Differential Paths to Political Activism: Comparisons of Four Mobilization Processes After the Three Mile Island Accident*

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Abstract

This paper compares political activists from four community protest organizations, formed in response to the March 1979 accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant.

Using survey data, newsletters, and fieldwork, we document the existence of two separate paths to protest involvement. In two communities, recruitment was less likely to occur along the lines of established social networks. Instead, utilitarian alliances grounded on shared grievances were constructed.

A second distinct path accounted for activism in two larger communities where many of the activists reported previous protest experience. In these communities, existing friendship networks were utilized.

Two years after the accident, significant network and ideological differences between the groups persisted. We suggest that analysts work to specify the conditions for different paths to activism.

Social movement analysts have largely neglected variation in avenues of activist recruitment and patterns of commitment. Until the early 1970s, for example, it was quite common for writers to accentuate values, attitudes, or activists' individual characteristics as reliable predictors of protest movement participation (e.g., Gurr 1970; Smelser 1963; Toch 1966).

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Then, in reaction to the exaggerated mentalism of such approaches, came the resource mobilization (RM) perspectives' counteremphases on strata, class, organizational, and other societal infrastructures (e.g., McCarthy & Zald 1977; Oberschall 1973; Snyder & Tilly 1972; Tilly 1978). More recently, a trend toward syntheses of social psychological and structural variables has emerged (Killian 1984; Klandermans 1984; Snow, Zurcher & Ekland-Olson 1980; Turner 1981; Useem 1980). Developing this synthetic line of argument further, we argue that mobilization processes involving complex interactions between and among such variables are likely to vary systematically with the structural situations of the aggrieved populations.

The nature of the fluid, fragile, and complex phenomena commonly studied by social movement analysts often hampers the collection of similar information across multiple mobilization processes. The common solution is to use data and insights from one case of collective action to assess and/or challenge generalizations from a variety of presumably similar phenomena. Serious questions can be raised, however, about the comparability of such data. The differences between and among national social movements, religious innovations, rebellions within universities, millennial visions, and communitarian withdrawals from the world, for example, are probably greater than whatever similarities analysts may eventually identify across such a wide and diverse spectrum of collective action (e.g., Tilly 1985).

Yet even when researchers limit their focus to national protest movements they frequently talk past one another rather than addressing identical issues, as when entrepreneurial perspectives on professional social movements are contrasted with theoretical models emphasizing grassroots mobilization.[1] A recent noteworthy exception is Killian's (1984) report on the spontaneous and emergent nature of civil rights protests in certain Florida communities, countering more structural interpretations of such mobilization processes in the wider movement (Morris 1981). The reasons for confusion thus derive from numerous sources, including generic diversity among collective action phenomena under consideration, differences of research foci, and the general absence of comparable data sets.

The simultaneous emergence and development of four relatively independent protest organizations in the wake of the Three Mile Island (TMI) accident presented an atypical situation. It provided a rare research opportunity to study recruitment and commitment processes generated by the same set of grievances, during the same time period, in diverse structural settings.

A central point of contention between RM analysts and others has been the relative importance of structural and social psychological variables in accounting for protest mobilization. In challenging earlier perspectives which emphasized the centrality of magic-laden "generalized be-

liefs" in social movements (Smelser 1963), some RM writers have tended to dismiss ideological variables, despite the admonitions of certain sympathetic critics (Isaac, Mutran & Stryker 1980).

Focusing on activists affiliated with the four most dynamic and robust community groups in the TMI area after the first eighteen months of political struggle, we attempt to assess the relative importance of numerous structural and social psychological variables in accounting for their recruitment and commitment processes.[2] Before turning to our measures, however, it is useful to profile these four communities and briefly summarize the early months of protest mobilization which preceded our survey.

The Four Communities

In the confusion surrounding the TMI accident, more than 150,000 residents in the general vicinity evacuated their homes. Upon returning, they found a utility determined to restart the Unit 1 reactor while simultaneously confronted with a billion dollar cleanup of the heavily damaged Unit 2. Citizens rapidly organized, with significant outside help from the national antinuclear movement (Walsh 1981, 1984), to begin what turned out to be a multi-year struggle against the utility and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The two main goals of these citizen challenges were to oppose the restart of Unit 1 and to impose high safety standards in the cleanup of Unit 2.

The communities with active citizen protest groups at the time of our survey were Middletown, Newberry Township, Harrisburg, and Lancaster. Although two of these are within a five-mile radius of the TMI nuclear reactors, bridges to the island connect only to Middletown on the east shore. Newberry Township residents, on the west shore of the mile-wide Susquehanna River, must travel more than ten miles north or south to cross the river. Such geographical factors made Middletown a more convenient home than any of the other communities for TMI workers, and also made it more likely that their relatives and friends, as well as workers from various service industries with economic linkages to the reactors, would be integrated into Middletown social networks. As is the case with most central Pennsylvania communities, the prevailing political atmosphere was quite conservative. The Middletown citizens who organized themselves into a protest group adopted the name People Against Nuclear Energy (PANE).

Newberry Township, across the river, was more rural than Middletown and also quite politically conservative. One of the Newberry Township commissioners, however, had been instrumental in helping initiate that community's organized protest, and thus the existing political infrastructure was more available to the anti-TMI activists in the wake of the

accident. Although this community's residents were less likely than those in Middletown to have friends or family members working at TMI or in related industries, enough such ties existed to prevent widespread bloc recruitment of social and religious groups against a Unit 1 restart. This protest group called itself the Newberry Township Steering Committee.

Both of these small towns had been somewhat hostile to the recruitment efforts of the Harrisburg-based anti-TMI group calling itself Three Mile Island Alert (TMIA), prior to the accident. Harrisburg is approximately fifteen miles north of the TMI reactors. Residents of Middletown and Newberry Township who subsequently became active in the struggle against the utility admitted that they had considered the pre-accident TMIA activists, in the vivid words of one, "radical kooks."

Harrisburg's TMIA organization itself underwent dramatic changes in the wake of the partial meltdown of the Unit 2 reactor and the utility's announced intention of bringing its Unit 1 reactor, which was down for routine refueling at the time of the accident, back on line. Scores of new activists joined the TMIA organization from throughout Harrisburg and its suburbs. Unlike the post-accident activists in Middletown and Newberry Township, however, many of these TMIA recruits had previous experience with protest activism in the movements of the 1960s and early 1970s.

The fourth major community group in the area was from Lancaster, approximately twenty-five miles east of the TMI reactors. Its reason for involvement was that it had a major drinking water intake station approximately twelve miles downstream of TMI on the Susquehanna River. Residents of this municipality became alarmed at the utility's announced intention to dump approximately one million gallons of filtered radioactive accident water from Unit 2 into the river. Although also previously uninvolved in antinuclear protests, many of those who became active from the Lancaster area had earlier experience in other movements. This group called itself the Susquehanna Valley Alliance (SVA).

Within a year of the accident, two coalitions involving these four groups had formed in the TMI area. One was geared toward public education and the other toward fund-raising for legal actions. The four groups sketched above were central in each coalition, fostering a considerable amount of intergroup exchange and cooperation through meetings, common projects, and other such ventures.

The TMI accident thus precipitated multiple, and simultaneous, mobilization processes, focused on the same targets, and motivated by the same general grievances. The opportunity to administer systematic surveys to the citizen activists from four separate communities promised to yield quantitative answers to vexing questions regarding the relative importance of structural and ideological variables in recruitment and commitment processes.

First, we examined similarities and differences in the initial paths to activism between and among the four communities. The RM literature suggested that activists would rank relatively high in solidary networks and that social psychological factors would not figure prominently in explaining recruitment. Although we already knew from our earlier analysis of the aggregate data that discontent and ideology were both important factors distinguishing activists from free riders (Walsh & Warland 1983), we had not examined their importance within the individual communities.

Our second focal question was the following: Regardless of the similarities and differences between and among the four communities' activists before mobilization, how much alike did they become in terms of solidarity and ideology after involvement with their respective protest groups and local coalitions? Although RM analysts have thus far ignored such questions, earlier writers (Smelser 1963) argued that collective action would have homogenizing effects on participants. In terms of specific measures, we are asking whether any network and ideological differences which existed prior to the intercommunity mobilization processes tended to disappear in their wake.

Methods, Data, and Operational Measures

The primary data sources for this report are comprehensive surveys of activists in the four communities. In addition, three of the four social movement organizations (SMOs) published their own monthly newsletters which were used as sources for group-level measures constructed from a content analysis of these publications (Cable 1985). Qualitative comments from field notes and interviews have also been drawn upon where appropriate.

For the activists' surveys, leaders of the four community SMOs were asked to list those participating in their groups. Ninety percent of the 165 potential respondents thus obtained cooperated in filling out questionnaires. The resulting numbers for the various communities were as follows: Middletown (45); Newberry Township (27); Harrisburg (47); and Lancaster (30). Details on the importance of the link between the early field work and the survey, as well as on specifics of the survey itself, are available elsewhere (Walsh & Warland 1983).

The conceptual framework for the study was drawn from RM perspectives and current criticisms of them. While earlier approaches emphasized grievances (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970; Toch 1966), some RM analysts minimized the importance of discontent in accounting for organized protest (McCarthy & Zald 1977). Following more recent studies suggesting that sudden increases in grievances may be critical in promoting collective

protest (Useem 1980; Walsh 1981), we included measures to tap variations in discontent. A hallmark of RM approaches has been an emphasis on the facilitating effects of preexisting solidary networks, and we have examined them in this study. Ideology has consistently been excluded from RM analyses; this exclusion has drawn criticism from writers otherwise sympathetic to the new approaches (Ferree & Miller 1985; Klandermans 1984; Snow, Zurcher & Ekland-Olson 1980). We attempted to measure ideological factors most relevant to activism in each community. Our theoretical framework thus consisted of background, grievance, network, and ideological variables. We attempted to obtain measures of the latter two concepts for both the time before (recall items) and after the activists' recruitment to protest organizations. Evidence from the fieldwork is used to supplement the quantitative analysis regarding paths to activism.

Analyses were divided into pre- and post-recruitment phases in order to address the two focal questions. In the pre-recruitment analyses, groups of activists were compared on background characteristics as well as on measures of grievances, networks, and ideologies prior to their becoming involved in the protest. Although such data are doubtlessly vulnerable to typical problems of recall, generated as they are approximately two years after the accident, there are some reasons for confidence in their validity which will be noted below. Post-recruitment analyses compared activists on the same general dimensions after they had become involved in their community protest organizations to assess the effect of commitment on participants.

Table 1 summarizes the pre-recruitment measures used in the following analyses. Background items in panel A include the standard sociodemographic variables of age, sex, and educational level. Two measures of grievance intensity are displayed in panel B. Respondents were asked to evaluate the seriousness of the initial radiation emergency and also whether or not they evacuated, thus providing both an attitudinal and behavioral measure of pre-recruitment grievance levels.

Panel C of Table 1 includes a variety of social network items intended to tap pre-recruitment solidarity. RM perspectives lead one to expect that social ties to one's community, mainstream organizations, and the antinuclear movement, as well as prior social movement experience, should facilitate SMO mobilization. Besides the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and women's movements, others explicitly mentioned in the questionnaire were the environmental, consumer, right-to-life, and pro-choice.[3] Relevant friendship networks were measured by the number of recruits the activist reported bringing into the SMO.

Various pre-recruitment indicators of ideology are displayed in panel D of Table 1. Activists were asked to estimate their pre-accident opposition to the specific TMI reactors, to nuclear power in general, and to nuclear weapons. Two additional items, one behavioral and the other a

Table 1. PRE-RECRUITMENT CONCEPTS, VARIABLES, AND SPECIFIC MEASURES

Concepts and Variables	Measures
A. Background	
1. Age	Actual age coded in years.
2. Sex	Coded (1) female or (2) male.
3. Education	Categories: (1) none, (2) grade school, (3) some high school, (4) completed high school, (5) some college/vocational, (6) completed college, (7) graduate or professional School.
B. Grievances	
1. Initial seriousness	Categories: (1) no threat, (2) somewhat of a threat, (3) serious threat, (4) very serious threat.
2. Evacuation	Coded yes or no.
C. Solidary Networks	
1. Community	Categories: (1) nothing in common with most people in community before the accident, (2) little in common, (3) don't know, (4) pretty much, (5) very much.
2. Antinuclear	Categories: (1) nothing in common with anti-nuclear activists before the accident, (2) little in common, (3) don't know, (4) pretty much, (5) very much.
3. Organizational	Total number of clubs and organizations with which respondent was affiliated before the accident.
4. Friendship	Number of people respondent recruited into SMO.
5. SMOs	Total number of SMOs with which respondent affiliated before the accident.
6. Civil rights movement	Coded (1) yes or (0) no.
7. Antiwar movement	Coded (1) yes or (0) no.
8. Women's movement	Coded (1) yes or (0) no.
D. Ideology	
1. Opposition to TMI plant	Categories: (1) strongly favor, (2) mildly favor, (3) neutral, (4) mildly oppose, (5) strongly oppose.
2. Opposition to nuclear power	Same categories as D1.
3. Opposition to nuclear weapons	Same categories as D1.
4. Voted for Ford in 1976	Categories: (1) voted for Ford, (2) voted for someone other than Ford.
5. Liberalness	Categories: (1) conservative, (2) middle of the road, (3) liberal.

global attitudinal measure, were added: voting preference in the 1976 presidential elections, and the respondent's own self-evaluation on the conservative/liberal dimension.

The post-recruitment measures of networks and ideology are summarized in Table 2. Panel A of this table includes items on various networks and networking behavior including the respondents' ties to others in their own group, knowledge of neighboring protest groups, relationships with activists from those groups, and attendance at major rallies in Washington, D.C., during 1979 and 1980. While such quantitative indicators may not provide direct evidence on the recruitment process, when coupled with insights from the field notes and interviews they offer valu-

Table 2. POST-RECRUITMENT CONCEPTS, VARIABLES, AND SPECIFIC MEASURES

Concepts and Variables	Measures
A. Solidary Networks	
1. Association with members outside SMO	Coded (1) yes or (2) no.
2. Members associated with	Actual number coded.
3. Other TMI groups known	Actual number coded.
4. Persons known in other TMI groups	Actual number coded.
5. Attended 1979 D.C. rally	Coded (1) yes or (2) no.
6. Attended 1980 D.C. rally	Coded (1) yes or (2) no.
7. Newsletters containing supragroup items	% of SMO's total newsletters with such items.
B. Ideology	
1. Opposition to nuclear power	Categories: (1) strongly favor, (2) mildly favor, (3) neutral, (4) mildly oppose, (5) strongly oppose.
2. Newsletters containing antinuclear power items	Same as A7.
3. Opposition to nuclear weapons	Same as B1.
4. Newsletters containing antinuclear weapons items	Same as A7.
5. Newsletters containing alternative energy/conservation items	Same as A7.
6. Support of civil disobedience	Categories: (1) completely disapprove, (2) somewhat disapprove, (3) neutral, (4) somewhat approve, (5) completely approve.
7. Voted for Reagan in 1980	Categories: (1) voted for Reagan, (2) voted for someone other than Reagan.

able supporting evidence for our arguments about differential paths to activism. The final measure in this panel derives from the content analysis of SMO newsletters, telling what percentage of them include a mention of nuclear power issues and events outside the local area. These are referred to as supragroup items.[4]

Panel B of Table 2 includes the items used as indicators of post-recruitment ideology. The activists were asked to give their current opinions about nuclear power in general and nuclear weapons, their attitude toward nonviolent civil disobedience, and their voting preference in the 1980 election. Three additional measures, derived from the content analysis of the random sample of SMO newsletters, are included to show percentages mentioning antinuclear power items other than those directly concerned with TMI, those addressing the nuclear weapons issue, and those discussing alternative energy or conservation items.

Findings

Activists from the four communities are first compared on the various pre-recruitment measures, and then consolidated into the two larger groups

Table 3. PRE-RECRUITMENT COMPARISONS OF FOUR GROUPS OF ACTIVISTS

	Middle-town (N=45)	Newberry Township (N=72)	Harris-burg (N=47)	Lan-caster (N=30)	Significance
A. Background					
Age	46.61	40.13	35.34	39.65	***
Percent female	48.89%	66.67%	55.32%	46.67%	
Education	5.20	5.00	6.00	5.79	***
B. Grievances					
Initial seriousness	3.87	3.96	3.78	3.73	
Evacuation	86.67%	77.78%	63.38%	80.00%	
C. Solidary Networks					
Community	3.05	3.41	2.91	2.50	*
Antinuclear	2.44	2.11	3.00	3.53	***
Organizational	1.71	1.59	1.64	1.57	
Friendship	2.02	2.12	4.13	4.27	***
SMOs	1.11	0.70	3.02	3.07	***
Civil rights movement	8.89%	3.70%	44.68%	51.72%	***
Antiwar movement	20.00%	18.52%	58.57%	72.41%	***
Women's movement	13.33%	3.70%	44.85%	41.38%	***
D. Ideology					
Opposition to TMI plant	3.57	3.67	3.77	3.80	
Opposition to nuclear power	3.41	3.56	3.72	3.93	
Opposition to nuclear weapons	3.18	3.44	4.53	4.43	***
Voted for Ford in 1976	31.11%	25.93%	8.51%	0.00%	**
Liberalness	1.86	1.84	2.76	2.86	***

*p<.05   **p<.01   ***p<.001

suggested by the analysis. Next, we turn to post-recruitment comparisons of these two groups and assess the effects of commitment on networks and ideology, supplementing the quantitative analysis with qualitative insights and quotes from the field work accompanying the surveys.

PRE-RECRUITMENT COMPARISONS: AVENUES TO ACTIVISM

The results of an analysis of variance comparison among the four groups of community activists are displayed in Table 3. Panel A reveals significant differences on two of the three background variables. The Harrisburg and Lancaster residents tend to be slightly younger and report more formal education. The education means for all four groups showed average members with some college or, in the case of the Harrisburg activists, with a college degree. The differences in gender composition among the groups were not statistically significant.

One of the more surprising findings was the absence of significant differences among the four groups on the pre-recruitment grievance dimensions in panel B. We expected the activists from Middletown and Newberry Township, the communities closest to TMI, to have considered the accident a greater threat and, specifically, to have reported higher

levels of evacuation during the initial emergency period because they were closer to the epicenter of the accident. Approximately 60 percent of the general population living within five miles of the reactors evacuated (Flynn 1979), and thus it was not too surprising to find over 75 percent of the activists in the two communities within this radius indicating that they had evacuated. To find the activists from Harrisburg and Lancaster—15 and 25 miles, respectively, from the reactors—reporting similar levels of perceived threat and consequent evacuation, however, indicates that these individuals stood out from other residents in their own communities more than did those from the smaller towns closer to the reactors. The evacuation rates for residents from Harrisburg and Lancaster were only 36 percent and 13 percent, respectively (Flynn 1979). In brief, the activists from the larger cities, further removed from TMI, were more atypical for their respective communities than were the activists from the smaller towns within the five-mile radius of the reactors.

Panel C reveals significant differences among the four groups of activists on seven of the eight pre-recruitment network measures. The typical pattern is for the Lancaster group to be at one extreme and the Newberry Township activists at the other, with Harrisburg's TMIA closer to the Lancaster group and Middletown's PANE closer to the Newberry Township activists. Thus the Lancaster and Harrisburg groups reported higher levels of solidarity with, and experience in, the women's, anti-Vietnam War, and civil rights movements than their small town confreres closer to the scene of the accident. The latter, on the other hand, reported higher levels of community solidarity, as might be expected among residents of small towns where inhabitants are presumed to interact more frequently.[5]

The pre-accident ideological differences on nuclear power issues among the four groups—in terms of either opposition to the TMI reactors, in particular, or against nuclear power, in general—were not statistically significant (Panel D). Such results increase our confidence in the data because they dovetail with the fact that antinuclear groups in the area were unable to find much support prior to the accident (Walsh 1981), and they also run counter to the presumed tendency to adjust earlier ideological positions in view of later events. On the other three ideology items, the differences are significant, with the activists from Middletown and Newberry Township more likely to have voted for Ford and less likely to oppose nuclear weapons or to evaluate themselves as political liberals.

A close inspection of Table 3 suggests that the four communities cluster into two general categories enveloping the activists living in the smaller towns closer to TMI (Middletown and Newberry Township) and those living in the urban areas further from the plant (Harrisburg and Lancaster). A discriminant analysis, identifying the linear combination of variables best differentiating among the groups (Kachigan 1982), was per-

Table 4. PRE-RECRUITMENT COMPARISONS OF COMBINED GROUPS

	Activists <5 Miles from TMI (N=72)	Activists >5 Miles from TMI (N=77)	Significance
A. Background			
Age	44.32	36.94	***
Education	5.13	5.92	***
B. Solidary Networks			
Community	3.19	2.75	**
Antinuclear	2.31	3.21	***
Friendship	2.06	4.19	***
SMOs	0.96	3.04	***
Civil rights movement	6.94%	47.37%	***
Antiwar movement	19.44%	64.47%	***
Women's movement	9.72%	43.42%	***
C. Ideology			
Opposition to nuclear power	3.46	3.81	*
Opposition to nuclear weapons	3.28	4.49	***
Voted for Ford in 1976	29.17%	5.18%	***
Liberalness	1.85	2.80	***

*$p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

formed to determine whether the combination suggested by the visual inspection of the data in Table 3 would be supported by this multivariate technique. The results indicated that there was only one significant function separating the four groups into two distinct categories. Middletown and Newberry Township were located together by the group centroids (-2.05 and -1.99) while Harrisburg and Lancaster were located near one another (group centroids of 1.75 and 1.70).

Next, an analysis of variance was rerun with Middletown and Newberry Township combined and compared with aggregated Harrisburg and Lancaster activists. Only statistically significant differences are reported in Table 4. These two-group comparisons reveal the activists from Harrisburg and Lancaster as typically younger, more educated, with weaker community ties, more liberal political preferences, and much more likely to report previous protest experience in the antiwar, civil rights, and women's movements.

This pattern of differences between the two groups is reminiscent of Merton's (1968) distinction between local and cosmopolitan influentials. According to Merton, the two are distinguished primarily in terms of their orientations to their communities. The local type is parochial, confining her or his interests to the community, while the cosmopolitan is more ecumenical in perspective. Although the latter is involved in some com-

munity issues, s/he is more concerned with those of the larger society. Based on the evidence in Tables 3 and 4, we can conveniently label the activists from Middletown and Newberry Township "localites" and those from the two larger urban areas "cosmopolitans" in the following discussion.[6] The Harrisburg and Lancaster activists' involvement in other social movements as well as their inclination to include the TMI problem within wider perspectives of nuclear power and nuclear weapons distinguishes them from those we will call the "localites." The latter are much more typical—not only of those in the smaller town, but also of the majority of people living in the TMI area.

POST-RECRUITMENT COMPARISONS: PATTERNS OF COMMITMENT

Our second focal question concerned the effects of commitment on these two aggregated groups of activists. Regardless of the diversity of their initial paths to activism, did they become homogenized in terms of their networks and ideologies, as assumed by such concepts as Smelser's (1963) "generalized belief," or did they remain distinctive in these respects? As noted earlier, two coalitions of the various SMOs were functioning in the TMI area by the time of the surveys, and these doubtlessly helped foster some common networks and also presumably a convergence of ideological perspectives among activists from the various communities.

The results of the bivariate comparisons between the localites and cosmopolitans on both network and ideology measures are displayed in Table 5.[7] In regard to social network variables, our analysis suggests that there were three distinct types of networks in which activists were engaged: networks within the member's SMO, networks among the several anti-TMI SMOs, and networks with national groups. These networks define different types of solidarity, which we have termed intragroup, intergroup, and supragroup solidarity. Measurements for these categories of solidarity are presented in Table 5 panel A.

Intragroup solidarity refers to relationships between and among members of the same SMO. The first two indicators show the cosmopolitans likely to associate with more fellow activists from their own organizations in outside activities not directly related to protest actions. *Intergroup* solidarity includes relationships between activists from different SMOs in the TMI area. The third and fourth items in panel A also reveal significant differences between the two groups on this dimension, with the cosmopolitans reporting themselves knowing more area SMOs as well as activists from these other protest organizations. *Supragroup* solidarity refers to network links with the wider antinuclear protest movement outside the TMI area. The final two items in panel A, showing the percentages of activists attending major rallies in the nation's capital, again suggest that the cosmopolitan activists continued to open themselves to outside influ-

Table 5. POST-RECRUITMENT COMPARISONS OF COMBINED GROUPS

	Localites (N=72)	Cosmo- politans (N=77)	Significance
A. Social Networks			
Association with members outside SMO	47.14%	84.21%	***
Members associated with	1.65	4.11	***
Other TMI groups known	1.51	2.61	**
Persons known in other TMI groups	7.42	15.32	**
Attended 1979 D.C. rally	20.83%	67.53%	***
Attended 1980 D.C. rally	16.67%	50.65%	***
B. Ideology			
Opposition to nuclear power	4.94	4.95	
Opposition to nuclear weapons	3.94	4.95	***
Support of civil disobedience	4.07	4.84	***
Voted for Reagan in 1980	30.56%	5.19%	***

** $p<.01$ *** $p<.001$

ences to a greater extent than their localite counterparts. Thus these activists living farther from the plant were more enmeshed in all three kinds of solidary networks than their small town confreres within a five-mile radius of the reactors.

The post-recruitment ideological measures are displayed in panel B of Table 5 where we see that the gap, on most dimensions, between the two consolidated groups of activists seems to have persisted despite their cooperation in a common venture against both the utility and the NRC. Although there is no longer any statistically significant difference between the two in opposition to nuclear power, differences persist in levels of opposition to nuclear weapons, support of civil disobedience, and support for Reagan in 1980.[8]

The results of the content analysis of the samples of SMO newsletters are displayed in Table 6 and support the same general conclusions regarding network and ideological differences between and among the various groups of activists. Whereas approximately 52 percent of the cosmopolitan group's newsletters contained items about the national antinuclear movement or other outside issues which the editors considered relevant to the TMI protest, only 16 percent of the localite groups' newsletters contained such items. The same tendency for the latter activists to limit the scope of their protest to the prevention of the Unit 1 restart while their more cosmopolitan counterparts revealed a broader focus is shown by the results on the other three content analysis comparisons of newsletters.

Contrary to those who emphasize the homogenizing influence of social movement involvement on participants, our data reveal a surprising

Table 6. CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

	Localites (N=72)	Cosmo- politans (N=77)	Significance
Newsletters containing supragroup items	16%	52%	**
Newsletters containing anti-nuclear power items	52%	100%	**
Newsletters containing anti-nuclear weapons items	4%	48%	**
Newsletters containing alternative energy/conservation items	16%	64%	**

**p<.01

degree of heterogeneity persisting between the localite and cosmopolitan activists. Evidence from field notes and interviews help support and flesh out these differences.

The localite activists were determined not to alienate the majority of their fellow citizens in the TMI area with radical rhetoric or controversial tactics. The wife of a PANE leader, for example, explained how local networks were neutralized in Middletown: "Four of the women in our social club had husbands or sons working at TMI. The rest of us discussed our evacuation experiences at the first meeting after the accident, but then we started avoiding the topic at later meetings after the issues had become so political." A local builder from the same community, not wanting to lose business by unintentionally offending a potential customer, advised his partner-sons: "Remember before the accident I told you to avoid discussing religion and politics? Well, add TMI to that list." A Middletown activist, who worked closely with some of the Harrisburg volunteers on a major joint project, commented: "I'd never in a million years have imagined myself working with these hippies on anything—but I'll bend a lot to keep that goddam Unit 1 from coming back on line." PANE's charter explicitly excluded civil disobedience in pursuit of political goals, a position the Middletown leaders found convenient when outside activists suggested confrontational tactics throughout the course of the struggle.

The more cosmopolitan activists from Harrisburg and Lancaster, on the other hand, were inclined to ignore local sensitivities in their efforts to challenge the utility and the NRC. They were accustomed to initial opposition from neighbors, associates, and others in earlier movements; and the significant reference groups for many of them were more likely to be fellow activists. A middle-aged cosmopolitan, for example, remarked: "In those days after the accident, the only joy in my life was being with old friends from the days of the anti-war movement, the lettuce and grape boycotts, and the march on Washington. I remember feeling somewhat

ashamed of myself for not having offered more support to my daughter who was arrested at the earlier Seabrook demonstrations."

Discussion

The TMI accident precipitated widespread citizen protest mobilization along two distinct paths. In the smaller towns within a few miles of the reactors where a majority of the general population evacuated during the emergency period, politically conservative activists concentrated on protecting themselves and their community during the cleanup of the heavily damaged Unit 2 and on preventing the restart of Unit 1. In addition to its disturbing impact on the everyday routines of the people in these communities, the accident and its aftermath also disrupted social networks and altered political ideologies. Although some of the existing organizations were used for protest mobilization in Newberry Township where an incumbent commissioner became a leading activist, the dominant conservative ideology in the area was ill-fitted to the increasingly strident challenges of that community's protest group against both the nuclear industry and the federal government.[9] The internal tensions were even greater in the Middletown community where many TMI workers and their families, as well as workers from support and supply establishments, lived.[10] Most of the existing local organizations in Middletown were thus politically neutralized because they included at least a minority of such people sympathetic to the continued operation of TMI. Protest leaders and other anti-TMI activists in these communities were careful not to offend, unnecessarily, the sensibilities of neighbors whose good will they wanted in their struggle against the utility.

A second, and quite different, path to political activism was followed in Harrisburg and Lancaster. Here, many of those who became involved in the anti-TMI struggle had previous experience with social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. These cosmopolitan activists were much less typical citizens in their communities than was the case in Middletown and Newberry Township, as indicated by their high evacuation rates discussed earlier. Already mistrustful of political authorities from their protest experience in previous social movements, these individuals were more easily able to fit the nuclear accident experience into their existing ideological perspectives as one more example of the venality and ineptness of corporate chieftains and government elites. Networks from earlier protests were activated, just as the RM perspectives predict, and new ones were formed with national organizations in the antinuclear movement.

Although activists from the various communities cooperated for approximately two years before our survey in efforts to monitor the cleanup

of Unit 2 and to prevent the restart of Unit 1, most of the differences between them persisted. Those from Middletown and Newberry Township, suspicious of the more radical ideology and networks of their urban confederates, insisted on maintaining autonomous protest organizations in order to have more control over strategies and tactics. The Middletown and Newberry Township activists, for example, wanted the protest focus kept on the safety and health threats posed by the TMI reactors rather than allowing it to be expanded to include nuclear power, in general, or nuclear weapons. Even two years after the accident, when the various protest groups had worked jointly on numerous major projects and had sent representatives to countless common meetings, rather striking network and ideological differences persisted between the cosmopolitan and localite activists.

The fact that two distinct paths to activism emerged and that different commitment patterns persisted even in response to the single cluster of serious grievances deriving from the TMI accident has more general applicability to social movement analysis. Recruitment and commitment patterns appear to depend on complex interactions between and among grievances, existing networks, and prevailing ideologies. When a suddenly imposed grievance fits congruently within the ideological predispositions of existing networks of the aggrieved population, protest mobilization patterns utilizing such networks are likely. This acknowledgment of the role of ideology is a social psychological application of RM perspectives, and is exemplified by the Harrisburg and Lancaster mobilization processes in the wake of the TMI accident. When, on the other hand, the grievance poorly fits the dominant ideologies of existing networks within aggrieved populations, new grievance-specific networks and ideologies are likely to be formed, as happened in the Middletown and Newberry Township communities.[11]

If such clearcut differences in models of recruitment and commitment existed among protest groups responding to the same general set of grievances, how much more likely is it that distinct theoretical models will be necessary for different collectivities responding to a wide variety of grievance factors? Sometimes additional variables may need to be included in a model, as when coercive social control agents play a significant role in the mobilization process.[12] Rather than seeking some single model of activist recruitment and commitment, consisting of structural and/or social psychological variables, social movement analysts should assume that there are multiple models and then get on with the more useful work of specifying the conditions under which one or another is more appropriate.

Notes

1. Summaries of the various perspectives are readily available (e.g., Jenkins 1983; McCarthy & Zald 1977; Turner 1981).

2. This is the first systematic analysis of the data set on the activists. A previously published report (Walsh & Warland 1983) used a subset of activist items which were also asked of random samples of sympathetic residents who did not become involved in the protests. The four groups of activists which are the foci of this report were not previously distinguished.

3. This SMOs variable, which simply sums the total number of movement affiliations reported, is probably the one most likely to have been either intentionally or unintentionally misreported. In the wake of the accident, some respondents may have preferred to portray themselves as previously affiliated with the environmental movement. Others may have interpreted their preferences for or against abortion, for example, as indicators of their belonging to those movements. Despite such possibilities of minor distortions, especially via exaggerations of previous SMO affiliations, these quantitative data do not contradict the conclusions from the more qualitative fieldwork which suggested that the activists from the smaller towns were much less likely to have been involved in any form of organized protest prior to the accident.

4. Three of the four SMOs published monthly newsletters that were used for this content analysis. All 25 newsletters published by the Middletown activists during this period were used to represent the sentiments of those living closer to the TMI reactors, while another 25 were sampled from Harrisburg ($N = 13$) and Lancaster ($N = 12$). These two groups of 25 were decided upon only after the results of the analysis of variance and discriminant analyses discussed later in the text suggested the distinction between the activists living in small towns closer to the reactors and those living in larger cities further away. Using individual newsletter items as the recording unit, items were coded into one of five categories: anti-TMI and organizational references, antinuclear power statements, antinuclear weapons statements, pro-alternative energy and conservation statements, and statements indicating solidarity affiliation and/or identification with groups or events that were nationally prominent. Our post-recruitment measures included the percentage of the sampled newsletters containing each type of item.

5. These data which are based on recall coincide with fieldwork insights and are also internally consistent. The urban activists came disproportionately from the ranks of those with previous experience in protest activities, the type of people likely to be sympathetic to new protest issues (such as the antinuclear movement) with which they had not yet identified and also unlikely to be as closely integrated into their local communities as those from the smaller towns.

6. Among other useful comments on an earlier draft, Charles Tilly suggested using Merton's venerable distinction for our combined groups of activists (personal communication, November 6, 1985).

7. We also compared these consolidated groups of activists on a number of post-recruitment grievance measures including discontent over the behavior of both the utility and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission during and after the initial emergency period as well as the seriousness of the threat to local residents approximately two years after the accident. There were uniformly high levels of grievances on these measures, and no statistically significant differences between the groups (Cable 1985).

8. Again we used discriminant analysis to verify our conclusions from the bivariate comparisons. Only one function was statistically significant and it separated the four SMOs into the same two distinct groups. The centroids for Middletown and Newberry Township were -1.93 and -1.04, respectively, while those for Harrisburg and Lancaster were 1.42 and 1.44.

9. In his private comments on an earlier draft, Lewis Killian observed: "What happened in Newberry sounds very much like what I observed happening with preexisting black structures in Tallahassee" (letter, June 24, 1986). This Newberry Township protest group, however, was forced to change its name a year or so after our survey was completed because some local officials insisted that it was viewed by a growing number of citizens as being officially sponsored by the local commissioners.

10. Although respondents were asked about family and friends working at the TMI nuclear

plant, such items are not included in this analysis because the data revealed that the Middletown activists were much more likely to know someone working at TMI. As mentioned above, the two bridges from the Island both connected it to the eastern shore where Middletown is located and where many of the TMI workers elect to live.

11. Although it may seem tempting to generalize our results to cover the differences between mobilization processes in small towns and larger urban areas, such an inference is unwarranted. Had the smaller towns not been so close to the TMI reactors, it is unlikely that they would have mobilized in this case. Had the threat been one which did not involve so many community jobs, directly or indirectly, the existing networks within these communities neutralized by TMI loyalties might have been activated, just as the RM writers predict. Thus geography and, especially in the case of Middletown, employment structure were also important variables.

12. The Tallahassee Civil Rights mobilization processes, as discussed by Lewis Killian (1984), reveal the importance of taking the role of coercive authorities into account. Because the grievances in that case fit very well into the ideological perspectives of local blacks who were only too well acquainted with discrimination, our conclusions would lead one to predict that widespread mobilization along existing organizational and network lines would have occurred. They did, but there were political reasons for accentuating spontaneity and deemphasizing the cooptation of existing organizations at the time (Killian 1984).

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