

# Emotions and Social Movements

*Edited by*  
Helena Flam and Debra King

# Emotions and Social Movements

Most research on social movements has ignored the significance of emotions. This edited volume seeks to redress this oversight and introduces new research themes and tools to the field of emotions and social movements.

This volume takes both the sociology of social movements and the sociology of emotions in an exciting new direction. Truly international in scope, the contributions to this volume cover diverse issues such as the Women in Black in Israel, the Chinese student movement, care and feminism, and the techniques of the Adbusters Media Foundation. The contributions show how emotions connect macro- and micro-politics, examine highly emotional movement-staged public events and address the role of attempts to express, regulate and ignore emotions within social movements. Above all, this volume contributes to the general understanding of how emotions work in a social context. Comprising three main sections, the work focuses on theoretical frameworks, movements that challenge states and state policies and movement consolidation and demise.

Sociologists and political activists around the world will find this volume to be of great interest given its wide-ranging approach and its heretofore unique emphasis on the role of emotion in protest, dissent and social movements.

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# 1 Introduction

*Helena Flam in collaboration with Debra King*

This book is about emotions *and* about social movements. Its contributors draw both on the sociology of emotions and theories of social movements. Both these sociologies date back to the mid-1970s – a time which witnessed the rise of many new sociological perspectives and special areas of inquiry. But whereas the development of the sociology of emotions was marked by anarchistic pluralism from its very beginning, research on social movements evolved much more like ‘normal science’. It was clearly marked by deferential-referential dynamics constitutive of various schools of thought with their distinct approaches to social movements.

Until today the sociology of emotions has featured various competing perspectives on emotions. Even though both American and British sociologists have established special sections in their national organizations devoted to this field of sociology, and many edited and single volumes have come out which bear witness to the creativity, productivity and popularity of the sociologists of emotions, no single approach to emotions – with the notable exception of, perhaps, Arlie Hochschild’s – has come to dominate this area of inquiry. Instead those interested in the sociology of emotions have practiced a happy eclecticism drawing on the perspectives worked out by Theodore Kemper, Randall Collins, Thomas J. Scheff, Peggy Thoits, Candance Clark, Cas Wouters, Norman K. Denzin, Eva Illouz, Jack Katz, Jack Barbalet, Francesca Cancian and numerous others who have brought their gift of creativity to this area of study. If the sociology of emotions keeps gaining momentum today, it is more due to its compelling nature than to any co-ordinated organizational or programmatic efforts. Without exaggeration it can be said that despite this lack of any co-ordinated or frontal assault many areas of sociological inquiry have begun paying at least some attention to emotions. Even the most ardent enemies of emotions, such as the rational choice proponents, have come to recognize that they are unable to explain the many anomalies which they encounter in their research without recourse to emotions. Research on social movements has also succumbed to emotions, albeit very recently.

From its beginning, social movement research has been marked by well-defined controversies which, after initial polarizing effects, have resulted in

the introduction and diffusion of additional approaches to social movements. There are, of course, many founding fathers and mothers – Charles Tilly, Mayer Zald, John McCarthy, Doug McAdam, Myra Marx Ferree, William A. Gamson, Sidney Tarrow, David A. Snow, Robert D. Benford, Kim Voss, Verta Taylor, Nancy Whittier, Alberto Melucci, Alain Touraine and others – who compete with each other on the scientific market. However, a casual look at the numerous social movement readers and journals reveals that, although the qualitative ‘Europeans’ are granted definitely less presence, hardly any approaches are denied the recognition they deserve. Most of them feature chapters or articles devoted to what by now has become the standard approaches: the resource mobilization perspective, political opportunity structures, networks, framing, identities, subcultures, space and temporality, and so on. Yet, despite this flurry of unceasing, exciting research, one gains the impression of restlessness and dissatisfaction. It seems that social movement researchers and theorists, having explored various older approaches to social movements, are now looking towards new explanatory frameworks, including those that are more inclusive of emotions.

So far just two initiatives have acknowledged the importance of emotions in social movements in an explicit, focused and central manner: the first initiative was the publication of *Passionate Politics* (2001) and the second was to devote one special issue of the international journal on social movements, *Mobilization* (2002), to emotions. Singling out these two publications is not meant to deny that several well-known social movement theorists – mostly female – have addressed emotions in their earlier work or that recently quite a few separate articles have been published in refereed journals. The contributors to this volume repeatedly acknowledge many of these intellectual predecessors in their texts. This singling out is instead merely intended to underline that new – collective, organized, visible – interest is being taken in the specific area of emotions in social movements.

Both *Passionate Politics* edited by Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta and the special *Mobilization* issue guest edited by Aminzade and McAdam contributed to a better visibility of emotions in social movement research and bestowed the necessary legitimacy on research dedicated to emotions in social movements. It is, however, worth noting that unlike these editors we lean more heavily on the sociology of emotions to demonstrate that movement emotions and feeling rules produce both structural and action consequences. More specifically, contrary to the guest editors of the special *Mobilization* issue devoted to emotions, we believe that it is not too early to link movement-generated emotions to protest strategies or movement action repertoires in a systematic way.

Our undertaking also differs in several other respects from past efforts. We examine a wider range of emotions. In this volume not only the standard set of shame, pride, anger and solidarity is subject to analysis, we also

make room for emotions such as loyalty, joy, hope, fear, contempt, sadness, distrust, empathy, compassion, altruism, outrage, gratitude and happiness. However, to prevent a cacophony of emotions, we offer several frameworks that aim to link them to each other in a systematic manner.

We go beyond simply introducing emotions to social movement research, we are further developing the field by:

- showing how emotions connect the macro-politics to the micro-politics of social movements;
- focusing on highly emotional movement-staged public events and the role of emotions in constituting not only the movement collective or its interactions with the opponents but also those with its public;
- bringing emotions into the analyses of the sustainability and demise of social movements;
- paying attention to the difficulties associated with attempts to express, regulate and ignore emotions within social movements.

The contributors to this volume do not see the exploration of emotions as merely opening up our eyes to new dimensions of social movements, but instead they grant emotions a definite causal weight. In essence, they propose a more theoretical approach to emotions in social movements, by either extending older theories of emotions based on data gained from social movements, or constructing new theories of emotions more appropriate to the study of social movements.

Furthermore, the present volume deals with both democratic and repressive political systems, emphasizing differences between the two. The empirical material presented here is truly international. It comes from Australia, Canada, China, re-united Germany, Israel, 'socialist' Germany and Poland, Serbia, the UK and the US. Among the contributors to this volume one finds both seasoned scientists and young researchers whose innovative scholarship has already been distinguished by numerous awards. Some are also activists who have brought their vast movement experience into their scientific work.

By paying attention to emotions as a key feature of society, the contributors move beyond the usual concern with cognitions, interests and strategies. By staking out this new thematic territory they also go beyond the burgeoning research in this area which mainly treat emotions as merely a mobilization resource or an object of management. Most significantly, this volume shows that there is much to be gained when the sociology of emotions and the sociology of social movements are explored together.

## **The structure of the book**

The first section of this volume focuses on theoretical frameworks for the study of emotions and social movements. The second section – which also

proposes further theoretical frameworks – portrays movements as challengers to the states, their policies and the market. It highlights the role of emotions in turning-point movement-staged events geared, among others, to the mobilization of the public. The third and fourth sections highlight the role emotions play in movement consolidation and demise.

### *Theoretical frameworks*

The following chapters by Helena Flam and Ron Eyerman have a dual purpose. They describe the theoretical context within which interest in the role of emotions in social movements is currently developing. They also propose new theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of emotions in social movements. Helena Flam calls attention to what she names the normal distribution of ‘cementing’ emotions in society. She points out that emotions such as loyalty, anger, shame and fear, uphold social structures and relations of dominations in both democratic and repressive regimes, but they differ in their weight. She then argues that regime-dependent social movements counter these and construct new, subversive emotions. The research agenda she proposes emphasizes the emotional-institutional context within which social movements do their emotion work, and thus moves away from the tendency to treat emotions as a purely micro-level phenomenon. Flam’s first focus is comprised of two elements. One is on the particular emotions and feeling rules which social movements construct to accomplish the emotional re-framing of reality, with the other being on the structural preconditions leading to individual emotional liberation. Her second focus is on emotions as a causal factor. Here she concentrates firstly on movement emotions towards opponents and then on movement emotions and feeling rules in order to persuasively demonstrate that these have significant structural and action consequences.

For Ron Eyerman emotion is an essential component of movement emergence, maintenance and, where it is lacking, decline. It is what puts the ‘move’ in movement. As with several other authors in this volume he proposes that to best analyze a social movement it is necessary to focus on the emerging movement, its opponent(s) and its public. His special purchase on these three is found in performance theory. Through performance theory, Eyerman links cognitive framing, narration and discourse to the practice of mobilization through emotion. Using the perspective of performance to examine the practice of demonstrations, Eyerman is able to highlight the corporeality of movement emotions and the place of the body in the emotional reframing of values and meaning. As he states, ‘it turns our attention to the performance of opposition and the aesthetics of movement, to the very choreography of protest, as well as to the moral and emotional in mobilization’. More specifically Eyerman argues that protest events involve ritual practices, symbolic gestures and shared experiences of empowering, collective effervescence which affect the move from

framed emotion to action and from individual to collective, narrative identity. In attempting to move their publics and opponents, movements rely on contentious gatherings and communication. When they stage their public self-presentation, they frame their struggle not only in a cognitive-narrative manner, but also become involved in the emotional, symbolic and dramatic ‘performance of opposition’ – opposition which is always performed in public spaces, often chosen precisely for their emotion-evoking symbolism.

Eyerman’s discussion of the emotional dimensions of ‘movement choreography’, combined with Flam’s insights into the work on emotion through which social movements encourage people’s disengagement from dominant society, sets the scene for the following chapters. Each of the subsequent chapters, however, provides its own perspective on the study of emotions and social movements.

### *Social movements against states, state policies and markets*

The next section is comprised of four chapters devoted to social movements which oppose the state, its policies or the market. Three of these chapters draw attention to an aspect of social movement research which has received much too little attention: the interaction between social movements and their onlookers. Taking a different approach is a chapter that analyzes a conflict between two movements about a government policy.

In an extraordinary display of patience, dignity, resilience and defiance, a group of Women in Black perform a monthly vigil on a roundabout in Haifa, Israel. The aim of their vigil is to link the effects of militarism and patriarchy through protesting against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. In so doing these women stage a spectacle that generates strong feelings in the public. Tova Benski’s focus is on these feelings. She interprets the vigils as ‘breaching events’, a concept derived from Garfinkel’s micro-level experiments demonstrating the importance of routines for the smooth operation of everyday social life and anchored in Durkheimian discussions of the social bases of social solidarity. A ‘breaching event’ is defined as an act of defiance that is performed in public which is composed of real and/or symbolic violations of accepted social practices, definitions and nominations of reality. Such an event necessarily invites negative emotional responses from the by-standing public. These responses express the anxiety, frustration and outrage that members of a society feel when their taken-for-granted cultural and political definitions of reality are violated. Benski analyzes five visual elements of the ‘breaching event’ – the location, the women’s clothing, the signs held, the women’s bodies and the time of the event. She shows that each element conveys a specific breaching message and provokes a specific set of reactions. They pose a strong challenge to the accepted gendered social order, the hegemonic definitions of



the current phase of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and frames of the discourse over security issues in Israel.

In the next chapter, Guobin Yang uses a dramaturgical lens to analyze the 1989 Chinese student movement. He argues that in order to fully understand the dynamics and processes of collective action it is necessary to take account of 'critical emotional events' constructed in and by a movement. He focuses on three critical emotional events: the Xinhuaamen incident which was sparked by the death of a sympathetic (and therefore demoted) party leader in which mourning students become drawn into a violent confrontation with the police, and in a spiral of anger and shame with the party leaders; the successful demonstration in Beijing which was accompanied by massive, enthusiastic and warmhearted citizen support; and, finally, the tragic hunger strike which evoked a general outpouring of sympathy and compassion, transforming the course of collective action and thereby affecting the future. These events brought movement activists, opponents and the public together in intensely emotional encounters in symbolic places. To understand how 'critical emotional events' transform the dynamics of collective action, Yang develops a dramaturgical approach that takes account of the emotional structures – both emotional schemas and immediately relevant context-specific emotions – of social movements. The dramaturgical perspective Yang proposes explores dramatic techniques or strategies of protest, the comportment of opponents, public responses, place and temporality. It provides a framework which brings together identities, interactions, rituals and emotions in a coherent manner.

Culture jamming is a form of symbolic contentious politics, directed at a capitalist, commercialized, undemocratic society within which we – without ever being consulted – are constantly inundated with visual messages that reinforce consumer capitalism. Åsa Wettergren's chapter on the 'Adbusters Media Foundation' (AMF) is innovative in focusing on visuals as a means of mobilization. The AMF is a significant culture jamming organization, founded in 1989 with the aim of subverting corporate logos and advertisements, and mobilizing a 'culture jammers movement'. Wettergren analyzes AMF's discourses, spoof-ads and uncommercials – which subvert the commercial messages conveyed by, for example, Benetton, Smirnoff and Calvin Klein – to reflect upon how culture jammers attempt to mobilize the public. She pays particular attention to the emotional processes involved in this mobilization. She shows how through the use of irony and moments of surprise, the visuals are intended to evoke emotions of pleasure, guilt, shame, anger and fear in the viewers. Wettergren argues that although the intended function of these visuals is to produce a dislocating shock and critical reflection in the viewer there is a risk that, since the necessary cognitive framing is left up to the spectator, the anger and disgust that are meant to be directed at specific products in particular and consumer culture in general, will instead be directed at the AMF, thus alienating potential adherents rather than mobilizing them.

Debra Hopkins and her co-authors depict two social movements – the Disability and the Feminist Movements – involved simultaneously in a conflict with each other and the British state about the concept of care. For several decades the Disabled People's Movement (DPM) in Britain has been campaigning against the professional and welfare discourses which construct disabled people as passive, helpless and pitiable, thus depriving them of a sense of dignity and pride. DPM revolted against the emotionalized, demeaning notions of the dependent needy and the heroic, self-sacrificing caregivers, and sought to institute the language of rights and interest. It aimed to extricate disabled people from the disempowering discourse of care by arguing for the removal of emotion from the care relationship through the development of direct payments for 'personal assistance'. In 1997 this battle was won. Feminists, in contrast, have placed value on care in human relationships, while expressing concern that carers, or 'personal assistants', often women who provide nurturing and caring services to uphold their gender identity, are being manipulated and exploited. Feminists argue that stripped of the reciprocity and the emotional components of care, such as devotion or trust, the care relationship may thus exist as merely a low paid economic commodity. They believe that removing the emotional component from care is misguided and perilous. The value of this chapter is not only to highlight the salient points of a movement controversy about a particular government policy and the stages of transition towards 'emancipatory care' which grants the disabled the right to (co-)define the feeling rules, but also to shed light on how movement discourses work towards both the cognitive-normative and the emotional (re-)framing of reality.

### *Movement consolidation: re-charging emotional batteries*

Activists sense particularly strongly the tension between being embedded in the emotional culture of a particular social movement, being pressed upon by the values and emotions of broader society and developing one's own cognitive-normative and emotional frame. This often results in the need for activists to recharge their emotional batteries. They do so in a variety of ways. As Erika Summers-Effler demonstrates in her chapter dealing with a Catholic worker community in a large American city, *laughter* helps to release built up tension and downplay shame-evoking distinctions of status among movement members and those they want to help, while solidarity-ascertaining *rituals* help them to go on. Or, alternatively, activists may decide to become involved in one of many sensitivity-training and consciousness-raising *practices* on offer. Re-evaluation Counseling (also called co-counseling) is one such practice. As Debra King points out it allows Australian activists to sustain their hope for and participation in social change, while providing an opportunity to construct new ways of thinking and feeling which improve their capacity to

co-operate with others. At the other end of the spectrum, Silke Roth's research on an American women's caucus deals with friendship and quitting and is presented in greater detail in the next section. Suffice to say here that it shows how important friendly, supportive and informative *networks* are for career-making within the male-dominated American union movement. Her analysis, which demonstrates the limits of these networks, adds a much needed sobering dose of reality which counter-balances an over-idealized view of activism-sustaining activities and bonds.

Both Debra King and Erika Summers-Effler highlight the difficulties of being engaged in intense movement activities questioning the dominant norms and relations at every possible level. As Debra King puts it, activists occupy the space between integration and de-integration, between the established and the questioned, and are thus subject to dissonance at both emotional and cognitive level. As Erika Summer-Effler points out, day-by-day activists are confronted with limited resources, conflicts, stress, ridicule and their own inconsistencies, while acting under pressure to sustain their solidarity with other activists and the groups they aim to serve. While King examines the emotion work involved in the process through which activists become capable of producing, and not simply reproducing, their subject positions, Summers-Effler investigates the value of rituals and laughter for sustaining hope and solidarity.

These chapters show that activism is not the result of a single, individual decision, but rather constitutes a long-term commitment which, however, is difficult to sustain without external support. This support can come from within the movement, or it can be accessed outside the movement, taking the form of a revitalizing practice, network, organization or event. It is an interesting research question why, as these chapters suggest, only some movements are capable of providing internal activism-sustaining activities; and whether it makes any difference for the consolidation of the movement if it relies on internal or external activism-sustaining practices. Finally the three chapters suggest that sustained activism is not a matter of a single moment of cognitive, normative and emotional liberation, but instead is best understood as a process which entails a series of choices about further – reinvigorating and commitment-deepening – involvements.

King's observation is that while Touraine provides a useful framework for examining this process through his concept of subjectivation – through which the Subject becomes social movement – his disregard of the emotions limits its relevance to social movement theory. In addressing this limitation, King relies on Hochschild's concept of emotional dissonance to explain the activists' need to engage in practices of emotional reflexivity to construct themselves as Subjects. Her empirical reference is to Australian activists relying on one type of organization that explicitly advocates such practices. King analyzes the kinds of emotion work activists engage in to achieve the level of reflexivity that enables them to align their ideals and

actions. In critically engaging with Hochschild's concept of emotional labor, her research demonstrates that emotional reflexivity goes beyond the management of emotions. It also requires that activists reflexively engage *with* their emotions to disintegrate from hegemonic emotional and cognitive norms. Emotional reflexivity is therefore central to the process of subjectivation. It provides a means for activists to sustain hope and participation in social change; to re-examine those areas where there are discrepancies between their politics and their emotional attachment to dominant discourses; and for constructing new feeling rules that enable them to engage flexibly and creatively with other activists, their social movement organization and with the dominant discourses within which they operate. Emotional reflexivity therefore constitutes a key to sustained activism and thus to the continuation of social movements.

Erika Summers-Effler's starting point is that the field of social movements has acknowledged the significance of emotion for understanding social movement dynamics but, until this point, the emphasis has primarily been on the social construction of emotion rather than the impact of the structure of interaction on emotion. The two perspectives need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, a combination of the structure of interaction and social construction of emotion makes for a powerful theory of emotions in social movements. Summers-Effler shows that Catholic workers live in voluntary poverty in impoverished neighborhoods, sharing their home and other possessions with their neighbors, and that while voluntary material vulnerability allows these activists to bridge differences in social positions and create solidarity with people in their neighborhood, ritual and laughter are central to generating and maintaining solidarity within their community. In analyzing these aspects of the activists' lives, Summers-Effler focuses on the impact of the structure of interaction on emotion. Furthermore, she argues that only by highlighting both cultural and structural conditions can we understand how the structure of interaction and available interpretive frames create opportunities for bonding emotional experience.

### *Movement demise: quitting*

The research on social movements still emphasizes the emergence and consolidation of social movements. To redress this imbalance, the last point on our research agenda is the much under-explored issue of movement demise. It is crucial to find out what sort of emotions lead to member withdrawal and movement demise for in understanding the disengagement we also gain insight into the grounds for engagement and consolidation. The contributions on re-charging emotional energies suggest that if the movement activists do not find some re-charging opportunities, at some point they may succumb to burnout, well-known from organizational sociology. Hirschman (1982) suggested that disappointment with enthusiastic engagement in any form of politics sets in when the load of personal

labor and the duration of engagement over time keeps increasing without any visible positive effects. It is ultimately the failure to see that one's actions are effective, despite all efforts that have been made, that makes one disengage. An alternative, widespread interpretation suggests that when a movement's goals are achieved, its members leave, although this again is dependent on specific outcome-framing. As Kleres also informs us, several small and scattered studies suggest that the changing membership structures of social movements can explain movement demise.

Positing an alternative to these individualistic, goal-focused approaches, Jochen Kleres examines the impact of the reunification of Germany on the Saxon chapter of the Gay Association of Germany, today the core national gay and lesbian organization which was originally founded in the East. In particular, he analyzes the emotional consequences of the intra-movement distribution of power. He attributes demobilization within this organization to Westernization in the wake of the reunification of Germany in 1989 and organizational expansion to the West. It was through this process that Western activists, who had joined the organization in 1990, managed to seize increasing influence within it. He shows why, when newcomers take over the control of an older, but expanded organization, the old-timers may decide to withdraw rather than fight for their due share of resources and power. His compelling argument emphasizes the role that shame plays in preventing the old-timers from asserting themselves in relationship to the power-usurping newcomers whom they, at first, uncritically admire and respect. His study supports the view that the distribution of resources and power has to be equitable in order to produce emotions which keep an organization going. In contrast to Polletta (2002), Kleres shows that those excluded from power and mutual affective regard do not necessarily respond in an assertive way – instead they just abandon the movement which proves itself incapable of providing them with emotional nourishment and a legitimate share of power. Kleres constructs a convincing argument about how the emotion of shame exercises a decisive causal power. He shows that we have to grasp emotions in their historicity because their intensity, and thus their motivational strength, depends on the substance of interactions which develop over time in a changing macro-context.

The problem of finding ways of integrating new and old members into an organization was also highlighted by Silke Roth, who focused on the role of friendship. Although some feminists have argued that bureaucratic organizations are anti-feminist per se because women prefer a less rationalized emotion culture, Roth's research suggests that friendship can play an important role even in a bureaucratic women's organization. In examining the Coalition of Labor Women (CLUW), Roth found that membership in CLUW made it possible to meet women from other unions and develop friendships. Most members joined it because they felt isolated in a male-dominated labor movement. Emotional support, exchange of knowledge and expertise, as well as network connections were intertwined. Women

who developed friendships within CLUW, were part of support networks, and held leadership positions at the local, regional, and national level, tended to stay in the organization. At the same time their participation in CLUW helped them move up the union ranks and to influence the agenda of labor unions. As Roth shows, however, existing friendships and informality also had pronounced negative effects. They presented an obstacle to integrating new members and satisfying members who turned into ‘pressed-for-time’ union leaders. As with Polletta (2002), Roth shows that friendships and informality may alienate not only their new but also their old, albeit efficiency-oriented, members. However, in contrast to Polletta (2002) and more like Hirschman (1970) Roth shows that, even if dissatisfied with their organization, these members do not necessarily quit. Loyalty to ‘their’ organization keeps them within its boundary. Roth argues, finally, that CLUW’s long-term beneficiaries achieved a lot, but did so at the expense of the excluded, non-unionized women and internal democracy. CLUW constituted a case of exclusionary solidarity in more than just one sense.

## Two key themes

There are two specific themes to which we would like to draw special attention of the reader. In our view, research on social movements focuses too much on the movement mobilization per se and too little on the reactions of the public to this mobilization. One of our particular interests in this volume is in the role that emotions play in movement mobilization directed at a public, and in public reactions to this mobilization. By amplifying some of the contributions, we want to give additional weight to this, as yet, little explored research area. The second research theme concerns emotions in transnational movements. In part because some of these movements constitute a very new phenomenon and in part because research on these movements has only just begun, we have not been able to include any contributions which address this theme. By reviewing some recent attempts to tackle the issue of emotions in the transnational movements in this introduction, we want to stress its importance and show the direction in which current research is moving.

## *Movements’ work on onlookers’ emotions*

Several essays in this volume are united in their concern with movements’ work on onlookers’ emotions. Social movements often wish to affect and mobilize by-standers whom they hope to entice over to their side. Some movements work on the emotions of the public, even when they ‘only’ provide commentary on the ‘dry’ statistics, and even when they are not aware of it. The very fact that the scientific material is usually meant to alarm, shock or warn of impending dangers implies that it has *emotion-evoking* potential. Such material might aim to move the public to sense fear

and shock and, possibly, distrust other information provided by business or the authorities. Other movements, like the adbusting movement Åsa Wettergren analyzes in this volume, may specialize in creating emotion-evoking images, giving a slight twist to reality. They may, for example, employ extremely shocking pictures of cancer or war victims, tortured animals, abused children or dead forests to evoke a gut-level movement-supporting response. Social movements as an aggregate employ a wide range of media to evoke specific emotions in their public and possibly persuade people to join. Some seek to give an emotional twist, others an emotional u-turn to reality. Finally, while some work mainly with cultural artefacts others, such as those analyzed by Benski and Yang in this volume, put their own bodies and minds on display in the service of protest.

The protest movements which Tova Benski, Åsa Wettergren and Guobin Yang portray in this volume stage events which question central symbols, societal institutions and interaction modes. These events differ profoundly in their emotional substance. While the Adbusters hope to provoke shocked amusement, sadness or shame, Women in Black – whether they want to or not – provoke frustration, anxiety and anger. In contrast to both, the protesting Chinese students are met with an outpouring of sympathy, compassion and respect. In one respect, however, the three contributions agree: social movements wish to shock the onlookers out of their everyday routine compliance or indifference, cynicism and resignation. They all offer a radically different *emotional (re-)framing* of reality.

One research question that can be raised is whether this emotional (re-)framing of reality is effective. The Adbusters wish to cause laughter or sad reflection to force their on-lookers to engage with their ironic viewpoint. They hope for a gestalt switch (frame transformation), but we do not really know what they achieve. Wettergren suspects that cynicism rather than outrage may be the result. Benski does not tell us what intentions Women in Black pursue by staging their infuriating, unbearable ‘breaching events’ which generate extremely strong feelings in the public. However, the outraged, defensive reactions to these events suggest that they presumably fail to provoke a gestalt switch. The protesting Chinese students of 1989 create ‘critical emotional events’, put on a tragic, heroic drama far removed from the resignation and boredom of everyday life, yet it still falls well within the mainstream of the Chinese history and culture. They hope for and indeed achieve both a gestalt switch and a deep emotional engagement of the public on their side. Although we need much more research of this type to reach any reliable conclusions, these three examples suggest that neither ironic nor ‘breaching protest events’ achieve their purpose, while the ‘critical emotional events’ do.

It is interesting to recall Yang’s (2000) earlier text to work out the contrast between successful but differing – dramaturgical and satirical – protest forms. The protesting Chinese students made their bodies the carrier of revolution against the intransigent power-holders, the most dra-