

# Creating Emotional Resonance: Interpersonal Emotion Work and Motivational Framing in a Transgender Community

DOUGLAS SCHROCK, *Florida State University*

DAPHNE HOLDEN, *Florida State University*

LORI REID, *Florida State University*

*In this article, we examine how interpersonal emotion work in a transgender support group and motivational framing of transgender social movement organizations together constructed favorable conditions for emotional resonance. We define emotional resonance as the emotional harmony and/or disjuncture between collective action frames and the emotional lives of potential recruits. Data derive from fieldwork, interviews, online e-mail lists and forums, community publications, activist speeches, and social movement organizations' recruitment appeals. Transgendered people joined support groups hoping to find relief from shame, fear, powerlessness, alienation, and inauthenticity. Although group members' emotion work partly accomplished such relief, it was hindered by identity conflicts and the temporal bounds of the meetings. Transgender activists and nascent social movement organizations, however, used motivational framing to promise targeted recruits a more permanent emotional resolution—one which could draw them into the movement. Our analysis moves transgender scholarship beyond issues of identity and moves framing theory beyond an almost exclusive concern with cognitive processes.*

When the first author conducted research on a predominately white middle-class transgender (TG) support group during the early 1990s, group members talked about suicide more often than TG politics. Most of the transsexuals, who hoped surgery could bring their bodies into conformity with their true selves, and most of the male crossdressers, who occasionally dressed as women to express their feminine side, were primarily concerned with self and social acceptance. Images of transgendered serial killers and vaudevillian women regularly flashed across the silver screen, and support group members understood that coming out often meant being cut off from family, friends, work, health insurance, and basic civil rights. Like many transgendered people, they felt a debilitating blend of shame, alienation, fear, powerlessness, and inauthenticity. Even if political opportunities abounded, such feelings could stifle activism (Gecas 2000). Emotional pain took priority over social change.

However, during the past decade, a nascent middle-class transgender movement found its voice and made strides toward "trans liberation" (Feinberg 1998). Transgender activists fought for inclusion in gay and lesbian regional and national marches, student organizations, and parent support groups, as well as the National Organization for Women and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (Gamson 1997). Transgender social movement organizations,

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such as It's Time, America!, the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, and Gender-PAC, lobbied local, state, and federal politicians for inclusion in anti-discrimination and hate crimes legislation. The Transexual Menace, the New York-based Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries, and various direct action groups protested or intervened in the annual meetings of psychiatrists, medical professionals, and sociologists (including a SSSP 1996 paper session), in order to educate and influence professional discourse. The International Foundation for Gender Education and the American Educational Gender Information Service relayed trans-positive information to media outlets, health care providers, employers, and families and friends of TG people. In addition to reformist and cultural politics, radical transgenderists—echoing Judith Lorber (2000)—called for the elimination of gender categories (see Roen 2001).

In this article, we examine a key aspect of emotional mobilization that fueled the development and expansion of the primarily white, middle-class TG movement. Whereas mobilization refers to the “marshaling for action of people, funds, and/or other material and symbolic resources” (Schmitt and Martin 1999:368), emotional mobilization refers to processes through which feelings are suppressed, evoked, and used in multiple contexts so as to foster and/or support activism. More specifically, we show how interpersonal emotion work in TG support groups and the motivational framing of TG social movement organizations (SMOs) together constructed favorable conditions for what we call emotional resonance. By emotional resonance, we refer to the emotional harmony and/or tension between collective action frames (Snow et al. 1986) and the emotional lives of potential recruits.

Drawing on complementary interactionist and constructionist perspectives on emotions (see Thoits 1989), we show how TG support groups used therapeutic discourse to offer partial relief from noxious emotions, while nascent SMOs used a politicized discourse of injustice (Gamson 1992) to promise transgendered people a more permanent solution to emotional troubles. More generally, this article moves transgender scholarship beyond issues of personal identity (Gagne and Tewksbury 1998; Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997; Garfinkel 1967; Mason-Schrock 1996) and moves framing scholarship beyond an almost exclusive focus on cognitive processes. In conclusion, we argue that emotional resonance is a useful “sensitizing concept” (Blumer 1969:149) for understanding mobilization across diverse social movements.

### **Social Movement Framing and Emotions**

Drawing on Erving Goffman (1974), the framing perspective views SMOs as signifying agents that define the relationship between themselves and antagonists, as well as larger events, in ways that can inspire outsiders to join and insiders to remain committed to the cause (Snow et al. 1986). The effectiveness of social movement framing largely depends on how much it resonates with potential recruits (Snow and Benford 1988). Theory and research on frame resonance (see Snow and Benford [2000:619–622] for a review) focus almost exclusively on cognitive aspects, such as the congruency between frames and knowledge of real world events, between collective action frames and cultural narratives and myths, between the values embedded in frames and the minds of recruits, as well as the framers' credibility (but see Berbrier 1998). David Snow and Robert Benford's (2000) notion of “experiential commensurability” (p. 621), which refers to the congruency of frames with targeted recruits' everyday experiences, moves us closer to understanding emotional dynamics. But related research emphasizes attitudes (Heitlinger 1996), beliefs (Allen 2000), identities (Haydu 1999), and economic circumstances (Babb 1996) to the neglect of emotional experience.

In this article we develop the notion of “emotional resonance” to better understand the role of emotions in frame resonance. We define emotional resonance as the *link* between targeted recruits' emotional lives and the emotional messages encoded in SMO framing. As

Michelle Wolkomir (2001) shows in her analysis of recruitment and commitment in gay and ex-gay Christian support groups, the groups' promises to minimize undesired emotions (shame) and maximize desired emotions (authenticity) motivated newcomers to pursue changing their own beliefs to fit with the groups' framings. Although not situated in the framing literature, Wolkomir's analysis suggests that emotional promises that resonate with the emotional desires of potential recruits can overpower cognitive *incongruity* between targeted recruits' beliefs and SMOs' frames. Wolkomir's research also suggests that understanding the construction of emotional resonance depends on comparing the emotional needs of potential recruits with the emotional promises contained in SMO framing.

Understanding the emotional lives of potential recruits requires not only talking with them, but also investigating how facilitative contexts—environments that “provide fertile soil for movement mobilization” (Snow and Oliver 1995:575)—shape their emotions. Social movement scholars have recently examined this process in two basic ways. One strand of research examines how the redefinition of personal or collective identity fosters emotional mobilization (Britt and Heise 2000; Gould 2001, 2002; Stein 2001; Taylor 1996, 2000; Taylor and Rupp 2002; Whittier 2000). Verta Taylor (2000), for example, shows that the “collective redefinition of self” in women's postpartum support groups “allows women to trade guilt and depression for pride in having survived their ordeals and for anger directed at those who perpetrate the gendered model of motherhood” (p. 291). A second strand emphasizes how discourse and narrative emotionally prime a population for protest (Fine 2002; Kane 2001; Polletta 2002; Young 2001). In the early 1800s, for example, revival preachers discursively erased the split between personal sin and public sin (i.e., government misdeeds), and seminary instructors altered the adage “the human condition was slavery to sin” to mean “slavery was sin” (Young 2001). Altering religious discourse led white Christians to equate their own salvation with the emancipation of slaves, which evoked an unprecedented emotional urgency to end slavery.

The above studies show how leaders in facilitative contexts use discourse and identity as resources to emotionally prime members for social movement recruitment, which points to the importance of “interpersonal emotion work” (Cahill and Eggleston 1994; Francis 1994), the *interactional* process of shaping the emotions of self and others. Drawing on interactionist and constructionist perspectives, we view emotions as both subjective states and cultural labels, which influence each other and depend on “definitions of the situation, emotion vocabularies, and emotional beliefs, which vary across time and location” (Thoits 1989:319). As subjective states, feelings are a source of motivation and agency (Gecas 1991) and thus part of all social life, including social movements. Interpersonal emotion work in facilitative contexts can thus aid or hinder mobilization through its shaping of agency.

Being emotionally primed in facilitative contexts is often not enough to motivate participation in or support of social movement organizations. People must come into contact with and be hooked by SMO framing. Of particular importance here is what Snow and Benford (1988) call “motivational framing,” which is a “call to arms” that provides incentives for participation. Although motivational framing “would seem to have a great deal to do with emotions [because] it is apparently what gets people actually to do something” (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2000:6), the relatively scant empirical research (Benford 1993; Shemtov 1999) and theoretical discussion (Snow and Benford 1988, 2000) of motivational framing downplay emotions. Because there is not much precedent in examining the emotional elements of framing, as Benford (1997) notes, how might one go about doing this? We believe a fruitful approach, because framing is primarily discursive (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Steinberg 1999), involves drawing on what emotion scholars call emotional discourse.

As social constructionists (Gordon 1989; Lutz 1988) point out, people experience, talk, and think about emotions within a humanly created, culturally and historically situated discourse. Emotional discourse prescribes a folk theory about the causes of certain emotions, the appropriateness of emotional expressions, as well as how and when to act on one's emotions

(Gordon 1989). People and institutions can strategically employ this folk theory or culturally dominant emotional discourse to shape others' emotions for specific ends. As Donileen Loseke (1993) points out, all discursive claims imply and construct "preferred emotional orientations and responses" (p. 207). Naming something an injustice, for example, simultaneously instructs others that anger is appropriate and social change is necessary. Similarly, David Altheide (2002) shows that corporate news outlets use a discourse of fear to frame their stories, which promotes the growth of law enforcement and punishment industries. Drawing on this approach, we examine how activists' motivational framing similarly uses the larger emotional culture to promote and/or promise feelings designed to resonate with the emotional lives of targeted recruits.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data analyzed for this study speak directly to the issue of constructing the conditions for emotional resonance. In terms of examining interpersonal emotion work in facilitative contexts, the first author observed eight (of a possible twelve) monthly transgender support group meetings in a mid-sized southeastern city from the summer of 1993 to the fall of 1994. A sympathetic lesbian therapist and a heterosexual male crossdresser co-led the local group, although regular members defined discussion topics and often led discussions. Although support groups may have political consequences (Taylor 1996), TG group members did not see themselves as activists, the group was not connected to early TG SMOs, and they used a therapeutic rather than a politicized discourse. The group was less structured than twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous (c.f. Denzin 1987)—there were few official rules and members were not interested in suppressing behavior—but they similarly used ritualized introductions and talked about their emotional struggles.

The first author did not crossdress at the meetings, but being a white, middle-class, college-educated born male helped generate rapport, because most members shared these characteristics. There was only one born female transsexual at the meetings who attended intermittently and then stopped coming because she said the meetings were geared toward male crossdressers and male-to-female transsexuals. The meetings lasted about three hours and drew an average of fifteen crossdressers and preoperative transsexuals. During the two-hour drive home, the first author recorded the evening's happenings on a tape recorder, which aided the writing of full fieldnotes. When writing fieldnotes, he incorporated and reflected on his own feelings during the meetings (see Kleinman and Copp 1993), which helped generate hypotheses about the setting's emotional dynamics. The first author also attended a support group-sponsored Christmas party and a hockey game with one transsexual woman.

While observing only one white, middle-class support group in one particular region of the United States precludes generalizing about the entire TG community, the local group was structurally similar to the majority of TG support groups operating in the early 1990s. Of the 139 U.S. transgender groups listed in a 1993 directory published in the TG magazine *Tapestry*, 128 were advertised primarily as support groups for transsexuals and/or crossdressers, as opposed to social clubs (6) or groups only for significant others (5). Furthermore, similar to the local group, a majority of the groups (80) were for *both* transsexuals and crossdressers, although sizable minorities were exclusively for crossdressers (48) or transsexuals (19). About ten advertised support groups sent the first author basic information and newsletters that indicated that, like the local group, they focused on helping people with emotional difficulties, coming out to others, and learning to pass.

We also learned about the emotional lives of some of the members of the local support group through in-depth interviews. The first author conducted and transcribed life course interviews with 10 transsexuals, which lasted between 2 and 3½ hours. The interviews were designed to elicit stories about coming to terms with transsexuality, which uncovered

interviewees' emotional struggles. Although crossdressers were not interviewed, fieldwork, community publications, and Internet data provided a window into their experiences.

The first author collected data from two Internet newsgroups, an e-mail list, and a "real time" support group on America Online that were explicitly for crossdressers and transsexuals. Sometimes he took notes off the screen, but more often he downloaded and/or printed this material. We also used data from community publications, primarily articles and advertisements in *Tapestry*. Similar to face-to-face support groups, community publications and Internet data emphasized coping with emotionally difficult situations. Like the local group, Internet data as well as *Tapestry* spoke of and for a white middle-class audience. Taking into account their race and class helps us more fully understand how TG SMOs' use of certain collective action frames resonated with potential recruits' emotional needs.

Examining the construction of emotional resonance requires understanding not only the emotional lives of recruits, but also the emotional messages in SMO framing. We gathered data on early 1990s framing in three primary ways. First, we used articles in *Tapestry* about TG SMOs, protests, and transgender rights, which were usually written by activists; we also used reprinted activist speeches. Second, we collected statements from or about TG SMOs that were distributed through e-mail lists and the America Online support group. Third, the first author received flyers, articles, and calls for action from about a half dozen SMOs that were advertised and/or written about in *Tapestry*.

Analyzing many sources of data maximized the validity of our findings through "triangulation" (see Fielding and Fielding 1986). Our goal was not to generalize the entire TG population, but to generalize about the process of constructing emotional resonance. To accomplish this, we drew on the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Martin and Turner 1986). More specifically, the three authors went through the data asking the generic question, "What does this exchange or text have to do with emotion?" We then proceeded inductively, comparing and contrasting our answers to the aforementioned question and searching for patterns. This led us to see the importance of interpersonal emotion work in support groups and the emotional messages encoded in SMO framing. Rather than seeing these two processes as distinct, we asked how they were related. By comparing our answers to this question with existing framing theory and research, our focus on emotional resonance slowly crystallized.

## **Constructing Emotional Resonance**

We first analyze how talk among local support group members and discourse in Internet forums were variably successful in shaping three sets of emotions: (1) solidarity and authenticity; (2) self-esteem and self-efficacy; and (3) fear and anger. After examining this interpersonal emotion work, we turn to consider how TG SMOs' motivational framing promised potential recruits enticing emotional experiences. In doing so, we pay close attention to how SMO discourse created conditions ripe for emotional resonance.

### ***Interpersonal Emotion Work in Facilitative Contexts***

Middle-class crossdressers and transsexuals joined support groups largely to seek relief from inauthenticity, loneliness, shame, powerlessness, and fear. Newcomers to the local group did not express an interest in activism, but participating in support groups primed them for the SMOs' motivational framing in two basic ways. First, the interpersonal emotion work lifted their spirits enough so that group members did not have to focus all of their energy on their emotional difficulties, which would have made mobilization unlikely (see Gecas 2000). Second, the limited effectiveness of this interpersonal emotion work left transgendered people with unmet emotional needs, which SMOs could promise to resolve.

*Solidarity and Authenticity.* Crossdressers and transsexuals said that before they became involved in the community, they felt “isolated,” “alone,” and “like I was the only one doing this.” Because they hid their crossdressing to avoid stigmatization (Goffman 1963), they often felt inauthentic in their relations with others, and hence estranged. In support group and online interactions, however, people collectively tried to transform these debilitating emotions into solidarity and authenticity. But largely due to a conflict between crossdressers and transsexuals, such interpersonal emotion work was continually undermined.

In the support group and the online community, newcomers found increased possibilities for authenticity and connectedness. Newcomers viewed such emotional relief through a therapeutic lens that imbues everyone with a “true self” (Turner 1976). The support group offered members a chance to excavate and validate a true self that differed from their born sex category. The following excerpt from a crossdresser’s first post to an Internet news group was typical of support group newcomers’ joy at finding connection:

Subject: Weeeeeeeee!

just couldn’t resist sharing my \*elation\* at having found you! i stumbled across the group by accident during lunch today and my heart skipped, then skipped again. and again. i’ve been a t-something as long as i can recall, but never had much hope of meeting anyone else. it’s so \*good\* to see you all out there.

Interviewees often described attending their first support group meeting as an emotional turning point. Sandra’s story was similar in its emotional content to others’ accounts:

I told [the support group] my story. I was honest with myself and with the people in the room, and it was very cleansing. I felt really good. . . . I was amazed, it was like I broke through a shell; an underground society that had before been out of reach. And all of a sudden there I was in touch with it. It was right in front of me. It’s almost like I had come home.

Interacting with other differently-gendered people allowed newcomers to feel like they were born into a new kind of family where it was safe to be themselves.

During the local support group meetings, members interactively produced feelings of authenticity and togetherness through “supportive interchanges” that “affirm and support the social relationship” (Goffman 1971:63). For example, each meeting began with participants describing themselves as a crossdresser or transsexual, which evoked variations of “Welcome” or “Good to see you” from others. Such affirmations of each other’s identity claims promoted feelings of authenticity. These introduction rituals also encouraged solidarity by expressing “the symbolic separation from the outside world” (Schwalbe 1996:97). A group leader generally closed the rituals by reminding members that their words would remain confidential. Constructing such a sense of secrecy furthered cohesion (see Fine and Holyfield 1996).

Besides introduction rituals, members collectively fostered solidarity and authenticity by creating and telling self-narratives through which members portrayed themselves as always having been transgendered (Mason-Schrock 1996). For example, newcomers learned how to tell authenticating stories by modeling and being guided by seasoned group members. Such interactional exchanges led newcomers to adopt stories that defined gender-transgressive behavior—such as born males performing poorly at sports—as well as stories of gender conformity (interpreted as denial)—such as born males doing well at sports—as proof of their differently-gendered true selves.

Support group members also exchanged stories about their relations with psychiatrists and therapists in ways that fostered authenticity. A common narrative theme involved discrediting professionals who did not take them seriously or believed they could “cure” them. Members also told more positive stories about psychiatrists and therapists who diagnosed them with transsexualism and wrote letters saying they were ready to live life as the “opposite” sex (both of which are required for sex reassignment surgery in the United States). Stories about both “good” and “bad” mental health professionals thus promoted authenticity

because both confirmed the tellers' identities. The interactive *sharing* of such storytelling promoted feelings of togetherness.

In a contradictory fashion, group members' use of psychiatric discourse threatened authenticity. The psychiatrists' labeling guide, the DSM-III-R (APA 1987), defined transsexualism and crossdressing as pathology, which implied that their true selves were only a manifestation of mental disorder—albeit one that might be cured through surgery. Local group members ignored the implication, however, partly because many had found sympathetic psychiatrists and also because the diagnosis legitimated their claims for surgery. But by not challenging the medical definition, they had to live with the stigma: if they were “authentically” transgendered (i.e., as designated by professionals), they had a mental disorder.

Support group members could not easily ignore those who were sitting next to them, however. Members' use of therapeutic discourse, due to its emphasis on authenticity, fueled a conflict between transsexuals and crossdressers that threatened both solidarity and authenticity. For transsexuals, being authentic meant recognizing and bringing into existence a true self that was of the “opposite sex” to which they were assigned at birth. In contrast, crossdressers' true selves were bifurcated—they believed they had both a “male” and “female” self. Because most transsexuals in the group had previously labeled themselves crossdressers, their sense of authenticity depended on defining their “crossdressing period” as denial, which suggested that the crossdressers could be in denial of their true transsexuality. On the other hand, crossdressers reminded transsexuals that there was another option for enjoying the feminine—one that did not require the difficulty of coming out to relatives, friends, employers, or surgery. What solidified the authenticity of one group's identity thus threatened the other group's authenticity.

The conflict was most apparent when crossdressers decided to define themselves as transsexuals. For example, Dana introduced herself as a “crossdresser” at one meeting, “just myself” at the next, and as a “transsexual” who was “struggling to get through denial” at the next. Transsexuals offered her “congratulations,” but crossdressers were unenthusiastic. Besides withholding congratulations, crossdressers did not join transsexuals in the semi-circle around Dana after the meeting.

If Dana was in denial about being a transsexual, could crossdressers be sure they were *authentic* crossdressers? Such a question would have been difficult to answer because there was no subcultural discourse enabling people to (1) deny being in denial, or (2) specify the difference between a mislabeled crossdresser who was really a transsexual underneath and an authentic crossdresser. Ignoring these issues in support group meetings, online forums, and community publications simplified identity switching, but at the cost of continual risk to each groups' feelings of authenticity.

One strategy of managing this risk involved maintaining exclusionary social events, which hindered solidarity. After Dana came out as transsexual, for example, other transsexuals began inviting her to gatherings (potlucks, movie nights, etc.) that excluded crossdressers. Dana also stopped going to a pizza parlor with crossdressers after the monthly meetings. Although co-leaders of the group invited everyone, transsexuals usually declined, making the event in effect “crossdresser only.” Such exclusionary events and social networking helped protect crossdressers' and transsexuals' feelings of authenticity at the expense of solidarity.

Transsexuals' discomfort with crossdressers was also revealed in interviews. For example, some transsexuals said crossdressers, unlike themselves, were “just playing games” and only interested in “going out and having fun,” such as “driving around in the middle of the night” crossdressed. Some interviewees dreamt of transsexual-only support groups:

My ideal group would be nothing but transsexuals—no crossdressers, no transvestites, no players—just real transsexuals. We could get together and somebody could say, “This is the problem that I have” and someone else could say, “This is what I did to fix it.”

In the larger transgender community, middle-class crossdressers had many support groups that excluded transsexuals (Tri-Ess, The Society for the Second Self, had about 40 U.S. chapters). Pam, a transsexual from the local group who had defined herself as a crossdresser when she was president of a Tri-Ess chapter, explained this policy of exclusion in an interview:

I was a very strong advocate of the Tri-Ess policy [of] no transsexuals and the reason was because it was a family organization and you can't have transsexuals there because the wives just can't handle it. If Suzy Q over there says I'm a transsexual and proud of it at a Tri-Ess meeting, the wife looks over to Becky, her husband, and says, "Is this phase two coming up over here? . . . The TS element . . . is very disconcerting.

While minimizing significant others' fears and protecting crossdressers' authenticity, exclusionary groups such as Tri-Ess weakened solidarity in the larger community.

Overall, interpersonal emotion work in the local support group enabled transgendered people to feel more authentic and less isolated than before they had found the community. At the same time, however, crossdressers' and transsexuals' oppositional self-definitions and exclusionary practices limited togetherness. Interpersonal emotion work thus boosted authenticity and solidarity in some ways while undermining it in others.

*Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy.* Local group members often said that feelings of shame and powerlessness led them to seek help for depression. Most interviewees revealed that they had thought about or attempted suicide. One interviewee died sober in a one-person car accident that group members believed was a successful attempt. Such low levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy were not only personally debilitating, but also obviously hindered collective action. Interpersonal emotion work in support groups allowed participants to mitigate feelings of shame by rhetorically distancing themselves from stigmatized others while associating themselves with Christians. By feeling better about themselves, participants started to feel more control over their own lives, and the support group was there to give them tips on coming out, passing, and dealing with government bureaucracies and employers—mitigating feelings of powerlessness. But as we will show, redrawing moral boundaries by distancing themselves from "perverts" and feeling more powerful through adapting ultimately left transgendered people vulnerable.

At his first support group meeting, the first author said his interest in transgendered issues began when, as an undergraduate student, he was part of a research team that interviewed male, female, and transgendered prostitutes in San Francisco. The research team, he explained, also attended a banquet for a crossdressing group, a female impersonation contest, and a sado-masochism (SM) club. The support group members asked him about the SM group and seemed uninterested in the crossdressers and transsexuals he had encountered. When he told them about whips, chains, and the goings on at the SM club, many members appeared aghast. Support group members' emphasis on the "abnormality" of the SM folks helped them mitigate shame by distancing themselves from a group commonly defined as "perverse." They did not express any interest in transgendered prostitutes, a group with which these middle-class professionals felt little political affiliation.

In addition to defining sexual minority groups as morally inferior (i.e., "othering" [Holden 1997]), support group members mitigated shame by collectively avoiding discussions of sexuality. Although most interviewees revealed that they had crossdressed for erotic purposes, no one brought this up during support group meetings or in community publications. The local group promoted a non-sexual atmosphere by screening out those interested in sexual thrills. During the first author's initial phone conversation with the group's co-leader, she explained that the group was for people who crossdressed for "purer reasons" than sexual arousal. Similarly, *Tapestry's* guidelines for contributions stated: "Sexually oriented, fantastic, or negative material is unacceptable." Sex talk could have given further ammunition to those who would stigmatize transgendered people as "perverts." However, distancing themselves

from sexual minorities hindered forming coalitions with the larger sexual civil rights movement and with transsexual prostitutes.

Community members also used the emotion work strategy of discursively affiliating themselves with “moral people,” especially Christians. Such rhetoric was appealing because transgendered people had been targeted by the Christian Right. Furthermore, because the local group was located in the Bible Belt, emphasizing Christianity was an especially useful shame-reducing tool. In the local group, members often inserted phrases like “God is on my side” or “God made me this way” when telling stories.

Online data and literature from other support groups suggest that invoking religious authority to mitigate shame was common during the early 1990s. In the following excerpt, participants of an America Online support group meeting collectively subverted religious parents’ rejection by claiming that transgendered people were a product of holiness.

Jenny: GOD does not want you to change!!

Sue: the RELIGIOUS barrier. Tell them GOD made you that way. He/she does not make mistakes.

Jenny: You are your only judge.

Marzie: God made you the way he wanted you to be! Externally, of course, that is... :(

Ruth: GOD NEVER MAKES MISTAKES . . . including you!

Revising religious discourse was a particularly effective emotion work strategy (see Thumma 1991). According to a much-circulated Internet article, the Biblical passage, “Women are not to wear men’s clothing, and men are not to wear women’s clothing; the Lord your God hates people who do such things” (Deuteronomy 22:5) could be rendered ineffectual by pointing out that the same chapter said that people must put railings around the edge of roofs, that people should not wear clothing made of both wool and linen, and that people must sew tassels on the corners of their clothing. The implication was that these were silly old rules that should not be taken seriously today—including the admonition against crossdressing.

Transgendered individuals could not completely discount all of the sacred texts and still maintain the identity “Christian,” so they drew a distinction between the Old and New Testaments. The author of the Deuteronomy critique said that the New Testament emphasizes faith in Jesus Christ as the key to salvation, quoting Galatians 3:11:28: “So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women: You are all one in union with Christ Jesus.” If there were no difference between men and women, explained the author, there is no religious basis upon which to condemn transgendered people.

As participants were able to feel better about themselves in support groups, they began to take steps to feel more control over their lives. For participants, having control meant learning to pass and go out in public as their chosen gender. Support groups and community publications devoted much attention to perfecting born males’ public presentations as women. Local group members frequently discussed and watched videos about learning to change one’s voice, gestures, and appearance so as to increase the likelihood of passing. Sometimes cosmetics representatives conducted makeovers and sales during meetings. Because the born males did not extensively experiment and learn how to do gender like most adolescent girls do, they described such knowledge as empowering.

For everyone except one participant, attending the support group enabled them to go out in public for the first time. Terry’s account was typical:

I couldn’t imagine walking out in public in front of people [before attending the support group]. I may have gotten dressed and hopped in my car and driven somewhere. But I wouldn’t have even gone through a drive-through at Hardee’s.

By providing practice space, focused group discussions, and practical advice on embodying womanhood, the support group enabled members to generate feelings of self-efficacy.

Support group interactions furthermore created a sense of moral acceptance, which in addition to minimizing shame, increased feelings of empowerment. As Suzanne Retzinger (1991) explains: "In shame the self feels helpless, not in control; the reaction in a shame experience is to hide" (p. 41). As support group members got help and support from each other, and collaborated in creating a moral identity, they felt empowered to walk out of the closet into public life.

When overwhelmed by emotional pain, people have difficulty finding the energy to fight for justice. Support group members' interpersonal emotion work helped mitigate feelings of shame and powerlessness, which created the emotional conditions under which political struggle was possible. By trying to assimilate as religious, sexual, and gendered "normals," however, participants left intact the power of moral entrepreneurs who continued to stigmatize them. And by focusing on passing in public, participants did not challenge the power of those who would harass, assault, and discriminate against them for publicly living out their chosen identities. Transgendered people thus remained vulnerable to feelings of shame and powerlessness, which could be triggered by those who police rigid gender norms through labeling transsexuals as deviant or harassing them in public.

*Fear and Anger.* When the first author went to a hockey game with a born male in a dress, he felt a bit of the fear that transgendered people face daily, especially when five drunken soldiers sat in front of them. When the soldiers accidentally spilled beer in their direction and apologized, he became even more scared due to the attention. Support groups offered members temporary relief from such fear, but in ways that squelched anger. Within therapeutic discourse, the feelings, not the social conditions from which they arose, were defined as the problem.

During support group meetings, members often shared stories of being harassed by men. Such "horror stories" (Fine 1995) or personal "moral shocks" (Jasper 1998) had the potential to make participants fearful of mistreatment and angry with those upholding rigid gender norms. But in the support group, members used gender ideology and humor to cool out fear and anger, rather than stoke it for mobilization. For example, during one meeting, Wendy described being followed in the mall by a group of teenage boys calling out: "That's a dude in a dress." She said she had never felt so worried about her safety. Support group members responded by saying the boys were "stupid kids trying to be macho." Such variations on the "boys will be boys" excuse may have slightly mitigated fear, but they also preempted righteous anger.

Besides using gender ideology to excuse harassment, group members preempted anger through joking. For example, Chelsea foreshadowed the ending of one her stories by saying that she used to wear "falsies" made out of plastic bags filled with liquid soap, which sometimes became gassy. She said that one evening in a packed bar her falsies emitted "fart-like sounds," which she felt undermined her femininity. "This drunk man came straight up to me and said, 'Can I play with your titties?'" Pulling a falsie out from her blouse and handing it to the man, she responded, "Sure, play with it all you want." Group members erupted in laughter and avoided discussing harassment seriously.

Group members also framed physical harassment within a joke format. For example, Joyce told the group a story about going to a "straight bar" and confronting a man who "wouldn't take no for an answer." Hoping he would leave her alone, she told him, "I'm a heterosexual male in a dress and I'm not interested in you," which evoked scattered laughter from group members. The man responded with, "You're not a man in a dress. What do you have underneath that skirt?" Joyce said that in an attempt to prove his point, the man "reached into my skirt and grabbed my thing." Joyce then landed a right hook that knocked him across the room. Everyone at the support group meeting laughed at this story, but no one talked about sexual harassment or even gender politics.

It makes sense that support group members wanted to cool out and/or preempt anger with humor. Similar to flight attendants who want to see obnoxious passengers as unruly children (Hochschild 1983), they felt powerless to change others' actions and worked on not letting it bother them. However, while joking about and excusing harassment mitigated some degree of fear and anger (as well as fostered a sense of togetherness), it set the standard by which such stories were discussed. Unlike stories of coming out, fighting depression, and learning to do gender differently, stories of harassment were not treated seriously, nor did they emphasize the victim's subjectivity. In contrast, during one-on-one interviews, transsexuals keyed stories of harassment more seriously and their fears and sometimes anger became evident. Outside of the monthly meetings, their fears could not be easily ignored or cooled out with humor.

At the end of every support group meeting, it became clear to the first author that the meetings offered participants a temporary and thus ultimately unsatisfying emotional boost. When meetings ended, members stacked their plastic chairs along the back wall and wandered toward the exit—where they stalled. Many stood silently. Others chatted in small groups. They usually held their ground for about thirty minutes. It was as if they were trying to hang on to the feelings evoked in the meeting room. Finally, a group leader would prod them into leaving by saying, "Okay, let's go. Everybody out. See you next month." Walking out the door was an uncomfortable reentry into a hostile world in which they would again hide their true selves or risk harassment, violence, and stigmatization.

### *Motivational Framing*

The interpersonal emotion work in the local support group and online forums created the conditions for mobilization by mitigating overpowering feelings of shame, alienation, worthlessness, powerlessness, and fear. But their reliance on therapeutic discourse, their identity conflicts, and the temporary nature of support groups undermined a more complete emotional transformation. Both the success and failure of this emotion work, however, were resources for SMOs. SMOs' motivational framing promised to meet their emotional needs, which created the conditions for emotional resonance. More specifically, we show how SMOs promised potential recruits solidarity and authenticity by constructing a collective identity; promoted pride and self-efficacy by encouraging TG people to stand up for their rights; and validated and stoked TG people's anger at harassers and discriminators.

*Solidarity and Authenticity.* Whereas support groups emphasized authenticity as a central problem, SMOs emphasized oppression. SMO discourse generally portrayed transsexuals and crossdressers as similarly oppressed, ignoring differences between them. This erasure of difference implicitly promised two emotional rewards for SMO participation: (1) the neutralization of threats to authenticity, and (2) the creation of feelings of togetherness.

Newly formed SMOs that sought to represent both middle-class crossdressers and middle-class transsexuals needed a collective identity (Melucci 1989) to refer to both groups. For a short period of time, they used the phrase "gender community," but, as one interviewee explained, the "gender community" was vague and hid its true membership. SMOs gradually dropped the "ist" from "transgenderist"—a term Virginia Prince (1979) used to describe living full-time as a woman with a penis—and the "transgender community" was rhetorically born.

Many support groups, including the local group, followed suit and redefined themselves as transgender support groups. By the mid-1990s the collective identity transgender was so accepted that the dominant community publication, *Tapestry*, changed its name to *Transgender Tapestry*. Importantly, because transgender was a community-grown identity, it subverted the emphasis of medicalized terms transsexual and transvestite on pathology—reducing a threat to authenticity and self-worth. The TG community could embrace "transgender" without having to distance themselves from having a mental disorder.

However, although widely adopted and commonly used, the term “transgender” remains controversial within the transgender/transsexual community. Some transsexuals disassociate themselves from the new collective identity, because of the original meaning of *transgenderist* and a desire to maintain a distinct political identity based on shared experiences (Namaste 2000). Furthermore, as Katrine Roen (2001) suggests, many TG activists are contemptuous of transsexuals who choose to “pass,” and exclude their experiences and concerns. The collective identity transgender thus had contradictory effects—it enabled many to feel connected to a larger network of similar others and to feel less stigmatized as pathological, but it also redrew political boundaries in a way that excluded those who wanted to retain the distinct identity and political concerns of transsexuals who wanted to pass as women or men.

The following excerpt from a speech given by TG activist and attorney Phillis Randolph Frye (1993) at the 1993 March on Washington for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Rights and Liberation illustrates how transgender activists “deployed” (Bernstein 1997) their new collective identity within a discourse of injustice.

Listen Up! I have something to tell you! Why is it that the first March and the second March and this third March does not have Transgendered in the name of the March? You see, pitting lesbians, gays and bisexuals against the transgendered is another of the bigots’ ploys. It’s called division. Many in the lesbian, gay and bisexual community resent being stereotyped as *crossdressing effeminate*s just because the bigots, the dividers, have successfully cast such with a pejorative label. Others in the transgender community resent being stereotyped as *homosexual/bisexual* simply because the bigots, the dividers have successfully cast such with another pejorative label. In order for us to resist the bigots’ ploy . . . we must embrace each other’s labels with pride. We must unite. We must go into Congress and into the State Houses speaking for lesbian and gay AND TRANSGENDER—AND TRANSGENDER—say it—AND TRANSGENDER—and transgender rights. We must seek legal language that protects us on the basis of both sexual orientation and GENDER IDENTIFICATION. (Pp. 44–5)

The excerpt shows how activists used motivational framing to deploy a shared identity that glossed over divisions between crossdressers and transsexuals. Furthermore, by emphasizing common oppressors, Frye sought to “bridge” (Snow et al. 1986) the division between the transgendered and the gay/lesbian/bisexual community. Such bridging appeared successful, as The Millennium March on Washington for Equality in April 2000 was subtitled A National March for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights, and included transgender-inclusive language in its general call for action, voting initiatives, and festivities. Activists who rhetorically aligned TG people with the middle-class gay, lesbian, and bisexual movement rather than with poor, working-class, or transsexual prostitutes preserved the middle-class focus and interests of the movement (Namaste 2000), similar to how social problems claims makers often emphasize middle-class victims to generate sympathy and economic support (Loseke 1999).

As explained earlier, transgendered people’s use of psychiatric diagnoses to legitimate their identity both fostered and threatened authenticity. Many early 1990s middle-class TG activists’ solution to the emotional dilemma involved framing their relationship with mental health professionals within a discourse of *injustice*. In the following excerpt from a *Tapestry* article titled “Achieving Equality” (Masters 1993), the founder of the activist group TransEqual encouraged the community to separate itself from psychiatry.

Our problems are imposed upon us by an unaccepting society. We do not need to change, they do. . . . Perhaps the best closing comment comes from one of TransEqual’s supporting members. “Consider the absolute foolishness of claiming to have escaped oppression, when, in fact, you have spent half your life cringing in the closet and, once out, you end up asking a psychiatrist for permission to be yourself.” (P. 56)

The message was clear: if the reader wanted to avoid being foolish, s/he shouldn’t rely on the medical profession for authenticity. The idea that TG people should be able to self-diagnose

independently of medical experts was especially appealing to U.S. middle-class TG people because they could more easily afford expensive hormones and/or surgery. In contrast, working-class and poor TG people were more concerned with gaining Canadian style state-supported hormone therapy and surgery, which required psychiatric diagnoses (Namaste 2000).

Motivational framing drew on the increased feelings of authenticity and togetherness ritually generated in support groups. Because such interpersonal emotion work was not completely successful, however, motivational framing promised to alleviate threats to these desired emotions through cultural and political change. More specifically, SMO framing deployed the collective identity “transgender” to minimize the conflict between middle-class transsexuals’ and middle-class crossdressers’ personal self-definitions, which threatened both authenticity and solidarity. Activists’ framing also protected authenticity by denying that psychiatrists could better decide if they were authentically transgendered than they themselves. TG motivational framing thus helped create the conditions for emotional resonance by implicitly promising that activism could resolve emotional problems better than therapeutic work.

*Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy.* Throughout the 1990s, many transgender activists began rhetorically offering crossdressers and transsexuals feelings of pride by standing in solidarity with some other alleged deviants. Motivational framing also implicitly promoted empowerment by defining transgendered people as deserving of equal rights, in contrast to the support group tactic of perfecting their self-presentations. Activists thus drew on non-activists’ desire for self-esteem and self-efficacy in a way that emotionally steered them toward confronting regulating institutions and the larger culture.

A prominent transgendered speaker, activist, and writer, Leslie Feinberg (1996) eschewed the support group tactic of distancing transsexuals and crossdressers from “perverts”:

A timid denial that “we’re not all like that” only serves to weaken the entire fightback movement. We can never throw enough people overboard to win approval from our enemies. Should we try to argue that we’re as “normal” as those who organize against our civil rights? Forget it! I am *queer* and proud of it. (P. 98)

Feinberg’s “power cognizant” (Frankenberg 1993) discourse suggests that pride comes from fighting oppression rather than fighting to be included in oppressors’ definition of “normal.” Furthermore, by suggesting that everyone who is stigmatized as perverse or abnormal are “queer” together, Feinberg redraws the lines that once divided potential movement participants.

Activists’ motivational framing also drew on cultural discourse that defines empowerment as standing up for oneself rather than conforming or passing. Widely circulated through the Internet and the community’s print media during the early 1990s, The International Bill of Gender Rights listed basic rights all transgendered people should be entitled to, such as:

- The right to free expression of gender identity.
- The right to secure and retain employment and to receive just compensation.
- The right to control and change one’s own body.
- The right to competent and professional care.
- The right to form committed, loving relationships and enter into marital contracts.
- The right to nurture and have custody of children and exercise parental rights. (ICTLEP 1996)

Written by the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP), the bill’s uncompromising language could evoke feelings of empowerment, hope, and pride in a middle-class TG population. The bill further promised self-efficacy by promoting a doctrine of self-determination. TG people should have control of their own lives rather than be at the mercy of regulating institutions. Such motivational framing helped ICTLEP

bring hundreds of activists to Washington to lobby legislators for inclusion in anti-discrimination and hate crimes legislation (Frye 2000).

TG SMO framing created the conditions for emotional resonance largely because the support group's emphasis on passing left transgendered people emotionally vulnerable. TG people often do not easily pass and thus risk harassment, which undermines self-esteem and self-efficacy. Furthermore, minimizing shame by maligning sexual minorities did not win them many friends and revising religious discourse did not change the minds of religious zealots. But SMO framing spoke to their vulnerabilities by promising pride and self-efficacy for standing together with other middle-class minorities against unaccepting bigots and their institutions of social control.

*Fear and Anger.* Whereas interpersonal emotion work cooled out fear and anger with humor, activists' motivational framing aimed to mobilize the discontented by using the language of injustice (Gamson 1992) to change fear into righteous anger. Motivational framing sometimes worked by implying that transgendered people were in danger and needed protection. Jane Fee, a Minnesota activist who led a successful effort for transgender inclusion in the state's anti-discrimination legislation, established *It's Time, America!* in 1993. The group's first mission statement flowed through Internet lists and stated:

The goal of *It's Time, America!* is to educate and influence Congress, State and Local Governments, and other transgender and non-transgender political organizations, using direct action where necessary to safeguard and to advance the rights of transgendered people.

Bringing up the organization's aim to "safeguard" and "advance the rights" of community members reinforced the notion that trans folk were targets of discrimination. The appeal thus drew on targeted recruits' fears while implying that anger should be directed toward the state. *It's Time, America!* has become one of the more successful TG SMOs, with chapters in 26 states.

TG activists often described the scorn and ridicule they faced while protesting injustice. A *Tapestry* article about an action during the 1993 American Psychiatric Association meetings provides a particularly appropriate example. While some activists spray-painted "Transgender Liberation" and "APA Go 'Way" on the building, chanted and carried signs, and were eventually arrested, inside activists—who had reserved an information booth—handed out over 2,000 information packets. As James Green (1993), a female-to-male transsexual activist, reported, many psychiatrists scorned their efforts.

One doctor asked, "What's gender education?" We responded by explaining that the Foundation works with transvestites and transsexuals, and he replied, "Oh, I think I am well enough informed," and walked away with a smirk and without our packet. Another doctor refused my offer for information saying, "I don't believe God makes mistakes." I said to him, "Neither do I." He smiled and said, "Good!" as he walked off. (P. 35)

By portraying doctors as transphobic, Green implicitly defined anger as the appropriate response.

Motivational framing could evoke anger by narratively pegging antagonists while defining protagonists as victims. An International Foundation of Gender Education (IFGE) flyer titled "Who Needs IFGE?" proclaimed: "We are all hostage to public opinion, the prejudices of the Great American Public (GAP), the Moral Majority and the Ayatollahs of this world." Ayatollah is a reference to the leader of Iran in 1979–1980 when U.S. citizens were held hostage and thus the statement drew on a discourse of nationalism and racism that paints Arabs as terrorist hostage-takers. More specifically, by making the U.S. central in a world of racialized "others" and using the idea that America is the land of freedom, such framing could tap into white, middle-class U.S. TG's unacknowledged ethnocentrism to evoke anger while directing people to express that anger against the transphobic.

Activists also portrayed TG people as being misrepresented by self-interested outsiders. For example, an IFGE flyer solicited people to “donate your money,” work with the media, and/or do public speaking, before giving one final pitch:

[L]ike the loud-talking National Rifle Association people, we would like to be a lobby on your behalf. If not I.F.G.E., then what? A Post Office box in Chicago or California, a misinformed psychiatrist, a toad-like malpractice lawyer, a gay ex-[transvestite] from New York City, a born-again “ex-transsexual”? Who would *you* like to have speak for you? We need your support, and your guidance. Call us at . . .

Framing TG people as victims of constant misrepresentation, fueled by talk shows (Gamson 1998), IFGE evoked anger in potential recruits and presented itself as the avenue for authentic representation.

TG activists frequently invoked parallels to other civil rights struggles, especially that of African Americans, to paint the transgendered as a beleaguered minority group who would one day triumph, given enough righteous anger and activism (Namaste 2000). For example, activist Marla Aspen (1993:12) wrote in *Tapestry*: “Which restroom does a transgendered person use? Any restroom, because ‘male’ and ‘female’ signs will be no more appropriate on restroom doors than are ‘white’ and ‘colored’ signs today.” Another activist (Denny 1993) wrote, “Like other minority groups before them, [the transgendered] are devalued—and being devalued, there are no safeguards and few checks to ensure their proper treatment, or safety” (p. 43). Such SMO appeals gave support group members who felt constant fear the opportunity to feel righteous anger as a member of a minority group. While defining the struggles of TG people as parallel to those of African Americans appealed to *white* liberal TG people, such rhetoric assumed the two social movements were separate ones, erasing the presence of TG people of color who wanted activism to be *both* anti-racist and anti-transphobic (see Namaste 2000).

Activists’ discourse resonated with potential recruits’ desire to be free of fear and to feel righteous about standing up for equality. But TG individuals also wanted to minimize the emotional suffering of similar others. One interviewee explained her decision to help the TG movement as follows:

I’m not one to be real active in supporting charities. I do some, but it’s not usually a major thing. But IFGE came out recently and solicited and it just really hit me. This is a really worthwhile thing to contribute to. This makes a difference in people’s lives. And I’m happy to help make sure that effort continues and to participate in it all I can.

TG SMO framing during the early 1990s thus also appealed to TG people’s compassion for each other in order to motivate participation. The sharing of stories about coming out, harassment, depression, and inauthenticity during support group meetings helped members open their hearts to each other and primed them for this motivational framing.

Even though it was uncommon to hear members of the local support group in the early 1990s say they were involved in social change work, some recently collected data suggest a change occurred by the late 1990s. In the early 1990s, the local group put out a newsletter that announced meeting dates and occasionally contained short articles, which focused on passing and interpersonal issues. In contrast, the group published an Internet newsletter during the late 1990s that focused almost entirely on political issues, such as TG marriages, the state Pride March, city ordinances banning TG discrimination, TG inclusion in hate crimes legislation, coalition building with the gay and lesbian community, employment discrimination, and the work of TG SMOs.

The apparent adoption of an injustice frame by the local support group does not appear to be an isolated case. As a TG reviewer of this article suggested, many support groups today focus more on raising political consciousness than passing (although there may be regional differences). We recently examined web pages of TG support groups and found much supporting

anecdotal evidence: many included articles on transgender politics and links to TG SMOs; many had programs to educate community groups about TG issues; and some groups protested and/or boycotted transphobic community organizations and events. Although support groups do not appear to have abandoned therapeutic work, these data suggest that the split between TG support groups and SMOs during the early 1990s may be dissolving. More specifically, motivational framing may have resonated so fully with white middle-class community members, that some support groups have adopted the SMOs' injustice frame as well as the challenge of trans liberation.

## Discussion

Both the interpersonal emotion work in facilitative contexts and SMO activists' motivational framing constructed the conditions for emotional resonance in the early 1990s middle-class transgender community. Transgendered people joined support groups hoping to find relief from shame, fear, powerlessness, alienation, and inauthenticity. Support group members largely accomplished such relief through interaction rituals, distancing themselves from sexual minorities, affiliating themselves with Christians, learning how to pass, and joking about their fears. This interpersonal emotion work was in many ways unsuccessful, however, and hindered group members' confrontation of oppressors, largely due to the underlying identity conflict between crossdressers and transsexuals, the individualist assumptions of therapeutic discourse, the cooling out of anger, and the temporal bounds of the monthly meetings. Both the successes and failures of such interpersonal emotion work primed transgendered people for SMO motivational framing.

Transgendered activists and nascent SMOs used emotional discourse to promise transgendered people a more permanent emotional resolution, if they participated in the movement. More specifically, TG SMO activists' motivational framing promised solidarity by rhetorically deploying the collective identity transgender, authenticity by asserting independence from psychiatry, pride and self-efficacy by standing up for transgendered rights, and righteous indignation by painting oppressors as immoral. In promising emotional benefits to those who fight for transgendered rights, 1990s TG SMOs presented emotional reasons to be motivated to confront our transphobic culture and institutions. Because SMO framing spoke directly to the emotional dilemmas that were unresolved or exacerbated by the interpersonal emotion work in support groups, the emotional link between potential recruits' lives and SMO framing—the emotional resonance—could hook people into the movement.

Our analysis thus uncovers the importance of emotions in constructing frame resonance, an area which has been neglected by social movement scholars. Mitch Berbrier (1998) points social movement scholars in this direction when he suggests that frames resonate by appealing to people's "fundamental sentiments" (p. 440). We think, however, that the relatively static notion of "fundamental sentiments" glosses the processual, contingent, and social nature of emotions. Potential recruits' emotions are always in flux; their feelings depend on new and changing everyday life experiences, the development and use of variably effective interpersonal emotion work strategies in different contexts, and shifting cultural and historical conditions, including those caused by social movements themselves. Our analysis furthermore suggests that a more holistic understanding of emotional resonance requires not only an examination of the emotional messages in SMO framing, but also the emotional lives of recruits.

Examining the emotional side of frame resonance can contribute to framing theory in both complementary and counterintuitive ways. For example, framing theorists and researchers emphasize that frame resonance results from the cognitive congruity between frames and personal beliefs, between frames and cultural narratives or knowledge of events, and between frames and SMO tactics (see Snow and Benford 2000). However, as Jeff Goodwin,

James Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (2001) assert: “Cognitive agreement alone does not result in action” (p. 6). Agency flows through emotions. Examining the role of emotions can thus help us create a more authentic picture of the mobilizing potency of frame resonance.

Moreover, our findings suggest that even when frames are cognitively *incongruent* with targeted recruits’ understandings, frame resonance can be generated. Although the individualist discourse of the SMOs, the emotional promises embedded in the motivational framing resonated with the emotional desires of support group members. The recently collected evidence of an increase in power-cognizant discourse among TG support groups furthermore suggests that when there is discord between SMOs’ and targeted recruits’ constructions of reality, a high degree of emotional resonance may evoke a “frame transformation” (Snow et al. 1986) among targeted recruits. In other words, emotional resonance may fuel political consciousness-raising.

While our analysis of emotional resonance in the transgender community may appear to be unique, as a sensitizing concept (Blumer 1969), emotional resonance can shed light on past, present, and future social movements. Previous research provides a glimpse at how the conditions for emotional resonance are constructed across many movements. For example, research on the civil rights movement suggests that activist speeches were especially emotionally appealing to targeted recruits and supporters (Wasielewski 1985). The Christian Right’s efforts to mobilize people to crusade against equality for sexual minorities draws upon poor and working-class white people’s emotional troubles, especially their shame (Stein 2001). Women’s rap groups during the second wave of the women’s movement appear to have not only raised members’ consciousness, but also emotionally primed them for resistance (see, for example, Kalcik 1975). When gays and lesbians were labeled communist and frequently targeted by police in the 1950s, the Mattachine Society promised to unify homosexuals, create a culture that fostered pride, and help victims (Adam 1987:61–4). Although only systematic empirical research of these and other movements can uncover the precise role of emotional resonance, we believe that constructing emotional resonance is likely a generic social process (Prus 1996; Schwalbe et al. 2000) of social movement mobilization. That is, while future research may reveal important variations in how the process works, we believe that constructing emotional resonance can be examined across diverse social movements.

Our study also has implications for how frame resonance can both mobilize and create membership boundaries within identity-based social movements. Activists’ framing of transgendered people as a beleaguered minority group with political concerns parallel to—but not inclusive of—those of African Americans presupposed that they were white. The discursive neglect of women’s oppression and movements could lead TG feminists to search for a political community elsewhere. SMO attempts to align TG folks with the gay, lesbian, and bisexual movement could alienate heterosexual crossdressers and transsexuals. And the middle-class movement’s focus on lobbying politicians to be included in anti-discrimination legislation and fighting for freedom from psychiatric diagnosis excludes poor and working-class transsexuals whose lives could be impacted more directly by fighting police and prison abuse and forcing health clinics, shelters, and drug and alcohol treatment programs to be trans-inclusive (Namaste 2000). Such framing thus had the ironic consequence of mobilizing recruits to fight injustice in a way that had reactionary consequences: as middle-class TG activists politically aligned themselves with white middle-class gay, lesbian, and bisexual activists, they hindered solidarity with many crossdressers and transsexuals who did not share these social identities.

Our study has related implications for transgender scholarship more generally. First, scholars who research only the white, middle-class TG community need to take into account how the race and class privileges of participants shape their life experiences (c.f. Bolin 1988; Feinbloom 1976; Gagne and Tewksbury 1998; Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997; Kando 1973; Kessler and McKenna 1978; Mason-Schrock 1996). Second, scholars should

avoid claiming that research on a relatively small group of race and class privileged TG folks is generalizable to a larger “transgender community” (see also Namaste 2000). Third, our study shows that scholars should not view support groups and subcultural processes in isolation from SMO activities because each develops in relation to the other (c.f. Bolin 1988; Feinbloom 1976; Mason-Schrock 1996).

Our analysis, largely due to the nature of our data, only presents a snapshot of how the conditions for emotional resonance were created in a relatively short time period preceding a surge of mobilization. Future research might examine the subjective experiences and possibly the epiphanies of targeted recruits when they come into contact with motivational framing; unpack the negotiated process through which SMO participants construct emotional promises; conduct comparative analyses of the construction of emotional resonance in successful and failed SMOs; analyze the role of emotional resonance in frame disputes; and study how changing historical conditions and events shape both SMOs’ strategies of producing and success at generating emotional resonance.

As our suggestions for future research make clear, we do not believe that bringing emotions into social movement scholarship requires discarding our existing conceptual toolkit. In contrast, it is important to incorporate emotions into research that addresses identity, framing, tactical interaction, mobilization, political opportunities, and historical change. (See also Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001.) Emotions are part of all social life and to ignore them is to shut a window into human agency, which, underneath it all, is the primary source of social change. Our hope is that scholars will examine the relationships between our most useful sensitizing concepts, including emotions, to create more holistic and empirically-grounded representations of the patterns of activities that comprise what we call social movements.

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