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A Social Movement Generation: Cohort and Period Trends in Protest Attendance and Petition Signing

Neal Caren,[a] Raj Andrew Ghoshal,[b] and Vanesa Ribas[a]

Abstract

This project explores cohort and period trends in political participation in the United States between 1973 and 2008. We examine the extent to which protest attendance and petition signing have diffused to different kinds of actors across multiple generations; we test claims central to understanding trends in social movement participation. Using aggregated, cross-sectional survey data on political involvement from 34,241 respondents, we examine changes in the probability of ever having attended a protest or signed a petition over time periods and across cohorts using cross-classified, random-effects models. We find a strong generational effect on the probability of ever having attended a protest, which explains much of the observed change in self-reports of protest behavior. More than half of this generational effect is a result of compositional change, but we find little evidence that protest attendance diffused to new types of actors. We compare these findings with a less confrontational form of protesting, petition signing, which shows more period than cohort effects. We argue that social movement activities have not become a widespread means of civic engagement.

Keywords

social movements; civic engagement; generational effects; protest; cross-classified, random-effects

The proportion of individuals who reported ever having attended a protest rose from 10.1 percent in the 1973 General Social Survey (GSS) to 18.8 percent in the 2004 GSS. Social movement scholars, notably Tarrow (1994) and Meyer and Tarrow (1998a, 1998b), argue that the United States and other industrialized democracies are ''social movement societies'' in which marches, demonstrations, boycotts, and other confrontational political tactics have become routinized, acceptable forms of political engagement in the wake of the 1960s protest cycle. In this line of argument, tactics that

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historically were strongly associated with political outsiders, such as civil rights activists and unruly student leftists, are now a part of the modern political repertoire available to the left and the right, to insiders and outsiders, for a wide variety of issues.

Some scholars take this rise in the proportion of individuals ever attending a protest to indicate the health of advanced democracy in the face of much-heralded declines in other forms of civic engagement. Notably, Inglehart and Catterberg (2002) and Dalton (2008b) see the rise of post-material social movements, such as the environmental movement in advanced industrial democracies, as a sign that a new form of engaged citizenship has restructured the ways that individuals participate in governance. They see the rise and diffusion of protest attendance and petition signing as evidence that any particular decline in civic life (see Putnam 2000) is not a threat to the health of democracy; these newly prominent forms of political action allow citizens to focus ''on issues of greatest concern,'' in contrast to the blunt tool of voting (Dalton 2008b:93).

We argue, however, that the extent of the rise and diffusion of protest attendance and petition signing is understudied. While studies find some support for the diffusion and institutionalization of protest during the past 50 years (e.g., Soule and Earl 2005), the principal mechanisms for this shift to a social movement society remain underspecified in several important ways.

First, it remains unclear how much of the observed increase in movement participation relates to generational change and how much of this increased probability of protest is the result of time period effects. Previous research focuses exclusively on changes over time, largely ignoring the role of generational replacement and cohort socialization. By contrast, researchers studying other aspects of social movements find large generational effects (Whittier 1995). If the observed changes are related to generational effects, with protesting Baby Boomers replacing their more quiescent parents, then the increase in proportion ever protesting does not represent a fundamental change in the way that individuals interact with the state. Instead, it may be a short-lived interruption in habits of civic engagement. If, on the other hand, the increase in protesting has affected individuals who did not live through the 1960s, this suggests a long-term shift in the practices of governance.

Second, observed generational and temporal patterns in political participation might be largely an artifact of compositional change. If the increase in protest participation is largely a function of the increasing proportion of Americans who go to college, which is a strong predictor of political engagement, this would represent a different sort of change mechanism than if the increase were caused by the increased number of racial and ethnic minority group members living in the United States. We explore the extent to which changes in the demographic profile of Americans drive participation changes over time and cohorts.

Third, we know little about whether and how specific individual characteristics associated with protest attendance have changed over time and across cohorts. Current claims that protest has diffused to different categories of individuals say little about which individual characteristics have become more or less salient for protest attendance, and whether any of these changes have occurred over periods or cohorts. The extent to which the increase in protesting and petitioning is restructuring modes of civic engagement depends heavily on the extent to which it is providing new means of participation to new kinds of citizens.

Fourth, prior research has not examined how temporal and generational trends compare for different types of protest tactics. On a spectrum of levels of institutionalization of different political activities—ranging from the entirely state-sanctioned and organized electoral voting to state-overthrowing revolts—petition signing, for example, falls closer

to the voting end of the spectrum, while protest remains rare, is often somewhat confrontational, and requires higher levels of commitment. As a social movement tactic, petition signing also differs from attending a protest in that it is less collective. Although petition drives seek many individuals' signatures, signing is an individual act, and even running a petition drive may require little or no coordination of groups. Petitioning, especially for candidates and ballot initiatives, is also likely to be highly routinized by the state. More generally, research describing and explaining trends in costly, confrontational, rare, and challenging tactics may not generalize to less costly, less confrontational, more common, and more institutionalized tactics.

In this project, we address these four sets of unanswered questions by theoretically and empirically specifying the relations among generations, time periods, individual characteristics, and political activism. We accomplish this using all available national survey data on ever having protested or signed a petition from 1973 to 2008; this encompasses 34,241 respondents from 21 different surveys conducted by 11 polling organizations. Protest, as operationalized here, includes participating in activities variously referred to as demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, public protests, and picketing. Missing data are multiply imputed. We employ cross-classified, random-effects models (CCREM) to model cohort and period effects simultaneously (Yang 2008; Yang and Land 2006, 2008).

We find that in protest behavior, temporal (period) trends are dwarfed by generational (cohort) trends. These generational trends are not linear but bell-curve shaped, with the probability of ever having protested highest for individuals born around 1950. By contrast, the change in petition signing is more related to period effects. Additionally, more than half of the estimated generational change in both protest behavior and petition signing is related to demographic compositional change. We find little evidence of protest diffusing to new categories of individuals. We estimate that only for level of education has there been any change in the relation between individual characteristics and protest over this time period, with college education—a significant predictor of protest for all cohorts—bearing an even larger effect for early Baby Boomers than for other cohorts. Because we find that the patterns of political engagement that developed in the 1960s changed little over subsequent decades, we argue that changes in the types of individuals who engage in political action are unlikely to occur slowly over time, but are more likely to happen suddenly during periods of political unrest.

A SOCIAL MOVEMENT SOCIETY?

As developed by Tarrow (1994) and Meyer and Tarrow (1998a, 1998b), the social movement society (SMS) thesis offers three primary hypotheses about protest in advanced industrialized societies. First, the SMS thesis maintains that protest has changed from being an irregular and episodic occurrence to being a perpetual and pervasive feature of modern life as a result of the protest movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Second, the SMS thesis holds that protest has diffused in its constituencies, claims, and targets over time. In this view, protest is no longer dominated by student radicals, ethnic minorities, and union activists, as it purportedly was four decades ago, but it is now a political tool used by actors of many different political orientations and social locations. Claims that once were seen as outside the purview of movements have become grounds for protest, and private as well as public institutions have become targets of protest. Third, the SMS thesis argues that movement tactics have become steadily more a part of conventional politics through the professionalization of movement actors and the institutionalization of movement repertoires.

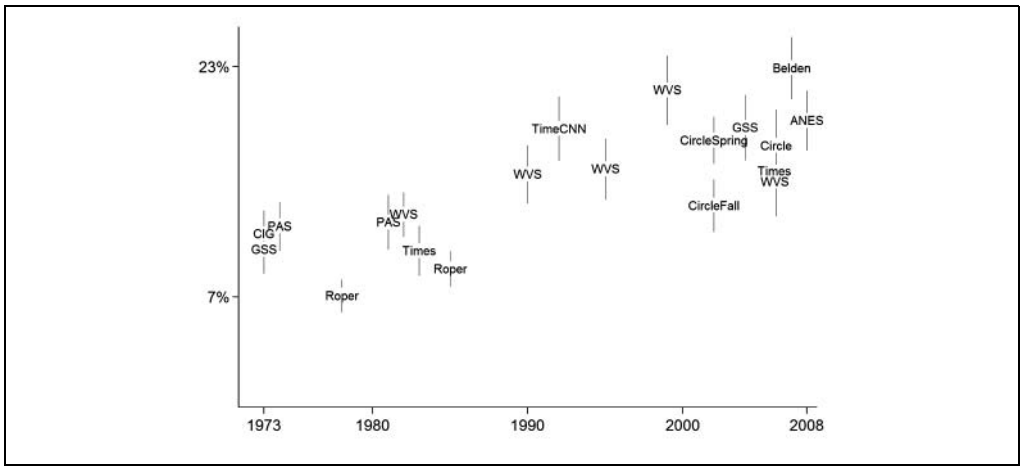

Figure 1. Percent Reporting Ever Attending a Demonstration in 20 National Surveys from 1973 to 2008

Note: Lines show 95 percent confidence interval. Details of polls are available in the online supplement.

In the view of SMS proponents, it is not just movement participants who have become professionalized; rather, states and movements now often engage each other in predictable, patterned ways, such that demonstrations and state responses are often orderly, planned, and coordinated (della Porta 1995, 1998). A common concern among SMS scholars is whether the expansion and routinization of less confrontational forms of protest (e.g., petitioning) chiefly account for the conditioning of a social movement society, while more confrontational forms of protest (e.g., riots and building occupations) have declined.

Several empirical studies find some support for the SMS ideas of more frequent and more diffused protest in the United States and other Western countries. Several studies based on individual-level survey data indicate that more U.S. citizens report having participated in movement activities now than in prior decades (e.g., Dalton 2006, 2008a; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), as do residents of other advanced industrial democracies (e.g., Dalton 2006; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Rucht 1998). As Figure 1 shows, the proportion of people saying they have ever been to a demonstration has increased over time, ranging from a low of 7 percent in a 1978 Roper survey to a high of 22 percent in a 2007 survey by Belden, Russonello, & Stewart.

Studies examining the relation between movements and conventional politics support the SMS thesis in its claims of increasing professionalization and institutionalization of protest, which has occurred through changes in the legal context and policing of protest along with cultural shifts in the acceptance of protest as a legitimate means for expressing opinions (McCarthy and McPhail 1998). A higher percentage of protest events in the United States featured at least one organization present in the mid-1980s than in the early 1960s (Soule and Earl 2005). Violence and other militant tactics (e.g., occupying buildings) became less common features of protest in the United States during this period (Crozat 1998), while the use of less disruptive tactics grew. For example, the proportion of protests without property violence increased from approximately 85 percent in the late 1960s to over 95 percent in the early 1980s (Soule and Earl 2005). Increasingly, authorities and protesters, in the United States and elsewhere,

have cooperated in setting boundaries for ''acceptable'' kinds of protest (della Porta, Fillieule, and Reiter 1998; McCarthy and McPhail 1998). Police response has moderated over time, with presence of police violence declining from 14 percent of confrontational events in 1970 to 2 percent in 1985 (Soule and Earl 2005).

Participation in protest remains uncommon in the United States; individual-level survey data generally find few individuals who have protested recently. For example, in the 2004 GSS, only 6 percent of respondents reported attending a protest in the past year, which is less than the rate of political donations (32 percent), boycotting products (35 percent), contacting elected officials (23 percent), or attending a political rally (13 percent) during the same time period. This suggests that while attending a protest may be more routinized, it is still rarer than other forms of political action and about three-quarters of people who have ever attended a protest last did so more than a year ago.

Although not always articulated as such, SMS proponents' claims are situated within a broader debate about political participation in contemporary democracies. While Putnam and others (see Putnam 2000) conclude that American democracy is imperiled by a steep decline in civic and political engagement, Inglehart and Catterberg (2002) and Dalton (2008b) propose analogous counter-arguments pointing to a shift in the underlying norms of citizenship that have engendered changes in the prevalence of distinct forms of political participation. These counter-arguments to the civic disengagement thesis make SMS-like claims that unconventional forms of political participation, including protest and petition signing, have increased as commitments to ''materialist values'' or ''duty-based citizenship'' have given way to an embrace of ''postmaterialist values'' and ''engaged citizenship'' (Dalton 2008b; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). Indeed, echoing the chorus of SMS proponents, Dalton (2008b:91) contends that ''protest has become so common that it is now the extension of conventional political action by other means.''

HYPOTHESES

We present six hypotheses about changing patterns of political involvement. Our first two hypotheses concern the role of time period and generational effects. To the extent that the increase in protest participation is largely the result of routinized interactions between social movement organizations and the state (and other targets), as some SMS scholars suggest, we would expect that the increase in protest participation would largely be a function of period effects, with generational and compositional effects playing a secondary role. Dalton (2008b:90), for example, finds that ''signing petitions and participating in more challenging protest activities display a marked increase from 1975 to the present.''

A major source of these period effects is likely the institutionalization of protest that SMS scholars have noted, especially the decline in the potential disruptiveness of protest, which reduces the cost and risk associated with participation. For example, according to the 2008 American National Election Study, among respondents who have ever protested, only 32 percent report ever fearing being arrested. For respondents born between 1930 and 1960, however, the rate is 40 percent, dropping to 24 percent for individuals born after 1960.[1] The drop in perceived risk over time may be an important cause of increased protest participation; people unwilling to participate in high-risk forms of activism may have become more willing to protest due to the perceived decline in associated risks.

Hypothesis 1: The likelihood of attending a protest has increased over time, net of compositional and generational effects.

Other scholars, however, point to the importance of early political experiences that vary significantly by generation, rather than by time period. Putnam (2000), for example, suggests that the observed increase in protest participation could be driven by generational replacement. Much evidence suggests that generational replacement is a central cause in observed macro-level changes in political attitudes. For example, individuals who were young adults during the feminist movement of the 1970s are more likely than older and younger cohorts to call themselves feminists and to have such a self-identification linked to a stable set of beliefs (Schnittker, Freese, and Powell 2003). Similarly, growing tolerance of homosexuality in the United States and Canada has resulted from both time period and cohort effects (Andersen and Fetner 2008). In the realm of protest activity, Baby Boomers, many of whom were active as very young adults in the student and antiwar movements of the 1960s, increased their share of the adult population as early, less protest-oriented generations died off. This gave the appearance of a general trend toward increased participation in the protest form of political action. In reality, however, this exceptional "political generation" (Mannheim 1952) that came of age during the 1960s protest wave may be an aberration in a general trend toward decreased participation in civic life.

Hypothesis 2: The likelihood of attending a protest is especially high for birth cohorts that were in their late teens to mid-20s in the late 1960s—that is, the Baby Boomers—net of compositional and period effects.

Our next three hypotheses address the diffusion of protest. Cross-sectional studies of the likelihood of individuals having ever protested suggest that protest is unevenly distributed throughout society. Prior cross-sectional research has uncovered strong predictors of individual protest participation. In some ways, predictors of protest mirror those of voting and other, more conventional forms of political participation (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Verba et al. 1995). People with high levels of interest in politics and high levels of organizational membership are more likely than the uninterested and the uninvolved to have protested in the past year (McAdam 1986; Schussman and Soule 2005; Verba et al. 1995).

In other ways, however, researchers find that determinants of protest diverge from determinants of conventional political involvement. For example, using data from 1990, Schussman and Soule (2005) find that the positive effects of education and income on the likelihood of a person having protested in the past year disappear when measures of political engagement and structural availability (e.g., organizational membership and being asked to protest) are accounted for, as does the positive effect of being African American. Being young is positively correlated with having protested in the past year, as is liberalism (Hirsch 1990; Schussman and Soule 2005; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991).

Schussman and Soule (2005) suggest that gender became a nonsignificant predictor of protest by 1990, in contrast to prior findings that women protest less than men (Dalton 2006; Taylor and Raeburn 1995; Verba et al. 1995). Beyond this evidence about the changing effect of gender, little is known about how predictors of protest participation may have changed over time. Additionally, as protesting has become less disruptive, it may have become more appealing to individuals who are less likely to be interested in a pitched battle with the police, such as non-youths and others with less biographical availability. This shift in perceived risk is more nuanced than the general shift we consider in Hypothesis 1; here we suggest that a decline in perceived risk may have affected different sorts of people differently. While the SMS thesis of a diffusion of protest throughout society implicitly suggests that various predictors of protest may be weakening, we know of little

empirical work that examines change in protest predictors during the past few decades.

Using the 1999 to 2002 World Values Survey (WVS) data, Dalton (2006) examines the strength of various predictors of respondents' stated willingness to engage in a challenging action in the United States. He finds moderate effects for education, union membership, and left/right political orientation, and strong effects for age. Dalton (2006:71, 2008a:69) speculates that youths may be more willing to engage in protest, with this willingness declining as individuals age; alternatively, he suggests that ''age differences in protest may represent a generational pattern of changing participation styles'' rather than a youth effect. Furthermore, Dalton (2006:72–73) claims that the effect of age has declined over time ''as acceptance of protest has spread throughout society. . . . Even seniors are now willing to take to the barricades.'' We argue, however, that such a weakening of the age effect, if it exists, might reflect generational replacement as Baby Boomers matured, rather than a more general decline in the age effect per se. Using a panel study of Baby Boomers, Jennings (1987) found that while this generation became more politically conservative as it aged, individuals who protested during college remained distinct in political beliefs and behaviors later in life.

In addition, Dalton (2006:74, 2008a:73) proposes that the ''new citizen politics,'' which is characterized by a shift in citizens' level and style of political action toward greater participation and control, may enhance the importance of social status as a predictor of participation. In other words, the better-educated are more likely to avail themselves of new forms of participation. If this is the case, we would expect the protest participation gap between college and non-college graduates to have increased over time. These studies of individual correlates of protest participation suggest two possible hypotheses related to observed shifts in aggregate protest participation.

Hypothesis 3: Correlations between attending a protest and individual characteristics have declined over time, as protest has diffused to more types of people.

If protest has become more widely available over either time period or cohort, we would expect correlations between individual characteristics and protest behavior to have declined. At the extreme, if everyone is equally likely to attend a protest, then none of the significant predictors from early time periods or generations would have any predictive power in later time periods or among later generations. Alternatively, if new categories of individuals now find protest an option, but the diffusion is not uniform, we might expect previously non-significant variables to have a larger effect over either time or generations. For example, a marked increase in conservatives attending protests might result in a conservative orientation becoming a significant protest predictor relative to a moderate orientation. Protest by right-wing groups trended upward as a share of all protest events between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s, and the average size of right-wing or conservative movement protest events increased during this period as well (Soule and Earl 2005), although this shift in size was also found in non–right-wing events. The 1980s saw the increasing prominence of the Christian right and pro-life movements, which may have increased the probability of non-liberals protesting, although earlier right-wing movements, such as the anti-busing and anti-gay movements of the 1970s, also mobilized conservatives.

Hypothesis 4: The correlation between attending a protest and individual characteristics has changed or declined over generations, as protest has diffused to more types of people. The gap in demonstration attendance between conservatives and liberals, people with and without college degrees, African Americans and whites, and men and women will shrink or be

reduced to zero across either periods, cohorts, or both.

Furthermore, any observed generational or temporal shifts might not be caused by any specific political generational or institutionalization effect, but instead might be the result of changing cohort composition. For example, this time period saw an increase in the proportion of Americans attending college, which is a significant positive predictor of protest participation, as noted earlier. The changing demographic composition of the United States may play a substantial role in observed increases in reports of protest participation.

Hypothesis 5: Observed changes in protest participation are linked to changing cohort demographics, rather than period or generational effects, because the increase in demonstration participation is primarily a result of increases in educational attainment in successive cohorts.

Finally, we are interested in variation in the relative importance of generational and period effects on different types of political activism. Specifically, we compare protest attendance with petition signing, a more common and less costly form of political participation. While some SMS research (e.g., Crozat 1998; McVeigh and Smith 1999) disaggregates more and less confrontational types of dissent, extant research does not explore whether changes in protest and petition activity are explicable through the same set of causes or require different explanations, nor does it examine differences in the determinants of these activities over time.

The ballot initiative process, which is permitted in 23 states, has had a large hand in institutionalizing petition signing. In states with this system, proposed statutes or constitutional amendments can be put on the ballot if enough petition signatures are collected. These usually require a large number of signatures; for example, in 2010 in California, statewide ballot initiatives required 433,971 signatures to appear on the ballot (Bowen 2010). The success of California's Proposition 13, which limited property taxes, is often credited with the growth of state ballot initiatives, which increased from 18 a year in the 1970s to 25 a year in the 1980s, 38 a year in the 1990s, and 37 a year in the 2000s (Initiative & Referendum Institute 2010). This formalization makes petition signing significantly different from protesting, as state statutes about the form that protests can take allow a great deal more latitude. Additionally, the benefits of protesting are much less definite; a certain number of petition signatures may guarantee an initiative is placed on the ballot, but no such threshold exists for measuring the success of a demonstration. Petition signing also differs from attending a demonstration in that signing a name can take less than 10 seconds and requires no planning, meaning the cost of participating is radically lower. While most protesters in the contemporary United States face little risk of being arrested, petition signers have almost no chance of being arrested, meaning the event is less risky. Because petition signers rarely face police barricades or counter-signers, the average level of physical contention is much lower.

Hypothesis 6: Compared with petition signing, the likelihood of attending a protest will follow different cohort and period trends, reflecting petition signing's greater degree of institutionalization and its much lower costs and risks.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Previous examinations of social movement activities over time (e.g., Amenta et al. 2009; Sampson et al. 2005; Soule and Earl 2005) primarily draw on newspaper reports of movement events or organizations. Aggregated newspaper reports of events have

a number of desirable properties, such as providing detailed information about the size of a protest event, the types of claims being made, and authorities' reactions, although the newspaper reporting process may introduce its own sources of bias (see Oliver and Myers 1999). For the hypotheses we seek to test, newspaper data are unsatisfactory because they provide little information about the individual participants and less still on their birth cohorts.

Another effective approach to studying long-term trends in political participation uses longitudinal data on individuals. For example, McAdam's (1988) examination of Freedom Summer participants and nonparticipants, before participants left for Mississippi and two decades later, relies on this research strategy. While this and other longitudinal studies have contributed greatly to our knowledge of the personal consequences of activism in the 1960s, no longitudinal studies have made cross-cohort comparisons of protest activity, and no such data currently exist.

We complement these two extant strategies by using multiple, cross-sectional surveys that asked very similar questions about respondents' historical participation in protest events and petition signing. While we are not able to track specific individuals over time, we are able to track multiple cohorts' experiences over time. This is central to understanding differences in age, period, and cohort effects that cannot be disentangled through either longitudinal data on one cohort or a cross-sectional analysis. Crozat (1998) adopts a similar strategy in looking at acceptance of protest tactics, but he uses only two time periods and does not attempt to disentangle period from cohort effects. Dalton (2006) compares the effect sizes of predictors of protest across different waves of the WVS, attributes observed differences largely to period effects, and likewise does not explore generational replacement as a possible mechanism for observed changes. Our approach builds on and advances these studies by examining period and cohort effects in an analysis that pools multiple surveys over three decades.

We aggregated all available U.S. national surveys that asked some variant of the questions ''Have you ever participated in a protest, march or demonstration?'' or ''Have you ever signed a petition?'' Eleven polling institutions conducted a total of 21 such surveys from 1973 to 2008; this encompasses 32,192 respondents asked about protesting and 25,812 who were asked about petitions.[2] We include all respondents age 18 years and over (for details of the surveys, see the online supplement [http://asr.sagepub.com/supplemental]). Combined, these surveys enable us to reliably estimate cohort and generational effects, as we have responses from at least 70 individuals from each of 22 different four-year birth cohorts observed for at least three four-year periods and eight cohorts across the entire time period. Additionally, because we have individual-level descriptive data, we can model potential changes in individual-level correlates of protest over time and generations. We also are able to simultaneously distinguish between period and cohort effects, examine the extent to which these two effects are driven by compositional change across periods, and identify the degree to which various predictors of protest attendance and petition signing changed over time period and generation. Finally, each survey asked comparable questions about individual demographic characteristics, enabling us to create a full set of individual predictor variables.

A major limitation of these data is that our first observation is not until 1973, which is at the tail end of the 1960s protest cycle. We are not able to measure the extent to which the 1960s wave of mobilization fundamentally altered the number and types of people who engage in protest. Unfortunately, no national surveys asked about protest participation prior to the early 1970s.[3] However, because of the nature of the question (''Have you ever . . . ''), we are able to measure self-reports of protest and petition signing that occurred prior to 1973. Additionally, we can

establish to what extent patterns formed during this period shifted in the 35-year period following it.

An additional limitation of the data is that questions are not the same across surveys (see the online supplement for exact question wording), and having the data collected by multiple survey organizations introduces further biases into the analysis. When aggregating cross-sectional data, a common practice is to only use data from the same survey series, such as the GSS, the American National Election Survey, or the WVS (e.g., Andersen and Fetner 2008). Unfortunately, no single survey series asked questions about protest on more than five occasions, and restricting ourselves to one survey, such as the WVS, would severely limit our ability to differentiate period from cohort effects. We seek to reduce any bias that may arise by controlling for polling ''house effects'' and word-order effects through the inclusion of indicator variables in all of our models for survey organization that are observed over more than one year. Because question wording is highly correlated with sponsoring organization, we cannot reliably distinguish between the effect of question wording and other survey sponsor effects, such as sampling procedure. For example, the word ''demonstration'' is present for all questions except those in the two Roper surveys, which ask about ''protest march or sit-in.'' Our indicator variable for Roper thus controls for both the absence of the word and any Roper-specific biases.

Because our survey questions are not identical across the different years and surveys (see the online supplement), one important consideration is whether there is any systematic bias in the scope of behaviors the questions called to mind. For instance, if earlier surveys referred to protest attendance using terms that called a wide array of behaviors into respondents' minds, while later surveys asked the protest question in such a way that respondents understood protest more narrowly, this skew would misleadingly produce the appearance of a decline in protest. To examine this possibility, we categorize all questions as ''broad'' or ''narrow,'' based on how inclusive a normal reading of the question would be. We classify all but five questions as lending themselves to a broad interpretation of protest. The question wordings we identified as potentially reducing survey participants' self-reported participation were from the 1973 Confidence in Government study, the 1973 GSS, the 1978 Roper study, the 1983 *New York Times* poll, and the 1985 Roper study. These questions referred to a subset of protest activities or asked the question in such a way that respondents might be expected to underreport participation, relative to the other question wordings used in the surveys. While the differences in wordings are small, the fact that all of the potentially narrowing question wordings appear in studies conducted during the early part of our time period indicates that, if anything, our study is biased toward finding expanding, rather than stable, protest trends over time. (Several of the questions asked about attendance only at ''lawful'' demonstrations, but we do not categorize these questions as narrow because the number of people who have participated in illegal demonstrations but not legal protests in this country is likely trivial. Furthermore, the questions referring to ''lawful'' demonstrations mostly appear on surveys from the early and middle years of our study period, meaning that any effect they might have would be to tilt our findings further toward a finding of a positive time trend for protest.)

For each survey analyzed, the online supplement lists the year it was conducted, the sponsoring organization, the number of respondents, the proportion that reported ever having attended a protest and signed a petition, and any variables that we entirely imputed (see below for more on the process of multiple imputation).

Dependent Measures

The dependent variables are two dichotomous measures: whether a respondent reported ever having attended a protest,

march, or demonstration, and whether a respondent reported ever having signed a petition. In a perfect world, each survey would have asked respondents whether they had ever protested, accompanied by a series of follow-up questions designed to reconstruct the respondent's protest history. Longitudinal data tracking multiple cohorts with repeated questions about recent protest and petition involvement would also be well-suited to address this question. Such data, however, have not been collected. This question is limited, in that answers might reflect some social desirability basis when an individual was surveyed or might be affected by recall error, with respondents either forgetting they ever signed a petition or attended a protest, or responding they did, when they had not. Studies of misreporting religious attendance (e.g., Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves 1993) and voting (Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986) find that mistaken respondents are generally usually engaged in the activity, but happen not to have done so during the question's time frame. As our questions have a lifetime time frame, we expect the effect of misreporting to be small (in contrast to questions that ask about attending a protest at a specific event).[4] The major limitation, however, is that we are not able to track annual levels of participation, the way that event-count data from newspapers do.

Our strategy of aggregating responses to the ''ever'' question has several benefits that outweigh its limitations. First, as noted earlier, national surveys on non-electoral politics were not fielded until the 1970s, and these early surveys focused exclusively on ''ever'' having participated. The questions analyzed here are the only available option to capture this crucial period along with early-twentieth-century birth cohorts. Second, to the extent that attending a protest happens when individuals are under age 18 or away at college, questions about recent activity are likely to miss much protest activity, as these individuals are excluded or underrepresented in most national surveys.

Period and Cohorts

We group birth cohort into four-year categories. While our groups could have been theoretically driven, such as creating categories based on membership in Early Boomers, Late Boomers, and Generation X, no consensus exists on which dates differentiate these groupings, especially for pre- and post-Boomers (Gillon 2004). We are also sympathetic to the notion that, at certain times, micro-cohorts may exist that vary significantly in political orientation, despite being born only a few years apart (Whittier 1995). To create period-cohort cell sizes that are not unreasonably small, however, some grouping is required. Because surveys on protesting were not conducted regularly, we are not able to divide our periods into uniform bins. We are also concerned about constructing individual periods that rely only on one survey organization, as we would be unable to distinguish the effect of that period from the effect of that pollster. Our eight time periods range from two to five years and are listed in the online supplement. This strategy is similar to conventional age binning procedures, for example, that group individuals into uneven bins such as 18 to 24, 25 to 35, and so on, followed by a 65 plus bin. Because we are not imposing a linear constraint on the effect of time periods, such as entering a single year variable in a regression model, varying bin widths have no substantive impact on our results. Results from other period and cohort binning strategies provide similar results and are available from the authors.

Explanatory Measures

We include a set of explanatory variables in the models that capture respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and political beliefs. As noted earlier, prior studies indicate that these characteristics are important predictors of political participation. Table 1 displays summary statistics.

Table 1. Proportion (Pre- and Post-Imputation) and Sample Size of Variables

	Measure	Pre-Imputation Proportion	Post-Imputation Proportion	Sample Size
Political Identification	Liberal	.208	.200	27,891
	Conservative	.377	.364	27,891
Education	Less than high school	.203	.250	31,546
	College and above	.248	.226	31,546
Sex	Male	.465	.465	35,966
Union	Member	.129	.125	30,436
Race	Black	.117	.127	31,506
	Hispanic	.064	.079	31,506
	Other (including Asian)	.042	.039	31,506
Community Size	Rural	.282	.291	23,665
	Urban	.359	.386	23,665
Income	Bottom quartile	.243	.249	31,962
	Top quartile	.237	.232	31,962
Marital Status	Ever married	.775	.766	35,813
Age Group	Under 35	.359	.369	35,560
	Over 55	.335	.326	35,560
Region	South	.353	.345	31,226
	Midwest	.250	.250	31,226
	West	.195	.192	31,226
Political Action[a]	Ever demonstrating	.156	.157	32,182
	Ever petition signing	.583	.559	25,812

[a]No cases with imputed values for the dependent variables were used in the analysis.

Our socioeconomic measures include education, income, and union membership. We measure education with indicators for not having completed high school and for having a college degree or more. In the United States, colleges have historically been sites of protest (Van Dyke 2003), and high levels of education are associated with higher degrees of political interest and civic skills linked to political participation (Brady et al. 1995; Schussman and Soule 2005). The intermediate level of education, completing high school and some college but not a degree, is the excluded category. More fine-tuned measures of educational attainment are not possible, given the various sources of data and the multiple ways this question was asked. A preliminary analysis on a subset of the data suggested that combining high school degree with some college experience yields identical results to analyses that separate these levels. We measure income with indicators for having a family income in the bottom or top quartile of respondents for a given survey. The excluded category is individuals in the second or third quartiles. Like education, family income is associated with the resources and skills often thought of as prerequisites for political action (Brady et al. 1995). Union membership was self-reported and measured dichotomously. Union members are linked to political organizations that may provide the ideological support for attending a protest. More directly, the labor movement has mobilized its members for protest demonstrations, such as the 1963 March on Washington and the 1999 anti-WTO protest in Seattle, and interpersonal ties among union members may encourage participation by facilitating recruitment (Brady et al. 1995; McAdam 1986).

We also measure several demographic characteristics: race, age, sex, and marital status. We measure race with indicator variables for respondents reporting being African American, Latino, or a member of any other racial group. White is the excluded racial

category. Prior research finds that while ethnic minorities may be less likely to participate in institutional politics, they are more likely to participate in protest (Paulsen 1991; Schussman and Soule 2005). We include age with two indicators: whether a respondent was under 35 years or over 55 years at the time of the survey. While younger respondents may be more biographically available for protest (McAdam 1986), older respondents have had more opportunities to have ever attended a protest or signed a petition. We operationalize sex by an indicator of whether a respondent is male, because prior research suggests that men have lower barriers to participation in activism (McAdam 1992). We also include a dichotomous indicator for whether a respondent was ever married, because married individuals are thought to be less biographically available (McAdam 1986).

Additionally, we use two measures of geography. First, we include a measure of Census region, with indicator variables for living in the South, Midwest, and West, with East as the excluded category. Regional variables control for unobserved cultural variation in the likelihood of participating in political action and for structures that encourage participation, particularly the fact that many western states have mechanisms for putting initiatives up for vote after collecting petition signatures (Gloger 2006) and that southern states were especially active in criminalizing protest activity during the 1950s and 1960s (McAdam 1988; Weaver 2007). We also include a measure of community size, with indicators for individuals living outside of metropolitan statistical areas or in small towns coded as rural and those living in cities with a population greater than 100,000 coded as urban. As most major protests are in big cities, residents of large metropolitan areas may find participation easier than would similarly minded people in more remote locations.

Finally, we measure political beliefs with indicator variables for whether a respondent identified as being liberal or conservative. On some surveys, this was a simple recoding of the original response. In other cases, it was based on converting a 10-point scale, where we coded respondents who chose the three most liberal numbers as liberal and those who chose the three most conservative numbers as conservative.[5] Protest attendance is thought to be a more established part of liberals' tactical repertoire (Schussman and Soule 2005). We measure party membership by identification with either the Democratic or the Republican party. We do not use this variable in the main analyses, because including beliefs and party membership would introduce a significant amount of confusion when interpreting the coefficients due to the correlation between the two. We include party membership in our multiple imputation models, however, to help provide estimates of political beliefs where the data are missing.

In all models, we also include indicator variables for a survey's sponsoring institution, with the WVS as the excluded category. We observe modest polling institution effects, with the strongest being significantly low levels of participation by respondents in the Roper surveys, a data source Putnam (2000) famously used in his analysis of social capital. Our strong suspicion is that the Roper effect is largely the result of question order. While most surveys asked about attending a protest within the context of possible political actions, the Roper survey asked about attending a protest alongside questions about beliefs in UFOs and criminal convictions. The indicator variables for survey sponsor control for this and other sponsor-specific sources of error.

Missing Data

Our raw dataset includes two types of missing data. The first type is the normal sort of missing data where a respondent refused to answer, skipped questions, or otherwise was recorded as having no response. The second type involves questions that were neither asked nor recorded for specific surveys, as detailed in the online supplement. Missing

variables of both sorts were multiply imputed (MI) (Allison 2001; King et al. 2002). We implemented this imputation through the ice suite of programs for Stata (Royston 2004).

MI is especially advantageous for the second type of missing data, where respondents were not asked specific questions. For example, respondents were not asked about their political beliefs in the 1973 Confidence in Government (CIG) survey. For unasked questions, we use a respondent's answers to other questions, along with the estimated relation between these other questions and the variable not asked, to impute answers (see Gelman, King, and Liu [1999] for a complete description of the process). Imputing data for unasked questions has a statistical advantage in that the missingness is not caused by any unobservable respondent characteristics that may complicate standard MI. That is, we are not imputing the political beliefs of someone who purposefully avoided answering the question; rather, we impute the political beliefs of someone who had not been asked about them. We also use MI to translate the measure of education used in the first two waves of the WVS, which asked about age when schooling was completed, into the education measure we employ. We leverage the fact that this WVS measure of education was asked alongside a more standard measure of educational attainment in later years to estimate attainment for the earlier years. Reported results, except where noted, are based on the combined results of five imputations, which allow us to accurately estimate our parameters and fully represent the uncertainty of the imputed data.

Methods

Of central importance to this project is the fact that respondents are categorized by the year they were born, by the year the survey was conducted, and by age. These measures are of theoretical and empirical interest to our understanding of the extent and nature of a social movement society. Because of our simultaneous interest in cohort and time-period effects, we employ a cross-classified random-effects model, with individuals nested within their birth cohorts and the survey period (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Yang 2008; Yang and Land 2006, 2008). The model estimates fixed effects for individual-level measures, such as those provided in LS regression where effects are assumed to be constant across all groups and random for period and cohort, and it estimates random effects for time period and birth cohort.

The CCREM logistic model can be written as the following:

$$Logit\{Pr(success)\} = b_0 + b_1 * X + u_i v_j + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where the logit of the probability of an outcome is modeled as the function of an intercept (b_0) and a vector of fixed coefficients (b_1), along with random intercepts for cohort (u_i) and period (v_j) and an error term (e_{ij}). This is an extension of the standard, multilevel model, which nests individuals within mutually exclusive categories, such as students within schools. Within a cross-classified framework, individuals are modeled as being exposed to two or more random factors that are not hierarchically related. For example, we might examine the influence of primary and secondary schools on student achievement, where students are exposed to both institutions. In our cases, individuals are exposed to both their birth cohort and the survey time period.

We are also interested in testing the assumption that individual-level covariates are fixed across periods and cohorts. We relax this assumption in some of our models by estimating the following model:

$$Logit\{Pr(success)\} = b_0 + b_1 * X + u_i + v_j + v_{1j} * X + e_{ij} \quad (2)$$

with the additional parameter v_{1j}*X representing a random coefficient at the period level. In

this case, we are estimating both the effect of a coefficient that was assumed to be constant across all periods (such as college education) and how much this effect varied by period. We also estimate random coefficient models where the variation is estimated by birth cohort, which can be written as the following:

$$Logit\{Pr(success)\} = b_0 + b_1{*}X + u_i + v_j + u_{1i}{*}X + e_{ij} \quad (3)$$

where the additional parameter $u_{1i}{*}X$ represents a random coefficient at the cohort level. We implemented these models in Stata 11.0 using the xtmelogit command.[6,7]

FINDINGS

We begin by exploring the outlines of cohort and generational shifts in political activities. Models 1, 2, and 3 in Table 2 model the likelihood of ever having attended a protest, and Models 4, 5, and 6 model the likelihood of ever having signed a petition. Model 1 presents results of a baseline model that includes only indicators for polling organizations and a random intercept for time period. Model 2 presents the same model but replaces the random intercept for time period with one for birth cohort. Model 3, the best fitting in terms of the BIC statistic, is a cross-nested model with random intercepts for period and cohort effects.

While the interpretations of the cohort and period variances are not straightforward, comparisons of their size across the three models are instructive in examining the extent to which political action varies more by cohort or by generation. The variance statistic indicates the distribution of period or cohort effects; larger variances are associated with larger differences between periods or cohorts. When estimated in different models, the estimated cohort variance for protest of .387 is approximately six times that of the .064 period estimate; when modeled together, the cohort effect is 10 times larger (.326/.032). This suggests that period effects on protest behavior are dwarfed by cohort effects. Additionally, the estimated cohort variance declines by only 15 percent between Models 2 and 3, which suggests that little of the post-1973 observed variation in protest participation by generation was caused by period shifts.

Models 4, 5, and 6 in Table 2 duplicate Models 1, 2, and 3, respectively, in that they estimate period effect, generation effect, and both simultaneously, controlling only for polling organizations, but the dependent variable is the likelihood of ever having signed a petition. Like the models for attending a protest, the model that includes both period and cohort effects provides the best fit, based on the BIC statistic. Unlike attending a protest, however, the period and cohort effects are modest and of equal size. Additionally, the variance for period and cohort shrinks little in the combined model, suggesting that they are operating separately. In summary, both petition signing and attending a protest show period and cohort effects, with cohort effects strongest for attending a protest and both effects comparable for petition signing.

Table 3 explores how much of the observed variation across time-period and birth cohort is the result of changing demographics and political beliefs. The models include controls for education levels, race and ethnicity, density, family income, gender, marital status, age, union membership and political beliefs, and region. These models are central to testing Hypothesis 1 (change over time, net of compositional effects), Hypothesis 2 (change over generation, net of compositional effects), and Hypothesis 5 (compositional effects). Models 7, 8, and 9 present the results for attending a protest, controlling for a random period effect (Model 7), a random cohort effect (Model 8), and both (Model 9). Models 10, 11, and 12 duplicate this order for petition signing.

Table 2. Random Intercept Models of the Probability of Ever Attending a Protest or Demonstration (Models 1 to 3) or Signing a Petition (Models 4 to 6) with Fixed Effects for Survey Conduction Organizations

	Demonstration			Petition		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Constant	−1.479**	−1.804**	−1.788**	.336*	.223**	.102
	(13.88)	(13.37)	(12.11)	(2.22)	(2.66)	(.61)
Level-2 Intercept Variance Estimates						
Period Variance	.064		.032	.13		.124
Cohort Variance		.387	.326		.13	.123
Poll Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BIC	27525.3	26880.2	26832.3	33750.4	33448.2	33289.8
Periods	8		8	7		7
Cohorts		23	23		23	23
N	32,182	32,182	32,182	25,812	25,812	25,812

Note: Combined results of five multiple imputations. *t* statistics in parentheses.
*$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Estimates of the period variance effect in Model 9 are slightly larger than those of Model 3 of Table 2, which suggests that estimated variation across time is not explained by demographic change, but rather is hidden by it. By contrast, the estimated generational variance declines more substantially, by approximately a quarter in Model 8, which does not estimate period effects, and by 60 percent in Model 9, which does estimate period variance. Model 9 is the best fitting, as measured by the BIC statistics, which implies that both generational and period effects should be included in the model. Generational variance remains large, however, and is 2.6 times greater than period variance (.13/.05). In summary, this provides strong support for Hypothesis 1, with evidence of a generational effect net of both period and compositional effects. It is also evidence in favor of Hypothesis 2, the period-effect hypothesis, although the effect is much smaller than the cohort effect. While cohort compositional change does explain some of the cohort variance, we find evidence to reject Hypothesis 5, which holds that change in protest is entirely rooted in compositional change. Even with a large number of individual predictors whose means vary significantly over the 30-year average, significant generational and cohort variances remain present.

Model 12, which simultaneously estimates period and cohort variance for petition signing, shows a similar pattern; it is the best fitting model. Accounting for compositional effects reduces the period effect but not the cohort effect, with the estimated period variance in the full model approximately three-quarters that of the null model from Table 2. The period effect is more than five times (.18/.04) that of the cohort effect after controlling for individual-level predictors.

To understand the direction and magnitude of the period and cohort effects, Figure 2, which is based on Models 9 and 12, shows plots of predicted values for each cohort and survey period with all other variables set to their sample means. Figure 2a, the protest by birth cohort figure, sets the period variance at zero, and Figure 2b sets the generational variance at zero. This isolates either generational or period effects as the cause of observed changes. Figures 2c and 2d, based on Model 12, replicate this analysis for petition signing. Figure 2a shows that the three four-year birth cohorts encompassing respondents born between 1943 and 1954 have the highest likelihood of reporting ever

Table 3. Random Intercept Models of the Likelihood of Ever Attending a Demonstration or Protest (Models 7 to 9) or Signing a Petition (Models 10 to 12) with the Full Set of Predictor Measures and Fixed Effects for Survey Conducting Organizations

	Protest			Petition		
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Political Beliefs (moderate excluded category)						
Liberal	.884**	.859**	.867**	.270**	.244**	.257**
	(19.60)	(19.54)	(19.66)	(6.53)	(5.89)	(6.14)
Conservative	−.144**	−.132*	−.128*	.026	.012	.032
	(3.02)	(2.80)	(2.75)	(.73)	(.34)	(.91)
Education (high school degree/some college excluded category)						
No degree	−.600**	−.539**	−.531**	−.819**	−.758**	−.784**
	(10.66)	(9.58)	(9.39)	(19.06)	(17.66)	(18.09)
College degree	.815**	.835**	.818**	.624**	.639**	.622**
	(19.18)	(19.12)	(18.65)	(14.39)	(14.45)	(14.06)
	−.600**	−.539**	−.531**	−.819**	−.758**	−.784**
Race/Ethnicity (non-Hispanic white excluded category)						
Black	.410**	.406**	.405**	−.451**	−.464**	−.462**
	(7.67)	(7.51)	(7.47)	(7.12)	(7.21)	(7.18)
Latino	.127	.155	.154	−.838**	−.820**	−.814**
	(1.70)	(2.10)	(2.08)	(12.26)	(12.31)	(11.94)
Asian/Other	−.108	−.077	−.096	−.643**	−.610**	−.624**
	(1.22)	(.88)	(1.09)	(8.16)	(7.87)	(7.90)
Density (suburban excluded category)						
Rural	−.117	−.103	−.114	−.017	−.02	−.017
	(1.97)	(1.73)	(1.90)	(.46)	(.54)	(.45)
Urban	.266**	.275**	.284**	.051	.015	.057
	(5.62)	(5.69)	(5.85)	(1.22)	(.35)	(1.33)
Family Income (quartiles 2 and 3 excluded)						
Income low	−.064	−.04	−.043	−.360**	−.344**	−.343**
	(1.35)	(.84)	(.89)	(9.67)	(9.25)	(9.15)
Income high	.089*	.057	.071	.263**	.235**	.254**
	(2.19)	(1.40)	(1.72)	(6.28)	(5.61)	(6.06)
Additional Controls						
Married	−.141**	−.173**	−.183**	.110**	.046	.052
	(3.32)	(3.94)	(4.18)	(2.95)	(1.18)	(1.36)
Under 35	−.049	−.183**	.037	−.278**	−.388**	−.189**
	(1.20)	(3.78)	(.60)	(7.26)	(7.33)	(3.91)
Over 55	−.289**	.118	−.081	−.172**	.173*	−.029
	(6.46)	(2.08)	(1.17)	(4.62)	(2.62)	(.55)
Male	.237**	.234**	.232**	−.065*	−.068*	−.069*
	(7.09)	(6.94)	(6.86)	(2.31)	(2.41)	(2.41)
Union member	.440**	.384**	.405**	.321**	.297**	.304**
	(8.67)	(7.49)	(7.84)	(6.78)	(6.19)	(6.39)
Census Region (East excluded)						
South	−.300**	−.289**	−.296**	−.141**	−.129*	−.141**
	(6.32)	(6.01)	(6.16)	(3.05)	(2.81)	(3.08)
Midwest	−.187**	−.174**	−.181**	.194**	.211**	.201**
	(3.70)	(3.39)	(3.53)	(4.19)	(4.57)	(4.35)
West	.043	.054	.046	.518**	.539**	.525**
	(.85)	(1.06)	(.90)	(11.12)	(11.62)	(11.29)
Constant	−1.930**	−2.230**	−2.206**	.141	.251*	.03
	(16.29)	(15.70)	(15.10)	(.76)	(2.22)	(.15)

(continued)

Table 3. *(continued)*

	Protest			Petition		
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Level-2 Intercept Variance Estimates						
Period variance	.045		.05	.176		.177
Cohort variance		.296	.131		.124	.038
Poll Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BIC	25220.6	24916.5	24878.8	30940.2	30887.3	30850.1
Periods	8		8	7		7
Cohorts		23	23		23	23
N	32,182	32,182	32,182	25,812	25,812	25,812

Note: Combined results of five multiple imputations. *t* statistics in parentheses.
*$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

having attended a protest. There is a drop-off for individuals born immediately after this period and a flat trend for those born after that, until individuals born in the 1980s, where we see an uptick, with those born in the 1980s approximately 1.3 times (18.2 percent/13.8 percent) more likely to report having protested than those born in the 1970s. Individuals in the three peak protesting cohorts are 1.6 times more likely than the three previous cohorts (born 1931 to 1942) to report having protested, and they are 2.2 times more likely to have protested than the three cohorts prior to them (born 1919 to 1930).

By contrast, Figure 2b, which shows protest by survey period net of generational and compositional effects, shows no major movements and could best be described as a slow shift upward. This supports Hypothesis 6, which holds that protesting and petition signing will follow different period and cohort trajectories. If we had data for 10 years earlier, we would likely see a large shift in the late 1960s, but since then, there have been only modest period effects, with the odds of ever having protested increasing by 1.3 times from the 1970s to the 1980s and 1990s, and by 1.2 times from the 1980s and 1990s to the 2000s. This can be contrasted with the period effect shown in Figure 2d for petition signing, which shows a relatively linear and quite substantial increase between the early and later periods, net of other effects. The birth cohort analysis, Figure 2c, shows a similar trend to Figure 2a, with a gradual increase up to the generation born around 1950 and declines ever since, but with changes of a much smaller magnitude. In summary, the large generational variance from Model 9 is, to a large degree, a function of the very high rate of attending a protest among early Baby Boomers, with a secondary contribution by increased protest among Generation Y.

We return to Table 3 to discuss the effect sizes and significance levels for each of our predictor variables. Our results are broadly consistent with prior research on political participation, even when controlling for generational and period effects simultaneously (see Models 9 and 12 for attending a protest and petition signing, respectively). We use these two models to estimate the probability of ever attending a protest or signing a petition with all other variables set to the mean, and without cohort and period effects. Liberals (23.6 percent) are twice as likely as political moderates (11.6 percent) to have protested, but political moderates are only 1.1 times more likely than conservatives (10.1 percent) to report attending a protest. Individuals without a high school degree are the least likely to have protested (7.4 percent), and those with a college degree (23.5 percent) are two times more likely to have protested than those with

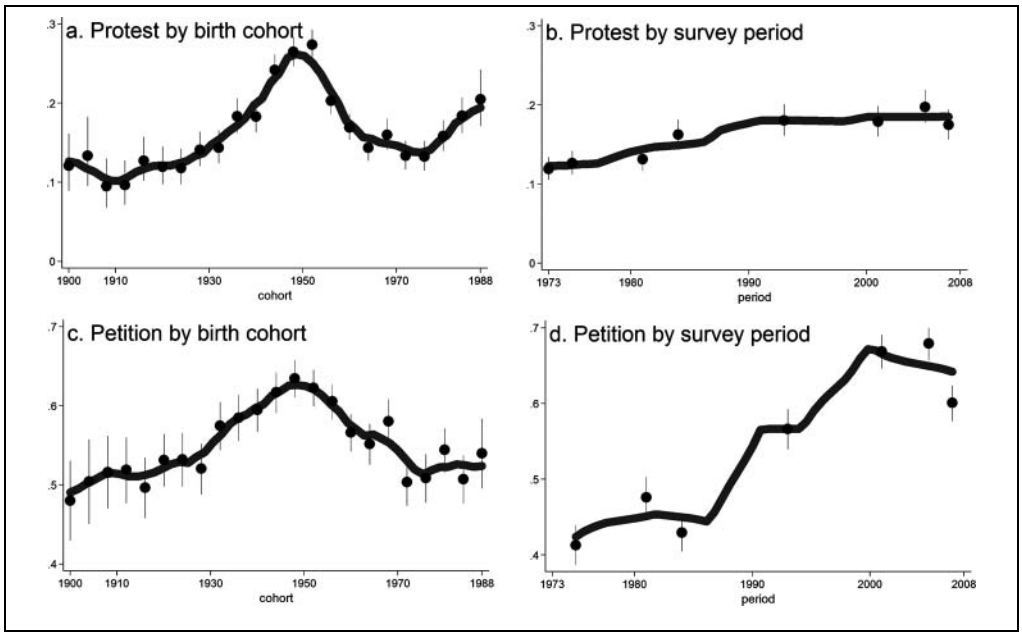

Figure 2. Predicted Probability of Ever Attending a Demonstration or Protest or Ever Signing a Petition by Cohort and Period with All Other Values Set to the Sample Mean
Note: Dots at each predicted value with thin lines for the 95 percent confidence interval. Thick line is based on kernel-weighted local polynomial smoothing with a six-unit kernel. Predicted values are based on Table 3, Model 9 for protest and Model 12 for petition.

a high school degree and some or no college experience (11.8 percent). African Americans (17.7 percent) are 1.4 times more likely than whites (12.2 percent) to report attending a protest; whites reported attending a protest at rates similar to Latinos and other racial groups, net of other effects. City dwellers (14.5 percent) are 1.3 times more likely to report having protested than others, although we see no significant difference between suburban (11.7 percent) and rural (10.3 percent) respondents.

Individuals with low family incomes are not significantly less likely to have attended a protest than those with high and middle incomes. Residents of the South (11.2 percent) and Midwest (12.5 percent) are significantly less likely to have protested than residents of the East (14.4 percent) or West (15.2 percent) coasts. Additionally, union members (17.6 percent) are 1.4 times more likely to have protested than non-members (12.4 percent); men (14.4 percent) are 1.3 times more likely than women (11.8 percent) to have protested; and individuals who have never been married (14.6 percent) are significantly more likely than married respondents (12.6 percent) to report ever having protested. Neither of the age variables are significant, which, counter-intuitively, suggests a very strong age effect. That is, if the probability of ever having protested changes little after a respondent enters the survey universe at age 18, most first protests likely occur during the early years of life.

We turn next to individual-level covariates of petition signing. While liberals (61.5 percent) are 1.1 times more likely than moderates (55.8 percent) to report having signed a petition, conservatives (55.4 percent) do not differ significantly from moderates. We find a clear education and income gradient for petition

signing, with college graduates (70.4 percent) 1.8 times more likely to have signed a petition than non–high-school graduates (38.5 percent), and those in the wealthiest income quartile (63 percent) 1.3 times more likely to have signed than those in the lowest quartile (48.0 percent). Whites (60.5 percent) are 1.25 times more likely to have signed a petition than African Americans (48.4 percent); 1.7 times more likely than Latinos (35.6 percent); and 1.4 times more likely than other ethnic groups (44.2 percent). A strong regional effect is present, with individuals in the South (50.0 percent) being the least likely to have signed, followed by those in the East (53 percent), and then those in the Midwest (58.7 percent), while residents in the West (66.8 percent) are the most likely to report petition signing. Union members (64.1 percent) are 1.1 times more likely than non-members (55.8 percent) to have signed a petition. Females are slightly more likely than males to have signed a petition, and marital status has no significant effect on petition signing.

While petition signing rates are higher than protesting rates for both whites and African Americans, whites are more likely than African Americans to sign petitions, net of other factors, while African Americans are more likely than whites to have been to a demonstration, net of other factors. This is likely a legacy of the African American civil rights movement, which established the protest march as a central element of African Americans' political repertoire.

To test whether the types of individuals who protest have changed over time period (Hypothesis 3) or cohort (Hypothesis 4), we relax the assumption that each of the individual predictors has an effect that is fixed across time or cohort by adding a series of random coefficient models. As noted earlier, these models estimate random intercepts for both cohorts and periods, along with a random coefficient by either cohort or period. We use the BIC statistic from Table 3's Model 9 as the baseline model with each of our new models for attending a protest, and from Table 3's Model 12 for each of our new models for petition signing. Negative BIC change statistic values can be interpreted as meaning that the model fit improved beyond what would be expected by reducing the degrees of freedom in estimating additional parameters. Table 4 summarizes our findings.

Overall, we find very little evidence that the effect of individual characteristics varied over time or over cohort for either attending a protest or petition signing. Whatever baseline relations between individual characteristics and political action were established prior to our first observation in 1973 remained largely in place during this time period. Across the 38 demonstrations estimated, only one significant finding is present, as shown in Row 4. In all other cases, the more parsimonious model—the model without the period or cohort varying effect—is a better fit. The one exception is that the significant variation in the effect of going to college on the likelihood of ever attending a protest varies by cohort.

We plot this relation in Figure 3, which shows the likelihood of ever having protested by educational attainment and birth cohort. The plot shows that the 1960s came with much more intensity for individuals who went to college than for those who did not. While individuals with all levels of educational attainment are more likely to have protested if they were born between 1943 and 1954, the effect is greatest for those who went to college. The gap is largest for the cohort born between 1947 and 1950, where college graduates (42 percent), who most likely attended in the late 1960s, were four times more likely to have protested than high school graduates (10.4 percent) of this generation. While individuals without college degrees represent an increasing proportion of those who have ever protested in post-Boomer cohorts, this is not because individuals with less education are protesting more. Rather, the highly educated are attending protests

Table 4. BIC Change Score From the Full Random Intercept Models of the Probability of Ever Attending a Protest or Demonstration (Table 3, Model 9) or Signing a Petition (Table 3, Model 12) with Full Set of Predictor Measures and Fixed Effects for Survey Conducting Organizations

		Demonstration		Petition	
Row	Variable	Cohort	Period	Cohort	Period
1	Liberal	5.051	8.784	8.421	−2.508*
2	Conservative	10.316	9.931	10.159	4.303
3	No Degree	2.67	5.337	9.762	6.935
4	College Degree	−7.427*	6.891	9.635	−2.359*
5	Black	.231	9.721	9.899	6.057
6	Latino	6.892	5.164	10.13	10.159
7	Asian/Other	10.379	10.195	3.651	−.644*
8	Rural	10.379	10.183	10.158	7.541
9	Urban	10.379	10.258	10.013	5.906
10	Income Low	10.379	3.528	9.742	5.51
11	Income High	9.638	7.945	10.149	9.367
12	Married	4.994	1.534	8.705	9.81
13	Under 35	9.863	5.511	8.77	10.02
14	Over 35	10.379	10.343	7.575	6.322
15	Male	9.42	4.664	9.704	8.587
16	Union	9.905	8.967	10.159	9.941
17	South	8.408	10.379	4.923	9.218
18	Midwest	10.302	10.012	8.907	2.025
19	West	10.367	10.183	9.589	8.523

Note: Each model separately allows the effect of the listed variable to be estimated as a random effect by cohort and period. A negative change score indicates a model with a better fit than the baseline model, accounting for changes in the degrees of freedom. Combined results of five multiple imputations.
*$p < .05$.

less, with the ratio down to 1.7 times more in the cohort born in the 1970s. This diminishing college effect over time may be a result of the fairly unique historical circumstances of the late 1960s; it may also reflect the decline of higher education as a sufficient criterion of access to the ''center of critical social and political networks,'' as access to college education expanded during this period (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996:7). However, inequality between college and non-college graduates increased again for the most recent cohorts, suggesting that college remains central to political engagement, and that when cohorts do protest more, it is driven by college graduates.

Unlike the models for protesting, the models for petition signing show no evidence that the effect of individual predictors varied over cohorts. As Table 4 shows, we estimate that the effect of three characteristics—having a college education, having liberal political views, and identifying as Asian American—each vary by time period; relaxing the assumption that the effect is constant across time periods improves the fit of the model based on a comparison of BIC statistics. In the case of liberals and the college educated, the significant period effect is largely driven by a positive effect in the 2000s. During the Bush administration, these two groups were significantly more likely to report signing a petition than were similar people in earlier time periods. Asian Americans show a more long-term trend of increasingly having signed petitions, with the effect of Asian American racial identity shifting from negative to zero during the 35-year time span.

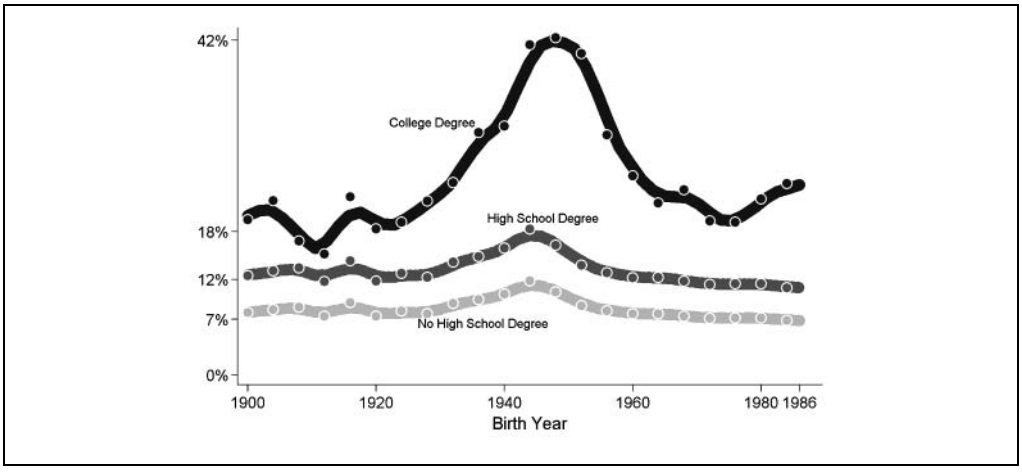

Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Ever Attending a Protest or Demonstration by Birth Cohort and Education Level with All Other Values Set to the Sample Mean
Note: Dots at each predicted value and line based on kernel-weighted local polynomial smoothing with a four-unit kernel. Predicted values are based on the model from Table 4, Row 4.

CONCLUSIONS

Our findings suggest that aspects of the social movement society thesis have overstated the extent to which participation in political demonstrations has become normalized in U.S. society. The evidence suggests that while the civil rights, anti-war, feminist, and other movements of the 1960s protest wave may have changed the number and types of people who engage in protest compared with prior periods, these relations have remained largely fixed since then. The types of individuals who viewed protest as a viable political tactic in the 1970s—liberals, the well-educated, union members, and people living on the coasts—were roughly the same 35 years later. With little evidence of diffusion or drift (except downward) across either generations or time periods, this suggests that while there might have been changes in the types of people who protested during the 1960s protest wave, the pattern established during this period of unrest appears very persistent.

Of our six hypotheses, we find strong evidence for two, mixed support for two, and no evidence for another two. Hypothesis 2, which highlights the role of birth cohorts, especially the Baby Boomers, in predicted protest participation (net of other factors), and Hypothesis 6, which predicts that petition signing and protest participation would follow different trajectories over period and cohort, are both supported. We find some support for Hypothesis 5, which holds that some of the cohort effects in protesting can be explained by correlated trends in cohort demographics, which we estimate to explain more than half the generational trend. We also find some support for Hypothesis 1, that the likelihood of attending a protest has increased over time. While period effects are secondary to cohort effects in protest participation, we still observe a positive period trend, net of cohort and demographic effects. Finally, we find no support for Hypotheses 3 and 4, which hold that protest participation diffused to new kinds of people, as the individual effects are remarkably stable across time and cohorts.

In their essay outlining the social movement society thesis, Meyer and Tarrow (1998b) ask, ''Has something fundamental changed in the politics in contemporary

industrial democracies?'' We answer that in terms of the overall level of protest participation and in the types of people who demonstrate, there has been no fundamental change. We find only a slight trend toward greater participation in demonstrations during the past 35 years, and that cohorts born after the Baby Boomers are much less likely than their parents to have participated in a protest, although we note a small resurgence among individuals born in the 1980s. Combined with the lack of social and demographic diffusions, this suggests that the United States may have a social movement generation, but it is not a social movement society.

The SMS thesis is part of a larger debate concerning the character of political participation in advanced industrialized democracies, especially in the United States. Whereas Putnam (2000) claims that American civic disengagement threatens to unravel democratic citizenship, Inglehart (1997) and Dalton (2008b) argue that forms of political participation in the United States are changing rather than declining, and that these changes are driven by the shifting commitments underlying American citizenship norms. While decline arguments contradict the claims of the SMS thesis or ignore confrontational politics altogether, focusing instead on voter turnout and civic organizational memberships, change arguments frequently support SMS proponents' fundamental claims that unconventional forms of political participation have become a pervasive feature of contemporary democracies.

Our findings support a less dramatic interpretation of the observed changes in forms of political participation, at least in the United States, as much of the increase in protest attendance is driven by generational replacement. Most people have never protested. Individuals born between 1960 and 1980 are not attending protests as much as earlier cohorts. This suggests that attending a protest represents a form of citizen engagement highly bounded by birth cohort, educational attainment, and political beliefs. The slight resurgence of protesting among individuals born in the 1980s was largely driven by the college educated, suggesting that within the American context, protest participation is still tightly entwined with opportunities on college campuses for activism and students' exposure in college classes to social and political critiques that are less easily accessible to individuals not in college. The lack of a strong period effect is all the more surprising given the ways that the act of protest itself has changed over time, becoming less confrontational and risky and more routinized and institutionalized. One would expect that as the cost of participation declined, new kinds of people would participate, but that has largely not been the case. It could be that these institutionalizing trends in mobilization permitted people to be active for longer than they would have previously, but our results cannot speak to this issue because most survey questions about protest pertain only to whether respondents have ''ever'' protested.

More promising for non-electoral forms of participation, however, is the robust increase over time in petition signing, as shown in Figure 2d. While there are strong regional effects, the growth in petition signing is national, suggesting that its appeal extends beyond the increasingly corporatized petition-signature efforts in some West Coast states (Gloger 2006). Unfortunately, while individuals on the left and the right are comfortable with petitioning signing as a means of influencing policies, petition signing is highly stratified by race and socioeconomic status. Individuals who belong to the most privileged groups are more likely to participate, similar to electoral politics. Notably, whereas protest attendance rates are not stratified by income, petition signing is. This suggests that while the form may allow citizens to participate in governance on specific issues in ways that are not historically common, it is not challenging the existing biases in the types of people who are represented (Bartels 2008).

We note one major limitation with our data: we cannot say whether these generational and

period trends affect the probability that individuals continue to attend political demonstrations throughout their lives. Because we only have evidence on whether individuals went to a demonstration or signed a petition, not when they first did so or how recently, we cannot say whether Baby Boomers disproportionately swelled the ranks of marches in the 1990s and 2000s. Extant evidence suggests that high-risk activism increases one's probability of political involvement years later (e.g., Goldstone and McAdam 2001), although this has not been tested on any non-60s influenced generations. Testing whether there is a generational residue that affects individuals later in life—net of individual protest history—would be a promising line of inquiry.

We suggest two additional lines of inquiry for future research on the relationships among political action, cohorts, and time periods. First, following McVeigh and Smith (1999), it would be useful to examine not only specific types of political action by themselves, but also changes in the configurations of political actions. For example, has there been a change in the types of individuals who use both institutionalized and non-institutionalized political acts, as opposed to one or the other? Second, as noted earlier, in this article we largely explore one facet of the SMS hypothesis—the extent to which protest has spread throughout society. An analysis similar to ours, but using organizational sponsorship of different sorts of actions (instead of individual participation) as the dependent variable, would also be useful. Such an analysis could help specify whether the increase in organizational sponsorship of demonstrations during this time period (Soule and Earl 2005) was primarily related to the development of new organizations with a protest orientation, or whether it was more the result of established organizations' tactical shifts. Minkoff's (1999) analysis of changes in social movement organizational orientation, for example, found strong age effects on the likelihood of switching between service and advocacy agendas. Conducting a similar study that specifically models organizational founding eras and period measures would help uncover the causal mechanisms in aggregate shifts in organizational identities. Examining these two aspects of the SMS thesis could be a significant step forward in broadening our understanding of how political repertoires evolve—a concern that dates back to Tilly's (e.g., 1978, 1998) foundational work on the birth of movements and the development of their repertoires.

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Notes

1. Authors' calculation.
2. These questions might have been asked on other occasions, but this is the universe of surveys available to researchers through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, or the survey sponsor (in the case of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement).
3. The two national surveys that did ask questions about protest participation focused specifically on young people (Jennings and Niemi 1981) and on African American college students (Biggs 2006).
4. For example, a Fox News poll in 2003 found that 3 percent of respondents had been to a demonstration against the Iraq War. While the percentage is small, it is likely a much larger number than the actual percentage of people who had attended demonstrations, as this would imply that 6,000,000 people had been at demonstrations, equivalent to 100,000 persons attending demonstrations in all 50 state capitals combined with 2,000 persons attending demonstrations in each state's 10 next-largest cities. These crowd estimates are at odds with contemporary news accounts, which reported that only a handful of major cities approached the 100,000 figure.
5. Complete details on this coding scheme and all other transformations are available from the authors.
6. While the authors do not have the rights to distribute the data used in this study, Stata do-files to

completely replicate this study are available on the first author's website (http://www.unc.edu/~ncaren/), along with links to the raw data used.

7. Thanks to Bobby Gutierrez at StataCorp for his assistance with implementing these models in Stata.

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