



## Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements

### Current Issue

Goodwin, Jeff, Jasper, James M., and Polletta, Francesca (Eds)

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While the earliest studies in social movements privileged emotions and irrationality, the later studies privileged logic and rationality. This book suggests both are important facets for study if one wants to fully understand social movements. Emotions matter in social movements. Logic matters in social movements. The argument is not about privileging rationality or irrationality, but about recognizing that social movements involve both, which is an innovative twist from past research. This argument is convincingly laid out in the introduction and reinforced in each chapter of the book. While the title suggests a privileging of emotions, the text actually provides a balanced view.

The book is organized into four parts: theoretical perspectives, cultural contexts, recruitment and internal dynamics, and the emotions of conflict. While drawing broadly from the cultural approach, Part I (Chapters 1-4) offers a rethinking of four diverse theoretical frameworks: critical mass, balance theory, the structural approach, and organizational theory. Each of these chapters attempts to re-place where emotions fit within a theoretical framework. These chapters provide a strong theoretical ground for the rest of the book.

Part II (Chapters 5-7) offers three cultural contexts to explore: fascist Italy, the abolitionist movement in America, and the Christian Right. Because all cultural analysis work, excluding purely theoretical argument pieces, must be grounded in a cultural context, this particular segmenting of the text seems forced. Also, the chapter on the Christian Right seems to miss how important it is when doing cultural analysis to understand behavior and emotions as one would understand it from within the community. From a liberal perspective, this chapter makes a lot of sense, but cultural analysis is not about a liberal perspective; it is about a particular culture's perspective.

Part III (Chapters 8-12) focuses on recruitment and the internal dynamics of AIDS activism, the U.S. Central America peace movement, the Solidarity movement in Poland, charitable organizations, and the animal rights movement. This section of the book is strong, in part, because the authors effectively situate each movement in its history and culture. Participant observation played a role in many of these studies, which may explain the depth with which these authors were able to access interesting information on how emotions and rational thinking influence social movements.

Part IV (chapters 13-16) highlights the emotions of conflict by looking at the movement against child sexual abuse, the Irish land movement, insurgency in El Salvador, and the Civil Rights movements in the U.S. and East Germany. This section, which explores the management of emotions or how social movements use emotions both intentionally and unintentionally, is probably the most interesting section of the text because it offers the most concrete view of the rational use of emotions and the unintentional (and therefore, not

rationality thought out) use of emotions.

The diversity of movements explored greatly strengthens this book. By including a wide range of social movements, the editors are able to forcefully make the point that logic and emotions are both significant forces in all social movements and should, therefore, be equally attended to in research.

This edited volume of essays, like most edited books of this sort does not flow neatly and cleanly from chapter to chapter. The writing styles change with each chapter, and the focus or emphasis is more strongly or weakly linked to the thesis of the book depending upon the chapter. However, the editors impressively overcame the limitations with their attention to focus--the writing styles are more similar than in most edited books, each chapter does connect with the thesis, and the introduction and conclusion chapters tie the book neatly together. This is a useful book for students of social movements.

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