**Whither Social Movement in Rhetorical Studies? A White Paper**

**The RSA 15**

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**Panel Description**

At the 2015 RSA Summer Institute, several authors of the proposed White Paper convened at the Whither “Social Movement” in Rhetorical Studies? Workshop (organized and co-lead by Christina R. Foust, University of Denver and Charles E. Morris, III, Syracuse University). The two and a half days proved inspiring and productive, as participants considered the loss of the term “social movement(s)” from the scholarly conversation in rhetoric, particularly following McGee’s polemic against the traditions of resource mobilization, functionalism, and the basic reduction of social movement to a “thing” awaiting classification by rhetorical critics (McGee, 1980; DeLuca, 1999; Enck-Wanzer, 2006). Participants considered the relocation of “social movement” into activist work (Cloud, 2009; Aseynas, McCann, Feyh, & Cloud, 2012) and rhetorical field methods (McHendry, Middleton, Endres, Senda-Cook, & O’Byrne, 2014), as well as tactics of resistance related to affect (Bruce, 2015), neoliberal capitalism (Pezzullo, 2011), and digital ubiquity (Ganesh & Stohl, 2013).

Though we can read “social movement” into the record of rhetorical studies, participants raised a number of questions: What is at stake in the loss of “social movement” in rhetorical studies? For rhetorical critics who see the value of “social movement” (in interdisciplinary connections and public relevance, for instance), what must be done to...

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rehabilitate the term? More particularly, what is the relationship between social movement as a phenomenon, noun, or “thing” and others’ treatments of social movement as a verb, process, or indicative of meaning change? How might reclaiming “social movement” for rhetorical studies invigorate work across different disciplinary domains, and the public?

Given the richness of the conversation, and its potential to intervene in shared concerns for rhetoric scholars across disciplines; and given the explicit connection to the 2016 RSA conference theme of Rhetoric and Change; we propose to present a White Paper on the state of social movement in rhetorical studies. The White Paper will be collectively authored by the individuals listed above. Should the panel be accepted, the authors have agreed to limit the number of participants presenting to eight, and have agreed that the presenters will reflect a diversity of disciplines and career stages as much as possible (with other authors welcome to sit in the audience).
Introduction and Background:

On the Disappearance and Dispersal of “Social Movement” in Rhetorical Studies

Twenty-seven scholars came together last June at the Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute in a workshop entitled, “Whither ‘Social Movement’ in Rhetorical Studies?” In keeping with this titular inquiry, we set out to explore the status of “social movement” within rhetoric’s dynamic vernacular. Our group’s diverse research areas, departmental homes, and scholarly methods shaped our engagements with the past, present, and future of “social movement” in rhetorical scholarship. Some of us began the workshop committed to the continued utility of “social movement” as a distinctly powerful way of conceptualizing relationships between rhetoric and change. Some were more compelled by arguments that the term has outlived its utility, gesturing instead toward groundbreaking work on activism, counterpublicity, and protest as more satisfying ways of accounting for discourse’s public power. And some of us, of course, were drawn to both positions, seeking to complicate the binary question with which we began our many productive conversations. After three days of highly fruitful engagement we were excited at the prospect of continuing our deliberation—though we were, perhaps, no closer to finding a definitive answer to our convening question. This White Paper, authored by 15 of the workshop’s participants, grew out of our many ongoing discussions.

A common point of departure was agreement on the waning use of the term “social movement” in our scholarly literature. While “social movement” enjoyed primacy in rhetorical studies during the contentious and productive decades of the 1960s and
1970s—interest that culminated in a 1980 special issue of *Central States Speech Journal* devoted to the topic—movement studies has declined considerably over the last three decades. Workshop participants considered two potential motives for this shift: tension between two competing conceptualizations of “social movements” and the rise of alternative paradigms for the exploration of discourses of social change. To access the first debate, we returned to McGee’s articulation of the phenomenological approach to movement studies, a perspective that treats social movements as discrete material realities that exist outside of the symbolic world. Diagnosing much of the literature as suffering from such a perspective, McGee (1980) argued that scholars of rhetoric ought to instead view “movement” as meaning, or a hermeneutic that could generate insight into rhetoric’s relationship to social change. Despite McGee’s provocative insights, little progress has been made in this endeavor. Instead, social movement literature continued, in the words of Kevin DeLuca (1999), to impart a “traditional sociological approach” to the rhetoric of social movements whose focus on organizations, leaders, and resources displaced questions of symbolic significance.

Within this context, workshop participants considered the rise of alternative critical perspectives on rhetoric and social change. We discussed the advent of counterpublicity, activism, and protest as critical lenses that have helped rhetorical scholars recover the symbolic and develop nuanced and insightful arguments that restore rhetoric’s place in the social world. We also worried, alongside Christina Foust (in press), that while the proliferation of these new approaches marks a thoughtful, intentional shift in our thinking about movements, it is also consistent with the neoliberal demands of the academic marketplace. Indeed, as participants mentioned in the discussion, the old
problem of the phenomenological approach to social change is not necessarily resolved by a change to, say, counterpublic theory. As Asen (2000) reminds us, the tendency to reduce complex constellations of discursive formations to particular “persons, places, or topics” must be resisted if we are to avoid the phenomenological approach that McGee heeded against.

The authors of this White Paper certainly do not posit “social movement” as the only or even necessarily the best term through which to describe the many varieties of organized social transformation; indeed, many of us are invested in precisely the kinds of proliferation of language that simultaneously enrich and disperse the study of social movements as such. We recognize that the language of, for instance, counterpublics, activism, rhetorical field methods, affect, networks, etc., allows us to investigate and account for changing cultural conditions and tactics of social change. Some of us may not feel at all compelled by or loyal to “social movement” as an organizing term.

Nonetheless, there are scholarly and political stakes in maintaining an attachment—even if an ambivalent one—to the tradition of the rhetoric of social movements. First, articulating work on the particularities of social change to an established scholarly discourse (i.e., social movement rhetoric) offers scholars and students a variety of critical tools and a context within which to situate new claims. If we understand “social movement” to function flexibly and capaquously, then even those interventions that challenge the most basic assumptions of movements need not be thought to be abandoning the term. Second, the term “social movement” travels across disciplines and throughout both scholarly and popular conversations with relative ease. This allows for more interdisciplinary insights and collaborations, as well as more
publicly engaged and publicly relevant scholarship. Third, “social movement” reminds us of the important local and global histories of agitation, radicalism, and protest that shape our current context of activism; overemphasizing the particularities of the present risks forgetting our connections to the past. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is the metaphor of movement that is at the heart of the rhetorical work of social change. The metaphor of movement unites our various concerns with the politics of social change and resistance, orienting us around shared investments in how rhetoric moves and how rhetoric moves us. Thus, this White Paper takes seriously what is at stake in the rhetoric of social movements, and attempts to account for the political and scholarly implications of our choices to abandon, embrace, and/or rehabilitate its terms. We proceed by briefly articulating our understanding of the field of social movement study, in order to identify trajectories for future scholarship.

II. The Advantages and Disadvantages of ‘Social Movement’ as a Term: What You Need to Know

In this section, we consider some advantages and disadvantages of using the term ‘social movement.’ Rather than take a firm position on whether or not it should be revived as a key term in our disciplines, we aim to equip would-be social movement scholars to make their own decisions. We discuss the conceptual and methodological implications of using the term social movement within and across disciplines, as well as with public audiences. Preceding these discussions, we offer a definitional primer that summarizes the different ways ‘social movement’ as a term, may be defined, as well as an account of some of the most important definitional problems that have been posed in social movement studies so far.
**Definitional Problems and Possibilities**

What referent(s) does the term ‘social movement’ designate? In our review of social movement scholarship, we have distinguished at least three distinct usages. ‘Social movement’ may refer to:

1. **An a priori entity that generates rhetoric**—i.e. an uninstitutionalized collectivity or array of organizations that attempt to create social change by circulating persuasive discourse (among other means). This is the usage most common in sociological and historical studies, as in: *The women’s rights movement sought to challenge the boundaries between public and private issues in American political discourse.*

2. **An entity constituted by rhetoric from which social change efforts may be seen to emanate**—i.e. an agent that is constituted by rhetorical discourse. The label ‘social movement,’ can be seen as an attribution or achievement, a label whose applicability to a particular cause in the eyes of the public represents a powerful kind of rhetorical effect. The moniker is, in other words, a marker of legitimacy, especially historical legitimacy. Christina Foust (in press) describes this usage when she suggests that, “perhaps the mid-point on the spectrum of ‘movement’ is the idea that movements are fictions to which people attach their sense of agency or identity in public struggle” (p. 39). For instance: *Women’s rights activists worked hard to be seen as a true social movement.*

3. **A term for social change in-and-of-itself**—i.e. demonstrable shifts in circulating ideas and public attitudes, possibly measured through careful analysis of discourse. Rather than the source of social change efforts, ‘social movement’
becomes the *telos* of such efforts. This usage is similar to (2) in that ‘social movement’ becomes an effect, but different in that it ceases to refer to a particular agent. Lucas (1980) suggests that the social-movement-as-meaning critique ultimately leads to this usage: “McGee’s central concern is not the rhetoric of *individual* social movements, but rhetoric as a factor in the *general process* of social movement (change)” (p. 256, italics original). Foust too sees this potential in McGee’s influential critique, arguing that it “encourages us to see movements as verbs” (p. 30) (though, of course, *movement* is a nominalization of a verb, not a verb in the grammatical sense). *Women’s rights groups have sought several different kinds of social movement. One key movement has been convincing Americans to see access to contraception as a right.*

Definitional problems have been haunting social movement studies since the early 1980s. Some of the most influential critiques boil down to a single question, what is a social movement, anyway? The answer, where it comes from, and who provides it will strongly impact the (possible) future of social movement studies in our disciplines. In his critique of movement studies, David Zarefsky (1980) advocates defining social movement as a historical entity: a “…scholar of social movement rhetoric takes, as given, instances of collective behavior which the sociologist labels a ‘movement’ and then examines their rhetorical dimensions” (p. 252 ). The goal of social movement study, Zarefsky argues, ought to be a better historical understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and social change. Michael McGee, on the other hand, insists that such a move (depending on sociologists to define what is and is not a movement) transforms social movement from a meaning—a label that reflects interpretation and value judgment—into
a phenomenon, a pseudo-objective assessment that obscures the power of the label itself. It is also unclear what, if anything, separates social movements from campaigns and institutional efforts to change public attitudes. There is, Zarefsky points out, nothing intrinsically different about grassroots efforts and government initiatives, at least at the level of rhetoric—the tools are much the same.

Along with debates over defining the proper aims of social movements, rhetoric scholars argue over the effects of social movement. Studies of social movement rhetoric have predominantly focused on groups who achieved public attention, engaged in dialectical enjoinment with an established order. For instance, Cathcart (1972) argued the distinguishing characteristic of social movement was “dialectical enjoinment,” the “moral arena” where movements and the establishment battled over the issue that triggered movement in the first place (p. 87). However, contemporary movements problematize the unquestioned assumption that social movement is geared at advancing the social. In fact, some movements come into existence in direct antagonism to the existing order, calling into question the logic of the status quo.

Other scholars have fashioned definitions of social movement that would permit a more flexible analysis of “moving the social.” McGee, for instance, departed from the purely phenomenal approach to studying social movement rhetoric. For McGee, “Theoretical descriptions of ‘social movement(s)’ . . . ought to make questions of consciousness ‘come first,’ focusing on the fact of collectivity and not on the accident of an allegedly pre-existing phenomenon” (p. 244). This approach to social movement rhetoric pressed critics to consider the material and discursive foundations of movement, preceding the recognizable collectives struggling within public view. Still, McGee’s
approach was largely dependent on Cathcart’s conceptualization of dialectical
enjoinment. The consciousness of social movement was found in a collective seeking to
“move the social,” a move that would no doubt eventually make its way into public view
or sputter out in the process. DeLuca (1999) began to question the meaning of “the
social,” arguing that social movements do not necessarily “focus on the distribution of
material goods, the expansion of institutional political rights, and security, but rather
thematize personal and collective identity, contest social norms, challenge the logic
governing the system, and, in sum, deconstruct the established naming of the world” (p.
25). Here, with new social movement scholars, DeLuca encourages scholars to attend to
how the social is conceived, especially as that which is moved, or the arena in which
movement is detected.

In at least some cases, critics must adapt their methods such that the focus is not
around how activists seek to reform or rebuild civil society, but rather how activists (such
as radical feminist and queer activists) seek its destruction in favor of new forms of
world-making.1 As David Chandler (2010) argues, “today critical intervention in the
public sphere is . . . no longer possible. In fact, to engage publically appears to engage on
the terrain of the enemy: The ideal of publicity functions ideologically . . . if there is no
public sphere in which collective identities can be formed it would appear that ‘radicals’
have little option but to engage in ‘global’ individuated ethical protest” (p. 55).

Certainly, the definitional debates over what initiates social movement, and the
ends of “moving the social” are complex and worthy of scholarly attention. However, we
fear contributing to the intractability of such debates, as it may have promoted the
atrophying of social movement rhetoric by the early 2000s (Mitchell, 2004). One
response to these definitional difficulties would be to shift to usage #3 above. Social
movement would become similar in some ways to social change. On the one hand, this
move has the advantage of uniting what might seem disparate scholarly projects. Indeed,
if social movement is similar to social change, then the study of social movement(s)
ever really ceased, but instead proliferated wildly and beautifully under a different
name. On the other hand, if social movement is a synonym for social change, why do we
need it at all? We would be right back where we started, and Zarefsky’s critique ended:
we have a term that is useful in its capacity to link scholarly work across time and
discipline, but too vague.

We would still need to answer the question, what does social movement signify
and how is it different from social change? There are two possibilities to start with. First,
*social movement*, in contrast to the more broad *social change*, might represent “an
affirmation of human significance” (McGee, p. 121) insofar as it focuses on instrumental,
rhetorical attempts to move the social. Second, the physical connotations of *movement*
might reaffirm the material dimensions—the demonstrable differences or
displacements—that rhetorical studies has sometimes been accused of ignoring (see, for
example, Cloud, 2001, p. 212).

Another response to these definitional critiques is to understand ‘social
movement’ as designating an outsider stance that may or may not succeed. Scholars using
the term social movement have often relied on tension between out-group and
establishment forces to identify their object of study (cf. Cathcart, 1978). But distinctions
like inside/outside and marginalized/empowered are never simple. Scholarship on
counterpublics offers a helpful example. Robert Asen (2001) asks, what exactly is
counter about counterpublics? His answer is instructive for social movement scholars as well. The counter in counterpublics (and perhaps the sense of resistance in social movements) is a stance, not an empirical observation. Any individuals or groups may set themselves against what they perceive as the establishment, but that stance may or may not be convincing to others. We can show that an anti-establishment stance is being attempted by, say, the Hitler Youth organization (to borrow McGee’s example) but also argue that it was unsuccessful, that few bought it. Like Asen, Michael Warner (2002) marks the oppositional quality of counterpublics as a stance, a recognition of outsider status that may or may not be accepted by others. Following their example, we might differentiate a public and a counterpublic—or a social movement and the establishment it confronts—by looking for challenges to not only circulating ideas but also norms (pp. 112, 118-122). In other words, social movements and counterpublics, when they are understood as collectivities, seek to create what Olson and Goodnight (1994) call a “social controversy,” “an extended rhetorical engagement that critiques, resituates, and develops communication practices bridging the public and personal spheres” (p. 249). They may also create an antagonism, articulating a limit or point of dissent with a dominant, hegemonic discourse (DeLuca, 1999).

In the sections below, we explore the advantages and disadvantages of reclaiming or rehabilitating the term social movement. Such a move has the potential to unite rhetoric-based work across different disciplinary domains to bridge public and personal spheres. It can enliven communication across rhetorical studies, enhance rhetorical studies’ contributions to interdisciplinary scholarship, and amplify rhetorical scholars engagement with public audiences. The latter, in particular, is not without risk.
'Social Movement’ and Public Audiences

While the term social movement is recognizable to public audiences, nonetheless when rhetorical scholars identify themselves as interested in what moves the social, they may risk being thrust into a more public spotlight for their work. If the backlash received by communication professors Dana Cloud (2009) and more recently Melissa Click (2016) are representative of the fire one must take to earn her or his stripes as a critical public intellectual, it can be argued that a more robust understanding of the forces that motivate social movement are required to articulate the potential rewards and risks of politically engaged scholarship. As Zarefsky articulates, the term ‘[m]ovement’ itself is a “persuasive definition” that “attaches one’s actions to the connotations of motion [. . .] future-orientation, and sympathy for the underdog” (p. 248). If hate email and death threats from partisan stakeholders make up the landscape where shifts from the “interpersonal to the movement and from the self to society” take place, then it can be argued that public intellectuals must be willing to risk severe and vocal criticism when they find common cause with those with limited social power and resources (Cloud p. 474; emphasis added). The moniker public intellectual is reserved as a compliment for those who can straddle the divide between expert or academic audiences and popular or lay audiences. A public intellectual is also someone who skirts the line between theory and practice to find places where the two meet to create space for public dialogue and debate. We suggest there could be significant political purchase in rehabilitating a term that is familiar, both in a contemporary and historical sense, to the public at large. Using the term can position us as public intellectuals and extend our work to engage with activists, media, and organizations. It may also help connect the questions we ask and the
investments we highlight in our scholarship with broader publics interested, frustrated, or excited by social change.

A further advantage of revitalizing the term social movement rhetoric is to better understand the motives social actors have for their actions and to equip a new generation of rhetorical studies scholars to learn how to live “without cynicism or pessimism” in the face of violence and threats of violence in the proverbial “night alleys” of everyday civic life (West p. 16-21). The politically right of center activist David Horowitz’s list of dangerous politically left academics may be a place of honor for some intellectuals, but for others the prospect and reality of harassment and threats has a chilling impact on scholars who study, teach, and write about social change. Just as there is pleasure for some in taking risks as a public intellectual, as Ralph R. Smith (1980) argues, there is also “intellectual pleasure” in performing rhetorical criticism and theory, which in darker times of material and symbolic violence can be a refuge (p. 296). If classifying oneself as a social movement scholar puts one at greater risk of being more easily recognizable by politically conservative stakeholders, then the term should be embraced cautiously by those on the political left who must be prepared for the possibility of letters of complaint to university administrators and trustees. However, one benefit here is that social movement scholarship, irrespective of where it falls on the political spectrum, may gain more attention generally and hence rhetoricians may have greater opportunity to enter and influence wider public and scholarly conversations to argue for social change and to raise awareness.

‘Social Movement’ as a Disciplinary Unifier within Rhetorical Studies
Using the term ‘social movement’ signals the common interests that can bring together seemingly disparate strands of scholarship and provide for better communication across the field of rhetorical studies in order to enhance and extend the conversation that dropped off with the term itself in the 1980s. The term gathers together “nomadic” theorization projects in rhetorical studies including counterpublics, activism, protest, resistance, establishment and more (Foust in press). Though concerns about joining, enhancing, or even extending the decades-old scholarly investigation into social movement by using the term are understandable, we suggest the approaches above may have additional theoretical potential when placed at the same table. Thus, using social movement has the potential to foster a subsequent politics of citation within rhetorical studies to bring disparate conceptual work into one place and allow rhetorical scholars to engage questions of concern for their individual case as well as the ongoing, developing, or shifting theoretical lines of inquiry. We do not claim that the goal is to develop a grand theory of social movement, that it is possible or even desirable, but rather that rehabilitating the term provides a means of stitching together a larger conversation to join scholars interested in rhetoric, social movement, resistance, and power, among a host of other concerns. The goal in rehabilitating the term ‘social movement’ is to develop a deeper understanding that is also indebted and connected to a lengthy past. Drawing together concepts and placing them in this conversation (i.e., body rhetoric, affect, etc.) contributes to understanding what is rhetorical about social movement and the concepts themselves. In short, rather than circling or existing within small conceptual orbits, we should step back and engage those concepts in a larger conceptual galaxy to see broader relationships and affinities to move toward a more complex understanding of the deeper,
broader, questions about how rhetoric moves the social or what, precisely, is rhetorical about social movement studies. This process of coming together by citational and theoretical practices around the term also fosters interdisciplinarity, explored in the next section.

‘Social Movement’ and Its Inter-Disciplinary Possibilities

In a moment when interdisciplinarity receives attention in many universities, but perhaps less traction in practice, reclaiming the term social movement may offer a point of departure for an interdisciplinary journey in which we can challenge one another across disciplines like sociology, American studies, English, and communication. We do not discount the possible disciplinary anxiety, particularly within the neoliberal, academic capitalist context, but we also do not claim ownership over the term social movement. Rather, we can lay claim to it as part of an interdisciplinary endeavor. Scholars can link their work to this ongoing and interdisciplinary conversation around social movement as noted above. In addition to the potential to draw together various strands in rhetorical studies, the rehabilitation of social movement could draw other scholars to rhetorical studies. As we signal our relationship to the interdisciplinary conversation concerning social movement, we have an opportunity to mark our collective investment in the role of rhetoric in “moving the social” (McGee; Foust, in press). Just as there is neoliberal inducement to generate new concepts rather than enhancing and extending ongoing conversations about social movement (Foust, in press), there is enticement to use (and still complicate) ‘social movement’ as a term that is familiar, recognizable, and historically relevant across disciplines.
Scholars of rhetoric can connect their work to vigorous and timely conversations from outside the disciplines of English and Communication by adopting the term ‘social movement.’ Rhetorical studies, as described above, has its own tradition of studying social movements from a text-based approach. A critical reassessment of this tradition can help rhetoricians better communicate where, precisely, the rhetorical dimensions of social movements lie beyond our disciplinary borders. Other disciplines, in exchange, can better communicate to us critical insights from their traditions. Sociology, in particular, is one of the more promising places for cross-disciplinary dialogue. Sociology can give rhetoricians a finer sense of the relationship between the material and the symbolic, as well as between structure and agency. Rhetoricians, at the same time, can help expand sociologists’ understanding of “framing processes” (see Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). Together, sociology and rhetorical studies can best trace the movement of culture, discourse, and identity alongside the flow of resources, allies, political opportunities, mobilizing structures, networks, and grievances. Sociology, without acknowledging rhetoric’s tradition, risks minimizing the role that language plays in constituting resistance. Rhetorical studies risks overstating the role of the “discursive” and the “symbolic” by turning a deaf ear toward to sociology. Such cross-disciplinary communication is difficult without the willingness of both sides to meet on the common ground of ‘social movement’ studies.

Sociology’s conventional understanding of “framing” can be expanded through a conversation with rhetorical studies. “Framing” is often the catch-all term for the symbolic and discursive work done by collective actors (see Snow & Benford, 1988). While the concept has changed since it rose to prominence in the 1980s, it most often
refers to strategic, intentional, and macro-scale persuasive work done by social movement actors. Sociological analysis of “framing” typically starts with pre-established categories that are then located, counted, and measured through both quantitative and qualitative methods (see McCammon, 2001; McCarthy, 1994). Rhetorical scholars can complement this approach by drawing attention to the discursive work at the micro- and meso- levels of collective action, beyond the more overt, instrumental language found at the macro-level. Rhetorical critics have analyzed speech and language beyond its instrumental use for decades, and the interpretive methods we have developed can help sociologists account for the more ephemeral dimensions of protest, such as the emotional, affective, performative, and cultural dimensions of social protest (see Berbrier, 1998; Cadena-Roa, 2002; Diani, 1996; Hunt, Benford, & Snow, 1994; Jasper, 1997; Many, Woehrle, & Coy, 2005; Melucci, 1996; Steinberg, 1999). By grounding framing analyses in the notion of a situated text, rhetorical studies can help sociology better identify and explicate the “hermeneutic depth” of texts that might otherwise get only a passing glance, such as protest fliers, posters, speeches, memos, and oral interviews. In short, the attention to textual dynamics that characterizes our work can provide sociologists with a new model for interpreting the more granular symbolic work of collective actors.

Rhetorical studies can also highlight the centrality of language and persuasion in social movement dynamics. Many analyses of social movement “framing” in the social sciences are done ex post facto, assuming that a given slogan or phrase must have been persuasive simply because it was a prevalent phrase by the end of the movement. Rhetorical criticism can provide a more rigorous and nuanced vocabulary to interpret the way collective actors are influenced by broader social, cultural, and political contexts that
predate the movement, contexts that sociologists term “discursive fields” (Spillman, 1995). Rather than a secondary research concern, a rhetorical understanding of social movement activity can help sociologists see how societal norms, definitions, and ideas are themselves crucial resources for movements at all stages and, as such, need to be understood as an integral part of mobilizing activists. Rhetorical studies, in short, can demonstrate to sociologists how framing processes are related to every other social movement variable, even the more quantitative variables frequently isolated from framing analyses, such as resource mobilization, grievances, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities.

Sociology’s long tradition of social movement studies, in exchange, can help rhetoricians better understand the relationship between the symbolic and the material, as well as between agency and structure. Sociology research, for instance, has suggested that the presence of material or social grievances alone does not serve as a strong predictor for activism. Clearly, this is an invitation for rhetorical critics to analyze the ways in which activists translate material conditions into meaningful shared grievances. Sociology research also demonstrates to rhetorical critics how the framing of grievances is inextricable from other political and cultural contexts (see Snow, Soule, & Cress, 2005). A rhetorical analysis of an issue, therefore, demands attention not only to the material context, but also the larger political, cultural, and social contexts, which sociology is sometimes in a better position to explain. Sociological research on resource mobilization and mobilizing structures, for instance, can help rhetorical scholars better interpret the relationship between a movement’s rhetoric—what it is able to say—and its dependency on particular resources, both material and cultural (see Jenkins & Eckert,
1986). Rhetorical critics, thus, can better identify when a rhetorical innovation is the result of grassroots activists or, in some instances, of bureaucratic actors who are controlling the movement. The increase in the institutionalization of activism, and how it affects the life-course of a movement, might be one of the most important sociological contexts for rhetorical critics to be attuned to (see Walker, 2014). Rhetorical critics, thus informed, can refine their interpretive claims of social movements by analyzing the institutional and organizational rhetoric that informs—and in some ways, constrains—social movement activities (see Finnemore, 1996; Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008).

In the age of transnational activism dominated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it also is crucial to listen to the trends and theoretical approaches from sociology regarding the impact of globalization on social movement activity. Rhetorical critics can test, for instance, if globalization does, in fact, lead to the use of more “global” and “non-state” rhetoric, as suggested by some scholars (see Seidman, 2001). Literature on political process is equally helpful in guiding rhetorical studies. Social movement trends connected to different political structures, such as “repressive” or “non-repressive” state apparatuses or the presence of new political allies in a given polity, can help rhetorical critics better trace the different types of rhetorical appeals that accompany shifts in political structure, thus helping our discipline gain a better sense of the relationship between structure and agency (see Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010; McDonnel, King, & Soule, 2015). Trends in social movement lifecycles can also help rhetorical critics better interpret a social movement’s rhetoric in relation to its larger context, as well as to a broader tradition of social activism which a movement may be drawing upon (see Koopmans, 1993; Minkoff, 1997). Last, sociology has made important
advancements in studying social networks, including digital networks, which can help rhetorical critics better understand how resistance can be both facilitated and restricted by different types of social connections (Briscoe, Gupta, & Anner, 2015; Snow, Zurcher, & Ekland-Olson, 1980; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Rohlinger & Bunnage, 2015).

When all of these variables are considered—political process, opportunities, resources, mobilizing structures, networks, grievances, and institutionality—rhetorical critics can sharpen their focus and better interpret how social movement actors negotiate complex fields of meaning and action. Such attention to social science variables can complement our studies on the rhetorical innovations of a given movement.

There are two key disadvantages that could befall rhetorical scholars who participate in other traditions of ‘social movement’ studies. Both disadvantages regard the politics of citation. First, there is the chance of non-reciprocity. Put simply, scholars in sociology and associated disciplines may not welcome, or even listen to, our contributions to the broader conversation. Our analyses of the rhetorical dynamics of social science variables, such as grievances, mobilizing structures, resources, networks, and opportunity structures, while worthwhile in their own right, would not be acknowledged by those most suited to apply our findings. Such “siloing” of disciplines is unfortunately common in the modern university. Moreover, disciplinary politics, involving questions of what is fashionable, timely, or within one’s ability to accomplish, are hard to predict, and sociologists might be forced into other directions and away from the framing processes of social movement activity. There may, instead, be increased demand for quantitative scholarship at the expense of interpretive and critical-qualitative
research. “Big Data,” for instance, is one such trend that, while not negating the role of rhetorical studies, steers scholarship in a direction that easily overlooks it.

Second, scholars of rhetoric must be careful how much they sacrifice to start a conversation outside their own discipline. If participating in an interdisciplinary conversation on ‘social movements’ demands that we forsake our own discipline’s voice and traditions for that of another, then we have to consider if the benefits are worth the cost. Adopting the vocabulary of another discipline, such as sociology, must be distinguished from assimilating to the voice and style of another discipline. Engaging in fruitful cross-disciplinary work is essential for a topic as broad and relevant as social movement studies, and with such exchanges there must be a degree of sacrifice. Cross-disciplinary exchanges, however, must be an exchange of equally distinct disciplinary identities. Rhetorical studies must not wander so far into the concerns and conceptual vocabulary of other ‘social movement’ traditions that it loses its uniquely beneficial academic import. English and Communication scholars might disagree on what, precisely, our contribution is, but it seems to involve, at minimum, an attention to the symbolic and persuasive work of actors who are responding to complex, contingent situations. We must not cede our disciplinary identity in order to participate in cross-disciplinary work, but rather contribute our distinct interpretive analyses to cross-disciplinary conversations. Straying too far into a focus on the quantitative research of framing, resources, organizations, and political process, for instance, could result in another unhealthy preoccupation with “method,” which characterized a large amount of intra-disciplinary hand-wringing in Communication Studies throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. In short, scholars of rhetoric must be willing to use the language and
categories of social science in order to better realize our own interpretive methods, and if
the only way to command an external audience for our findings is to forgo our critical
voice, then we must persist and be confident in the quality of our own scholarship until
new ears arrive.

**Five Turns for the Future of Rhetoric of Social Movement**

The rhetorical study of social movements must move past the binaries of
phenomenon or meaning, macro or micro, criticism or theory that have structured much
of the debates and scholarship in our fields. Scholars should continue to pursue the study
of specific movements and movement contexts (e.g., protests, performances, tactics,
campaigns), rather than returning to the pursuit of grand theories of SM behavior that
occupied scholars in the early decades of research. In this way, rhetorical studies can lead
the way for other disciplines studying social movements, such as sociology, which only
recently have begun to turn away from sociological theory building to understand social
movements from a situated and discursive perspective (e.g., Jasper, 1997; 2010.).

Rather than proposing a grand theory or overarching approach, instead we suggest
several different conceptual, methodological, and theoretical “turns” that rhetorical
studies of social movements could take up, independently or collectively, to extend and
strengthen our scholarship. These include a “turn” toward networks, bodies, affect,
materialities, and non-western rhetorics. In the bulk of this section we take up each move,
showing what they might contribute to rhetorical scholars studying social movements and
social protest. Each of these terms encapsulates a robust, interdisciplinary area of
theoretical, methodological and conceptual work, some of which already intersects with
studies of social protest, most of which is actively engaged by rhetorical scholars, but all of which could invigorate and reshape rhetorical studies of social movements.

Each of these “turns” can enrich existing research on the rhetoric of social protest while fomenting new avenues of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological innovation. They can inform studies of both contemporary and historical social movements. We could imagine many different permutations of these five “turns,” including a book-length study of a particular movement or activist group combining multiple “turns” (for example, examining global networks of affect and emotion in the so-called Arab Spring), an in-depth study of one particular “turn” across a variety of movement contexts (such as, a study of various dimensions of materiality in environmental movements), and everything in between. Furthermore, we imagine that each “turn” could also serve as an orienting lens, a heuristic or keyword that helps scholars attend to particular aspects of social movement practice and that can potentially organize scholarly work in the subfield of the Rhetoric of Social Movements (RSM). That is, by attending to networks, bodies, affects, materiality, and non-western rhetorics, rhetorical scholars could not only open up several new avenues for research but could also create possibilities for greater dialogue and collaboration between scholars. For example, by organizing research around such a “turn,” scholars interested in online and offline networks, or in affect and emotion in social movements, could collaboratively build empirical and theoretical knowledge across the particular contextual and conceptual contours of their study. We can imagine studies of social media networks and #BlackLivesMatter engaging in a scholarly dialogue with studies of transnational activist networks surrounding alter-globalization movements, or studies of shame and anger in AIDS activist groups like ACT-UP creating
dialogue with the affective power of image events in the Civil Rights Movement. In this way, these scholarly “turns” in RSM could provide the space for both empirical work of varying kinds and foster the development of broader theories about the workings of social movements (Cox & Foust, 2009), without falling into either the well-recognized dangers of grand theory-building that have been so convincingly pointed out by scholars such as David Zarefsky (1980) or Michael McGee (1980), or the “nomadic” and hyper-contextualized scholarship problematized by Christina Foust (forthcoming).

To this end, our recommendations of the following “turns” are organized by a broader belief that scholars studying social movements from a rhetorical perspective could best embrace a “meso-rhetorical” perspective on social movement rhetorics (e.g., Henry & Jensen, 1991; Lucas, 1980). This involves thinking about specific contexts and texts as well as broader networks of socio-rhetorical influence. Rhetorical studies of SM could attend both to the diffusive relationships and networks of meaning that compose any SM while also rooting those studies within the concrete materialities and realities of SM practice. That is, our studies should engage the particular and rich specificities of social movement texts or events while also attending to the fundamental ways that rhetoric, hearkening back to McGee (1980), moves the social. A particular leader’s strategy or oratorical performance, or a specific protest event or campaign, take shape within and are activated by the broader cultural circulation of meanings, discourses, and ideographs, just as the evolution of any ideograph or rhetorical tactic (e.g., image events) cannot be separated from the complex web of actors and material contexts (e.g., emotions, affects, bodies, relationships of power and privilege) that influence their evolution. These “turns” would provide specific points for analysis and could encourage
scholars to tack between and integrate the micro-contextual study of texts or events with the macro-rhetorical approach to ideographs and meanings. This approach would see social movements as material-rhetorical objects of study rather than as purely phenomenal or immaterial; it would seek to understand SM as both diffuse and concrete, as networks of rhetorical, material, affective, and embodied forces channeled for social change.

This meso-rhetorical perspective on social movements involves a number of specific “turns” for RSM scholars. That is, to realize the greatest potential of what rhetoric offers social movement studies, we propose that future studies attend to one or more of the following: networks (digital and otherwise), bodies, affect, materialities, and non-western rhetorics. Leaving behind the baggage and lexical debates over the term “social movement” necessitates that we use new theoretical perspective to offer conceptual alternatives for both contemporary and historical protest discourse. Doing so can ensure our work provides novel means to appraise the lasting rhetorical consequentiality of social movements (Ott, 2011; Cox & Foust, 2009).

First, and perhaps most broadly, we are proposing that scholars adopt a more networked approach in the study of social movements in order to account for the diverse factors that motivate protests as well as to incorporate non-human actants—from smartphones to economic systems. Though appropriate for RSM studies in general, focusing on networks is especially relevant in an era in which complex linkages are extending further, traversing transnational borders and leaping across cultural boundaries via heavily trafficked Internet pathways. Since their widespread adoption and use, Internet technologies have made possible different ways of protesting as is evident in
recent social movements across the world including the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, BlackLivesMatter, and environmental protests across China. These protests also make apparent that mass movements are moving the social in ways that have global reverberations. And yet, the contemporary proliferation of digitally networked social movements reminds us of what is often under-acknowledged in rhetorical scholarship, with its focus on singular texts, images, or events: that social movements and the movement of the social have always been fundamentally networked processes (Juris, 2005). Thus this call for rhetorical scholars to embrace a networked “turn” could not only inform the work of the “newest” social movements (to borrow a term from Richard J. F. Day [2005]), which rely heavily on social networking technology, but also could contribute to the study of historical social movements.

It could be possible to interpret this call for a “networked” turn as an appeal to the new and novel in social movement studies. Yet this is not the first time that technological changes have prompted claims about the evolution of social movements. With the popularization of television, scholars saw in the mediated turn an opportunity for the screen to be used towards social movements (DeLuca, 1999b; DeLuca & Peeples, 2002). Now, the development of internet and smart objects (i.e., smart phones, smart glasses, smart watches), permit speedy transmission of information, broad circulation, and invitational interactivity typical of social media. Given the ubiquity of digital media in contemporary social movements, rhetorical scholars increasingly call for attention to the influence and impact of digital rhetorics in articulating social change (Ganesh & Stohl, 2013). Scholars valorize network technologies and the Internet as forms of constituting publics and counterpublics through digital connections (Tarrow, 2005; Palczewski,
2001), or as ways to disrupt the social (Harold, 2004). According to scholars, the development of new technologies enables shifts in the speed with which information is conveyed as well as its potential reach, and contributes to new forms of connecting the social. Yet, this is not to say that the digital turn has fundamentally revolutionized social movements. The popularization of new technologies enable opportunities for greater intensity and speed in the distribution of information, and they shape and contribute to new forms of organization and social protest (e.g., Juris, 2012), but many of the more traditional protesting strategies remain as effective as always (i.e., picketing, pamphlet distribution), with the potential of being amplified by new technological devices.

Thus we emphasize a “networked” turn in a broader sense, as attention to the diffusive relationships of human and non-human actors that influence the particular events (e.g., protests, organizations, or meanings under study), whether historical or contemporary. As rhetorical scholars of social movements, we would trace the flows of emotion/affect, material objects, and people and/or the online and offline networks of influence that are marshaled to produce any singular movement, protest, or text. These might be networks of social media technologies that fostered the exchange and cultivation of affect and that lead to the so-called Arab Spring (Papacharissi, 2014), networks of media circulation that contributed to the Civil Rights Movement’s use of “image events” (such as the photographs from Birmingham in 1963 [Johnson, 2007]), or networks of political influence, bodies, ideologies, and modes of governance, such as those marshaled, according to Zornitza Keremidchieva (2013), during Congressional debates about the 19th amendment to secure the success of women’s suffrage.
Moving to a more networked approach in the study of social movements provides scholars with important advantages over more traditional methods that approach social movements from a hierarchical or functionalist perspective and/or approaches that focus on singular events or texts. First, network-inspired theories offer a means by which to incorporate social media in a more seamless fashion, as one of the many networks that links people rather than treating it as a separate world that stands in contrast to “real life.” Second, a network-centered perspective offers a productive approach to grassroots efforts and mass protests that are not organized by formal organizations. Increasingly, people across the globe are mobilizing the masses from the middle and choosing to move away from hierarchical models. This is very apparent in the Occupy movement, which refused to appoint a leader or a cohesive list of demands. Rather, people emphasized inclusivity, which was evident in the choice to label protestors as part of the 99%. This is not to say that organizations do not take part, but that they are not the leaders of many contemporary movements. Third, networked approaches supply the space to acknowledge organizations and other hierarchies within the larger network. Importantly, moving to a networked approach does not preclude the existence of hierarchies, or organizations. There are always “knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 20). ENGOs such as 350.org and Global Village (Beijing), for example, which tend to have more formal and hierarchical configurations, are microstructures within larger moving networks that include decentralized protests and violent transgressions. Similarly, systems meant to address for example, citizen complaints are structured via hierarchical systems often fail. When they do not work, they can often become one factor that drives people to the streets and to
illegal forms of protest. A networked approach allows scholars to look at these concurrently. Fourth, a networked approach also helps to advance McGee’s (1980) call to trace the movement of the social via ideographs and changes in “human consciousness” by extending the changes we trace to changes in networks. For example, in the #BlackLivesMatter movement, scholars could trace how the protests altered relationships between police and the court system, how it influences election outcomes in Chicago, and how it influences the tenor of other protest in terms of violent activity. This approach can also be applied to international movements including environmental protests in China in which protests are forcing the renegotiation of relationships between governments and industry as well as the people and their local officials. Fifth, and finally, this “networked” turn could complicate and extend existing research on historical social movements, from the Civil Rights Movement to the Women’s movement, to environmental movements. As we said above, past studies often focused on analyzing particular strategies, texts, or discourses, tracing their instrumental and constitutive effects. What would rhetorical studies of these movements look like if they embraced a more networked approach? A network “turn” could help scholars trace the impact of these movements outside of instrumental or constitutive success/failure and could help to illuminate broader networks of influence and social action, such as transnational networks of influence, transgression and resistance in alter-globalization protest (e.g., Foust, 2010).

Second, we propose a network approach to the body in RSM studies. Building off the corporeal turn in rhetorical studies (e.g. Bruner, 2005; Borda, 2002; DeLuca, 1999c; Rand, 2013; Stillion Southard, 2007), we argue that bodies can be studied not only for their signifying and asignifying potential, but more specifically as a central node in a
perspective that regards movements as an inherently embodied endeavor. Given that embodied subjectivities are inherently relational (Staiano-Ross, 2005), such a sensibility considers bodies within SMR as fluidly readable and constantly contested. Hence, which interpretations of bodies gain dominance bear material, discursive, as well as cultural ramifications. For example, how social movements successfully render their bodies as oppressed – and use that as a warrant for critical intervention – is one of many areas that rhetorical theory can contribute to embodied protest. Social movement scholars could examine whether such self-identifying discourses expand or limit what is considered material violence on bodies in a broader grid of intelligibility. Rhetorical critics of all stripes can account for how the indeterminate nature of bodies (Hauser, 1999; Fenske, 2007) shapes the material, affective, and spatial aspects of social protest.

Third, we argue for a consideration of affect within social movement scholarship. Again, we see this “turn” as building on already-developing work on affect and emotion in social movement studies (e.g., Gould, 2009), as well as on longstanding and implicit concerns with emotion in RSM (see below). Also, in advancing this turn we are also careful to assert that we do not want to perpetuate a rational/affect binary that is often implicitly or explicitly created by the recent turn to affect studies. Rational argument and affective arguments are intricately intertwined and their force must be considered concurrently. During the 1960s and 70s, protest practices, media environments, and political and economic landscapes were changing dramatically and, as a result, scholars were forced to alter and rework their theories of social movements to accommodate changing activist practices, tools, and rhetorics. This is evident in a variety of social movement scholarship. For example, Haiman (1967) addresses non-rational rhetoric in
his essay by carefully tracing the protestors’ as well as official reactions to a Civil Rights protest in Chicago. Scott and Smith (1969) also strive to give irrational arguments credibility in their study of Black Power rhetoric in the Civil Rights movement. Simons (1970) also calls for a change to social movement studies that can accommodate rhetoric outside the rational when he writes: “the decisive changes wrought by militant rhetorics in recent years gives credence to the view that the traditionally prescribed pattern is not the only viable alternative” (p. 8). The contemporary turn to affect is important in considering the force of non-rational arguments, but we must be careful not to let it create a bifurcating binary that poses rationality and affect as opposites.

This “turn” to affect in social movements dovetails with and complements the focus on networks and bodies discussed above. Not only is movement inherently embodied, but any given body (whether human or nonhuman) is always defined and articulated in movement, a Spinozan insight increasingly transforming our basic understanding of change (see, e.g., Deleuze, Massumi). A gendered body performs itself into being through its gait and gestures; a jug articulates itself as a jug in doing the work of holding and transporting liquid; a body politic like Occupy engenders itself in gathering people and public spaces around a matter of concern. Affect on this account is what moves before and between bodies, consciousness, and subjects. It is not a personal feeling possessed by a subject, but rather what possesses subjects, the play of energies calling subjects into being and becoming. Research that approaches social movement at the level of affect, then, avoids conceiving movement as merely the reordering and reconnecting of existing entities. In Massumi’s (2002) terms, rather than making movement “entirely subordinated to the positions it connects” (3)—rather than tracking
only prearticulated bodies, emotions, publics, organizations—social movement studies
would do well to additionally track how such entities articulate, the movements that come
before and not only after bodies, emotions, publics, organizations and the systems of
relation that they adopt. As Jenny Edbauer Rice (2005) puts it, “A given rhetoric is not
contained by the elements that comprise its rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor,
audience, constraints). Rather, a rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities
that are circulating in the social field” (14). Edbauer Rice models how scholars might
attend to the affective energies that prefigure rhetorical subjects and rhetorical situations
by tracing how the “Keep Austin Weird” trope circulates through radio commentary,
bumper stickers, clothing, and corporate logos. Her focus allows her to register this
charged moment in Austin not as a singular movement (such as anti-corporate activism),
but as a multifaceted transformation of the city and its weirdness, one run through with
corporate and anti-corporate sentiments in evolving tension and alliance. Building on
approaches such as these, we propose, scholars can cultivate a view of rhetorical agency
that is immanent to capitalism and social being, rather than separate from it (Greene
2004; Bost and Greene 2011), tracing social movement at levels not limited to simple
opposition, and thereby attuning to more promising tactics of change (see, e.g., Harold
2007).

Fourth, rhetorical scholars can develop on materialist perspectives on social
movements. Blair (1999) asserts that materiality is one of the most fundamental starting
characteristics of rhetoric. Thus, Marxist and new materialist analyses provide one way to
articulate the impact of social movement discourse on material conditions and means of
production. The *German Ideology* changed the way social theorists looked at the lived
experience of common people. What makes the argument of Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels innovative, and still relevant, is the proposition that ideology is fundamentally material. “The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life” (para. 32). The Marxist sense of materialism is focused on how people create their existence out of human labor. The use of labor can reproduce and/or destroy the meaning of that labor; for example a number of builders come together to build a church where they attend services which detail that hard work gives life meaning. The material nature of ideology is loaded into words, objects, places, and events. All of these common actions ground our experience and reify how ideology is not a study of the esoteric. The materialism of ideology asserts that thought has weight. Recognizing the material weight of discourse helps illuminate how rhetoric is used to rally/divide/harm people. Cloud (1994) is a voice in deliberation over materialism in rhetoric; her focus is on rhetoric and historical materialism. She wants rhetoricians to reckon with the idea that words have equal or more power over actions, which is an important reflection for a social movement rhetorician. Even as we push forward through analyzing the future of social movements we cannot dismiss this view of materialism. The value of historical materialism will continue to inform specific approaches to the study of social movements.

In recent years, as an emphasis on affect has moved thinkers away from seeing change in terms of preassembled bodies, new orientations to materialism have emerged. Like human subjects, new materialists argue, technologies, objects, and environments are also always affectively charged, always assembling and re-assembling, and this ongoing activity plays a crucial role in enabling our actual and possible worlds. Thus Bruno
Latour (2005) argues that, especially in light of the complex nature of contemporary challenges such as global warming, we must rethink the social “not as a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing”—such as the realm of human relations, for instance—“but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling” (p. 7, emphasis added). For Latour, the social is not a preexistent substance, item, or power whose presence explains a given phenomenon, but rather the actual movement of association between entities (p. 79). Following Latour, rather than thinking the “social” as what is solely human, linguistic, or symbolic about movements, social movement scholars might instead trace what is associative about movements—that is, what new actors they assemble and compose, and how they rework existing human-nonhuman assemblies. Here, the varied corpus of work on how rhetorical practice proceeds through the articulation of subjects, bodies, meanings, and environments offers a promising way in (see, e.g., Angus 1992; DeLuca 1999a; 1999b; Stormer 2004).

Such a rethinking of the social would allow us to respond to Greene’s (1998) point that rhetorical studies must track not simply how those in power persuade the public, but how complex apparatuses of power manufacture the conditions for public persuasion in the first place. As Rickert puts it, “the material component of rhetoric is not always amenable to quick transformation: persuasion inheres in the environment and infrastructure, and not just in the attitudes of people” (265). Rickert draws crucial implications for our understanding of change: for example, he argues, the problem of sustainability is not merely one of human values, attitudes, or choices, but rather a problem of an entire way of life in which many nonhuman forces actively participate (258). To enact significant change, environmentalists must not simply intervene in human
consciousness and behavior, but rather seek new kinds of lived coalitions with nonhuman forces like cars, roadways, train systems, and so on. Rickert traces two examples of how automobiles play a lively role in both the status quo and the potential for change: Toronto Island’s fight to remain car-free and the failed electric car, EV1. Although each initiative had instructive limitations, each marked environmentalist efforts that recognized how automobiles might rework roadways, urban spaces, and energy consumption practices toward more sustainable environmental relations. Social movement understood from this perspective is a thoroughly worldly transformation, referring not only to moments where ideas, logics, and beliefs might take hold and rework our worlds through human agency alone, but also to periods where human imbrications with technologies and built environments undergo change. Social movements are not reducible to the movement of meaning (discourse) but to shifts in the entire “distribution of the sensible,” including regimes of sensation, affects, and material relations (Panagia, 2010). In short, if Marx and Engels urged us to attend to material relations and material practices as the primary loci of political change, new materialisms urge us to notice that material life is not entirely subject to human control. The change that social movement studies describes and seeks cannot simply be driven by human intentions and actions, but must always emerge from engagements with the lively, generative things and environments that help compose the world, for better or for worse.

Fifth, and finally, we believe it is important for rhetorical scholars to expand the study of social movement rhetorics beyond the US American or Western contexts or paradigms and to study transnational and non-Western rhetorics. As scholars such as Christa Olson, Raka Shome, and Sara McKinnon, among others, have shown, rhetorical
studies can often be said to suffer from what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) call "methodological nationalism." That is, as rhetorical scholars we have a tendency not only to focus almost exclusively on US American and, perhaps most broadly, Anglo-European rhetorics, but, just as importantly, we take for granted the naturalness and boundedness of the nation-state in our rhetorical studies of social movements. Borrowing from Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), we might say that, historically, “nation-state principles . . . became so routinely assumed and ‘banal,’ that they vanished from sight altogether” (pp. 303-304). Even though more recently rhetorical scholars of nationalism or citizenship often take these principles and boundaries as an object of critique, rhetorical studies still often involves a “territialization” of the object of study, “the reduction of the analytical focus to the boundaries of the nation-state” (p. 307). Furthermore, many postcolonial scholars have gone one step further, arguing that rhetorical theories and concepts are fundamentally Euro-centric and invested in colonial modernity (e.g., Shome, 1996). From this point of view, it is not only that rhetorical scholars remain wedded to “methodological nationalism,” but also that the paradigms and theories of rhetorical study, which often fetishize Continental theory or Anglo-American standards of rhetorical effectiveness, are blind to their own coloniality (see Enck-Wanzer, 2012; Wanzer, 2012) and may be unsuited to studies of movements which operate from “differential” ethics (Sandoval, 1991), such as those of colonized people or people of color. Rather than perpetuate this theoretical and “methodological nationalism,” rhetorical scholars of social movements should engage both transnational and non-Western/non-Eurocentric rhetorics.
Some of the earliest movements in the US, such as abolition or women’s suffrage, have often been transnational and global movements, involving linkages and networks across and between borders and communities. The transnational dimensions of social movements only seem to grow in the age of social media technologies and globalization. This augurs the importance of a transnational perspective. The prefix trans- means across, beyond, or traversing, and it connotes a fundamental transformation in the nature of a thing. Thus a transnational perspective is sensitive to issues of coloniality, global capitalism, gender, race, and sexuality as they cleave and cut across levels of space and time (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994). Transnationalism helps us to think about social movement rhetorics as they cross or as they traverse the national and inter-national, and it pushes us to examine how these phenomena thoroughly change our tendency of thinking through the national form. Paraphrasing historian Micol Seigel (2005), transnational rhetorics are those that “spill over” or “seep through national borders,” discourses that are “greater and smaller than the nation state,” and that are neither national nor international but that work across, beyond, or are traverse these contexts.

To study transnational rhetoric entails more than just examination of non-US or international texts because these projects tend to work comparatively from the analytical category of the nation state. In contrast, transnational rhetoric cuts across these units of analysis. As Sara McKinnon (2011) summarizes, a transnational rhetorical perspective means “we must stop taking the nation-state on its word . . . and begin with the premise instead that it is always, in advance, directed toward something more than can be contained by its borders” (pp. 195-196). Following on work by McKinnon, Rebecca Dingo, Wendy Hesford, and others, we call on rhetorical scholars of SM to consider the
ways that their objects of study embody the transnational qualities of many SM rhetorics, that cut across borders, that involve transnational networks of cooperation and advocacy, that challenge the “hermeneutic preeminence” of the nation state (Seigel, 2005).

Following the work of Shome (1996), Wanzer-Serrano (2015), and others, we recognize the importance of scholars to broaden the study of social movement rhetoric beyond the Western cannon of movements, and in doing so, to not take as a starting point US or European rhetorical theory that may misconstrue or gloss over the unique dimensions of situated non-Western social movement rhetorics.

In this section we are arguing for a turn toward networks, bodies, affect, materiality, and non-Western and transnational rhetorics in rhetorical studies of social movements because we believe it is through such work that the knowledge gained from traditional social movement scholarship unites with new social movements. In networking we see the invitation for rhetorical scholarship of social movements to embrace theories that connect national and international interests, besides the analysis of mobilizations in studies regarding race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, migration, the prison industrial complex, public address among many other areas. In turns to the body and affect, we see the possibility of studying social movement in its most fundamental and corporeal sense – in the dynamic between individual and collective bodies and as the process of movement and being moved, affected and being affected. Through a focus on materiality in its multiple senses social movement scholars can more fully trace the effectivity of social protest beyond just the movement of meanings. And by expanding our scholarship to non-Western and transnational rhetoric, rhetorical scholars can
challenge and enrich our empirical and theoretical knowledge about the rhetoric of social change and the movement of the social.

As we said, in our mind these five “turns” could serve as both prompts for future scholarship and forms of creating collaboration and discussion in the sub-field of RSM. Scholars might choose to focus on one or more of these “turns” in a particular movement (such as the so-called Arab Spring or environmental protests in China), or they might focus on a particular aspect across a variety of movements (networking across both “old” and “new” social movements), or they might find some other combination or approach. We offer these “turns” as suggestions for pushing empirical work in social movement rhetoric but also as foci for developing new theoretical and conceptual insights. By fully embracing these “turns,” not only might we reinvigorate and expand the work of scholars interested in social movements, but also the study of social movement rhetorics would contribute more broadly to the study of rhetoric across the disciplines. At the very least these “turns” serve as provocations for renewing the conversation of what a rhetorical approach to social movement study might entail.

This White Paper discusses the trajectory of rhetorical scholarship in social movements in terms of what it was, what it is, and what it could be. While from a traditional perspective of social movements, rhetorical scholars were more devoted towards the identification of patterns, cycles, and categories of movements, New Social Movement scholarship approach movements in search for the disruption of such patterns, cycles and categories. In doing so, we perceive a renewed interest in issues of agency and materiality, in tracing the movement of the social in light of the development of new technologies, in non-structured movements, and in local and global connections.
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For instance, lesbian separatist movements have claimed that the social exists at the expense of women. Amanda Third (2014) argues, feminism is but a microcosm of “the interminable process of coming to consciousness about the implacable violence (separation, castration, etc.) which constitutes any symbolic contract,” and a “sexual contract” exists that operates to the exclusion of women (p. 103). Because “women are positioned as excessive to both the state and its operation in the public sphere,” they come to represent “the forces of chaos that threaten the ordered world of modernity” (Third, 2014, p. 104). Sara Ahmed’s feminist killjoy (2010) and Valerie Solanas’ SCUM Manifesto have both sparked movements calling for an end to the social. In these cases, “Feminism represents for the modern imagination a movement against the naturalized order of the world” (Third, 2014, pp. 104-105). One other example that raises questions about how critics ought approach the social is queer activist groups. Kouri-Towe (2013) describes queer approaches to survival as a “rethinking of the present,” a post-apocalyptic vision of “a radically different social and political world” brought on by “the complete destruction of the institutions and economies that were built and sustained through colonial and imperial violence and exploitation.” Queer apocalyptic activists have no investment in the future of civil society, but rather coalesce “by virtue of their antagonistic relationship to the norms of the dominant public sphere” (McCann, 2011, p. 255). This antagonistic relationship requires transgressed modes of rhetorical invention, “a queer ‘uncivil tongue’ that ‘circulates a modality of erotic desire’ and circumvents the privatized norms of heterosexual culture” (McCann, 2011, p. 261).