

Literature Review: Protest movement success factors

SAM GLOVER, JAMES OZDEN

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Literature Review on the Factors Behind Social Movement and Protest Success

Summary

- **We believe that there is strong evidence that nonviolent protest is generally preferable to violent protest for achieving desired outcomes.**
There have been multiple studies that indicate that nonviolent protesters are more likely to persuade the public, including [Wasow \(2020\)](#) and [Feinberg et al. \(2017\)](#), as well as persuading policymakers ([Wouters & Walgrave, 2017](#)).
- **We believe that there is moderate evidence that the protesters are more likely to succeed if the number of protesters is high**, although there are a number of studies that find no effect of protest size on the chance of protest success.
- **There is only limited evidence that unity of protester message and protest frequency are associated with an increased chance of protest success.**
However, this is mostly because of a lack of research rather than research that shows no effect.
- **Although more research is needed, we think it's likely that a nonviolent radical flank will increase an overall movement's likelihood of achieving policy wins.** On the other hand, we think a violent radical flank (e.g. riots and certain forms of property destruction) could be detrimental to building support for the aims of the wider movement.
- **The factors that influence the public are slightly different to factors that influence policymakers.** Namely, the public is much more concerned about the worthiness of protestors, whilst policymakers are more influenced by the numbers of protestors and the diversity of groups present.
- **The political context in which a protest takes place is also very relevant.**
There is some evidence that protesters are more likely to achieve their aims if:
 - They highlight an issue about which the public is already on their side
 - They attempt to influence legislators at the beginning of the legislation process rather than towards the end.
 - They focus on issues that have been recently covered in the media.
- **We believe in some cases, the political context might be important enough to dominate over factors within the movement's control**, meaning that detrimental external conditions might lead to failure regardless of how well the movement's crafts strategies or tactics.

Claim	Confidence
Violent tactics negatively impact the chance of protest movement success	High
The chance that a protest movement succeeds is heavily dependent on political context	High
A larger number of people taking part in a protest movement positively impacts the chance of success, and is likely one of the most important factors	High
A nonviolent radical flank is likely to increase the chances of success for an overall social movement, relative to a movement with no radical flank or a violent radical flank	Low
Protest movements that involve a diverse crowd of protesters are more likely to succeed	Low
Protests that have participants who demonstrate unity are more likely to succeed	Low
Protests that demonstrate committed protesters are more likely to succeed	Very Low

Table 1: A summary table which outlines what we believe is the academic consensus, given the available literature. Our confidence levels are given subjectively, based on the percentage of total papers supporting a claim, the empirical robustness of the papers, and how likely we think the findings are to generalise to future protest movements.

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Introduction

The purpose of this Literature Review is to analyse the extent to which different factors may have a causal impact on the chance of a protest movement successfully achieving its aims. The intended audience includes philanthropists who are interested in which factors make protests and protest movements more likely to succeed, activists who are interested in success factors, and members of the Effective Altruism community who are interested in social movements. We believe that understanding how and why protest movements tend to succeed or fail is among the most important tasks for those researching protest movements, and hope that this review helps those who are currently unfamiliar with the landscape of the social movement literature.

Despite there being a reasonable amount of work examining the outcomes of protest movements, which we cover in our [literature review](#), there is comparatively less on *how* protest movements can successfully create social change. [Louis \(2009\)](#) highlights some of these open questions, by setting out a number of testable hypotheses, such as the importance of identification of onlookers with the activists taking action. However, this work is primarily focused on intergroup social psychology. [Han and Barnett-Loro \(2018\)](#) expand this work, by including broader potential avenues for research that might assist social movement with building political power. For example, they include topics around governance of social movement organisations, and the relational conditions within a team. In this literature review, we seek to cover a broad range of factors, across multiple academic disciplines, that might influence how likely a protest movement is to succeed in achieving their aims.

Methodology

The social science literature on protests and Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) is large. There is a substantial amount of theoretical literature and empirical literature, spanning political science, sociology, and other disciplines. We concentrated on newer, empirical research related to the following:

- Modern, empirical research that used experimental or quasi-experimental methods, and had clear causal identification strategies.
- Focused on countries similar to the contexts we are interested in, which is largely Western democracies (e.g. the UK, the US and countries in Western Europe). However, there was some useful research studying the overthrowing of autocratic regimes in the Global South (e.g. Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008), which we did include with some appropriate caveats.
- Relatively recent protest movements, to provide more generalisability to the current social, political and economic contexts. Most papers we included were

focused on protest movements from the 2000s onwards, or otherwise recent experimental studies.

- We were less likely to include articles that were related to theoretical developments, our main focus was on empirical literature that was specifically looking at either the impact of protest, or the factors that affected the chance of protest success or failure.
- We looked through both highly relevant journals (such as *Mobilization* and *Social Forces*) and top political science and sociology journals (such as *APSR* and *ASR*), as well as using tools like Elicit to find relevant research in other journals.

The social science literature relating to protests and Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) is large - there is a lot of theoretical literature and empirical literature, spanning political science, sociology, and other disciplines. We were especially interested in newer empirical research that related to the following:

- The characteristics of protests that make them more or less likely to be successful.
- The political contexts in which protests are more or less likely to be successful.

When reviewing literature relating to factors that make protests more likely to be successful, we were particularly interested in research relating to Charles Tilley's WUNC (Worthiness, Unity, Numbers, and Commitment) framework. As we were interested in understanding what can make protests more effective, the WUNC framework was a useful starting point for figuring out how the chance of success is affected by who protests and the way in which they protest, and how this can have an effect on the perceptions of both legislators and the general public. While there is not a huge amount of empirical work that explicitly references the WUNC framework (with the exception of the work of Ruud Wouters and Stefaan Walgrave), we prioritised other empirical research that seemed to fit into the WUNC Framework - for instance, Fassiotto and Soule's work on 'Signal Clarity', which seems directly related to the 'Unity' element of the WUNC framework. That being said, we did examine some of the literature on how political context and political opportunity can impact the chance of success for protests and SMOs.

Search Methods

There were some journals that were obviously particularly relevant to our research that we searched in specifically, such as *Mobilization* and *Social Forces*. Similarly, top political science and sociology journals (such as *American Political Science Review* and *American Sociological Review*) were searched more extensively than other, smaller journals. To find research in other journals, we used a range of tools such as Elicit, Research Rabbit, and Google Scholar. We were also given access to an unpublished analysis of the literature

on protest movements, which we made use of to find relevant research that we hadn't found through searching journals or using other tools. We also performed a citation search - we both looked at the reference lists of useful research we had found in order to find other relevant research as well as looking at other research that had cited articles that we had found - this was useful for identifying articles in journals that we hadn't already searched in.

Literature Review

Worthiness and Violence

Charles Tilly, one of the most cited scholars working on understanding protest movements, developed the WUNC Framework for understanding why protests succeed and fail. WUNC is an acronym that stands for 'Worthiness, Unity, Numbers, and Commitment' - four factors that Tilly claimed would have a large impact on the chance that a protest would achieve its aims. Wouters and Walgrave also claim that the diversity of a protest movement is an important factor in its success - coining the term 'dWUNC' (Wouters and Walgrave, 2017).

While there are not many studies that explicitly examine whether Tilly's conception of 'worthiness' is an important factor in protest success, there are a number of studies (some of which have already been discussed) that examine whether non-violent protests are more likely to be successful than violent protests, and this corresponds fairly well with Tilly's conception of worthiness. As Wouters and Walgrave note in their reintroduction of the WUNC framework, 'violent, disruptive behaviour is worthiness's flipside' (2017, p. 5). However, most studies conflate disruption with violence whereas it is increasingly common for protest groups to use nonviolent but disruptive tactics.

Therefore, we think readers should interpret the following section as an examination of the impact of violence within protest movements, rather than the use of disruptive yet nonviolent tactics.

That said, a clean definition of violence is by no means simple. There is plenty of ongoing discussion whether property destruction or other specific actions that don't physically harm humans constitute violence. However, for the purpose of this literature review, we will use a common definition of violence amongst political scientists. Following Shuman (2021), Wasow (2020) and Wouters and Walgrave (2017), we define violent events as: events where demonstrators engage in acts which lead to a detectable level of injury or property damage, including but not limited to rock throwing, property destruction, window breaking or physical confrontation.

First, we will examine the results from experimental studies observing the impact of violence on protest outcomes. These often take the form of vignette studies, where randomly assigned study participants are exposed to a hypothetical news article about a protest, which is presented as violent or nonviolent, and asked to give their views on how much they support the cause and protestors in question.

Wouters and Walgrave (2017) conducted an experiment on Belgian legislators to see if they were more responsive to protests when the protesters demonstrated high levels of worthiness and found that legislators who were exposed to images of protests with high levels of worthiness (such as seeing protesters who were peaceful as opposed to protesters who broke shop windows, were arrested, and were fighting police) were more likely to say that their position was aligned with that of the protesters, however there was no significant effect on the actions that legislators claimed they would take or how salient they perceived the issue to be, as can be seen in the figure below.

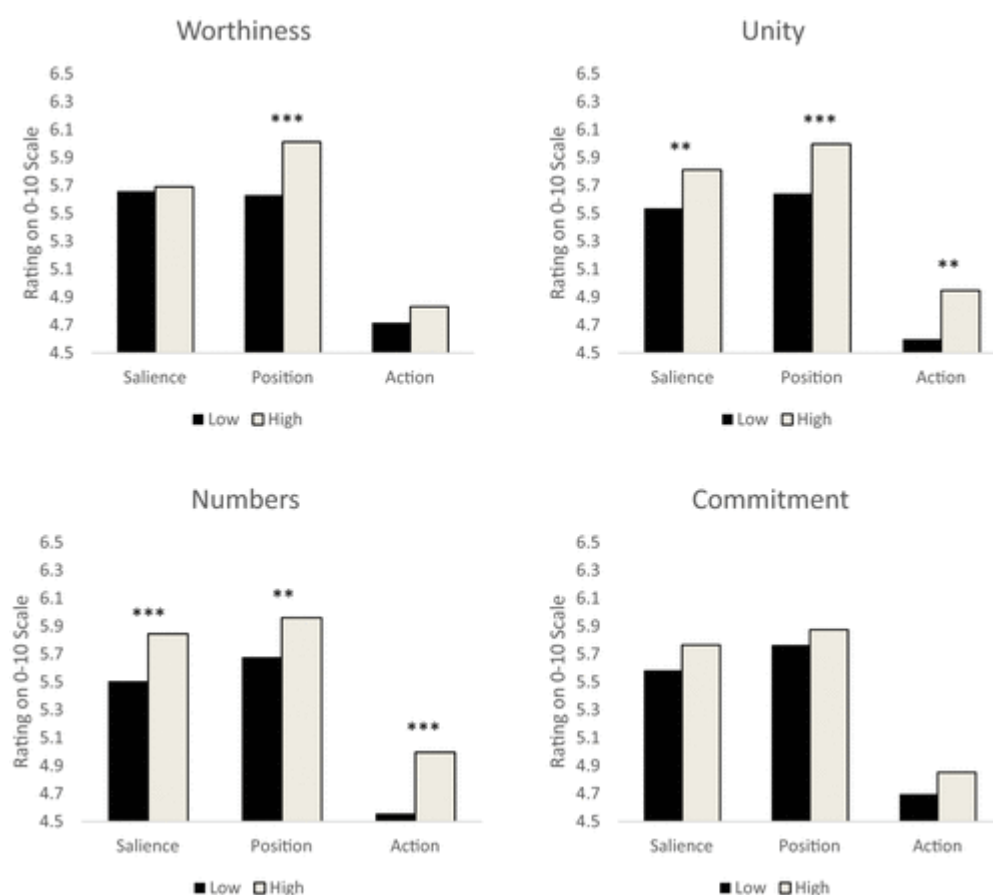


Figure 1. Predicted Values of Salience, Position, and Intended Action Effects by Protest Feature, measured in Belgian legislators. Source: Wouters and Walgrave (2017)

Simpson et al. (2018) look at whether violent tactics made people more or less likely to support protests, using a survey of 800 participants. Participants read newspaper

articles about white nationalist protesters and counter-protesters, with articles being manipulated to show either the protesters or counterprotesters (or both) as violent. The experiment found that if the only counter protesters alone were violent, respondents were significantly less likely to support the counter protesters, and similarly, if only the white nationalists were violent, they also received less support from respondents.

One type of 'worthiness' that may alter the chance of protest success is whether activists are perceived as eccentric or individually aggressive. In one experiment conducted by Bashir et al. (2013), people were shown either the profile of a 'typical feminist', an 'atypical feminist', or an undefined target whose stance on feminism was not given (as a control group). The 'typical feminist' was described as campaigning by holding rallies outside corporate headquarters to pressure CEOs into resigning, whereas the 'atypical feminist' was described as organising social events that promote women's rights. Participants in the experiment were more likely to associate the 'typical feminist' with negative stereotypes (unpleasant, militant, etc.) and less interested in affiliating with the 'typical feminist' than the 'atypical feminist'. The results indicate that if people perceive a protester as conforming with negative stereotypes they have about the group to which the protester belongs, they may be less likely to want to affiliate with the protest and the cause area.

In another experimental study, Wouters (2019) looks at the dWUNC framework and the extent to which protest movements appeal to the general public. He performs two studies - one looking at a demonstration for the rights of asylum seekers, and another looking at Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality, testing which features of each protest make a difference in the amount of support the protests receive from the general public. In each study, the elements of the protest shown to respondents were manipulated to show varying levels of worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment, and diversity. Both studies found that diversity increased the support for the cause, by statistically significant margins. Specifically, Study 1 found that respondents supported the cause more with worthy protest behaviour (5.04 on a 10-point Likert scale) compared to when violence was present (4.43). Study 2 found even larger effect sizes for worthiness, for highs of 6.63 for nonviolent and peaceful behaviour and 5.50 for the presence of violence and disruptive behaviour. Relative to other dWUNC factors, worthiness, or the absence of violence, was by far the most important factor. A diagram showing results from Study 1 can be seen below in Figure 3. Overall, all of the experimental studies examining the impact of nonviolence vs violence on public support for the issue finds that nonviolent approaches work best.

Orazani & Leidner (2018) conduct 3 experimental studies and 1 correlational study to examine the impact of nonviolence on people's willingness to support and join a

movement. The first study included 23 real social movements in the United States, using both violent and nonviolent strategies, and moral and immoral aims, ranging from the US Civil Rights Movement to the Klu Klux Klan. The latter three studies were experimental studies, looking again at violent and nonviolent movements pursuing a range of ideologically motivated goals. Across the four studies, the authors find that the nonviolence led to higher willingness to join and support the movement, leading to the conclusion that nonviolent movements likely have greater mobilisation potential. They attribute this down to greater perceived morality of nonviolent movements over violent movements, which was also observed in both the experimental and correlational study.

As noted in our [Protest Outcomes Literature Review](#), there are some limitations with an experimental approach. Most importantly, experimental studies suffer from concerns around ecological validity: it is unclear whether exposure to media articles in a controlled setting is a sufficiently close proxy to public exposure to protest in the real world. For example, exposure to protest content in reality is often from politically-biased media sources, and from a variety of different sources (e.g. radio, friends and family, social media, etc.) Therefore, whilst experimental studies show strong causal links, it's unclear whether these results will be replicable outside of controlled settings.

Figure 1. Predicted values of support for asylum demonstrators.

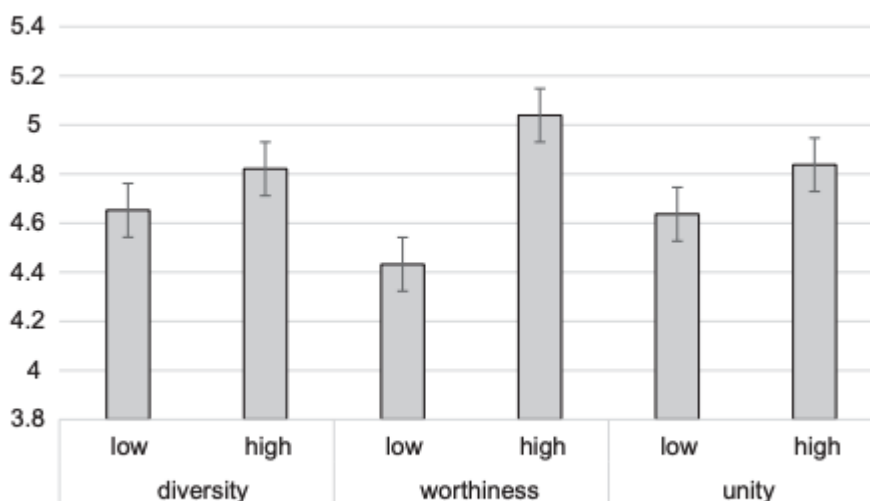


Figure 3. The interaction effect between diversity, worthiness and unity with support for asylum demonstrators. Source: Walgrave (2019)

As discussed in our [Protest Outcomes Literature Review](#), Wasow (2020) demonstrates with an instrumental variable approach that during the US Civil Rights Movement, non-violent protest was more successful in increasing Democratic vote share than was violent protest. He found that nonviolent protest resulted in a 1.6 percentage point higher Democratic vote share relative to a 'control' county, whereas violent protests increased votes for Republicans by 2.2 - 5.4 percentage points (in opposition to the aims of the Civil Rights movement). Similarly, Budgen (2020) showed that respondents were more receptive to news reports showing peaceful environmental protesters than violent protesters. Research from Feinberg et al (2017). also lends support to the idea that violent protest is less likely to be effective - they carried out three experiments that showed that extreme activism (which was usually violent action), resulted in reduced public support, and resulted in fewer people identifying with the protest movement.

Work by Muñoz and Anduiza (2019) supports the hypothesis that nonviolent protests are better at building public support for a social movement. They examine the 15-M anti-austerity protesters in Barcelona, exploiting a sudden shift from nonviolent activity to violent riots and protests in 2016. Surveys were conducted both before and after the sudden shift from nonviolent to violent activity. The level of support for 15-M decreased by ten percentage points after the shift, from 65% support to 55% support - and when controls and district fixed effects were introduced, the coefficient changed from -0.1 to -0.12, indicating a 12 percentage point fall in support. It should be noted that the fall in support was concentrated among voters of parties that did not have sympathy for the movement to begin with, whereas the fall in support among 'core supporters' was smaller. The figure below shows the interaction effect between an individual's past vote and change in support for the movement.

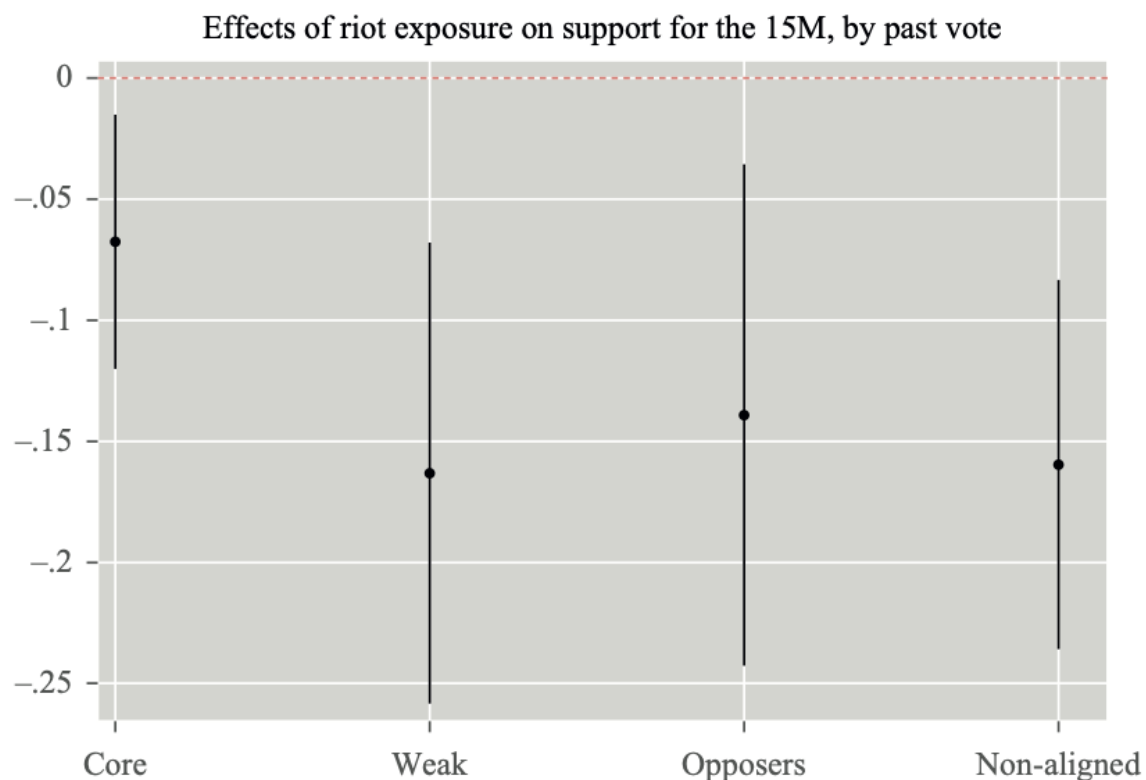


Figure 2: The interaction effect between past vote and change in support for the protest movement, after the public being exposed to riots. Source: Muñoz and Anduiza (2019)

Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), in their *Why Civil Resistance Works*, examine 323 protest movements that took place between 1900 and 2006. They find a strong correlation (not causation) that nonviolent movements are more likely to succeed in achieving their aims, often regime change, relative to violent movements. Overall, they find that nonviolent campaigns succeeded in achieving their aims 53% of the time, whilst violent campaigns only succeeded 26% of the time. They attribute this to the two main reasons. First, nonviolent movements are much more likely to mobilise larger numbers, and more diverse participants, relative to violent movements. Secondly, government repression towards a nonviolent movement is much more likely to lead to a backfire effect, where the public tends to sympathise much more with the nonviolent movement rather than a violent movement.

Chenoweth & Stephan (2011) also note that from 1900 to 2019, 65% of nonviolent campaigns without fringe violence succeeded in overthrowing regimes, but this was true of only 35% of movements with fringe violence. Later work by Chenoweth and Schock (2015) found similar results, that armed struggles have an indirect negative effect on campaign success, through a negative association with participation in the movement.

Again, the same caveats mentioned before apply, in that her work was set in a very different context, and often included armed challenges as part of violent radical flanks. The authors specifically distinguish that they're examining the role of a violent radical flank, rather than a nonviolent radical flank. This is important as it's quite likely that violence against humans is more damaging to the movement relative to property destruction, due to increased risk to movement participants. The mechanism she lays out for this is that violent radical flanks often lead to lower participation, due to fear of getting involved and subsequent repression, as well as less diverse participation. In her latest book, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs To Know*, Chenoweth (2021) highlights a quote from another political scientist, Stephan Zunes, who says "Generally movements have to choose between fringe violence and diverse participation. It's hard to have both".

That being said, there are obvious issues in establishing *causality* when simply looking at the association between levels of violence and the chance of success - for instance, this research by default will only find the most influential movements, and therefore might have overlooked lots of failed nonviolent movements, which will likely get less attention than violent movements. Chenoweth's work also includes armed challenges by non-state actors within her definition of violence, which is very different to the types of violence often used within Global North protest movements (e.g. property destruction). In addition, this work focuses largely on regime change in authoritarian countries in the Global South, so there are large contextual differences if attempting to apply these findings to North American or European movements campaigning for policy change in liberal democracies. Despite these differences, we think these results are somewhat generalisable to democratic contexts, as it's reasonable that nonviolent movements would attract greater participation relative to violent movements in both authoritarian and democratic countries.

Huet-Vaughn (2013) uses Instrumental Variables to examine the impact of violence by protesters in France between 1980 and 1995 on policy outcomes. He uses weather as an instrumental variable, using the correlation between hot weather and violence as a way to estimate the causal effect of violence on protest success. There seems to be a causal effect of going from a nonviolent protest to a violent one, wherein using violent protest rather than nonviolent protest decreases the chance of achieving a policy concession by 20%. It should be noted that this causal estimate is much higher than the estimate obtained when using Ordinary Least Squares, which may suggest (as Huet-Vaughn posits) that OLS estimates may be affected by omitted variable bias. We have some scepticism about the finding, as Huet-Vaughn claims that there is no correlation between the weather conditions (temperature and/or precipitation) and the

size of the protest, which seems extremely intuitively unlikely, and it also conflicts with previous findings (Teeselink and Melios, Madestam et al, *inter alia*).

On the other hand, some studies do indicate that property destruction and violence can have positive, or neutral, outcomes in some contexts. Shuman et al. (2022) analysed the impact of violence during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, using three groups: people living in areas featuring no protest events, people living in areas featuring only nonviolent protests, and people living in areas featuring both violent and nonviolent protests. They used both linear regression with controls and propensity score matching. In their first study, they found that conservatives living in areas with both violent and nonviolent protests were more likely to support BLM's policy goals. In the second study using a separate dataset, they again found that policy support was higher among conservatives in areas where both nonviolent and violent protests (as opposed to only nonviolent protests), but that this was *only* true in areas where Trump had received a low vote share. In areas with a high Trump vote share, policy support was significantly *lower* in areas with both violent and nonviolent protest.

This seems to suggest that when opponents to a social movement's goals are in an area where people are generally supportive of those goals, violent protest is not as likely to put them off the social movement. On the other hand, violence may have a negative effect if most people in the area are not supportive of the movement's goals. The figure below shows the interaction effect found in the first study.

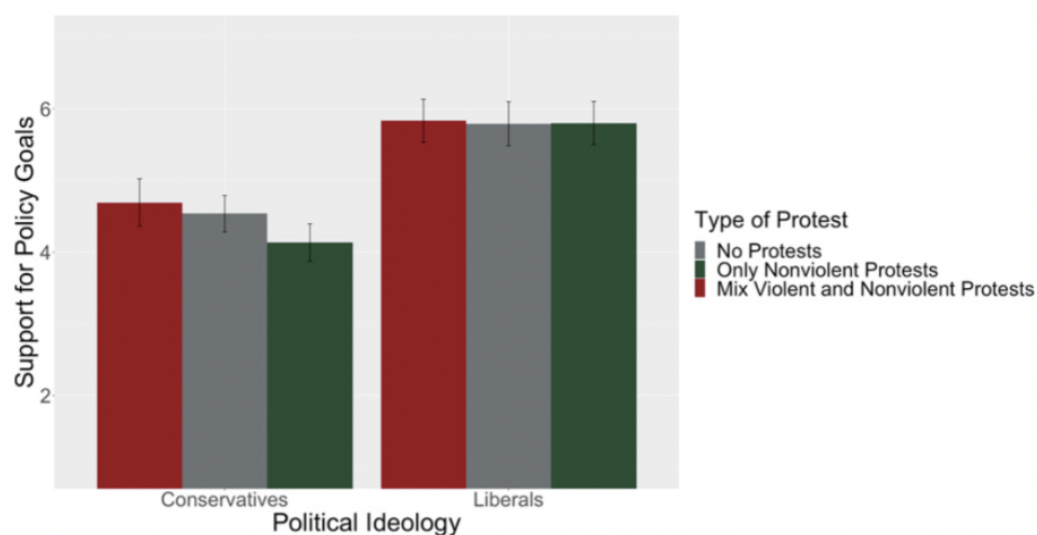


Figure 4. The interaction effect between protest type and ideology in predicting support for BLM policy goals. (Shuman et al. 2022)

Enos, Kaufman and Sands (2019) find that the violent riots that took place in 1992 in Los Angeles in response to the beating of Rodney King resulted in changes in voting

behaviour in referendums that took place in 1992. They examined two referendums that occurred after the riots - one relating to public schools, which were considered by many to be an issue linked to African American prospects, and one relating to universities, which were not. They use a difference-in-differences design comparing the change in support for funding public schools to the change in support for funding higher education, finding that the support for funding public schools increased more than the support for funding higher education in the Los Angeles Basin. This was not true of other parts of California, suggesting that the violent riots may have had a causal impact on voting behaviour in Los Angeles. The increase in willingness to pay for public schools relative to universities was higher among African-Americans, indicating that they were more responsive to the riots than were non African-American voters. This paper does not necessarily suggest that violent riots were preferable to the counterfactual in which nonviolent protests had taken place, but does suggest that it is not that case that violent protests are *necessarily* counterproductive.

Rojas (2006) examines movements that attempted to get universities to establish departments for African-American studies at their universities, looking at whether disruptive tactics (including violence, property damage, and building occupations) are more effective than non-disruptive tactics (including rallies and other non-violent demonstrations), controlling for organisational structure, institutional type, and client demography. He finds that after controls are introduced, disruptive protest has no statistically significant effect, whereas the effect of non-disruptive protest remains statistically significant.

Numbers

Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) famously proposed a 3.5 percent rule - claiming that no protest movement that involved at least 3.5% of a country's population had ever failed to achieve its aims. Their book *Why Civil Resistance Works* examines 323 protest movements that took place between 1900 and 2006, and does find an association between the number of protesters and the likelihood that the protest achieved its aims. While they acknowledge that huge numbers of protesters do not always mean a protest movement is successful (for instance, they give the example of the anti-Japanese insurgency in China in the 1930s and 1940s that had over 4 million participants), they note that a single unit increase in the number of active participants in a protest makes a campaign over 10% more likely to be successful - as can be seen in the figure below. That being said, there are obvious issues in establishing *causality* when simply looking at the association between the number of protesters and the chance of success - for instance, protest movements that seem to be succeeding will be more likely to attract more numbers of participants. As mentioned above, there are also reasons to think this

research won't generalise particularly well, such as the use of older examples dating back to 1900, and the focus on authoritarian rather than democratic contexts.

FIGURE 2.1 THE EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION ON THE PROBABILITY OF CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

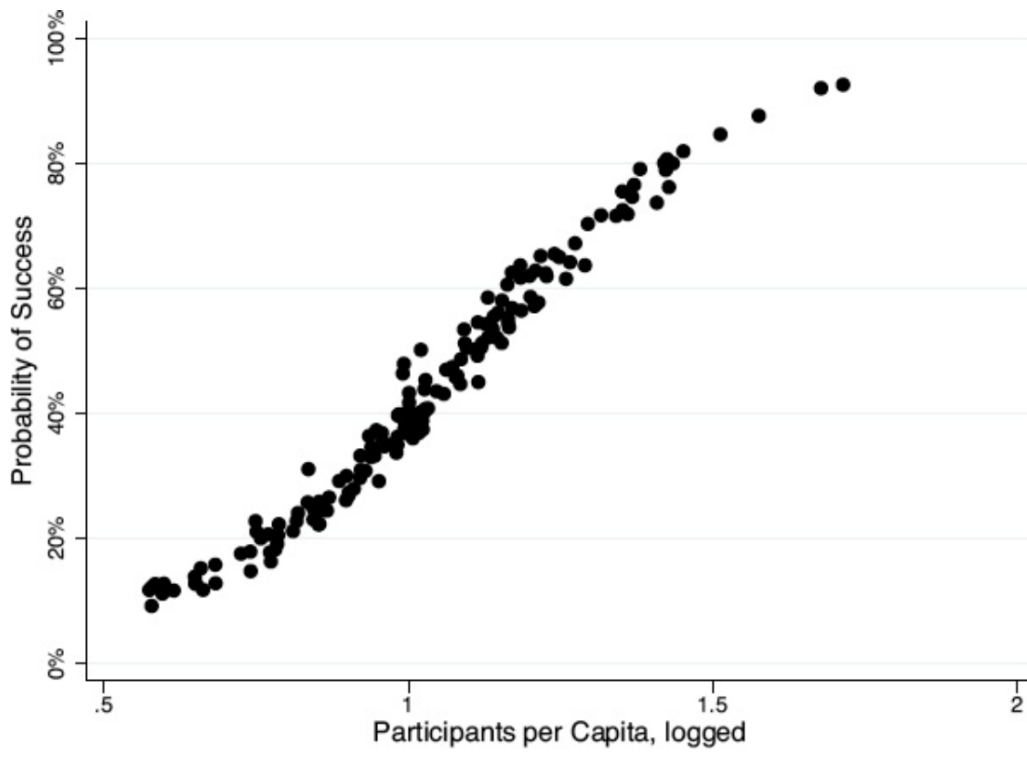


Figure 5: Chenworth and Stephan (2011) demonstrate that there is a strong association between the probability that a protest is successful and protest participants per capita - although this does not demonstrate a causal influence of protest size on chance of success

But there is some indication that the number of people at a protest has a causal impact on the chance of success - as noted above, Wouters and Walgrave (2017) found an effect manipulating the number of protesters in a news vignette shown to legislators. Legislators who were shown news vignettes that showed protests with higher numbers of protesters had a position closer to that of the protesters, believed that the issue being highlighted by the protesters was of a higher salience, and said they were more likely to take action on the issue that the protesters were highlighting.

Teeselink and Melios (2021) also highlights the importance of numbers at a protest - their quasi-experiment used Instrumental Variables to demonstrate that people in areas with Black Lives Matter protests with high participation (those that had no rainfall) were more likely to vote Democrat than those in areas with protests with low participation (due to rainfall).

Walgrave and Vliegenthart (2012) examine protests between 1993 and 2000 in Belgium, looking at the impact of (mostly) nonviolent and legal protests on questions in parliament, decisions by government, and passed legislation. They found a significant impact of protest size on legislation - the larger the number of protesters, the more likely it is that legislation is affected. On the other hand, protest size did *not* have a significant effect on decisions by the government or on speeches/questions in parliament.

Some of the evidence that can be found in our [Protest Outcomes Literature review](#) can also be taken as evidence that the number of people at a protest matters. Madestam et al. (2013) use Instrumental Variables to estimate the impact of Tea Party protests on Republican vote share, finding that rainfall is associated with smaller protests, which in turn causes an increase in the Republican vote share.

On the other hand, Butcher and Pinckney (2022) find that in Muslim countries, an increase in protest size *negatively* impacts the chance of concession from the government. The study exploits a novel exogenous variable, which is whether the day was a Friday, when Muslims typically go to Mosque and thus have a natural starting point for their protest. They control for several things that that Friday could also be correlated with other things, such as increased strike activity, whether the protest was explicitly linked with Muslim organisations, etc. That being said, it seems plausible that they do not perfectly exclude all things that are more likely to occur on a Friday, so unlike some other quasi-experiments, confounding still seems as though it could be a serious possibility. Moving from the median number of protesters (1270) to the 90th percentile number of protesters decreases the chance of government concessions by 17 percentage points, on average. It is worth noting that this finding may not be generalisable to a Western context, but remains an interesting result. The proposed mechanism is that governments anticipate that Fridays will have more people at protests, and thus the increased number of people is of no surprise to the government - governments seem to be more responsive to unanticipated protests.

King and Soule (2007) also fail to find any impact of protest size on chance of success. They examine the impact of protests on the stock price of US corporations between 1962 and 1990, and note that there is no significant correlation between the size of the protest and the change in stock price, although they do find a significant negative correlation between the *length* of the protests (a binary variable that is equal to 1 when the protest takes place over a series of days) and the stock price (although they include protest length as a control variable rather than an independent variable).

Wouters (2019) looks at the dWUNC framework and the extent to which protest movements appeal to the general public, and finds no significant relationship between the number of protestors, and public support for the cause. This indicates that what convinces legislators, as seen in Wouters & Walgrave (2017) is different to what persuades the public. Based on these studies alone, one might infer that numbers are crucial to persuade policymakers, but less important to build public support for your cause.

Hager et al. (2021) examine the impact of the size of counter-protests on the willingness of activists to engage in protest in Germany. They used Facebook advertising to recruit people who had expressed an interest in either a right-wing or left-wing political cause or movement (they called them 'potential activists'), and who also lived in an area where there was known to be an upcoming protest. They then randomly assigned people to read different forecasts of how many people would turn up to both the political protest they might participate in *and* a forecast of how many people were due to turn up at a counterprotest. They found that left-wing respondents who were randomly assigned to read that the protest they would attend would have a high turnout were more likely to attend the protest (as well as more likely to claim that they would attend the protest), whereas there was no interaction effect for right-wing respondents. Respondents who were told that the counterprotest would have a higher turnout were neither more nor less likely to report that they would attend a future protest.

Overall, where there is some evidence that numbers might not be an important factor (King and Soule, 2007; Butcher and Pinckney, 2022), we think the strongest evidence is in favour of the size of the protest movement being important. Specifically, we think the fact that King and Soule (2007) only examines data from 1962-1990 and Butcher and Pinckney (2022) focuses solely on Muslim countries means their work is less applicable to the context we're interested in. On the other hand, Madestam et al. (2013), Wasow (2020) and Teeselink and Melios (2021) all use a quite compelling instrumental variable approach, utilising natural experiments due to recent electoral outcomes.

Radical Flank Effect

The 'Radical Flank' effect refers to the influence of more extreme activists on the chance of success of more moderate activists who are highlighting the same issue as the radical actors. The effect here could either be a 'positive radical flank effect', wherein radical actors make moderate actors look more reasonable in comparison, thus increasing the chance that moderate actors will achieve their aims. It could, on the other hand, result in a 'negative radical flank effect', wherein the radical actors hurt the whole movement through actions that are likely to reflect badly on all the activists who are campaigning on the same issue. Evidence surrounding the radical flank effect is both sparse and

mixed, meaning that we are fairly uncertain about when movements are likely to experience a positive radical flank effect as opposed to a negative radical flank effect. Additionally, we have only explored the key texts covering the radical flank effect, so there might be some other relevant literature we're missing. **Despite this, we think the overall effect is likely to be positive for nonviolent radical flanks**, such that a movement with a nonviolent radical flank is likely to be more successful than a movement with no nonviolent radical flank. For violent radical flanks (involving violence to humans, rioting and some forms of property destruction), we think it's possible that they have a negative effect on the overall movement, but we're less sure.

Simpson et al. (2022) use online experiments to test the impact of a radical flank in both the animal rights movement and the climate movement. In each experiment, participants read descriptions of a 'treatment faction', and were randomised into groups - some were given descriptions that portrayed a radical/moderate agenda and others were given descriptions that portrayed the use of radical/moderate tactics. Participants also read about a 'focal faction', and each participant was given the same description of this faction. In this study, moderate groups were shown to be holding peaceful demonstrations, whereas the radical groups used tactics such as blocking roads, criminal damage, or sabotage. In experiment 1, they found that when the treatment faction had radical tactics, participants viewed the focal faction's tactics as being more moderate. In addition, participants also expressed greater support for the focal faction in the context of radical tactics by the treatment factions. On the other hand, when the treatment faction had a radical agenda, there was no impact on perceptions of the focal faction. The table below shows the mean responses on a seven point scale by condition in experiment 1 (relating to animal rights).

Table 1. Effect of treatment faction's tactics (moderate or radical) and agenda (moderate or radical) on perceptions of and support for the focal faction. Experiment 1.

	Means (SDs) by condition				ANOVA results		
	Mod. tactics mod. agenda	Rad. tactics mod. agenda	Mod. tactics rad. agenda	Rad. tactics rad. agenda	Radical tactics	Radical agenda	Interaction
Perceived radicalness of focal faction tactics	2.38 (1.05)	2.16 (1.03)	2.19 (1.08)	2.14 (1.00)	F = 4.81 P = 0.029	F = 2.74 P = 0.098	F = 2.13 P = 0.145
Perceived radicalness of focal faction agenda	2.20 (1.45)	2.03 (1.33)	2.15 (1.51)	1.99 (1.29)	F = 3.80 P = 0.051	F = 0.37 P = 0.543	F = 0.01 P = 0.934
Identify with focal faction	3.89 (1.84)	4.36 (1.76)	4.28 (1.82)	4.52 (1.76)	F = 10.99 P < 0.01	F = 6.47 P = 0.011	F = 1.13 P = 0.288
Support for focal faction	4.90 (1.65)	5.32 (1.60)	5.12 (1.78)	5.17 (1.75)	F = 5.50 P = 0.019	F = 0.13 P = 0.717	F = 3.43 P = 0.064

In experiment 2 (looking at climate change activists), they found a similar result, if the treatment faction were manipulated to have radical tactics, the focal faction were perceived as having a less radical agenda and less radical tactics, as well as receiving greater normative support. This can be seen in the table below.

Table 3. Effect of treatment faction's tactics (moderate or radical) and agenda (moderate or radical) on perceptions of and support for the focal faction. Experiment 2.

	Means (SDs) by condition				ANOVA results		
	Mod. tactics mod. agenda	Rad. tactics mod. agenda	Mod. tactics rad. agenda	Rad. tactics rad. agenda	Radical tactics	Radical agenda	Interaction
Perceived radicalness of focal faction tactics	19.57 (20.96)	15.15 (19.45)	18.70 (19.56)	14.75 (19.84)	F = 18.18 P < 0.001	F = 0.041 P = 0.520	F = 0.06 P = 0.809
Perceived radicalness of focal faction agenda	23.42 (23.27)	19.81 (22.99)	22.87 (20.77)	18.32 (21.63)	F = 13.98 P < 0.001	F = 0.89 P = 0.347	F = 0.18 P = 0.669
Identify with focal faction	52.55 (31.39)	58.19 (30.15)	55.01 (28.94)	59.81 (30.43)	F = 12.29 P < 0.001	F = 1.89 P = 0.170	F = 0.08 P = 0.778
Support for Focal Faction	68.44 (28.64)	73.52 (27.38)	70.19 (27.01)	72.80 (28.04)	F = 7.92 P = 0.005	F = 0.14 P = 0.707	F = 0.82 P = 0.366
Willingness to act on behalf of focal faction	48.62 (33.40)	53.44 (32.08)	49.14 (32.17)	52.85 (33.33)	F = 6.99 P = 0.008	F = 0.00 P = 0.984	F = 0.12 P = 0.730

This does seem to suggest that there may be a positive radical flank effect when it comes to a protest movement having radical tactics. Specifically, a positive radical flank leads to people being more likely to identify with a more moderate group. Additionally, the experiment also tested whether there was increased or decreased support for broader movement issues, such as measures of climate policy support or to what extent participants thought animal welfare was an important issue. The authors found no change in broader movement issues, indicating there is increased support for the moderate faction without undermining (or increasing) support for broader movement issues. On one hand, this is somewhat promising that radical tactics don't seem to undermine general perceptions towards a movement, yet somewhat underwhelming as they also lead no noticeable positive impacts.

It also should be noted that there are limitations to the study: as the authors note, the fact that participants were shown two examples of protest movement factions close in time, meaning that they are probably more likely to observe a contrast between the factions than are people observing protest movements in reality. Interestingly, the author notes there is no such effect when a group employs a radical agenda, such that the radical flank effect seems to be limited to the use of radical tactics rather than a radical agenda.

Shuman et al. (2020) also discuss the impact of non-normative collective action, similar to how a radical flank might work. In a series of five experimental studies, they test the impact of normative nonviolent action (e.g. peaceful protest), nonnormative nonviolent actions (e.g. blockades or sit-ins) and violent actions (e.g. riots and property destruction) against a control condition. They find that for people resistant to social change, nonnormative nonviolent action is more effective than the other forms of action (nothing, violence and normative nonviolent action). The results from Study 1 can be seen below in Figure X.

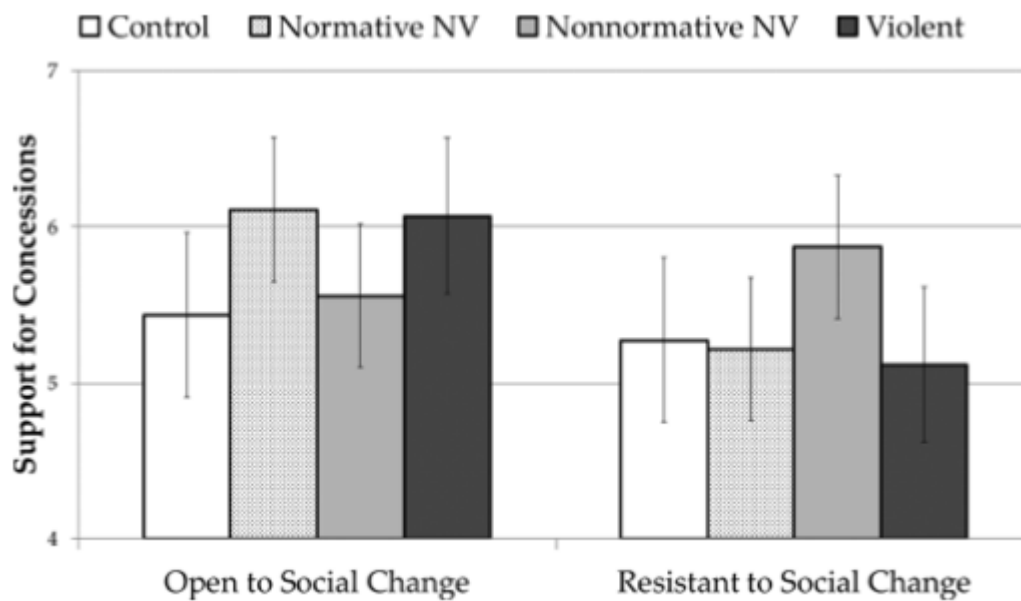


Figure 6: Shuman et al. (2020) demonstrate the outcome of various forms of antiracist collective action for groups who are both open and resistant to social change. Resistance to social change for this experiment was defined as White racial identification (e.g. “I feel strong ties with other White Americans”).

In additional experiments, the authors find a consistent trend where nonnormative is particularly effective who those who are resistant to social change (e.g. right-wing Israelis for pro-Palestinian issues in Israel). Figure 7 below shows the interaction effect for a longitudinal experiment, where the authors asked participants about support for gun control in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting, and subsequent collective action.

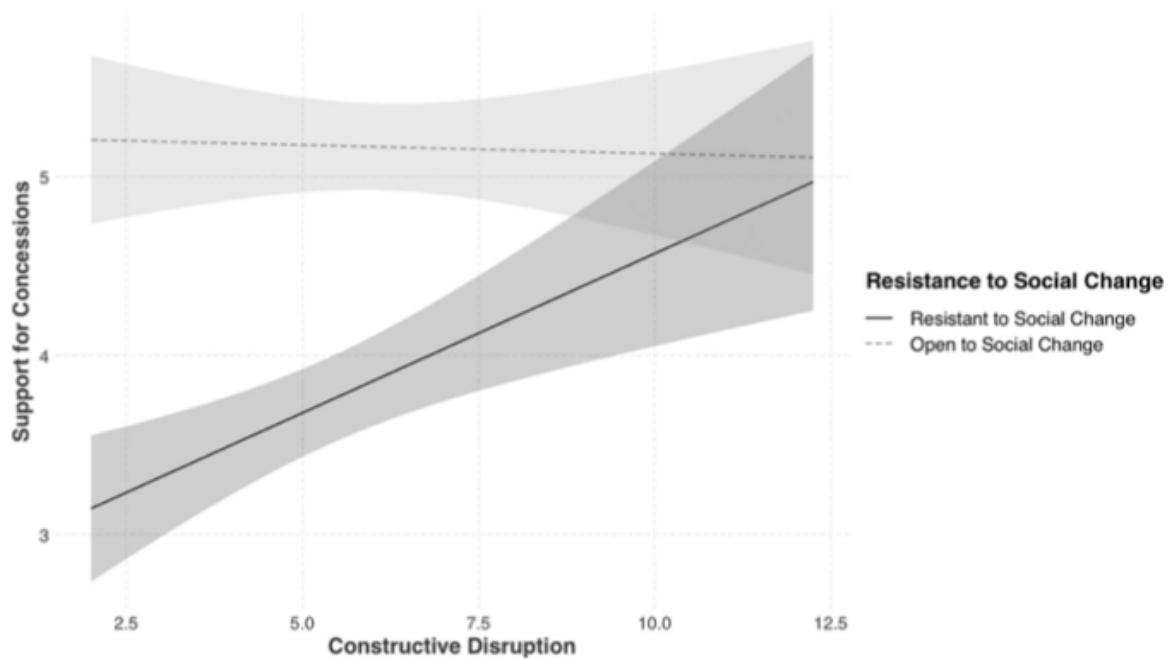


Figure 7: Shuman et al. (2020) show that constructive disruption, closely tied to non-normative collection against, is particularly effective in increasing support for policy measures from those who are more resistant to social change.

The authors conclude that non-normative nonviolent action (e.g. blocking roads and using more disruptive tactics) is effective in building support from those who are more resistant to change, as shown above in Figure 7. However, as shown above in Figure 6 and Figure 7, there are also no likely negative consequences of using non-normative nonviolent action, so this seems to be worthwhile adding a portfolio of other actions. Specifically, normative nonviolent action has been shown to turn sympathisers into active supporters (Teixeria et al. 2020) in a more mobilising way, so a mix of these strategies seem useful. Hence, the authors conclude that the “most effective” tactic is likely contingent on what the social movement organisation ultimately wants to achieve.

The study, whilst very impressive, also has some limitations to note. For example, their longitudinal study suffered from reasonably large rates of attrition, of 30%, so there is always the possibility for differential attrition to be obscuring alternate findings. Additionally, they focus solely on the impact on public support for certain policies, whereas policymaker support might be of greater importance in a specific case. Three out of five studies also take part in Israel, with two of these focusing on the Israel-Palestine conflict, which might be atypical to other social struggles.

Farrer and Klein (2022) examine how violence and property destruction (termed ‘forceful or violent environmental sabotage’ or FVES) by environmental activists affects the electoral prospects of the Green Party in the United States in local elections. They

find that violence by environmental activists has a strong negative effect on the Green Party's predicted vote share *if* the Green Party has previously been relatively successful in local elections, whereas when the Green party has no record of electoral success, there is no equivalent backlash. In a separate study, Farrer and Klein find that FVES becomes more frequent when the Green Party continually fights and loses elections, however we ought to be sceptical about the extent to which this is a causal relationship.

Haines (2013) also examines the impact of the radical flank effect on the financial resources of groups in the Civil Rights movement between 1957 and 1970 in the United States. He finds that more moderate and established organisations such as the NAACP received more funding than younger and more radical organisations. As nonviolent activism increased in the 1960s, civil rights organisations received significantly more funding. Haines claims that there was no financial backlash for more moderate groups as a result of rioting and more extreme action. However, there is no exploration of the counterfactual in which extreme action does not occur, and the fact that funding towards more moderate groups increased during the 1960s is not sufficient to demonstrate that they would have not received even more funding had there been no extreme action.

Tompkins (2015) examines the impact of radical and armed groups on the chance of protest success, using the NAVCO 2.0 dataset (which contains 119 campaigns that had 'maximalist' goals, e.g. secession or self-determination). This dataset includes campaigns from around the world, including the Orange revolution in Ukraine, IRA action in Northern Ireland, and the Palestinian liberation movement. Tompkins examines the impact of a radical flank on three outcome variables: repression from the state in response to campaign activity, backlash (which measures the impact of the state's repression on the campaign mobilisation), and the progress that the campaign made. Controls are included for campaign size, the structure of the campaign, and whether repression by the state was indiscriminate or discriminate.

The main finding is that having a radical flank is positively associated with more state repression. Having a radical flank is also associated both with increased mobilisation and decreased mobilisation (relative to maintaining the status quo), but it most strongly increases the likelihood of decreased mobilisation. That being said, no significant relationship is found between having a radical flank and overall campaign progress, although the level of repression is significantly negatively associated with campaign progress. That being said, this should not be taken as necessarily being a causal connection - omitted variable bias seems fairly likely in this instance, given the limited use of control variables and high potential for confounding. In addition, Tompkins (2015) focused on armed radical flanks primarily seeking regime change, which is very

different from nonviolent yet disruptive radical flanks in Western liberal democracies (such as Just Stop Oil).

Commitment and Protest Frequency

Although Tilly originally proposed that 'commitment' was a factor in the success of social movement organisations, there is currently fairly limited evidence that protesters demonstrating that they are committed to the cause they are highlighting is a particularly important factor in protest success. In their experiment testing how different factors affect the views of legislators, Wouters and Walgrave (2017) manipulated the 'commitment' of the protesters by telling legislators that the protesters being shown had protested in the past and planned to do so again in future - but this had no significant effect on the legislators' attitudes towards the protest. Wouters (2017) similarly finds no effect of the perceived commitment of protesters on the attitudes of respondents taken from the general public towards the protesters. In the same study discussed in the previous section, Walgrave and Vliegenthart (2012) do find that protest frequency, which perhaps serves as a proxy for the commitment of the protesters, has a significant impact on government action in Belgium, although there is no significant effect on legislation, nor on the questions/speeches in parliament. That being said, protest frequency may be an imperfect proxy for commitment - it may be the case that other forms of commitment have differing impacts on the chance of protest success.

King, Bentele, and Soule (2007) examine the relationships between various aspects of Social Movement Organisations campaigning on rights issues and the number of hearings in Congress on rights issues between 1960 and 1986. They coded years with an above average number of protests as 1 and those with a below average number of protesters as 0, finding that years with more protests saw a 70% increase in the number of hearings (an annual increase of 0.56 hearings). This control for various other variables such as media attention, public opinion, and the degree of electoral competition. That being said, this still seems highly likely to suffer from omitted variable bias, as it seems extremely likely that years in which lots of protests related to rights issues might be different to years without many protests in ways that are not controlled for.

Wouters (2019) looks at the dWUNC framework and the extent to which protest movements appeal to the general public, and finds no significant relationship between committed protesters, and public support for the cause. It's important to note here that the operationalisation of commitment for this study was the existence of future protests and plans to protest again, which might not be the best demonstration of protestor commitment. That being said, while there is not currently strong evidence that

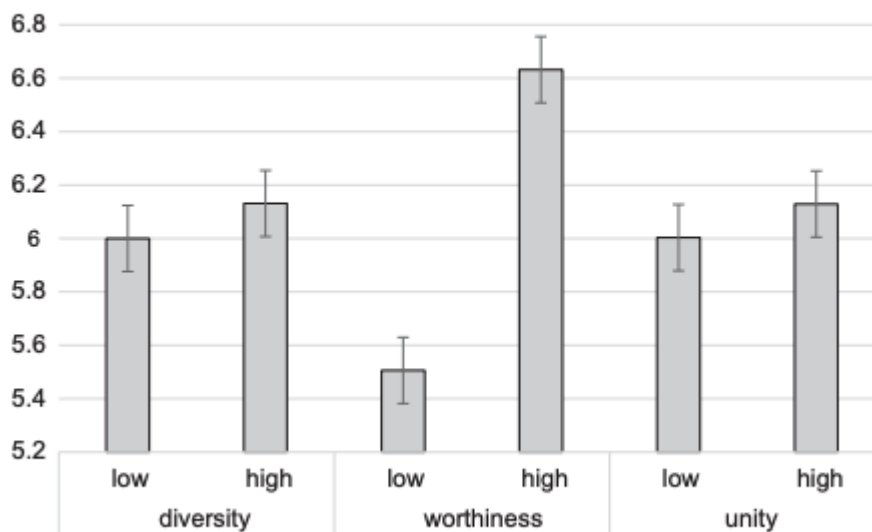
the perceived commitment of the protesters has a *direct* impact on public opinion or the views of legislators, the commitment of protesters is likely important for ensuring that protest activity can continue with large numbers of people.

Diversity

Wouters and Walgrave (2017) manipulated the degree of diversity in the vignettes of protests shown to legislators - some legislators were shown images of an asylum protest that included only Afghan and African protesters, whereas others were shown protests that also included white participants. There was no significant effect of diversity on the legislators, and the results were ultimately not included in the study due to diversity not being a part of Tilley's original theory and due to the non-significant results.

However, in later work by Wouters (2019), he looks at the dWUNC framework and the extent to which protest movements appeal to the *general public*, rather than legislators. He performs two studies - one looking at a demonstration for the rights of asylum seekers, and another looking at Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality, testing which features of each protest make a difference in the amount of support the protests receive from the general public. In each study, the elements of the protest shown to respondents were manipulated to show varying levels of worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment, and diversity. Both studies found that diversity increased the support for the cause, by statistically significant margins.

Specifically, Study 1 found the protest resonated more strongly with general citizens (4.82/10) compared to when only asylum seekers participated (4.65/10). Study 2 found smaller effect sizes for diversity, for highs of 6.12 for diverse participants and 6 for a less diverse group. Relative to other dWUNC factors, it was considerably less important than worthiness (or nonviolence) but tied as the second most important factor, along with unity. A diagram showing results from Study 2 can be seen below. It is worth noting that in Study 2, there seemed to be an interaction effect between the race of the respondent and the factors that affected their perception of the protests - African American respondents' tendency to support the protests was not contingent on the levels of diversity at the protests.

Figure 2. Predicted values of support for police brutality demonstrators.**Figure 6.** The interaction effect between diversity, worthiness and unity with support for police brutality demonstrators. Source: Walgrave (2019)

Chenoweth & Stephan (2011), in their aforementioned work studying over 300 movements fighting for regime change in authoritarian countries, also identified diversity of participants as a crucial factor that determined movement success. They argue that broad-based campaigns, that mobilise various sectors of society, are much more likely to achieve wins. They argue that broad-based movements are much more likely to threaten the legitimacy of the opponent, as well as create much larger costs for the government if they were to repress the movement. Due to the particularity of this research looking at authoritarian regimes, we should evaluate whether these findings are likely to generalise over to democratic contexts. Diverse participation in a democratic country is also likely to yield greater costs to the government if they were to repress the movement, so this finding seems to generalise well. In addition, a democratic government, all things considered, should be more likely to make reforms if a movement was more diverse, rather than less. If it was the case that only a specific sector of society cared about an issue, even a democratically elected government could reasonably ignore this group if there were never a strong chance they would vote for their party. However, this becomes much more difficult for diverse and broad movements, where the participants could represent potential voters.

Unity

Wouters and Walgrave (2017) conducted an experiment on Belgian legislators to see if they were more responsive to protests when the protesters demonstrated high levels of unity (all protesters using the same signs and slogans), and found that legislators who

were exposed to images of protests with high levels of unity were more likely to say that the issue being highlighted was important, that they would take action on the issue, and that they had a position that was closer to that of the protesters.

While there have not been many studies other than those carried out by Walgrave and Wouters that relate specifically to the unity of protesters, there are some studies that look at factors that are roughly analogous to unity. For instance, Fassiotto and Soule (2017) find that 'signal clarity' is associated with protest movements having an effect on legislators. Looking at marches relating to women's rights in the United States, they operationalise 'signal clarity' in two ways: firstly, if women were reported as being the primary presence at a protest, and secondly, if the issues being espoused at protest events are similar over time. They find that both aspects of 'signal clarity' are strongly associated with at least one Congressional vote on Women's issues in the subsequent month.

Referring back to Wouters (2019), we see that both studies found that unity increased the support for the cause, by statistically significant margins. Specifically, Study 1 found the protest resonated more strongly with the public when the protestors were presented as a solid bloc with a single coherent claim (4.83/10) compared to when they were presented as divergent (4.63/10). Study 2 found smaller effect sizes for unity, for highs of 6.12 for unified participants and 6 for a more divergent group. Relative to other dWUNC factors, it was considerably less important than worthiness (or nonviolence) but tied as the second most important factor, along with diversity. However, overall, the authors find that a protest that performs well on worthiness, unity and diversity scores 6.76 on 0-10 support scale, relative to 5.38 for a protest that fails on these three factors. This is a substantial increase of half a standard deviation, or 25% larger.

Other Factors

We focused the majority of our literature review on the dWUNC framework described above, and the subsequent factors (e.g. violence, numbers, the radical flank effect, etc.). However, we also uncovered some interesting literature examining the impact of training, varied tactics, and organisational resilience on protest movement success. However, we note that our literature review for these factors is not exhaustive, and we have likely overlooked some important and relevant work. Due to this, we're less sure about the strength of the factors listed below, relative to the ones above.

Training

Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, in a monograph titled [*The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns*](#), examined various forms of external support given to nonviolent campaigns and how this influenced rates of success. Using a mix of

qualitative and quantitative methods, they conclude the activists who receive trainings prior to peak mobilisation events are much more likely to draw higher participation rates (e.g. bigger movement size) and greater likelihood of defections from the opposition government. As noted elsewhere, this work focuses primarily on maximalist campaigns (e.g. seek regime change) in the Global South, so caution is required when adapting these results for other contexts. Nonetheless, the authors note that trainings can provide strong avenues for relationship building, peer learning and strategic planning. The methodology used in this was based primarily on qualitative evidence gathered from eight case studies, along with 80 interviews and focus groups with relevant policymakers, donors and activists, as well as 67 maximalist campaigns from 2000-2013. The quantitative data draws upon these maximalist campaigns, and includes over 25,000 reported incidents of external support to nonviolent campaigns.

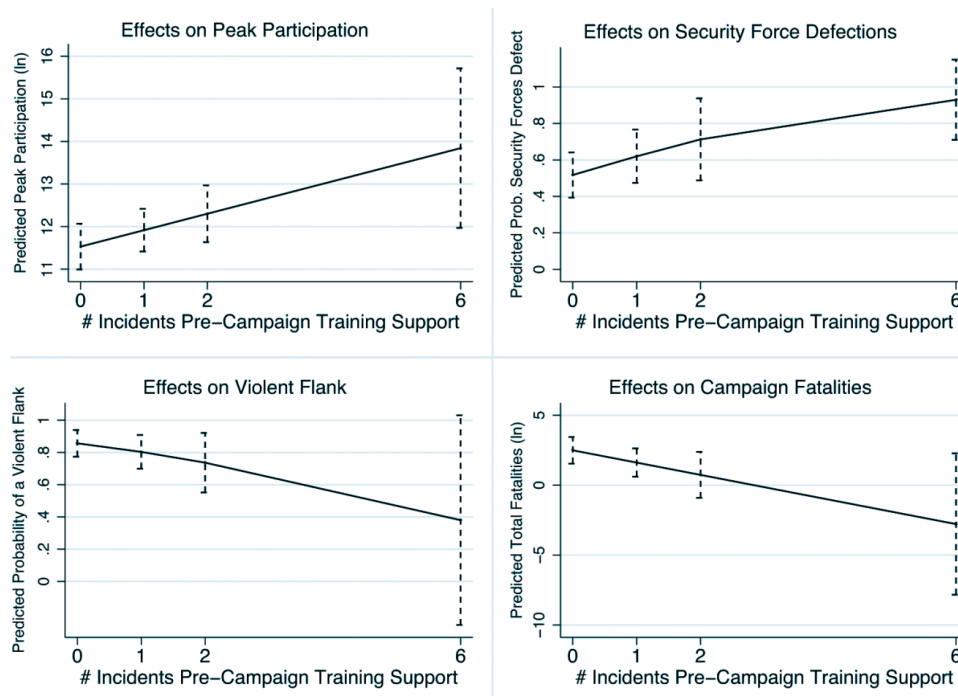


FIGURE 2. Correlations between Pre-Campaign Training Support and Campaign Dynamics

Marginal effects of training support during campaign's peak on campaign dynamics with 95% confidence intervals. $p < .001$. Based on bivariate regressions (logistic regressions for defections and violent flanks, OLS regressions for participants and fatalities), with robust standard errors clustered around location. $n=68$

Figure 7. The interaction effect between training and campaign participation rates, security force defections, probability of a radical flank and campaign fatalities.. Source: [Chenoweth & Stephan \(2021\)](#)

Varied Tactics

In her most recent book, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs To Know*, Erica Chenoweth (2021) highlights the fact that protest movements who use a variety of nonviolent tactics are more likely to achieve their aims. She notes that based on her previous work, such as Chenoweth & Stephan (2011), movements that are able to create new and unexpected tactics are better at maintaining momentum, relative to movements that become predictable and tactically stagnant. She also notes that tactical innovation is a way for movements to apply pressure in the face of repression, or limited other opportunities for civil resistance. She notes that this is one of the four most important factors for civil resistance campaigns, yet we haven't seen this factor discussed explicitly in other work on protest movements.

Organisational Resilience

To draw further from Erica Chenoweth (2021), she notes that movements who have nonviolent discipline and resilience in the face of repression are more likely to achieve their aims. Specific examples include the ability to face violence and government repression without resorting to counter violence, or counter new forms of repression with innovative tactics. Clear organisational structures, succession plans and other contingency plans will aid movements in reacting to a changing landscape and possible repression from the target of the movement. She also emphasises the fact that successful nonviolent movements are rarely spontaneous, and include months or years of planning, in order to set up the adequate organisation structures mentioned.

Political Context

Up until now, we have focused exclusively on factors that are largely within the control of the protest movement. However, external factors, or factors that are largely shaped by other forces (e.g. the media) also have a large influence on protest movement success. In the following section we examine the literature looking at the importance of factors that are largely outside the control of the protest movement. Again, we note that examining the external factors outside of a movement's control was not the focus of this literature review, so it's possible we have overlooked some important material.

One of the recurrent themes in the Political Sociology literature relating to protest is that of the Political Opportunity Structure (POS). In their paper *Conceptualizing Political Opportunity*, Meyer and Minkoff (2004) quote Tarrow as describing the POS as 'dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure'. The structure of the institutions of a country can make a protest more or less likely to be successful, and

more or less likely to occur in the first place. Whether or not protest movements emerge and are successful is likely to be contingent on various aspects of the POS - whether there are Social Movement allies among political elites, the extent to which the political system is open/closed, and so on.

Tarrow (1998) argues that there are five dimensions of the Political Opportunity Structure: the opening of access to participation, the evidence of political realignment within the polity, the appearance of influential allies, emerging splits within the elite, and a decline in the state's capacity or will to repress dissent. There is some debate in the literature about whether the relationship between protest movements and the POS is linear or curvilinear. On the linear understanding of the relationship, the more political opportunity there is, the more likely protest is to occur. On the curvilinear understanding, protest is unlikely to occur when political opportunities are very limited, but it is similarly unlikely to occur when citizens' demands are usually met, as protest groups are likely to be assimilated into the political system - see the figure below from Opp (2009).

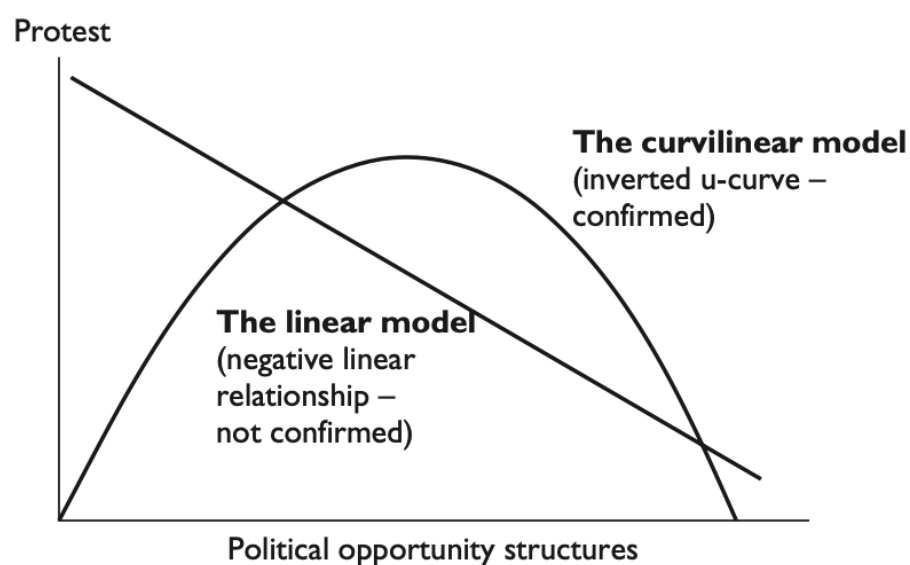


Figure 7. Opp (2009) shows two theorised models of the relationship between political opportunities and the amount of protest that occurs

One example of the POS being used in empirical research is Kitschelt's 1986 paper on the anti-nuclear movement in France, Sweden, the United States, and West Germany. He notes that while the origins of the anti-nuclear movement in each country was fairly similar (growing out of the environmental movement and reaching a peak in the second half of the 1970s), there were large differences in the opportunity structures that they faced. He focused on how open a country's political system it is, and how strong it is, arguing that open political systems (such as the US and Sweden) had anti-nuclear

movements that tried to influence legislators and political parties directly, whereas in closed political systems (such as France and West Germany) activists tried to press for structural changes rather than trying to influence legislators directly. Protest action was more likely in closed systems - in France, 175,000 people rallied against nuclear power, and in West Germany, 280,000 people participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations.

Agnone (2007) posits an 'amplification model', wherein there is an interaction effect between public opinion and protest to influence legislators. Looking at time-series data in the US from between 1960 and 1998, he finds that there is an amplification mechanism between environmental protest and public opinion, wherein public opinion affects legislator behaviour above its independent effect when accompanied by environmental protest activity.

Bernardi et al. (2020) find that the effectiveness of protest on changing legislative agendas is contingent on the issue that is being highlighted. They find that there is a direct effect of protest on legislator behaviour for the issue of social welfare, and an interaction effect between protest and public opinion (a la Agnone's Amplification model) for the issues of housing, unemployment, and education. Legislators seem to be more responsive to protests on 'bread and butter issues' that strongly impact citizens' lives and may become an issue in upcoming elections if not addressed. They argue that the impact of protest is highly contingent, noting that 'Only if protesters' signal is strong and supported by public priorities will protest matter for attention changes'.

Burstein (2020) reviews studies into whether advocacy is more likely to be effective at changing legislator behaviour on 'high-activity issues' or 'low-activity issues', meaning issues that are particularly controversial or have received a significant amount of attention from advocacy groups in the past (for instance, abortion is classified as a high-activity issue whereas monetary policy is considered a low-activity issue), finding that whether the issue is high-activity or low-activity is not significantly correlated with the chance of success - it should be noted that this included studies on lobbying and actions by smaller interest groups as well as protests.

It is also worth noting that the feelings that protesters have in the immediate aftermath of a protest can have an effect on how likely they are to protest again - people who feel pride after protesting is likely to give a protester the impression that their protest is likely to be successful, and the belief that the protest is likely to be successful is, in turn, likely to lead to protesters being willing to participate in protests in future (Tausch and Becker, 2012).

Political Allies

It is also worth noting that many scholars take the view that elite alliances are an important factor in protest success, although the evidence is fairly mixed. In their 2010 literature review, Amenta et al. (2010) note that influencing legislators can be beneficial for social movements, as they are able to introduce bills aligned with the objectives of social movements as well as help get them through the legislature. They further note that a challenger's action is more likely to produce results when legislators see benefit in aiding the group the challenger represents. Similarly, in their paper on the impact of the Civil Rights movement, Andrews and Gaby (2015) claim that the availability of elite allies is commonly understood as an important feature of the POS that is beneficial to protesters.

Giugni also stresses the importance of political allies, noting that protest movements are much more likely to be successful in the presence of both favourable public opinion and allies in political institutions. Giugni's (2007) paper indicates that in order to achieve success in attaining policy changes, protest movements *require* both public opinion on their side and political allies. He calls this the 'joint-effects model', using data from ecology, anti-nuclear, and peace movements in the United States. He found that there was a highly significant interaction effect between protest, public opinion, and political allies on spending for both environmental protection and reducing spending on nuclear energy, but no similar effect for the peace movement.

However, Olzak et al. (2013) cast some doubt on the claims that elite allies are highly beneficial for protesters and social movements. Looking at the effect of environmental protests on the United States Congress, they note the members of congress who are allied to protest movements are less likely to be successful in passing legislation in Congress, whereas Members of Congress who are not allies of protest movements are often closer to the median Member of Congress and more likely to be able to get legislation passed. However, the authors note that they think this is largely down to the fact Members of Congress who are more allied with movement organisations are more likely to hold extreme views, and therefore have to compromise more in often delicate political negotiation processes. They also suggest that "extreme" Members of Congress, who take partisan stands with social movement groups, can be penalised by having their other bill endorsements discounted by more mainstream Members of Congress. This implies a cost to potential political allies in openly siding with social movement organisations, where they may lose political capital.

Soule and King (2006) also examine how responsive legislators are at different stages of the legislative process, finding similar results. They examine the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and find that social movements were more likely to have an effect

on legislators at the beginning of the legislative process, whereas public opinion became more important when it came to ratifying legislation. When the consequences of legislators taking action are lower (such as right at the beginning of the legislative process), legislators seem more likely to support bills that aren't in alignment with public opinion. At the stage when a bill needs to be ratified, however, public opinion becomes more important, whereas the influence of the pro-ERA movement was completely diminished.

Other Factors

Uba carried out a meta-analysis on studies looking at the effectiveness of SMOs, and found that a protest was more likely to be successful in a democratic country than in an undemocratic country, but was not a necessity for a protest to be effective - writing that 'democracy facilitates the impact of mobilization but is not a precondition for it' (Uba 2009, p. 413).

Banaszak's 1996 book *Why Movements Succeed or Fail* looks at the differing routes towards women's suffrage in the United States and Switzerland (women in Switzerland gained the right to vote in federal elections in 1971, and the last Swiss canton to give women the vote on local issues did so in 1991) looking at competing factors: the resources of the movement, the political opportunity structure, and the values/beliefs of participants in the movement. Banaszak finds that the Swiss women's movement was less likely to recruit nationally - the Swiss belief in the importance of federalism meant that Swiss campaigners were not willing to recruit campaigners outside of their own canton. Similarly, campaigners in the United States targeted legislators directly in order to hasten the passing of federal women's suffrage, whereas the Swiss campaigners took the view that persuading the general public was more important than targeting politicians, meaning they largely abstained from action designed to impact legislators specifically.

It is worth noting that existing media narratives can impact the chance of protest success - specifically, past media coverage can impact future media coverage. Vliegthart et al. (2016) find that the strongest predictor of an issue receiving media coverage is whether it has received media coverage in the past, meaning that if a protest can garner media attention, it is more likely to receive media attention in future.

Limitations of existing research

- Generally, there is not much research on the topic of success factors for protests and social movements. Moreover, a significant proportion of this research has been conducted in the US or Belgium, and results in these countries might not

extrapolate well to other contexts. Therefore, it would be useful to have greater research from both European countries and other countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

- Most of the research for success factors has been conducted using controlled experimental conditions, which raises validity concerns around replicability for real-world movements. Greater focus on observational studies or natural experiments might add to the strength of evidence. Similarly, a large-scale statistical analysis, similar to Gamson (1990) or Chenoweth (2008), focused on more recent protest movements might form the basis of a more systematic and comparative analysis of different factors that affect the success of social movements.
- On the other hand, conducting research into success factors using natural experiment methods seems extremely challenging, as there are many different variables between different protest movements, such that it is impossible to control for everything. Therefore it seems empirically very difficult to causally isolate any small number of success factors.
- There is little research on issues outside of civil rights, racism, immigration and climate change is very scarce. These issues make up the vast majority (80%+) of the protest research we have examined to date.
- It's unclear how different levels of extremity of nonviolent protest affect outcomes. Whilst there is a good amount of research on the outcomes of nonviolent vs violent protest, there is little on the differing impacts of different levels of disruption. This seems pertinent due to recent protest movements, such as Extinction Rebellion or Insulate Britain, employing highly disruptive yet nonviolent tactics, which raises concerns around the loss of public opinion. It may also be the case that the relationship between how extreme a protest is and its chance of success is nonlinear - it could have an inverse U shape, for instance.
- It seems extremely likely that movements that are extremely visible (whether because they were highly successful or because they achieved significant media attention for other reasons) are more likely to be the subject of research. This means that there is relatively less research on small protests or protest movements that fizzled out quickly.
- Many of the studies use vignettes or controlled experimental designs that may not adequately represent real-life conditions - for instance, showing people neutral descriptions of the actions of protesters may not be similar to how the actions of protesters are actually depicted in the media.

Conclusion

- **Overall, there is broad consensus that nonviolent protests are *generally* more successful than violent protests.** Several studies find that violent protests can lead to a loss of support or negative consequences for a protest movement, such as increased voting for an opposition party. However, there is also some evidence of violent protests succeeding in achieving their aims.
- **There is some evidence to show that diversity, worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment (dWUNC) are factors that predict protest movement success.** Specifically, the size of the protest (numbers) and a cohesive message (unity) were found to be the two most important factors in affecting the beliefs and intended actions of policymakers. Worthiness, often related to the protestor's behaviour, mattered less for legislators, but was the most important factor for shifting the opinions of ordinary citizens.
- **External conditions, such as political structures, existing media narratives and public opinion, have significant impacts on the success of protest and social movements.** Whilst it's not exactly clear what the exact importance of movement agency vs external factors are, it's apparent that external conditions play a large role.

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