

Understanding Persistence in the Resistance

Authors: Dana R. Fisher¹ and Lorien Jasny²

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¹ Department of Sociology, University of Maryland, 2112 Parren Mitchell Art-Sociology Building
3834 Campus Drive, College Park, MD 20742, drfisher@umd.edu; ORCID: 0000-0002-4273-4294

² Department of Politics, University of Exeter, Exeter, Devon UK EX4 4SB,
L.Jasny@Exeter.ac.uk; ORCID: 0000-0002-9014-4838

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Abstract

Since Donald Trump's Inauguration, large-scale protest events have taken place around the US, with many of the biggest events being held in Washington, DC. The streets of the nation's capital have been flooded with people marching about a diversity of progressive issues including women's rights, climate change, and gun violence. Although research has found that these events have mobilized a high proportion of repeat participants who come out again-and-again, limited research has focused on understanding differential participation in protest, especially during one cycle of contention. This paper, accordingly, explores the patterns among the protest participants to understand differential participation and what we refer to as "persistence in the Resistance." In it, we analyze a unique dataset collected from surveys conducted with a field approximation of a random sample of protest participants at the largest protest events in Washington, DC since the Resistance began at the 2017 Women's March. Our findings provide insights into repeat protesters during this cycle of contention. The paper concludes by discussing how our findings contribute to the research on differential participation.

Keywords: protest, social movements, mobilization, persistence, the Resistance,

Introduction

Since Donald Trump’s Inauguration, large-scale protest events have taken place around the US, with many of the biggest events being held in Washington, DC. People have marched for a diversity of progressive issues including women’s rights, climate change, gun violence, and the Administration’s immigration policies (For an overview, see Heaney 2018).³ At this point, the movement to challenge the Trump Administration and its policies—what has come to be known as *the Resistance*—has become a cycle of contention that is “comparable to the one that Americans experienced during the period of Civil Rights and the movement against Vietnam War [sic]” (Tarrow and Meyer 2018:3). Although each march was focused on a different issue,⁴ a number of studies have shown that they are part of the Resistance countermovement to the Trump Administration that has integrated the work of a number of progressive movements in the United States (for a full discussion, see Tarrow and Meyer 2018; Fisher 2019; see also Meyer and Tarrow 2018; Fisher, Jasny, and Dow 2018).

Although research has looked at differential participation in protest (see particularly Barkan, Cohn, and Whitaker 1995; Downton and Wehr 1997; Saunders et al. 2012; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009), scholars have yet to study the patterns among those who turn out repeatedly during one cycle of contention comparing them to less engaged participants (for an overview of cycles of contention, see Tarrow 1998:9). This paper, accordingly, explores the patterns among the protest participants who have come out to multiple protest events to understand what explains persistence in the Resistance. It is broken down into three sections. First, we review the literature on mobilization that aims to understand differential recruitment and participation, paying particular attention to those scholars who have disaggregated protest participants based

³ This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

⁴ Women’s Marches were held in 2017 and 2018.

on their experiences. Second, we explain how the unique dataset of protest participants that we utilize in this paper was collected and the methods that we used to analyze it. Third, we present our findings on how to understand persistence in the Resistance. We conclude by highlighting the ways that our findings contribute to a more general conversation about differential participation, as well as to understanding persistence within this one cycle of contention.

On Differential Recruitment and Differential Participation

Looking at the growth of social movements, extensive research has focused on mobilization processes and how individuals come to be involved in varying forms of collective action (See e.g. Fisher and McInerney 2012; Klandermans et al. 2014; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Lim 2008; McAdam 1986; Munson 2010). Specifically, research has aimed to comprehend what explains differential recruitment—who mobilizes to participate—as well as differential participation—who participates more—in social protest. Across this research, most studies look specifically at the role of structural availability via social ties, biographical availability, and political engagement to explain protest participation (See particularly Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Saunders et al. 2012; Schussman and Soule 2005; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009; see also Wahlström and Wennerhag 2014). In the pages that follow, we review these strands of research, focusing particularly on how research has understood varying levels of engagement in protest.

Understanding Differential Recruitment

The role of social networks in facilitating participation in collective action has been a central focus of social movements research on participation in collective action (Bearman and Everett 1993; Gould 1991; Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Kim and Bearman 1997; Kitts 2000; Loveman

1998; Marwell, Oliver, and Prahl 1988; McAdam 1986; Oberschall 1973; Oegema and Klandermans 1994; Tilly 1978; Tindall 2015). To understand the specific role that social networks play in protest, scholars have explored how different types of social ties assist in social movement recruitment (Diani and McAdam 2003; Heaney and Rojas 2015; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; but see Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Zald and McCarthy 1987), which some studies have called “structural availability” (see particularly Saunders et al. 2012; Schussman and Soule 2005).

Much attention has been paid to how personal ties and organizational ties can influence protest participation. One the one hand, scholars have found that social connections to friends, family members, and colleagues can explain protest participation (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Opp and Gern 1993; see also Rochford 1982). On the other hand, other studies have found that individuals’ ties to organizations play a more powerful role than personal connections (e.g. Anheier 2003; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Ohlemacher 1996; Passy 2003). McAdam and Paulson, for example, conclude that organizational ties were more significant than personal ties in mobilizing activists to participate in Freedom Summer (McAdam and Paulsen 1993; see also Fernandez and McAdam 1988).

There has also been a growing focus on understanding how mobilization happens in the absence of social ties (see e.g. Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Munson 2010; Zald and McCarthy 1987). In their 1995 study, Jasper and Poulsen find individuals are mobilized through moral shocks, which raise “such a sense of outrage in people that they become inclined toward political action, even in the absence of a network of contacts” (Jasper and Poulsen 1995:498; see also Jasper 1997). McCarthy also compares the differences between two social movements in his study of the Pro-Life and Pro-Choice movements, concluding that the Pro-Choice movement

overcame the “infrastructural deficit” of a lack of social ties by mobilizing activists “individually, rather than in preexisting groups” through direct appeals (1987:60). Similarly, Fisher and Boekkooi find that the participants who mobilize to participate in a protest without social ties tend to hear about events through the various mediated forms of communication on the Internet and tend to come to protest events alone (Fisher and Boekkooi 2010).

Other studies look at the biographical availability of individuals to understand their mobilization and commitment to activism (Corrigall-Brown 2011; McAdam 1986). In the words of McAdam, “biographical availability can be defined as the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities” (McAdam 1986:70, see also 1989). In their study of individual protest participation, Schussman and Soule integrate biographical availability, political engagement and structural availability to explain differential recruitment in protest participation (Schussman and Soule 2005). The authors find that a combination of factors explains who chooses to participate in protest. In their own words, “people who protest were likely to have been asked to do so, and that those individuals asked to protest tend to belong to organizations, have more education, lack constraints on participation, and are politically engaged” (Schussman and Soule 2005:1099).

Others have also looked at how more general forms of political participation are associated with participation in activism and protest (Saunders et al. 2012). In some cases, research has found that people who have a more progressive political orientation are more likely to protest (Corrigall-Brown 2011; Dalton 2013). In her analysis of the Youth Socialization Panel Data from 2004, Corrigall-Brown finds that that political ideology/party affiliation predicts participation in what she calls “contentious political action” (Corrigall-Brown 2011: chapter 2).

Studying Differential Participation

Similar to the research on differential recruitment, researchers have also looked at varying levels of participation in activism, or differential participation. A handful of studies have specifically examined long-term engagement and activism over the life course. For example, McAdam analyzes what he calls the “biographical consequences of activism” for participants twenty years after the Mississippi Freedom Summer project (McAdam 1989). He finds participants to be “tied to networks of organizational and personal relationships that helped sustain their activism” (McAdam 1989:758). Similarly, in their study of American Vietnam war resisters in Canada, Hagan and Hansford-Bowles conclude that “the evolution and persistence of activism is often a life course persistent process that covers a longer period and involves the influence of more generically structured network ties” (Hagan and Hansford-Bowles 2005:231; see also Barkan et al. 1995).

In their study of activists involved in the peace movement, Downton and Wehr specifically explain what they call the “persistent activist,” discussing the differences between those who persist in the movement, those who shift their activism to other movements, and those who drop out of activism altogether (Downton and Wehr 1997; see also Klandermans 1997). The authors find that social ties and changes in social ties helped to explain why some members of their sample shifted and others dropped out. Similarly, in their study of young people who fundraise for progressive groups as canvassers, Fisher and McInerney find that “canvassers who came to the job through their social ties were less likely to be working for the organization a year later than those who came as self-starters” (Fisher and McInerney 2012:123).

Coming from a slightly different perspective, Corrigall-Brown studies individual patterns of participation over the life-course. The author identifies four possible trajectories of participation: persistence, transfer, abeyance, and disengagement (Corrigall-Brown 2011). In this work, persistence is particular to a social movement organization (SMO) and/or a protest activity (Corrigall-Brown 2011:6). When compared to those who ‘disengage,’ the author finds that people who persist are more likely to hold a post-secondary education, not be of the Protestant faith, and to be single without children (see Table 4 in Corrigall-Brown 2011:53). Although Corrigall-Brown finds political ideology is important for predicting participation in protest, it does not predict persistence as she defines it (2011: 52). It is worth stressing that her categories are labeled differently than the other studies. However, these findings are relatively consistent with those scholars who conclude that biographical availability plays a substantial role in understanding differential participation (see particularly Schussman and Soule 2005; see also Saunders et al. 2012).

Perhaps most relevant for the current study are the small number of studies that look specifically at differential participation at protest events. Like the research on differential recruitment (see particularly Schussman and Soule 2005), these studies also look at the role of structural availability, biographical availability, and political engagement. Most of this research compares data collected from individuals attending a set of demonstrations to understand different levels of participation. In their 2009 paper, for example, Verhulst and Walgrave compare data collected from 18 demonstrations in eight countries (Verhulst and Walgrave 2009). More recently, Saunders and colleagues analyzed a cross-national dataset of protest participants from seven European countries that were collected in 2009-2010 (Saunders et al. 2012). In both

cases, the studies analyze data collected from protest events in numerous locations that focus on a range of issues.

Verhulst and Walgrave specifically aim to understand what explains first-timership for the individuals in their sample. They conclude that age, motivation, and non-organizational mobilization “appear to be consistent and robust predictors of first-timership” (Verhulst and Walgrave 2009:455). Consequently, the more experienced participants in this study were found to be older, to be members of an organization that organized the protest events where the data were collected, and to have heard about the event through organizational channels, which they refer to as “closed” mobilization channels.

Saunders and colleagues also look at differential participation in protest. In their case, the authors disaggregate protest experience further into four categories: Novices, Returners, Repeaters, and Stalwarts (Saunders et al. 2012). Like the Verhulst and Walgrave paper, the authors find that being of a biographically available “age distinguishes novices from repeaters” (Saunders et al. 2012:274). The authors also note that stalwarts—the most engaged protest participants who report attending 6 or more protests in the past 12 months—are the most politically engaged of all protest participants. In other words, people who participated in many protests over the past 12 months also reported engaging in a range of other forms of political action. Also like the previous study (Verhulst and Walgrave 2009), Saunders and colleagues look at the mobilization channels through which participants heard about the protest events. The authors conclude that the most experienced protesters were also the most likely to have heard about protests via organizational “closed” communication channels (see also Klandermans et al. 2014).

In addition to these relevant studies that have looked specifically at differential recruitment, persistence, and differential participation, this paper also builds on the small but growing literature on the Resistance itself. Although research has yet to assess what explains repeat participation in the protests during this specific cycle of contention, studies have looked at what were the main motivations for participants at the large-scale protest events within the Resistance (Fisher, Dow, and Ray 2017; Fisher et al. 2018). In these studies, when controlling for a number of variables including protest experience, the authors find that there were overlapping patterns of motivations for participants that span the progressive agenda. This paper, accordingly, includes what participants identified as their motivations for participating to see if these data help to explain differential participation and persistence.

Building off of the relevant literature summarized above, this paper tests four hypotheses:

H1: Biographical availability is associated with higher levels of protest participation.

H2: Participation in other types of civic and political activities and political ideology are associated with higher levels of protest participation.

H3: Structural availability, in terms of organizational membership and hearing about events through organizational channels, is associated with higher levels of protest participation.

H4: Common motivations distinguish those with higher levels of protest participation.

In this paper, we test these four hypotheses. In addition to testing the relationship between a more general measure of differential participation, we also look at if these relationships hold when we test them against the level of participation in the countermovement of the Resistance (for a full discussion, see Tarrow and Meyer 2019; Fisher 2019; see also Meyer and Tarrow 2018; Fisher, Jasny, and Dow 2018). Here, in contrast to those studies that have looked at persistence as engagement in activism over the life cycle (Corrigall-Brown 2011;

Downton and Wehr 1997), we use the term “persistence” to refer to repeat participation in this one cycle of contention. In contrast to the studies about differential participation, which compare data collected from international data sets of protest events (Saunders et al. 2012:268–71; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009:464–69), this paper presents data collected from six protest-events that all took place during the same cycle of contention of the Resistance in the same city: Washington, DC. In the pages that follow, we begin by describing the protests studied and the methods employed to collect our data. Then, we present findings from our analysis to understand patterns of differential participation in the Resistance.

Studying Protest Events in the Resistance

This paper presents data collected from participants at six of the largest events that took place since the Resistance began on the day after the inauguration of Donald Trump at the 2017 Women’s March (For an overview, see Meyer and Tarrow 2018; Fisher et al. 2018; Fisher 2019): the March for Science, the People’s Climate March, the March for Racial Justice, the 2018 Women’s March, the March for Our Lives, and the Families Belong Together Event. Data were also collected at the 2017 Women’s March on Washington, DC but, as we discuss in more detail in the data and methods section of this paper, because this paper specifically looks at *persistence* in the Resistance, data from this first event in the cycle of contention are not included. Together, the responses to the surveys include data from 1,399 participants who were randomly selected from throughout the crowds. All of the data presented in this paper were collected by surveying protesters using a methodology that is consistent with previous research on large-scale protest events (For a summary of the methodology, see Fisher et al. 2005; Heaney

and Rojas 2015). Using data collected from field notes, media accounts, and materials from the organizations involved with the protests studied, we provide a brief summary of the six events.

The March for Science

The March for Science began with a “throwaway line on Reddit”(Guarino 2017). Its aim was “to defend the role of science in policy and society.”⁵ Although it was originally proposed on social media, the March took on a number of professional scientific associations as its partners, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the American Sociological Association.⁶ While many scientists supported and participated in the march, some did not participate because they viewed it as partisan (see Akpan et al. 2017). Satellite marches took place around the world on the same day as the flagship event in DC, which was held on Earth Day 2017—April 22, 2017. An estimated 100,000 people participated in the event in Washington, DC in the rain. The event involved a rally with speeches, which were headlined by Bill Nye “the science guy.”

A twelve-member research team entered the staging area around the Washington Monument through an entrance designated by the organizers. March participants were sampled throughout the morning and early afternoon of the 22nd as they listened to speeches about the importance of science. Researchers completed 212 surveys with a refusal rate of 6%. Analysis are based on the 199 usable surveys (13 were lost due to technical problems in the rain).

⁵ <https://www.marchforscience.com/>

⁶ For a full list, see for a full list, see <https://www.marchforscience.com/partners> (Accessed 20 June 2018).

People's Climate March 2017

Exactly a week after the March for Science, the People's Climate March was held on 29 April 2017. This event in Washington, DC was a follow-up to the first People's Climate March, which was held in New York City three years earlier on the Sunday before the United Nations hosted talks on the issue of climate change. Although this march was unique in that it was connected to a broader effort to draw attention to the issue of climate change in the US and was not a direct response to the Trump Administration and its policies, participants had a lot to protest by late April. Participants marched to express their concerns about the environmental agenda of the Trump Administration, particularly as the President had signed an executive order in March rescinding the Clean Power Plan⁷ and was threatening to pull out of the Paris Agreement on climate change, which he formally did in June (Fandos 2017). Like the previous marches in this cycle of contention, as well as the 2014 People's Climate March, this event coincided with over 370 coordinated protest events.⁸ Protesters in Washington, DC marched to the White House and surrounded it to show that the world was watching as President Trump passed his 100th day in office.

An estimated 200,000 people participated in the PCM in Washington, DC on an unseasonably hot and sunny April day where temperatures reached almost 90 degrees (Meyer 2017). A ten-member research team entered the crowd in the designated areas around the

⁷ The Clean Power Plan was designed to regulate the emissions of utilities in the US for details, see https://ballotpedia.org/Clean_Power_Plan_political_timeline (Accessed 8 November 2017).

⁸ <https://pcm2017.wpeengine.com/> (Accessed 7 December 2017)

National Mall.⁹ March participants were sampled throughout the morning and early afternoon as they lined up to march. Researchers completed 348 surveys with a refusal rate of 11%.

March for Racial Justice

Like the March for Science, the March for Racial Justice was also initiated by a less professionalized group. In contrast to the other marches with similar origination stories, however, the March for Racial Justice did not end up being coordinated by a broad national committee of seasoned activists nor did it connect with a broad coalition of national groups as organizational partners. On September 30, 2017, the March for Racial Justice (M4RJ) was held in Lincoln Park near Capitol Hill. The protest was planned in June after a police officer was acquitted of all charges related to killing Philando Castile (Stein 2017). After the President's response to the killing of a peaceful protester and the injury of 19 others by a white supremacist in Charlotte, VA in August and his September critiques of NFL athletes who had taken a knee during the national anthem to show their concern for police brutality and their desire for racial justice in America, many expected the march to gain additional support. The march was scheduled to take place on the same day as the March for Black Women a few blocks from the staging area of the March for Racial Justice (Chason 2017). After separate rallies took place, the two groups converged and marched together toward the Capitol and the Department of Justice, ending at the National Mall. A number of concurrent events were scheduled to take place around the country (Baumgaertner 2017).

Due, in part, to its lack of institutional support, turnout was much lower than previous marches in Washington, DC. An estimated 10,000 people participated in the march, which

⁹ See map at <http://pcm2017.wpeengine.com/logistics/#map> (Accessed 7 December 2017).

included people from both rallies. A fourteen-member research team entered the crowd in the designated areas around Lincoln Park. Participants were sampled throughout the morning and early afternoon during the rally. Researchers completed 187 surveys with a refusal rate of 17%.

Women's March 2018

Although the national organization that coordinated the 2017 march—The Women's March, Inc.—decided to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the March with a rally in Las Vegas, Nevada in January 2018 (Savransky 2018), many of the organizers of the sister marches that took place around the country in 2017, along with the newer group March On and branches of Indivisible, wanted to commemorate the anniversary with another march. After some tense interactions among groups involved in the 2017 Women's March (For a discussion, see Stockman 2018), the 2018 Women's March was held on the weekend of the one year anniversary (20-21 January 2018). Events took place in 407 locations around the US and turned out about two million people (Chenoweth and Pressman 2018b).

The march in Washington, DC in 2018 was organized by March Forward Virginia, “the state-level organizers for the 2017 Women's March.”¹⁰ The event was originally arranged to showcase the numerous women's successes in Virginia in the year since the first Women's March. However, since the federal government shutdown the night before, many Democratic Party leaders ended up staying in Washington, attending the march and speaking at the rally (Chandler and Heim 2018). An estimated 75,000 people participated in the 2018 Women's March in Washington, DC. A six-member research team entered the crowd at the various entrances to the reflecting pool and steps of the Lincoln Memorial and sampled march

¹⁰ For details, see <https://www.marchdc.com/qa/> (Accessed 17 August 2018).

participants throughout the morning and early afternoon of the 20th while the rally took place.

Researchers completed 205 surveys with a refusal rate of 8%

March for Our Lives

In contrast to these other marches that were called for by adults, high school students who had survived a school shooting in Parkland, Florida called for the March for Our Lives. With the help of some well-resourced benefactors, including Oprah Winfrey and George Clooney, the survivors organized a rally in D.C. on 24 March, a mere six weeks after the school shooting on February 14th. The event included speeches by survivors of gun violence and performances by musicians including pop stars Demi Lovato and Ariana Grande.¹¹ The march in Washington, DC coincided with 763 sibling marches around the country (Bond, Chenoweth, and Pressman 2018). Organizers estimate that 800,000 people attended the event in DC (Bond et al. 2018), which was the main march. A six-member research team entered the crowd at the various entrances on Pennsylvania Avenue and sampled participants throughout the morning and early afternoon of the 24th while the rally/concert took place. Researchers completed 256 surveys with a refusal rate of 7%.

Families Belong Together

Unlike the other marches that were organized months ahead of time, the Families Belong Together event was organized in 12 days to protest the Trump Administration's family separation policy that involved children being separated from their parents and held for prosecution. The event was led by a diverse coalitions of over 100 organizations, including

¹¹ For details, see <https://www.thecut.com/2018/03/march-for-our-lives-celebrities-performers-speakers.html> (accessed 20 August 2018).

MoveOn, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.¹² The event turned out an estimated 35,000 people in Washington, DC and coincided with at least 737 sibling marches that were held around the country. Around the country, the event turned out around 450,000 people at these events to protest the Trump administration’s separation of children from their parents (Chenoweth and Pressman 2018a). A four-member research team entered the crowd at the various entrances to Lafayette Square and sampled rally participants throughout the morning and early afternoon of the 30th while the rally took place. Researchers completed 201 surveys with a refusal rate of 9%.

Table 1 presents the reported attendance at the six marches compared in this paper, the number of survey participants, and the response rates for each of the protests.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Data and Methods

Participants at all six events were selected using a sampling methodology consistent with other studies of street demonstrations in the U.S. and abroad, which uses a field approximation of random selection at the march (Bédoyan, Aelst, and Walgrave 2004; Fisher et al. 2005; Heaney and Rojas 2015). Snaking through the crowd as people gathered, researchers “counted off” protesters while participants were lining up and listening to speeches, selecting every fifth person as determined by researchers working in a particular section to participate. This method avoids the potential of selection bias by preventing researchers from selecting only “approachable peers” (Walgrave and Verhulst 2011; Walgrave, Wouters, and Ketelaars 2016). Given the large size of the crowds and the labor-intensive nature of the survey methodology, the samples

¹² For a list, see <https://act.moveon.org/survey/families-belong-together-partners/?source=families> (accessed 20 August 2018).

presented here represent small, approximately randomized portions of the overall participant populations at each demonstration.

The survey was designed to be short and non-invasive, so as to encourage the highest level of participation possible and facilitate data collection in the field: it took about 10 minutes for participants to complete it.¹³ Survey data were collected on electronic tablets utilizing the online survey system, *Qualtrics*. Although the survey asks a wide range of questions about protest participants and their mobilization, civic participation, motivations, demographics, and political participation and orientation, this paper analyzes data collected from a fraction of the questions on the survey to test our four hypotheses regarding differential participation and persistence. More details about the variables and how they are derived from the survey data are provided in the discussion of our variables in the next section of this paper.

All data were collected in accordance with the University of Maryland policies instituted by their Institutional Review Board (Protocol # 999342-1). As such, only individuals over the age of 18 were eligible to participate in the study. It is worth noting that the refusal rates noted above are consistent with other studies that use this methodology and are substantially lower than those studies that rely on mailed back questionnaires, which can suffer from delayed refusal bias (Walgrave and Verhulst 2011; Walgrave et al. 2016).

Operationalization of Dependent Variables

To understand patterns of differential participation in the Resistance, we run models on two separate dependent variables. The first dependent variable builds directly off of the literature on differential participation reviewed above and specifically looks at the differentiation of

¹³ Survey instruments are posted at www.drfisher.umd.edu/Protest.html

participants by their *overall* previous participation (e.g. Saunders et al. 2012; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009). For this first set of analyses, we look at responses to a question that asks: “How many protests and/or demonstrations have you attended in the past five years?” Data were coded into three categories: first time ever participating in a protest, first time in the last five years, and those who report participating in more than one event in the past five years (not including the event where they were surveyed). The two later categories can include any other marches prior to the event where the respondent was surveyed; responses to this question do not necessarily include participation in a demonstration that is part of the Resistance. It is worth highlighting that this operationalization is a combination of the ways that the previous research has looked at differential participation.¹⁴ The percentage of respondents surveyed at each march who placed themselves into each category is presented in Figure 1. The marches are ordered in the plot and listed in the legend in temporal order. We see that the proportion of first-timers at these marches falls at each march as the cycle of contention progresses, with the one exception of the March for Our Lives (for a discussion of turnout at the March for Our Lives, see Fisher 2018). This plot also clearly shows that the vast majority of respondents overall had participated in more than one event in the past five years.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The second dependent variable, in contrast, specifically looks at what we are calling “persistence in the Resistance.” We asked respondents about their attendance at all of the large-

¹⁴ In their study of differential participation in protest, Saunders and colleagues define novices as people who have never before protested, returners as people who have participated 1-5 times ever, and repeaters and stalwarts are both operationalized as having participated in 6 or more protests ever (Saunders et al. 2012:269). In contrast, Verhulst and Walgrave operationalize “first-timership” as people who report that a demonstration is the first time they have ever participated in a protest *and* as the first time in the past 5 years that they have participated in a protest (Verhulst and Walgrave 2009:469–70).

scale marches since and including the 2017 Women's March, which took place the day after the inauguration and has been called the trigger of the Resistance (Meyer and Tarrow 2018:1).

Figure 2 displays, for each march in temporal order, what percentage of respondents had attended the previous marches in this cycle of contention. Those surveyed at the March for Science were asked about their attendance at the 2017 Women's March; those surveyed at the People's Climate March were asked whether or not they had attended either of the previous two marches, and so on.¹⁵ For example, we see that 66% of those surveyed at the March for Science—the second large-scale protest in this cycle of contention—reported having attended the 2017 Women's March. In turn, respondents at the People's Climate March were asked both about the Women's March in 2017 and the March for Science. 25% of respondents at the People's Climate March reported attending both previous marches (the 2017 Women's March and the March for Science), 54% said that they were at one of the previous marches, and 21% responded that they had attended neither. We cannot directly compare these numbers as, because fewer events had happened at the time of the March for Science, those respondents were constrained to either 0 or 1, whereas only respondents at the Families Belong Together March, which took place in June 2018, could potentially have attended six previous events.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Because the possible marches respondents could have attended increased at each march, it is not appropriate to use the raw numbers of marches attended as a dependent variable. Additionally, simply using the percentage of the events the respondent could have attended is problematic because of the assumptions of linear regression. Instead, we estimate the underlying

¹⁵ Data were also collected at the 2017 Women's March. Since this paper specifically looks at persistence in the Resistance and the 2017 event was the first march in this cycle of contention, those data are not included in this analysis (For an analysis and discussion of the 2017 Women's March data, see Fisher 2019; Fisher, Dow, and Ray 2017).

rate of participation using a Bayesian transformation of these counts. The dependent variable we model is the posterior mean of a Jeffrey's prior and the binomial distribution of the number of marches attended given the number the respondent could possibly attend (for references on this transformation, see Rubin and Schenker 1987; for information on the Jeffrey's prior, see Lunn et al. 2012; for similar application using count data, see Hadden and Jasny 2017). This transformation thus incorporates the uncertainty introduced because we have fewer observations of behavior (we were able to ask about attendance at fewer marches) than others. Our two dependent variables measure different versions of previous behavior and are, understandably, highly significantly correlated with a Pearson correlation of .62 ($p < 2e-16$).

Operationalization of Independent Variables.

Our analysis includes measures similar to those used in the recent research on differential recruitment and differential participation (Saunders et al. 2012; Schussman and Soule 2005; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009). In particular, we include variables to measure biographical availability, structural availability, and political participation/political ideology. In addition to these three categories, we also add a fourth category: issue motivations.

Consistent with the work by Schussman and Soule (2005), biographical availability contains a continuous variable for Age and a scale for Education (1 is “Did not finish high school to 5 “Graduate or Professional Degree). We also include whether or not the respondent was considered unemployed. Our operationalization of unemployed follows Saunders et al. (2012), who include those who categorized themselves as a student, unemployed, retired or a stay-at-home parent in their variable. Each of these three variables were dichotomized from broader information.

For Structural Availability, once again we follow the work of Schussman and Soule (2005) and Saunders et al. (2012). Specifically, we include binary variables for: whether the respondent was a member of a group that was part of the organizing coalition for the march; whether the respondent came to the event with other organizational members; a collapsed variable for whether they came with friends, family, or colleagues; and whether they reported coming to the event alone. Our final variable for this category is a scale capturing how the respondent heard about the event. It is ranked in a manner consistent with the way the literature has termed open (1) to closed (4) channels (see particularly Saunders et al. 2012; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009).

For Political Participation and Ideology, we include a series of variables that are consistent with the work of Schussman and Soule (2005) and Saunders and colleagues (2012). Respondents were asked to tick which of a list of 10 civic and/or political activities they had participated in over the past 12 months. These data were included as binary variables. Consistent with Saunders et al. (2012), we also include a scale of Political View (1 is “Very Left” to 7 “Very Right”).

We also added a series of binary variables to reflect what issues motivated participants to join the demonstration where they were surveyed. This addition builds on recent research that finds participants in demonstrations in the Resistance to be motivated by a range of issues to participate (Fisher et al. 2018, see also 2017). Respondents were asked to tick off from a list of 14 issues what issue(s) motivated them to turnout at the specific event where they were surveyed.

Consistent with the work of Schussman and Soule (2005), we include binary measures for race (Non-White, White) and for gender (Female, Male) as controls in all models. Previous research has found Blacks to be more likely to protest than Whites (Verba, Schlozman, and

Brady 1995:484; but see results from Schussman and Soule 2005). The role that gender plays has been changing. Although previous research found men to be more likely to participate in protest (See particularly McAdam 1982; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), more recent work finds no significant difference in participation by gender (Schussman and Soule 2005), and much of the research on the Resistance has found women to be more likely to participate than men (Fisher et al. 2017; Putnam and Skocpol 2018). Each of these variables were dichotomized from broader information. In the case of gender, too few respondents gave an alternative category to be included in the regression so we only include these two categories. The initial survey also asked about a number of ethnic categories, however similarly, too few respondents across the marches were in each separate category so they were combined into a ‘non-white’ category (for a full discussion, see Fisher et al. 2018:appendix). Descriptive results and t-tests (for continuous variables) and chi-squared tests (for binary variables) comparing each event to the total are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

We see from the description of the variables included that there are many differences in participants across the different marches. For example, the participants at the March For Our Lives were significantly less likely to have participated in other forms of political engagement. We see that a larger proportion of the participants at the March for Science were white, and a larger proportion of the participants at the March for Racial Justice identified as non-white. In addition, significantly more men attended the March for Science and the People’s Climate March, but significantly fewer participants were male at the Women’s March in 2018. We also see that issues related to the particular event’s themes were more likely to fluctuate based on the protest where data were collected.

Results

We use two separate regression techniques – a multinomial logistic regression for analyzing differential participation (our first dependent variable) and a linear regression for the persistence across this cycle of contention (our second dependent variable).¹⁶ The multinomial is appropriate for the first dependent variable as the differences in protest participation categories are not ordinal. For the second set of analysis, because of our Bayesian transformation, the dependent variable capturing the log-odds that a participant is likely to engage in an event during the current cycle of contention is appropriate to a linear model (see e.g. Hadden and Jasny 2017). Given the differences in some of the descriptives by event, we include variables for each different event in the models presented.¹⁷ The results for both models are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Differential Participation Model

From the separate intercepts for the different events, we see that first timers (the reference category for the multinomial model of differential participation) were more likely to attend the March for Science and the People's Climate March than those who report having attended more than one other protest event in the past five years. We see no difference among march attendance

¹⁶ The sample sizes for the two regression models differ due to non-responses on the dependent variables. For example, those who responded to the question of previous participation but not whether they attended the Women's March in 2017 were included in the model of previous participation but not in persistence.

¹⁷ Separate models were run with interaction effects by Event for each of the independent variables. Since none of these additions improved the BIC value, we present the reduced models without any interaction effects in this paper.

for first timers relative to those who reported attending one other demonstration in the past five years.

The results of the previous participation model also provide some support for the findings from the previous research. We turn first to our biographical availability variables. Compared to those who are first timers, those with previous experience at both levels are more likely to be highly educated and to be unemployed. These findings are consistent with the work of Saunders and colleagues (2012). Although we find that those who have attended one event in the past five years are slightly older than first timers, we do not see the same effect for those who report attending more than one protest event in the last five years. Additionally, those who have attended more than one event in the last five years are also less likely to be white.

In contrast to previous studies, we do not find any support for structural availability. Neither organizational membership, nor coming to the events with members of an organization were statistically significant. We also find no support for the findings from the previous studies that people with higher levels of protest participation are more likely to hear about a demonstration through closed communication channels.

Regarding political participation, we find that those respondents who had attended one other event in the past five years were more likely than first timers to have participated in direct action, but less likely to have worked for a political party (17% of the total sample stated they had worked for a political party). These findings provide evidence that events in this cycle of contention were mobilizing newcomers to participate in protest who were already engaging in institutional politics. Moreover, when we compare those who report participating in more than one event in the past five years to first timers, we find they were more likely to have engaged in a range of political activities. Specifically, they are more likely to have contacted their elected

officials, contacted the media, signed a petition, and participated in direct action. They were less likely to have worked for a political party or to have engaged in political discussion online. Moreover, those who have attended more than one event in the last five years are more likely to identify more towards the liberal end of the political spectrum, which is consistent with the research by Saunders and colleagues (2012).

Finally, in the multinomial model we see strong differences in issue motivation between first timers and those who had attended one or more other events in the last five years. In particular, all of those who reported any previous participation in protest were more likely to state they were motivated to participate by the issues of Equality and Politics compared to first timers. Those with any previous protest experience were less likely to be motivated by the issue of Racial Justice than first timers. Also, those who reported attending more than one event in the past five years were also less likely to be motivated by the issue of Social Welfare, which includes gun control.

Persistence Model

Turning next to the persistence model, which predicts the underlying log-odds of attending additional protest events during the current cycle of contention, we find few characteristics that are statistically significant and some in direct contradiction to the previous model, as well as the literature on differential participation. While the attendees at the March for Science and the People's Climate March were less likely to have reported attending previous protest events prior to being surveyed at a demonstration, they are more likely to have higher log-odds of attending

other events in this cycle of contention. In other words, they are more likely to have participated in the previous marches of the Resistance.¹⁸

None of the biographical availability variables (including those that were significant in predicting previous participation in our differential participation model) nor the structural availability variables were significant in predicting persistence. When looking at political participation, only contacting an elected official in the past year was associated with increased log-odds of participating in previous events. It is worth highlighting that this measure is the sole independent variable that predicts both previous protest participation generally (our first dependent variable), as well as persistence in this specific cycle of contention (our second dependent variable).

Finally, the results of the persistence model also show that the issues motivating individuals with higher odds of returning to events in the Resistance are very different than our findings regarding differential participation. Individuals motivated by Reproductive Rights were significantly more likely to have higher log-odds of recurring participation.¹⁹ At the same time, those motivated by the general issue of politics were significantly less likely to have participated

¹⁸ As these protest events were held on adjacent weekends only one week apart, there is the chance for temporal autocorrelation in these marches. In other words, some individuals may have chosen to attend one versus the other, or were more likely to turn out to the second based on positive experiences at the first. To attempt to address these potential issues, we also ran models removing each march from the dataset in turn to see if the model results were robust to these differences and we discuss these findings as appropriate within the text. Additionally, the rate at which respondents of the People's Climate March attended the March for Science (34%) was not significantly higher than the following two marches in proportional tests; 27% of attendees at the March for Racial Justice and 32% of the respondents at the 2018 Women's March reported attending the March for Science.

¹⁹ This finding is significant even if the respondents surveyed at the Women's March in 2018 are removed. It is insignificant but close ($p=.06$) if respondents from the March for Science are removed.

in other events in this cycle,²⁰ in a stark contrast to the model for previous participation where this was significant but positive for both one and more than one other event in five years.

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, by looking at data collected from multiple protest-events in one city during one cycle of contention, we learn more about both differential participation, as well as persistence in a cycle of contention. Like the previous research predicts, we find some support for our first hypothesis that expects biographical availability to be associated with higher levels of protest participation (Saunders et al. 2012; Verhulst and Walgrave 2009). Moreover, like the study by Saunders and colleagues, we also find that political participation is associated with more protest participation (2012; see also Schussman and Soule 2005; Corrigall-Brown 2011). This finding is consistent with our second hypothesis. In contrast to these previous studies, however, we do not find any support for our third hypothesis, which is based on the notion of structural availability. None of the measures of structural availability included in our analysis—whether the respondent was a member of a group that was part of the organizing coalition for the march, whether the respondent came to the event with other organizational members, and whether respondent heard about the event via closed channels—predict higher levels of participation. In other words, social ties explain neither repeat participation in protest events, nor persistence in this specific cycle of contention.

When we look specifically at the variables that explain persistence in the Resistance, our results are surprising. In particular, we find that, in contrast to all of the variables that explained differential participation, only contacting an elected official in the past year is a significant

²⁰ This finding is insignificant ($p=.26$) if respondents from the People's Climate March are removed.

predictor of persistence. This finding provides evidence that people who are turning out to protest the Trump Administration and its policies during this cycle of contention are participating in institutional politics in a particular way.

In addition, and as expected by our final hypothesis, we find that the issue of Reproductive Rights motivated people to turn out again-and-again, even when the respondents from the Women's March in 2018 are removed from the analysis. This finding in some ways replicates what other studies of protests in the Resistance have found: women and women's issues have been a major focus of the current cycle of contention ever since the 2017 Women's March (Fisher et al. 2017; Meyer and Tarrow 2018; Putnam and Skocpol 2018). At the same time, the issue of Politics was negatively associated with persistence (second model), but positively associated with previous participation (first model). In other words, although some people came out to participate in demonstrations because they were motivated by Politics and the political system in America, they were less likely to come out again-and-again during this specific cycle. Aside from these motivations, we see general fluctuations in motivations associated with the specific goals of the march: the environment is a strong motivation for participants in the People's Climate March, where racial justice and immigration are important for those at the March for Racial Justice (for a full discussion, see Fisher et al. 2018). Thus, there are some common themes in those turning out as part of the Resistance, but these marches still draw heavily on different populations motivated by different sets of issues.

It is very likely that the importance of these issues as motivations to protest and persist may be unique to this cycle of contention and the product of the current political climate in the United States. To borrow terminology from Corrigal-Brown's work (2011): it remains to be seen

whether those who first became active during this cycle will disengage, persist in protest, or enter a period of abeyance.

Future research must continue to look at differential participation and persistence in protests that are part of one cycle of contention to explore the degree to which these findings are specific to our dataset collected from participants in multiple protests of the Resistance. Moreover, one of the hallmarks of this cycle of contention is that protest events take place in multiple locations simultaneously as part of a day of action. As our data were collected at events in Washington, DC, a proportion of the people in our samples traveled from outside the local area to attend these marches because they were held in the nation's capital. It is likely, therefore, that our samples include people who were more particularly motivated and engaged in politics than the participants at the hundreds of concurrent events that took place as part of protest events in other locations. Future research, thus, should compare protesting populations at different locations to see how they vary. Through such research, we learn much more about differential participation and persistence in the Resistance and in protest and activism more broadly.

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