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## **The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions In and Around Social Movements**

**James M. Jasper<sup>1</sup>**

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*The recent explosion of cultural work on social movements has been highly cognitive in its orientation, as though researchers were still reluctant to admit that strong emotions accompany protest. But such emotions do not render protestors irrational; emotions accompany all social action, providing both motivation and goals. Social movements are affected by transitory, context-specific emotions, usually reactions to information and events, as well as by more stable affective bonds and loyalties. Some emotions exist or arise in individuals before they join protest groups; others are formed or reinforced in collective action itself. The latter type can be further divided into shared and reciprocal emotions, the latter being feelings that protestors have toward each other.*

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**KEY WORDS:** social movements; protest; emotions; affect; political participation; frame alignment; moral shocks.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Emotions have disappeared from models of protest. When crowds and collective behavior, not social movements and collective action, were the lens for studying protest, emotions were central.<sup>2</sup> Frustration, anger, alienation, and anomie were not merely an incidental characteristic but the motivation

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<sup>2</sup>Protest and social movements are not quite the same: there can be individual protest outside of organized movements, and there can be movements (for example, many religious movements) that pursue social change without protesting against existing conditions (Jasper, 1997). For my purposes the two include many of the same emotional dynamics, but I see protest as also including emotional processes out of which organized movements can form.

and explanation of protest. Such images were displaced 30 years ago by metaphors of rational economic calculators and purposive formal organizations, for whom social movements were just one more means of pursuing desired ends. In the last 10 years, these instrumental metaphors have themselves been challenged from a cultural perspective in which protestors have a variety of reasons for pursuing a range of goals, not all of them material advantages for individuals or groups. Goals, interests, even strategies and political opportunities are increasingly viewed as embedded in and defined by cultural meanings and practices (Melucci, 1996; Jasper, 1997).

In this wave of culturally oriented research, considerable respect has still been paid to the rationality of protestors. They know what they want, varied though this may be, and they set out to get it. This respect may be the reason that most cultural researchers, although harking back to collective-behavior traditions in some ways, have avoided the issue of emotions. A variety of key cultural concepts—identity, injustice frames, cognitive liberation, and others—have been treated as though they were entirely cognitive, as though their highly charged emotional dimensions hardly mattered. If protestors are emotional, does that make them irrational? Recent researchers seem to fear—wrongly—that it does.

Emotions pervade all social life, social movements included. The most prosaic daily routines, seemingly neutral, can provoke violent emotional responses when interrupted. Unusual actions probably involve even more, and more complex, feelings. Not only are emotions part of our responses to events, but they also—in the form of deep affective attachments—shape the goals of our actions. There are positive emotions and negative ones, admirable and despicable ones, public and hidden ones. Without them, there might be no social action at all. To categorize them as rational or irrational (much less to dismiss them all as interferences with rationality) is deeply wrongheaded. We can categorize protestors' actions, usually *post hoc*, as strategically effective or mistaken, but rarely as irrational or rational. Even the proverbial Southern sheriff who flies into a rage and hits a peaceful civil rights demonstrator, although acting upon hateful and extreme emotions, has probably made a strategic error (at least when caught on camera) more than he has acted irrationally.

Emotions are as much a part of culture as cognitive understandings and moral visions are, and all social life occurs in and through culture. We are socialized (or not socialized) into appropriate feelings in the same way we learn or do not learn our local culture's beliefs and values. There is some individual variation in all three aspects of culture, and we recognize deviant emotional reactions and attachments as readily as deviant beliefs. As with the rest of culture, there is tension between the public, systematic expectations concerning emotional expression, and the individual innovations and idiosyncracies that

diverge from them. Emotions are learned and controlled through social interaction, although never with complete effectiveness.

In what follows, I argue for the centrality of emotions for understanding one corner of social life: the collective, concerted efforts to change some aspect of a society that we label social movements. I first discuss what emotions are, in particular the degree to which they are defined by context and culture in the same way that cognitive meanings are. I distinguish emotions that are transitory responses to external events and new information (such as anger, indignation, or fear) from underlying positive and negative affects (such as loyalties to or fears of groups, individuals, places, symbols, and moral principles) that help shape these responses. Then I distinguish emotions according to the social context that creates and shapes them, especially between those that form outside an organized movement and those that occur inside it. The former group primarily includes emotions that might lead individuals to join or even found protest groups; the latter, emotions that spur action, maintain the group, or lead to its demise. I then reexamine a series of moments of protest, concepts that have been studied as though they were primarily cognitive but that have an inextricable emotional side to them: moral shocks, frame alignment, attribution of blame, injustice frames, collective identity, cognitive liberation, movement membership and culture, and decline and abeyance.

This paper is meant as a conceptual, not empirical, contribution (for empirical cases of protest to accompany this theoretical discussion, see Jasper, 1997). If I can demonstrate that a number of proven concepts and mechanisms depend on emotions for part of their causal force, this should establish the importance of emotions to social movements.

### WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

Emotions do not merely accompany our deepest desires and satisfactions, they constitute them, permeating our ideas, identities, and interests. They are, in Collins' words (1990:28), "the 'glue' of solidarity—and what mobilizes conflict." Recently, sociologists have rediscovered emotions, although they have yet to integrate them into much empirical research outside of social psychology. One aspect of this renewal has been an emphasis on how emotions are culturally constructed (and hence linked to cognitive appraisals) rather than being automatic somatic responses (and hence potentially less controllable, or less "rational"). To the extent that emotions depend on cognitions, they more clearly allow learning and adaptation to one's environment, i.e., rationality.

Older schools of thought viewed emotions as natural sensations—"feelings"—originating in the body, beyond the control of those experiencing them. In common parlance, people are said to be "seized by emotion," to be "in the grip" of passions such as jealousy or anger. The irrefutable bodily symptoms of emotions, whether increased adrenaline or redness in the face, are taken to be the emotions themselves, to which we then attach names. Emotions, in this view, thwart our wiser intentions and prevent effective actions. No doubt this sometimes happens, as in the case of the Southern sheriff. But people make cognitive mistakes as easily as emotional ones, and more strategic battles have been lost, in all likelihood, by mistaken cognitions than by mistaken emotions. Mistakes, furthermore, are not necessarily irrational, just mistaken.

Constructionists respond by pointing to the considerable interpretation that our bodily states require as well as to the cross-cultural diversity of emotions.<sup>3</sup> Rather than being a simple set of inner sensations (are the physical sensations that accompany annoyance and indignation, for example, distinguishable?), an emotion is an action or state of mind that makes sense only in particular circumstances. Averill (1980:308) describes emotions as transitory social roles, which he in turn defines as "a socially prescribed set of responses to be followed by a person in a given situation." The rules governing the response consist of "social norms or shared expectations regarding appropriate behavior."

In the constructionist view, then, emotions are constituted more by shared social meanings than automatic physiological states. Some theorists argue that bodily changes are there, but must be interpreted before they can become emotions; others take the more extreme view that bodies change only in response to cultural settings associated with particular emotions. Evidence of the many cross-cultural differences in emotions seems to support the latter position. Nonetheless, the apparent existence of several universals, especially facial expressions of surprise, anger, and fear, suggests a weaker constructionist model in which, while some or most of any emotion is socially constructed, there is some natural expression involved as well (Armon-Jones, 1986). Thoits (1989:320) distinguishes a strong version of constructionism—there are no basic, universal emotions—from a weaker version—basic emotions may exist but explain little. Primary emotions such as anger and surprise may be more universal and tied directly to bodily states, whereas complex secondary ones such as compassion or shame may depend more on cultural context. It is possible as

<sup>3</sup>A collection of articles that explicitly argue the constructionist position is Harré (1986a). Other useful works include Cancian (1987), de Sousa (1987); Frijda (1986); Hochschild (1975, 1979); L. Lofland (1985); Lutz (1988); Oakley (1992); Rorty (1980); Solomon (1976); and for an overview, Thoits (1989).

well that primary emotions are more important in face-to-face settings—of the kind many symbolic interactionists study—than in ongoing political processes, where secondary emotions such as outrage or pride may be more influential.

Both the strong and the weak forms of constructionism tie emotions to cognition in several ways. Emotions involve beliefs and assumptions open to cognitive persuasion. We often can be talked out of our anger on the grounds that it is too extreme a response, or that we are misinformed. The plots of many plays or novels, from Shakespeare to Hardy, depend on “mistaken” emotions derived from incorrect information. Because emotions normally have objects (we are afraid *of* something), they depend at least partly on cognitive understandings and appraisals of those objects. This allows learning and adaptation. If emotions are tied to beliefs and contexts, they are also partly open to debate as to whether they are appropriate or not at a given time. Because there are cultural rules governing them, emotions can usually be labeled as normal or deviant (Thoits, 1985, 1990). Even our gut-level emotions, if they exist, are conditioned by our expectations, which in turn are derived from knowledge about appropriate conditions in the world (Hochschild, 1983:219–221).

Emotions are also tied to moral values, often arising from perceived infractions of moral rules. According to Harré (1986b:6), “the study of emotions like envy (and jealousy) will require careful attention to the details of local systems of rights and obligations, of criteria of value and so on. In short, these emotions cannot seriously be studied without attention to the local moral order.” One context in which emotions unfold is that of common human narratives, or what de Sousa (1987) calls “paradigm scenarios.” Just as the death of a friend leads one through several predictable emotional stages, other unexpected and unpleasant events—such as a proposal for a nearby nuclear power plant—may lead to surprise, sadness, anger, then outrage. Solomon (1976) even describes the roles that accompany these plots: with anger, you are the judge and the other person is the defendant; with contempt, you are pure and blameless while the other person is vile and despicable. Each emotion implies a family of terms to hurl at your opponent. A social movement organizer deploys different language and arouses different emotions in her listeners if she paints her opponents as inherently malevolent or well-meaning but ignorant (Vanderford, 1989).

Most constructionists focus on emotions that represent temporary responses to events and information, since these are so clearly tied to cognition. But emotions also cover more permanent feelings of the type normally labeled affect or sentiment: love for one’s family and other selected individuals; a sense of identification with a group and loyalty to its members; fondness for places and objects, perhaps based on memories;

positive responses to symbols of various kinds; and negative versions of each of these. To Heise (1979, 1988), affect is a central component of social life: all actions, actors, and settings have an affective component, involving not only a good–bad dimension but a potency dimension and a dimension capturing level of activity (lively–quiet). Humans act, according to Heise, in order to confirm their underlying sentiments. If “neighborhood” has positive connotations of safety and quiet, Heise’s affect control theory would predict that a resident would fight to keep her neighborhood that way. Much political activity, no doubt, involves the reference to or creation of positive and negative affects toward groups, policies, and activities.

Trust and respect are examples of affects with an enormous impact on political action. We have deep tendencies to trust certain individuals, groups, and institutions but not others, and many of our allegiances, alliances, and choices follow from this pattern (Freudenburg, 1993). Past experience or observation, agreement over goals or values or styles, collective identities, maybe even abstract deductions from principles: all these affect whom we trust. We tend to trust those we agree with and agree with those we trust. Generalized trust in the political system, furthermore, affects political behavior, usually dampening protest because of an assumption that the government will fix things without public pressure (Rosenberg, 1956; Marsh, 1977; Barnes *et al.*, 1979).

Affects and reactive emotions are two ends of a continuum with a grey area in the middle. At one end, love for a parent or loyalty to a country are usually strong and abiding affects, in the context of which many specific emotional reactions can come and go. Anger over a decision, at the other extreme, is usually a short-term response. In between are cases such as respect for a political leader, which can be an ongoing affect or a response to a particular action or a combination of the two. Fear, for instance, can slide along the continuum, depending on whether it is fear of abstract entities such as war or radiation or it is fear of more concrete embodiments such as a specific war or proposed nuclear reactor. Also in the middle are what are frequently labeled “moods”: chronic or recurring feelings that do not always have a direct object. They may begin as, and are shaped by, reactions, but they linger.

General affects and specific emotions are a part of all social life as surely as cognitive meanings and moral values are. What is more, they are relatively predictable, not accidental eruptions of the irrational. The transitory emotional responses, it seems to me, are a function of both external context (or, more precisely, interpreted information about that context) and deeper affective states, for the latter help explain why people respond differently to the same information. Those who feel positively about their neighborhood, for instance, may respond with greater outrage to proposals

to change it. Parallel loyalties to professional ethics might determine who becomes a whistleblower when asked by one's boss to break certain rules (Bernstein and Jasper, 1996). The affects help shape the responses.

The relationship between these two kinds of emotions varies, perhaps, also along a continuum. At one extreme, rigid affective loyalties dominate all responses, potentially leading to paranoia or rigid ideologies. At the other extreme, these affects are flexible or weak, and emotional responses are dominated more by immediate context. The responses might themselves be weaker as a result, or they might simply consist of the kind of reaction that almost anyone would have in the same situation.

At stake in the constructionist debate is the rationality of emotions: to the extent that they are collectively shaped, depend on context, and are based on cognitions (themselves changeable through learning), they do not appear irrational. The dismissal of emotions as irrational comes in part from the tendency of Freudian psychological theories, especially earlier in the 20th century, to explain emotions through personality, in other words as a result of individual idiosyncracies fixed early in life rather than as responses to changing cultural contexts. Works such as Lasswell's *Psychopathology and Politics* (1930) were filled with discussions of narcissism, latent homosexuality, oral dependence, and anal retention—often aimed at showing protest participation to be an immature activity. Freudians emphasized processes of ego-defense, which Greenstein (1987:3) defines as “the means through which individuals, often without realizing it, adapt their behavior to the need to manage their inner conflicts.” According to Greenstein, the development in the 1960s of a post-Freudian ego psychology, which stressed the cognitive strengths and adaptive resources of the ego, discouraged the view that political participation arose from psychopathologies (Lane, 1959, 1962). The ego was adapting to external realities, not simply projecting internal conflicts.

The apparent threat to rationality remains, though, in any model of the unconscious. Conflicts, urges, or affects that we cannot understand or control, may prevent us from learning or adapting to new circumstances—processes that might be thought of as a minimal requirement for rationality.<sup>4</sup> Such psychodynamics certainly exist. But it may be unfair to label them as emotions, in contrast to cognition, for they encompass both. They are part of the many limits on human reasoning power, with emotional limits alongside the many cognitive limitations documented by psychologists and others (Kahneman *et al.*, 1982). Neurotic patterns derived from childhood interfere with our processing of cognitive information as much as they do with our emotional responses. Paranoia, for instance, is largely a problem of giving too much credence to irrelevant cognitive cues.

<sup>4</sup>Stinchcombe (1969:282) once argued that “Rationality should not be defined as a quality of decisions at a particular time but rather as a pattern of systematic improvement over time.”



There is a difference between emotions as transitory social roles, which are publicly defined and shaped as much as cognitive meanings are, and the emotions attendant to individual idiosyncracies, personalities, and affective loyalties. The latter may occasionally thwart the well-defined emotional expectations of those around one. But the issue here is not that of emotions, but of how individuals relate to social expectations. There is always some individual variation in behavior, cognition, and emotional responses. This makes social-scientific generalizations difficult, but no more so for emotions than for other aspects of social life. We recognize structured systems of cognitive meanings that, like language, can be defined independently of individuals. That some individuals use these improperly or substitute their own meanings on occasion does not invalidate the systems or ruin their explanatory power. The same is true for emotions. There are systematic pressures to have well-defined emotional responses and affective ties in certain contexts. When individuals fail to meet these expectations, we can explain why without questioning the logic of the emotional system. Even patterns of affect have rules.

Beliefs can be mistaken, emotions inappropriate. But irrational? Either beliefs or emotions can be irrational if they cause actions that consistently lead to a deterioration in one's resources or strategic position or if they prevent learning and improvement. Affective loyalties such as love might blind us in this way, for they are more likely to frame the interpretation of new information than to change in response to that information, making us less adaptable and thus perhaps less rational. But since these affects are very close to moral values and basic goals, a commitment to them is hard to dismiss simply as irrational. They make nonsense of the very means/ends distinction that allows us to judge actions as ineffective for certain goals.<sup>5</sup> Shorter term emotional responses, such as the sheriff's anger, can hurt one's strategic position, but learning and improvement are possible even here. One learns, as other angry sheriffs have, not to strike peaceful protestors. Or not to strike them when cameras are rolling. If a fear of irrationality has prevented students of social movements from incorporating emotions into their models, the time has come to rethink this stance.

### EMOTIONS IN PROTEST

As an integral part of all social action, affective and reactive emotions enter into protest activities at every stage. Some help explain why individu-

<sup>5</sup>Thus martyrs and other extreme altruists *are* willing to have their resources drop (to say the least, in the case of martyrs) because of their attachments to their goals. There is an unusual calculus, but not necessarily an irrational one.

als join protest events or groups, ranging from emotional responses they can have as individuals to those that recruiters can stir in them. Others are generated during protest activities, including both affective ties among fellow members and feelings toward institutions, people, and practices outside the movement and its constituent groups. These affect whether a movement continues or declines, and when. In all stages, there are both preexisting affects and shorter term emotional responses to events, discoveries, and decisions.

Our world is patterned by affect. Our relationships with other humans, even fleeting ones, are charged with emotions. Those intimates whom we know well are wrapped in a complex web of emotions that we can never fully sort out. Affection or resentment toward our parents gives many activities associated with them (even symbolically) a positive or negative affective charge; we may protest in order to shock them, gain their respect, or replicate some childhood dynamic. Admiration for others also influences our choices, as we follow their examples or strive for their approval. We also have many emotional attachments to places and fight fiercely when we feel certain locales are threatened. We often have simple feelings even about strangers: attraction or repulsion, for example. Sexual desire, fulfilled or merely aroused, affects many of our choices of how to spend our time—or more precisely, with whom. Through group stereotypes, we also have emotions toward those we have never met.

But that is not all. On top of these affects, and often based on them, we have transitory feelings about all our activities. As Harold Garfinkel showed, even relatively thoughtless habits, when disrupted, release a torrent of emotions. We have feelings about our lives, whether boredom or excitement, about politics, no matter how remote it sometimes seems, even about events on the other side of the globe. There would be no social movements if we did not have emotional responses to developments near and far. Sometimes emotional responses are strong enough that people search out protest groups on their own (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995). It is affects and emotional responses that political organizers appeal to, arouse, manipulate, and sustain to recruit and retain members. Table I lists some of the emotions that help lead people into social movements, keep them there, and drive them away.<sup>6</sup> Some are primarily affects, others mostly reactive emotions, still others share aspects of each. In this latter category are the emotions often labeled “moods.” In many cases, the same emotions—in different contexts, or with different objects—that lead people into social movements can lead them out again.

<sup>6</sup>Davies (1980: ch. 9) discusses many of the emotions found in political action. On compassion, a key to many movements, see J. Lofland (1985: ch. 9).

**Table I.** Some Emotions Potentially Relevant to Protest

## Primarily affective

*Hatred, Hostility, Loathing:* Powerful step in the creation of outrage and the fixing of blame. Can alter goals from practical results to punishment of opponents.

*Love:* One can have erotic and other attachments to people already in a movement; love also shapes one's affective map of the world.

*Solidarity, Loyalty:* Positive feelings toward others can lead to action on behalf of that group or category.

*Suspicion, Paranoia:* Often lead to indignation and articulation of blame.

*Trust, Respect:* Basic positive affects that influence other emotional and cognitive responses, patterns of alliances, and credibility.

## Primarily reactive

*Anger:* Can have many sources, and can be channeled in many directions, including both rage and outrage. Can interfere with effective strategies.

*Grief, Loss, Sorrow:* Loss, especially of a loved one, can bring on life passage and raise issues of the meaning of life.

*Outrage, Indignation:* These build on other emotions, largely by providing a target or analysis.

*Shame:* Can lead to anger and aggressive reactions.

## Moods and others in between

*Compassion, Sympathy, Pity:* One can imagine the plight of others and develop a desire to help them.

*Cynicism, Depression:* They discourage protest by dampening hopes for change.

*Defiance:* Stance that encourages resistance.

*Enthusiasm, Pride:* Positive emotions that protest leaders try to encourage: enthusiasm for the movement and cause, pride in the associated collective identity, as in Black Power, gay and lesbian rights.

*Envy, Resentment:* Exaggerated by early crowd theorists, these are emotions that few admit to and which usually lead to actions other than protest; yet they may also appear among protestors.

*Fear, Dread:* These can arise from a sense of threat to one's daily routines or moral beliefs. They can paralyze but also be developed into outrage.

*Joy, Hope:* One can be attracted by the joys of empowerment, a sense of "flow" in protest and politics, or the anticipation of a better state of affairs in the future.

*Resignation:* Like cynicism, can dampen perceived possibility for change.

**Table II.** Examples of Emotions by Social Setting

Types	Settings Where Developed and Sustained	
	Outside Movement	Inside Movement
Ongoing Affects, Loyalties	Love for family members. Fondness for neighborhood. Reassuring security of home. Fears of radiation, war. Trust in certain public figures, mistrust of others. Racial or other prejudices.	Love, attraction to other members. Loyalty to shared symbols, identity. Respect, trust for leaders. Jealousy of leaders, others. Trust or mistrust of allies. Trust or mistrust of government officials, politicians.
Responses to Events, Information	Shock at loved one's death. Anger at government decision. Outrage at plans for nuclear plant. Indignation over siting of waste dump. Resignation over government inaction.	Anger, outrage, indignation over government actions, reactions to movement demands, responses of media.

Just to list these emotions should suggest their prevalence in social movements, but we can categorize them further. Table II provides examples of emotions according to the two basic distinctions I have mentioned: affects vs. reactive emotions, and the social settings where they are developed and sustained. It is the interaction between the affects and responses outside the movement that may propel someone to join an organization, participate in an event, contribute money, or be receptive to a recruiter's plea (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995). The right side of the table suggests a number of internal movement dynamics: affects about one's fellow members may lead to either continued allegiance or defection; responses to the decisions and actions of other players in a conflict help explain strategic choices, including whether to continue or not. Although many emotions can only fall in the right-hand column or in the left, many others can be created or sustained in either setting; most of the affects and reactive emotions that would draw someone to a movement would also help keep her there.

Every extensive study of a social movement is filled with emotions like those that fill these tables, but they almost never receive theoretical attention or even appear in indices (for one example, see Smith, 1996, who mentions emotions repeatedly without ever theorizing explicitly about them). There seem to be two main exceptions, in which scholars have addressed the emotions of social movements.

Certain social movements aim at changing the broader culture of their society, including the acceptability and display of certain emotions. These are often movements fighting against the stigmatization of some group.

And since emotions are often defined as “women’s work,” such efforts have frequently been part of the women’s movement. In the late 1960s thousands of consciousness-raising groups helped women learn to feel less guilty about their resentment toward husbands, fathers, employers, and other men. Anger was not only considered positive, it was almost a requirement for membership, argues Hochschild (1975:298), who continues, “Social movements for change make ‘bad’ feelings okay, and they make them useful. Depending on one’s point of view, they make bad feelings ‘rational.’ They also make them visible.” According to Taylor and Whittier (1995), women’s groups regularly try to transform the negative feelings many women have because of their structural positions, including depression, fear, and guilt. Taylor (1996) has examined self-help groups for mothers suffering from postpartum depression, an emotion widely stigmatized as “inappropriate,” not part of the mother role. In this paper I do not examine such cases, where changes in emotions are among a movement’s explicit goals, but rather I examine emotions as part of a movement’s own dynamics.

The other exception is the collective-behavior approach, which traditionally acknowledged the importance of emotions—but by linking the anger of organized protestors to the fears of panics. For example John Lofland (1985:32; also McPhail, 1991), in describing the joys of crowds, recognizes the problematic emotions emphasized in the collective-behavior tradition, summed up in the image of a crowd: “with all the emotional baggage of irrationality, irritability, excess, fickleness, and violence.” Lofland seems to imply that negative emotions such as fear and anger are closer to irrationality than positive ones such as joy. And organized social movements, as opposed to crowds, still appear free from emotions. There is still a taint or suspicion of irrationality surrounding most emotions.

### **EMOTIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF POPULAR CONCEPTS**

The remainder of this article examines a series of concepts that have proven useful in explaining the emergence, recruitment patterns, longevity, and decline of social movements—especially but not exclusively a number of cultural concepts. I would like to show that these causal mechanisms, which have been seen primarily from a structural or (if culturally oriented) cognitive point of view, are emotional as well. In many cases the causal impact of the factors depends heavily on emotional dimensions that have rarely been recognized or theorized.

### Moral Shocks

“Moral shocks,” often the first step toward recruitment into social movements, occur when an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action, whether or not she has acquaintances in the movement (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995; Jasper, 1997). The triggers may be highly publicized public events such as a nuclear accident, or personal experiences such as the death of a child. They may be sudden, like an accident or public announcement, or they may unfold gradually over time, as in the realization by Love Canal’s residents that they were living over a toxic waste dump. Similarly, the shock may come from a plan for something new or from new information about something existing, which has already done unseen damage. As Jane Poulsen and I (1995) first used the term, it was primarily cognitive: the information or event helps a person think about her basic values and how the world diverges from them in some important way. These shocks are similar to Edward Walsh’s “suddenly imposed grievances,” like his case of the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, that can spur recruitment (Walsh, 1981). The term “grievance” has primarily cognitive connotations whereas “shock” at least hints at the emotional power of these experiences. Whether the underlying image is a state of shock or an electrical shock, it implies a visceral, bodily feeling, on a par with vertigo or nausea. Strong emotions should flow from this.

Shocks depend on preexisting patterns of affect, which channel the interpretation of announcements and revelations. Reverence for the beauty of the countryside where I live or suspicion of my local electric utility (or of technology or corporations in general) will increase my shock at a proposal for a nuclear power plant. Positive and negative affects like these are related to moral sensibilities, at least in that I am morally indignant or outraged (my moral sensibilities are expressed through emotions) when the objects of my affection are threatened in some way.

Responses to moral shocks vary greatly in the emotions that ensue. Most people, in most cases, resign themselves to unpleasant changes, certain that governments and corporations do not bend to citizen protest. But others, through complex emotional processes that few researchers have described, channel their fear and anger into righteous indignation and political activity. The prospect of unexpected and sudden changes in one’s surroundings can arouse feelings of dread and anger. The former can paralyze, the latter can be the basis for mobilization. Activists work hard to create moral outrage and anger and to provide a target against which these can be vented. Inchoate anxieties and fears must be transformed into moral indignation and outrage toward concrete policies and decisionmakers

(Gamson *et al.*, 1982; Gamson, 1992). Activists must weave together a moral, cognitive, and emotional package of attitudes. By framing the problem as, say, "big business" or "instrumentalism," they suggest a moral judgment: abuse of humans by bureaucracy. The proper emotion shifts from dread to outrage. There is someone to blame.

### Blame

If protest is going to arise from moral shocks, there must be someone to blame for what is wrong (Gamson, 1992). The ability to focus blame is crucial to protest, and it differs according to the perceived ultimate causes and the direct embodiments of each threat or outrage (Gordon and Jasper, 1996). We construct blame differently according to our perceptions of the threat: if its ultimate source is natural or human, if it is embodied in other humans or inanimate technology, if it already exists or is being planned, and if we assign someone responsibility for fixing it. Regarding this last dimension, there are both *causal* and *remedial* forms of blame: causing a threat differs from responsibility for fixing it. If people believe their government should have foreseen or prevented a catastrophe, or should have done more to help afterward, they may become indignant even without believing that the government actually caused the calamity.

We rarely blame nature. Perceived "acts of God," such as forest fires or floods, discourage the blaming of any group or institution and rarely lead to protest movements; in fact they may create a broad solidarity by pitting humans against nature: "The tasks that survivors engage in are helping, altruistic endeavors that require people to work side by side, in unison, to save lives and property. Such tasks encourage the formation of communal associations, which function to reassert the power of the group over nature by reconstituting routines that reinvest daily life with a sense of permanence and predictability" (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1990:165). In some cases, though, survivors are so devastated, thinking there is nothing left to save, that trauma, depression, and lethargy result (Erikson, 1994). In either case, there is no one to blame, so protest is uncommon. Acts of god must be interpreted as such, of course, leaving room for cultural variation. For example Zonabend (1993) has shown that French workers at the La Hague nuclear waste reprocessing plant face their activities in the same fatalistic way that their ancestors treated the perils of fishing in the Atlantic; partly because of their cultural traditions they treat nuclear technologies as a force of nature.

When humans can be blamed for causing a threat, outrage is a common response. Most technological threats are easily tied to conscious choices made by others, since someone designs, builds, owns, and regulates

**Table III.** Families of Perceived Threats

Types	Emotional responses	Examples
Natural disasters	Difficult to direct blame or seek redress. Typically accompanied by grief and fatalism.	Fires, hurricanes, floods, most diseases.
Diffuse environmental threats	Not seen as natural, but hard to pin down blame. Often chronic, unfolding over long periods. Fear and resignation are more likely than outrage.	Air pollution, global warming, ozone depletion.
Focused environmental/technological threats	Ownership, responsibility, and blame are clear. Outrage and indignation are possible.	Chemical plants, nuclear power plants, hazardous waste dumps.
Threats embodied in humans	To identify them as threat is to blame them. Loathing accompanies outrage.	Public housing, group homes, hospices.

the technology. Yet even human-made sources vary in the extent to which morally responsible actors can be singled out for blame. For example, air pollution is so diffuse as to seem more like an inevitable force of nature, whereas nuclear power plants have clear owners, regulators, and neighbors. We could formulate the following prediction: the more clearly defined the proximate source of the threat, the more likely there is to be outrage or indignation—and hence opposition. Human-made waste products and technologies represent a “new species of trouble” not only in being especially deadly but in being made *by someone*, yielding a clear perpetrator to blame (Erikson, 1994; Walsh, 1988; Walsh *et al.*, 1993).

Finally, some perceived threats are thoroughly social, since they take the form of other humans. Group homes, new prisons, public housing, and other projects have been opposed for the kind of people they would house. Table III presents, in order of how clearly humans can be blamed, several categories of perceived threat and the typical emotions that accompany them.

If perceptions of natural vs. social sources of threat affect mobilization differently, the reasons are emotional as much as cognitive. The solidarity we feel with fellow humans in the face of a natural disaster, and the fatalistic resignation that sometimes sets in, could not be more different from the suspicions, outrage, and hate that we can muster against, say, a corporation that takes a coldly calculated risk, or a group of people who scare us. To be sure, these emotional responses (which may be shaped by preexisting affective patterns, especially in the case of human sources) are bound up with cognitive understandings, but they are no less important for that. To frame an outcome as either injustice or as bad luck entails how we should feel about it (grief versus indignation, perhaps) as much as how we understand it.



Existing and proposed threats may lead to different emotional responses, due to the different relations between cause and remedy. Many newly discovered but existing hazards inspire trauma and resignation, especially when those who caused the problem have left the scene or gone out of business—in other words when we cannot find or identify the appropriate object for our indignation. Anger at those causally responsible must be translated into demands for another party (usually a government agency) to find a solution. This redeployment of outrage is often hard to accomplish, so that social movements have an emotional advantage when redress is demanded of those who caused the problem. What's more, in the case of slowly unfolding, existing threats, we have more defense mechanisms—denial, resignation—that prevent our recognizing the full extent of the threat. When the damage to health has already occurred, anger can be overwhelmed by grief.<sup>7</sup>

The specification of blame is important because it generates villains. A study of pro-choice and anti-abortion newsletters found that they “identify concrete and specific adversaries, characterize enemy action in an entirely negative light, attribute corrupt motives to the foe, and magnify the opponents’ power” (Vanderford, 1989:174). Such characterizations enhance protestors’ outrage and sense of threat, transforming emotions at the same time as understanding. Demonization fuels powerful emotions for social movements, such as hatred, fear, anger, suspicion, and indignation.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving has succeeded so well in part because its very name formulates both threat and blame. As Gusfield (1988:125) puts it, “The very name, MADD, presents the symbols that carry an expressive imagery. ‘Mothers’ puts the issue in a framework of violence against children. ‘Against’ provides an emotional sense of battles and enemies. ‘Drunk drivers’ provides an image of the DUI as socially irresponsible and out of self-control. This is the ‘killer drunk’ who constitutes the villain of the story. MADD has brought to the public arena the emotional and dramatic expression of the public as victim.” The analysis of the problem, neatly condensed in a name, tells the public what emotions to feel toward each of the characters in the drunk-driving drama. Without the emotions they generate, processes of assigning blame would inspire little action.

### Frame Alignment

During recruitment to protest groups, organizers and potential participants must “align” their “frames,” achieving a common definition of a social

<sup>7</sup>Gordon (1987) distinguishes the “epistemic” emotions that look toward future uncertainties from “factive” ones that respond to known conditions. Presumably, protest must have some of the forward-looking emotions, even if it may also rely on factive ones too.

problem and a common prescription for solving it (Snow *et al.*, 1986). Snow and Benford (1992:137) define a frame as “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment.” They (1988) usefully distinguish three successive types of framing necessary for successful recruitment: *diagnostic*, in which a movement convinces potential converts that a problem needs to be addressed; *prognostic*, in which it convinces them of appropriate strategies, tactics and targets; and *motivational*, in which it exhorts them to get involved in these activities. They argue that frames are more likely to be accepted if they fit well with the beliefs of potential recruits, involve empirically credible claims, are compatible with the life experiences of the audience, and fit with the narratives the audiences tell about their lives. This “frame alignment” model has been the main way that culture has recently been brought into research on social movements.

The many definitions and applications of frames and framing processes deal almost entirely with their cognitive components. “Motivational framing,” which seems to be emotions even though the term makes them sound like something else, is rarely discussed, although it is apparently what gets people to actually do something. Cognitive agreement alone does not result in action. More widely, the motivation to protest has not been well studied in recent research because it is taken for granted. Once the desire and willingness to protest are assumed, only changes in the opportunity to act on them are needed to explain the rise of social movements (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994). All potential protestors need, it sometimes seems, is a cognitive signal that they can succeed or will not be severely repressed (Klandermans, 1984). This would be fine for rational automatons, not human beings.

In addition to neglecting motivation, much of the framing literature highlights the social networks through which recruitment occurs (Snow *et al.*, 1980; Snow *et al.*, 1986) without specifying what it is about these networks that makes them so influential. Although scholars tend to view them as structures and leave it at that, their causal impact is due to what those structures transmit. Part of their importance, certainly, is that they represent already shared assumptions and beliefs. But they are important at least as much because they represent affective bonds. I accept a friend’s invitation to a rally because I like her, not just because I agree with her. It is affective ties that preserve the networks and give them much of the causal impact they have.

### Injustice Frames

One particular kind of frame is especially important. Most scholars of social movements agree with Turner and Killian (1987:242) that “the com-

mon element in the norms of most, if not all, movements is the conviction that existing conditions are unjust." Gamson, in particular, has elaborated the concept of an injustice frame, a way of viewing a situation or condition that expresses indignation or outrage over a perceived injustice, as well as finding some human agency to blame for the transgression. In calling injustice a "hot cognition," though, Gamson still seems to subordinate the emotional to the cognitive, but he at least recognizes the importance of emotions. Of all the emotions, injustice is most closely associated with "the righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul" (Gamson, 1992:32). Gamson and his earlier coauthors were clear about the primacy of emotions in the adoption of an injustice frame, since the bonds of authority being questioned in their experiments were primarily affective. Suspicion, hostility, anger, and other emotions may arise even before blame is allocated through more cognitive processes. Gamson *et al.* (1982:123) quoted psychologist Robert Zajonc: "Preferences need no inferences . . . . Affective reactions can occur without extensive perceptual and cognitive encoding, are made with greater confidence than cognitive judgments, and can be made sooner." We may need to study not just how cognitions affect emotions but how they are affected by them.

By examining encounters with authorities, Gamson and his collaborators did not need to examine the process by which blame is attached to groups or individuals; in their case, the authorities were the natural and only target. Other cases may be more complex: those responsible for fixing a problem, we saw, may not be those who caused it. The emotional work required to trigger protest may, accordingly, be more complex. Gamson (1992:33) later elaborated on the sources of injustice frames, including "concreteness in the target, even when it is misplaced and directed away from the real causes of hardship." The need for strong emotions may even lead organizers to distort their cognitive analyses. They may "exaggerate the role of human actors, failing to understand broader structural constraints, and misdirect their anger at easy and inappropriate targets." It is almost impossible to imagine mobilization in the absence of strong emotions.

In an injustice frame, the passion for justice is fueled by anger over existing injustice. Since protest is aimed at what one dislikes, negative emotions have a prominent role, even though they seem furthest from the rational calculations envisioned by rational choice theorists and implicitly accepted by most other traditions. Abstract norms of justice gain some power from the positive emotions associated with them—hope, joy, compassion—but probably not enough to motivate action in the absence of a contrast with an unjust situation and the negative emotions—a sense of threat, outrage, anger, fear—associated with it. Negative emotions are powerful.

### Collective Identity

Recently, collective identity has become a popular term among both protestors and those who study them (Taylor and Whittier, 1995; Johnston *et al.*, 1994; J. Gamson, 1995). It sometimes refers to a sense of solidarity among members of a social movement itself, and sometimes to an underlying social categorization in whose name a movement claims to speak. Collective identity is seen as a spur to action because one values the potential gain to the group, so that identity thereby helps to define one's "interests." Identities frequently stand as proxies for many specific cultural attributes, including skills, habits, loyalties, beliefs, ideologies, and sensibilities: one can have an "activist" identity that transcends a particular movement, or an "organizational" identity associated with loyalty to a particular organization, perhaps even a "tactical" identity—for example as a radical or as a nonviolent activist (Jasper, 1997: chap. 4). More commonly, identities are based on ascribed traits such as sexual preference, nationality, race, class, and gender—although such labels are usually still proxies for more concrete cultural attributes. One can also identify with beliefs or principles, such as religions.

But a collective identity is not simply the drawing of a cognitive boundary; most of all, it is an emotion, a positive affect toward other group members on the grounds of that common membership. Defining oneself through the help of a collective label entails an affective as well as cognitive mapping of the social world. Partly because of this affection, participation in social movements can be pleasurable in itself, independently of the ultimate goals and outcomes. Protest becomes a way of saying something about oneself and one's morals, and of finding joy and pride in them. One can also have negative emotions about one's identity, such as shame or guilt; many movements are motivated precisely to fight stigmatized identities. What is difficult to imagine is an identity that is purely cognitive yet strongly held. The "strength" of an identity comes from its emotional side. Identities can be cognitively vague, for instance, yet still strongly held.

### Cognitive Liberation

In an effort to insert culture into structural "political process" models, Doug McAdam argued that "objective" opportunities for action only lead to action when potential protestors recognize those opportunities as such. This recognition he labels "cognitive liberation." As he describes it, "the altered responses of members to a particular challenger serve to transform evolving political conditions into a set of 'cognitive cues' signifying to insurgents that the political system is becoming increasingly vulnerable to

challenge” (McAdam, 1982:49). Despite the term, which seems to imply a radical change in one’s perspective, cognitive liberation appears to be a relatively instrumental reading of available information about the state’s willingness to repress dissent. As McAdam says, some such shift is crucial to the emergence of protest movements. But what is liberated and how?

In a telling example, Tarrow (1994:84) mentions the Bolshevik Revolution as having triggered socialist movements throughout the industrial West. What kind of message did it send? A fragile state, worn down by a long war, had been toppled. Did other potential revolutionaries conclude that their own governments were equally vulnerable? In fact, the Russian Revolution frightened other states into more active and severe repression (elites too have emotions such as fear). It nonetheless inspired mobilization, not as an objective or as a cognitive indicator of the odds of success, but as an emotional inspiration, a symbolic reminder of a joyful utopian future, a reassuring sign that history was on the side of the revolutionaries. It caused action, in other words, more through its emotional impact than its cognitive message. Cognitive liberation is probably more important for its bundle of emotions than for any “objective” information about odds of success. “Liberation” implies heady emotions that “cognitive” then denies.

### **Membership Maintenance and Movement Culture**

Emotions help explain not simply the origin and spread of social movements but also their continuation or decline. Although few scholars have asked why movements decline when they do, or why individuals leave movements when they do, Lofland (1996:237–242) has addressed the issue of “membership maintenance” as a problem for social movement organizations. He lists many factors that may lead to defection, including stigma in the external world, a lack of success, shifting goals of the movement or individual members, factionalism, and long hours. He neglects the emotions that accompany most of these: embarrassment, disappointment, and frustration. He mentions only guilt over not meeting obligations to one’s family. The main solution to the problem, Lofland says, is the development of a rich social movement culture, although the title of his discussion of culture—“The Broader Context of Beliefs: Culture”—hints at a cognitive bias. He discusses six basic components of culture: values, symbolic objects, stories, occasions, roles, and persona. In his presentation, all of these play a cognitive role, embodying important beliefs of participants. But they have an equally important emotional side, entailing joy, hope, enthusiasm, pride, and affective attachment to the group.

It is because of emotions such as these that participation carries many pleasures, which may be great enough to motivate participation without

relying on a cognitive belief that success is possible or likely. According to Bell (1992:xvi), many black civil rights protestors participated to gain dignity in their lives through struggle and moral expression, not necessarily because they expected to gain equal rights from that struggle; as he says of one participant, “her goal was defiance, and its harassing effect was likely more potent precisely because she did what she did without expecting to topple her oppressors.” If emotions are intimately involved in the processes by which people come to join social movements, they are even more obvious in the ongoing activities of the movements. The richer a movement’s culture—with more rituals, songs, folktales, heroes, denunciation of enemies, and so on—the greater these pleasures.<sup>8</sup>

Movements are themselves a distinct setting in which emotions can be created or reinforced. In contrast to emotions that grow out of existing moral frameworks such as religious systems or professional ethics, the emotions created within social movements are attempts, often explicit, to elaborate intuitive visions into explicit ideologies and proposals. The anger of a farmer living near a proposed site for a nuclear plant is the intuition that the antinuclear movement tries to build into a systematic ideology of opposition. What the farmer sees first as “meddlesome outsiders” develops into “technocracy”; fear develops into outrage. Each cognitive shift is accompanied by emotional ones.

Some of the emotions generated within a social movement—call them *reciprocal*—concern participants’ ongoing feelings toward each other. These are the close, affective ties of friendship, love, solidarity, and loyalty, and the more specific emotions they give rise to. Together they create what Goodwin (1997) calls the “libidinal economy” of a movement, yielding many of the pleasures of protest, including erotic pleasures. Other emotions—call them *shared*—are consciously held by a group at the same time, but they do not have the other group members as their objects. The group nurtures anger toward outsiders, or outrage over government policies. Reciprocal and shared emotions, although distinct, reinforce each other—thereby building a movement’s culture. Each measure of shared outrage against a nuclear plant reinforces the reciprocal emotion of fondness for others precisely because they feel the same way. They are like us; they understand. Conversely, mutual affection is one context in which new shared emotions are easily created. Because you are fond of others, you want to adopt their feelings. Both kinds of collective emotion foster soli-

<sup>8</sup>A number of observers have described movement culture. Most have concentrated on rhetoric and beliefs, but not the emotions that accompany them. Others have examined rituals and other actions that contribute to “identity” or “solidarity,” without picking apart these latter ideas so that we could see the emotional glue that holds them together.

arity within a protest group. They are key sources of identification with a movement.

Collective emotions, the reciprocal ones especially, are linked to the pleasures of protest. Most obvious are the pleasures of being with people one likes, in any number of ways. Other pleasures arise from the joys of collective activities, such as losing oneself in collective motion or song. This can be satisfying even when done with strangers—who of course no longer feel like strangers. And articulating one's moral principles is always a source of joy, pride, and fulfilment—even when it is also painful.

Emotions are one of the products of collective action, especially internal rituals. Collective rites remind participants of their basic moral commitments, stir up strong emotions, and reinforce a sense of solidarity with the group, a "we-ness." Rituals are symbolic embodiments, at salient times and places, of the beliefs and feelings of a group. Singing and dancing are two activities often found in rituals, providing the requisite emotional charge through music, coordinated physical activity, and bodily contact (McNeill, 1995). Since Durkheim first described "collective effervescence," it has been clear that these activities were crucial in creating it, by transporting participants onto another plane, into what they feel is a more ethereal, or at any rate different, reality. In many ways, singing and dancing are the kernel of truth in older crowd theories, the one moment when a large group can attain a certain coordination and unity, can silence the small groups talking among themselves, can concentrate the attention of all. Of course, this coordination does not emerge spontaneously, since participants must know the dances and the lyrics. And it is hard to imagine *all* participants joining in (McPhail, 1991). But Durkheim was pointing to important processes that reinforce emotions in predictable ways.<sup>9</sup>

Singing was especially important to the civil rights movement (Morris, 1984). Lyrics such as "Onward Christian Soldiers," "There's a great day coming," and "We shall overcome" lent biblical authority to the campaign with specific references to fundamental beliefs and narratives (Watters, 1971). Deliverance through a great leader—Moses, Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr.—was a reassuring emotional message. Extensive religious training meant that almost all African American participants knew the music, loudly generating a moving feeling of solidarity. Lyrics are a form of shared knowledge that helps one feel like an insider. Morris (1984:47) quotes King: "The opening hymn was the old familiar 'Onward Christian

<sup>9</sup>Durkheim, one source of inspiration for older crowd theories, said that song and dance might be necessary to sustain the collective effervescence of crowds: "And since a collective sentiment cannot express itself collectively except on the condition of observing a certain order permitting co-operation and movements in unison, these gestures and cries naturally tend to become rhythmic and regular; hence come songs and dances" (Durkheim, 1965:247).

Soldiers,' and when that mammoth audience stood to sing, the voices outside (the church building could not accommodate the large gatherings) swelling the chorus in the church, there was a mighty ring like the glad echo of heaven itself . . . . The enthusiasm of these thousands of people swept everything along like an onrushing tidal wave." It is hard to imagine more powerful emotional materials.

### Decline and Abeyance

Many of the same emotions that help explain the origins and unfolding of social movements also contribute to its decline. As Goodwin (1997) shows, love and erotic attraction can lead dyads out of movements and into private life. Frustration can cause groups to change tactics or to disband altogether. Jealousy, envy, disgust, and hatred can pull groups apart. In Hirschman's (1992) account, people retreat from the public to the private sphere because "participation in public life offers only this unsatisfactory too-much-or-too-little choice and is therefore bound to be disappointing in one way or another" (120). Voting offers too little involvement; social movements demand too much. We become addicted to protest activities, commit huge amounts of time to them, and become exhausted; we have unrealistic expectations of social change and are easily disappointed. Hirschman's description of these dynamics depends (mostly implicitly) on emotions such as excitement, disappointment, and frustration: "The turns from the private to the public life are marked by wildly exaggerated expectations, by total infatuation, and by sudden revulsions" (102). Except in the rare case when a social movement achieves its goals, it is hard to imagine an individual abandoning her routines of protest without experiencing—and probably because of—strong emotions.

Emotions, especially affective ones, also support movements in their less active phases. In her discussion of the "abeyance structures" through which movements survive between periods of mass mobilization, Taylor (1989; also Rupp and Taylor, 1987) recognizes the role of emotions without elaborating how fully they permeate all the dimensions of these structures that she lists (continuity over time, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralization, and culture). In her example, these dimensions allowed the National Women's Party to provide the resurgent women's movement of the 1960s with activist networks, goals and tactical choices, and a collective identity. Except perhaps for goals and tactics, these contributions (like the dimensions) depend heavily on emotions for their causal effect. The time dimension, as Taylor describes it, offers a sense of community and a continuity of membership, but her quotes from participants contain emotional words like "thrilling" and "uplifting." Purposive commitment, exclusiveness,



centralization, and culture also had the effect of reinforcing a strong sense of a community among a small group of activists (which in turn yielded the activist network and collective identity). "Personal ties of love and friendship among members were an important cultural ideal. A willingness to shape personal relationships around the cause was, in large measure, what made possible the intense commitment of members" (Taylor, 1989:769). Many activists were actually couples, and many had an intense devotion to the party's leader. Like other efforts to understand the effects of internal movement culture, this one would benefit from more direct examination of emotional dynamics.

## CONCLUSIONS

Emotions give ideas, ideologies, identities, and even interests their power to motivate. Just as they must respond to cognitive grids and moral visions, movement organizers and participants appeal to and build upon preexisting emotions such as fear, outrage, even love. Some of these emotions are temporary responses to events; others are longer lasting affective ties. Almost all the important concepts used to account for recruitment into protest, we have seen, rest heavily on their undertheorized emotional dimensions.

What is more, once generated, protest itself is filled with a variety of emotions. Some of these are important because they are shared by members of a protest group. Others are reciprocal feelings that the members of a protest group or movement have for each other. Some emotional dynamics keep people in a movement; others drive them away. Emotions help explain the networks and communities through which movements survive even in abeyance. They also help explain, I suspect, not only continued allegiance but choices of tactics, organizational forms, and outcomes such as schisms (Jasper, 1997: chap. 10).

Scheff (1994:65) bemoans the disappearance of emotions from explanations of political conflict: "Emotions lead only a shadow life these days. Shame, particularly, has dropped out of the discussion, along with other emotions and personal motives. Lust for possessions or power is seen as real; for honor, unreal . . . [S]ocial scientists, like most others in our civilization, are too ashamed of emotions to give them serious attention as causal elements." Most social scientists mimic the tendency of modern societies to denigrate emotions as the opposite of rationality. This is especially true in the study of political action at the macrolevel, for emotions are easily relegated to a "psychological" level allegedly irrelevant to big phenomena such as social movements. Those sympathetic to protestors, above others, assume that their

rationality is somehow at stake. They trot out emotions only to study Nazis, moral panics, and other movements they dislike.

The specter of irrationality arises when we assume that emotions—whether conceived as momentary “passions” or stubborn loyalties—lead us to do things we normally would not do or do not “really” want. But even the most fleeting emotions are firmly rooted in moral and cognitive beliefs that are relatively stable and predictable. In addition, most emotions, far from subverting our goal attainment, help us define our goals and motivate action toward them. When protestors’ actions backfire, it is usually because their opponents actively work to portray them in a bad light. The southern sheriff’s rage is a major part of what animates him, even when protestors can manipulate his rage strategically to his disadvantage. Actions can be mistaken or detrimental to strategic action, but actions are never based on emotion alone. And emotions can be relearned if they consistently hurt one’s position.

In the explosion of work on the cultural dimensions of social movements, emotions have been slighted in favor of the cognitive dimensions of culture. In their desire to demonstrate the rationality of protest movements, recent researchers seem to have erroneously concluded that emotions were inevitably irrational and should be minimized in their models. One frequent result, once basic affective commitments are overlooked, is that the only motivation left to protestors is group or self-interest. Emotional dynamics, alongside morality and cognition, are ubiquitous in social life, and hardly render action irrational. Only because of the biases of researchers have emotions been studied as though they were irrational or destructive—at the same time that protest organizers work hard to build those emotions. The time has come for a fuller cultural approach to social movements, and to social life more generally.

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