SACRIFICE FOR THE CAUSE: GROUP PROCESSES, RECRUITMENT, AND COMMITMENT IN A STUDENT SOCIAL MOVEMENT*

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Recruitment and commitment in protest movements are best explained by analyzing group-level political processes such as consciousness-raising, collective empowerment, polarization, and collective decision-making. Such processes increase protesters' political solidarity — their commitment to the cause and their belief in the non-institutional tactics that further that cause. Other frameworks, such as the rational choice and collective behavior approaches, are less adequate in accounting for recruitment and commitment. Rational choice perspectives neglect group processes by suggesting that decisions about whether to join or stay at a protest are based largely on isolated individual cost/benefit calculations. The collective behavior view that protests are spawned by confused and insecure individuals in situations of social unrest cannot be reconciled with the fact that most protests originate among close-knit groups of politically committed ac-•tivists using carefully planned strategies and tactics. These conclusions are based on a study of the 1985 Columbia University divestment protest.

E arly analyses of protest movement mobilization emphasized the irrationality of movement participation and argued that marginal, insecure people join movements because of a need for social direction. This approach has lost popularity because many movement participants are socially integrated and quite rational. A popular current approach, rational choice theory, counters by suggesting that movement participation is the result of individual cost-benefit calculations. But even the most elaborate individual incentive models cannot fully account for the manner in which group political processes influence movement participants to sacrifice individual interests in favor of a collective cause.

This article develops an alternative perspective on recruitment and commitment to protest movements; it emphasizes the importance of the development of *political solidarity*, that is, support for a group cause and its tactics. Mobilization can then be explained by analyzing how group-based political processes, such as *consciousness-raising, collective empowerment, polarization*, and *group decision-making*, induce movement participants to sacrifice their personal welfare for the group cause. Empirical support for this perspective comes from a detailed analysis of a Columbia University student movement that demanded that the university divest itself of stock in companies doing business in South Africa.

CURRENT THEORIES

One view of recruitment and commitment in protest movements has been formulated within the crowd theory and collective behavior traditions. This view emphasizes social factors, proposing that movements arise in situations of disorganized unrest associated with broad social changes (Tarde 1969; LeBon 1960; Hoffer 1951; Kornhauser 1959; Smelser 1962). Mar-

ginal, insecure, irrational people join these movements because they provide needed social direction unavailable from existing social institutions.

The most sophisticated collective behavior view, the *emergent norm* approach of Turner and Killian (1987), downplays the irrationality of movement participation, but retains as its basic proposition the idea that collective behavior arises in socially disorganized settings. They stress that confused, impulsive people without institutional routines to direct them are the most likely recruits for collective behavior and argue that many individuals participate in collective behavior because they "feel insecure about themselves and their status in society" and receive psychic benefits such as feelings of power and righteousness that are "not directly related to the goals of the collectivity" (1987, p. 32).

The major difficulty with this perspective is that the setting in which political protest movements originate is typically not characterized by confusion, insecurity, and unrest, but by careful planning by close-knit groups of politically committed activists (Morris 1984). New recruits to such movements usually join because they support the political cause and believe that only non-institutional tactics can advance that cause (Pinard 1971; Oberschall 1973; Gamson 1975; Snow, Zurcher, Ecklund-Olson 1980; Snow, Rochford, Worden, Benford 1986).

Resource mobilization views of protest movement participation reject the emphasis on unrest and irrationality and stress the similarities between institutional and non-institutional political behavior. Many resource mobilization theorists use an economic model of movement participation (Olson 1965), arguing that recruitment is accomplished by movement entrepreneurs who use divisible *selective incentives* to prevent free-riding by cost-benefit calculating individuals (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

This view overstates the similarities between institutional and non-institutional politics. Unlike those who play by the rules, protesters often face severe repression by those whose authority they challenge. A long-term commitment to a protest movement also may require disconnection from comfortable daily routines. But increased costs do not always result in decreased participation in the movement; protesters often respond to threats and repression by developing a greater willingness to ignore personal costs in favor of the collective struggle (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Hirsch 1986). Even the most

sophisticated rational choice models (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Mueller and Opp 1986) cannot account for group solidarity in movement recruitment and commitment because they focus on the individual decision to participate and neglect the group processes which influence those decisions (Ferree and Miller 1985).

IMPACT OF GROUP PROCESSES

The best way to explain recruitment and commitment in protest movements is to reject both rational choice and social disorganization views and focus instead on explaining how groups create commitment to their goals and tactics. The following discussion builds on the work of movement theorists (Gamson 1975; Schwartz 1976; Tilly 1978; Gamson, Fireman, Rytina 1982; McAdam 1982, 1986, 1988; Ferree and Miller 1985; Hirsch 1986, 1989; Rosenthal and Schwartz 1989)[1] and conflict theorists (Simmel 1955; Coser 1956, 1967; Edelman 1971; Kriesberg 1973; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, Sherif 1988) to provide an explanation of recruitment and commitment to protest movements that emphasizes how four group processes — *consciousness-raising, collective empowerment, polarization*, and *group decision-making* — create a willingness to sacrifice personal welfare for a collective cause.

Consciousness-Raising

Potential recruits are not likely to join a protest movement unless they develop an ideological commitment to the group cause and believe that only non-institutional means can further that cause. Consciousness-raising involves a group

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[1] I have elsewhere (1989) labelled this theoretical tradition "solidarity theory." Perrow (1979) calls those who emphasize the development of movement solidarity "resource mobilization I" theorists, but this term is better reserved for theories that emphasize the similarities between institutional and noninstitutional politics and are sympathetic to rational choice perspectives. Others working in this tradition have described it as "political process theory" (McAdam 1982), but until recently (McAdam 1986; 1988) this theory has generally emphasized macro movement processes and ignored micromobilization. The best approach to further theoretical development in the field of social movements is to elaborate the connections between a macro political process theory and a theory of micromobilization like the one described here.

discussion where such beliefs are created or reinforced. It may occur among members of an emerging movement who realize they face a problem of common concern that cannot be solved through routine political processes. Or it may happen in an ongoing movement, when movement activists try to convince potential recruits that their cause is just, that institutional means of influence have been unsuccessful, and that morally committed individuals must fight for the cause. Effective consciousness-raising is a difficult task because protest tactics usually challenge acknowledged authority relationships. Predisposing factors, such as prior political socialization, may make certain individuals susceptible to some appeals and unsympathetic to others.

Consciousness-raising is not likely to take place among socially marginal individuals because such isolation implies difficulty in communicating ideas to others. And it is not likely to happen among a group of rational calculators because the evaluation of society and of the chances for change is often influenced more by commitment to political or moral values than by self-interest calculations (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Ferree and Miller 1985). Consciousness-raising is facilitated in non-hierarchical, loosely structured, face-to-face settings that are isolated from persons in power; in such *havens* (Hirsch 1989), people can easily express concerns, become aware of common problems, and begin to question the legitimacy of institutions that deny them the means for resolving those problems (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Rosenthal and Schwartz 1989).

Collective Empowerment

The recruitment and commitment of participants in a protest movement may also be affected by a group process called collective empowerment. While recruits may gain a sense of the potential power of a movement in consciousness-raising sessions, the real test for the movement comes at the actual protest site where all involved see how many are willing to take the risks associated with challenging authority. If large numbers are willing to sacrifice themselves for the movement, the chances for success seem greater; a "bandwagon effect" (Hirsch 1986) convinces people to participate in this particular protest because of its presumed ability to accomplish the movement goal. Tactics are more easily viewed as powerful if they are highly visible, dramatic, and disrupt normal institutional routines.

Polarization

A third important group process is polarization. Protest challenges authority in a way that institutional tactics do not because it automatically questions the rules of the decision-making game. The use of non-routine methods of influence also means that there is always uncertainty about the target's response. For these reasons, one common result of a protest is unpredictable escalating conflict. Each side sees the battle in black and white terms, uses increasingly coercive tactics, and develops high levels of distrust and anger toward the opponent (Kriesberg 1973: 170-3).

Polarization is often seen as a problem since it convinces each side that their position is right and the opponent's is wrong; this makes compromise and negotiation less likely (Coleman 1957). Since it leads each side to develop the independent goal of harming the opponent, movement participants may lose sight of their original goal. Finally, escalation of coercive tactics by those in power can result in demobilization of the movement as individual participants assess the potential negative consequences of continued participation.

But if other group processes, such as consciousness-raising and collective empowerment, have created sufficient group identification, the protesters will respond to threats as a powerful, angry group rather than as isolated, frightened individuals. Under these circumstances, polarization can have a strong positive impact on participation (Coser 1956, 1967; Edelman 1971). The sense of crisis that develops in such conflicts strengthens participants' belief that their fate is tied to that of the group. They develop a willingness to continue to participate despite the personal risks because they believe the costs of protest should be collectively shared. Greater consensus on group goals develops because the importance of social factors in perception increases in an ambiguous conflict (Sherif et al. 1988); protesters become more likely to accept the arguments of their loved fellow activists and less likely to accept those of their hated enemy. Because of the need to act quickly in a crisis, participants also become willing to submerge their differences with respect to the group's tactical choices (Coleman 1957).

Collective Decision-Making

Finally, collective decision-making often plays an important role in motivating the continuing commitment of movement participants. Movements often have group discussions about whether to initiate, continue, or end a given protest. Committed protesters may feel bound by group decisions made during such discussions, even when those decisions are contrary to their personal preferences (Rosenthal and Schwartz 1989). Participation in a protest movement is often the result of a complex group decision-making process, and not the consequence of many isolated, rational individual decisions.

THE COLUMBIA DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGN: A CASE STUDY

The importance of these four group processes — consciousness-raising, collective empowerment, polarization, and group decision-making — in recruitment and commitment in a protest movement is illustrated by the Columbia University divestment protest. In April of 1985, several hundred Columbia University and Barnard College students sat down in front of the chained doors of the main Columbia College classroom and administrative building, Hamilton Hall, and stated that they would not leave until the university divested itself of stock in companies doing business in South Africa. Many students remained on this "blockade" for three weeks. This was a particularly good case for the analysis of movement recruitment and commitment because the majority of the participants in the protest had not been active previously in the divestment or other campus protest movements.

Protest actions of this kind can create problems for researchers because the organizers' need for secrecy often prevents the researcher from knowing of the event in advance. The best solution is to use as many diverse research methods as possible to study the movement after it has begun. I spent many hours at the protest site each day observing the activities of the protesters and their opponent, the Columbia administration. I also discussed the demonstration with participants and non-participants at the protest site, in classrooms, and other campus settings; and examined the many leaflets, position papers, and press reports on the demonstration.

During the summer of 1985, I completed 19 extended interviews, averaging one and one-half hours each, with blockaders and members of the steering committee of the Coalition for a Free South Africa (CFSA), the group that organized and led the protest. The interviews covered the protestor's political background, previous experience in politics and protest movements, her/his experiences during the three weeks of the protest, and feelings about the personal consequences of participation. All quotes are taken from transcripts of these interviews.

I also analyzed responses to a survey distributed to the dormitory mailboxes of a random sample of 300 Barnard and Columbia resident undergraduates during the third week of the protest. The 28-question survey assessed attitudes toward those on both sides of the conflict, the extent of the respondent's participation in the protest and in campus politics and social organizations, the respondent's general political values, and demographic information.

Of the 300 surveys, 181, or 60.3 percent, were returned. Given the situation on campus at the time and the fact that the semester was drawing to a close, it was difficult to increase the return rate through followup letters and questionnaires. If those who returned the questionnaires differed in a significant way from those who did not, survey results would be biased. However, it wasn't only divestment activists who returned the survey; a wide variety of opinions was expressed by respondents. Nine-tenths of respondents had not been active in the divestment movement prior to the blockade, and only about half favored divestment or felt that the blockade was justified when they first heard about it. A copy of the questionnaire and a summary of the results are available from the author upon request.

Consciousness-Raising

The Coalition for a Free South Africa (CFSA) was founded in 1981 to promote Columbia University's divestment of stock in companies doing business in South Africa. It was a loosely structured group with a predominantly black steering committee of about a dozen individuals who made decisions by consensus, and a less active circle of about fifty students who attended meetings and the group's protests and educational events. The group was non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic, and had few resources other than its members' labor. The CFSA tried

to convince Columbia and Barnard students that blacks faced injustice under apartheid, that U.S. corporations with investments in South Africa profited from the low wages paid to blacks, that Columbia was an accomplice in apartheid because it invested in the stock of these companies, and that divestment would advance the anti-apartheid movement by putting economic and political pressure on the white regime of South Africa.

This consciousness-raising was done in a variety of small group settings, including dormitory rap sessions, forums, and teach-ins. Coverage of the CFSA's activities in the Columbia student newspaper and television reports on the violent repression of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa increased student consciousness of apartheid and encouraged many students to support divestment.

Even in this early period, conflict between the CFSA and the Columbia administration affected the views of potential movement recruits. At first, the CFSA tried to achieve divestment by using traditional avenues of influence. In 1983, the organization was able to gain a unanimous vote for divestment by administration, faculty, and student representatives in the University Senate, but Columbia's Board of Trustees rejected the resolution. As one protester pointed out, that action was interpreted by many students as an indication that traditional means of influence could not achieve divestment:

I remember in '83 when the Senate voted to divest. I was convinced that students had voiced their opinion and had been able to convince the minority of administrators that what they wanted was a moral thing. It hadn't been a bunch of radical youths taking buildings and burning things down, to destroy. But rather, going through the system, and it seemed to me that for the first time in a really long time the system was going to work. And then I found out that it hadn't worked, and that just reaffirmed my feelings about how the system at Columbia really did work.

The result of CFSA's extensive organizing work was that many students were aware of the oppressed state of blacks in South Africa, the call for divestment by anti-apartheid activists, and the intransigence of the university President and Trustees in the face of a unanimous vote for divestment by the representative democratic body at the university.

Collective Empowerment: The Initiation of the Blockade

In the next phase of the movement, the CFSA sponsored rallies and vigils to call attention to the intransigence of the Trustees. Few students attended these demonstrations, probably because few supporters believed they would result in divestment. Deciding that more militant tactics were necessary, the CFSA steering committee began to plan a fast by steering committee members and a takeover of a campus building. The plan called for chaining shut the doors of the building and blocking the entrance with protesters; this, it was assumed, would lead to a symbolic arrest of a few dozen steering committee members and other hard-core supporters of divestment. The intent was to draw media coverage to dramatize the continuing fight for divestment.

Because they had worked hard on publicity, the steering committee of CFSA expected a large turnout for their initial rally, but fewer than 200 students gathered at the Sundial in the center of campus on the morning of April 4. Speeches were made by a local political official, a representative of the African National Congress, several black South African students, and members of the CFSA steering committee. Many of those interviewed had been at the rally, but none felt that the speeches were any more or less inspiring than speeches they had heard at previous CFSA events.

At the conclusion of the speeches, nearly all of those present agreed to follow one of the CFSA steering committee members on a march around campus. Most expected to chant a few anti-apartheid and pro-divestment slogans and return to the Sundial for a short wrap-up speech. Instead, they were led to the steps in front of the already-chained doors at Hamilton Hall. The protesters did not understand at first why they had been led to this spot, and few noticed the chained doors.

The steering committee member then revealed the day's plan, stating that this group of protesters would not leave the steps until the university divested itself of stock in companies doing business in South Africa. At least 150 students remained where they were; no one recalls a significant number of defections. Within two hours, the group on the steps grew to over 250.

Why did so many students agree to participate in this militant protest? The CFSA steering committee did not have an answer. Student

participation in their relatively safe rallies and vigils had been minimal, so they certainly did not expect hundreds to join a much riskier act of civil disobedience. According to one steering committee member:

> Needless to say, I was quite startled by the events of April 4. By noon, there must have been hundreds more people than I expected there would be. I was hoping for 50 people, including the hard core. We would all get carted off, and whatever obstacles were blockading the door would be cut, removed, or thrown up. That's what everyone was expecting. We would have a story written and the press would report that we had done this. Jesus Christ, what happened that day was absolutely mind boggling! I still haven't gotten over it.

It was hard for anyone to predict the high level of mobilization based on the prior actions and attitudes of the participants because so few had been active in the divestment movement prior to April 4. Only 9 percent of the random sample of students reported that they had been at least somewhat active in the divestment movement, yet 37 percent participated in blockade rallies and/or slept overnight on the steps of Hamilton Hall. In fact, these students did not know that they would join this militant protest until it was actually initiated.

It is unlikely that the decision to participate was due to a narrow individual cost/benefit analysis including such costs as the time involved and the definite possibilities of arrest and/or disciplinary action by the university. Regarding personal benefits, it is hard to see how any Columbia student could gain from the divestment of South Africa-related stock.

Rather, participation was due to a belief in the cause and the conviction that this protest might work where previous CFSA actions had failed. Consciousness-raising had convinced these students of the importance of divestment, but they had not participated in the movement because they did not believe its tactics would work. Once several hundred were in front of the doors, many demonstrators felt that such a large group using a dramatic tactic would have the power to call attention to the evils of apartheid and cause the university to seriously consider divestment:

> Often when I would see a rally, I'd think that here was a bunch of people huffing and puffing about an issue who are going to be ignored and things are going to go on just as they were before this rally. The fact that there were a couple of hundred people out there with the purpose of altering the way the University does business gave me the feeling that this would be noticed, that people would pay attention.

The belief in the potential power of the tactic was reinforced by the willingness of several leaders of the movement to sacrifice their individual interests to achieve divestment. Two black South African students who spoke at the rally faced the possibility of exile or arrest and imprisonment upon their return home. About half a dozen CFSA steering committee members had fasted for nearly two weeks simply to get a meeting with the university President and Trustees; two of these students were eventually hospitalized. As one blockader testified:

> The fasters were doing something that personally took a lot of willpower for them, and that gave you a little extra willpower. To have to go into the hospital because you were off food for fifteen days, and the Trustees won't even speak to you. It really made me angry at the Trustees, so I was determined that this was not something that was just going to wimper off. At least I was going to be there, and I know others felt the same way.

The leaders of the protest recruited participants by taking personal risks that demonstrated their own commitment to the cause and to this particular tactic; other students in the blockade ignored individual interests in favor of the cause as well.

> I do think it has something to do with the support of peers, just seeing that there were people who were willing to extend themselves and put their own asses on the line. I guess it's the self-sacrifice aspect of it that appealed to me, that really drew my attention. These people were willing to sacrifice their own personal interests in a big way, or a larger way than usual. That's something that hit a chord with me. It was the degree to which people were willing to give up self-interest.

Another factor influencing participation may have been the fact that the protesters were not forced to decide to join the protest at all. Instead, they were led as a group to a position in front of the doors, unaware that this was an act of civil disobedience; the only decision to be made was whether or not to leave the protest. Although this was done because CFSA did not want to reveal its plans to campus security prematurely, the unintended consequence was to maximize participation; it was difficult for demonstrators to leave the steps because of the public example of self-sacrificing black South Africans and the fasters.

Of course, each protester had many less public opportunities to leave the protest during the three weeks after April 4th. Most stayed, partly because of growing evidence of the power of this tactic. The protest soon gained the public support of a variety of groups locally and nationally, including Harlem community groups and churches, the Columbia faculty, unions on and off the campus, the African National Congress, and the United Nations. Students on other campuses engaged in similar protests. This support made the blockaders believe that their challenge to the authority of the Columbia administration was moral, necessary, and powerful. One blockader described this as being "part of something that was much larger than myself." Another suggested:

> One thing I believe now is that people in a grassroots movement can actually have an impact, that we're not all completely helpless. I guess it was that sense of power that I didn't have before.

Polarization and Increased Commitment

Because the blockade was an unconventional attempt to gain political influence, the steering committee of CFSA was unable to predict how many would participate. For the same reason, they were unable to predict their opponent's reaction to their tactic. Based on the information they had on recent South African consulate and embassy protests, they assumed they would be arrested soon after the doors of Hamilton Hall were chained. As these expectations of a mostly symbolic arrest were communicated to the less politically experienced blockaders, a consensus developed that the blockade would be short-lived.

However, the administration did not order the arrest of the protesters. Instead, Columbia's President sent a letter to everyone at the university arguing that the students were "disruptive" and "coercive," and that they were trying to impose their will on the rest of the university. He suggested that "countless avenues of free speech" in the university community were open to them and that what they were doing was illegal, that divestment would probably hurt rather than help blacks in South Africa, and that the university was doing all it could to fight apartheid.

University officials began to videotape the protesters in order to prosecute them under university regulations on obstructing university buildings and disrupting university functions. They sent letters threatening suspension or expulsion to the members of the CFSA steering committee and a few others. Guarantees were given that those who reported for individual disciplinary hearings would be treated more leniently than those who did not. They also obtained a court order calling on participants in the blockade to cease and desist.

By threatening suspensions and expulsions, the administration had raised the stakes; the protesters felt much more threatened by these academic penalties than by symbolic arrests. There were other costs associated with participating in this protest, including dealing with the cold and freezing rain; missing classes, exams, and study time; and losing close relationships with non-blockaders. Ignoring these costs, the steering committee members who received letters refused to go to the disciplinary hearings, suggested that the administration was engaging in unfair selective prosecution, and reiterated their determination to remain in front of Hamilton Hall until the university divested.

Such actions were to be expected from the strongly committed CFSA steering committee. The surprise was that the less experienced majority of protesters also refused to be intimidated and remained on the blockade. They did so in part because of an example of self-sacrifice by one of their own. One of the politically inexperienced students, a senior with three weeks to go before graduation, received a letter threatening him with expulsion. Initially, he was scared:

> I was petrified, especially since Columbia has not been fun for me but rather painful. I really wanted to get out of here, and I was horrified by the thought that I would either have to come back to Columbia or go somewhere else and lose credits by transferring. My reaction was, "Why do they have to pick me? Why do I have to be the focal point of this whole thing?"

But he decided not to report for disciplinary action. He felt that he could not give in to his fears in the face of the sacrifices being made by the fasters and South African students.

> Listening to the commitment on the part of the steering committee people who had received letters made me feel bad that I even considered leaving the blockade. One other factor was the fasters, the fact that there were South Africans involved in it, and that these people had more on the line than I did. I felt like I could not let these people down. I also felt that I was a sort of representative of a lot of people on the blockade and I felt I could not set a precedent by leaving and backing down.

His example was extremely important for the maintenance of commitment by the other inexperienced blockaders:

> They threatened (the blockader) with expulsion. It was sobering in a way. But it helped bond us together. It was stupid to do that because it just made people more furious, and it made people more resolved to stay. We just said we're not going to let him be expelled. We're all going to stick together in this.

The protesters responded as a group to administration threats, not as isolated individuals. Individual concerns about disciplinary actions were now secondary; each blockader saw her or his welfare as tied to the group fate. Paradoxically, the potential for high personal costs became a reason for participation; protesters wanted to be part of an important and powerful movement and they did not want fellow activists to face the wrath of the authorities alone. The night the threat of arrest was assumed to be greatest, Easter Sunday, was also the one night out of twenty-one with the greatest number sleeping out on the blockade. Soon after this, 500 students signed a statement accepting personal responsibility for the blockade.

Collective Decision-Making and the End of the Blockade

Another group process which influenced participation in this protest was collective decision-making. Open-ended rap sessions among the blockaders, lasting up to four or five hours, were begun after administration representatives delivered the first disciplinary letters to the protesters. In all cases, a serious attempt was made to reach consensus among all those on the steps; votes were held on only a few occasions. One of the main questions was whether to continue the protest. This discussion was initiated by members of the CFSA steering committee because of their commitment to democratic decision-making, and because they understood that the blockaders would be more likely to continue the protest if they participated in a collective decision to do so. During the first two weeks of the protest, the consensus was to continue the blockade.

By the third week, though, some of the protesters began to feel that the protest should be ended. The sense of crisis had been dulled by the lack of action by the administration to back up their threats. It was now clear that there were no plans to call in the police to make arrests. As one

blockader put it, the "university's policy of waiting it out was becoming effective." Also, an event can be news for only so long, and the image of Columbia students sitting on some steps became commonplace. Diminishing television and print coverage reduced the collective belief in the power of this particular tactic. As one protester suggested:

> It was during the third week that I started spending nights at home and coming up in the morning. During the last week I probably spent three nights out [on the steps] and four nights at home. During that third week a kind of mood of lethargy hit, and it became a chorelike atmosphere. There was a lot of feeling that it was kind of futile to stay out there.

In the face of declining participation, long and heated discussions were held about ending the protest. Proponents of continuing the action argued that protesters ought to honor their commitment to stay in front of the doors until Columbia divested. Those who advocated ending the protest argued that divestment was not imminent and that the blockade was no longer effective. As one protester put it:

> The blockade ended because a very thoughtful and carefully planned decision was made. It was a question of what we could do that would be most effective for divestment. We decided that the blockade had done a lot, but at this point other things would be better, seeing how the administration was willing to sit us out.

On the 25th of April, the blockade officially ended with a march into Harlem to a rally at a Baptist Church. Five months later, the Columbia Trustees divested.

SURVEY RESULTS

Participant observation of the protest as well as extended interviews with the protesters revealed that certain group processes — consciousness-raising, collective empowerment, polarization, and group decision-making — influenced recruitment to and motivated continuing participation in the blockade. Findings from the survey support this conclusion.[2]

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[2] A single cross-sectional survey cannot assess the importance of group processes. If one finds a political attitude to be highly correlated with participation in the blockade, how does one know whether the attitude caused participation or participation caused the attitude? This demonstrates the need for the qualitative methods of participant observation and extended interviews. Analysts should do baseline sur-

Table 1. Regression Between Level of Participation in the Blockade and Selected Independent Variables: Columbia University, 1985

Independent Variables	b	Beta
Conservative- liberal scale	.25	.32**
Support for divestment X effectiveness of blockade	.09	.24**
Personal expense caused by blockade justified?	.10	.15*
Opinion of university President declined	.18	.13*
Divestment will influence South African government?	.17	.14*
Extent of prior participation in divestment movement	.32	.09
Membership in campus political action organization	.09	.04
Number of campus organization memberships	-.01	-.01
First-year student	.05	.02
No religious affiliation	-.08	-.03
Constant	-.17	----

$*p < .05$ $**p < .01$

Note: $R^2 = .59$; N = 176.

One question on the survey asked the respondent to report on his or her level of involvement in the protest. Responses indicated that 18 percent completely avoided the demonstration, 44 percent stopped by out of curiosity, 20 percent participated in the rallies supporting the blockade or frequently joined the demonstration during the daytime, and 17 percent spent at least one night sleeping on the steps.

Table 1 shows a multiple regression analysis with responses to the participation question as the dependent variable and a variety of possible correlates of participation as independent variables. The resulting equation explains 59 percent of the variance in participation. The single most important predictor is being politically liberal or radical, indicating that general ideological predisposition, not just commitment to the specific cause, has an important impact on protest participation. This is consistent with the findings of Walsh and Warland (1983) and

veys to assess attitudes before a movement begins, as some analysts have done (Klandermans 1984; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; McAdam 1986; 1988). But as Walsh and Warland (1983) have pointed out, it is often difficult to predict the need for such baseline surveys before the outbreak of protest.

Mueller and Opp (1986).

Another important factor associated with participation is the interaction effect between support for Columbia's divestment of all stock in companies doing business in South Africa, and a belief that Columbia would divest as a result of the blockade.[3] This result indicates the importance of both consciousness-raising and collective empowerment processes in recruitment and commitment to protest; it shows that those who support the specific cause and believe in the power of the tactic to further that cause are likely to participate in a protest.

That participation is associated with a belief in the power of the collective tactic to further movement goals is given further support by the fact that those who felt that divestment would influence the policies of the South African government were more likely to join the movement. Finally, the equation shows an independent association of a declining opinion of the university President with participation, supporting the notion that a polarization process had an important effect on participation in the blockade.

A variety of other factors were entered in the equation to assess the propositions of rational choice and collective behavior theories. Those who felt that any personal expense or inconvenience suffered as a result of the blockade was justified were more likely to participate in the protest. In other words, participants were committed to the group cause and felt that personal costs suffered as a result of participation were justified. Other factors emphasized by resource mobilization theories of participation, such as prior participation in the divestment movement or in a political action group on campus, were not highly associated with joining the blockade. Propositions about the association between social marginality or a lack of values and recruitment to movements are not supported; being a first-

[3] Klandermans' work (1984) inspired the use of an interaction term. Running the equation with the "support for divestment" question substituted for the interaction term results in an equation that explains 57 percent of the variance in participation. A similar result is obtained if only the question about whether Columbia would divest as a result of the blockade is included. If both questions are included and the interaction term omitted, the percentage of variance explained is 58 percent. In other words, the percent of variance explained is higher in the equation with only the interaction effect than with the main effects entered separately or together.

year student, lacking a religious affiliation, and being a member of a small number of campus groups were not highly correlated with participation in the blockade.

CONCLUSION

Rational choice theories cannot explain why students joined and became committed to this protest action because group processes are not just the sum of individual preferences or predispositions. Such frameworks cannot easily account for why participants felt willing to accept the personal costs associated with this protest; it is contradictory to argue that students stayed on the blockade to enjoy the selective incentive of self-sacrifice. Recruitment and commitment to the blockade can only be understood through the analysis of how group discussions, empowerment, conflict, and decision-making led participants to a willingness to sacrifice self-interest in pursuit of a valued collective goal using a noninstitutional tactic.

Collective behavior theory is right about the importance of group-level processes in the mobilization of noninstitutional movements. But its proposition that protest originates in disorganized unrest certainly does not apply here. Years of well-organized activities by the CFSA were crucial in raising consciousness about the apartheid issue and on the need for noninstitutional means of influence to achieve divestment. The blockade itself was initiated only after two months of careful planning by the CFSA steering committee.

The blockaders were not just isolated individuals with preferences for divestment nor a set of confused, insecure people; rather, they were people who had been convinced by CFSA meetings that apartheid was evil, that divestment would help South African blacks, and that divestment could be achieved through protest. They joined the blockade on April 4th because it appeared to offer a powerful alternative to previously impotent demonstrations and because of the example of self-sacrificing CFSA leaders. The solidarity of the group increased after the administration's escalation of the conflict because group identification among the protesters was already strong enough so that they responded to the threat as a powerful group rather than as powerless individuals. Protesters remained at this long and risky protest partly because of the democratic decision-making processes used by the group.

This analysis of the 1985 Columbia University divestment protest indicates that useful theories of movement mobilization must include insights about how individual protesters are convinced by group-level processes to sacrifice themselves for the cause. This means asking new kinds of questions in movement research: What kinds of arguments in what kinds of settings convince people to support a political cause? Why do potential recruits decide that non-institutional means of influence are justified and necessary? Under what circumstances is the example of leaders sacrificing for the cause likely to induce people to join a risky protest? Why do some tactics appear to offer a greater chance of success than others? Under what conditions do threats or actual repression by authorities create greater internal solidarity in a protest group? Under what conditions do threats or repression result in the demobilization of protest? What kinds of group decision-making processes are likely to convince people to continue to participate in a protest movement?

Generalizing from case studies is always difficult. Some aspects of student movements make them unusual, especially the ability of organizers to take advantage of the physical concentration of students on campuses. But the important impact of group processes on movement recruitment and commitment is not unique to the 1985 Columbia anti-apartheid movement. The development of solidarity based on a sense of collective power and polarization was also found in a Chicago community organization (Hirsch 1986). And these same group processes were crucial in the mobilization and development of the Southern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Consciousness-raising occurred in black churches and colleges. The collective power of protest was evident to those who participated in bus boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, and in Freedom Summer. The movement relied heavily on the creation of polarized conflict between the white Southern segregationist elite and black protesters to recruit participants, to gain national media attention, and ultimately to force federal intervention to redress the social and political grievances of Southern blacks (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). Finally, two of the major mobilizations in the 1960s student movement — the Berkeley Free Speech movement in 1964 and the Columbia conflict in 1968 — developed in a manner similar to the 1985 divestment movement (Heirich 1970; Avorn 1968).

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