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Different Issues, Same Process

Solidarity and Ecology Movements in Switzerland

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In the social science literature, altruism is often seen as a phenomenon *sui generis* which requires specific theoretical tools to be analyzed (e.g., Greven and Willems 1994; Olson 1965; Rucht, forthcoming). We do not share this view. Just as different forms of collective protests, from social movements to revolutions, can be brought under the same rubric of "contentious politics" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996a), we think that individual participation in social movements follows similar processes, regardless of the type of movement and regardless of the beneficiaries of the action. In the end, the distinction between altruistic and "egoistic" behavior depends on the presence or absence of self-interest. Political altruism, by definition, does not rely on private interest. The goal is not to provide individual benefits for oneself, but rather to improve the situation of others. As a consequence, if one admits that these two kinds of political behavior are different, the difference stems precisely from the self-interest involved and the possibility to achieve individual gains for oneself. As a great many authors have shown (e.g., Gould 1991; Klandermans 1997; Marwell and Oliver 1993; McAdam 1986), the process leading to participation in social movements is much more complex, involving a number of crucial factors and going through a number of stages. We reject a monocausal explanation of individual participation which focuses on one key decision based on self-interest. While rational decisions to take part in a social movement do play a role, other factors affect participation: above all, the activists' position in the social structure, their value system, and their embeddedness in social networks. If that is true, altruistic and "ego-

istic" political action, as Charles Tilly argues in this volume, do not stem from different processes, but rest on similar causal mechanisms.

In considering how to study political altruism, the problem with a *sui generis* view is that it is based on a purely rationalist perspective which focuses almost exclusively on the individual benefits one gets from getting involved. In other words, the basic theoretical problem is that, if one appears to get no benefits whatsoever, then altruistic behavior cannot be grasped with a rationalist approach. At this point, scholars have opted for one of two solutions. On one hand, most have expanded the notion of rational behavior. They have broadened the concept of selective incentives to include not only material incentives, but also moral and purposive ones, as well as other individual rewards (e.g., Opp 1985, 1989). This solution seems not very viable in the light of criticisms from students of collective action (Chazel 1986; White 1976). The danger of falling into tautology and the failure to make empirical statements that can be falsified suggest abandoning this path. Alternatively, as Olson proposed to do, the rational-choice model might be abandoned in favor of other theoretical perspectives in order to account for altruistic behavior. Yet interests do play a role in the process of individual participation in social movements, at least as expressed in the actors' intention to act. Most importantly, if we expunge interests from our explanations, there is the risk of denying that those who act on behalf of others do so out of a rational willingness to act. In other words, there is the risk of overlooking the purposive nature of human action and of falling into an overly deterministic view of political behavior.

In sum, in this chapter we question two mistaken ideas: that altruistic behavior—and, more specifically, political altruism—is a form of human action in its own right which, consequently, requires specific analytic tools to be grasped; and that it ultimately depends solely on the actors' decision to act altruistically. The latter point can be generalized to say that the process leading to individual participation in social movements cannot be reduced simply to de-contextualized interests, intentions, and decisions, but involves contextual and relational factors, that is, social structure and networks. Political altruism, as any other form of contentious politics, is a product of social relations.

Research Strategy

To empirically illustrate our argument, we propose to compare participation in two social movements that differ in the altruistic orientation of their claims: solidarity and ecology movements. The latter cannot be defined *prima facie* as an instance of altruistic behavior, as participants stand to benefit directly from the outcomes of their actions. Our strategy consists of comparing two movements that belong to the same family (the new social move-

ments family) in order to isolate the effect of the principal variable of interest (altruistic versus self-oriented mobilization) on individual participation. In addition, we control for the political context by focusing on a single country: Switzerland. The main difference between solidarity and ecology movements concerns the benefits of successful mobilization. Actions carried by the solidarity movement benefit other persons; those by the ecology movement produce gains for participants as well.

We focus on two social movement organizations: the Bern Declaration (BD) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The BD emerged out of Protestant milieus in 1970 and belongs to the development-aid branch of the Swiss solidarity movement. Unlike charity organizations, which provide direct aid to Third World countries, it seeks to inject social justice into economical and political relations between the North and the South. This organization, which has about 18,000 members, is run by a small staff of professionals (fewer than ten persons) on a relatively low budget. The Swiss branch of the WWF was created in 1961. At the beginning it dealt primarily with nature conservation. Activists were engaged in traditional areas such as endangered animal species, forest destruction, water pollution, and so forth. However, the organization soon expanded to new areas and added new political interests to its agenda. Specifically, it came to incorporate a political ecology dimension. The WWF has developed steadily since its founding to become one of the largest organizations in the Swiss ecology movement. With more than 210,000 members, almost 100 employees, and an annual budget of 28 million Swiss francs, the WWF is not only one of the major organizations of the ecology movement today, but one of largest social movement organizations overall in Switzerland.

To analyze individual participation in the BD and the WWF, we use survey data on two representative samples of their members. The survey of members of the BD was conducted in 1993 in the context of a study on the process of individual participation in social movements (Passy 1998). The survey on WWF members was made in 1998 with the aim of allowing for a comparison of participation in two distinct movements.[1]

A Model of Individual Participation

Generally speaking, explanations of how and why people get involved in movement activities follow two perspectives. Following the route paved by Mancur Olson (1965), a number of scholars explain participation in social movements by underscoring the key role of individual interests, intentions, and decisions (e.g., Chong 1991; Hardin 1982; Macy 1991; Opp 1989; Sandler 1992). Rational choice theorists stress individual preferences as the critical moment along the path leading people to join a movement. Their accounts focus on the last stage of the process of individual participation,

namely the actors' decision. In contrast, scholars in another theoretical tradition have criticized rational choice explanations and stressed instead the role of social structures and networks (e.g., della Porta 1988; Kriesi 1993; McAdam 1982, 1988). According to them, participation does not stem from a single key decision; rather, it is the product of social relations. Both approaches have proved insightful, for they have shown, on the one hand, that individual preferences have an important impact on participation and, on the other hand, that social norms and values, structural locations, and social networks are crucial push-factors. However, this theoretical divide has encountered many criticisms from scholars who try to link social relations to the actors' decisions in an attempt to go beyond a fragmented view of individual participation in social movements (e.g., Gould 1991, 1993; Klandermans 1997; Marwell and Oliver 1993).

We start from these criticisms to go a step further, arguing that both the actors' decisions and their embeddedness in social networks must be seen as part of a broader process in which each factor intervenes at different moments in time. Specifically, we maintain that the process of movement participation unfolds in three stages. First, individuals come in *cultural proximity* with the movement, that is to say, they share norms, values, and a structural location which make them belong to its mobilization potential. Second, they come in *social proximity* with the movement, a process that is largely facilitated by the embeddedness in social networks. Such embeddedness, in turn, strengthens the cultural affinity and the identification with the movement. Furthermore, it establishes a direct contact with the opportunity to participate and hence allows individuals to translate their willingness to act into actual action. Third, before getting involved, potential participants assess a number of cognitive parameters in order to *decide* if they will join the movement and with what intensity. Thus, before they reach the stage of deciding whether to participate or not, individuals go through a complex process of construction of the willingness to do so. Social relations play a crucial role in this process, one that has largely been overlooked by rational choice theorists.

Cultural Proximity

Cultural proximity evokes the concept of cleavages. As Rokkan (1970) shows in his seminal work on European political parties, political conflicts are rooted in cultural and structural cleavages. Social change produces the structural bases for the emergence of political conflicts, but the politicization of the conflicts results mainly from mobilization (Bartolini and Mair 1990). Thus political parties, interest groups, and social movements all contribute to the politicization of cultural and structural cleavages. Following the way charted by Rokkan, Kriesi (1989, 1993) argues that after World War II a new cleavage has emerged in Western Europe[2] which reflects two major contra-

dictions of post-war societies: the growth of control over the population and the development of new technological risks that can potentially destroy the planet (e.g., nuclear power, genetic technology, industrial pollution). Much the same as for traditional cleavages, new sectors of the population mobilize around this new cultural and structural divide, claiming individual autonomy and emancipation, citizen oversight on the state, democratic control of high-risk technology, and a democratization of society in general. New social movements draw their human resources largely from the new middle class (Cotgrove and Duff 1980; Eder 1993), in particular among the social-cultural specialists (e.g., teachers, social assistants) (Kriesi 1989). In addition to having a specific position in the social structure, people who join these movements display a value system that favors individual emancipation and a leftist political orientation (Cotgrove and Duff 1981; Inglehart 1990; Kriesi 1993).

According to the cleavage hypothesis, individuals who belong to the new middle class—and, even more specifically, to the social-cultural specialists—and who have a value system emphasizing emancipation and a leftist orientation form the *mobilization potential* of new social movements. We can then plausibly argue that if members of the BD and the WWF share a similar structural position and a similar value system, the nature of protest (altruistic versus self-oriented) should not have a great impact on the first stage of the process of individuals participation. Table 5.1 largely confirms this expectation, and allows us to make a first step toward a rejection of the *sui generis* hypothesis of political altruism. Participants in solidarity and ecology movements have a similar location in the social structure. The new middle class, in particular, is over-represented in both organizations as compared to the Swiss population. While 14 percent of the Swiss belong to the social-cultural specialists, they represent respectively 59 percent and 45 percent of the members of the BD and the WWF. In addition, table 5.1 shows that the working class is largely under-represented in both organizations, especially in the BD. The under-representation of the working class in new social movement organizations is a well-known phenomenon (Kriesi 1989, 1993; Passy 1998), and confirms that the mobilization potential of these movements is socially determined. However, while the BD attracts social-cultural specialists in high numbers, the WWF has a somewhat more heterogeneous stock of members, for it tends to draw less from social-cultural professionals and more from the working class. This difference might be due to a particular strategy of the WWF, which often organizes summer camps for children that provide financial support for low-income families. This program would enable the WWF to expand its mobilization potential.

Table 5.1 about here

Participants in altruistic contentious politics not only have a similar strutural location, they also share a value system. If we compare the two main cul-

tural values espoused by new social movements—emancipation and a leftist orientation—we see how the two groups under study resemble each other in this respect. First, both groups are clearly close to leftist parties, in particular those of the "red-green" alliance. About 80 percent of solidarity and ecology movement members declare themselves to be politically close to either the Greens, the Socialists, or both (table 5.2). Second, taking Inglehart's post-materialism scale to measure an emphasis put on individual emancipation, we see that the number of postmaterialists in the two organizations is perceptibly higher than among the Swiss population. Only 22 percent of the Swiss display postmaterialist values, whereas 89 percent of BD members and 61 percent of WWF members declare a strong affinity with emancipation values (table 5.3). The latter table suggests that participants in the solidarity movement are more postmaterialist than those active in the ecology movement. This variation can be understood in the light of the different years the two surveys were conducted (1993 for the BD and 1998 for the WWF). If we look at the national trend in this aspect of the value system, we observe a sharp decline of postmaterialist values in the Swiss population. As Switzerland encountered economic difficulties, postmaterialist values decreased (Brunner 1999). This trend affected the whole population, including new social movement participants. In fact, a closer look at the four dimensions included in Inglehart's scale shows that participants in the ecology movement privilege the economic dimension rather than that of law-and-order, which explains why 37 percent among them belong to the mixed category on the scale. On the other three dimensions of emancipation values (gender equality, equal opportunities for citizens, and increasing citizen participation), there are no significant differences between the BD and the WWF.[3]

To summarize, we observe no significant difference between altruistic and self-oriented involvement with regard to the first stage of the process of individual participation in social movements. As far as locations in the social structure and value systems are concerned, we cannot distinguish between BD and WWF members; both have a cultural and structural profile similar to that of participants in other new social movements, which is a pre-condition of mobilization.

Table 5.2 and 5.3 about here

Social Proximity

Social networks perform a variety of functions in the process of individual participation (Gould 1991; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Passy 1998). First is their cultural function intervening in the political socialization of potential

participants. Previous participation in social networks provides individuals with meanings and identities which facilitate involvement in social movements. Second, networks have a structural function in bridging the gap between individuals and a social movement organization. They provide a concrete opportunity to translate individuals' willingness to act into actual action and thus play an important role in the recruitment of new members. Finally, social networks contribute to the definition and evolution of individual preferences. The latter, in turn, lead individuals to decide if they will eventually participate. In our comparison of solidarity and ecology movements we focus on the first two functions of social networks, which correspond to the processes of political socialization and recruitment.

If political altruism and self-oriented contentious politics arise from different processes, social networks should have a varying impact on them. But if they are not substantially different, we should find a similar impact of networks on BD and WWF members. Networks should affect both the socialization and recruitment of members. Social psychologists have long stressed that emotions usually accompany altruistic acts, provoking a favorable reaction from persons in interaction with individuals who act altruistically (Berkowitz 1972; Brehm 1966; Isen and Noonberg 1979; Krebs 1970; Piliavin and Charng 1990; Thorton, Kirchneer, and Jacobs 1991; Wolfe 1998). Thus imitation can facilitate prosocial behavior (see Soule in this volume). As the chances that actions are imitated are higher in intensified face-to-face social interaction, we expect networks (which reflect social interaction) to play a greater role in individual participation in the solidarity movement (which we define as an instance of altruistic contentious politics), independently of their function. Moreover, following the imitation hypothesis, we expect imitation to be more important when individuals are recruited by people who are already involved in the movement. Therefore we think that the role of social networks in political altruism should be particularly important in their recruitment function.

While several social psychologists emphasize the impact of emotions on altruistic behavior, others argue that altruistic acts are motivated by a commitment to principles (Charng, Piliavin, and Callero, 1988; Chaves 1998; Schwarz 1977; Zuckerman and Reiss 1978). Emotions and principles are the two main types of motivations put forward by work in the social psychological tradition to explain prosocial behaviors (Wolfe 1998). Principles leading to altruism develop in specific cultural contexts. Certain contexts yield a greater amount of symbolic and discursive resources which are instrumental in propagating altruistic attitudes. As Wuthnow (1991) points out, cultural repertoires facilitate prosocial behaviors. Relying on survey data, he shows that although Americans have little substantial knowledge of the Bible, half of them were able to relate the story of the Good Samaritan. This percentage is much higher among individuals engaged in altruistic activities. This example suggests that religious institutions are a crucial "reservoir" of symbolic

and discursive resources that facilitate the emergence and spread of prosocial behaviors in Western societies. Thus we expect participation in religious networks to be a major factor of socialization to political altruism; individuals who are part of religious networks should be more inclined to join the solidarity movement.

Table 5.4 offers a first empirical test of the impact of networks on political altruism. If we look at the top half of the table, we observe no striking differences between BD and WWF members in the socialization function of networks. In both cases, social networks impact significantly the process of meaning and identity construction which led individuals to join the movement. Only a small part of participants were not previously involved in networks. If we distinguish between formal (i.e., organizational) and informal (i.e., interpersonal) networks, we see that the socialization function is performed mainly by interpersonal networks, or by a combination of both formal and informal ones. Interpersonal networks play a greater role in the socialization of participants in the solidarity movement, whereas for participants in the ecology movement a combination of formal and informal networks seems to be more important. Sixty percent of WWF members were part of formal networks before they joined the organization, and at the same time had a broad network of interpersonal contacts with people sensitive to environmental issues or already engaged in the ecology movement. Only 29 percent of WWF members were exposed to ecology issues exclusively through interpersonal networks. This percentage rises to 44 percent in the case of BD members. Their socialization to Third World issues comes from interpersonal relationships with individuals close to these issues or already involved in the branch of the solidarity movement that deals with North-South issues. Only 36 percent of BD members got socialized through a combination of informal and formal networks.

Table 5.4 about here

We can perform a more detailed analysis of the differences between altruistic and self-oriented participation with respect to the socializing role of networks by looking at the type of formal networks in which members were involved before they joined the organization. Our expectation was that religious organizations should serve as a key network for the political socialization of participants in the solidarity movement. These networks carry symbolic and discursive resources that might facilitate the emergence and diffusion of prosocial behaviors. Table 5.5 shows the prior formal embeddedness of BD and WWF members, that is, their participation in formal networks before they got involved in the organization. The results do not support the hypothesis. No difference can be observed between the two organizations. In both cases, participants were heavily associated with new social movement networks, less so with conventional political networks such as unions and

parties, and even less with religious networks. The important point here is the strong resemblance of the embeddedness of altruistic and self-oriented participants. Contrary to our expectation, religious networks are not a privileged channel for the political socialization of participants in the solidarity movement.[4] The only significant difference between the two groups is the larger proportion of WWF members that were embedded in youth and student associations. This difference is traceable to the holiday camps that the WWF often organizes for youngsters; and many of today's adult members may have taken part in such activities in their childhood.

Table 5.5 about here

Turning to the recruitment function of networks, the bottom part of table 5.4 shows that about half of the members in both organizations became involved through this channel. Hence social networks represent indeed an important bridge between individuals who are culturally close to an area of interest and the opportunity to participate. Furthermore, these networks play a greater role in recruiting participants in the solidarity movement than in the ecology movement. In the latter case, other channels are more important. For example, a closer look to the various channels of recruitment (the organization itself, the news media, networks, and others) shows that the media are much more important for the WWF than for the BD.[5] This difference stems more from the higher public visibility of the WWF than from the distinction between altruistic and self-oriented nature of mobilization. A simple but significant indication of this explanation comes from a survey showing that the WWF logo is the most widely known in Switzerland after that of Coca-Cola. The wide popularity and visibility of this international organization facilitate recruitment through advertisement in the media, and could explain the difference we observe in the recruitment function of networks.

The bottom half of table 5.4 also suggests that informal networks do not impact strongly on recruitment in the solidarity movement. This finding questions the contention that the function of networks, as regards the mechanism of imitation, is specific to political altruism. Members of the WWF have been recruited mostly through interpersonal contacts (30 percent), whereas recruitment of members of the BD is more variegated and went through formal (23 percent), informal (23 percent), or both (13 percent) types of networks. Thus interpersonal relationships are not prevalent in the recruitment process of participants in the solidarity movement.

In sum, our comparison of ecology and solidarity movements with respect to the second stage of the process of individual participation—that involving social networks—tends to counter the hypothesis that political altruism follows a distinct path. To be sure, some variations can be observed between BD and WWF members. Yet, in our view, they are too small to suggest that altruistic contentious politics follows a distinct route in this second stage of

the participation process. That said, it is obvious that no organization resembles another in all respects and no most similar research design can eliminate all differences in the variables one wants to control. The BD and the WWF differ, in particular, as to public visibility. The latter is much more publicly visible.

Perceptions and Intentions

The third and last stage in the process of individual participation concerns the decision to act, made by people who are culturally and socially close to a given area of contention. A great many studies have shown that individual preferences and perceptions are strong predictors of participation in social movements (e.g., Klandermans 1984, 1997; Macy 1991; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Oberschall 1993; Opp 1985, 1989; Opp and Roehl 1990). Drawing from the extant literature, we can identify four cognitive parameters that affect the individual decision to participate: the perceived effectiveness of the action (Klandermans 1984, 1997; McAdam 1986; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Opp 1989), the potential risks of the action (della Porta 1988, 1995; Hirsch 1990; McAdam 1986; Opp 1989; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991), the degree of legitimacy of political authorities (McAdam 1982; Melucci 1989, 1996; Piven and Cloward 1979), and the personal availability of potential participants (McAdam 1988; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991).

First, the perceived effectiveness of the action refers to the individuals' sense of usefulness of their own action in case they join a social movement organization (individual effectiveness), as well as of the action of the organization as a whole (collective effectiveness). If they perceive positively their and the organization's effectiveness, they are more likely to participate. Second, the evaluation of the risks of the action usually occurs when significant risks derive from participating. Risks increase substantially the costs of the action and tend to form an important barrier to participation. High risks are, in general, absent from activities of solidarity and ecology movements.[6] These two movements make mostly moderate demands and tend to adopt pacific forms of action. Therefore we can ignore this aspect in the present study. Third, when individuals think that the authorities are unable to provide adequate responses to certain problems and that citizens—specifically, organized citizens—are both legitimate and capable political actors, they are more likely to engage in social movements. Fourth, participation in contentious politics depends on personal availability, that is, the amount of time at one's disposal for collective action. We consider both objective (i.e., actual) and subjective (i.e., perceived) availability. People who have, or think they have, more time at their disposal should be more likely to participate.

Do members of the BD and the WWF score differently on these perceptions and intentions? Our data suggest a negative answer to this question.

First of all, before they got involved, both BD and WWF members had a strong feeling of the effectiveness of the respective organization to reach its goals. As table 5.6 illustrates, they perceived the organization as very effective, and this influenced their decision to join it. In contrast, their own individual contribution was seen as less relevant in encouraging them to participate. This factor does not seem to decisively affect the decision to get involved in social movements. However, as we shall see below, it does significantly affect the degree of commitment once one has decided to participate. Second, the judgment of the capacity of the authorities to adequately address social problems in North-South relations and environmental protection is less negative than we might expect. Indeed, there is no significant distinction between the evaluation of the authorities' capacity to act and that of the potential contribution of citizens. Table 5.7 indicates that about half of the participants do not grant legitimacy to the role of political authorities for bringing about social change, while they do grant legitimacy to the role of citizens. However, a third of them do not question either the state's capacity or that of citizens. They think that both are legitimate actors, able to provide adequate answers to the problems that concern them. Finally, as far as personal availability is concerned, BD and WWF members reveal similar constraints. The resemblance is striking concerning professional constraints: about three-quarters of participants in both organizations have a job[7] and more than half of them work full time.[8] Thus participants have quite limited resources of time to be devoted to social movement activities. On the other hand, they do not perceive that as being very important. All said that before they joined the organization they thought they lacked enough free time for such activities.

To sum up, we do not find substantial differences between BD and WWF members regarding perceptions and intentions. While the various aspects we have examined might impact the decision to participate, members of both organizations evaluated these aspects in a similar fashion. This leads us to conclude that altruistic and self-oriented participants do not behave differently in the third and last stage of the process of individual participation in social movements.

Table 5.6 et 5.7 about here

High-Cost Participation

Our comparison of members of the BD and the WWF indicates that participants in political altruism do not follow a process of individual participation different from that in other kinds of contentious politics. We observe similarity on three levels: the cultural and structural profile of participants, their involvement in and recruitment by social networks, and the cognitive parameters that affect their decision to participate. However, we may still wonder

whether the process of individual participation varies for different levels of engagement. If we take the restrictive definition of altruism which Charles Tilly adopts in his contribution to this volume—that altruism not only implies benefits for the other person, but also significant costs for the actor—we may wonder whether a distinct pattern of involvement characterizes those participants who are most deeply involved (i.e., activists). Activists in the Swiss solidarity movement do not face the high risks implied in the kinds of altruistic behavior Tilly refers to, but deeply involved participants invest much time and energy for the cause. Such commitment is very costly. In-depth interviews with core activists of the BD show clearly that commitment implies high costs for all activists, especially in their private life (Passy 1998). For example, one activist stated that her strong involvement in the movement proved disastrous for her family life.

In the light of the distinction between strongly engaged participants (i.e., activists) and those with a more marginal involvement, we can try to determine whether, when it comes to very costly participation, political altruism is indeed distinct from other types of contentious politics. In other words, do individuals who not only mobilize to provide others with collective benefits, but in addition bear important costs from such mobilization, follow the same process of individual participation as activists in self-oriented movements? Alternatively, is political altruism a phenomenon *sui generis* when it comes to strong commitment? To answer this question we compare once again members of the BD and of the WWF. In both cases, we isolated the group of activists from the whole sample. Activists are participants who enter an active process of participation, either on an irregular or a regular basis (in contrast to participants who simply contribute financially to the organization).[9] We want to ascertain whether the three stages in the process of individual participation discussed above—cultural proximity, social proximity, and perceptions and intentions—differ between the two groups.

Tables 5.8 and 5.9 show the results of logistic regression, respectively of BD and WWF activists, on a battery of independent variables grouped according to the three stages of the participation process. They support the hypothesis that political altruism is not a phenomenon *sui generis* even in the case of high-cost participation. For both solidarity and ecology movements, social relations and the cognitive aspects related to the actors' intention to act are the key factors leading to activism. As far as social proximity is concerned, the findings (model 2) indicate that networks play a key role in engaging individuals with the protest issue and establishing a direct contact with the opportunity to participate. Organizational (formal) networks, especially organizations that are culturally and ideologically close to the movement, are particularly important to socializing individuals to the issue,[10] while interpersonal (informal) networks play a crucial role in the recruitment process. As regards perceptions and intentions, it appears that certain parameters are more important than others (model 3). First, a positive assessment of the

effectiveness of their own participation is, by and large, the strongest determinant of both altruistic and self-oriented activism. The finding is especially interesting for the former group, for we see that action is prompted by the interest in bringing about social change and that a positive perception of one's personal effort leads to a higher level of participation. In other words, contrary to Olson's (1965) view, political altruism is performed on a rational basis rather than irrationally. Second, the interest in the issue affects the level of participation. However, as often stressed in the literature (e.g., Klandermans 1997; Marwell and Oliver 1993), it is not the most important factor. Moreover, its impact disappears when we control it for the other determinants of engagement (model 4). Finally, the perception by ecology activists of having free time to invest in collective action leads them to a higher level of participation. This factor is not significant in the case of the solidarity movement. However, here we must note that the measure of this variable differs for the two groups. Specifically, we do not have a good indicator of the perception of free time by BD members because the study measures the lack of free time in the context of not being more active in the organization, whereas in the WWF survey it refers to the perception that individuals held before joining the organization. For technical reasons, therefore, we cannot draw solid conclusions from this finding.[11]

Thus, when we look at social proximity as well as perceptions and intentions, we find no fundamental difference; the role of these two stages in the route leading to activism is comparable for altruistic and self-oriented movements alike. A substantial difference does exist in the impact of cultural proximity, which is much stronger in the case of the WWF (model 1). This divergence could result from the lower degree of homogeneity of this organization. As previously noted, the WWF organizes summer camps for children, and this activity may help the WWF to expand its mobilization potential beyond the new social movements. Whereas the WWF attracts people beyond the cleavage articulated by the new social movements, ecology activists have a structural and cultural profile typical of the potential participants in those movements. Therefore we suspect that the difference in the weight of cultural factors in our comparison is due to a peculiar characteristic of the ecology organization under study, rather than to basically different processes leading to activism.

Table 5.8 and 5.9 about here

To facilitate a more consistent comparison, model 5 in tables 5.8 and 5.9 excludes from the analyses the variables pertaining to cultural proximity. This allows us to ascertain whether the two groups of activists show similar patterns of participation when we control for the specificity of the WWF on mobilization potential. The answer is yes. Without going into much detail, we can stress two points. First, the findings indicate that altruistic activists do not

follow a distinct process of participation. The effect of social networks remains significant, for both the BD and the WWF. Specifically, socialization by organizational (formal) networks and recruitment by interpersonal (informal) networks lead to a stronger engagement. Second, individual effectiveness continues to be significant, meaning that a positive evaluation of one's own contribution continues to be significant and increases the chances of becoming an activist, in both altruistic and self-oriented movements.

Political Altruism: Social Construction or Reality?

Our analysis of the process leading to political altruism in general, and to activism in this type of contentious politics in particular, leads us to conclude that altruistic participants do not follow a distinct process of individual participation. In other words, political altruism is not a phenomenon *sui generis*—a special form of political behavior that rests on distinct causal mechanisms. Specifically, we see that involvement in social movements is not the result of a single key decision in which one assesses the costs and benefits of participation. It is rather the product of a more complex process in which perceptions and intentions do play an important role, but in which social relations also intervene in a decisive fashion. The most important finding for the present purpose, however, is that the nature of the protest issue and the orientation of the movement (altruistic or self-oriented) do not affect the process of individual participation. Such participation occurs through similar causal processes, regardless of the issue addressed and the orientation of the movement. This conclusion calls for further reflection about the supposed altruistic bases of the solidarity movement. Put another way, is the solidarity movement a genuine instance of political altruism? Isn't it simply a disguised form of egoism, as it was often considered in certain theoretical perspectives? (See Tilly's criticism in this volume.) For example, Wuthnow (1991) concludes that "acts of compassion" in voluntary associations are, in fact, a way to gain self-fulfillment. Prosocial behavior would help individuals to "feel better" and to express their own individuality. In this context, therefore, it should be considered an act of disguised egoism. Hence the question: Is the solidarity movement, too, a channel for the self-fulfillment for people who participate to feel better or to obtain some kind of hidden rewards?

A first way to answer this provocative question is examining whether participants get rewards once they are involved in the movement. Table 5.10 shows that members of the BD receive various compensations for their acts of solidarity. Virtually all of them say that their engagement in the organization gives them individual rewards. These rewards are mainly nonmaterial and represent a route toward self-fulfillment. Participation offers them the opportunity to acquire and develop new skills, realize their ideals, and gain a life experience. Here again, participants in the solidarity movement are not

different from those involved in the ecology movement; both get compensations for their political activities. Political altruism, then, seems to provide rewards. These findings hence support Wuthnow's argument that acts of compassion contribute to self-fulfillment. Do they lead us to revise our view of the solidarity movement as an instance of political altruism?

One of the characteristics of political altruism is to perform deeds without expecting any external reward, but now we see that participants in the solidarity movement do receive rewards. However, we must consider the definition of political altruism more carefully. The definition given in the introduction to this volume stresses that in order to be seen as altruistic, individuals do not have to *expect* any reward before they join the movement. In other words, they do not have to be *motivated* by individual rewards. Table 5.10 indicates, in fact, that BD members receive compensations once they are already involved in the movement; they do not say that they were motivated by rewards to get involved in the first place. Although we lack quantitative data, we have qualitative information suggesting that altruistic participants were not motivated by individual rewards to act on behalf of others (Passy 1998). Activists of the BD said during in-depth interviews that they were unaware beforehand of the potential gains on the private level to be drawn from their participation in the organization. They learned such rewards only after they first got involved in the movement. In the light of this statement, we can hardly consider participation in the solidarity movement as a form of disguised egoism.

Table 10 about here

A second way to answer the question addressed above lies in sociological considerations. It is difficult to imagine that social actors receive nothing in return, whatever the purpose of their actions. Human action is not a one-way ticket, but rather an interactive process (Tilly 1996). Individuals get feedback that either encourages or discourages them to act again, independently of the type of action they are performing. It would be overly idealistic to say that in certain areas individuals receive nothing in return. Both altruistic and self-oriented movement participants receive something from their actions, something we usually call "rewards." Yet this does not allow us to conclude that political altruism is a form of disguised egoism. Every individual performing an action of this sort gets something in return.

Here we might open a broader philosophical debate on the definition of political altruism. We refrain from the temptation to do so, and limit ourselves to a few concluding reflections. To think of altruistic acts in the absence of rewards or compensations is quite difficult in contemporary Western culture.[12] As Mansbridge (1998) points out, "[l]ove (or some feeling of empathy or affinity with a group or individuals) and duty (or some form of commitment to principle) are the two known forms of altruism, of which public spirit

is a subset" (4). But the definition of the concept of public good (i.e., the public spirit) has been subject to much controversy and to historical as well as geographical variation. Since the time of Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas in the Middle Ages, altruism has been a difficult idea to grasp, as they clearly held opposing views on the public good and the private good. This conflict was intensified in the eighteenth century by utilitarianism. Olson's (1965) theory of collective action fits well into this philosophical and cultural background. Altruism—and, for that matter, any other kind of action lacking individual rewards—cannot be grasped intellectually. Yet this conception of public and private goods as two opposed entities was preceded by quite a different view. For example, the ancient Greeks, notably Plato, saw public and private goods as compatible, positing that what is good for the public is naturally good for individuals as well. Similarly, Rousseau, who was strongly influenced by Greek thinkers, did not consider these two entities opposed to each other, for human beings are social actors inclined toward the public good. As a consequence, what is good for individuals is naturally good for people collectively. Adam Smith also saw compatibility between the public good and private interests, insofar as private advantages are inevitably transformed in public advantages through the "invisible hand."

These examples, borrowed from Mansbridge's (1998) discussion of the contested boundaries of the public good, show that our appraisal of political altruism—which can be defined as a contribution to producing collective goods without receiving individual rewards—is contingent upon the philosophical view of the human being we endorse. Today we still largely share the opposition between public goods and private interests which was handed down by early Christian thinkers and utilitarianism, and which leads us to think in such terms as: if people do something for the public good, it is because they think they will get something in return, something we usually call "rewards." Otherwise it is irrational do so. This way of thinking puts us in a poor position to judge prosocial behavior. It also prevents us from seeing that individuals may act altruistically driven by hopes of social change, moral obligations, or another internalized altruistic principle or norm. Instead of saying that political altruism exists or not depending on what view of the human being we adhere to, instead of falling into a sterile discussion that resembles Pandora's box, we think it more fruitful to examine the processes that lead to this type of behavior with the aim of bringing its peculiarities to the fore and hence reach a better understanding of social processes in general.

Notes

TABLE 5.1
Distribution of BD and WWF Members by Class
(Compared to the Swiss Population)

	BD Members	WWF members	Swiss population [a]
Bourgeoisie/old middle class	**14**	**11**	**19**
Free professionals (independent)	9	7	8
Employers/craftsmen	4	3	7
Peasants	1	1	4
New middle class	**76**	**66**	**48**
Social-cultural specialists	59	45	14
Technocrats	16	19	14
Managers	1	2	20
Labor class	**12**	**23**	**34**
Specialized workers/employees	3	6	23
Nonspecialized workers/employees	9	17	11
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	599	535	2807

[a] Bütschi (1997).

TABLE 5.2
Distribution of BD and WWF Members by Partisan Preference
(Compared to the Swiss Population)

	BD members	WWF Members	Swiss population [a]
Extreme left	5	3	1
Extreme left/Socialist party	3	3	—
Socialist party	33	23	21
Left/Greens	34	33	—
Greens	10	22	6
Left/right	2	3	—
Religious-based parties	5	4	15
Right	3	8	30
Other/no partisan preference	3	3	28
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	566	540	2022

[a] Analyses Vox (no. 49, 51, 53).

TABLE 5.3
Distribution of BD and WWF Members by Value Scale
(Compared to the Swiss Population)

	BD Members	WWF Members	Swiss Population [a]
Postmaterialist	89	61	22
Mixed, prevailingly postmaterialist	7	22	28
Mixed, prevailingly materialist	4	15	31
Materialist	0	3	19
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	547	469	2416

[a] Bütschi (1997).

TABLE 5.4
Distribution of BD and WWF Members by Social Network Function

	BD members	WWF members
Socialization		
No networks	11	4
Formal networks only	9	8
Informal networks only	44	29
Formal and informal networks	36	60
Total	100%	100%
N	646	670
Recruitment		
No networks	41	61
Formal networks only	23	5
Informal networks only	23	30
Formal and informal networks	13	4
Total	100%	100%
N	646	670

TABLE 5.5
Distribution of BD and WWF Members by Network Type (Percentages)

	Members of formal networks before joining the BD	Members of formal networks before joining the WWF
New social movements	**50**	**47**
Ecology movement	23	27
Third World organizations	20	20
Human rights organizations	9	10
Student associations	1	8
Peace movement	6	7
Antinuclear movement	4	6
Women's movement	3	2
Asylum/immigration organizations	2	3
Antiracist organizations	1	2
Conventional political networks	**21**	**20**
Unions	19	15
Parties	5	8
Employers' associations	—	2
Religious networks	**11**	**11**
Other networks	**35**	**43**
Youth associations	1	17
Charity associations	5	11
Other associations	3	10
Consumers' associations	4	8
Scientific associations	5	6
Renters' associations	4	5
Neighborhood associations	2	4
Pupils' parents associations	1	4
Patriotic/military associations	—	1
N	646	670

Percentages do not total 100 because data drawn from multiple-choice questions.

TABLE 5.6
Mean of Perceived Effectiveness by BD and WWF Members

	BD members	WWF members
Individual effectiveness	2.71 (617)	3.31 (652)
Collective effectiveness	4.00 (615)	4.02 (657)

5-point scale (1 = no sense of effectiveness, 5 = strong sense of effectiveness); number of cases in parentheses.

TABLE 5.7
Evaluation of Authorities and Citizens' Capacity to Act by BD and WWF Members

	BD members	WWF members
Delegitimation of authorities/ legitimation of citizens	47	39
Legitimation of authorities/ legitimation of citizens	31	39
Delegitimation of authorities/ delegitimation of citizens	18	16
Legitimation of authorities/ delegitimation of citizens	5	10
Total	100%	100%
N	646	670

TABLE 5.8
Logistic Regression of BD Activists on the Determinants of Participation (Odds Ratios)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Cultural Proximity					
Social-cultural specialists	2.087			1.211	
New middle class (other)	2.300			3.099	
Workers	1.446			1.339	
Partisan preference	1.355***			1.739	
Postmaterialism	.668			1.419	
Social Proximity					
Embedded in formal networks close to the movement		2.332***		3.525***	3.468***
Embedded in other formal networks		.932		.916	.972
Embedded in informal networks		1.569***		1.474	1.377
Recruited by formal networks		1.615*		2.208	1.543
Recruited by informal networks		3.346***		5.908***	5.591***
Perceptions and intentions					
Interest in the issue			1.803**	1.587	1.545
Individual effectiveness			2.146***	2.239***	2.103***
Collective effectiveness			.777	.763	.729
Delegitimation of authorities/legitimation of citizens			.778	.767	.814
Objective availability			1.353	1.977**	1.850*
Subjective availability			1.146	1.247	1.226
−2 Log likelihood	503.105	614.438	294.695	173.169	204.741
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	.032	.199	.251	.452	.414
N	436	534	264	222	258

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

TABLE 5.9
Logistic Regression of WWF Activists on the Determinants of Participation
(Odds Ratios)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Cultural Proximity					
Social-cultural specialists	.724			.610	
New middle class (other)	.923			1.326	
Workers	.386			.284	
Partisan preference	3.660***			3.555***	
Postmaterialism	1.746***			1.652*	
Social Proximity					
Embedded in formal networks close to the movement		1.797***		1.249	1.875***
Embedded in other formal networks		.817**		.840	.826
Embedded in informal networks		1.100		1.058	1.014
Recruited by formal networks		1.169		.809	.811
Recruited by informal networks		2.260***		1.890	2.352**
Perceptions and intentions					
Interest in the issue			1.868**	1.446	1.731*
Individual effectiveness			1.701***	1.787***	1.662***
Collective effectiveness			.831	.953	.938
Delegitimation of authorities/legitimation of citizens			1.000	.881	.916
Objective availability			.987	.969	.960
Subjective availability			1.389**	1.607***	1.435***
−2 Log likelihood	444.201	719.065	436.799	317.071	436.799
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	.200	.124	.224	.424	.317
N	508	524	317	231	307

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

TABLE 5.10
Rewards Received by BD and WWF Members from Engagement in the Organizations (Percentages) [a]

	BD Members	WWF Members
Has received rewards from engagement	**84**	**92**
Material		
Participate in actions in the field	—[b]	36
Provides outlets for a future job	17	33
Benefit from special offers given to members	—	19
Self-fulfillment		
Acquire skills	72	88
Realize own ideals	—	74
Belong to a group that shares own ideals	33	48
Meet new friends	40	42
Acquire recognition from friends	9	10
Life experience	61	—
Give meaning to life	49	—
N	646	670

[a] Percentages do not total 100 because data drawn from multiple-choice questions.
[b] Not measured.