Stoker, Gerry. "Citizenship and Social Movement Protest." *Prospects for Citizenship*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 51–70. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849662444.ch-003>>.

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CHAPTER THREE

Citizenship and Social Movement Protest

In the face of a 'malaise' in political citizenship (Chapter One), we now turn to look at the second of two approaches to the revitalization of citizenship. In Chapter Two, we focused on the institutional approach, which involves public authorities purposively creating opportunities for citizen participation in the decision-making process. In this chapter, we focus on a more bottom-up oppositional approach as expressed by social movements (Dryzek 2000), particularly through their use of protest.

Social movements are networks of individuals and organizations that engage in collective action to address a shared concern (Diani 1992; Saunders 2007). In theory, therefore, social movements make perfect institutions for the practice of citizenship. As you are reading this, social movement organizations and activists across the world are discussing and engaging in collective action on a variety of issues from economics, through to the environment and women's rights. They are highlighting perceived inadequacies of policies, proposing alternatives and planning how to shift public opinion and/or bring influence to the corridors of power. Social movements have had a dual role in their contribution to citizenship; not only do they provide avenues for individuals to express citizenship, they also, particularly in historical perspective, have been important for extending citizenship rights for the excluded – black people, gained the vote through the civil rights movement, women, through the women's movement, and the working class through the labour movement. More recently, they have sought to extend citizenship for immigrants (see Chapters Four and Six), with active 'no borders' campaigns and camps being present and active in many countries. At the very least, social movements, of whatever shape or form, engage people with politics.

This engagement is most visible in the form of protest, which, if we take a superficial look at the data, appears to be on the rise. This apparent rise has coincided with increasing public acceptance of protest as a legitimate means of expressing discontent with the political system. Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001), for example, indicate that over half of the populace of western democracies would 'strongly support' a legal demonstration.

More recently, scholars have become enthusiastic about the prospects of an emerging 'global civil society' (Kumar *et al.* 2009), which they deem to express nascent forms of global citizenship through, for example, the global justice movement. This type of citizenship is, at best, 'nascent' not only because it is still developing, but also because it operates 'temporally ... in accordance with more idealistic and normatively rich conceptions of political community' (Falk 1993) rather than within a nation (see also Chapter Eight, in which we discuss the conceptual difficulties of global citizenship). A central objective of the global justice movement is to facilitate 'democracy from below', and, consequently, some scholars even label the movement in those terms (e.g. della Porta *et al.* 2006). 'Democracy from below' challenges national governments, which Falk (1999) claims have fallen hook, line and sinker for the neo-liberal agenda (see Chapter Seven). Social movements using militant actions, labour militancy and new transnational networks are, Falk suggests, important vehicles for challenging multinational corporations and international financial institutions. Since 1999 there has most certainly been a rise in the number of attendees at, and the frequency of, transnational protests and summits. Pianta (2002), for example, shows that 40 per cent of all recorded parallel summits – forums organized by social-movement organizations and activists, which are coincident with meetings of international governmental and financial institutions and seek to develop alternative and more socially acceptable practices – in the period 1988–2001 occurred *since* 2000.

Scholars have also suggested that social movements are vehicles for the realization of citizenship and democracy because, like public authorities making use of 'democratic innovations' (see Chapter Three), they explicitly seek to broaden public participation in decision making through use of methods such as web-based deliberation (Mosca and della Porta 2009), and non-hierarchical social forums (della Porta 2005a). In this sense, social movements, particularly at the grassroots level, can be conceived of as 'schools of democracy', providing people with routes into and experience of political engagement, sharpening their knowledge, encouraging them to develop their values and fostering their political skills (see also Smith 2005: 278–80, who makes similar arguments with reference to the social economy).

The alleged rise of protest, its increasing acceptability, the desirability of 'globalization from below', social movements' use of tools to widen public participation and their focus on issues that feature in academic debates about citizenship – such as migration and civil rights – might lead us to conclude that social movements have the potential to cure the malaise in political citizenship that we identified in Chapter One. However, despite

much aggrandisement of the role of social movements as reinvigorators of citizenship and democracy, active participation in social movements remains a minority activity (see Table 1.1 in Chapter One), and, as a closer inspection of social trends data reveals, may even be declining.

A comparison of numbers attending two events that took place on 4 July 2009 serves to aptly illustrate the extent to which social movement participation remains marginal in our society. On that day, the 'boy band', Take That performed at Wembley stadium to an audience of 80,000 of their fans, having sold 600,000 tickets for their tour in less than four-and-a-half hours (Orr 2009). That same day, a number of organizations including World Development Movement, Oxfam and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds organized a 'Mili-band' demonstration, which demanded that Ed Miliband, then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, refuse to give permission for a new coal-fired power station to be built at Kingsnorth, Kent. The call to action requested members of the public to join thousands of other protesters in a symbolic encirclement of the power station to form a 'Mili-band'. In comparison to the 80,000 attending the Wembley Take That concert, a paltry 1,000 protesters turned up to the demonstration, not enough to completely encircle the power station even with one-metre-long sashes between all attendees' hands.

This leaves us with several important questions to answer. Should we be excited about the prospects that social movements offer for citizenship and democracy when 80 times more people turn up to a pop concert than to a demonstration on what government advisors have dubbed 'the most important issue facing humanity'? Is social movement protest really rising? How does Britain compare to other countries – are the political systems in other countries more conducive to protest? Why do some protests attract

Table 3.1 Engagement in protest politics since 1970s (% of public)

	Mid-1970s	Early 1980s	1990	Mid-1990s
Signed petition	32	46	54	60
Demonstrated	9	14	18	17
Consumer boycott	5	8	11	15
Unofficial strike	2	3	4	4
Occupied buildings	1	2	2	2

Source: World Values survey, Norris (2002).¹

huge numbers of protesters, whilst others attract so few? And what is it about protesters that makes them more inclined to protest – how do they differ from the general public in their biographies and views?

We will begin this chapter by exposing some of the problems with the widely held assumption that there has been a long-term rise in social-movement activity in western democracies since they first came to public prominence in the 1960s. It is important to discuss the alleged rise because it partially explains why social movements have been so valorized as harbingers of citizenship and democracy, even if inaccurately. After this exposé, we shall attempt to explain participation in social movements through the lens of social movement theory by focusing on structure, grievances and agency. We consider *structure* by using political process theories to explain differential participation in social movement activity in different countries. Decades of work on political processes has demonstrated that the political situation in a given country may provide barriers or opportunities to the expression of citizenship through social movements.

We then turn to discuss *agency*, focusing on the characteristics or behaviour of individuals, including those relating to resource mobilization theory and the new middle class thesis. We show that variables such as ‘education’ interact in interesting ways with political process theories. But, as we shall demonstrate, even in a stable polity with high levels of education, protest activity does not remain constant over time and from issue to issue. This can be the result of fluctuations in the *grievance* base, as issues dip in and out of salience. Grievances will be discussed in relation to the theory of protest cycles/waves. Towards the end of the chapter, we discuss future research avenues that need to be explored.

A Rise in Social Movement Activity: A Resurgence of Citizenship and Democracy?

Many social movement scholars argue that it is premature and misleading to toll the death knell for public engagement in politics. Pippa Norris (2001: 1), for example, ‘suggests reasons to question and revise popular assumptions of a contagious plague of citizen apathy ... The obituary for civic activism is premature’. Norris and other scholars argue that increasing engagement in social movements is one reason to postpone the ordering of the coffin for citizenship. Social movement activity, they argue, is bucking the trend of increasing disengagement in politics. The alleged dramatic increase in political participation beyond the vote in western democracies (Topf 1998: 52) is, according to Norris (2001: 2), the result of the emergence of

'multiple newer channels of civic engagement, mobilization and expression', which 'are rapidly emerging in post-industrial societies to supplement traditional modes'. According to Norris, one of these supplementary modes of engagement is new social movements. Similarly, della Porta and Caiani (2007) note increased Europeanization from below in European global justice movements, in which social movements increasingly challenge European institutions, campaigning, organizing and mobilizing in a pan-European style; and Rootes (2006) makes claims for the 'resurgence of protest and revitalisation of democracy' in Britain. Each of these scholars uses social survey or protest event analysis evidence to support the contention that there has been a dramatic rise in protest politics since the 1970s.

In at least one sense, the claim that protest is increasing seems odd. Many look back favourably on the 1970s as the heyday of social movements, with the advent of hippy culture, 'one love', student uprisings, women standing up for their rights and the revolutionary ideas of the new Left movements. Can it really be that many forms of protest are now almost or at least twice as popular as they were then? One take on the data seems to suggest so (Table 3.1). When considering public engagement in protest politics since the 1970s, most forms of protest now *seem* at least twice as common as they did in the 1970s.

There are two important points to make with regard to Table 3.1: one is about the extent of participation in different types of protest, and the other expresses a word of caution in inferring trend data from this type of survey research. First, it is important to point out that forms of protest that require little commitment have been, and remain, routinely more common than those that require greater commitment. Signing a petition, for example, may take a matter of seconds, can even be completed on line with the click of a mouse, and requires little personal investment. The least popular forms of protest are, and always have been, 'high risk activism' (McAdam 1989) such as engagement in unofficial strikes and occupying buildings, in which there is much higher personal investment and sometimes a risk of economic loss, injury and/or arrest. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the proportion of those signing petitions has remained around thirty times greater than those engaging in the occupation of buildings. This is important because it demonstrates that claims about 'a rising tide of unconventional participation' seem exaggerated because moderate forms of protest remain considerably more popular than more confrontational ones.

Second, we should bear in mind that the data in Table 3.1 were derived from a question which asked members of the public whether they had actually 'ever done' any of the selected forms of protest. So it may be that

that 32 per cent of those who had ever signed a petition in the mid-1970s are added to cumulatively over time, inevitably leading to higher figures by the mid-1990s. Assuming that the protesters of the 1970s are still alive and well today, they would not have needed to have participated in any forms of protest since then for their contribution to still count in the mid-1990s. Therefore we should, instead, focus on the percentage rise. According to the data, whilst 9 per cent had demonstrated in the 1970s, only an extra 5 per cent had by the 1980s, another 4 per cent to 1990 and just another 1 per cent to 1999.² So, although the proportion of the public that claim to have 'done' acts of protest has increased, there is not a corresponding rise in protest per year.

Similar scepticism should be used when interpreting the data collated by Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001). They, too, show an increase in the proportion of the public engaging in demonstrations since the 1970s. According to the data they present, the British case shows a large increase in the proportion attending lawful demonstrations between 1974 and 1990, rising from 6 to 14 per cent by 1990. However, the European Social Survey data we presented in Table 1.1 (in Chapter One) show that when asked whether they had participated in a legal demonstration *in the last twelve months*, the proportion responding in the affirmative was, in 2002, as low as 4.4 per cent. And in the 2005 European Social Survey, the equivalent figure is only 2 per cent.

Unfortunately, there is little longitudinal data on the frequency of protest over time that allows us to correct for this. One exception comes from Rucht's (1998) study of media reporting of protest in Germany. Although he noted an overall rise in the reporting of protest, with some peaks and troughs, the data should be treated with caution because they perhaps reflect the frequency of mediagenic protest events – those which journalists select to sell newspapers – rather than protest events at large, for not all protests gain media coverage.

The Political Environment

In Britain, then, it seems that only around 2 per cent of the population participated in a legal demonstration in 2005. This is a very small minority, and is a smaller proportion than in many other west European countries. Looking back to the 2002 European Social Survey data we presented in Chapter One (see Table 1.1), we can see that in Britain the proportion of the public who have engaged in a lawful public demonstration in 2002 is well below the European average (9.3 per cent). In contrast, in Spain and France nearly one-fifth claimed to have participated in a lawful public

demonstration in that same twelve month period. Could this be because the structural conditions for the expression of citizenship via protest are more favourable in Spain and France than they are in Britain?

The standard social movement theorist's response would call on political process/opportunity theory to explain these differences. This theoretical approach assumes that the political environment affects the emergence, strategy, form and success of social movements. Although it has precedents in the collective behaviour approach, and Lipsky (1970) suggested that fluctuations in political systems should be considered when explaining trends in protest, it was a concept by most accounts coined and christened by Eisinger (1973 – in McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1988; Burnstein *et al.* 1995) who defined it as 'the openings, weak spots, barriers and resources of the political system itself'.

However, the literature identifies two main problems with political process theory. The first centres around debates about what is and what is not 'structural' (see Rootes 1997); and the second is concerned with the way in which different scholars seem to have adopted an idiosyncratic approach to the application of the theory, sometimes seemingly adding new variables to make their findings fit the particular movement or polity they are studying (Saunders 2009).

In this chapter, we use political process theory rather than political opportunity *structure* theory to escape criticisms levelled by Rootes regarding the structural dimension. Political process theory considers both structural and contingent aspects of the polity that might impact social movement emergence, form and strategy. Using this approach it is possible, although not entirely unproblematic, to conceptualize idealized 'open' and 'closed' polities. Even though they are usually treated as if they can be neatly slotted into one category or the other, real life polities always fall some place between these two extreme types. Nonetheless, idealized 'open' states have a decentralized structure, egalitarian ideology and proportional representation. This allows informal and formal access, resulting in the little build-up of pressure, and consequently moderate social movements. In this kind of polity it is assumed that social movement activists regard negotiations as worthwhile because they believe they will be likely to result in policy gains. As Kitschelt (1986: 302) sums up, those movements in a liberal egalitarian political culture are expected to be much less antagonistic, largely because they have less need to antagonize (Saunders 2009).

By contrast, closed states – which at the extreme are centralized, corrupt and totalitarian – deny access, and activists within them regard conventional

forms of political participation as time-wasting activities. According to this approach, when protest does occur in a closed polity, it tends to sway towards 'more direct forms of struggle such as land occupation, factory seizures, store-house raids and insurrections' (Bordreau 1996: 181) or go underground and be violent and sect-like. A closed polity is most likely to engage in repression of social movement efforts, which can act as a double-edged sword for social movements. For obvious reasons, it discourages social movement activity by increasing the costs for individual activists, yet it could also serve as a stimulant to protest by reinforcing the identity, solidarity and sense of injustice that movements possess (Kriesi 1995: 177–8; della Porta and Fillieule 2004: 233).

It is safe to say that the polities in western democracies are closer to the 'open' pole than the 'closed' one. However, in many regards, Britain is one of the most 'closed' western democracies. The British polity is the single polity most consistently referred to in the literature as an archetypal 'majoritarian' state (Lipjhart 1999). It is unitary, has concentrated executive power, a bipartisan system, a first-past-the-post voting system and parliamentary sovereignty. What this means is that we would expect more radical protest to emerge in Britain as compared to (for example) France and Spain. The theory suggests that the first-past-the-post system in Britain reduces the opportunities for social movements to use more conventional means to influence policy, primarily because of the formidable obstacles faced by small parties that would make natural allies for social movements. Consequently, the first-past-the-post system denies social movement organizations access to or alliances with left-wing parliamentary opposition to centre parties. As such, it would be expected that social movement organizations would be forced into more radical activities. In contrast, in France and Spain, the electoral system allows social movement participation in party politics by being more favourable to small parties, and left-wing support gives movements access to parliamentary processes and additional mobilization power. This is used, quite rightly, to explain why there is more protest participation *per se* in France and Germany. But the theory would lead us to believe that radical protest in France and Spain should be relatively unusual because conventional means of participation are available. And yet protest – whether radical or more conventional – is much less frequent in Britain than in France and Spain. The electoral system alone cannot provide an answer to this conundrum.

An alternative explanation is offered by Rootes (1992), for whom 'British exceptionalism' is explained by the combination of the restrictive electoral

system and the 'open' (tolerant might be a more appropriate word) administrative system, which encourages integration rather than opposition. There are two problems with Rootes's thesis. One is that the administrative and electoral systems have changed little, if at all, whilst protest – both radical and conventional – has gone through peaks and troughs. The same year Rootes published his paper on British exceptionalism, radical environmental protest emerged, later to blossom, in the form of the anti-roads movement (Wall 1997; Doherty 2000). The second problem is that we are left with the difficulty of trying to unpack the relative impact of the 'open' administrative system and the 'closed' electoral system. What was an initially simple distinction between 'open' and 'closed' systems is (perhaps necessarily) now much more complicated, making it more difficult to understand the explanatory power of individual variables on the activities of social movements.

Yet another variable may need to be introduced in the search for an explanation of why protest has tended to be moderate in Britain, namely the degree of state 'tolerance to protest'. It is certainly true that Britain has generally been much more tolerant to protest than France and Spain, both of which have longer histories of violent repression and the exclusion of certain groups. Although we might expect repression to act as a deterrent for protest, social movement scholars tend to take an alternative view: that historical repression has led to a culture in which pressure is not effectively absorbed, and has instead been allowed to build up and then be released in violent and radical moments of insurgency. Unfortunately we are again left with the problem of trying to separate out the effect of different variables – some suggest that France and Spain are both 'open' (electoral system, etc.) and others suggest they are 'closed' (tolerance to protest).

What we can glean, speculatively at the most, from this account so far is that people may be more likely to engage in protest if they meet closed doors to the administrative system and open doors to the electoral system, and have opportunities for alliances in the form of minority parties in government coalitions. The first two are hardly conditions we would want to promote to enable flourishing citizenship! But our analysis is complicated even further if we turn our attention to an archetypal 'open' state such as Sweden. Here, a more universally open system embodying proportional representation, a federal system that is tolerant to protest and is welcoming of public participation, and strong 'output structures' – a degree of competence and capacity that allows it to act on its policy promises (Kitschelt 1986: 64) – should result in *less* protest by social movements.

But the reverse is true: Swedes have a higher tendency to participate in demonstrations than the British (6.4 per cent). They also more readily sign petitions, boycott unethical products and engage in ethical consumerism. Yet they are equally as unlikely to participate in illegal protest activities as the British (neck and neck at 0.8 per cent in 2002).

Political process theory, then, only takes us so far in explaining differences in the frequency and composition of protest between countries. One major problem with the theory is that certain conditions may either encourage or discourage protest and no scholars have conclusively identified the combination of factors that encourage the pendulum to swing in a particular direction. Why, for example, does the more open and facilitative democracy of Sweden have more protest than the less open polity of Britain? How do political process variables interact with characteristics of the population, individual activists and the issues people protest about? Which is most important, and why?

A further pendulum problem can be exposed by considering the levels of satisfaction that activists have with democracy in different countries. We might, quite reasonably, expect greater participation in protest in countries that have high levels of dissatisfaction with democracy, where we would expect activists to make use of protest as an alternative to conventional channels for expressing discontent. Activists certainly have higher levels of dissatisfaction with democracy than the populace at large; according to a survey of participants in the International Day of Action on Climate Change demonstrations, London, November 2007 (Saunders and Rootes 2009 Rootes and Saunders 2008), only 26 per cent of participants were satisfied with democracy in Britain, compared to 60 per cent of the British at large (Eurobarometer 2003). Yet political process theory cannot explain why it is that the Swedes, 75 per cent of whom are satisfied with democracy in their own country (Eurobarometer 2003), more readily protest than the Brits. It seems that the explanation for greater civic involvement through protest movements in Sweden compared to Britain lies out of the bounds of political process theory.

Individuals: Middle Class and Rational?

Structural factors do not magically create social movements on their own. Agency is crucial. Therefore, we now move on to consider the role that individuals play in the realization of active citizenship through protest movements. We focus first on the resources that individuals can bring to protest, before briefly considering their motivations and characteristics.

Once social movement theory had progressed beyond 'the myth of the maddening crowd' (McPhail 1991), which wrongly assumed that all protests were equally irrational and spontaneous (see e.g. Gurr 1970), it began to focus on more organized aspects of protest movements. Protest, it was realized, can happen for good reasons: it is often a response to a legitimate strain (Smelser 1962). But given that grievances are ubiquitous, why was it that only certain protest movements emerged and successfully mobilized? Building from the assumption that 'there is always enough discontent in any society to supply grassroots support' for a movement, McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1215), in their embryonic conception of resource mobilization theory, suggested that what really transformed a movement from a pool of disorganized discontent into an organized movement was it having 'at its disposal the power and resources of some established elite group'. Such resources, they argued, were important for establishing the organizational backbone of a movement, which is necessary for effective mobilization.

Without doubt, income is important for social movements, even for grassroots networks like the Camp for Climate Action which, although it has no staff, requires money for running its website, printing its leaflets and setting up the Camps. At the risk of stating the obvious, for a huge protest event to materialize, the public need to know about it. Resources – whether derived from rich sponsors, from collecting membership dues or hosting fundraising events – are crucial for informing them.

However, as Jenkins (1985) showed in his study of the farm workers movement and McAdam (1982) noted in his account of 'the rise of black insurgency', successful movements can and do emerge without a kick-start from elites. Nonetheless, for all movements, whether they have received elite support or not, one of the most important resources is a large pool of adherents that will support movement goals and attend protest events. But what sorts of people are within this large pool, and why would they engage in protest? Social movement theorists usually turn to the new middle class thesis to help answer this question.

In the 1980s, social movement theorists sought to explain the apparent rise in social movement activity in the light of the systemic shift from industrial to progressively post-industrial societies. What had emerged, they noted, was a 'new middle class' that worked in newly founded welfare industries and was instrumental in facilitating (see above) and participating in social movement protest. Various reasons have been posited for the enthusiastic participation in protest politics of the new middle class. Cotgrove (1982) claimed that the people in this stratum were inclined to

protest because they had become disconnected from their role in primary manufacture and, as such, had become disenfranchised from the economic power of the state. Because they could no longer influence the state through their labour, he argues, they turned to protest instead. This explanation is not generally regarded as convincing, partly because it fails to explain why the 'new' social movements in which the new middle class participated expressed universalistic rather than class-based interests (della Porta and Diani 2001: 47–8). A more convincing explanation suggests that the new middle class are most inclined to protest because of their relatively high levels of education and professional resources.

Welfare jobs – those in the public sector associated with welfare state apparatus – it is alleged, attract those inclined to be sympathetic to collective action problems, and provide people with the time and resources to develop critical faculties, offering what Doherty (2002: 61) calls 'emancipatory occupational cultures'. Whilst this seems convincing, it appears that the evidence in support of the new middle thesis is weak. Rohrschneider (1990), in his exploration of the basis for environmental concern, for example, found that there is only a slight relationship between new middle class membership and support for environmental groups. And Bagguley (1992: 30) shows, using cross-national comparisons of social movements, that those countries with strong service classes do not necessarily have the strongest social movements. McAdam (1989), more to the point, notes that it is the 'biographically available' or what Offe (1987) calls 'de-commodified groups' – such as housewives, students, the self-employed and unemployed – who are most likely to contribute more to social movements, not on the basis of class but simply because they have more time.

Although Offe (1987) has been criticized for defining the middle class in terms of education levels rather than job type, he has still made a worthwhile contribution to the literature. One very important thing we can learn from Offe is that high levels of education, the bedrock for the development of egalitarian and/or anti-authoritarian values espoused by social movements, is crucial for motivating participation in protest. Time after time, empirical research on social movement participants has found that protesters are highly educated (see e.g. Opp 1989: Chapter 7). For example, as many as one-third of protesters at the International Day of Action on Climate Change, London, November 2007 (Saunders 2008) claimed to have a *higher* degree (a Masters or PhD).³ Research by Jenkins and Wallace (1996) and Cleveland (2007) further stresses the importance of education for social movements. The former find that 'educated, salaried professionals' have the greatest

protest potential, and the latter reports that those leading movements tend to be 'intellectual radicals'.

Can these findings enlighten us on the anomalous case of Sweden? To refresh, we noted above that political process theory would predict little protest in Sweden because of its accommodating polity. Is it the case that the Swedes are more highly educated, and if so, does this facilitate greater citizenship through protest? Milner (2003: 199–204) presents evidence from the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey to demonstrate that Swedes, along with other Scandinavians, have the highest levels of functional literacy in the twenty advanced industrialized democracies for which there is comparable data, even amongst those who have not finished high school. He attributes the high levels of literacy to the prevalence of study circles and adult education societies, which are commonplace in Sweden. It is also the case that Sweden subsidizes daily newspapers, resulting in the distribution of one newspaper for every two persons per day, compared to one in every five in North America. Although part of the purpose of Milner's chapter is to show the strong inverse relationship between literacy inequality against municipal voter turnout (Milner 2003: 230), it seems the same could be said to be true for participation in less conventional forms of politics, like protest. Where the populace of a country is, on average, highly educated across all sectors of the population political participation, rates of protest it seems, are higher. However, this is certainly not conclusive evidence. As Grasso (2006) illustrates with reference to European Social Survey data (2003), education does not necessarily have the same effect on political participation across different countries. Whilst high levels of education increase levels of participation amongst Italian youth, this does not appear to be the case for their British counterparts.

If the new middle class thesis only goes some way towards explaining participation in protest *per se*, it does a better job of explaining participation in Internet-based forms of activism. Survey research provides conclusive evidence that Internet users are most likely to be young, male, affluent and well-educated (Norris 2001). Whilst social movement organizations have actively embraced the Internet as a means of widening and deepening participation, it seems that it has not helped them to branch out beyond 'the usual suspects'. Results from a survey of the websites of 261 global justice movement organizations suggest that social movement organizations appear to do little to help resolve the digital divide, finding that fewer than 10 per cent provide computer courses or help desks, only 5 per cent offer free email to their users and just 8 per cent allow for free hosting of

web material (Mosca and della Porta 2009). Despite the ongoing digital divide, the Internet has been important for social movement mobilization. Activists and scholars alike have even gone so far as to suggest that the international summit-hopping protest events that dominated global justice activism in the 1990s would not have materialized in its absence (Pickerill 2003). Forms of online mobilization, such as e-postcards and online petitions have become commonplace, but more innovative Internet protest repertoires like mail-bombings – coordinated mass email sendings – and netstrikes – logging on to an adversary's server in order to cause it to become overloaded and 'crash' – remain rare outside of Italy (Mosca and della Porta 2009; Reieter *et al.* 2007).

Waves of Protest

Even in a country which has high levels of education and a great deal of protest, the frequency of protests *and* the number of attendees varies from issue to issue, and even on the same issue over time. Neither are protests equally spread across geographical space. In social movement theory, these differences are best explained by the concept of a 'protest wave', which, following Tarrow (1994: 153), is 'a phase of heightened conflict and contention across the social system'.⁴

The peace movement is perhaps the best example of a movement with very obvious waves, which have tended to break when the particular sub-issue at stake has either been won or lost. The first wave, 'ban the bomb', lost its impetus with the advent of the 1963 Test Ban Treaty, which insisted that nuclear weapons testing be carried out underground. The second wave, concerned with the 'arms race' in the 1970s and 1980s, fizzled out as the Cold War came to an end. The third wave, which resisted the war in Vietnam, ended after factious disputes between radicals and moderates and their inability to prevent the war (Lortie 2000). The fourth major wave was against the Iraq War, with millions of protesters mobilizing across the world. This fourth wave shrank dramatically once the war had commenced. Whilst the 13 February 2003 demonstrations in London, which occurred prior to the commencement of war, attracted around 2 million participants, the 'troops out' demonstrations that followed struggled to attract four-digit numbers, let alone millions, of protesters (Walgrave *et al.* 2007).

In the environmental movement, there have not been such obvious waves, but there have been surges of protest on particular issues, such as anti-roads in the 1990s (Rootes 2006). In the case of the environmental movement, anti-roads protest largely dissipated in 1997 with the Labour Government's

unrealized pledge for integrated transport. The subsequent campaigns against genetically modified crops were not ever able to garner such high levels of public support.

There are other reasons given for the presence or absence of waves, some of which interact with *structure* and others which are related to matters of *agency*. Koopmans's (2004) three Es – erraticism, evolution and ecology⁵ – do a good job at summarizing the main reasons posited by social movement theorists. Similar to Cobb and Elder's (1984) notion of a 'trigger event', erraticism refers to 'tipping points' caused by an unstable polity, or an ill-founded or, put more appropriately, unpopular political decision. Examples include the Thatcher Government's 'Roads to Prosperity' White Paper, which proposed the building of hundreds of road schemes throughout Britain and consequently sparked off widespread anti-roads protest, and Tony Blair's decision to engage British troops in the war in Iraq. Evolution depends on agency and refers to the coming together of new ideas and innovative repertoires that evolve from previous waves of protest (Hetherington 1998: 3). The Camp for Climate Action, for example, is based on repertoires learned from the peace movement (camps) and the anti-roads movement (direct action against businesses). For new waves of protest to emerge, key activists are important in bridging the gaps between peaks in protest. Finally, ecological explanations, which stress the importance of the political and social environment, are deemed important. According to Koopmans, waves of protest can emerge as a result of the 'complex web of social relations linking particular contenders to supporters, opponents, competitors, and neutral third parties, and stretching across societal sectors, social groups, and often across national boundaries' (Koopmans 2004: 40).

It is true, though, that protest issues themselves can dip in and out of salience even if the 'three Es' are favourable for the emergence of protest. The degree of salience of issues can depend on competition with other issues, and the extent of media attention and manner of portrayal. With regard to competition with other issues, environmental issues, for example, have traditionally received less public support in periods of economic recession (Worcester 1997: 163–4). This makes a convincing explanation for the dramatic fall in the memberships of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace in the early 1990s (Rootes and Miller 2000). With regard to the media, articles are selected that are most likely to sell papers, giving the public a somewhat warped impression of contemporary issues. Note, for example, how the MPs' expenses scandal in June 2009 quickly supplanted the early coverage of the swine flu 'pandemic'. Even though the latter continued to be an important

contemporary issue, it temporarily lost its salience when press coverage subsided. Similar things happen with the reporting of social movement issues (see Downs 1972 on 'the ecology issue'), and this is partly responsible for waxes and wanes in public support for issues and the correspondingly fluctuating levels of mobilization.

Even if social movement issues are salient, this does not necessarily mean that participants will engage in social movement activity and a 'wave' will emerge. There is a clear gap between values and behaviours that has been of longstanding interest to social movement scholars. The most pervasive argument in social movement theory argues that the value-behaviour gap can be explained by the tendency that the public have to free-ride on the good intentions and practices of others. In his classic *Logic of Collective Action*, Olson (1965)⁶ suggested that collective action in the pursuit of collective goods was irrational, arguing that if collective actors were successful in achieving a collective good, individuals would stand to gain regardless of their participation. However, unsuccessful collective actors would be left with a deficit in their cost-benefit balance, having invested in a cause to no avail whilst still footing the bill for the cost of action. A rational actor would, in Olson's terms, *free-ride*, reaping benefits without any personal commitment or other outlay to the cause.

Olson suggested that people could be persuaded to participate in collective action through the use of 'selective incentives' – benefits that members receive in exchange for their participation, and which swing the cost-benefit ratio in their favour. Of course there are other incentives for participation in protest movements such as fostering solidarity, developing consciousness of shared interests (Fireman and Gamson 1979) and a broad range of other social, symbolic and normative incentives (e.g. Cress and Snow 1986; Opp 1989). Regardless of whether people need to be coerced to engage in protest, is it true that there is a tendency for people to free-ride?

Jordan and Maloney (2007) investigated to see whether those who were interested in environmental issues and were aware of relevant campaigning groups that they considered to be effective really were free-riders. They found that free-riding was not an important reason for non-membership but that what mattered instead were the presence of resources – participants were more likely to be middle-class professionals and highly educated – and the absence of family obligations that made it difficult for people to make commitments. Given that a variety of types of incentives are responsible for engagement in social movements, it seems that we are back to square one: what really seem to matter for participation are education and

biographic availability, even though not everyone who is highly educated and biographically available participates.

In the shorter term, there are other factors that are important for broadening mobilization in particular protest events: coalitional support, innovative use of the Internet, broad goals – the lower the common denominator the better – and clement weather. Saunders (2008) shows how these factors go some way to account for differential rates of participation in the annual London climate marches in 2006 compared to 2007. On a gloriously sunny day in 2006, 30,000 people attended the march and rally that was organized by the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. The coalition made innovative use of the Internet to inform the public of the event. In 2007, only around 3,000 turned up in the pouring rain to the march organized by the Campaign Against Climate Change. Over the course of the year, the political conditions and the salience of climate change as an issue had remained constant.

So far, this chapter has focused on the importance of protest as an indicator of 'bottom-up citizenship'. However, we should not forget that the lack of protest during lulls does not, by itself, imply that movements have disappeared, but simply that they are experiencing a temporary state of latency. During periods of latency, movement activists work behind the scenes on research, they build networks and sometimes even practise new ways of living that relate to their movement's aims and objectives (Melucci 1989: 70–1). The latter is sometimes called 'DIY culture' and has been hailed as an important feature of social movements (see Purdue *et al.* 1997; McKay 1999). However, it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss these here.

Future Research Agendas

If this chapter has taught us nothing else, we should now at least be aware that social movements and protest events do not always behave in the way in which theories would lead us to expect, even when the theory has been derived on the basis of comprehensive historical analysis. This is part of the beauty of the study of social movements. Protest continues to take us by surprise, whether that be because of the development of new, innovative protest repertoires, or because of the surprise visit of a radical burst of protest in a polity in which we would expect more staid action. This is a good thing for social movement scholars: it means that there is still much work for us to do before we can say that social movements are properly understood.

But before we can even *begin* to understand social movements, we need to properly report trends in social movement participation over time.

Research work that reports a rise in protest since the 1970s should be revisited to ensure that cumulative data are not misrepresented as trend data. The European Social Survey, which collects data on participation in protest activity 'in the past 12 months', is much more useful as trend data than surveys which ask 'Have you ever participated ...?' Only once we have settled on the trend data can we try to effectively account for the degree of protest. What we find in this chapter suggests that there are good reasons to challenge the assumption that social movements are a flourishing aspect of citizenship.

At best, this chapter has demonstrated that social movement protest occurs due to a confluence of structural and contingent aspects of the polity in which protest takes place, the coming together of those with high levels of education and the creation and development of salient issues that attract public support. Yet it is not fully understood how structural, issue and agency-based explanations interact, and which variables are most important.

Even at the structural level, more research needs to be carried out to establish the conditions under which harsh policing might stimulate or subdue protest, and under which satisfaction with democracy stifles or promotes protest. We might expect satisfaction with democracy to stifle protest because it implies contentment with conventional strategies of engagement with politics, but protesters need to be satisfied with democracy in order to maintain a belief that a polity is capable of making the societal changes it is proposing, lest protests become futile. Beyond the structural level, cultural variables need to be added to an explanatory model: education, as discussed in this chapter, is but one aspect of cultural differences between countries. Norms of behaviour, socialization, the presence or absence of venues for meeting, greeting and sharing views are also important for stimulating protest. But what is *most* important here is the way in which the different types of variables interact, and this needs comprehensive exploration through cross-national surveys over time and across different countries. In this respect, we can look forward to the results of the Caught in the Act of Protest project, which is systematically surveying three to four protest events per year, for four years in each of six European countries. However, this project is still biased towards western democracies and there is a clear need for more research in post-Communist states (Bernhagen and Marsh 2006) and beyond the EU and United States more generally.

Although the state is important, we should not forget the new challenges and forms of protest that are emerging in response to calls for 'global

justice'. The summit protests of the 1990s generated a raft of academic studies welcoming a supposedly new and significant form of global civil society. However, research *actively seeking* evidence of the Europeanization and globalization of social movement protest, beyond occasional summits, repeatedly fails to find it. It is clear that social movements within particular nations continue to act domestically – targeting government and businesses within their own nation (Rootes 2003; della Porta 2005b). Part of this is due to the non-democratic nature of many international institutions, which are not about to become transparent, participatory and open to influence from social movements overnight (see Chapter Eight).

Preliminary research findings from Rootes and Saunders (2008) on the global justice movement in Britain also weaken our hopes for the realization of a global civil society. They find that only around half of the participants in a range of social movement protests claim to identify with 'the global justice movement'. They also find that activists tend to have a set of quite limited preferred issues that do not always resonate with the theme of democracy from below – the alleged master frame of the movement. Indeed, for Make Poverty History participants, democracy was one of the least popular issues given in response to an open question which asked 'What should be the priority of the global justice movement?' Furthermore, Rootes and Saunders found that individual protest participants tend to engage in collective action events only on a few limited themes, and that they stick to a small range of preferred protest repertoires. They used network diagrams to quite convincingly demonstrate that those activists who engage in social forums tend to do just that – they do not engage in active citizenship beyond these 'talking shops'. On the face of this evidence, the 'movement of movements' seems to be more of a myth than an empirical reality. If we add to this the conceptual difficulties of achieving a global citizenry that we identify in Chapter Eight, this suggests that the realization of scholars' hopes for a global civil society created through social movements remains distant, if not impossible. Further cross-national research needs to be carried out to systematically reassess the extent to which social movements foster elements of global citizenship in practice, and there is interesting scope for synthesizing empirical and normative analysis on this theme.

There are also a number of research questions that can be asked about the challenges that social movement organizations face in attempting to attract people to protest. How can they broaden citizenship by attracting the less well educated to their ranks? How can they reach out to ethnic minorities? And how can they keep their issues salient in the face of competition with

other issues? Furthermore, once they have won a particular campaign, how might they sustain participation? It is also time for a new theory to replace the new middle class thesis. Social movement activists themselves use the term 'precariat' to refer to a new class of people – those who may be highly skilled but are trapped in poorly paid jobs on temporary contracts. Is this new class now an instrumental force in social movements? And if so, how and why?

When it comes to public engagement, social movements play a dual role: they raise public awareness, and they tap public support. But they do much better at the former than the latter, resulting in a value–behaviour gap. Scholars have yet to pay much attention to understanding how this might be overcome.

The constant evolution of social movements and the confluence of factors affecting protest mean that there will never be a shortage of research agendas in this field. But, more specifically in relation to this book and its focus on citizenship, there is a whole new world out there for movement scholars to explore; for social movements interact not only with the polity, and with allies and adversaries as social movement theorists identify, they also interact with other aspects of citizenship. For example, if democratic innovations were successfully implemented at the institutional level, and citizen concerns were better integrated into policy (see Chapter Two), there would surely be less need for social movements. As yet, social movement scholars have not explicitly focused on how these developments might interact with, or even cancel out social movement protest, and whether this is even desirable. In this vein, research on participatory budgeting in practice finds that top-down initiatives tend to be treated sceptically by activists who feel they have become 'tools of the administration', pushing them into a focus on local rather than broader issues, and encouraging them to become 'overly pragmatic' and less contentious (see Baiocchi 2003 in Smith 2009: 42–4). It may be the case that 'top down' democratic innovations stimulate public participation beyond the usual young, white, well-educated suspects found in social movements, but that the usual suspects – particularly the committed radicals, who are 'potentially powerful actors' (Abers 2000: 11 in Smith 2009: 42–4) – refuse to participate for fear of co-option.