

Individual Protest Participation in the United States: Conventional and Unconventional Activism*

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Objectives. This study addresses differences in the predictors of participation in different forms of protest activity using nationally representative data. The two types of protest examined, referred to as conventional and unconventional forms of activism, are differentiated by differing levels of risk, demands, and political legitimacy.

Methods. The analysis uses multinominal logistic regression and data from the World Values Survey to assess the effects of a wide range of independent variables on participation in protest. *Results.* The results indicate that participation in conventional forms of protest, activities that are relatively undemanding, socially legitimate, and low risk, tend to follow patterns that are consistent with participation in institutional politics. That is, participants in this form of activism tend to be socially privileged and ideologically moderate. Participants in unconventional protest, those that are highly demanding, socially illegitimate, or carry substantial risks, tend to be more ideologically extreme, socially disadvantaged, and more alienated from the conventional political system. *Conclusions.* The findings in this study suggest that the lack of consistency in some existing research on protest participation may be attributable to differences in the predictors of participation associated with different forms of protest. This study indicates that protest participation is not a unitary construct and should not be treated as one in research.

A great deal of research has been conducted to identify the factors associated with participation in both social movements and institutional politics. Often, the potential repertoire of political action is viewed as consisting of institutional activities, such as voting or working on political campaigns, on the one hand, or participation in protest activities, such as demonstrations, on the other (Wolfsfeld, 1986). While the distinction between protest and institutional action is important, it misses potentially important distinctions between different forms of protest activities.

Participation in protest and social movements was originally understood as action that existed outside of the system of conventional politics and democratic processes (Lipset, 1960; Davies, 1962; Smelser, 1965; Feierabend and

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Feierabend, 1966; Gurr, 1970). As such, early research on protest participation viewed those who took part in such actions as being socially marginalized, harboring high levels of anti-state sentiment, and as being alienated from the political system. Concepts derived from this research, such as political trust, alienation, and frustration, continue to receive considerable attention from researchers as predictors of protest participation (Muller and Opp, 1986; Gibson, 1991; Sherkat and Blocker, 1994; Finkel and Muller, 1998). However, the results of studies in this line of research have been characterized by contradictory and conflicting findings, with many scholars finding an effect and others finding no effect (e.g., Muller and Opp, 1986; Gibson, 1991).

Beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, as protest became a more common form of political action, many scholars and citizens began to view protest, not as an act against the system, perpetrated by alienated outsiders, but rather as part of a repertoire of legitimate political actions (Tarrow, 1994; Inglehart, 1997; Meyer and Tarrow, 1998). Research in this tradition often focused on the structural factors that facilitated social movement mobilization and influenced social movement outcomes (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; McAdam, 1982; Meyer and Steggenborn, 1996; Ganz, 2000; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004). When research from this perspective has addressed individual-level participation, it has emphasized factors that facilitate participation, such as resources, social networks, and biographical availability (e.g., Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson, 1980; McAdam, 1986; Gould, 1991; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995; Nepstad and Smith, 1999). Like research that focuses on concepts, such as trust, alienation, and attitudes, this line of research has often been characterized by a lack of consensus over the factors that are important for predicting participation.

Thus, while there has been a significant amount of research on protest participation from multiple theoretical perspectives, consensus on which of these factors are most important across a broad array of movements has not been achieved. One possible explanation for these discrepancies lies in the fact that many studies of protest participation do not distinguish between different forms of protest, implicitly treating disparate forms of protest participation as theoretically synonymous. This practice may be problematic because different forms of protest are characterized by different levels of risk, different costs and demands, and different levels of political legitimacy. These distinctions between different forms of protest may be becoming even more important as some forms of protest are coming to be seen as increasingly legitimate forms of political action, while others are still considered radical or outside the mainstream.

While there have been some scholars (e.g., McAdam, 1986; Wiltfang and McAdam, 1991; Nepstad and Smith, 1999) who have recognized the distinction between different forms of protest participation, particularly between forms characterized by high costs and risks and those characterized by low costs and risks, these studies have often relied on case studies from

which it can be difficult to generalize to the broader population. Additionally, other studies have looked specifically at the predictors of particular forms of protest, such as political consumerism, but have not systematically compared these forms of protest to other forms of participation (e.g., Gillham, 2008).

To address these problems, this study uses a nationally representative data set to test the effects of a broad range of independent variables on two forms of protest participation. The predictors of participation used in this study are derived from the previous findings in the two approaches to protest participation described above. These previous studies have identified numerous factors that may be predictors of protest participation, including biographical availability (McAdam, 1986; Wiltfang and McAdam, 1991; Nepstad and Smith, 1999; Beyerlein and Hipp, 2006), structural availability (Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson, 1980; McAdam, 1986; Gould, 1991), resources (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995), political trust (Muller, 1972; Worchel, Hester, and Kopala, 1974; Muller, Jukam, and Seligson, 1982; Muller and Opp, 1986; Finkel, Muller, and Opp, 1989; Herring, 1989; Finkel and Muller, 1998), and political engagement (Paulsen, 1991; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995).

This study conceptualizes protest as consisting of two categories: actions that are seen as politically legitimate and low risk, which I refer to as “conventional” forms of protest, and actions that are seen as politically illegitimate and carry higher risks, which I refer to as “unconventional” forms of protest.

Repertoires of Protest Participation

There have been a number of scholars who have attempted to examine individual predictors of disparate forms of protest participation. One well-known line of research focuses on the distinction between high-risk or cost protest activity and low-risk or cost protest activity (McAdam, 1986; Wiltfang and McAdam, 1991; Nepstad and Smith, 1999). This line of research essentially argues that there is reason to expect that the social context of unconventional and conventional protest activity will differ and that the factors that influence participation in each form of protest will also differ. As the costs and risks associated with unconventional protest present much steeper obstacles for participation and require a much higher level of investment both in terms of ideological commitment and resources, the factors that influence participation in conventional activity are unlikely to be sufficient to explain participation in unconventional activity. Additionally, Cohen and Valencia (2008) find empirical support for such a distinction in forms of protest activity when protest measures are aggregated to the country level. Using several multivariate methods to analyze protest items from the World Values Survey (WVS), the authors find that the forms of protest included in that survey cluster according to how risky or demanding they are.

The WVS provides items measuring participation in various forms of protest activity that provide a good representation of the repertoire of actual protest activity in the population. Two of the items, participation in unofficial strikes and the occupation of buildings, clearly stand out as being unsanctioned or illegal as well as highly risky. Those who participate in such activities risk losing their jobs or even arrest. The exceptionally risky and extreme nature of these activities is reflected in the WVS by the fact that a comparatively small proportion of respondents have participated in these activities (5.43 percent of the sample for unofficial strikes and 4.56 percent of the sample for the occupation of buildings). By contrast, the other forms of protest, participation in boycotts and participation in lawful demonstrations, are legal and relatively low-risk forms of participation.¹ Boycotts and lawful demonstrations show considerably higher rates of participation at 25.41 percent and 21.72 percent, respectively. These higher rates of participation are consistent with both the legality of these forms of participation as well as our intuitive understanding of these activities as being more socially legitimate than the occupation of buildings or participation in unofficial strikes. While activities such as boycotts and lawful demonstrations may carry grave risks in some countries, and may have been risky in some historical contexts in the United States, they very rarely are associated with substantial risk in the modern United States.

The dependent variable I propose divides the items in the WVS into two groups: one group includes participation in petitions and lawful demonstrations and the other group includes participation in unofficial strikes and the occupation of buildings. The first group I refer to as *conventional protest* and the second as *unconventional protest*. These two groups are categorized by differing levels of risk, legitimacy, and legality. As noted above, other researchers have proposed similar categorizations among the protest items on the WVS (e.g., Cohen and Valencia, 2008). Additionally, the results of a latent trait analysis on the items in question, shown in Table 1, support the intuitive clustering of the items. Although the items load onto a single factor, they are clearly distinguishable in terms of discrimination and difficulty.

Previous Literature on Protest Participation

Social Networks

An approach emphasizing social networks has emerged as an important area in social movements research and provides potentially powerful

¹It should be noted that the risks, costs, and legitimacy of different forms of protest can change over time. For example, Gillham and Noakes (2007) argue that demonstrations have become more risky for protesters in the 2000s as police departments have adopted more aggressive policing tactics. Additionally, the recent prominence of the Occupy movement may serve to alter the social legitimacy associated with some of that movement's tactics involving the occupation of public spaces.

TABLE 1

Latent Trait Model Results for Four Protest Items Included in 2000 World Values Survey (WVS)

	Difficulty	Discrimination	$p(x = 1 z = 0)$	z Loading
Boycott	0.966	2.411	0.133	2.411
Lawful demonstrations	0.838	2.235	0.089	2.235
Unofficial strike	2.559	1.438	0.025	1.437
Occupy	3.130	1.152	0.026	1.152

individual-level predictors of participation in social movements. Scholars using this perspective essentially argue that individuals tend to be drawn into protest activity through their network ties and that movements tend to recruit most successfully through networks (Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson, 1980; McAdam, 1986; Gould, 1991). Networks can function to influence participation by bringing individuals into contact with the movement and increasing the social costs of nonparticipation. Individuals can learn about opportunities to protest and make contact with other activists through networks as well as face social pressure by friends to join. Networks can also help strengthen and foster ideologies compatible with movement participation. Knowledge of an individual's social network, therefore, provides researchers with tools to understand the factors that influence some individuals to participate and others to refrain from participation.

However, some scholars have argued that social networks can prevent participation if members of one's social network are hostile to the movement and would cause the potential participant to incur social sanctions by participating (Kitts, 2000). Additionally, networks can function to prevent people from engaging in social movements by burdening potential participants with other obligations (e.g., caring for family members). Some scholars have also distinguished between individual ties and organizational associations. McAdam and Fernandez (1990) find that individual ties may not be as important as ties associated with organizational memberships.

Previous literature indicates that the role of social networks may be different for different forms of activism. McAdam (1986), in his study of high-risk and high-cost activism, has argued that while social pressure, exerted through one's social network, may be sufficient to draw potential participants into low-risk/cost activism, high-risk/cost activism requires that an individual first participate in lower risk/cost activities to be socialized into the norms and goals of the movement. He also argues that as costs and risks increase, factors besides network density, such as biographical availability and organizational ties, will become increasingly important as predictors of movement participation. However, this research is based on a single case study and it is uncertain to what extent it will generalize to the broader population.

Biographical Availability

Biographical availability, or the freedom from personal constraints that increase the costs and risks associated with participating in protest, has been an important component of social movement research (McAdam, 1986; Wiltfang and McAdam, 1991; Nepstad and Smith, 1999; Beyerlein and Hipp, 2006; Gillham, 2008). The existing literature essentially argues that biographical factors that are associated with social constraints, such as age, employment status, marital status, and children, will have an effect on protest participation by altering the perceived costs and benefits of participation. Specifically, the young and old who are not involved in careers, those who do not work, are students, or have professional jobs allowing greater personal freedom over time are thought to be more likely to participate in protest or social movement activities. Additionally, being married and having children are seen as being likely to increase the perceived costs and risks associated with protest, thereby decreasing the likelihood of participation. The existence of other obligations makes the expenditure of time and resources on protest more difficult and magnifies the potential risks of protest.

While there has been a considerable amount of research on this topic, both the case studies and survey research have not been particularly consistent in their findings on this issue. McAdam (1986) finds that biographical availability was a key factor for individuals choosing to participate in the Freedom Summer during the civil rights movement. Those who were old enough to be free of parental control and young enough to not have the full responsibilities of adult life were the most likely to participate. Additionally, Wiltfang and McAdam (1991), in their study of the sanctuary movement, find that factors related to biographical availability are important predictors of activism, particularly high-cost activism. However, Nepstad and Smith (1999), in their study of the U.S. Central American peace movement, found little effect of biographical availability and argued that the idiosyncratic context of individual movements sometimes allow people to find ways around such obstacles. Additionally, survey research has also yielded mixed results. Gillham (2008), in his analysis of environmental activism across several European nations, finds that there is no parenthood effect, but there are employment-related effects. Conversely, Schussman and Soule (2005), in their study of Americans engaging in protest, find effects for age and children, but no effect for employment or student status.

The existing literature suggests that biographical availability may become increasingly important as a potential obstacle to participation as the demands or riskiness associated with the activism increases. As biographical availability influences the ability of individuals to bear the costs and risks associated with protest, these factors are thought to be more important for costlier and riskier forms of activism (McAdam, 1986). For example, a person with a full-time job and family may be able to make time to attend a legal demonstration, but he or she may not be willing to risk arrest or job loss by participating in a riskier and

less legitimate form of protest. Despite McAdam's contentions, others have found that biographical availability does not predict participation in high-risk activities or distinguish high-risk activists from other activists (Nepstad and Smith, 1999). Nepstad and Smith have argued that idiosyncratic aspects of some movements can mitigate or exacerbate the importance of biographical availability. Given the uncertainty surrounding the findings of this earlier case study research, it is important to investigate the role of biographical availability using representative data.

Socioeconomic Status and the Resource Model

The resource model of political participation, articulated by Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995), argues that the possession of a range of resources, including time, skills, and money, are the most important predictors of participation in political activity. Political skills are built up through participation in organizations, job experience, and education. This model has been successful in predicting participation in institutional political activities; however, it is unclear how effective it is at predicting participation in protest activities.

In fact, there is some reason to think that participation in more radical, demanding, or less legitimate forms of protest may not have the same relationship with resources as institutional political participation. Piven and Cloward (1977) have argued that contentious politics are, for the poor, an alternative to institutional participation, which requires more resources than they have access to. As Piven and Cloward (1977) maintain, rebellious behavior serves as a last resort for those who have no other access to the levers of institutional power. Therefore, we might expect to find differences between unconventional protest and conventional protest with respect to resources. Specifically, there may be a weaker relationship or even a negative relationship between resources and unconventional activities that are more distant from conventional forms of political participation.

Research also suggests that differences in resources manifest themselves in differences in the levels of political participation between social groups (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie, 1993; Schlozman, Burns, and Verba, 1994; Schlozman, Burns, and Verba, 1999). These studies have essentially found that lower rates of political participation among certain social groups, specifically women, Latinos, and African Americans, can be accounted for largely, if not entirely, by differences in resources. This includes not just income and material resources, but also political skills developed on the job and in various organizations and religious groups. Variables measuring membership in these social groups can, therefore, be used as proxies for resources in regression analysis in addition to more direct measurements, such as income and education.

Political Trust

In recent decades, a line of research has examined the role of trust in political institutions in predicting participation in political violence and political protest. Many scholars have argued that lower levels of trust in the government and political institutions are associated with higher levels of protest behavior (Muller, 1972; Worchel, Hester, and Kopala, 1974; Muller, Jukam, and Seligson, 1982; Muller and Opp, 1986; Finkel, Muller, and Opp, 1989; Herring, 1989; Finkel and Muller, 1998). The central thrust of these arguments is that lower levels of trust in government are associated with a greater valuation of the collective goods that can be produced by protest as well as a recognition that these goods are unlikely to be procured through institutional political behavior. While there are a number of scholars who have argued for this position, other scholars have examined the issue and found no such relationship to exist (Wright, 1976; Nilson and Nilson, 1980; Gibson, 1991; Sherkat and Blocker, 1994). Additionally, Spehr and Dutt (2004) found a positive correlation between political trust and protest behavior in India. One likely reason for the inconsistency between these studies is the fact that few studies that have examined this relationship have used a representative sample, and many studies are based on case studies of a single movement or geographical location.

Political Engagement

Many scholars have pointed to the importance of political engagement as a prerequisite for participation in political activities, including protest. Political engagement has been conceptualized in the literature as both political interest and political efficacy (Paulsen, 1991; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995). According to Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995), individuals who have no interest in politics are unlikely to become active in politics, whether through protest or institutional channels. Additionally, according to Paulsen (1991), individuals who feel that they cannot make a difference are less motivated to participate.

Hypotheses and Expectations

The existing literature on social movements allows for the development of five hypotheses regarding the effect of the independent variables on both conventional and unconventional protest participation.

Hypothesis 1: *Network density will positively predict participation in protest, but will be most important for conventional participation. Biographical*

availability and organizational ties will be more important for more demanding, risky, or costly forms of protest.

Hypothesis 2: Resources will positively predict more legitimate forms of protest that are more closely related to conventional participation, but may negatively predict less legitimate forms of protest.

Hypothesis 3: Political trust is expected to have a negative relationship with participation in protest activity. Individuals with lower levels of political trust will be more willing to go outside of conventional, institutional political channels and will value the goals of protest more than individuals who are more trusting of government institutions.

Hypothesis 4: Political engagement is expected to have a positive relationship with protest activity. Those who are interested in politics and feel that they have the ability to influence the political process will be more likely to participate in all forms of political activity, including protest.

Hypothesis 5: Ideology will be a stronger predictor for unconventional activism: As proposed by McAdam (1986), it is expected that individuals who participate in high-risk/cost activism will need to have been more deeply involved in the social movement and socialized into its norms and values. Those who participate in low-risk/cost activism may do so solely on the basis of social pressures or other nonideological reasons.

Data and Methods

In order to address the hypotheses posed above, a random representative survey of the adult population that includes measures of protest participation, representing both unconventional and conventional activism, the appropriate independent variables as well as necessary controls are required. The data used in this study come from the U.S. portion of the fourth wave of the WVS collected in the year 2000.² The WVS is a collection of national random probability samples of the population of many countries, aged 18 years and above, including the United States. Although the WVS is frequently used to perform cross-national research, it is also well suited to studying protest participation in the United States as it contains multiple identically worded items measuring protest participation as well as a large number of independent variables necessary to test the hypotheses posed above. The U.S. portion of the sample contains 1,200 respondents. However, after removal of missing observations through list-wise deletion, the sample size was reduced to 1,015 observations.³

²World Value Survey 1981–2008 Official Aggregate v.20090901, 2009. *World Value Survey Association*. Available at (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Aggregate File Producer: ASEP/JDS, Madrid.

³A separate analysis was conducted using multiple imputation for missing items on the dependent variable. This analysis produced results that did not differ substantively from the

Dependent Variable

This study utilizes a categorical variable to capture the distinction between nonparticipation and the two forms of protest participation proposed in this study. Conventional protest is defined as participation in boycotts and lawful demonstrations, while unconventional protest is defined as participation in unofficial strikes or the occupation of buildings. Individuals who have not participated in either form of activism are coded as nonparticipants. Individuals who have participated in both forms of activism are coded as participants in unconventional protest. These categories are mutually exclusive.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the most common category is that for non-protestors, with over 63.25 percent of the sample not taking part in any form of protest. The two forms of protest also seem to differ in their level of difficulty, with approximately 27.98 percent of respondents falling into the conventional category and only 8.77 percent falling into the unconventional category.

Independent Variables

Independent variables included in this analysis will include measures of social networks, biographical availability, resources, and attitudes, such as political trust, political ideology, and political engagement.

Several different network measures are included in the analysis. One item that measures network density is a factor score generated from five items in which respondents indicate how frequently they spend time with relatives, friends, colleagues, people from their churches, or with people from voluntary associations. This measure provides some indication of the extent to which a respondent is socially connected to his or her community. Although this measure provides no direct indication of the extent to which respondents have ties to others who are involved with social movement activity, the hypotheses predict that, in general, individuals with greater network density should be recruited to participate in extra-institutional political activities with more frequency than those with lower network densities. Measures of membership in political and nonpolitical organizations are also used to measure network embeddedness. Each scale is a count of the number of organizations in which the respondent claims membership.

There are six items measuring biographical availability. These include a measure of marital status, a measure of whether or not the respondent has dependent children, and several measures of the respondent's employment status. The employment status items include dummy variables for full-time employment, student status, and being a housewife. Part-time workers and

original analysis. The results of the multiple imputation analysis are available from the author upon request.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics for Items Used in Analysis ($N = 1,015$)

Variable	Mean/Proportion	SD	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Dependent Variable</i>				
Participation in:				
Conventional protest	27.98%			
Unconventional protest	8.77%			
None	63.25%			
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
<i>Networks</i>				
Political organizations	0.58	0.95	0	5
Nonpolitical organizations	2.56	1.81	0	9
Network density	-0.01	0.76	-1.39	2.55
Labor	0.14	0.34	0	1
Efficacy	8	1.81	1	10
<i>Biographical Availability</i>				
Married	0.49	0.5	0	1
Children	0.69	0.46	0	1
Full time	0.53	0.5	0	1
Student	0.03	0.16	0	1
Housewife	0.06	0.23	0	1
Age (in years)	42.52	15.79	18	86
Age-squared	2,057.28	1,474.84	324	7,396
<i>Resources</i>				
Income/1,000	49.33	29.56	12.5	125
Education categories	6.72	2.2	1	9
White	0.73	0.44	0	1
Female	0.56	0.5	0	1
<i>Attitudes</i>				
Political interest	2.74	0.87	1	4
Political trust	8.33	1.89	3	12
Ideology	5.85	1.98	1	10

the unemployed are the reference category. These items have been recognized in previous research as important indicators of biographical availability. Additionally, measures of age and age-squared are included to test whether differing levels of responsibility associated with differences in age are predictive of protest participation. However, these measures of age must be interpreted with caution as it can be difficult to disentangle cohort effects from life-course effects given the nature of cross-sectional research.

Direct measures of resources in this analysis include items that measure income and education. Income is measured in 10 categories ranging from 10,000 to 125,000 and education is measured as a nine-category item with higher values indicating greater educational attainment. While being important resources themselves, income and education are also thought to be highly correlated with other unmeasured resources, such as political skills (Brady,

Verba, and Schlozman, 1995). Additionally, items measuring race and gender are used as proxy variables for resources, which can help capture differences in participation due to group differences in resources. The race item consists of a dummy variable coded as one if the respondent is white and the gender item consists of a dummy variable coded as one if the respondent is female.

Political trust is measured by an additive scale composed of items measuring trust in government institutions.⁴ The variables that comprise this scale measure general confidence in the government, confidence in the police, and confidence in the army.⁵ The political trust scale has a range of 3–12. Higher values indicate greater levels of trust and lower values indicate lower levels of trust.⁶ The items measuring political engagement include a Likert scale measuring subjective efficacy and a scale measuring political interest. High values on each scale indicate greater efficacy or interest. These items are intended to capture the two dimensions of political engagement discussed above—political interest and political efficacy. A measurement of political ideology is also included in the analysis. This item ranges from 1 to 10, with higher values being more conservative.

Due to the wide range of independent variables included in the analysis, relatively few additional controls are required. However, because one of the items that contributes to the construction of the dependent variable involves participation in unofficial strikes, an item measuring membership in labor unions is included as a control variable.

Analytical Strategy

The analysis uses multinomial logistic regression to examine the relationships between the independent variables and conventional and unconventional protest participation. The multinomial logistic regression model is an extension of binary logistic regression that simultaneously estimates all combinations of the response categories of a nominal variable using binary logistic regression (Long, 1997). This modeling strategy allows for the analysis of differences between nonprotestors and both unconventional and conventional protestors as well as the difference between conventional protestors and unconventional protestors.⁷

⁴A similar scale was constructed by Spehr and Dutt (2004).

⁵In order to assess the reliability of the trust scale, Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted on the component variables. The scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.790.

⁶A factor score was also extracted from these items and is correlated with the summated scale at approximately 0.99. The factor score also produced substantively identical results to the summated scale when used in the models. Ultimately, the summated scale was used in the final analysis for the sake of simplicity.

⁷A similar analytical strategy was employed by McVeigh and Smith (1999) to examine the differences between conventional protestors and those who participate in institutional politics.

Results

The results of the multinomial logistic regression analysis are shown in Table 3. In Table 3, the raw beta coefficients have been exponentiated giving odds ratios. Odds ratios can be interpreted as a factor change in the odds of one outcome of the dependent variable versus another, given a one-unit increase in the independent variable. Thus, odds ratios greater than one are indicative of a positive factor change and odds ratios smaller than one are indicative of a negative factor change.

Hypothesis 1 proposes that measures of network density will be positively associated with participation, with biographical availability and organizational ties being particularly important for unconventional forms of activity. Table 3 shows that there is a positive and significant effect for membership in political organizations on participation in both conventional and unconventional protest activity, indicating that those who are members of larger numbers of political organizations are more likely to participate in both conventional and unconventional protest activities than those who are not. Specifically, for each additional political organization one is a member of, there is a factor increase of 1.271 in the odds of participation in conventional activism and a 1.337 factor increase in the odds of participation in unconventional activism compared to nonparticipation. This is consistent with previous findings, which have suggested that political organizations are particularly likely to serve as vectors for social movement recruitment (McAdam, 1986). However, there appears to be no difference in the effect of political organization membership on participation in both forms of protest. Additionally, the effect for the measure of interpersonal ties is very small and insignificant.

Consistent with previous literature, Hypothesis 1 also predicts that biographical availability will differentiate between those who participate in the relatively low-risk and legitimate forms of conventional participation and those who participate in the riskier forms of unconventional participation. However, the only statistically significant effect for biographical availability is the negative coefficient for full-time work on the difference between nonprotestors and conventional activists. This indicates that those with full-time jobs are more likely to be nonparticipants than to participate in conventional protest. It should be noted that the coefficient for the difference between unconventional activism and nonparticipation for full-time work is negative, but statistically insignificant. Interestingly, despite the fact that previous literature predicts that biographical availability should constrain unconventional activism more than conventional activism, there is no significant difference between the groups. Biographical availability does not seem to have as great of an effect as some previous literature indicates and does not distinguish between the two forms of protest activity. Hypothesis 1 is, therefore, only partially supported by the data. Some measures of network density, namely, ties to political organizations, are positively

TABLE 3

Exponentiated Multinomial Logistic Regression Results ($N = 1,015$; Pseudo $F^2 = 0.104$)

	Conventional Activism Versus No Participation	Unconventional Activism Versus No Participation	Conventional Versus Unconventional Activism
Network Measures			
Network density	0.845 (0.113)	0.916 (0.175)	1.084 (0.186)
Political organizations	1.271** (0.088)	1.337* (0.128)	1.052 (0.128)
Nonpolitical organizations	1.016 (0.050)	0.932 (0.079)	0.918 (0.082)
Biographical Availability			
Married	1.054 (0.181)	1.017 (0.281)	0.965 (0.295)
Children	0.954 (0.210)	0.855 (0.308)	0.896 (0.329)
Full time	0.643* (0.183)	0.703 (0.279)	1.093 (0.294)
Student	2.111 (0.503)	0.267 (1.121)	0.126 (1.135)
Housewife	0.955 (0.345)	0.392 (0.780)	0.411 (0.805)
Age	1.009 (0.007)	0.998 (0.011)	0.99 (0.012)
Age-squared	0.999*** (0.000)	0.999 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)
Resources			
Income	1.000 (0.000)	1.001 (0.005)	1.002 (0.05)
Education	1.131** (0.040)	0.977 (0.060)	0.864* (0.065)
White	1.581* (0.194)	0.684 (0.268)	0.432** (0.291)
Female	0.720* (0.167)	1.071 (0.259)	1.488 (0.273)
Attitudes			
Efficacy	1.014 (0.043)	1.063 (0.068)	1.049 (0.072)
Political interest	1.505*** (0.100)	1.621** (0.153)	1.077 (0.162)
Political trust	0.878** (0.043)	0.783*** (0.062)	0.892 (0.066)
Conservative ideology	0.994 (0.040)	0.842** (0.061)	0.847** (0.063)
Labor union	2.070** (0.225)	4.343*** (0.293)	2.098* (0.299)

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

associated with protest participation; however, biographical availability and organizational ties do not appear to distinguish between different forms of activism.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that resources will be more strongly associated with conventional activism than with unconventional activism. The results in Table 3 do indicate that greater levels of resources are associated with increased participation in the conventional forms of protest and may be associated with decreased levels of participation in the unconventional higher risk and less legitimate forms of protest. Education and being white have a positive effect on participation in conventional activism, while being female has a negative effect on conventional activism. Additionally, being white and education have a negative effect on the distinction between conventional and unconventional activists. These results indicate that having higher educational status and being a member of more privileged social groups makes it more likely that one will participate in conventional protest relative to both nonparticipation and unconventional participation. Interestingly, income has no effect on any of the comparisons, suggesting that this may not be among the most important forms of resources for protest participation. Conventional protest seems, to an extent, to follow a similar pattern with respect to resources as institutional participation in that resources seem to be positively correlated with conventional activism just as previous research has shown them to be positively correlated with institutional participation. However, it appears that those who are in more socially marginal positions are more likely to resort to the unconventional activities. Hypothesis 2 is, therefore, largely confirmed by the data.

In accordance with Hypothesis 3, individuals with higher levels of trust in political institutions are found to be less likely to participate in both conventional and unconventional protest activity. Additionally, there is no significant distinction between unconventional and conventional participation with respect to political trust. Models also provide some support for Hypothesis 4, with political interest having a positive effect on participation on both unconventional and conventional participation relative to nonparticipation. Personal efficacy, however, does not appear to influence protest activity.

Hypothesis 5 predicts ideology to be more important for unconventional protest participation than conventional protest participation as greater ideological commitment is required to overcome the higher barriers to participation associated with this form of activity. The data do, in fact, show a statistically significant effect of ideology on both the distinction between unconventional protesters and nonprotestors and the distinction between unconventional protesters and conventional protesters. A possible interpretation may be that this is an indication that conventional protests are used on broader range political issues and require less in the way of ideological commitment from participants. It appears that unconventional protest not only requires strong ideological commitment, but at the time of data collection, was still

TABLE 4
 Predicted Probabilities for Selected Archetypical Individuals

Type	p (No Protest)	p (Conventional)	p (Unconventional)
Privileged	0.5508	0.4011	0.048
Average (mean)	0.6618	0.2683	0.0699
Disadvantaged	0.7759	0.1278	0.0963
Ideology and Engagement			
High enthusiasm	0.0909	0.3678	0.5413
Average (mean)	0.6618	0.2683	0.0699
Low enthusiasm	0.8989	0.0942	0.0069

NOTES:

Privileged: white, male college educated.

Disadvantaged: Nonwhite, female, less than primary education.

High enthusiasm: Maximum number of political organizations and interest, minimum trust, and most liberal ideology.

Low enthusiasm: Minimum number of political organizations and interest, maximum trust, and most conservative ideology.

Average: All values held to their means.

largely a liberal or left-wing form of political participation.⁸ Hypothesis 5, therefore, appears to be supported by the data.

In order to give a better sense of the magnitude of the effect of some of the significant independent variables, Table 4 shows predicted probabilities for a set of hypothetical archetypical individuals. Each cell shows the probability of participation predicted by the model for an individual fitting the specified characteristics. The independent variables that were found to be important for predicting participation in the two forms of activism can broadly be divided into two groups: those that measure resources and privilege and those that measure political involvement and interest. The table shows predicted probabilities for hypothetical individuals representing a range of values from each set of variables, holding all other variables at their means, first sorted by social and economic privilege and then by political networks, political engagement, and ideological intensity.

A "privileged" individual, who has a university degree, is white, and is male and has average values for all other independent variables, has a high probability of taking part in no activity or in conventional protest. An individual

⁸Supplementary analyses not included in this article examined the effect of several non-linear transformations of the ideology item on the dependent variables. Although fit statistics indicated a preference for the linear specification, both categorical and polynomial specifications indicated a slight, statistically significant increase in the likelihood of participating in unconventional activities for those identifying as highly conservative compared to those who identify as moderately conservative or moderate. This indicates that while liberals may engage in these activities more frequently, the strength of the ideological commitment itself, regardless of the ideology, also influences participation. However, the linear specification was used in this analysis as it was preferred by fit statistics and because the primary effect was associated with liberalism.

fitting these characteristics has a very low predicted probability of taking part in unconventional protest. Moving down to an “average” individual, in which all values are held at their means, the probability of doing nothing and participating in unconventional protest increases, while the probability of partaking in conventional protest declines markedly. Finally, the disadvantaged individual, one with less than a primary education, who is not white and is female, has a high probability of nonparticipation, an increased probability of taking part in unconventional activity, and a much lower probability of taking part in conventional activism. The trend clearly indicates that high levels of social and educational privilege are associated with high levels of participation in conventional activism and that as one becomes less privileged, one becomes less likely to engage in conventional activities and more likely to either withdraw from participation altogether or to resort to unconventional activities.

Examining the predicted probabilities for individuals with differing levels of political engagement and ideological strength, a different trend emerges. In this case low levels of enthusiasm, engagement, right-wing ideological commitment, and high levels of trust are associated with extremely high levels of nonparticipation. As engagement and ideological strength increase, the predicted probabilities of participation in both conventional and unconventional activities increase, though the rate of increase for unconventional activity is much greater, with the most engaged and ideological individuals having a predicted probability of over 0.54 of participating in unconventional activism.

Conclusions

This analysis has provided an improved means of understanding protest participation and has shed light on important differences in the predictors of participation in unconventional and conventional activism. Several factors are important predictors of participation in both forms of protest: membership in political organizations and unions, interest in politics, and lower levels of trust in the political system. Thus, protestors, in general, tend to be members of more political organizations, have greater interest in politics, and tend to be more distrustful of government than nonparticipants. We are, therefore, given an overall impression of protestors as individuals who are socially engaged and active and interested in politics, yet distrustful of the political system.

However, the analysis also reveals several key areas in which participants in the two forms of action appear to differ. Those with higher levels of resources generally appear to be more likely to participate in conventional protest activities. This is especially true for education and membership in socially privileged groups. However, the opposite is true for unconventional activism. This indicates that resources seem to have a similar relationship with conventional activism as previous research has shown them to have with institutional

participation. On the other hand, the more unconventional activities seem to be the domain of less privileged and lower status individuals, who perhaps need to engage in more extreme forms of action to get access to political power. Additionally, ideology seems to be an important distinguisher between unconventional and conventional activism. The findings of this analysis indicate that unconventional activism requires more ideological commitment and is more closely associated with left-leaning political causes. This is in keeping with previous research that has argued that ideological commitment needs to be built up before one will engage in higher risk/cost activities.

These findings highlight the importance of treating different forms of protest participation as distinct forms of political behavior. The fact that conventional protest participation is associated with higher levels of resources indicates that, given the growing acceptance of this form of activity, it seems to share much in common with what are considered to be conventional institutional forms of participation, such as voting, donations, and campaign work. These activities appear to be engaged in by individuals who are not socially marginalized and have access to conventional forms of political influence, despite their lower levels of trust in government. Additionally, it appears that unconventional activities remain the domain of those who have fewer resources, are members of less privileged social groups, and presumably have more difficulty influencing politics through conventional channels. Ultimately, the analysis reinforces the notion that there is no clear distinction between institutional political participation and extra-institutional participation, such as protest behavior. Rather, there is a continuum of protest activities varying in the degree to which it deviates from conventional politics. The individual-level predictors of these forms of activism are different. Much of the inconsistency in findings in the existing literature on participation in social movements are likely attributable to variation in the forms of participation being examined.

The results of this study, as with all research using cross-sectional data, do need to be interpreted with some caution. It can be difficult to establish the direction of causality in some statistical relationships. This has been noted as a cause for concern in research on protest participation, especially with regard to attitudinal predictors (Finkel and Muller, 1998). Finkel and Muller find that participation in protest increases the extent to which protesters value the psychological benefits of protest participation. This is in keeping with other scholars who have argued that becoming increasingly involved in protest participation is a process by which participation makes future participation more likely by influencing attitudes and beliefs to be more amenable to future activity. It is likely, therefore, that participation both influences and is influenced by ideology and attitudes. This may be the case for political trust, ideology, and interest in this analysis. Ultimately, the uncertainty surrounding causality when using cross-sectional data calls for better longitudinal data on political participation.

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