

## **Of Sympathy and Play: Emotional Mobilization in Online Collective Action**

YANG Guobin

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### **Abstract**

Internet incidents are a new form of collective action. They are an integral part of the countermovement against the “great transformation” in contemporary China. This article analyzes the mobilization of internet incidents from the perspective of cultural analysis in social movement theory. It argues that the mobilization of internet incidents depends on those expressive forms and content that may produce among internet users such emotional responses as joy, laughter, anger, sadness and sympathy. The occurrence of internet incidents is thus a process of emotional mobilization. This article reveals two styles of emotional mobilization through two case studies. The incident known as “A Bloody Case Triggered by a Bun” represents a humorous style of emotional mobilization and is typical of internet incidents involving cultural issues. The other incident, known as the “Shanxi black kiln” case, represents mobilization that appeals to the sentiments of sadness and sympathy, most often seen in cases involving various types of social injustices.

**Keywords:** Internet incidents, social movement, cultural analysis, emotional mobilization