

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITANT TACTICS IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN PROTEST

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It is frequently argued by both activists and social scientists that relatively powerless members of political communities--minority groups, the lower class, the poor, etc.--can enhance their influence and obtain economic and political benefits by mobilizing for militant political action (Alinsky, 1946; Wilson, 1961; Waskow, 1967; Kahn, 1970; and Cloward and Piven, 1975). Recently two extensive investigations of protest movements have presented systematic evidence documenting the effectiveness of militancy. In The Strategy of Social Protest, William Gamson (1975) has examined the activities of 53 American protest groups that mobilized between 1800 and 1945 to challenge some aspect of the status quo. As part of his analysis, Gamson measured both the strategies utilized by protest groups (whether or not the group used violence or some other type of "constraint" such as strikes and boycotts) and the outcome of the protest activity. Gamson found that "unruly groups, those that use violence, strikes, and other constraints, have better than average success rates" (Gamson, 1975: 87). In a somewhat complementary analysis of protest in Europe between 1830 and 1930, Charles Tilly et al. (1975) found that very few "initially powerless groups. . . accomplish any significant part of their objectives without some involvement in violence."

Although the investigations by Gamson and the Tillys are highly suggestive, it is not clear that their findings--based on the analysis of historical protest movements--are valid for contemporary protest in American communities. It is difficult to explain the present decline in the frequency of militant protest if, as Gamson and the Tillys argue, these tactics enhance the chances of success by protest groups. Given the relative quiescence of the 1970s, it makes more sense to hypothesize that, in recent years, protest groups using militant tactics have been relatively unsuccessful.

Anthony Oberschall (1973) has developed a new and appealing theory of protest movements--the "resource management approach"--which appears to reinforce the view that militancy may be less effective for contemporary protesters than suggested by the analyses of Gamson and the Tillys. According to Oberschall, protesters are engaged in rational and instrumental political activity. Rational "risk/reward" calculations are made by protesters prior to adopting a particular action. The mode of action chosen is that which appears to promise maximum rewards while minimizing risks. The high levels of militant protest in the 1960s in American cities suggest that the rewards for engaging in militancy in that decade must have seemed great to many discontented citizens. But, by the same token, the reduced levels of militant protest in American cities in the 1970s suggest that the rewards of engaging in militancy are now (or seem) minimal. If militant activities by protesters are indeed highly effective at present, the resource management approach would predict that rational protesters would more

frequently utilize such tactics to attain economic and political benefits from their targets. The fact that citizens continue to experience widespread discontent with the policies and services delivered by municipal governments (Rossi, et al., 1974; Fowler, 1974) but normally forego militant protest suggests that most protest groups have learned to question the proposition that militancy is rewarding.

This paper will thus examine the notion that militancy enhances effectiveness of protest groups operating in contemporary urban settings within the United States. Several models will be suggested and tested which relate various protest strategies to obtaining "responsive" outcomes from public officials in American communities. These models, which range in complexity from a simple bivariate model to multivariate models which test for curvilinearity, reciprocal causation, and interaction effects, are presented in the third section of this paper. Before turning to these models, however, it is necessary to discuss the concepts and data used in this paper. In the first section, a definition of protest groups is presented. In addition, the key variables in this study--the strategies which protest groups adopt and the responsiveness of authorities in local political communities--are discussed. In the second section, the data used to examine the relationship between protest strategies and responsiveness are briefly described.

PROTEST GROUPS: STRATEGIES AND POLICY RESPONSIVENESS

Protest groups are groups of citizens who do not normally interact with governmental officials. Under certain conditions, when they perceive that their interests are threatened by the activities of others or that the political system can be of use in furthering these interests, they organize on an informal, issue-specific basis to make demands on public officials through group processes (Schumaker, 1975: 490).

According to this definition, protest groups are to be distinguished from traditional interest groups on grounds of regular access to authorities. Interest groups have regular access to political authorities and, as a consequence, usually have substantial power resources (for example, professional leadership, financial well-being, and legitimacy). Protest groups lack regular access to political authorities and usually have fewer power resources than interest groups.

It should be noted that this definition of protest groups departs from that used by leading students of political protest. According to Lipsky (1970), "protest activity is...characterized by showmanship or display of an unconventional nature." And Eisinger (1973) defines protest as "a device by which groups of people manipulate fear of disorder and violence." Thus, Lipsky and Eisinger suggest that the term "protest group" should be reserved for those groups which use demonstrations, obstructions, boycotts, and other "unconventional" or "militant" protest strategies.

This prevailing conception of protest which focuses on the unconventional unnecessarily limits the various protest strategies which researchers can investigate by the comparative model. In order to compare the effectiveness of unconventional "militant" protest strategies relative to the effectiveness of more conventional "moderate" strategies, it is necessary to have a conception of protest groups which is broad enough to incorporate groups using a variety of strategies (Hawley, 1970: 1257).

To facilitate an investigation of the impacts of various protest actions, it is useful to envision alternative strategies as lying along a conventional-unconventional continuum. The following ordinal scale, which is similar to scales adopted by observers of student protest (Long and Foster, 1970; Bayer and Astin, 1969), has been adopted as the major independent variable in this study.

- (1) The private airing of grievances. Discussing grievances and negotiating with officials in a nonpublic forum.
- (2) The public airing of grievances. Discussing grievances and negotiating with officials in a public forum; seeking publicity which seeks to discredit or embarrass officials into responding positively to protest demands.
- (3) Physical group actions. Making grievances known to the community by having marches, rallies, or other highly visible demonstrations of political mobilization.
- (4) Obstructive group actions. Engaging in disruptions, such as sit-ins and boycotts, which inconvenience others and which suggest the possibility that violence may erupt.
- (5) Violent Actions. Inflicting personal injury on others in the community or damaging property.¹

The effectiveness of these various protest strategies will be examined in terms of their capacity to attain favorable policy responses from local political systems. This criterion of protest effectiveness, which is here labeled "policy responsiveness", is defined as the degree to which authorities of local political systems adopt public policies congruent with the manifest or explicitly-stated demands of protest groups. Policy responsiveness, like the protest strategy variable, is envisioned as a continuous variable approximated by the following ordinal scale.

- (1) Repressive policy responses. Responding by taking no actions favorable to protest groups, but, instead, taking some actions which are unfavorable or repressive to them.
- (2) No action. The failure to take any action of either a repressive or responsive nature.
- (3) Minimal policy responses. Responding by taking such actions as (a) establishing a program or law which is concerned with alleviating the protest grievances but which does not satisfy the protest group, (b) making token gestures, or (c) passing symbolic legislation.
- (4) Compromise policy responses. Responding by giving protest groups some, but not all, of what they demand.
- (5) Responsive policy actions. Responding by enacting policies congruent with the demands of the protest groups.

It should be noted that there are limitations in examining only policy responsiveness as a measure of the effectiveness of various protest group actions. First, attaining policies congruent with protest group demands hardly assures a "successful" conclusion as far as protest groups are concerned. As Lipsky (1970) points out, responsive policies may not be fully implemented or they may be ineffective; if this is the case, protest groups grievances will not be alleviated. Secondly, protest strategies which fail to obtain favorable policy responses or fail to alleviate protest group grievances may still serve positive functions for protest groups. For example, various scholars have suggested that unconventional protest strategies should be judged, in part, according to whether they

(1) enable protesters to meet with their targets and make their views known (Eisinger, 1973: 17), (2) enable the group to be accepted by their adversaries as spokesmen on behalf of legitimate concerns and grievances (Gamson, 1975: 31-34), (3) publicize the group's grievances and bring some transformation in public consciousness regarding these grievances (Zikmund, 1971), (4) politicize the protesters themselves, activating them for future political action (Ambrecht, 1974), and (5) help build organizational resources which are of use in future conflict with political officials (Alinsky, 1946).

In short, the criterion for the effectiveness of various protest group strategies which is examined in this paper is a limited but important criterion. Because policy responsiveness is an important goal of instrumental protest group activity and because policy responsiveness is seen by protesters as a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for alleviating their grievances, the degree of policy responsiveness to protest group demands serves as a useful dependent variable for analyzing the effectiveness of various protest group strategies.

DATA

In order to examine the relationship between various protest strategies and policy responsiveness, two samples of conflicts between local protest groups and political authorities in American communities were collected and analyzed. One sample consists of 93 protest incidents occurring primarily in the 1960s. This sample, referred to throughout this paper as the case studies sample, utilized data collected through content analysis of "case study" descriptions by scholars and journalists of these protest incidents. Cases were selected for inclusion in this sample on the basis of the availability of written reports on the incident. Thus, while the cases were not drawn using random sampling procedures, there is no known basis for believing the sample is biased. Procedures outlined by Gurr (1972) were used to code and measure the variables in the models for each protest incident in this sample.

The second sample, referred to as the questionnaires sample, consisted of 119 protest incidents occurring primarily in the early 1970's. It utilized data obtained from mail questionnaires sent to informants in 46 American communities. The informants consisted of officials in agencies which provide controversial public services (e.g., school administrators, directors of welfare departments, directors of housing agencies). As potential targets of citizen protest, these officials were asked to provide information, elicited through a combination of forced response and open-ended questions, regarding the most recent protest incident targeted at their agency.

ANALYSIS OF MODELS

In this section, several models involving the relationships between various protest strategies and policy responsiveness are developed and tested. First, a simple bivariate model is examined. Second, a multivariate model which controls for certain possible spuriousness-producing variables is developed. Third, a model is created permitting the examination for curvilinearity in the strategy-responsiveness relationship. A fourth model is developed to explore the possibility of reciprocal causation between protest strategies and policy responsiveness. Finally, interactive models are considered which suggest some conditions under which various protest strategies may be particularly effective or ineffective in terms of attaining responsive policies from community officials.

(1) A Bivariate Model.

The relationship between protest strategies and responsiveness can be most simply expressed as a bivariate model in which the use of increasingly unconventional strategies is associated with either increasing or decreasing responsiveness. The hypothesis of this study is that the use of unconventional strategies decreases policy responsiveness.

In order to test this hypothesis, several zero-order statistics measuring the relationship between the unconventionality of strategies and policy responsiveness are reported in Table 1.² The data are inconclusive. In the questionnaires sample, the hypothesis that unconventional strategies reduce policy responsiveness is supported. However, in the case studies sample, there is no significant relationship between the strategies employed by protesters and the policy response of their targets.

Table 1

The Bivariate Relationship Between the
Unconventionality of Protest Strategies and Policy Responsiveness

Measures of Association	Spearman's r	Kendall's r	Pearson's r	Beta-weight
Samples				
Case Studies Sample	-.01	-.01	-.03	-.03
Questionnaires Sample	-.24*	-.20*	-.22*	-.22*

* Indicates significance, using a one-tailed test at the .05 level.

In searching for an explanation of the divergent findings in the two samples, the most obvious hypothesis concerns the different time periods covered by the two samples. In this regard, it seems reasonable to suggest that the strategy-responsiveness relationship may be affected by the degree to which unconventional strategies are novel. Unconventional strategies are most likely to be effective when they are novel; they are at least likely to be effective when they are commonplace. The reason for this hypothesis is that the effectiveness of unconventional strategies depends on fear that violence may erupt as frustrated protesters escalate their tactics (Von Eschen, et al., 1969). However, as unconventional strategies become commonplace, the fears of both the public and authorities decrease as authorities learn how to control the prospects of violence. Thus, the routinization of unconventional protest reduces its coercive impact and leads to its increasing ineffectiveness.

In many incidents in the case studies sample, protest groups used marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and other unconventional strategies which, occurring in the early and mid-1960s, were new experiences for many protest targets. However, in recent protest, captured in the questionnaires sample, unconventional actions were much less novel and, hence, resulted in a relatively small number of policy changes. This explanation will be further tested when we turn to an examination of a multivariate model relating protest strategies to policy responsiveness.

(2) A Multivariate Model.

Although the data in Table 1 are useful for casting doubt on the universality of the findings of Gamson and the Tillys regarding the effectiveness of militant tactics, the possibility remains that the empirical relationships reported in Table 1 are spurious. There are theoretical reasons for supposing that two variables--protest group demands and protest group organization--may produce a spurious relationship between our measures of protester strategies and policy responsiveness.

Regarding protest group demands, it can be suggested that policy responsiveness is reduced when protest groups make "zero-sum" demands which are highly threatening to others in the community (Gamson, 1975: 38-50).³ The use of unconventional strategies could be spuriously related to unresponsiveness; militancy and unresponsiveness could be mutually caused by the type of demands raised (Gamson, 1975: 80). In order to cope with this possibility, a variable labeled "the zero-sumness of demands"--which estimates the degree to which the public would be burdened by acquiescing to protest group demands--can be included in a multivariate analysis in order to control for its effects.

Similarly, it can be hypothesized that the stability of protest group organization may be a spuriousness-producing factor because of its relationship with both protest strategies and responsiveness. Protest organizations can vary from completely ad hoc associations of citizens to groups which draw in various ways on the resources of stable organizations (Gamson, 1975: 89-92). Given this variation in the degree of the "bureaucratization" of protest organizations, it can be hypothesized that highly unorganized groups, possessing few conventional resources, may tend to utilize unconventional strategies. At the same time, the lack of organizational stability may result in diminished responsiveness to protest group demands (Gamson, 1975: 92). If these hypotheses are correct, a spurious relationship between the use of unconventional strategies and unresponsiveness could appear in bivariate analyses such as that reported in Table 1.

Table 2 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between the use of unconventional strategies and policy responsiveness, when controls have been applied for both the zero-sumness of demands and organizational stability. These data suggest, first, that in general there is no significant causal relationship between the strategies employed by protesters and policy responsiveness.

The data in Table 2 also point to a second important conclusion. As suggested in our previous discussion of the bivariate model, the effectiveness of unconventional strategies may indeed be affected by the degree to which such strategies are novel. In Table 2, the protest incidents comprising the case studies sample have been divided into three time periods. These data show that in the early 1960s, when unconventional protests were relatively novel experiences for most protest targets, these tactics enhanced responsiveness ($\beta = .32$). In subsequent time periods, as unconventional protest became relatively commonplace, the effectiveness of militant strategies appears to have declined ($\beta = .04$ in the mid-1960s and $\beta = -.15$ in the late 1960s).

The results presented thus far suggest there is little causal connection between the strategies employed by protest groups and achieving policy successes. And if there is a causal relationship between these variables, it is a relationship

Table 2

The Relationship Between the Unconventionality of Protest Strategies
and Policy Responsiveness, Controlling for
Demands and Organizational Structure

Sample	Measures of Association	N	Zero-order r	Partial r ^a	Beta-Weight ^a
Case Studies Sample					
ALL cases		93	-.03	-.02	-.02
Cases Prior to 1963		29	.07	.32*	.32*
Cases Between 63 and 65		31	-.14	.03	.04
Cases after 1965		33	-.02	-.14	-.15
Questionnaires Sample		119	-.22*	-.12	-.11

* Indicates significance, using a two-tailed test, at the .05 level.

^a The partial correlation coefficients and beta-weights indicate the relationship between the unconventionality of protest strategies and policy responsiveness controlling for the zero-sumness of demands and organizational stability.

which is variable over time.

(3) Test for Curvilinearity.

In recent years, a body of literature has developed citing the effectiveness of non-violent direct action as a protest strategy (Etzioni, 1970; Bell, 1968). According to its advocates, the use of non-violent, direct action tactics creates a crisis situation where officials feel that they must either capitulate or repress the protest group. Given these two choices, officials will usually choose capitulation; for repression is perceived as an illegitimate response to non-violent protest groups. The repression alternative would seem much more viable if the protest group resorts to violence.

In order to test for such curvilinear relationships, we have simply examined, in separate regression equations, the effectiveness of each of the various strategies available to protest groups.

The data testing these considerations are given in Table 3. Although the independent effects of various protest strategies on policy responsiveness (indicated by the partial correlation coefficients and beta-weights) are quite weak and do not attain customary levels of statistical significance, the limitations of the linear model are suggested. It appears that there may be a curvilinear relationship between unconventionality of protest strategies and policy responsiveness, but it is not the curvilinear model originally hypothesized. Instead of those non-violent direct action strategies in the middle of the unconventionality of strategy continuum being most effective, the data suggest that these strategies are least effective.⁴ Figure 1 summarizes the argument.

Although contrary to expectations generated by advocates of non-violent direct action, these findings can nevertheless be given a broad theoretical interpretation which is consistent with the previous literature regarding protest groups. James Q. Wilson (1961: 291-292) has argued that certain protest strategies can be effective if they generate "negative inducements"; protesters who use strategies involving "threats" and "sanctions" can induce targets to provide concessions in exchange for "not acting in a certain (disruptive) manner." Michael Lipsky (1970: 2) has countered that "positive inducements" are also important. Rather than threatening to bring deprivations upon others, protest groups can use strategies which "appeal to other groups" and attempt to persuade rather than coerce them into responding positively to protest demands.

Given these notions regarding positive and negative inducements, the following propositions can be suggested regarding their relative effectiveness.

- (1) Political systems will be most responsive to groups which maximize the use of positive inducements. When groups negotiate with officials, targets will respond in a favorable manner whenever it is economically and politically feasible.
- (2) Political systems will be less responsive to groups which maximize the use of negative inducements. When groups attempt to coerce or embarrass public officials, they will respond in a favorable manner only when the economic and political pressures are so severe that prudence requires capitulation.

Table 3
The Relationship Between Various Protest Strategies
and Policy Responsiveness

Measure of Association Strategy	The Case Studies Sample			The Questionnaires Sample		
	Zero-Order r	Partial r ^a	Beta- Weight ^a	Zero-Order r	Partial r ^a	Beta- Weight ^a
Negotiation	.34*	.29*	.28*	.13	.07	.06
Attending Public Hearings	--(b)	--	--	.04	.12	.11
Collecting Petitions	--(b)	--	--	-.05	-.01	-.01
Demonstrating	-.15	-.12	-.12	-.20*	-.14	-.13
Engaging in Obstruction	-.11	-.09	-.08	-.14	-.10	-.09
Boycotting Public Services	.02	.03	.03	-.06	.07	.06
Boycotting Community Businesses	.01	.07	.06	--(b)	--	--
Engaging in Violence	-.11	-.02	-.02	-.11	-.02	-.02

* Indicates significance, using a two-tailed test, at the .05 level.

^a The partial correlation coefficients and beta-weights indicate the relationship between various protest strategies and policy responsiveness controlling for protester demands.

^b These samples did not have enough cases in which the indicated strategies were used to be statistically analyzed.

Figure 1

Curvilinear Models of Protest Strategies and Policy Responsiveness

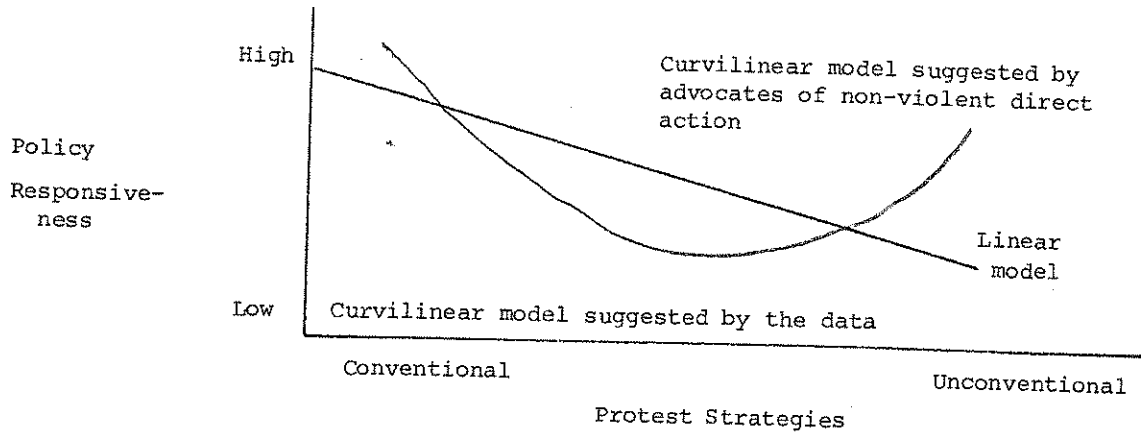
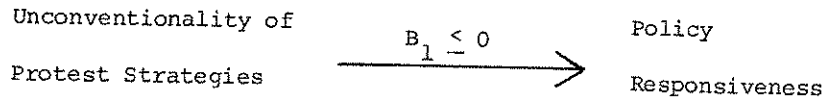


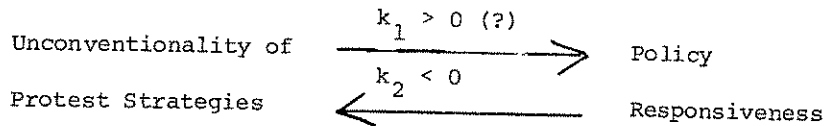
Figure 2

Reciprocal Causation Between Protest Strategies and Policy Responsiveness

The Recursive Model



The Reciprocal Causation Model



(3) Political systems will be least responsive to groups which fail to maximize the possibilities of either positive or negative inducements. Targets are hostile to such groups because of their coercive actions; but these actions are too feeble to require targets to capitulate to protest group demands.

It should be noted that these propositions are consistent with a well-established principle of operant conditioning: the behaviors of targets are most effectively modified by the use of reinforcing stimuli, are less effectively modified by the use of aversive stimuli, and are least subject to modification if no positive or negative inducements are available.⁵ When these principles are applied to the question of the effectiveness of various protest strategies, they suggest that negotiation is the most effective protest strategy, boycott strategies are the next most effective, and demonstrations and obstructions are least effective. This theory about the effectiveness of various protest strategies is consistent with the data.

(4) A Reciprocal Causation Model.

To this point, the theoretical concern of this paper has been on how the use of unconventional strategies by protest groups affects the policy response of community targets. It has thus been assumed that any correlation between these variables reflects a uni-directional relationship in which the strategies employed by protesters cause the policy response. However, it can be argued that the policy response of authorities may affect protest group decisions regarding the use of unconventional strategies. This possibility is diagrammed in Figure 2. If unresponsiveness causes protesters to use unconventional strategies (if $K_2 < 0$ in Figure 2), then a single statistic associating these variables (β_1 in Figure 2) could mask the possibility that the use of unconventional strategies actually enhances responsiveness (K_2 could be positive in Figure 2).

These data provide little support for the hypothesis that unresponsiveness results in the use of unconventional strategies. In the case studies sample, only the relationship suggesting that violence is enhanced by unresponsiveness ($K_2 = -.82$) is significant at conventional levels. Moreover, in the questionnaires sample, the values of K_2 are weak and insignificant. Thus the hypothesis that unresponsiveness leads to tactical escalation by protest groups must be treated as tentative.

(5) Interactive Models.

The data analysis of the models considered thus far has suggested that, although protest group strategies may affect responsiveness, the general relationship among these variables is weak. One possible reason for the weakness of this relationship may be that various protest strategies are effective under some conditions and ineffective under other conditions. The specification of the conditions when various protest strategies are particularly effective (or ineffective) is, therefore, an important way of enhancing theoretical understanding of the relationship between protest strategies and responsiveness. By suggesting and testing nonadditive models, it is possible to determine whether responsiveness is affected by "interaction effects" between the protest strategy variable and other conditioning variables.

The conditioning factors affecting the relationship between protest strategies and responsiveness may be of two types: conditions pertaining to the protest

groups themselves and conditions pertaining to the environment in which protest groups find themselves. In this study, two aspects of each of these conditioning factors are examined. Regarding protest group characteristics, models are suggested and tested which examine (1) whether unconventional strategies are most effective for blacks or for whites and (2) whether unconventional strategies are most successful for ad hoc or stable protest groups. Regarding environmental characteristics, models are suggested and tested which examine (1) whether unconventional strategies are most effective when groups face hostile or supportive communities and (2) whether unconventional strategies are most effective when community governmental structures are reformed or unreformed. These variables are examined for prescriptive reasons. Protest groups can use knowledge attained from models incorporating these variables by attending to the conditions which prevail in their particular situations and by adopting strategies which are most likely to be effective under these conditions.

Hypothesis 1: Unconventional strategies are more positively related to policy responsiveness for black protesters than for white protesters. The notion that unconventional strategies are most effectively used by blacks is based on the fact that such strategies were developed and made a common aspect of political life by the black civil rights movement. Blacks, therefore, should be relatively experienced and sophisticated in the use of these strategies.

The data do not confirm the hypothesis. Although blacks apparently used unconventional strategies somewhat more effectively than whites in the case studies sample, the differences between the races are small and statistically insignificant. And in the questionnaires sample, blacks made even less effective use of unconventional strategies than did whites. This suggests that local political systems do not differentiate between races when responding to groups using unconventional strategies.

Hypothesis 2: Relative to more permanent groups, protesters lacking stable organizations are most likely to increase their effectiveness by utilizing unconventional protest strategies. This hypothesis is based on the notion that organizational stability can be both an asset and a liability for protest groups affecting their ability to utilize various protest strategies successfully (Lipsky and Levi, 1972). On the one hand, organizational stability should provide protesters with the conventional resources and skills which enable them to use conventional strategies more effectively than ad hoc groups. On the other hand, stable groups must be more concerned than ad hoc groups with their own viability and persistence. Therefore, they cannot pursue vigorously those unconventional strategies which diminish their cohesion. Ad hoc groups are more likely to be composed of people who are like-minded regarding proper strategies (as well as proper demands) and can thus actively and perhaps effectively utilize unconventional strategies to achieve their goals (Davies, 1966: 177-177).

The data suggest that conventional strategies may be used more effectively by stable organizations than ad hoc organizations. Unconventional strategies may be more useful for ad hoc groups than for stable groups. However, these assertions must be treated very tentatively, as hypotheses; for the differences between ad hoc groups and stable organizations are weak and statistically insignificant.

Hypothesis 3: When groups enjoy social support, conventional strategies are most likely to enhance responsiveness. But when groups face a hostile environ-

ment, unconventional strategies may enhance responsiveness. As mentioned previously, the use of unconventional strategies is likely to diminish social support for protest group demands. But social support is not only a function of protest group strategies but also is affected by the nature of protest group demands and other characteristics regarding protest groups (Schumaker, 1975: 518). Therefore various sectors of a community may have predispositions toward protest groups which such groups should take into consideration when devising their protest strategies. For example, when various sectors of the community are favorably disposed towards a protest group and its demands, the use of unconventional strategies may simply antagonize those who would otherwise be allies. This increased hostility may, in turn, diminish the targets' responsiveness to protest groups. But when protesters face hostile attitudes in the various sectors of the community, they may find that the use of unconventional strategies is particularly effective. Positive inducements may fail to change the minds of those who oppose protest groups, but negative inducements may convince targets that capitulation is preferable to incurring the sanctions which unconventional strategies impose.

The data suggest that the effectiveness of various protest strategies may be dependent on the amount of social support which protest groups enjoy. The data in the case studies sample suggest that when groups face hostile and partly hostile environments, the use of unconventional strategies is positively related to responsiveness. However, the questionnaire data do not exactly collaborate this finding; instead, these data suggest that, although unconventional strategies are more effective in a hostile than a supportive environment, these strategies remain associated with unresponsive policies. Still, both data sets support the notion that unconventional strategies are particularly ineffective when groups face supportive audiences; under these conditions the use of conventional strategies appears to enhance policy responsiveness.

Hypothesis 4: Unconventional strategies are most likely to be successful in cities having a mixture of reformed and unreformed governmental structures.

Peter Eisinger (1973) has argued that unconventional protest is most likely to be effective in cities having a mixture of reformed and unreformed characteristics. On the one hand, according to Eisinger, reformed governmental structures create an "extremely closed system" in which unconventional protest "finds neither tolerance nor elicits favorable responses." On the other hand, unreformed governmental structure are much more "open"; in such environments protest groups can be effectively heard by using conventional protest strategies, and unconventional "protest will be unnecessary." Eisinger (1973) thus concludes that unconventional protest "flourishes" in a system having a mixture of reformed and unreformed characteristics.

The data suggest that Eisinger may be correct in pointing out that unconventional protest is not likely to be effective in communities having reformed characteristics. However, the presence of mixed governmental characteristics does not appear to enhance the effectiveness of unconventional protest. Conventional protest strategies appear to be more effective than unconventional protest strategies in communities having reformed, mixed, and unreformed governmental structures.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has developed and tested several models regarding the relationship

between using various protest strategies and attaining positive policy responses from political officials in American cities. The analysis has been exploratory and conclusions must be deemed tentative for a number of reasons. First, many of the relationships considered are empirically weak and fail to meet conventional levels of statistical significance. Secondly, the data used in testing the models are not ideal. Both sampling and measurement error occur and may partly account for both the divergences in the two samples and for the weak relationships which have been found.⁶ Thirdly, although efforts have been made to consider alternative explanations for the empirical relationships in the data (by developing multivariate recursive and nonrecursive models), the causal inferences which are drawn from the models are tentative subject to further investigation. Finally, conclusions about the over-all effectiveness of various protest strategies are unwarranted because only one impact--the policy responsiveness impact--of using these strategies has been examined.

Nevertheless, some important conclusions are suggested by the analysis in this paper. The most general finding is that, contrary to the findings of Gamson and the Tillys, unconventional protest strategies appear to reduce policy responsiveness. However, some qualifications appear to be warranted. First, not all unconventional strategies are equally ineffective. Strategies, such as boycotting public services and community businesses, which can make use of important political and economic sanctions, may often be effective. However, other unconventional strategies fail to utilize fully these negative inducements and therefore are seldom effective. Demonstrating and engaging in obstructions appear to be examples of such strategies. A second qualification is that the use of unconventional strategies may enhance responsiveness to protest group demands under certain specific conditions. For example, groups which totally lack organizational resources or the support of various sectors of the community may be more likely to succeed in their demands if they use the negative inducements of unconventional strategies rather than the positive inducements of more conventional strategies.

A third qualification is that the policy effectiveness of unconventional strategies may vary over time. This possibility would be able to account for the conflicting findings of Gamson and the Tillys and Schumaker (1975) and for the varying relationships between unconventional strategies and policy responsiveness in the different samples and subsamples of protest examined in this study. It may well be that unconventional strategies go through cycles of relative effectiveness followed by relative ineffectiveness. When unconventional strategies are novel experiences for targets, their coercive aspects may be effective. But as these experiences become commonplace and targets learn to exert counter-control, the effectiveness of unconventional strategies may wane. It follows, of course, that after a period of non-use, unconventional strategies may again become novel and effective tools of protest groups.

An implication of the above consideration is that in the 1970s, the use of unconventional strategies has declined as the effectiveness of these strategies has declined. As suggested in the introduction, the psychological principles of reinforcement and extinction may explain the present reduced level of unconventional protest activity. However, to suggest that the use of conventional strategies is presently declining is not to suggest that political protest is declining. Citizens with grievances about their governments continue to organize on ad hoc issue-specific bases to express their demands. It is reasonable to suppose that they are simply doing so in conventional rather than unconventional ways. Indeed, given the greater effectiveness of these strategies, it is rational that they do so.

NOTES

1. The notion that urban violence and civil disorder is a form of political protest is generally accepted among social scientists. However, one might contrast the work of Edward Banfield (1968: 185-209) with that of Peter Lupsha (1969), Robert Fogelson (1971), and David Sears and John McConahay (1973).

2. The Spearman and Kendall measures are non-parametric statistics which are appropriate for measuring the degree of association between two ordinal level variables. The Pearsonian correlation coefficients and standardized regression statistics assume an interval level of measurement while both our measures, the degree to which protesters utilize unconventional strategies and the degree of policy responsiveness, are only ordinal level. However, see Tukey (1961) and Kim (1975) for discussions of the validity of using regression-based statistics when one's measures are ordinal level.

The purpose of reporting both non-parametric and regression-based statistics in Table 1 is to show that there are only negligible differences among these statistics. This suggests that little or no error is introduced by treating our ordinal level measures as interval-level data. For this reason, it seems appropriate to use regression analysis to test the more complex models reported in this paper.

3. The "zero-sumness" of demands can be considered to be one indicator of the radicalness of protester demands. In an earlier study, other dimensions of group demands (e.g., the extent to which groups demanded change, and the extent to which groups sought "status" rather than "welfare" goals) were analyzed as indicators of the radicalness of group demands (Schumaker, 1975). That analysis suggested that the zero-sumness of demands had the greatest construct validity of any indicator of protest demands.

4. Throughout this paper, correlation and regression coefficients which approach zero are given a theoretical significance beyond the normal interpretation that there is no significant relationship between variables. For example, the finding that there is no relationship between a protest strategy variable (e.g., the boycott variables) and responsiveness is often given the interpretation, which would be more apparent in contingency tables, that the protest strategy variable under investigation had as many successes as failures. Thus a protest strategy having no relationship with responsiveness may be said to be more effective than a protest strategy having a negative relationship with responsiveness. Nevertheless, given the weakness of the relationships reported in Table 3, the readers may wish to view our interpretation of the results with caution.

5. The reason that positive reinforcers are more effective than aversive stimuli in shaping the behavior of targets has been suggested by Skinner (1971: 76). The argument is simply that persons confronted with aversive stimuli are primarily interested in avoiding punishment; they are not interested in adopting the behavior demanded by the would-be modifiers. Thus, in terms of this research, authorities who are targets of coercive tactics are primarily interested in avoiding the adverse consequences of the unconventional protest. If they can avoid these consequences without responding to the desires of the protest groups, they will do so.

6. Random measurement error will result in underestimates of the "true" strength of the relationships among variables.

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