



Fighting Back: Vulnerabilities, Blunders, and Countermobilization by the Targets in Three Animal Rights Campaigns

James M. Jasper; Jane Poulsen

Sociological Forum, Vol. 8, No. 4. (Dec., 1993), pp. 639-657.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0884-8971%28199312%298%3A4%3C639%3AFBVBAC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5>

Sociological Forum is currently published by Springer.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/springer.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Fighting Back: Vulnerabilities, Blunders, and Countermobilization by the Targets in Three Animal Rights Campaigns¹

James M. Jasper^{2,3} and Jane Poulsen²

Among the determinants of social movement success, the characteristics and responses of nonstate organizations under attack by protestors have been overlooked. We examine three campaigns by animal rights groups against experimentation, in 1976–1977, 1987–1988, and 1988–1989. The first two campaigns stopped the research, while the third did not. One influential set of factors was the preexisting vulnerabilities—e.g., unpopular practices, internal factions—on the part of targeted organizations. Another was the strategic responses of these organizations, especially the avoidance of “blunders.” A growing countermovement, thirdly, affected the organizations’ ability to respond effectively and avoid blunders. As a social movement expands and strengthens, it encourages counterorganizing and a hardening of resistance, so that many social movements may actually be less successful as they become larger and more visible.

KEY WORDS: social movements; animal rights; countermovements; vulnerabilities; strategic blunders.

INTRODUCTION

In 1977 a small group of animal protectionists stopped a long-running research program on cat sexuality at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan. Ten years later (1987–1988), in response to pressure from an animal rights group named Trans-Species Unlimited, a researcher

¹Revised version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, DC, August 1990.

²Department of Sociology, New York University, 269 Mercer Street, New York, New York 10003.

³To whom correspondence should be addressed.

at the Cornell Medical School returned her federal funding for a long-running cat experiment on drug addiction. In 1988–1990—at the height of the animal rights movement—the same group, using the same tactics, failed in its efforts to stop drug addiction experiments on monkeys at New York University (NYU). Since then, there have been almost no victories in similar antivivisection efforts. Three battles in a growing war on animal experimentation, these campaigns raise obvious questions. Why do some social movement campaigns succeed while others fail? And why, in this case, does there seem to be an inverse relationship between the size of a movement and its ability to win campaigns?

Most explanations of social movement success concentrate on the tactics and traits of protest groups and on the responses of the state, largely ignoring the characteristics and responses of other targeted organizations. Yet the outcomes of protest campaigns are often influenced by the actions of the organizations under attack: their preexisting vulnerabilities (Walsh, 1986), their strategic responses to the protest, especially damaging “blunders,” and their ability to mobilize a countermovement. Examination of these factors helps us see the relationship between different forms of success, which might include membership growth and accumulation of resources, institutional acceptance and longevity, and the attainment of stated goals. In particular, we shall see the possibility that the larger a movement becomes, the more countermobilizing it may inspire, and the less it may be able to attain specific stated goals.

Our evidence comes from participant observation at the NYU demonstrations and the meetings that planned them, from interviews with protestors and officials of the targeted institutions, and from exhaustive review of all the available published accounts of the three campaigns. (For interview data on the NYU protestors, see Jasper and Poulsen, 1989; for a broader interpretation of the animal rights movements, Jasper and Nelkin, 1992.)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the 1970s, “resource mobilization” explanations of social movement success typically concentrated on the characteristics, resources, and strategies of social movement organizations (SMOs) and their supporters (Ash, 1972; Gamson, 1975; Piven and Cloward, 1977). With the rise of “political process” approaches (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, 1982; Kitschelt, 1986) attention shifted to state institutions, with their power to tax and spend and to use violence to repress protest. Because protestors were viewed as insurgents demanding access to the polity, the state was naturally their pre-

eminent opponent. McAdam (1982:25) even defined social movements as “those organized efforts, on the part of excluded groups, to promote or resist changes in the structure of society that involve recourse to noninstitutional forms of political participation.” Others simply assumed that movement goals involved changes in state policies (Gamson, 1975).

Much of the “political opportunity structure” literature had two generic blind spots, overlooking additional strategic actors besides protestors and the state as well as missing the dynamic interaction between protestors and their environment. Because of its focus on the state, such research tended to ignore movement goals such as changes in public awareness, changes in the practices and beliefs of protestors themselves, or changes in the attitudes and practices of other targeted, but nonstate, institutions (Troyer and Markle, 1983, are an exception). Because many social movements try to change the practices of nonstate actors—such as corporations, universities, or professional associations—the responses of these targets often affect movements’ success or failure. What is more, both state agencies and these other actors respond energetically with their own strategies. Doug McAdam (1983:736) explains the pace and outcome of protest in terms of “(a) the creativity of insurgents in devising new tactical forms, and (b) the ability of opponents to neutralize these moves through effective tactical counters.” Protest campaigns are elaborate strategic games (see Staggenborg, 1986, and Hirsch, 1990, for examples), often with more than two players.

We hope to suggest ways of filling these lacunae by examining the role of targeted organizations in the outcomes of protest campaigns. Three factors prove especially important: preexisting vulnerabilities on the part of these targets, their strategic responses to attack, and broader counter-mobilization that they and similar organizations mount.

Vulnerabilities

Certain characteristics or practices of targeted organizations make them vulnerable to attacks by protestors. Edward Walsh (1986) analyzed the “target vulnerabilities” of General Public Utilities (GPU)—the owner of the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor—during the battle over cleanup and restart of the twin, undamaged reactor. Following the 1979 accident, GPU’s credibility was further undermined when the utility filed a lawsuit against the reactor makers, as the suit inadvertently revealed GPU’s own improper management and falsification of operating data, cheating by reactor operators in examinations for promotions, and leaking steam tubes at the undamaged Unit 1 reactor. Several engineers also charged that the

cleanup was not proceeding in a safe manner. These vulnerabilities influenced public opinion, regulators, and elected officials. Walsh does not distinguish between types of vulnerability, some of which were ongoing conditions at the company, while others were blunders the company made in responding to the attacks by protestors. We reserve the term "vulnerability" for preexisting conditions (even if they are only brought to light during the controversy), and use the term "blunder" for actions taken in response to criticism. Both vulnerabilities and blunders can occur at the level of the entire organization, for example in its official response to controversy, or at the sublevel of the project under attack, for example a particular research experiment or laboratory.

SMOs understandably look for targets with project vulnerabilities. National antinuclear organizations cultivated the Diablo Canyon reactor as a symbol of nuclear energy, because it was near an earthquake fault and had extreme cost overruns. Animal activists focused on experiments using cats because, given public tastes in animals, they are more evocative than research using rats. Protestors also look for weaknesses in targeted institutions such as internal cleavages, financial instability, or failure to perform according to publicly stated standards (cf. Freudenburg, 1993). Once an institution is spotlighted by protest, its activities are closely watched, and organizational problems unconnected with the controversy can be uncovered. Its general reputation for competence and credibility can be undermined, indirectly providing fuel for its critics. Disagreements between elites may yield an institutional vulnerability, by isolating the target from potential supporters.

Blunders

In addition to preexisting (and relatively passive) vulnerabilities, targeted organizations actively deploy, in response to public criticism, a range of strategies that may be either wise or mistaken. Protestors attempt to goad their opponents into mistakes, while targets try to reduce their preexisting vulnerabilities and avoid blunders. Many vulnerabilities are revealed during this interaction;⁴ they can be seen as "accidents" revealing intentions and power structures that institutions often try to hide (Molotch, 1970). A strategic blunder can weaken an organization's reputation for competence, honesty, or benevolence. A classic case is Eugene "Bull" Connor's ferocious attacks on peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama; transmitted through the news media, they created national sympathy for

⁴We say "revealed" because we assume that the vulnerabilities are already there, and are exploited by rather than created by movement leaders. Otherwise the concept becomes tautological, in that anything the activists can use to their advantage becomes a vulnerability.

Table I. Examples of Vulnerabilities and Blunders

	Vulnerabilities	Blunders
Project level	Experimental use of popular species; lack of obvious public benefits; potential environmental impact; criticism by external experts.	Deception or arrogance on the part of individual researcher; inability to communicate with the public or media.
Institutional level	Reputation for sloppy management, unsafe practices, or previous controversies; weak financial position; internal cleavages or frictions; failure to perform according to organization's own stated standards or goals.	Deception or denial; infiltration of the movement, or unsuccessful efforts to belittle it; brutal repression of peaceful protest.

the demonstrators (Garrow, 1978:133–160; McAdam, 1982). Similarly, Steven Barkan (1984) found that southern communities which responded to civil rights protest with violence were less successful at defeating it than those using legal means. In other words, blunders become new issues to be added to the original causes for protest (Oberschall, 1979:47).

Countermobilization

Whether an organization attacked by protestors reacts effectively or poorly often depends on the experiences of similar organizations that have been attacked or that perceive themselves at risk of attack. When a critical mass of organizations feel threatened, they may organize a countermovement. Professional or trade associations, for example, can serve as countermovement organizations, giving aid to targeted individuals and institutions, coordinating their responses, providing resources, and sharing information about effective strategies. Counterorganizations thus help targeted institutions hide preexisting vulnerabilities and avoid blunders. (Their ability to do this shows that it is partly possible to predict what strategies will be blunders, rather than seeing this only in retrospect; otherwise blunders could only be recognized by their effects.)

As McAdam suggests, social movement success depends on whether the movement or its countermovement mobilizes more rapidly and effec-

tively. Gamson (1975) argues that counterorganization is more immediate if a social movement explicitly names its target. Zald and Useem (1987:254) and Mottl (1980:624) claim that social movement successes spur counter-mobilization, unless they are “crushing victories.” For example, the early successes of the pro Equal Rights Amendment movement aroused a broad backlash, because the issue “provided a link with the fundamentalist churches” and “mobilized a group, traditional homemakers, that had lost status over the two previous decades and was feeling the psychological effects of the loss” (Mansbridge, 1986:5–6). Most research on countermovements views them as efforts to undo the social changes brought about by social movements, rather than as active opponents of the social movements (often directly attacking movement organizations, as in lawsuits).

The interaction between mobilization and countermobilization can be summarized by tracing the life cycle of protest movements. Charles Tilly (1978:122) plotted movement success (“collective goods produced”) as a function of mobilization and protest activity (“resources expended”). Although his picture is static, the relationship can be seen as the life cycle of a growing movement: no action yields negative results (as the group’s interests are not protected); a little action, because repressed, yields worse losses; extensive action yields significant results, but at some point there are diminishing returns (Fig. 1, “Early Losses”). Yet the two segments of Tilly’s curve with negative slopes actually seem driven by two distinct factors: early repression by the state, and later countermobilization by other groups. This pattern fits the labor movement, which historically faced swift state responses. But how general is this pattern? Does it fit movements that avoid state repression?⁵

The target and opponent of many protest movements is not the state, but other actors in civil society. For these movements, which are not automatically repressed by the state, a small amount of action can yield substantial results. An incipient movement, still a collection of scattered groups, can be very successful. Jasper (1990:109) suggested that antinuclear groups stopped several planned nuclear reactors in the 1960s—places like Bodega Head, Cayuga Lake, Malibu, Lloyd Harbor, Nippomo Dunes—before the national antinuclear movement emerged. These groups succeeded because electric utilities felt that if one site was controversial, they could find another. Once the national movement gelled in the early 1970s, however, antinuclear groups were unable to stop the construction of reactors, as utilities universally mobilized to fight back (plants were, however, can-

⁵The abscissa reflects both the level of collective action and the size of the challenger. We assume that these typically vary together, although further research is needed to separate their effects. See Oberschall (1979:61).

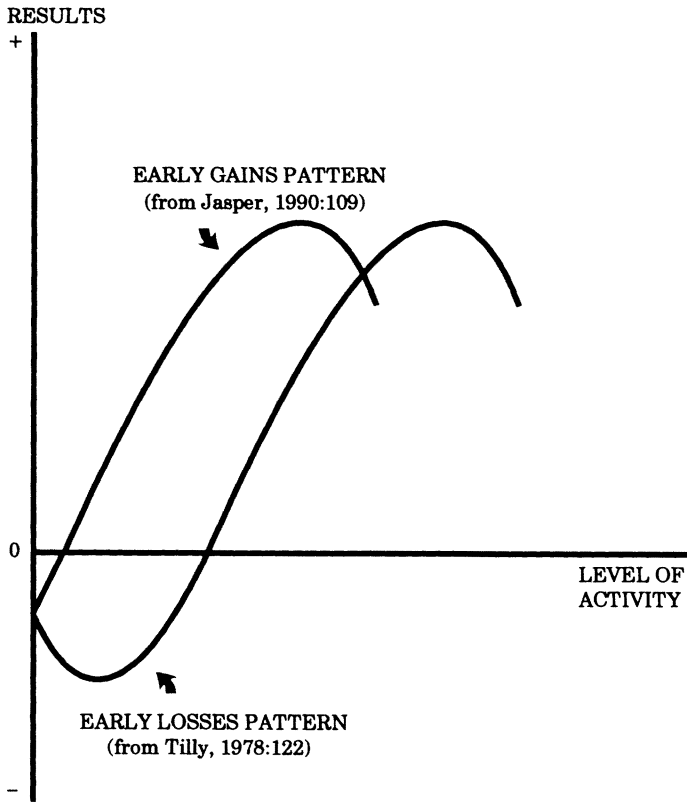


Fig. 1. Effect of mobilization on outcomes differs in absence of state repression.

celed for reasons other than public protest). Antinuclear groups did not face early state repression—hence they achieved early gains rather than early losses—but they did ultimately face countermobilization.

If a movement is recognized in the media and perceived as a threat by its targets, every battle has wider—symbolic, if not material—implications. If it appears likely that a controversy will persist, targeted institutions counterorganize, bringing powerful national pressures to bear on local antagonists; witness the federal government’s interference to stop New York State’s arrangements to retire the Shoreham nuclear plant. In both curves in Fig. 1, the increasing size of a social movement ultimately spurs countermobilization; they differ in that the “early gains” pattern assumes little state repression in the early stages of mobilization. There may also be vul-

nerabilities and blunders that protestors can exploit in the early stages of a movement but which decrease over time. The conditions for the early success may simply disappear; more surprisingly, the early success may itself undermine its own conditions (by inspiring countermobilization).

The success or failure of social movements has often been analyzed as a consequence of resource distributions rather than as an open-ended game depending on clever moves. When this structuralist perspective is relaxed, SMOs can be seen as strategic agents; with political process models the state is also seen as a key strategic agent (Tilly, 1978, McAdam, 1983). But there has been little effort to theorize the active role of nonstate organizations under attack by protestors. Not only their preexisting vulnerabilities, but their individual blunders and collective countermobilization have a crucial effect on movement success.

THREE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS

We now try to explain the outcomes of two successful and one failed campaign against particular animal experiments. The cases are similar in many ways. All three campaigns attacked institutions located in Manhattan. All involved higher-order mammals—cats and monkeys—for which there is widespread public sympathy. The same animal rights group, Trans-Species Unlimited, conducted two of the campaigns. While all three cases attracted national media attention, they were organized by local animal groups or chapters. At the same time certain differences between these cases highlight our theoretical concerns. The level of countermobilization by the research community increased over time across the three cases, and the pattern of vulnerabilities and blunders also differed in the three cases.

While these three campaigns are tactically similar to many others around the country, we do not claim they are representative. Protests have stopped relatively few animal experiments. Mainly they have caused delays and inspired costly protective measures. But it is useful to examine those campaigns that do succeed in their specific goals if we are to explain the determinants of success and failure. Why could activists stop these two experiments, when most of their efforts have failed?

The American Museum of Natural History

In 1976, several years before a discernible animal rights movement emerged, several activists who had taken a course on animal liberation taught by philosopher Peter Singer learned of an experiment on the sexual

behavior of cats at the American Museum of Natural History. Underway since 1959, this research involved mutilating cats—castrating them, removing parts of the brain, destroying the sense of smell—to observe the effects on their sexual preferences and abilities. The activists had been searching for a target in New York (for better access and media attention) that involved dubious and easily parodied research. Experiments on feline sexual practices seemed ideal.

The campaign was organized by a new coalition, although several pro-animal organizations were involved. Henry Spira, former union and civil rights activist, emerged as the key figure. As a newcomer to animal protection, he could avoid jealousies between existing animal groups. The campaign went public in June 1976. The museum received 8000 letters of protest in 1976, but its directors refused to talk with the campaign organizers. Picket lines formed outside the museum every weekend for 18 months, and because the museum has one main entrance, the activists could distribute informational leaflets to all visitors. One large rally drew 1000 people. Protestors claimed the experiments were not just cruel, but bad science and a waste of public funds. This last issue provided an opportunity for Congressman Ed Koch to visit the lab and report his skepticism: “I said to this professor, ‘Now, tell me, after you have taken a deranged male cat with brain lesions and you place it in a room and you find that it is going to mount a rabbit instead of a female cat, what have you got?’ There was no response. I said ‘How much has this cost the government?’ She said ‘\$435,000’” (Spira, 1985:199). Protestors provided a grandstand for a politician fond of posturing and sarcasm.

Like Ed Koch, the news media had fun with the weaker aspects of the experiment. Gleefully reporting the protestors’ slogans (“Curiosity Kills Cats,” and “Castrate the Scientists”), they also questioned the research itself (“Cutting up Cats to Study Sex—What Fun!” *Chicago Sun Times*, July 25, 1976). Given broad public ambivalence about science, basic research, which appears driven by sheer curiosity, may be more vulnerable than applied research. The nature of the experiments—basic research, use of a popular species, sexual behavior—provided project vulnerabilities for protestors to exploit. Even *Science* magazine wryly commented that the research “sounds like no picnic” (Wade, 1976).

The federal agency funding the research, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), was inundated with letters from the public and inquiries from Congress. Upon investigation it found that the internal museum committee that had reviewed the experiments had been composed of two of the project’s principal investigators and an outside veterinarian. An NIH official reported, “This violates the spirit of the animal welfare committee’s

function.” This was a strong preexisting vulnerability (of both the project and the institution) that helped to alienate an important financial player.

By the fall of 1977, NIH and the museum agreed to capitulate. NIH stopped funding the experiment, and the museum dismantled the labs. In 1980 the museum abolished the entire Department of Animal Behavior in which the experiments had taken place. Unknown to the animal activists, this department had occupied a weak position within the museum—an institutional vulnerability that prevented a united position to protect the research. Research in museums usually focuses on the assembly and study of collections; behavioral research had been marginal at the museum. Tension between the two kinds of research had recently surfaced in the process of filling new staff positions. The animal rights campaign aggravated this conflict, providing an excuse for museum directors to abandon a unit they already regarded as peripheral.

Cornell Medical College

In the decade following the museum case, animal rights groups proliferated, their activities accelerated, and the movement came to be widely recognized as a threat to animal experimentation. New groups were formed especially from 1981 to 1985, partly inspired by several notorious challenges to animal experiments, including a 1981 case in Silver Spring that resulted in the indictment of the principal investigator and a 1984 case in which grisly videotapes were taken from a trauma research lab at the University of Pennsylvania (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992). Trans-Species Unlimited (TSU) was founded in 1981 in eastern Pennsylvania, and its largely autonomous New York City chapter grew to be its largest. While TSU solicited funds through mailings, its forte was public protest and civil disobedience. The New York chapter had monthly meetings typically attended by over 100 people. It held a “Fur-Free Friday” each November as well as other protests, letter-writing campaigns, and outreach activities. Each spring it targeted a local scientific research project, and in 1987 it selected one at the Cornell Medical College in Manhattan.

The Cornell experiments, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), examined the effects of barbiturates on cats by means of electrodes implanted in the animals’ skulls. A pharmacology professor had been conducting this work since 1973 on around 200 cats. Animal activists target drug addiction research, on the grounds that the money should go to help real human addicts instead. As in the museum case, the use of cats made the project vulnerable to public opinion. But unlike the museum case, TSU claimed to have chosen the Cornell experiments because they were

typical, not because they were especially vulnerable. In a fund-raising brochure, TSU President George Cave (no date) boasted that “We met the Cornell experiments head-on...the public learned that the cat addiction studies were not simply an isolated instance of ‘bad’ research but an all-too-typical example of useless drug addiction experiments.” Furthermore, unlike the situation at the museum, the experiments had the full support of the funding agency and the medical school administration—there were no obvious institutional vulnerabilities.

The campaign began with a protest outside the school on April 24, 1987—World Day for Laboratory Animals. Roughly 350 people demonstrated, and 56 were arrested for civil disobedience. TSU benefited from the growing animal rights movement not only through the publicity surrounding World Day for Laboratory Animals, but also by networking with 65 other organizations to generate phone calls and letters of protest. NIDA received over 10,000 written protests, and eighty congressional offices made inquiries. Several scientists—involved in the national animal rights movement as counterexperts—drafted a critique of the experiments, arguing that, because the cat was a poor model for human barbiturate dependence, the research had no relevance for treating addicts.

Medical School officials made several surprising moves that added up to a fatal blunder. In August they met with TSU President George Cave and science advisor Murray Cohen (who advises many animal rights groups around the country). According to Cave, the officials said that the “experiments were over,” and that the renewal grant, approved in May, would not be used. He cited a letter, drafted by a Cornell committee, and sent to legislators and the media over the signature of the associate dean for sponsored programs at the medical school. While defending the pharmacologist’s research, the letter ambiguously said, “The research...that required the use of the cat model has essentially been completed.” TSU claimed victory.

Two months later the researcher applied to NIDA for a renewal grant to continue the cat studies and develop an experimental model using rats. The proposal, consigned by the dean who had sent out the earlier letter, was funded. When TSU learned of this, it renewed its letter-writing campaign, insisting that Cornell had lied or reversed its stated intentions. Cornell’s reaction placed it in an increasingly awkward position. Personally harassed, with little support from Cornell, the researcher returned the grant money in September 1988. Cornell officials said that this was done to preserve “institutional credibility” and also that it was the investigator’s own personal decision. The university itself temporarily funded her research, which turned to rats as experimental models.

TSU's Steve Siegel called the case "the first time a major experiment has ever been stopped simply because of the lack of value of the research itself." It is one of the few large experiments stopped by the animal rights movement, though for political rather than scientific reasons. However, it may also be the last. Angry scientists around the country wrote to Cornell, arguing that the university's responsibility was to protect researchers from "extremists," and that Cornell's decision was a "disastrous precedent." Even NIDA attacked the university's "ostrich-like stance" and hinted the decision might affect future funding. The fact that a major private university had stopped an ongoing research project galvanized the biomedical community. New organizations have been founded to defend the use of animals in research. Professional associations discuss tactics for countering the animal rights movement, and counsel research institutions to take unyielding positions. This activity was accelerated by the Cornell case.

New York University

Believing it had already won the Cornell campaign, TSU targeted the New York University medical school in the spring of 1988. The experiments in this case involved Macaque monkeys (like cats, a popular species), which were taught to self-administer toluene, a common industrial solvent used in glues and paints. The purpose was to understand the effects of toluene in early stages of use, for children and teens occasionally sniff toluene for pleasure. Supported by NIDA, a professor of environmental medicine was conducting the experiments 40 miles north of NYU's Manhattan campus, in a research facility at Sterling Forest.

TSU's campaign against NYU resembled the Cornell protest. It involved pickets in front of the NYU library and administration building and extensive letter writing to legislators and NYU officials. In April 1988 and again in April 1989 nearly 1000 demonstrators participated, compared to 350 in the 1987 Cornell protest. TSU did not try to talk with NYU administrators, as demonstrators had in the museum and Cornell campaigns.

TSU had little practical effect on NYU's research. Although leaders claimed some success because the campaign mobilized new supporters and attracted media coverage, the experiments were not changed in any significant way (beyond tighter security measures). TSU put little effort into organizing the second (1989) rally. After their failure to influence NYU in 1988, many TSU members turned their attention to other animal issues, and the TSU meeting just before the 1989 NYU protest gave more time to furs than to the NYU action. In April 1990 there was no protest against

NYU. The campaign was effectively over. (TSU underwent internal splits at this time, and it eventually collapsed. Other animal rights groups demonstrated at NYU in April 1991, attracting almost 300 protestors, but their focus was not these experiments.)

From the start, NYU's response to the campaign was aggressively "proactive" rather than defensive and "reactive." The day before each protest, NYU held a press conference to praise both the targeted experiments and scientific research in general. In 1988 this meeting centered on a sick 8-year-old and his mother, both with down-home Kentucky accents. The boy was a victim of a blood vessel tumor that trapped white cells and prevented blood coagulation, and scientists claimed he would not be alive except for procedures developed through animal experimentation. He and his mother proclaimed their love for animals, but also their gratitude that some animals were sacrificed to save people. Most of the news coverage of the next day's protest included clips from this conference. In the battle over public opinion NYU had found an emotional appeal to equal that of furry animals caged and victimized, and its reaction reduced the vulnerability of the project. It could contest protestors' "framing" of NYU as a heartless bureaucracy (Snow *et al.*, 1986; Snow and Benford, 1988). The university unintentionally won another symbolic battle: the protests were held in front of the building housing university administrators, which is also the main library. The disturbing image was of protestors shouting at a place symbolic of learning, while the experiments took place miles away.

TSU faced practical disadvantages as well. Held on Saturdays, the protests did not disrupt university activity, and demonstrators could not speak to university officials. Unlike the museum, there were no clear places where they could contact people entering the university. That NIDA, the funding agency for both the Cornell and the NYU experiments, had disapproved of Cornell's capitulation was not lost on NYU. Moreover, the scientific response and the counterorganization following the Cornell case had strengthened the resistance of other universities to animal rights protests. The message was clear to NYU, which ignored the demonstrators and courted public sympathy.

Cornell and NYU may be seen as end points in a continuum from defensive and reactive to positive and proactive responses, and research institutions are drawing lessons from these and similar experiences. As state and national organizations of scientists spread information about tactics, targeted institutions are increasingly likely to adopt the proactive response that worked for NYU. Analysis of our three cases suggests the result may be even fewer victories for future animal rights campaigns.

ANALYSIS

Why did the Cornell and museum campaigns succeed in stopping the experiments, while the NYU campaign, like most attacks on scientific experiments, failed? One set of explanatory factors are the choices and activities of the SMOs: their goals, tactics, recruitment, organizational structure, and mobilization of resources. Second are the preexisting vulnerabilities of the targeted institutions: project vulnerabilities such as the nature of the research, and institutional ones such as internal conflict. Third are the active responses of targeted organizations, including the presence or absence of blunders and the effect of counterorganization. The differences between the cases are summarized in Table II.

In each campaign, the SMOs made similar choices. They targeted experiments that might be offensive to a broad segment of the population because they used furry mammals and could be attacked as apparently pointless. These were significant choices, given the whole range of experiments (most of them using rodents) underway in New York laboratories. All three SMOs relied on a standard repertory of tactics: tabling to provide public information, letter writing, and a combination of occasional large rallies with more frequent picketing. All three employed mild civil disobedience, blocking traffic in order to be arrested or blocking the entrance to

Table II. Factors in the Three Cases

Variable	American Museum	Cornell University	New York University
Scope of SMO goal	Limited	Limited	Limited
Defense of research by funding agency	Weak	Strong	Strong
Project vulnerabilities	Sympathetic mammal; basic research poor internal review	Sympathetic mammal	Sympathetic mammal
Institutional vulnerabilities	Department lacked institutional support	None	None
Blunders	None	Misled public	None
Level of counterorganization	Low	Medium-high	High
Outcome	Experiment stopped	External funding stopped	Continued unchanged

the museum. The rhetoric, both verbal and visual, was similar in the three campaigns (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992, discuss this rhetoric).

The three campaigns mobilized similar numbers of demonstrators, and NIDA and the American Museum received comparable numbers of letters. The museum campaign encouraged people to send letters of protest, and those more dedicated to join picket lines. The other two campaigns encouraged people to join TSU and participate through this organization. While TSU is inevitably concerned with its own survival, it emphasizes public action rather than fundraising. It probably has more bureaucracy than an *ad hoc* coalition focused on one experiment, but organizational interests did not seem to interfere with TSU's efforts. And these organizational interests obviously do not explain the different outcomes of the NYU and Cornell campaigns.

More important in these cases than the actions of the SMOs were the vulnerabilities and responses of the targeted institutions. The museum research was vulnerable in several ways. The experiments lacked obvious practical implications, and their intellectual implications were easy to lampoon. While the experiments were bringing in outside funds, the museum depended much more heavily on public contributions. If one unit, already in a precarious position within that organization, threatened public goodwill, it could be sacrificed. Finally, the centralized physical plant, with limited access, facilitated contact between picketers and museum-goers. The museum made no egregious blunders in handling the protest, but it did not need to. The preexisting project and institutional vulnerabilities were sufficient for protestors to stop the experiment.

In contrast, Cornell made blunders in its reaction to the controversy. When the campaign began, it seemed to be in a strong position, and TSU viewed it that way. The targeted research had practical applications, even though it involved a popular species. Cornell is a private research university more dependent on government funding and alumni support than on the general public. The funding agency had no desire to stop the experiments; in fact, it strongly favored their continuation. But the medical school made strategic mistakes in dealing with the protestors. Its public relations representatives were relatively inactive. Perhaps they thought that the protestors would go away if palliated with vague promises; or that they were too weak to force Cornell to stick to its apparent promise; or that they simply would not know if the experiment continued. Having made verbal and written assurances implying the research would end, Cornell could be shamed into keeping them. Behavior that SMOs can effectively portray as lies are devastating blunders.

Although its project used appealing animals, NYU managed to minimize both its vulnerabilities and its blunders. Learning from prior experi-

ence, the university worked to maintain its strong position by trying to defuse media attention through its own emotional appeals. A large (nine-person) public relations office at the NYU medical school, with long experience in animal controversies (NYU had been attacked by other animal rights groups in 1979 and 1986), made a difference. Beyond that, the university tried to avoid misleading public statements. It sent the targeted researcher to a media training school in order to avoid embarrassments in the form of misstatements at press conferences. TSU found few preexisting vulnerabilities and triggered no blunders.

Federal funding agencies were involved in all three cases, but their influence was not strong. In the museum case, the funder actually became a source of weakness since it was the object of congressional scrutiny and seemed willing to let the research disappear. In contrast, NIDA pressured both NYU and Cornell to stand firm. In the Cornell case, the university capitulated despite NIDA's firm support of the project, while NYU resisted the animal rights campaign. So the actions of funding agencies were not decisive to the outcomes of these cases. Nonetheless, indirectly, federal agencies funding biomedical research have become enthusiastic players in the countermovement against animal rights.

The responses of the targeted institutions reflected the life cycle of the animal rights movement, for the strategies of both SMOs and their targets change as controversies mature. In the early stages of a conflict, public awareness and media coverage are limited (Jasper 1988). Then, as awareness grows, both sides tend to seek favorable public opinion. By 1988 neither the protestors nor NYU representatives were willing to talk to each other, although NYU had negotiated with other demonstrators as recently as 1986. Instead, both sides believed themselves engaged in a battle for the uncommitted public.

For the animal rights movement, the growth of a national controversy encouraged this expansive strategy. The national movement and the spread of organizational know-how and tactical innovation helped animal rights organizations mobilize members and accumulate funds. Photographs and videotapes taken from laboratories were widely distributed and proved to be effective recruiting devices. However, expansion of the controversy also spurred countermobilization by scientists. Targeted groups began to mobilize resources, share tactical information and expertise, and develop strategic sophistication to counterattack. In the 1970s, the museum case was seen as an isolated, fluke incident at an institution not primarily devoted to research. But victories like that against Cornell demanded attention. The subsequent counterorganization will probably be successful in showing future targets how to avoid blunders in resisting animal rights campaigns. No fewer than 19 state-level groups have been established since 1983 to defend biomedical research. The head of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental

Health Administration, Frederick Goodwin, decided to attend NYU's 1989 press conference himself, and said,

They succeeded at Cornell. They got the higher levels of the university to worry about contributions from alumni. They got bad publicity. So the researcher gave up the grant; taxpayers' money was wasted. And this really got the attention of the scientific community. I don't think they're going to pull that off again. I don't think NYU is going to do that. I don't think Cornell would do that again. I think we all learned a very tough lesson.

We can see how success in specific campaigns can hurt longer term success for a protest movement as a whole. In the absence of state repression, a movement may attain early gains. But these may in turn inspire even more rapid and energetic countermobilization. Then, as the controversy matures, SMOs may attend more to convincing the broader public about their cause than to attaining specific short-term goals. Future success for the animal rights movement may come through federal regulations and policies, not by stopping individual experiments.

One straightforward way that scientific institutions have reduced their vulnerabilities is by improving the conditions of laboratory animals. These movement successes (tighter federal regulations, institutional animal care and use committees) may prevent it from attaining more sweeping goals such as the abolition of certain categories of experiments or (sought by some) of all live-animal experiments. In this case, the movement simply has partly contradictory goals (reform vs. abolition). Yet it remains an open question as to whether mild success dampens a movement's fervor or encourages even more radical demands.

Additional research is necessary to uncover more complex relationships between different forms of social movement success. Perhaps some kinds of early victories do not lead to countermobilization—for example, decisive ones or imperceptible ones (Zald and Useem, 1987). Some kinds of blunders may be more difficult for a countermovement to suppress than others—for example, when institutional responses are multiple and decentralized, or when elites themselves are divided over the proper response.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of target vulnerabilities, blunders, and countermobilization suggests that larger social movements are not necessarily more successful than smaller ones in attaining their stated goals. In the absence of state repression, movements can succeed in specific campaigns when they are still small, before they have inspired countermobilization. In the three animal rights campaigns discussed in this paper, the size of the movement

and the choices of the SMOs were less important than the vulnerabilities and responses of the targeted institutions. The SMOs had to choose vulnerable targets, and to take advantage of blunders made during the disputes. But most critical were the responses of targeted groups, shaped in part by the timing of the campaign in the life of the entire animal rights movement.

One implication of this argument is that radical tactics may not always help movements succeed. Most research has found violent and other radical tactics to aid a group in attaining its demands, largely because the state is threatened in its role as keeper of order. But when movement success depends primarily on affecting nonstate actors (including the public), dialogue and compromise may be more effective. Jasper and Nelkin (1992) argued that this is true for the animal rights movement.

To set these findings in theoretical context, we propose that more attention be paid to strategic choices made on *both* sides of a social conflict. Recent work on social movements has recognized the importance of conscious actions and decisions made by social movement organizers and strategists, but the surrounding environment has been seen as a set of inflexible structures, a stage for social movement actors. In Tilly's model, state repression is almost automatic, not a choice, whereas we have shown one set of cases where early state repression is absent—a pattern we believe common for many contemporary protest movements. Especially in the absence of automatic state intervention, targeted institutions other than the state, become important strategic actors whose decisions and actions heavily influence the outcomes of social movement campaigns.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Deborah Abowitz, Edwin Amenta, Mary Bernstein, Cindy Gordon, John McCarthy, Dorothy Nelkin, Henry Spira, Yvonne Zylan, and anonymous reviewers for help and comments. Research for this paper was supported by the National Science Foundation EVS program, Grant DIR-8820241.

REFERENCES

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Ash, Roberta
1972 <i>Social Movements in America</i>. Chicago: Markham.</p> <p>Barkan, Steven E.
1984 "Legal control of the southern civil rights movement." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 49:552-565.</p> | <p>Cave, George
n.d. "Born to Be Wild...but Enslaved at NYU." Brochure, Trans-Species Unlimited.</p> <p>Freudenburg, William R.
1993 "Risk and recreancy: Weber, the division of labor, and the rationality of</p> |
|---|--|

- risk perceptions." *Social Forces* 71:909-932.
- Gamson, William A.**
1975 *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Illinois: The Dorsey Press.
- Garrow, David J.**
1978 *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hirsch, Eric L.**
1990 "Sacrifice for the cause : Group processes, recruitment, and commitment in a student social movement." *American Sociological Review* 55:243-254.
- Jasper, James M.**
1988 "The political life cycle of technological controversies." *Social Forces* 67:357-377.
1990 *Nuclear Politics: Energy and the State in the United States, Sweden, and France*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jasper, James M. and Dorothy Nelkin**
1992 *The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest*. New York: The Free Press.
- Jasper, James M. and Jane Poulsen**
1989 "Animal rights and anti-nuclear protest: Condensing symbols and the critique of instrumental reason." Paper presented at the American Sociological Association annual meetings, San Francisco.
- Kitschelt, Herbert**
1986 "Political opportunity structures and political protest." *British Journal of Political Science* 16:57-85.
- Mansbridge, Jane J.**
1986 *Why We Lost the ERA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, Doug**
1982 *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1983 "Tactical innovation and the pace of insurgency." *American Sociological Review* 48:735-754.
- Molotch, Harvey**
1970 "Oil in Santa Barbara and power in America." *Sociological Inquiry* 40:131-144.
- Mottl, Tahí L.**
1980 "The analysis of countermovements." *Social Problems* 27:620-635.
- Oberschall, Anthony**
1979 "Protracted conflict." In Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy (eds.), *The Dynamics of Social Movements: 45-70*. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop.
- Piven, Frances Fox, and Richard A. Cloward**
1977 *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford**
1988 "Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization." *International Social Movement Research* 1:197-217.
- Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford**
1986 "Frame alignment processes, micro-mobilization, and movement participation." *American Sociological Review* 51:464-481.
- Spira, Henry**
1985 "Fighting to win." In Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: 194-208*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Staggenborg, Suzanne**
1986 "Coalition work in the pro-choice movement: Organizational and environmental opportunities and obstacles." *Social Problems* 33:374-390.
- Tilly, Charles**
1978 *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Random House.
- Troyer, Ronald J. and Gerald E. Markle**
1983 *Cigarettes: The Battle over Smoking*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Wade, Nicholas**
1976 "Animal rights: NIH cat sex study brings grief to New York museum." *Science* 194:162-166.
- Walsh, Edward J.**
1986 "The role of target vulnerabilities in high-technology protest movements: the nuclear establishment at Three Mile Island." *Sociological Forum* 1:199-218.
- Zald, Mayer N. and Bert Useem**
1987 "Movement and countermovement interaction: Mobilization, tactics, and state involvement." In Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy (eds.), *Social Movements in an Organizational Society: 247-272*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 1 of 3 -



You have printed the following article:

Fighting Back: Vulnerabilities, Blunders, and Countermobilization by the Targets in Three Animal Rights Campaigns

James M. Jasper; Jane Poulsen

Sociological Forum, Vol. 8, No. 4. (Dec., 1993), pp. 639-657.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0884-8971%28199312%298%3A4%3C639%3AFBVBAC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5>

This article references the following linked citations. If you are trying to access articles from an off-campus location, you may be required to first logon via your library web site to access JSTOR. Please visit your library's website or contact a librarian to learn about options for remote access to JSTOR.

References

Legal Control of the Southern Civil Rights Movement

Steven E. Barkan

American Sociological Review, Vol. 49, No. 4. (Aug., 1984), pp. 552-565.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28198408%2949%3A4%3C552%3ALCOTSC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>

Risk and Recreancy: Weber, the Division of Labor, and the Rationality of Risk Perceptions

William R. Freudenburg

Social Forces, Vol. 71, No. 4. (Jun., 1993), pp. 909-932.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732%28199306%2971%3A4%3C909%3ARARWTD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>

Sacrifice for the Cause: Group Processes, Recruitment, and Commitment in a Student Social Movement

Eric L. Hirsch

American Sociological Review, Vol. 55, No. 2. (Apr., 1990), pp. 243-254.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28199004%2955%3A2%3C243%3ASFCTCGP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-L>

LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 2 of 3 -



The Political Life Cycle of Technological Controversies

James M. Jasper

Social Forces, Vol. 67, No. 2. (Dec., 1988), pp. 357-377.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732%28198812%2967%3A2%3C357%3ATPLCOT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J>

Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies

Herbert P. Kitschelt

British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 16, No. 1. (Jan., 1986), pp. 57-85.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-1234%28198601%2916%3A1%3C57%3APOSAPP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q>

Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency

Doug McAdam

American Sociological Review, Vol. 48, No. 6. (Dec., 1983), pp. 735-754.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28198312%2948%3A6%3C735%3ATIATPO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-%23>

The Analysis of Countermovements

Tahi L. Mottl

Social Problems, Vol. 27, No. 5, Sociology of Political Knowledge Issue: Theoretical Inquiries, Critiques and Explications. (Jun., 1980), pp. 620-635.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7791%28198006%2927%3A5%3C620%3ATAOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5>

Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation

David A. Snow; E. Burke Rochford, Jr.; Steven K. Worden; Robert D. Benford

American Sociological Review, Vol. 51, No. 4. (Aug., 1986), pp. 464-481.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28198608%2951%3A4%3C464%3AFAPMAM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-2>

Coalition Work in the Pro-Choice Movement: Organizational and Environmental Opportunities and Obstacles

Suzanne Staggenborg

Social Problems, Vol. 33, No. 5. (Jun., 1986), pp. 374-390.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7791%28198606%2933%3A5%3C374%3ACWITPM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9>

LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 3 of 3 -



Animal Rights: NIH Cat Sex Study Brings Grief to New York Museum

Nicholas Wade

Science, New Series, Vol. 194, No. 4261. (Oct. 8, 1976), pp. 162-167.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0036-8075%2819761008%293%3A194%3A4261%3C162%3AARNCSS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B>

The Role of Target Vulnerabilities in High-Technology Protest Movements: The Nuclear Establishment at Three Mile Island

Edward J. Walsh

Sociological Forum, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Spring, 1986), pp. 199-218.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0884-8971%28198621%291%3A2%3C199%3ATROTVI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-%23>