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Nayda Terkildsen; Frauke Schnell

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How Media Frames Move Public Opinion: An Analysis of the Women's Movement

NAYDA TERKILDSEN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS
FRAUKE SCHNELL, WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

We examine the weekly print media's coverage of the women's movement and ascertain the presence of five unique frames from the 1950s through the 1990s: a sex roles frame, a feminism frame, political rights frame, economic rights frame, and an anti-feminism frame. After describing the frames we discuss an experimental test of four of the media packages on voters' political attitudes using a non-random sample of adults. Experimental results indicate that the economic rights and anti-feminism frames had a strong, negative impact on subject attitudes toward gender equality, support for women's rights, support for non-traditional gender roles and the frequency with which subjects mentioned "women's issues" as among the most important issues facing the U.S. In addition, the feminism frame also exerted negative effects; while, conversely, the political rights frame had a positive influence on similar gender attitudes. Results were moderated by respondent gender with men demonstrating greater susceptibility to issue framing than women.

The public is dependent on the mass media for political information. Whether citizens access the media via television, print, or radio they are exposed to editorial decisions about what constitutes news, what issues are important, and how policy debates are packaged. However, initial attempts to document media influence failed to unearth powerful persuasion effects,

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concluding instead that the media simply reinforce citizens' political choices (Klapper 1960; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948).

In contrast to the "minimal effects" school, more recent explorations have begun to dispel this rather narrow view of media power. These researchers rely on a more complex conceptualization of media effects. That is, in the context of reflecting social and political reality, the media select and arrange, to use Lippmann's (1922) term, the "pictures in our heads." This recognition of media power has brought to the forefront two new directions in media research: agenda setting and priming (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; MacKuen 1981; McCombs 1981).

There is strong evidence that agenda setting and priming influence voters in two ways. First, by deciding which issues to cover the media set the public agenda, which in turn influences the importance citizens ascribe to reported issues (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; MacKuen 1981; McCombs 1981). Second, by elevating certain issues over others, i.e., priming, the media influence voters' subsequent evaluations of political actors and alter the criteria by which political players are judged (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Iyengar and Kinder 1987).

However, agenda setting and priming are far from the media's sole powers. While these concepts describe which issues will enter the public domain and how they may later influence political judgements, a theory of framing asserts that issues, in and of themselves, can be arranged or presented in multiple fashions and as such influence citizens' ensuing issue considerations and levels of policy support.

While at first glance priming and framing effects may appear to be similar, there are key differences. Although framing may be capable of increasing issue salience by pairing a specific frame with issue coverage, framing's real effects are due to the changed considerations that come to bear when forming an opinion and how these changes can result in a net shift in policy support. This change is due to the language of that unique frame, *not* merely to the issue itself being primed. In contrast, priming, as conceptualized in political science, refers to the greater inferential weight attached to a previously mentioned issue once it receives media coverage.¹

A political example blended from the real world follows: Opinions toward U.S. support for the Nicaraguan Contras were twice as influential a de-

¹ Issues that are primed by the media are more likely to influence voters' candidate evaluations. Yet, priming only alters net support for a policy if a voter's and a candidate's stances on the primed issue are at odds, or if the citizen holds no a priori attitude on the issue.

terminant of Reagan's popularity after the Irancontra scandal then prior to coverage (Krosnick and Kinder 1990). This is a clear example of a priming effect: due to the media's emphasis on Irancontra, evaluations of Reagan—one of the Contras' patron saints—were more likely to be based on this issue than on others. However, had media discussions of the Contras portrayed them as “freedom fighters” versus “militaristic thugs,” and public opinion found citizens to be more supportive of the Contras when their aims were described in broad democratic terms rather than portrayed in Machiavellian ones, then a framing effect would have occurred. Of course, media coverage primes and frames an issue simultaneously. A more realistic example, and one that more likely mimics the complexity of actual policy debates, would be as follows. Increased press coverage of the Contras and the Irancontra affair, packaged in terms of “freedom fighters seeking to establish a democracy,” would have elevated issue coverage. In turn, this coverage would have *primed* the salience of the policy domain, and the predominant *frame* would have influenced subsequent assessments of Reagan (i.e., coverage would have both elevated the issue in importance and potentially altered voters' net evaluations of Reagan).

Thus, frames are the “maps” or the internal story patterns reporters and editors draw for their readers. These maps or frames cognitively serve to structure the public debate, influence readers' issue information, and the attribution of policy responsibility (Gamson 1992; Iyengar 1991; Popkin 1991; Kinder and Sanders 1990; Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Gamson and Lasch 1983; Kahneman and Tversky 1982).

THE IMPACT OF ISSUE FRAMES

Most research on framing is intellectually indebted to the work of William Gamson and colleagues (Gamson 1992; Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Gamson and Lasch 1983). Gamson et al. define an *issue frame* as “the central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events and weaves a connection among them” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 143).

Framing is important whenever an issue can be presented in multiple ways which may potentially influence how people think about an issue (Popkin 1991; Gamson and Modigliani 1987). A growing body of research attests to the influence frames exert in shifting the criteria individuals use to make decisions. Seminal work by Kahneman and Tversky (1982) demonstrates that linguistic alterations in the formulation of statistically identical choices shift subjects' reference points and influence subsequent behavior. Similarly, Kinder and Sanders' (1990) study of question wording effects shows that shifts in the reference points used to evaluate affirmative action (e.g., portraying the policy as an “unfair advantage” versus “reverse discrimination”) produced judgments that were based on unique sets of values.

Without doubt, in the course of shifting citizens' reference points, frames alter the information citizens' decisions are based on. But, do issue frames alter voters' policy attitudes by having a persuasive effect on their net levels of support? That is, do frames only suggest how citizens should think about an issue, or do they also produce shifts in attitudes? Experimental results by Iyengar (1991) on the impact of abstract versus concrete television news coverage point to the persuasive effect of frames. Iyengar finds that variations in the patterns of news coverage (e.g., thematic versus episodic) play a key role in shaping both voters' attributions of political responsibility, *and* their policy preferences.

However, editorial control is not limited to media decisions concerning reporting styles. In addition to variations in how issues are covered, journalists can choose from an array of issue perspectives promoted by political elites (Gamson and Modigliani 1987) or create their own thematic interpretations (Terkildsen, Schnell and Ling 1996). Part of a journalist's job is to structure information so as to approximate reality. The structuring of reality involves many choices, and frames are but one choice.² "For instance, packaging the abortion debate as a question of women's rights or individual freedom versus morality or fetal rights activates different values and should produce varying levels of policy support. If only one political group's frame is included in an issue's coverage or journalists choose to bypass elite packages by constructing their own thematic spins, then media-constructed versions of reality influence public opinion over and above elites' attempts to structure the policy debate. In this manner, issue frames involve a complex interaction between the media, government actors, and interest groups.

Most political issues are inherently multi-dimensional and can be framed in terms of a variety of different values and policy pitches. We argue that political frames are related to public opinion in clear, intelligible ways (see also Zaller 1992). Issue frames that package a policy debate in a specific manner or evoke a particular set of values subsequently drive public support for that issue (e.g., promoting Alaskan oil drilling as a means to prevent dependency on foreign oil rather than as a method to reduce oil prices alters levels of policy support). Or, as Gamson and colleagues note, frames "generally imply a policy direction or implicit answer as to what should be done about an issue" (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 144). Based on these considerations, we assert that frames not only shape the considerations voters use to evaluate policies, but are capable of shifting attitudes toward policies as well.

² Which frames are promoted at any given time is a function of interest group activities, available news space, professional norms, journalists' personal values, technical considerations, as well as marketplace constraints (see also Terkildsen et al. 1996).

The intent of this research is twofold. First, to apply framing theory to social movements by examining media coverage of mid-20th century feminism. Using a content analysis of weekly print coverage from 1950 to 1995, we document how the women's movement was defined by multiple media frames. Second, we seek to evaluate the impact such organizational devices had on public opinion by approximating the extent to which frames influenced public opinion toward the women's movement, feminists and related policy issues. Here we present the results from an experiment designed to test the attitudinal impact of actual media frames.

STUDY ONE: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEDIA FRAMES

Methods

All non-fiction stories relating to the women's movement, feminism, and women's issues published by the three major news weeklies—*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*—between 1950 and 1979 were assembled and analyzed.³ From 1980 through 1995, once print coverage had increased, every fifth article related to women's rights was systematically sampled and analyzed. Key phrases such as "women in politics," "women as political actors," "women and work," "women and the court" determined which articles were selected.

The three weeklies were chosen as reflective of national daily print coverage on major policy issues, as well as for their broad national circulation, readership accessibility, and the ideological range of their editorial positions (Hunt and Rubin 1993; Davis 1992; Gamson and Modigliani 1987). Together the circulation of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* covers 9.5 million readers; and these are the only print media capable of competing with national television news in reaching a comparable mass audience while providing coverage trends similar to the major dailies (Willings 1993; Hunt and Rubin 1993; Davis 1992).

Independent of the principle investigators, a graduate and an undergraduate student were employed to code the articles for frames. Coders were instructed to read an article first and then determine the piece's organizational theme. In some instances, particularly from the 1970s onward, frames began to overlap or merge as subframes developed (i.e., frames like economic rights and feminism became less distinct); in such cases coders were instructed to

³ The content analysis excludes print coverage of the abortion issue. More than 80 abortion-related articles were published in the weeklies during this time period. The abortion debate, however, was typically framed in legal, medical, or ethical terms, not women's rights, and thus received independent analysis (see Terkildsen et al. 1996 for a discussion of abortion frames).

classify the major component of the frame first and then make a judgment about the subtheme. One third of all articles were randomly tested for inter-coder reliability. A reliability coefficient of .78 was obtained indicating a moderately strong level of agreement between the two coders.⁴

RESULTS

As seen in Table 1, five unique frames were employed by the national news weeklies throughout these four-and-a-half decades: a traditional gender roles frame, an anti-feminism frame, an economic rights/workplace frame, a political roles frame, and a feminism or gender equality frame. A sixth frame, one stressing divisions within the women's movement, materialized only marginally during the late 1970s; otherwise, discussions of the differing tactics preferred by "mainstream" versus "radical" feminists were largely subsumed within the broader frame of feminism or gender equality.

Most articles utilized only one overarching frame. Later years of coverage, however, were characterized by a greater overlap in themes. For example, from the 1970s and beyond the economic frame began to include a substantial component on gender roles as they related to the workplace, the feminism frame took on a backlash subcomponent, and themes related to other issue domains such as affirmative action were linked to women's rights and gender equality frames.

Weekly print media coverage was dominated by the feminism and the economic rights frames (75 percent of all articles). Only 12.5 percent of the articles focused on women's political roles. The remaining two frames, traditional gender roles and anti-feminism, were deployed quite rarely by the media (approximately one out of ten articles).

The *traditional gender roles frame* was quite robust throughout the 1950s and 1960s but disappeared by 1973. This frame described women as the "weaker sex," the defenders of familial and societal morality, and defined women exclusively by their looks and fashion tastes. This frame reflects the low levels of feminist activism prior to the mid-1960s (Klein 1984) and the media's emphasis on domesticity as the womanly ideal (Banner 1984; Cancian and Ross 1981).

Anti-feminism emerged as a frame in a 1969 article discussing the ideological indictments of women's liberation. The thematic shorthand that

⁴ It is important to note that the inter-coder reliability is artificially suppressed due to conflicts that emerged when the coders assessed the subframes. Typically, coders expressed a high level of agreement on an article's overall theme (.89) but disagreed on whether a subframe actually existed. As noted, this inaccuracy was compounded from 1975-85 when the number of subframes increased. For this reason, our later manipulations involve only the major frames that were unearthed rather than a number of the more subtle subvariants.

TABLE 1
MEDIA FRAMES

Overall Content (N = 339)	
Issue Frame & Variants	% Articles
Feminism	40.0 %
Economics/Workplace	35.4
Women's Political Roles	12.5
Anti-Feminism	6.8
Traditional Gender Roles	4.7
Women's Divisions	0.6
General Trends	
1950s:	
Traditional Gender Roles	36%
Economics/workplace	29
Feminism	21
Women's Political Roles	14
1960s	
Economics/Workplace	40%
Traditional Gender Roles	9
Women's Political Roles	25
Feminism	24
Anti-Feminism	2
1970	
Feminism	42%
Economics/Workplace	36
Women's Political Roles	9
Anti-Feminism	9
Traditional Gender Roles	3
Divisions Among Feminists	1
1980s-1995:	
Feminism	39.4%
Economics/Workplace	33
Women's Political Roles	27.6
Anti-Feminism	0
Traditional Gender Roles	0
Divisions Among Feminists	0

eventually took shape described women who were happy with the status quo and traditional roles. As issues like the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion reform, and support for women's traditional roles fueled an anti-feminist movement, articles focused on the political and ideological divisions between women and the continued necessity for gender protectionism. Although highly similar in their ideological messages, the gender roles and anti-feminism frames differed in one important manner:

the traditional gender roles frame pitted emerging feminists against societal norms, while the anti-feminist frame pitted feminists against women supportive of the separate spheres ideology.

The frame stressing *women's political roles* peaked during the late 1960s and was rarely utilized again until around 1980. In the 1950s this frame focused on women's voting behavior. As the "barren years" of women's political participation drew to a close (Klein 1984), this frame included the added dimension of women as political actors both within the party structures and as candidates. During the 1980s and 1990s, the political rights frame was frequently intertwined with feminist themes as more women sought public office (i.e., candidates either wrapped themselves in feminist doctrine or attempted to separate themselves from what they perceived to be the more radical elements of the women's movement).⁵

Forty percent of all articles framed the women's movement in terms of gender equality values. Initially, the *feminism frame* was associated exclusively with the broadly defined goal of women's rights and included images of women "stirring the social pot," or upsetting the status quo. Over time, the feminism frame evolved to encompass the themes of sexism, gender discrimination, language biases, developing tensions between women's groups, and the notion of a movement dominated by radicals and lesbians.⁶

Around 1954 the *economic equality* frame emerged. This organizational theme was employed in approximately one-third of all articles published during the forty-five years of coverage examined. This frame evolved from the theme of women seeking higher wages and increased job opportunities to a topical focus that encompassed general employment rights (e.g., job discrimination, women breaking into male-dominated professions, and women's expanding economic power). By the late-1970s the subthemes of workplace discrimination eclipsed the general economic frame and women's economic rights began to be tied to other political issues as well (e.g., affirmative action and wage equity). Structurally, the economic frame was most likely to be episodic in nature (i.e., emphasizing one woman's struggles).

⁵ The following quote from a 1974 *Newsweek* article demonstrates the electoral implications of this point. "Krupsak steered clear of identifying herself with the more radical women's liberationists declaring that the conduct of women in public office would do more for women's causes than all the rallying on the streets."

⁶ For example, a 1975 *Time Magazine* article described the changes in feminism as follows: "The angry rhetoric has cooled, the marches are less frequent and so is the ritual roasting of that familiar foe, the male chauvinist pig. A more mature feminism has come to focus on the drive for equality on the job, in the home, and in the nation's political life."

In sum, the economic and feminism frames swamped coverage of women's rights. Women's quest for political parity was a distant third, and frames that would have benefited women who wished to maintain the gender status quo (e.g., traditional sex roles, anti-feminism, and divisions within the women's movement) were used even less. To what extent did these frames influence public opinion? Did these various themes affect the import voters ascribed to women's issues and their willingness to intellectually and/or tangibly support the aims of feminism? Study Two approximates how these cognitive packages may have influenced attitude formation.

STUDY TWO: FRAMING AND POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Methods

To approximate the effect of the previously documented issue frames, a single factorial experiment with a control condition was designed. Participants were randomly assigned to read about one of the four documented frames—feminism/gender equality, women's economic equality, women's political rights, anti-feminism—or were assigned to the control condition where they were not exposed to any manipulation but instead merely answered questions about feminism and the women's movement.⁷

Under the guise of judging an article written by a student journalist for a national newspaper contest, a non-random sample of 141 adults from the northeastern United States was recruited to participate in the study. During October 1995 trained undergraduate political science students from Drew and West Chester Universities were asked as part of a course requirement to recruit one adult, non-student to participate in the experiment. Students who administered the questionnaires were completely unaware of the study's purpose and given the same cover story as participants.

The average respondent was a 28-year-old white (83 percent) woman (55 percent) who identified herself as a liberal (42 percent) Democrat (45 percent). Respondents were well-educated (34 percent were college graduates or better), regular voters (60 percent) with above average incomes (56 percent had family incomes of more than \$50,000) who habitually followed political events (83 percent) and the daily news (81 percent). While hardly a representative national sample this non-random population has one strong advantage—these subjects reflect the types of individuals the women's movement would have most desired to recruit (e.g., young, educated, middle-class women

⁷ Due to its time-bound nature, the women's roles frame was not included in the experimental manipulation. Also, since the frame stressing divisions in the women's movement was used only irregularly as an independent frame, it was not included either.

with liberal predispositions). Therefore, we believe that this population allows for a meaningful test of competing frames on citizens' willingness to endorse feminist values.

The stimulus materials were a composite of actual articles published about the women's movement and gender concerns (see Appendix A). In an attempt to avoid a confound between article subject matter, linguistic cues, and issue frames, the essence and language of each article were held constant. For example, the economic rights frame emphasized women's past economic achievements and unfinished employment issues, and included core elements like equal protection, equal job opportunities, equal pay for comparable work, affirmative action programs for women, "pink collar jobs," and sexual harassment. In turn, the political frame featured similar political issues, the feminism frame focused on general gender equality concerns, and the anti-feminism condition discussed how much of the progress in gender equality was detrimental to women, men, and the family. However, due to the unique, antithetical nature of the antifeminism frame, it was impossible to preserve the linguistic similarities used in the other three frames when composing this stimulus material. Therefore, while this pseudo-article is comparable topically to the other frames (i.e., how the women's movement influenced society), it is clearly unique in the language it employs.⁸

Following exposure to the stimuli, participants were asked to make a series of judgments and to answer a few demographic questions. Respondents rated the importance of gender equality, and indicated the extent to which they were willing tangibly to support equal rights for women (e.g., donate money, volunteer their time, attend a rally, add their name to a pre-paid endorsement). They also responded to a series of measures designed to tap their attitudes about women's roles, as well as indicated what they believed to be the most important issues facing the United States. These freely generated issues were scaled according to the number of traditionally defined "women's concerns" the subject mentioned (e.g., day care, gender equality, family issues, domestic violence, wage gap, etc.) versus "non-women's issues." Subject gender, ideology, a measure of feminism, and domain-specific knowledge were also tapped. (See Appendix B for exact question wording and scale composition.)

⁸ In terms of experimentation, one could argue that the anti-feminist frame is confounded with linguistic variations, so therefore it is impossible to disentangle the effects of the issue frame from the impact of the rhetorical differences. Such an argument is clearly correct. However, given that in any issue domain it often becomes impossible to separate issue frames from the broader context of linguistic choices, this condition could in that sense be seen as a closer parallel to the real world of debate formation.

After respondents completed the experimental portion of the study, the student experimenters were directed to ask them if they had formed an opinion about the study's intent. No subjects surmised the experiment's purpose. Once all the questionnaires were collected students were verbally debriefed and instructed to debrief the subject they had recruited.

Hypotheses

Due to the unique core values evoked by each frame, we hypothesized that the political rights frame would have a positive impact on respondents' attitudes about women's roles and levels of support for women's rights. Vice versa, the economic rights, feminism, and anti-feminism frames were expected to have a negative effect. Our logic is as follows: As a majority of Americans strongly endorse formal political equality as well as individual responsibility for citizens' economic status (Dolbeare 1986; Kluegel and Smith 1986; McClosky and Zaller 1984), we expected that the framing of gender equality in economic terms would result in more negative attitudes than when presented as an extension of formal political equality. Because the political equality frame may be more likely to trigger widely accepted notions of formal political equality and the rights of individuals to participate in the political process (McClosky and Zaller 1984), the effects of this frame should be positive. Alternatively, the economic rights frame should be more likely to invoke beliefs about the redistribution of economic resources and governmental economic activism, particularly given the subcomponents of affirmative action and equal pay for comparable work (Kluegel and Smith 1986), and should consequently be negative.

As the feminism frame contains elements of both political and economic equality, and has been negatively symbolized over time to represent women's quest for equality (see Terkildsen and Schnell 1996), we expected that this thematic package would also produce negative attitudes toward women's concerns. Our hypothesis about the antifeminist theme concerned the time-bound nature of that frame in light of current reformulations of gender roles. Even though most citizens no longer support traditional gender roles for men and women, we speculated that the values that prior gender traditionalism evoked would suppress support for the women's movement and women's concerns either by emphasizing traditional conservative values or the notion that feminists had gone too far.

Cognitively, the frames' effects were expected to vary according to individuals' level of media susceptibility. Based on pre-established differences in individual processing (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Terkildsen 1993; Iyengar 1991; Fiske and Taylor 1991; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Iyengar and Kinder 1987), we anticipated that subjects without strong alternative cognitions (e.g.,

feminism, ideology, domain-specific knowledge), would be most prone to media-induced framing effects. In addition, we hypothesized a gender gap in respondents' support for the women's movement and gender equality driven by varying levels of group consciousness among women and men, and/or due to self-interest related cost-benefit calculations on the part of men, i.e., men, particularly those with weak alternative belief systems, would react more negatively to frames that invoke the greatest threat (read economic threats).⁹

Results

In partial support of our hypotheses we find that the economic rights and antifeminism packages had a uniformly negative impact on readers' issue importance ratings, their willingness tangibly to support the women's movement, and their attitudes about gender roles. (See Table 2 for ANOVA results.) The impact of

TABLE 2
EXPERIMENTAL FRAMING EFFECTS

	Political Equality	Economic Equality	Feminism	Anti- Feminism	Control
<i>DV 1: Importance of Gender Equality</i>					
F-value: 3.122* (0-10 point scale)	9.2 (27)	7.5* (23)	7.8* (28)	7.7* (34)	8.7 (29)
<i>DV 2: Women's Issue Mentioned as U.S.'s Most Important Issues</i>					
F-value: 3.204* (0-5 point scale)	3.2 (27)	2.5* (23)	2.8* (28)	2.7* (34)	3.2 (29)
<i>DV 3: Willingness to Tangibly Back Women's Rights</i>					
F-value: 2.258+ (1-4 point scale)	3.0* (27)	2.4 (23)	2.7 (28)	2.4 (34)	2.6 (29)
<i>DV 4: Women's Roles Scale</i>					
F-value: 2.51 (1-7 point scale)	5.9 (27)	5.4* (23)	5.6 (28)	5.3* (34)	5.9 (29)

* $p < .05$ / + $p \leq .10$ All analyses performed using ANOVA. Entries are pooled means for each condition; numbers in parentheses represent cell N's. Means with an asterisk are statistically different from the control at the .05 level.

⁹ The self-interest explanation implies that men and women would react to the frames based on their assessment of the effect said feminist policies would have on their group's economic achievement (Bobo 1983; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985; Kinder and Sears 1981). The group affiliation explanation would suggest that women's higher levels of support for gender equality are due to their heightened group consciousness with personal discriminatory experience being one of the catalysts propelling greater awareness (Klein 1984).

the political rights and feminism frames, while following the direction of our hypotheses were less consistent in their effects across all dependent variables, though they did act in a positive and a negative manner, respectively.

However, the effects of all frames, excluding the political rights package, were moderated by respondent gender but not by any other individual difference variables. Table 3 shows that among men, the economic, feminism and anti-feminism frames were associated with more negative attitudes toward gender equality than was the case in the political equality and control conditions. On the other hand, women's attitudes did not differ across frames

TABLE 3
IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUALITY BY INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Political Equality	Economic Equality	Feminism	Ant- Feminism	Control
<i>Importance X Gender</i>					
F-value: 3.279*					
Women	9.3 (18)	9.1 (12)	8.2 (15)	8.6 (17)	8.6 (19)
Men	9.0 (09)	5.5* (10)	7.4* (13)	6.9* (17)	8.9 (10)
<i>Importance X Self-Labeled Feminism</i>					
F-value: .869					
Feminists	9.4 (18)	8.9 (10)	8.9 (13)	8.6 (14)	9.3 (17)
Non-Feminists	8.8* (09)	6.3* (12)	6.8* (15)	7.2 (20)	7.8 (12)
<i>Importance X Political Knowledge</i>					
F-value: 0.050					
High	9.3 (23)	7.9 (11)	7.9 (25)	8.1 (24)	8.9 (21)
Low	8.5 (04)	7.0* (11)	7.0* (03)	6.9* (10)	8.3 (08)
<i>Importance X Ideology</i>					
F-value: 1.422					
Lib's	9.4 (17)	8.9 (08)	8.0* (12)	8.2* (13)	9.2 (13)
Con's	8.5 (02)	4.7* (06)	7.8 (09)	7.0* (11)	8.6 (08)
Mod's	8.9 (08)	8.1 (08)	7.4 (07)	7.8 (09)	8.0 (08)

* $p < .05$ / + $p < .10$ Analyses performed using ANOVA. Entries are pooled means for each condition; numbers in parentheses represent cell N's. Means with an asterisk are statistically different from the control at the .05 level.

and the control condition.¹⁰ Also, contrary to prior research and our a priori assumptions, feminism, domain specific knowledge, and ideology produced statistically insignificant results.¹¹ As these patterns were consistent across all the dependent variables, for the sake of simplicity and clarity only the interactions for the importance of gender equality are presented here.

For men, exposure to the feminism and anti-feminism frames produced more negative attitudes toward the importance of gender equality than the frames generated for women. A comparison of these means to the control condition demonstrates that men's importance ratings were 17 percent lower in the feminism condition and 23 percent lower in the anti-feminism condition. Exposure to the economic equality package produced even more pronounced differences. Framing the women's movement in terms of economic equality had a negative impact on men's attitudes about the importance of gender equality. While gender equality was rated as highly important in the control condition ($M = 8.9$), men's ratings dropped by 38 percent to marginally important ($M = 5.5$) in the economic frame condition. The same pattern holds for men's and women's attitudes toward the importance of other women's issues, willingness tangibly to back women's rights, and judgments about women's roles as well.

To what extent were the effects of the economic rights frame driven by subjects' attitudes toward affirmative action, a subcomponent of the frame, rather than by general economic considerations? It is possible that the gender effects, at least in the economic condition, represent participants' reactions to the linking of affirmative action to women's economic rights. For male subjects who might perceive affirmative action as a direct threat to their economic livelihood this effect could have been accentuated. To test this possibility we conducted a number of additional analyses. Our findings indicate that such is the case; attitudes toward affirmative action and respondent gender did play a partial role, but in a slightly unexpected manner.

Both women and men in the economic frame who were against affirmative action perceived gender equality as less important than affirmative action opponents in the control condition; though men were still affected more by

¹⁰ A series of contrast effects (i.e., a comparison of the control mean with the mean for the other four conditions) were statistically insignificant for female respondents, but significant at the .05 level or below for males in three out of the four conditions (e.g., the economic equality, feminism, and anti-feminism frames).

¹¹ While neither the controls for feminism, political knowledge, nor ideology were statistically significant, there were some consistent results (see Table 3). Non-feminists were somewhat more likely to be influenced by the frames than were feminists. Likewise, as predicted, subjects low in political knowledge were marginally more susceptible to the effect of framing than were the politically knowledgeable.

this frame than women (a 36 percent decrease compared to 12 percent). However, male supporters of affirmative action also decreased their support for gender equality after exposure to the economic frame (decrease equals 20 percent, while women who favored affirmative action increased their levels of support (+10 percent). This finding seems to imply that men were reacting to the economic frame over and above any reactions they might have had to affirmative action. That is, think of the impact of the economic rights frame on men supportive of affirmative action as the baseline and the attitudes of men opposed to affirmative action as the additional impact of that cue. However, we caution the reader in making too much of these results, as the three-way interaction failed to reach standard levels of significance and the mean for one of the contrasted cells is based on fewer than five cases; though the mean changes reported are statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

This study presents evidence that the print media assisted in packaging the women's movement and related gender issues by employing five unique frames over the course of forty-five years—political and economic rights, feminism, anti-feminism, and gender roles. Whether these themes represent deliberate attempts by the media to define feminism, attempts by feminists to package themselves, opposition strategies, or some combination of all three, we cannot say and leave such analyses to future research. Instead, we focus our attention on the differential impact these frames had on gender equality attitudes.

Clearly, different frames produced different attitudes and assessments. The two dominant media frames—feminism and economic rights—accounted for 75 percent of all weekly print coverage. Both of these frames exerted a negative impact on gender-related issues and willingness to support women's rights. Only the political rights frame, utilized in but one out of ten articles, had a positive attitudinal impact, perhaps attributable to citizens' beliefs about popular sovereignty and support for formal political equality.

It seems evident, based on these results, that political movements or interest groups who wish to mobilize broad electoral support would do well to package their issues to appeal to the most commonly held societal values and avoid appeals to economic rights or group-specific legislation. Nineteenth century women's suffrage may owe its success in part to early women's leaders who wisely separated their appeals for the vote from more sweeping calls for full gender equality. This strategy of emphasizing a common denominator would result in interest group rhetoric which stresses universal values and avoids emphasizing any controversial issue that could offend parts of the mass public. However, given the partial control the media exert over interest group's messages, i.e., the media's ability to frame an issue, such an approach

might not be successful. Additionally, this strategy has the potential to alienate the most faithful and committed supporters of a group's cause.

Finally, we conclude our discussion by returning to media effects. We believe our findings underscore research by Iyengar (1991) that media frames not only alter issue conceptualizations, but also produce a net shift in citizens' issue support. Based on this, we believe that the impact of the mass media reaches beyond "minimal effects."

The subtle, often non-conscious, nature of frames to direct for many citizens what set of beliefs or information is cued for subsequent evaluations is an immense power. Given that for most issues the vast majority of citizens are without a strong personal stake or a cognitive ballast, media frames become a potent source of public opinion orchestration either directly by the media itself or via interest groups and other political players. Furthermore, citizens who think of the media as an independent source with little or no intent to persuade may be more susceptible to issue packaging since objective sources are documented as far more persuasive than sources which appear to have a vested interest in the issue (Cook 1987; Petty and Cacioppo 1981).

Taken in total with agenda-setting effects, priming, and other documented framing effects, we assert that Bernard Cohen's (1963) classic observation that, "the true power of the media lies not in telling voters what to think, but in telling them what to think about" needs amending. We propose that the true power of the media lies in telling the public what issues to think about, *as well as* how to think about those issues.

APPENDIX A: STIMULUS MATERIAL

Gender Equality: The Struggle Continues

Among women's leaders the belief that full equality of the sexes has yet to be achieved continues to dominate. On the surface women are riding the crest of gains made since the mid-1960's; having secured significant gains in areas of economic parity, political representation, and gender discrimination.

Yet women continue to work for rights fueled by many frustrations and disappointments such as the failure to ratify the equal rights amendment and need to slow the erosion of abortion rights. "Women need to rebel until all barriers for them are removed," said former California Representative Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, "This can be achieved through laws and legislation."

In fact, women have done just that, advanced their cause through Congressional legislation on economic and family issues, as well as reproductive and economic rights gained in the Supreme Court.

Women have also become heavily involved in efforts to elect other women to political office by placing greater emphasis on state level organization. According

to Eleanor Smeal, former activist, women legislators are needed to ensure federal funding for abortions, greater legal protection for battered women, standardized federal child care, and stronger rape laws. However, these women's groups still don't speak for all women. Though more working-class and minority women than in the past are joining their ranks, their leadership remains largely white, college-educated, and middle-class. Furthermore, vocal and well-organized groups of women have risen in opposition to many of the aims of feminism.

FEMINISM CONDITION

Women's Political Equality: The Struggle Continues

Among women's leaders the belief that full political equality of the sexes has yet to be achieved continues to dominate. On the surface women are riding the crest of gains made since the mid-1960s in the areas of women's political participation, increased numbers of women in political office, and more women's issues reaching the national agenda. Yet women continue to work for political rights fueled by many frustrations and disappointments such as failure to achieve equal political representation, relative tokenism in the governors' mansions, and failure to elect a woman as either vice president or president. "Women need to rebel until all political barriers for them are removed," said former California Representative Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, "This can be achieved through laws and legislation."

In fact, women have done just that, more women are running for political office—vying to represent both the Democratic and Republican parties, others have become heavily involved in efforts to elect women to political office and served as campaign managers for presidential candidates. Women politicians have increased their numbers at all levels of political office, and are now rated voters to be as competent as men to serve the public. Some women leaders believe that the most significant way to affect public policy is to elect greater numbers of women to public office.

However, these new politicians still don't speak for all women. Though more working-class and minority women than in the past are joining their ranks, their leadership remains largely white, college-educated, and middle-class. Furthermore, vocal and well-organized groups of women have risen in opposition to many of the aims of political feminism.

POLITICAL EQUALITY FRAME

Women's Economic Equality: The Struggle Continues

Among women's leaders the belief that full economic equality of the sexes has yet to be achieved continues to dominate. On the surface women are riding the crest of gains made since the mid-1960's in the areas of equal job opportunities, equal protection, and job discrimination.

Yet women continue to work for economic rights fueled by many frustrations and disappointments such as failure to secure equal pay for comparable work legislation, strengthen affirmative action programs for women, and establish equal opportunity programs. "Women need to rebel until all economic barriers for them are removed," said former California Representative Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, "This can be achieved through laws and legislation."

In fact, women have made significant in-roads into all levels of management positions, the legal and medical professions and the military. However, almost 50 percent of women continue to work in "pink collar" jobs, or those traditionally filled by women such as clerical and service-related positions. According to Eleanor Smeal, former activist, women need to ensure their economic rights through stronger laws to fight sexual harassment in the workplace, financial equity, and a more rigorous implementation of economic discrimination laws.

However, these women's groups still don't speak for all women. Though more working-class and minority women than in the past are joining their ranks, their leadership remains largely white, college-educated, and middle-class. Furthermore, vocal and well-organized groups of women have risen in opposition to many of the aims of economic feminism.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY FRAME

Gender Equality: The Struggle Against the Women's Movement

Many working-class and other women are opposed to women's rights. They see the movement as responsible for the deterioration of the family and women's social roles. They also believe that the women's movement has caused a decrease in male self-esteem, greater male unemployment, allowed women to usurp traditional male power, reduced respect for motherhood, and increased divorce rates.

According to one leading feminist critic, "Modern technology and opportunity have not discovered any nobler or more satisfying or more creative career for a woman than marriage and motherhood. Men and women are endowed with different characteristics appropriate for their diverse functions in life. Women's primary responsibility is motherhood, while men are charged with the family's economic well-being. Anything else undermines the traditional American family." Another leader, Ann Livingston, has described American women as "the most favored class of people anywhere in the world with most women enjoying their domestic positions."

Supporters of traditional women's roles frequently take issue with state or federal attempts to ensure women's equal rights. They perceive that such attempts may, among other things, eliminate alimony and child support payments, alter child custody arrangements, absolve men from their economic

responsibilities, force women into the labor market, and erase protective legislation that currently benefits women.

Many women opposed to the principles of gender equality are themselves housewives with little work force experience. Analysts believe these activists feel compelled to defend their own lifestyle patterns by opposing the women's movement. Feminists assert that their female critics have misunderstood their movements intentions. Instead, they advocate a choice for women and their social roles, not a forced decision of marriage and motherhood.

ANTI-FEMINISM FRAME

APPENDIX B: INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT MEASURES DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Issue Importance Measures:

(1) "What do you believe are the most important issues facing the United States today?" (Participants could freely generate up to five responses).

(2) "On a 10 point scale where 0 represents an issue that is totally unimportant, and 10 an issue that is very important and 5 represents neutral, please rate the importance of gender equality."

Tangible Behavioral Support:

Cumulative four point scale ranging from—very willing, somewhat willing, somewhat unwilling, very unwilling—averaged responses to the following four questions; $\alpha = .89$.

(1) How willing would you be to donate a small amount of money (less than \$25) to a group supporting equal rights for women?

(2) . . . volunteer a limited amount of time (less than 5 hours per week)?

(3) . . . add your name to a pre-paid newspaper ad endorsing?

(4) . . . attend a rally in support of equal rights for women?

Women's Roles:

A seven-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree ($\alpha = .78$), averaged responses to the following seven questions.

(1) If a woman is working full-time, her husband should do half the cooking, cleaning and other household chores.

(2) A woman can maintain a full-time job and still be a good mother.

(3) It seems somehow unnatural to place women in positions of authority over men.

(4) If a husband and wife earn about the same amount and the woman has better job prospects in another city her husband should consider changing jobs and moving with her.

(5) A wife, not a husband, should be the first one to take off from work to deal with family problems.

(6) It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself.

(7) A preschool child suffers if a mother works.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Feminist Label:

"Do you consider yourself a feminist or not?" (Response categories: Strong Feminist, Weak Feminist, Not a Feminist).

Political Knowledge:

"Please circle either True or False as it applies to the following statements" (Count of correct responses).

	True	False
(1) On the average wages for women and men in the U.S. are virtually equal.	1	2
(2) Currently in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, women comprise approximately 30% of elected members.	1	2
(3) The federal constitution guarantees equal rights for women.	1	2

Ideology:

"In general, when it comes to politics, do you view yourself as: very liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, middle-of-the-road, slightly conservative, conservative, or very conservative."

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