame (p. 145). They distinguish "elaborated" versus "restricted" frames, following Basil Bernstein's well-known distinction between restricted and elaborated linguistic codes (1992: 139-140). According to Snow and Benford, the civil rights frame was highly elaborated, meaning that components of civil rights thought (equal opportunities, comparable worth, voting and office holding) were highly general and inclusive and could be used by other aggrieved groups. Even broader is the nationalism master frame, which can be seen across epochs, regions, and cultures. Intellectuals of specific national movements elaborate ideologies within this frame drawing upon history, culture, and political context; typical actions are glorification of the past, exultation of the language, drawing boundaries with other national groups, political contention based on national identity, and transcendence or coming to terms with class divisions. (At the lowest or most restricted level of generalization, Snow and Benford cite the nuclear freeze frame that shaped the U.S. peace movement in the 1980s, but this frame seems so restricted as not really to deserve the modifier "master.")

There is another kind of "master" frame that perhaps needs another label, general frames that are not always associated with movement clustering (Gerhards and Rucht 1992). These are generic framing processes that can be applied across different cultural and political contexts and for a variety of movements. The most important examples are injustice frames (Gamson et al. 1982), mobilizing frames (Ryan 1991), oppositional frames (Coy and Woehrle 1966), and antisystemic frames, revitalization frames, and inclusion frames (Diani 1996). We concur with Benford (1997: 414) that these activities hold potential for theoretical advance because of their generality.

Ideologies also occur at different levels of generality and can support more specific articulations of theory and value nested within more general ones. Dalton (1994), for example, demonstrates how environmentalist ideology embraces both conservationist and ecologist variants and how each shapes the horizon of action and opportunities available to different SMOs. Moreover, within ecologist ideology, there are variants such as Deep Ecology, whose ideological treatises accentuate some values, prognoses, and theories while discounting others. Similarly the umbrella of feminist ideology has included the three broad tendencies of liberal, socialist, and radical or separatist feminism, each with a long history of ideological elaboration and specification, as well as more specific variants, many of which are highly theorized and articulated, including eco-feminism and lesbian feminism, as well as the subtleties of women-of-color feminism and womanism (which explicitly distances itself from feminism).

With various levels of generality for both frames and ideologies, there is a temptation to treat ideologies as master frames because both inform the interpretation of many specific instances, and ideologies often function as frames. However, it is not appropriate to simply rename ideology as a master frame, such as recasting feminism as a "feminist frame" (Benford 1997: 420). A better conception, we believe, treats a master frame as markedly different from an ideology, as much closer to the original meaning of a frame. In this conception, a master frame lacks the elaborate social theory and normative and value systems that characterize a full-blown ideology, but instead is a signifier that points to a general category of socially-recognized

instances. In this sense, the "rights frame" is not an ideology, but an angle or perspective on a problem. The rights master frame surely gave women a new perspective on work situations where they were paid less than men for the same work. This frame pointed many women in the direction of feminist ideology, but one can apply the rights frame without having a feminist ideology. Rather, the "rights" frame echoes themes from deep in U.S. political culture and has across the last two centuries been evoked in a wide variety of ideologically disparate movements including, as we argued above, both sides of the abortion counter-movement pair.

A good example of the distinction between ideology and master frame can be seen in Aarelaid's (1998) study of the Estonian national opposition. She identified a "pure Estonian nationality" master frame that was anchored in experiences and beliefs about the period of independence between 1918 and 1940, but did not include the specific political ideologies of the period. Essential orientations about the value of the language and the people were present, as was a strong affirmation of the nation embodied in a refusal to compromise with Soviet "occupiers." The frame guided actions of small groups of artists, intellectuals, and activists during fifty years that Estonia was part of the Soviet Union. These groups theorized their resistance with different assessments of the situation, tactics, and justifications for action that drew upon Estonian nationalism and western models of human rights, democracy, and basic freedoms in different ways. The frame guided resistance and opposition, which was shared among different groups, but was distinct from the ideological orientations of each.

Putting it Together: Conclusions and Suggestions

Frame and ideology are both useful concepts for students of social movements, as are grievance, interest, and culture. We are not calling for the abandonment of framing theory, nor claiming that framing processes are unimportant. Further, we recognize that ideologies often function as frames, and that not all frames are ideologies. Rather, we are saying that ideologies are worthy of study in their own right, and that studying ideologies as ideologies involves different questions and different kinds of research than studying them as frames. Further, we are critical of the move that has appropriated the older theorizing about ideologies and recast it in framing language. The language of frames is perhaps the best way to explain our central point. To frame an ideology as a frame is to seek to understand how a particular ideology is invoked as relevant in a particular context and how, once invoked, it shapes the meanings of words and the connections between words. It is to say that ideology is fundamentally a backdrop to an instance of interpersonal communication. The ideology is taken as fixed, and attention is focused on how it constrains understanding of a particular event or utterance. Frames can be understood as malleable, but this version of frame theory focuses on how meanings are negotiated in interpersonal contexts. To frame an ideology as a frame is to say that the social psychological issues are paramount. By contrast, to frame an ideology as an ideology is to call attention to the ideas on their own terms, to the structure of beliefs about society (its social theory), and to its ethical, moral, and political content, to its values and norms. It is to understand the origin and logic of those beliefs, and potentially to be prepared to assess that belief system against one's own meaning system. Ideologies are socially constructed, and the social construction of ideologies does involve framing processes, but trying to reduce ideology construction to a series of framing processes at the interactive level or frame alignment at the organizational level loses its social and political content. Unlike frame theory, ideology theory has always grappled with the relation between people's material conditions or material experiences and their ideologies. Theorists of ideology have suggested that class or other material interests might underlie belief systems. It is they who are prepared to discuss the political implications of belief systems. In short, to frame an ideology as an ideology is to say that the political issues are paramount.

At the same time, there are latent political implications in frame theory, and latent social psychological implications in a theory of ideology. Exclusive emphasis on frames can suggest that politics are unimportant, or can be reduced to simple difference of opinion. To imply that politics are unimportant and that everybody's ideas are structurally equivalent to everyone else's is a politics. Those who criticized rational action theory for its narrow and ultimately wrong social

psychology were right – that is not how people actually think – but at least rational action theory contained the political concept of interest. Pure social constructionism carried to its logical extreme lacks an explicit political model. Its latent political model will be worthy of the same critiques that led to the rejection in 1970 of the excessive psychologizing in collective behavior theory. (It should be noted that there are variants of ideology theory that fall to this same criticism.) Frame theory in social movements has avoided the danger of complete depoliticization by its intellectual alliance with political opportunity theory, and its explicit models of how particular frames appeal to particular constituencies, or access particular resources, or take advantage of particular political opportunities, although this very turn has led to the most mechanistic and superficial images of frame alignment processes.

The social psychological implications of ideology theory are rather more diverse, as there is no single theory of ideology, and the different theories have radically different images of how people create and respond to ideologies. Nevertheless, a latent social psychology emerges from a focus on ideologies as systems of ideas. People are viewed as developing belief systems from a combination of reflecting on and interpreting their own experiences and learning ideas and idea systems from others. They are thinkers and interpreters. There is always a concern with where the ideas are coming from; they are never just taken as givens. Most ideology theories embody a social model of the production of ideologies, in which it is recognized that relatively few intellectuals or "idea specialists" create elaborate ideological systems. Intellectuals have learned ideas from others, and build their ideas in dialogue with previous ideas, as well as with their own experiences. Ideas can be abstracted or alienated from the people who originally thought them. The relation between the intellectuals and non-intellectuals is a matter for explicit inquiry. There is generally a recognition that popular beliefs differ from those of the intellectuals. There is usually some kind of teaching model, an explanation for how intellectuals communicate with others, as well as a general recognition that those "taught" do not necessarily absorb the ideology intact from the teacher. In short, the fundamental assumptions about the nature of people are generally similar between ideology and social constructionist social psychology. The difference would be that the social structure in which they are embedded is more directly considered as part of the theory.

Frame theory has stimulated a wide variety of research because it points to important processes in social movements. Framing concepts have been enormously valuable and productive, and should not be abandoned. But no concept can serve all purposes, and the eclipse of ideology by frame theory has been a mistake. Ideology was abandoned because of its pejorative baggage, and this baggage needs to be stripped away if we are to have a vigorous and useful concept. Understanding ideology as a system of meaning that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with values and norms relevant to promoting or resisting social change opens the door to a serious investigation of ideologies and the social construction of ideologies. As we reopen the study of ideology and explicitly theorize the interrelations between ideologies and frames and framing processes, we will have a sounder body of ideational theory that is better able to speak to the ways in which ideas influence politics and political action.

Endnotes

1. Another source was the resurgence of cultural studies and their application to social movement analysis (see Johnston and Klandermans 1995). It is an important trend embracing various perspectives and foci, but will not be reviewed here as it is tangential to our central argument.

2. Moreover, it is questionable whether factors which are idenitified by data-reduction coding of interviews are indeed interpretative "frames, schemata, or scripts." The question is whether the elements of a cognitive frame properly represented by recasting it as a category which groups similar responses to interview or survey questions.

3. The fourth, frame transformation, involves changing people's ideas, but the discussion largely focuses on what it feels like to undergo such a transformation, not on how the movement activists accomplish it. Their examples of frame transformation come from religious movements, in which the transformation involves reinterpreting one's personal biography, not reinterpreting the structure of society.

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