The Movement Society in Comparative Perspective

Recent theorizing argues that citizens in advanced democracies are turning to protests as a means to voicing political preferences. Advocates claim that citizens now live in a "movement society," where protest activities stand alongside more traditional forms of political participation. However, despite the theoretical advances embodied in the movement society approach, comprehensive evaluations of the underlying claims are lacking. This study remedies the empirical gaps by assessing three arguments. First, are more citizens participating in protest activities? Second, are protest activities expanding to more democratic countries? Third, have protest activities become "institutionalized," as indicated by a shift to non-confrontational tactics? Analyses based on cross-national data provide mixed support for the movement society thesis. More citizens are becoming involved in protests, and this trend is observed in a large number of advanced democracies. Yet, there has not been a discernable shift toward the use of non-confrontational tactics; indeed, confrontational tactics are becoming more popular as well.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 40 years, protest activities have experienced an impressive rise in popularity, to the point that some scholars claim citizens in democratic countries now live in a "movement society" (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Rucht 1998; Soule and Earl 2005). Initially, the United States was seen as the national prototype of this phenomenon. But over time, scholars have hypothesized that social movement activities are part of the standard repertoire of political participation and have become a normal feature of democratic politics in the developed world (also see Dalton 2008). Indeed, advocates of the movement society thesis suggest that the widespread nature of protest participation has led to the institutionalization of "contentious politics," and that so-called "unconventional" political activities have, in practice, become conventional (McCarthy and McPhail 1998).

An important condition of the movement society thesis, therefore, concerns the expansion of social movement activities. Yet, despite movement society theorists' claims of rising protest activity, few researchers have actually undertaken a rigorous empirical examination of the issue. To the extent that analysts have investigated movement society thesis, they have only focused on a handful of countries (Kriesi 1995; Kriesi, Koopmans, Dyvendak and Giugni 1995; Rucht 1998; Soule and Earl 2005). While these studies have generated evidence that suggests attendance at protests is increasing and that the events themselves are more institutionalized, a more thorough investigation—one that considers a wider range of countries as well as different types of activities—is useful, even needed.

The changing dynamics of social movement activities are important to consider. From the viewpoint of normative theories of democracy, social movements provide individuals with opportunities to voice grievances (Duyvendak 1995; Bernstein 1997), develop civic behavior

(McAdam 1989; Van Dyke, McAdam and Wilhelm 2000), influence policy-making (Kane 2003; King, Bentele and Soule 2007), and challenge social conventions (Armstrong 2002; Earl 2003). As such, many scholars argue that social movements are key drivers of political change (Tilly 1999). To cite a few examples, researchers have demonstrated that the Civil Rights movement (Andrews 1997), the Townsend movement (Amenta 2005), Equal Rights Amendment movement (Soule and King 2006), and the U.S. women's jury movement (McCammon, Muse, Newman and Terrell 2007) were greatly influential in developing public policy.

Given the importance of social movements for influencing democratic conflict and its outcomes, questions about the rise of a movement society are critical to answer. In this study, I contribute to the debate over the existence and organization of a movement society by addressing three gaps in the empirical literature. First, I provide comparative perspective to the U.S. case by examining trends in social movement activities across 18 democratic countries. Importantly, this study advances scholarship by using truly comparable cross-national data to focus on aggregate trends. Second, I incorporate more recent data than previous analyses. Most long-term analyses of social movement activism stop in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The following analysis extends prior work by focusing on trends through 2008. Third, I consider a wider array of activities than prior scholarship has investigated. In particular, I build on recent theorizing in social movements to consider trends in two types of activities: non-confrontational activities, such as petition signing and boycotting, as well as confrontational activities, such as striking and demonstrating. While there is some earlier scholarship that also takes advantage of this distinction (see, for example, Soule and Earl 2005), it typically focuses on the incidence of the events themselves, not the frequency of individual participation in them.

THE MOVEMENT SOCIETY THESIS

Scholars have identified four components of the movement society: the diffusion of protest to an increasing number of individuals, the expansion of protest across geographic contexts, the institutionalization of protest strategies, and the institutionalization of how states respond to protest activities (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Soule and Earl 2005). While the last characteristic deals with the response of the state to changing protest activities, the first three concern the dynamics of individual protest participation, and form the building-blocks of the analysis presented in this study.

Diffusion to New Groups of People

Research on individual participation in social movement activities suggests that more individuals are participating in protests than ever before (Inglehart 1997; Putnam 2000; Cain, Dalton and Scarrow 2003). In part, this is because social movement organizations are becoming more professional, and their recruitment strategies more effective (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986; Staggenborg 1988). But this trend is also due to the massive expansion of education that occurred during the postwar era. One of the most important resources for mobilization (Schussman and Soule 2005; Dalton 2008), education not only improves individuals' cognitive skills, but also exposes individuals to a wide variety of political stimuli, from information on emerging social issues to recruitment attempts by social movement organizations.

Shifts in public opinion matter as well, particularly with respect to the public's perceptions of protest as a legitimate form of making political claims (Crozat 1998; cf. Ferree 2005). Forty years ago, protests were largely stigmatized events that mainstream political culture

actively avoided. Among the public, many viewed protests as high-risk events organized by radical groups. This perspective has changed in recent decades, however (Inglehart 1987, 1997). Today, much of the public supports protest as means to political change and sees social movement activity as a normal feature of political conflict (Tilly 1984; McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996). Indeed, according to studies of public opinion, protests have become a more attractive option for individuals looking to express grievances (Dalton 2008).

Furthermore, while protests have historically been associated with progressive and other left-leaning movements, recent evidence suggests that protest activities are drawing activists from across the political spectrum, in part because right-wing mobilization appears to be rising (Soule and Earl 2005). Case-oriented research highlights the recent reinvigoration of many conservative movements as well, such as the anti-abortion movement (Blanchard 1994), the extreme right in Germany (Koopmans and Olzak 2004), the religious right in the United States (Fetner 2008), and the militia movement (Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Furthermore, according to movement society theorists, individuals who had never protested before are now more likely to be contacted by social movement organizations and acquiesce to their requests for participation (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). This is partly because the protest tactics that social movement actors employ are seen as less radical by the general public (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).

Despite expectations of long-term increases in protest activity and the qualitative evidence to that effect, there has been little systematic research on recent time trends in protest participation. Most research has instead tended to focus on the period from the late 1950s to the late 1980s, leaving the two subsequent decades understudied (cf. Putnam 2000; Soule and Earl 2005). The lack of work since the 1990s is problematic because alternative strains of social movement theorizing raise the possibility that protest activities could be trending in ways not

anticipated by movement society scholars. Indeed, it suggests that social movement activities may actually be entering a process of decline.

In particular, Tarrow's (1993) work on protest cycles argues that social movement activities follow a cyclical pattern. At first, movements experience a burst of rapid and widespread diffusion as they recruit new members and attract other social movement organizations. As the pool of potential recruits becomes depleted, however, movement organizations are forced to compete over the remaining activists, often by adopting tactical innovations that radicalize the movement (Koopmans 1993). This increasing radicalization deters many of the movement's current supporters, which leads to an eventual contraction and decline in the movement cycle.

In contrast to the movement society thesis, then, work on protest cycles raises the possibility of a different trajectory. It suggests that movement activity may well have declined after expanding from the 1960s through the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, research has presented mixed evidence to this effect. For example, while the size of protest events may be increasing, the frequency with which they occur appears to be declining (Soule and Earl 2005). Moreover, work by Minkoff (1997) suggests that African American protest events declined from 1965 to 1985 and feminist protest events declined from the late 1970s to 1985.

Expansion across Geographic Context

While researchers initially observed an increase in protest participation in the U.S. context, recent scholarship has noted similar trends in Western Europe and the Pacific Rim. In the United States, for example, research indicates that participation rates begin increasing in the late 1950s and early 1960s (McAdam 1982; Putnam 2000; Earl and Soule 2001), while in Western Europe,

similar analyses suggest the increase begins somewhat later, in the mid-1960s (Kriesi et al. 1995; Rucht 1998; Dalton 2008). As a result, in addition to claims of a rise in the popularity of protest activities, movement society scholars also argue that protests are expanding across geographical context, to the point that they now represent a pervasive feature of most advanced democracies.

Current research suggests a number of processes that help account for this process; perhaps the most notable are the role of international networks of social movement organizations, mass media, globalization, and the structural similarities between countries. Networks of social movement organizations are important because they provide activists with important resources, such as expertise, experience, and allies (Smith 2003); spread democratic values (Boli and Thomas 1997); and help national movements articulate political grievances (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

The advent of a global media helps communicate information on successful protest strategies to citizens across advanced democracies, further increasing the likelihood that these tactics will be deployed in subsequent movements (McCarthy and McPhail 1998; Koopmans and Olzak 2004). For example, within the American South during the 1960s, news media played an instrumental role in disseminating information about sit-ins as a protest tactic (Andrews and Biggs 2006). In a similar vein, mass media were also crucial in the spread of riots as a form of collective violence in the 1960s (Myers 2000).

Forces related to globalization also push the geographic boundaries of social movements. Economic integration, for example, is viewed by many as a primary force against which many transnational movements are mobilizing, largely because of popular concerns with its effects on the environment, human rights, and economic justice (Smith 2001; Almeida 2008).

Finally, the characteristics of the countries involved in the potential diffusion of protest activities are important because they serve as mediators in the successful implementation of different tactics (McAdam and Rucht 1993). In general, research has demonstrated that protests tactics are more likely to diffuse across geographic contexts that share common political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics (Soule 1997). That is, protest tactics tend to diffuse among social movements that are structurally similar or institutionally equivalent (also see Strang and Meyer 1993). This also suggests that cross-national expansion of protest is more likely to occur among countries with similar political opportunity structures (Guigni 1995).

As with claims over the diffusion of protest activity, however, expectations for the geographical expansion of movement activities have not been subjected to systematic empirical analysis. The most comprehensive to date is Norris' (2002) analysis of protest activities in eight democracies, which finds evidence of increasing protest activity. Yet, this study focuses on aggregate trends and ignores differences among various types of movement activity. More importantly, aside from Norris' work, most researchers have developed the thesis of geographic expansion by generalizing from case-oriented research studies. For example, Meyer and Tarrow (1998: 12) cite the rapid adoption of human chains as a protest tactic in Europe during the 1990s as evidence of geographic expansion, and Soule (1997) focuses on the spread of shantytown protests across U.S. campuses. While these studies provide an empirical basis for anticipating the spatial diffusion of social movement activities, they are limited in that they typically only analyze one type of activity in one (or a few) countries. The absence of comparative data makes it difficult to infer how different types of social movement activities are changing across advanced democracies.

Institutionalization of Tactics

In addition to the diffusion of protest activities across people and places, movement society scholars also argue that protests are becoming institutionalized. In formulating their argument, these scholars highlight the distinction between conventional forms of protest on one hand and more contentious forms of protest on the other. Specifically, movement society scholars claim that the least contentious forms of protest are becoming more popular, and that trends in the more contentious forms of protest have remained stable (Soule and Earl 2005).

While scholars point to the professionalization of movement organizations as a key source behind this trend (Zald and Ash 1966; Piven and Cloward 1977), the mechanisms that link professionalization to a shift in protest tactics remain underspecified. Indeed, scholars have traditionally only focused on the conventionalization of protest—that is, the shift toward more moderate forms of protest.[i]

Scholars argue that conventionalization is a product of professionalized activists pushing movement organizations toward tactics that are less likely to alienate state actors and other elites (Staggenborg 1988; Everett 1992). These activists prefer moderate forms of activism because they improve the long-term viability of the movement organizations in which they are employed (Zald and Ash 1966). Conventionalization, then, entails a movement away from protest activities that take place outside established institutional infrastructure and toward protests activities that take place within the established institutional infrastructure (Rucht 1996).

This process suggests that the use of conventional activities, but not disruptive or violent activities, should increase over time. The empirical evidence lends some support to these claims. For example, Soule and Earl (2005) find that the number of protests that use contentious tactics declined from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, while McAdam and his colleagues note the

virtual disappearance of violent protest in Chicago after the 1970s (McAdam, Sampson, Weffer and MacIndoe 2005). Everett (1992) also finds evidence of a shift in the tactical repertoire towards lower-risk activities over a similar time period.

However, despite evidence that violent forms of protest have declined over time, two other dimensions of institutionalization suggest that other, non-violent forms of contentious protest may actually be increasing. The first dimension, legitimation, refers to the process by which the public starts to view protest tactics as an appropriate means to voicing political grievances (see, for example, McVeigh and Sikkink 2001). According to movement society scholars, protest activities have experienced a rise in public acceptance since the 1960s (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Dalton 2008). If true, then it may be that both contentious and conventional forms of activity are increasing.

In contrast to the external conditions that may constrain protest activities, routinization, focuses on the isomorphic tendencies within tactical repertoires (Zald and Ash 1966; Meyer and Tarrow 1998). That is, over time, protest tactics start to look the same across different social movements, giving the appearance that activists are adhering to a common script when deploying a tactic. Importantly, routinization occurs across many types of protest, regardless of how disruptive they may be (Koopmans 1993). That is, sit-ins are as likely to follow a common script as boycotts.

Taken together, then, trends in legitimation and routinization suggest that activities of all types should be increasing over time, not just conventional forms of protest. Recent scholarship on the gay and lesbian movement provides some support to this claim, and suggests riskier activities remain popular (Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke and Anderson 2009). Indeed, some scholars have suggested that as protest cycles develop and repertoires become institutionalized,

many organizations choose to adopt more radical strategies in an attempt to garner more of the public's attention (Meyer 1993; Tarrow 1993). There is evidence, for example, that radical strategies of protest are still common, especially with respect to European environmental movements (Rootes 2004).

It therefore remains unclear whether an institutionalization of protest tactics, insofar as it entails a legitimation and routinization of protest activity, would lead to a shift toward more conventional forms of protest. The uncertainty suggests that a more thorough empirical evaluation of internal shifts in social movement activities is needed.

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To summarize, research concerning the movement society thesis has been hindered in three respects: an absence of extensive cross-national research, an inattention to recent trends, and a lack of work that investigates differences in protest forms. In the following analysis, I address these limitations by examining the following research questions. First, does the expansion of protest activity observed by scholars from the 1960s to the 1980s extend to the 1990s and early 21st century? Second, have the changes in participation levels been limited to non-confrontational tactics, as anticipated by the movement society thesis? Third, has the rise in popularity of social movement activities expanded beyond the American case and into other advanced democracies?

METHODS

Data

To answer emerging questions over cross-national trends in social movement activity, I use pooled data from the 1981 to 2008 World Values Survey (WVS). The analysis includes information on over-time patterns of change for 18 advanced democracies: Australia (1981, 1995, and 2005); Austria (1990 and 1999); Belgium (1981, 1990, and 1999); Canada (1982, 1990, 2000, and 2006); Denmark (1981, 1990, and 1999); Finland (1981, 1990, 1996, 2000, and 2005); France (1981, 1990, 1999, and 2006); Great Britain (1981, 1990, 1998, 1999, and 2006); Iceland (1984, 1990, and 1999); Ireland (1981, 1990, and 1999); Italy (1981, 1990, 1999, and 2005); Japan (1981, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005); the Netherlands (1981, 1990, 1999, and 2006); New Zealand (1998 and 2004); Norway (1982,1990, 1996, and 2008); Sweden (1982, 1990, 1996, 1999, and 2006); Switzerland (1989, 1996, and 2007); and the United States (1982, 1990, 1995, 1999, and 2006).

While examining patterns of over-time change in protest activity across a wider spectrum of democratic and non-democratic countries may have potentially yielded important insights into the country-level dynamics behind protest participation, the movement society thesis has generally been derived using data on advanced democracies. Rather than introduce possible sources of unobserved cross-national heterogeneity, which would extend the scope of the original thesis, this analysis focuses instead on the dynamics within a particular national context. Focusing on established democracies should omit possible factors that could weaken over-time inferences, providing a stronger test of the movement society thesis.

To date, most movement scholars have relied on either case studies of specific social movements to develop the movement society thesis (as in Meyer and Tarrow 1998) or have used aggregate data on protest events, typically derived from media accounts (as in Soule and Earl 2005). While these studies provide important insights into the potential establishment of a

movement society, few researchers have used individual-level data to examine over-time changes in protest participation (for exemplars of this latter approach, however, see Norris 2002; Dalton 2008). This study uses the WVS data to remedy the empirical absence and focuses on the individual-level dynamics behind protest participation to complement the existing research.

Measures

Within the movement society formulation, protest strategies are categorized according to the tactical repertoires that activists employ (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Soule, McAdam, McCarthy and Su 1999; Soule and Earl 2005). As such, *confrontational* tactics refer to activities that use radical (and sometimes violent) methods for claims-making. *Non-confrontational* tactics, by contrast, refer to safer, more established methods to make claims on its target. In addition, confrontational activities tend to be riskier, more demanding, and more visible than non-confrontational activity. This distinction builds on a substantial research tradition that focuses on the forms of protest activity (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Van Dyke, Soule and Taylor 2004; Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Walker, Martin and McCarthy 2008).

Non-confrontational activities are measured by whether the respondents reported whether they have ever signed a petition or joined a boycott. Confrontational activities, by contrast, are measured by reference to whether the respondents reported whether they have ever participated in any of the following three activities: attending lawful demonstrations, joining unofficial strikes, and occupying buildings or factories. While non-confrontational activities are not measured as comprehensively as confrontational activities, together, these five outcomes represent a substantial improvement over the movement society literature, which has generally focused on participation in only one or two types of activities.

Two independent variables are of key interest for this analysis. The first, country membership, is measured as a series of 18 dummy variables, with the United States serving as the reference category. The second key covariate is time, and is also measured as a series of dummy variables, where 1981 is the reference year. Together, these variables will help provide an assessment of how social movement activity has varied both across country and over time (for more information on the coding of these items, see Table 1).[ii]

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Despite the clear advantages of using the WVS data to examine over-time trends in individuals' protest behavior, some caveats should be kept in mind when assessing the results. One important consideration is whether trends in self-reported activity actually reflect changes in the inclination of individuals to admit protest behaviors rather than shifts in the behavior itself. That is, if protests are becoming less stigmatized events over time, one possibility is that individuals may be more willing to acknowledge protest involvement today than 20 years ago. As such, any upward trend in protest activities may actually be an artifact of trends in the social desirability of protest.

One way to assess this possibility is to examine trends in objective rather than subjective indicators. Newspaper accounts of protests provide one such opportunity, and two studies are particularly relevant. In an analysis of protest trends in West Germany, Rucht (1998) finds that both the frequency of protests and the number of protestors per year has increased since the 1970s. In the United States, a similar approach suggests that while the frequency of protests has declined since the 1960s, the number of protestors at each event has increased (Soule and Earl

2005). Together, these studies suggest that protest activity should be increasing, and that any increase in the self-reported protest behavior is likely to be a real reflection of that process. In other words, the evidence from newspaper accounts of protest activities would seem to corroborate, rather than undermine, the self-reported claims of increasing protest.[iii]

Strategy of Analysis

The analysis for this study proceeds in four stages. In the first stage, a baseline model of protest behavior is estimated that includes a set of covariates for year and another set for country. The models are estimated with robust standard errors to offset the likelihood that the errors are not independent within each of the 18 countries. The baseline models will provide an initial glimpse of how movement activities vary both across time and country, and will be useful in assessing the three substantive claims of the movement society thesis. In the second stage, the first claim of the movement society thesis is evaluated. Using estimates from the baseline model of protest behavior, over-time trends in activity are plotted to examine whether protest activities are spreading to new individuals.

In the third stage of the analysis, the claim that movement activities are becoming more popular across most advanced democracies is evaluated. In this stage, three models of protest behavior are evaluated. The first model is the baseline model, and it constrains the protest trends to be the same for each country. The second model relaxes this constraint by including a series of survey year by country interactions. The third model exacts more parsimony over the fully-interactive model by substituting continuous measures of survey year in the interactions. These two sets of interactive models allow the time trends to be limited to just a few countries. If significant interactions are found, it may indicate that social movement activities have not spread

to additional democratic countries, and instead have remained concentrated among the early movers. If true, then it would suggest that that protest activities are not expanding across geographical context.

In the final stage of the analysis, the last claim (that movement activities are becoming institutionalized) is empirically evaluated by examining the time trends for different *strategies* of protest activity. This portion of the analysis focuses on whether rates of non-confrontational protests have been increasing at higher rates than other protest tactics, as movement society scholars expect.

RESULTS

A Model of Protest Behavior

As a starting point in the analysis, for each social movement activity, Table 2 reports the estimated time and country effects across the 18 advanced democracies in the analysis. The reference year is 1981 and the reference country is the United States. Looking at the time trends, the results suggest that the early 1980s generally represent a low-water mark for social movement activity, as indicated by the positive and statistically significant coefficients for the subsequent survey years. Rates of both non-confrontational and confrontational activities are significantly lower during the early 1980s than any other period in the analysis. The one activity that appears to have remained stable is the occupation of buildings, which briefly spikes in 1999.

The regression results also point to sizeable differences between countries in social movement participation. Interestingly, while the United States tends to have higher rates of non-confrontational activity than most other countries, its relative position with respect to rates of confrontational activity tends to be more varied. The popularity of non-confrontational activities

in the United States is largely consistent with the expectations of the movement society thesis, which anticipates both a shift in the popularity of protest activities toward the more institutionalized forms as well as the relative prominence of the United States in acting as a first mover in the process.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Diffusion to New Groups of People?

The results from Table 2 can be used to provide a more systematic assessment of the claim made by movement society scholars that more individuals are becoming involved in protest activities. Figure 1 uses the estimated effects from the models in Table 2 to plot the time trends for the five social movement activities. Starting first with non-confrontational activities, the trends indicate that, with the exception of a couple years, rates of participation in petition signing and boycotting trend in an upward direction, suggesting that more individuals became involved with non-confrontational activities over time.

Turning to confrontational activities, Figure 1 suggests that demonstrating is experiencing an upward trend similar to that of the non-confrontational activities. Participating in demonstrations was almost twice as popular in 2008 as it was in the early 1980s. In contrast to these gains in popularity, trends in other forms of protest are considerably more modest, perhaps even negligible. While the percentage of individuals participating in strikes appears to trend slightly upward (from about 4% in the early 1980s to 9% more recently), the trend in occupying buildings as a form of protest activity largely remains flat.[iv]

Taken together, trends in confrontational and non-confrontational activities provide strong, but not unequivocal, support for the movement society claim that protest activities are becoming more popular. Of the five activities in the analysis, four are experiencing an upward trend over time. At the same time, however, the trends themselves have been less than dramatic, and the majority of citizens still report not participating in most forms of protest. The results suggest, then, that claims of protest activity becoming "pervasive" should be tempered, and that scholars should view the process as more gradual.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Expansion across Geographic Context?

Movement society theorists also claim that that protest activities are spreading across geographic context, to the point that citizens in most advanced democracies view them as a viable option for political participation. While the results of this analysis indicate that protest activities are spreading to new groups of people, it remains possible that the upward time trends are limited to certain countries, and that the trends are not as widespread as movement society scholars argue.

To examine this possibility, the next stage of analysis builds on the baseline model in Table 2 and estimates two additional models, both of which represent theoretically-distinct alternatives. The first alternative includes a set of country by dummy year interactions. Conceptually, this model implies a temporal process in which each country experiences its own time trend. In contrast to the baseline model, which forces all the countries to share the same time trend, this alternative model is more flexible, if also less parsimonious. The second alternative constrains the time trends to either diverge or converge in a linear (rather than

nonlinear) fashion. It does so by including a series of country by continuous year interactions (rather than dummy years). In essence, this second alternative also allows the time trends to vary across national context, but in a more parsimonious way than the first alternative. To empirically adjudicate between the three models (i.e., the baseline model and the two alternative models), I use the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) statistic to determine which model best fits the data.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

For each social movement activity, Table 3 lists the BIC scores for each model. For four protest activities—boycotting, demonstrating, striking, and occupying buildings—the preferred model is the one that constrains the time trend to be constant across country. This indicates that the upward trend in boycotting, demonstrating, and striking as well as the stability of occupying buildings can be observed across different national contexts, and are not limited to a subset of the countries. In other words, the growth of protest activities that have been observed in the United States and a handful of European countries is actually occurring in a much wider setting.

However, for one activity, petition signing, the preferred model indicates that time trends did vary across country, raising the possibility that the upward trajectory observed earlier in Figure 1 might be limited to a handful of countries. Figure 2 probes this instance of cross-national variation further by using the preferred model to plot the net over-time change in the rate of petition signing for each country.[v]

Is the upward trend in petition signing limited to only a few "first movers"? Not according to Figure 2. Instead, the net changes in petition signing indicate that most countries are

trending upward (the lone exception is New Zealand). Cross-national variation exists in that some countries, such as Belgium and Ireland, have higher trajectories than others, such as Canada and Great Britain. That is, while there is some variation in the rate of adoption, most countries are nevertheless adopting petition signing as a protest tactic when voicing claims against their targets.

These results provide strong support for the movement society claim that protest activities are expanding across a variety of democratic settings. While not quite pervasive, they suggest that protest activities are more popular today than in the past, and that they are gradually becoming part of the standard repertoire of democratic action. Perhaps as importantly, while the United States may have been the original prototype for this phenomenon, citizens in other countries are now clearly part of the development.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Institutionalization of Tactics?

Thus far, the results of the analysis have provided largely affirmative evidence in support of the claim of a movement society. In short, more individuals in more countries are becoming involved with protest politics. In this section, a third claim is evaluated—specifically, that the rise of protest activity has been limited to only non-confrontational activities. While Figure 1 provides prima facie evidence against this claim—two confrontational activities are actually trending upward—a more thorough examination is needed to adequately assess it. Specifically, claims over an institutionalization of movement tactics hold that individuals and social movement organizations are more likely to advocate the use of non-confrontational activities,

such as petition signing, because they hold greater appeal for a risk-averse public. As a result, individuals are thought to be abandoning confrontational activities as a strategy of protest in favor of non-confrontational activities. Viewing social movement activities as separate events, as in Figure 1, overlooks this relational nature of protest strategy (i.e., the choice of one activity *instead of* another). Indeed, what is neglected is the underlying strategy of protest activity.

To address this problem, the final stage of the analysis codes respondents' protest behavior according to their strategy of protest activity—that is, whether they participated in (1) only non-confrontational activities, (2) only confrontational activities, (3) both non-confrontational and confrontational activities, or (4) neither type of activity. This outcome is then regressed on survey year and country to examine whether only non-confrontational activities have become more popular over time, net of country differences, as anticipated by the movement society thesis. The results of this multinomial logistic model are presented in Table 4 (choosing to engage in neither type of activity is the base category).

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

With respect to the claim that non-confrontational-only activities are becoming more popular, the results from Table 4 are mixed. On one hand, for most of the period under study, engaging in only non-confrontational activities becomes more popular. On the other hand, a strategy of engaging in both confrontational *and* non-confrontational activities (versus nonparticipation) also becomes more popular. This suggests that when protest activities are treated as independent events (i.e., the decision to participate in one type of activity is not related to their decision to participate in another type of activity), there appears to be some support for the claim that protest

activities are becoming institutionalized. However, when non-confrontational and confrontational activities are viewed as part of a larger strategy of protest, as in the dual-pronged approach, the claim seems more dubious.

Figure 3 provides a further illustration. In it, trends in three strategies of action charted: (1) non-confrontational-only activities, (2) confrontational-only activities, and (2) both types of activities. The over-time trends are relative to choosing neither activity, so that the log-odds are relative to the trend in that strategy. Three findings are worth noting. First, as indicated in Table 4, the three strategies that entail active involvement with protests have become more popular over time, relative to a strategy of non-involvement, consistent with the earlier claims of a rise in social movement activity. Second, engaging in both non-confrontational and confrontational activities is an increasingly popular strategy of protest, particularly from the late 1980s up to the late 1990s. That is, a multi-pronged strategy of protest activity has actually experienced a higher upward trajectory than engaging in only non-confrontational activities. This suggests that, rather than shifting toward more conventional activities, protestors are taking a more nuanced approach, in which they actively participate in conventional and contentious forms of protest—perhaps because they are adopting an array tactics to suit the diverse goals of a movement agenda.

Second, despite the rising popularity of a dual-pronged approach to protest, the percentage of citizens who participated in *only confrontational* activities spiked sharply in 2004. This suggests some degree of historical contingency in the extent to which certain strategies are popular. That is, general trends in protest activity can be interrupted by historical events that call for a dramatic departure from the norm. With respect to the surge in popularity of confrontational activities in 2004, any number of events may have propelled citizens to eschew non-

confrontational activities in favor of a more confrontational approach, including anger over the Iraq war, the emergence of a new post 9/11 protest environment, as well as the amplification of extremist movements across most advanced democracies.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

In contrast to the expectations of movement society theorists, then, it appears that social movement activities are not becoming more institutionalized, in the sense of shifting away from more contentious forms of protest, such as demonstrations and strikes. If anything, dual-pronged approaches that take advantage of the strengths of both non-confrontational and confrontational activities are becoming more pervasive. This does suggest, however, that two other dimensions of institutionalization—legitimation and routinization—may actually be occurring. That is, as other scholars have noted, public acceptance of protest activity has been increasing over time, reducing the likelihood that protest events will experience a public backlash. At the same time, protests activities have become more routine, making it easier for individuals to adopt new tactics. Together, then, the dual trends of legitimation and routinization could be driving the rise in both non-confrontational and confrontational activities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Social movements have the potential to serve as key drivers of social change. They channel democratic conflict, mobilize political grievances, and organize popular discontent. Based on evidence from case studies of social movements in the United States in Western Europe, scholars have recently started to argue that social movements have become pervasive in advanced

democracies. These scholars have made three claims in particular. First, they argue that social movement activities are spreading to new groups of people. Second, they argue that social movement activities are expanding across geographic context. Third, they claim movement tactics are becoming more institutionalized. If true, these claims would suggest that social movements have become part of the standard repertoire of democratic politics, potentially opening new opportunities for political dialogue. Yet, despite their implications, few studies have subjected the movement society claims to empirical scrutiny.

This study addresses the empirical gap by examining over-time trends in different forms of social movement activity across a wide range of advanced democracies. In particular, this analysis has focused on three questions. First, how has participation in different social movement activities changed over time, especially since the early 1990s? Second, do the American patterns observed by earlier social movement research extend to a wider range of democratic settings? Third, are social movement tactics shifting toward a strategy that focuses on non-confrontational-only activities?

In general, the results of the analysis largely confirm the movement society thesis. Since 1981, citizens in advanced democracies have become more likely to participate in social movement activities. Scholars using newspaper reports of protest activity have also generated evidence that indicates the size of protests events are growing over time (Rucht 1998; Soule and Earl 2005), suggesting congruence between their findings and the findings presented here. That is, the results of this analysis are based on individuals' self-reports, and while they may not be directly comparable to the more objective measures of protest activity, they can be viewed as a source of corroboration for the earlier work.

Moreover, while the United States may have been a first-mover in this development, the trend toward heightened movement activism is now clearly observable in practically every country in the study, including, for example, Belgium, Ireland, and Sweden. Despite cross-national differences in the extent to which countries are adopting these practices, the results suggest that social movement activities are in fact spreading to new groups of people and expanding across geographic context.

Nevertheless, these findings do suggest important points of departure from the movement society thesis. First, in contrast to the argument that social movements are shifting toward the adoption of safer, non-confrontational activities in an attempt to secure the support of risk-averse citizens, the findings from this analysis suggest that individuals are instead adopting a multi-pronged strategy that takes advantage of both non-confrontational and confrontational tactics. Far from a movement toward more conservative activities, these results suggest that social movement actors may be amplifying their efforts across both conventional and contentious activities. This would be consistent with research (e.g., Morris 1993) that suggests successful movements tend to incorporate a more nuanced strategy that utilizes a variety of tactics. To the extent that this trend entails an expansion of protest activities beyond non-confrontational tactics, then, these results suggest movement society scholars may have actually underestimated the extent to which protest activity has populated democratic politics.

Furthermore, many observers have treated the trends as largely definite and irreversible. That is, these theorists have suggested the trend toward a "movement society" is somehow inevitable—in part because of rising education levels, improving economic affluence, along with other components of modernization (Meyer and Tarrow 1998: 13). But the results presented here suggest a greater degree of historical contingency than these prior accounts imply. Specifically,

these findings suggest historical events, such as the Iraq War, can play an instrumental role in affecting how, when, and to what extent citizens mobilize around a political issue. Exploring why trends vary across national context remains a topic for subsequent research.

Conclusions

Political sociologists have had an enduring interest in long-term patterns of social movement activity. From the perspective of democratic accountability, social movements are often argued to be powerful vehicles for the communication of public preferences. Unlike conventional forms of participation, social movement activities are unconstrained by election schedules; activists are free to voice discontent whenever they desire. In addition, whereas elections are not well suited for registering support or opposition for specific policies, social movements can articulate these preferences. Compared to electoral participation, then, movement activities are in some respects powerful signals of mass preferences to political elites.

Against this backdrop, the results presented in this study would seem to bode well for the ability of citizens to influence policymakers. Specifically, the evidence indicates that citizens are highly involved in movement activities today—indeed, they are more involved today than at any point in the past 30 years. More citizens are signing petitions, participating in boycotts, attending demonstrations, and joining strikes. In this respect, then, the expectations of movement society scholars have been born out. It appears, then, that social movement activities are gradually becoming an entrenched, if not quite pervasive, aspect of advanced democracies.

At the same time, however, the sources of this increase in movement activism remain unclear. While the movement society thesis can be interpreted as a boon for the development and spread of democratic values, other research raises the possibility that this trend may actually

have its roots in an anti-democratic agenda (Blee and Creasap forthcoming). For example, the last three decades have seen a rise in extreme right-wing movements—not just in the United States, but across most advanced democracies. While the tactics of these organizations have been linked to increases in violence, especially toward minority populations (Koopmans and Olzak 2004; Goodwin 2006), the evidence also suggests that right-wing movements are utilizing non-confrontational tactics as well (Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky 2006; Blee and Creasap forthcoming). The strategic approach of these conservative movements raises the possibility that they are central force behind the shift toward a movement society. Perhaps more importantly, if these are the types of movements driving the upward trend in protest activity, then the democratic vision implied by the movement society may be in need of a further reconsideration.

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[i] I use the term conventionalization rather than cooptation because the former focuses attention on the moderation of movement *tactics*, while the latter focuses on the moderation—perhaps even abandonment—of movement *goals*.

[ii] Because the focus of the movement society thesis is on the observed, or unadjusted, time trends for each country, the analysis excludes controls for the social, political, and economic characteristics of individuals. Leaving these covariates out of the model is important because their inclusion could suppress (or perhaps even exaggerate) the estimated time trends.

[iii] In some respects, the opposite possibility—that is, that the over-time trends are actually underestimated—may be of a greater concern. Specifically, the outcomes measured in the analysis do not actually exhaust the tactical repertoires available to activists. As other scholars have noted, protestors constantly devise new tactics, particularly with respect to the theatrics of protest (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004), suggesting that the tactical repertoires available to protestors may be expanding over time. For example, many protestors are turning to street performances and art exhibits as a means to voicing political grievances, and for the most part, these are tactics that are not necessarily measured by the five outcomes in the present analysis. As a result, it remains possible that individuals may answer in the negative to questions of protest involvement only because many of the newer forms of protest are not mentioned. If true, then the trends presented here may underestimate the degree to which protest involvement has been increasing. This suggests that the results presented here could be viewed as a conservative estimate of the extent to which protest activities have expanded.

[iv] The upward trend in the popularity of strikes may at first seem counter-intuitive to those familiar with the well-established finding that labor unions have been in a state of long-term decay. Indeed, given the continued decline in labor union memberships, a downward trend in the popularity of strikes could have been anticipated. It remains possible, however, that as unions have become increasingly marginalized, they have resorted to more contentious forms of activity as a means to voicing their grievances (Clawson 2003; Van Dyke, Dixon, and Carlon 2007).

[v] For a more detailed illustration of these time trends, see Table A1 in the Appendix, which plots the trends for the entire time span.

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FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Predicted Time Trends in Social Movement Activities among 18 Advanced Democracies, 1981-2008.

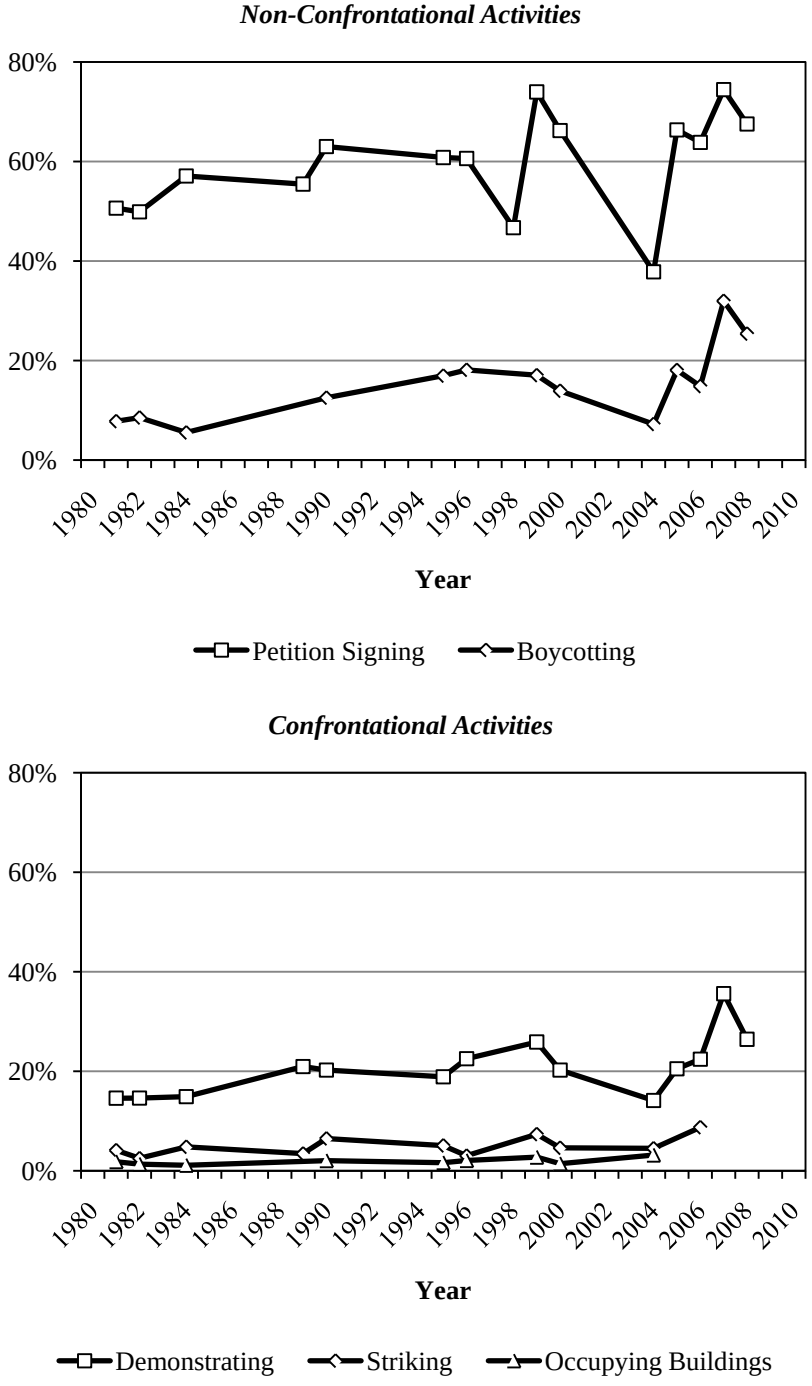

Figure 2: Net Change in Petition Signing among 18 Advanced Democracies, 1981-2008.

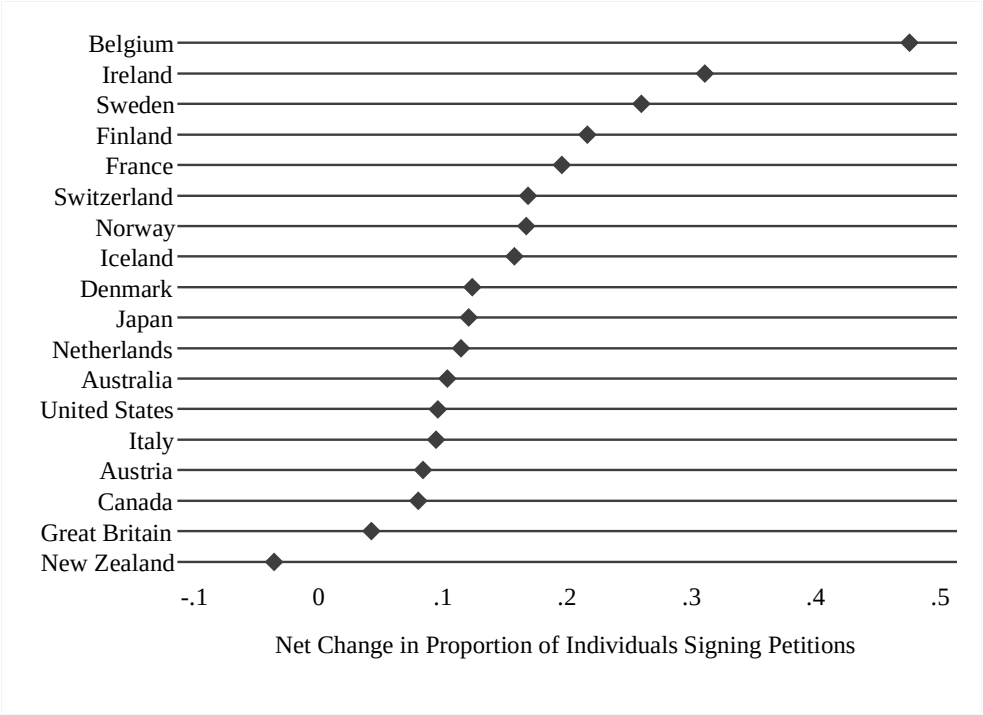

Figure 3: Log-Odds of Choosing Different Strategies of Protest Activity versus Choosing No Protest Activity, among 18 Advanced Democracies from 1981-2004.

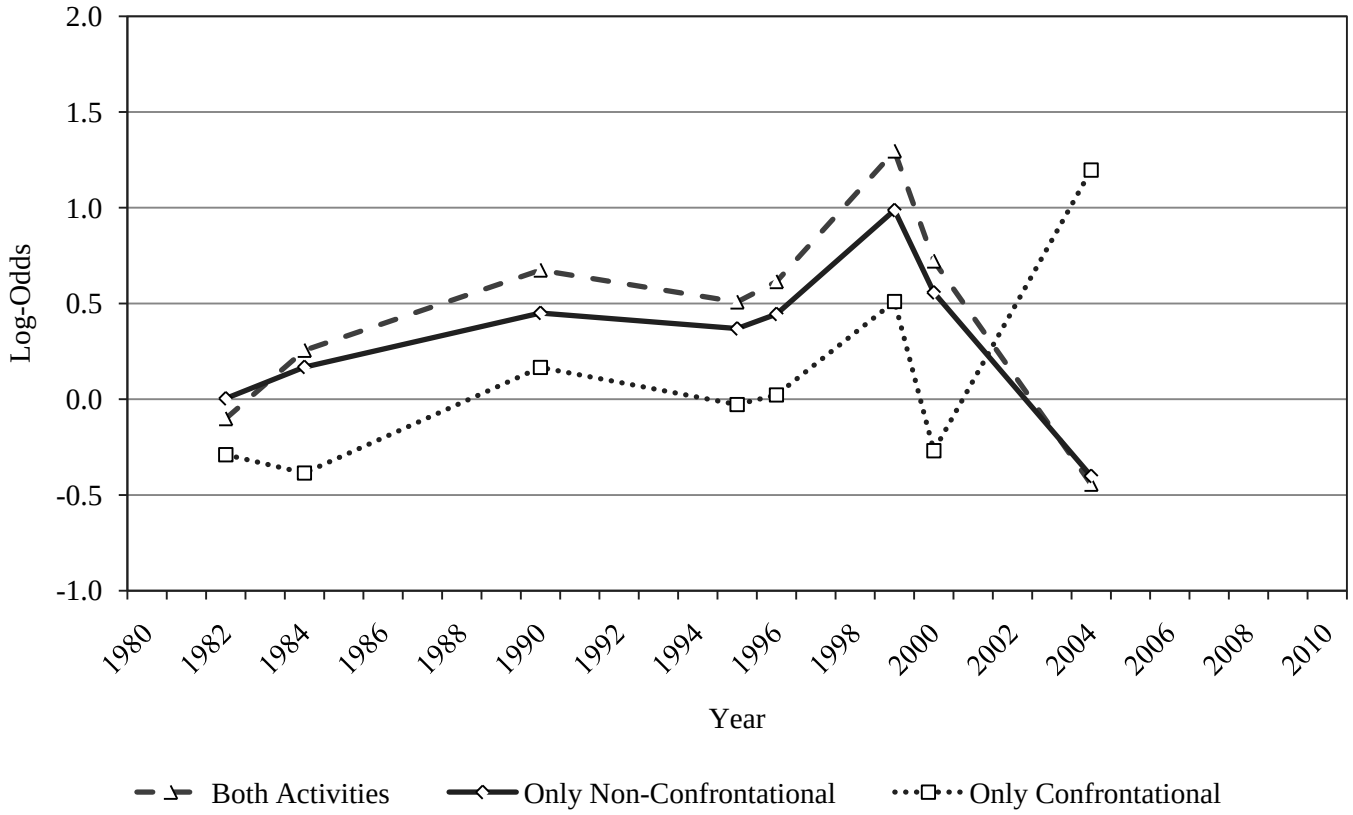

Table 1: Description and Summary Statistics of Variables Used in Analysis.

	Description	Mean (S.D.)	N
Social Movement Activities			
Petition Signing	*I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.*		
	Signing a petition. 1=have done; 0=else.	.61 (.49)	81,888
Boycotts	*Joining in boycotts. 1=have done; 0=else.*	.14 (.35)	76,921
Demonstration	*Attending lawful demonstrations. 1=have done; 0=else.*	.21 (.41)	79,433
Strikes	*Joining unofficial strikes. 1=have done; 0=else.*	.06 (.24)	66,735
Occupying Buildings	*Occupying buildings or factories. 1=have done; 0=else.*	.03 (.16)	63,645
Independent Variables			
Country	*Dichotomous indicators for country (reference=United States).*		
Year	*Dichotomous indicators for year (reference=1981).*		

Table 2: Logistic Regression Model of Time Trends in Social Movement Activity among 18 Advanced Democracies, 1981-2008.

	Non-confrontational Activities		Confrontational Activities		
Independent Variable:	Petition Signing	Boycotting	Demonstrating	Striking	Occupying Buildings
Year					
1982	-.029	.098	.002	-.510***	-.321*
	(.041)	(.063)	(.053)	(.103)	(.149)
1984	.261**	-.367*	.025	.161	-.510
	(.088)	(.149)	(.117)	(.245)	(.565)
1989	.194*		.439***	-.184	
	(.097)		(.123)	(.312)	
1990	.507***	.526***	.395***	.477***	.108
	(.026)	(.047)	(.034)	(.056)	(.076)
1995	.414***	.879***	.309***	.218*	-.114
	(.044)	(.061)	(.057)	(.095)	(.163)
1996	.406***	.961***	.531***	-.319**	.121
	(.049)	(.068)	(.059)	(.116)	(.223)
1998	-.157*				
	(.072)				
1999	1.020***	.886***	.714***	.611***	.408***
	(.029)	(.047)	(.034)	(.058)	(.073)
2000	.648***	.647***	.395***	.117	-.256
	(.044)	(.069)	(.059)	(.104)	(.180)
2004	-.521***	-.082	-.039	.092	.558
	(.158)	(.121)	(.114)	(.210)	(.380)
2005	.654***	.958***	.411***		
	(.041)	(.063)	(.051)		
2006	.543***	.722***	.526***	.798***	
	(.036)	(.054)	(.042)	(.115)	
2007	1.044***	1.714***	1.173***		
	(.107)	(.135)	(.117)		
2008	.707***	1.391***	.743***		
	(.083)	(.103)	(.089)		
Country					
Australia	.323***	-.366***	.242***	.615***	-.011
	(.048)	(.058)	(.057)	(.102)	(.166)
Austria	-1.201***	-1.204***	-.404***	-1.271***	-1.383***
	(.049)	(.080)	(.066)	(.159)	(.241)
Belgium	-1.042***	-.860***	.602***	.222**	.515***
	(.041)	(.059)	(.047)	(.086)	(.119)
Canada	.010	.097*	.307***	.473***	.403**
	(.039)	(.048)	(.047)	(.098)	(.137)
Denmark	-.976***	-.214***	.564***	1.292***	-.026
	(.049)	(.062)	(.055)	(.083)	(.151)
Finland	-1.262***	-.539***	-.197**	.327**	-1.272***
	(.045)	(.062)	(.061)	(.112)	(.260)

(*continued on next page*)

Table 2 (continued)

	Non-confrontational Activities		Confrontational Activities		
Independent Variable:	Petition Signing	Boycotting	Demonstrating	Striking	Occupying Buildings
Country					
France	-.696***	-.494***	.956***	.871***	1.177***
	(.043)	(.057)	(.046)	(.085)	(.118)
Iceland	-1.291***	-.141	.185**	-.397**	-1.111***
	(.059)	(.073)	(.070)	(.143)	(.271)
Ireland	-1.275***	-.973***	.071	-.007	-.280
	(.048)	(.077)	(.060)	(.107)	(.163)
Italy	-1.107***	-.693***	.936***	-.058	1.051***
	(.041)	(.054)	(.045)	(.093)	(.113)
Japan	-.646***	-1.357***	-.356***	-.486***	-1.842***
	(.043)	(.073)	(.062)	(.126)	(.308)
Netherlands	-1.096***	-.492***	.364***	-.570***	.330*
	(.043)	(.059)	(.051)	(.126)	(.139)
New Zealand	1.911***	.587***	.739***	.420*	-.597
	(.126)	(.095)	(.088)	(.165)	(.313)
Norway	-.397***	-.505***	.410***	1.309***	-.586**
	(.047)	(.067)	(.057)	(.094)	(.190)
Sweden	.014	.221***	.602***	-.156	-.832***
	(.043)	(.047)	(.047)	(.109)	(.191)
Switzerland	-.161*	-.990***	-.057	-.298	-.842*
	(.081)	(.113)	(.099)	(.251)	(.370)
Great Britain	-.046	-.376***	-.247***	.607***	-.110
	(.045)	(.055)	(.056)	(.089)	(.149)
Constant	.510***	-2.032***	-2.041***	-3.325***	-3.798***
	(.037)	(.053)	(.045)	(.080)	(.116)
Observations	81,888	76,921	79,433	66,735	63,645

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. The reference year is 1981, and the reference country is the United States.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$(two-tailed test)

Table 3: Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) Scores for Logistic Regression Model of Time Trends in Social Movement Activity among 18 Advanced Democracies, 1981-2008.

	Non-confrontational Activities		Confrontational Activities		
Model/Description	Petition Signing	Boycotting	Demonstrating	Striking	Occupying Buildings
1 Base Model (Table 2)	-823,631	**-804,091**	**-816,779**	**-711,551**	**-688,673**
2 Base Model + [Country × Year (dummy variables)]	-821,006	-801,646	-814,003	-709,413	-686,720
3 Base Model + [Country × Year (continuous)]	**-823,781**	-804,067	-816,771	-711,458	-688,547

Note: Preferred model in bold.

Table 4: Multinomial Logistic Regression Model of Time Trends in Strategies of Social Movement Activity among 18 Advanced Democracies, 1981-2004 (N=59,394).

	Non-Confrontational Only vs. None	Confrontational Only vs. None	Both vs. None
Year			
1982	.004	-.290	-.102
	(.049)	(.150)	(.063)
1984	.168	-.385	.255
	(.103)	(.276)	(.131)
1990	.450***	.166*	.674***
	(.033)	(.070)	(.039)
1995	.369***	-.028	.508***
	(.053)	(.212)	(.069)
1996	.444***	.022	.614***
	(.059)	(.143)	(.072)
1999	.987***	.510***	1.296***
	(.036)	(.073)	(.041)
2000	.557***	-.269	.722***
	(.055)	(.168)	(.072)
2004	-.401*	1.197	-.444*
	(.171)	(1.129)	(.191)
Country			
Australia	.348***	.046	.387***
	(.060)	(.250)	(.076)
Austria	-1.212***	-.225	-1.406***
	(.057)	(.222)	(.078)
Belgium	-1.380***	.839***	-.443***
	(.051)	(.177)	(.058)
Canada	-.004	.569**	.191**
	(.051)	(.205)	(.066)
Denmark	-1.165***	1.450***	-.170*
	(.061)	(.181)	(.068)
Finland	-1.311***	.981***	-.988***
	(.059)	(.192)	(.078)
France	-1.168***	1.238***	.042
	(.059)	(.182)	(.064)
Iceland	-1.370***	.541*	-.913***
	(.070)	(.216)	(.084)
Ireland	-1.454***	.558**	-.953***
	(.058)	(.191)	(.071)
Italy	-1.439***	1.649***	-.287***
	(.055)	(.172)	(.061)
Japan	-.683***	-.104	-.966***
	(.055)	(.227)	(.080)
Netherlands	-1.292***	.491*	-.538***
	(.058)	(.195)	(.067)

(*continued on next page*)

Table 4 (continued)

	Non-Confrontational Only vs. None	Confrontational Only vs. None	Both vs. None
Country			
New Zealand	1.729***	-.857	1.959***
	(.133)	(1.021)	(.148)
Norway	-.559***	1.236***	.088
	(.056)	(.185)	(.068)
Sweden	-.167**	.952***	.329***
	(.054)	(.193)	(.065)
Switzerland	-.262**	.042	-.332**
	(.094)	(.366)	(.121)
Great Britain	.048	.383	-.088
	(.057)	(.220)	(.072)
Constant	.368***	-3.420***	-.893***
	(.045)	(.170)	(.056)

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. The reference year is 1981, and the reference country is the United States.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test)

Appendix

Table A1: Fitted Time Trends in Petition-Signing among 18 Advanced Democracies, 1981-2008.