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The First Time is the Hardest? A Cross-National and Cross-Issue Comparison of First-Time Protest Participants

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Abstract The study aims to extend the existing knowledge about the dynamics of first-time participation in protest events. To tackle that puzzle we rely on extensive and innovative protest survey evidence covering 18 separate demonstrations in eight countries across nine different issues. On the individual level, age, motivation, and non-organizational mobilization appear to be consistent and robust predictors of first-timership. On the aggregate level, demonstrations staged just after or during a protest wave, large demonstrations, and demonstrations of old or new emotional movements are attended by a relatively larger share of first-timers. We conclude that it is thus the interplay of individual- and aggregate-level determinants that produces first-time participation.

Keywords Protest participation · Political participation · First time participants

Introduction

Attracting, mobilizing, and recruiting first-timers to social movements and protest participation are crucial in securing a movement's upkeep. As older militants are

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retiring, new activists have to be recruited. Without new blood, movements will eventually wither. In the ebb en flow of protest participation, first-timers are key. New blood is not only important to keep up the movements' numbers. Whittier (1997) found that, among others things, the external context of the movement at the time of entry of new participants defines a 'generation' of activists. These generations then subsequently contribute 'to produce *change* in social movements' and 'alter the movement's direction' (Whittier 1997, p. 761). So when and how people participate for the first time not only has important consequences for their continual engagement, but also for the movement and its further development.

While the literature on militant careers has been booming during the last decade, we still know relatively little about the antecedents of these careers and, in particular, we do not know much about people's first time participation. The reason is simple: it is tricky to draw upon traditional retrospective and recall data on activism as older protest experiences tend to be colored by recent protest experiences. To reliably assess first-time participation and its context, we need evidence collected immediately after the first participation. In this paper, we draw upon such evidence. We present data from 18 protest surveys conducted in eight countries and across nine issues in the 2003–2007 period. We want to make inroads in understanding *who participates for the first time, why those people show up, and how they are mobilized*.

The theoretical argument we develop revolves around the concept of participation barriers. We suppose that first-time activists, due to their unfamiliarity with protest participation, have barriers to overcome between willingness to participate and effective participation.

To test those ideas, we develop a double research track. First, we focus on the individual level. In what respect do first-timers differ from longer-time activists? Do we find any signs of higher thresholds that must be overcome? Are they socio-demographically different, more motivated, and mobilized via other channels and networks? In short: do we find systematic differences between recidivists and more experienced protesters that hold across issues? Second, we deal with first-time participation on an aggregate level. The question here is whether we find differences in shares of novices across demonstrations varying in issues and nation and whether we can account for these differences. Which factors can account for the fact that some demonstrations are permeated with first-time participants while other demonstrations are only populated by die-hard and experienced activists? Or, in other words, can we find evidence of contextual circumstances that can open or block the streets for demonstration debutants? These are all crucial questions, not only for students of protest and social movements but also for social movements and protest organizers. They relate to strategic decisions as to what sort of new people are best targeted for mobilization and recruitment and which macro circumstances allow best for attracting first-timers.

First, the study elaborates on the idea of protest normalization and presents a theoretical argument about first-time participation. Then we propose our hypotheses. Next we present our protest survey data. Then, we introduce our dependent variable and show that the number of first-timers differs extensively across issues and across nations. We continue with individual-level analyses to systematically

analyze differences between first-timers and experienced activists. We subsequently perform aggregate analyses to try to get a hold on why the shares of first-timers differ between demonstrations. Finally, we combine aggregate and micro-level data trying to develop a multi-level insight in first-timership. We close with a conclusion and discussion section.

First-Time Activism: Protest Normalization and Participation Barriers

Protest is up in post-industrial democracies. Demonstration activism for instance has, sometimes spectacularly, accrued in almost all countries (Norris et al. 2005). On top of that, also the socio-demographic diversity of those taking part in protest demonstrations is broadening (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). The normalization of *protest* has brought on a normalization of *protesters*. In current 'movement societies' (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) contentious politics, and certainly protest demonstrations, have become an alternative means for people to participate in politics beside the institutionalized channels of political participation (Norris 2002). Institutional political participation is down: electoral turnout decreases (ibid.), and so do party memberships (Dalton and Wattenberg 2001), party loyalties (Mair et al. 2004), and associational memberships (Pharr 2000; Pharr and Putnam 2000). While conventional participation is losing its legitimacy and is perceived less as an instrument for social change, ever more and ever more diverse crowds of people consider lawful demonstrations as a tool for change and as a way to express their grievances or preferences. For a while now, protest participation increasingly has become "simply politics by other means" (Gamson 1990, p. 139) and seems to have gradually become a substitute for, or at least an important supplement to 'politics by normal means'. Western post-industrial societies are evolving into 'demonstrating democracies' (Etzioni 1970) where people and social movements will turn to protest "to represent a wider range of claims than ever before" (Meyer and Tarrow (1998). Accordingly, the protest normalization trend will most likely persist in the future as it seems to be a self-reinforcing process—the more protest becomes an accepted means of participation, the more it attracts issue entrepreneurs and social movements defending main stream issues and representing and/or attracting more heterogeneous crowds. The normalization of both protest and protesters has many causes (see Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001) but the mechanisms driving the process are not well-known. In this study we depart from the straightforward idea that protest normalization is driven by mobilizing new people to protest participation. It is in fact by attracting first-timers that protest crowds get more diverse and that the aggregate normalization process further evolves. If no new people would be participating in protest, the normalization process would be stopped and even reversed as only the same ever smaller group of usual suspects and die-hard protesters would continue to protest. This idea corresponds with Whittier (1997) findings that such longer periods during which no 'new cohorts' enter the (in her case women's) movement would indeed only strengthen the status quo. So, focusing on the crucial first participation of activists is not only paramount to understand how social movements survive and manage to renew their constituency but also to tackle

the general protest normalization process. Three dimensions of first time participation are important: Who are those people who are newly attracted to the streets to vent their discontent (socio-demographics)? How are they reached and mobilized (mobilization)? And what are their individual motivations (motivation)?

Our key argument is that it is more difficult for first-time participants to take the different kinds of barriers that face all potential protesters, than is the case for many-time participants. These barriers, as well as first-timership, can be examined on two different levels of analysis. First, certain *individual* characteristics and motivations are needed to convert non-activists to activists. Elaborate studies of specific protest events and their mobilization processes show that participation—although gradually becoming normalized—still is a drop-out race. Klandermans and Oegema (1987) established that the amount of people agreeing with the goals of a specific protest event is by far larger than the amount of actual participants who manage to take all the practical, psychological and circumstantial barriers before hitting the streets. At each stage of the mobilization process potential participants drop out. For example, not all people who agree with the goals of a protest event are motivated to take part in that specific event: they may value de potential outcome not important enough, not outweighing the costs of participation (time, resources, risks…), or they may doubt that the protest can bring about the wanted results, or they may consider their own potential contribution to the protest's success marginal, or they may think that the turnout will be low in any case thwarting chances that the goals will be reached and so on (Olson 1965; Klandermans 1997). Additionally, not all people who are motivated are effectively targeted by mobilization efforts and are incited to take part. And finally, even people who are motivated and targeted may be hindered to actually participate because of all kinds of practical barriers regarding transport, free time, child care etc. (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; McAdam 1988; Downton and Wehr 1997, 1998). Consequently and in spite of protest normalization, protest participation, as well as conventional participation, to some degree remains a privilege of the higher educated and the more affluent (Verba et al. 1995).

If participation is a matter of taking the many thresholds that lie between passivity and activity, some people are better geared up to take those thresholds than others as they dispose of distinctive features or positions facilitating participation. Research has found that protest participation—as is the case with all forms of political participation—can be considered as a habit, as a practice one should be socialized into (McAdam 1988; Verhulst and Van Laer 2009). By participating, a psychological process is set in motion that creates an individual participatory 'state of mind' which is eventually internalized within individuals' "activist identities" (Melucci 1989). Participation in collective action is, certainly in the long term, also a social process creating organizational bonds and affective ties with fellow members and participants. In-group positions not only facilitate the creation of shared solidarities and identities (ibid; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Klandermans 1997; Bernstein 2002), but also play an important role in in-group interactive evaluation and mobilization processes (Passy 2002). Clearly, once a person has found out how protest participation works, the threshold for further participation goes down. First-timers do not have these advantages experienced protesters have, and are for instance inexperienced in assessing costs and benefits ratios of participation and

have less experience on practical issues like transport to the protest venue. By and large, we believe it is more difficult for first-timers to become motivated and targeted (because of a lack of activist network embedment), and to actually attend (because of less practical know-how). Consequently, we maintain that first-timers are characterized by specific features that distinguish them from recidivists and that help them to take these (higher) barriers.

Returning to Verba and colleagues' civic voluntary model (1995), personal features like schooling and wealth are probably not only predictors of participation, but also of first-time participation. But thresholds to first-time participation could also be lowered by specific mobilizing strategies (see e.g. McAdam 1988; Passy 2002), as well as by strongly felt grievances and emotions (see for some extreme cases e.g. Walsh 1981; Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Walgrave and Verhulst 2006), and by strong collective identities (Klandermans 1997; Bernstein 2002; Melucci 1989). The idea that network embeddedness, mobilization and motivations are important explananda for protest participation is certainly not new. Yet, we contend that these same variables are essential to pull especially first-timers to the streets. Probably, networks and motivations—far more than 'structural' individual predictors like SES, general political features like interest in politics that are so often used in the (comparative) study of political participation (see e.g. Verba et al. 1995; Norris 2002)—are distinguishing first- from recidivists. Below we hypothesize that protest are targeted differently, are embedded within different networks and/or that they are more individually or collectively motivated than their more experienced counterparts for whom the practice of protest has gradually been internalized into an *activist identity* (Melucci 1989). The empirical literature on mobilization, social movements, and protest participation is structured around three core concepts: the socio-structural background of participants (who?), their motivations (why?), and the way they are drawn into participating (how?). First-timers may be different from experienced participants regarding all three facets of protest participation. Each of these three elements—who, why and how—will be operationalized in testable hypotheses.

So far we only focused on the individual side of first-time participation. Individual features of first-timers versus experienced protesters, though, are but a part of the story. First-time protest participation also depends on contextual factors. Only very recently social movement scholars and political scientists have engaged in comparative research on contextual impacts on the individual composition of protest events. Walgrave and Verhulst (2009a), for instance, showed that the internal diversity of eight different national demonstrations against war in Iraq (February 15, 2003) was largely determined by contextual factors. They conclude that "in a nutshell, there seem to be two contextual "syndromes" in which protest can be staged; favorable conditions with supportive politics, public opinion and media (with the potential benefit of open mobilization) and unfavorable conditions with hostile politics, public opinion and media (and thus closed mobilization). The first context produces a different type of event: protesters are the usual suspects that come from the fringes of the political spectrum, with distinctive social and political characteristics. The favorable context produces another type of protest: more internally diverse and more resembling the population at large" (Walgrave and

Verhulst 2009a). So, context matters for who shows up and who does not. We hypothesize that context matters as well for first-time participation. Depending on the features of the protest event at hand more or less first-timers will participate. We propose three distinct contextual determinants affecting the number of first-timers on the streets, all three of them reflecting the potential to facilitate first time protest participation: the amount of previous protest supply on the national protest market, different types of mobilizing issues linked to distinct social movements, and the size of the demonstration. Below we will formulate specific hypotheses regarding these three context determinants.

Hypotheses

Continued activism, the well-documented opposite of first-time participation, requires a certain biographical availability: 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, p. 70). To continue to be active, people need to organize their lives around their activism (ibid; Downton and Wehr 1998; Whittier 1997, p. 767).. Especially age is an important variables as it is systematically associated with risk-taking and being free from other obligations, which are both associated with being younger. (Schussman and Soule 2005; McAdam 1986; 1988). Yet in our quest, age could be more directly related to first-timership through a generational approach, with protest first-timers representing new generational micro-cohorts (Whittier 1997) entering the world of protest activism. In other words, first-timers could very well be relatively younger, since they are … first-timers. Our data do not allow us to test for all dimensions of biographical availability: besides age we only gauged for professional situation. Regarding the "freer" professional situation of people not working or working part-time, however, research results are contradictory: people employed full-time in inflexible jobs seem to participate *more* in protest, not less. This is probably due to the larger resources of people with jobs lowering barriers for participation (Schussman and Soule 2005). Either way, we are unsure what association to expect between first-time participation and professional situation. Our first individual-level hypothesis then goes as follows: *first-timers display a higher biographical availability in terms of age and differ in their professional situation from recidivists* (H_in1).

People engage in protest because they want to show and channel their dissatisfaction regarding a certain issue. However, obviously not everyone who agrees with the goals of a protest event participates in it (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Much more is needed for people to participate. Klandermans (2004) has developed a motivational typology distinguishing instrumental, collective identity, and ideological motives to participate in protest. For each of these three types of motivations we formulate a distinct hypothesis stating that first-time participants are more motivated than experienced protesters.

Klandermans' 'ideological' motivation is associated with outrage and persons' will to express themselves against what they consider to be unjust: an illegitimate

inequality, a suddenly imposed grievance (Walsh 1981), or a holy principle that is violated (Klandermans 1997, 2004). We think it is better to speak about 'emotional' than about 'ideological' motives in these cases. Indeed, since more than a decade the mobilizing force of emotions has been (re)acknowledged (amongst many others see: Jasper 1998; Goodwin et al. 2001; Aminzade and McAdam 2001). The angrier or more offended people are, the higher the chance that they will take action and protest (Jasper and Poulsen 1995). We stated earlier that participation barriers are more difficult to overcome for first-timers, and we hypothesize that they need extra emotional 'drive' to resort to actual protest. Their strong convictions and hot emotions help them across. In a certain sense, they are so scandalized that they mobilize themselves (ibid.; Walgrave and Verhulst 2006). We put forward hypotheses on two emotional dimensions: the first reflecting the demonstrators' anger and indignation and another reflecting their frustration and powerlessness. Both dimensions gauge for the individuals' feelings on the protest issues, and can be logically linked to first-timership: either protest novices are more outraged, which helps them in taking the protest barriers, or they are deeply frustrated and feel powerless about the issue at stake and how it has been dealt with in the past, leading them to take to the streets as a sort of 'next step' of discontent. Or, of course, they could be both. Summarizing, we hypothesize that *first-timers, compared to experienced protesters, are more outraged and more frustrated about the protest issue* (H_in2).

In contrast, instrumental motivation is not about emotions but about a more or less rational calculus of pros (change) and cons (costs) of protest participation (Olson 1965; Oegema and Klandermans 1994). If chances of reaching goals are small, motivation to participate dwindles. Downton and Wehr (1997) found that *all* persistent peace activists in their study held the perception that their actions made a difference and resulted at least in modest success. Again departing from the idea that first-timers need to get across more barriers than other demonstrators, we expect first-timers to be more optimistic about the potential outcome of the protest. This may be caused by the fact that, having less experience with collective action, protest tyros have unrealistic expectations about success chances (Klandermans 1997) or by the fact that their sheer eagerness and enthusiasm to participate affects their trade-off and pushes them to overrate success chances. Either way, *first-timers, compared to experienced protesters, are more optimistic about the outcomes of the protest* (H_in3).

Collective identity as a motivation refers to the fact that protesters feel addressed by a certain issue because they identify with a group that is associated with the issue. Again to overcome the larger barriers of participation due to their inexperience, first-timers are expected to identify more with the protesting crowd than more frequent protesters. Also the fact that we asked our respondents about their feelings of identification with the other participants only *after* their effective participation probably contributes to their being more motivated through group identification. Indeed, whereas routine protesters are aware of the internal tensions and differences between different participants and staging organizations within a protest demonstration, we expect protest first-timers to be more 'naïve', more impressed by the protest event itself, in which they participated for the first time,

and, consequently, to hold a more positive view of the other participants. *First-timers, compared to experienced protesters, are characterized by a stronger feeling of collective identity and identification with their fellow protesters* (H_in4).

Apart from the socio-structural background of the participants and their motivation to participate, also the way they are mobilized may matter. The literature overwhelmingly claims that mobilization is a key variable to understand political participation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). It is via formal or via informal micro-mobilization networks that people are incited to take part in protest (McAdam 1988). Embeddedness in networks dramatically increases the chances of being targeted by mobilization efforts: organizations mobilize their members; friends and family mobilize their peers. Networks structurally connect people to others increasing the chances of being asked to participate (Passy 2002; Schussman and Soule 2005). On top of that, networks socialize individuals into groups, generate shared conceptions of issues, and create affective ties with other people and possibly with organizations (Passy 2002). Furthermore networks also have a decision-shaping function, not only based on shared presumptions and solidarities, but also on an evaluative basis: simply being asked by others or knowing that others will join are important predictors of participation (Verba et al. 1995; Passy 2002; Schussman and Soule 2005; Granovetter 1978; Klandermans 1997). Consequently, sustained activism is strongly linked with integration in formal and informal networks (Downton and Wehr 1997) and we expect first-timers to display the exact opposite features. In rare cases, mobilization is possible without networks. In certain circumstances mass media, for example, can take over the mobilizing role of organizations and urge people to take the streets even without them being integrated in networks (Walgrave and Manssens 2000; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). This type of "open" mobilization, in contrast to the more "closed" mobilization by organizations, targets the population as a whole and is not confined to people with specific (network) features (Walgrave and Klandermans 2009). Applied to the present first-timers puzzle, we anticipate that *first-time participants, compared to experienced demonstrators, are mainly mobilized via open mobilization channels and display less organizational membership or affiliations* (H_in5).

The five hypotheses above are all situated on the individual level. We argued earlier that first-timership is also affected by contextual, aggregate-level factors. In the remainder of this section, we propose three aggregate-level hypotheses. The first contextual variable is the most straightforward one. Protest goes in cycles: sometimes societies are hit by a wave of protest with a plethora of movements organizing a wide range of massive contentious events; sometimes the same societies witness a tranquil episode with hardly any contentious gatherings nor deep conflicts fought out on the streets (Tarrow 1991). If the agencies typically staging protest events—trade unions, social movements, political parties etc.—stay silent for a while, protest 'supply' will be low. Even people willing and prepared to hit the streets for a certain matter will not find an offer that suits their 'demand' for participation (Klandermans 2004). This applies even more for protest first-timers. As they do not have any experience with protest participation, they are less able to actively search themselves for concealed and small protest opportunities and they are more dependent than experienced protesters on large events with ample

publicity and a large outreach. Secondly, the lower protest supply has been in a given period, the more citizens have been 'waiting' for an opportunity to give expression to their grievances that have been building up. Eventually an opportunity may present itself and those stand-by contestants might effectively participate for the first time. Purely mechanically and due to the increase of 'standby' protesters through time, more first-timers will be attracted when the protest supply finally goes up. So, we hypothesize that protest events staged after a long period of protest absence will attract a large amount of first-timers. *In a given society there are less first-time protesters after a preceding protest wave than when there is no preceding high general protest activity* (H_ag1).

Protest issue and movement type play a role too. Demonstrations on different issues—for instance on pro-choice, asylum seekers' rights or unemployment benefits—are likely to attract different kinds of people as well as different proportions of first-timers. Mobilizing issues have not received much scholarly attention, certainly not in a comparative way. Still their importance is undeniable. Jennings and Andersen (2003, p. 117) for instance argue that mobilizing issues are important factors accounting for differential participation: "a richer comprehension of political participation requires more studies of issue-specific activists and the specification of contextual factors that serve to motivate more intensive degrees of participation." Also Verba et al. (1995, p. 522), in their seminal work on civic voluntarism regard mobilizing issues as 'theoretical wildcards' in explaining political participation. Protest issues, and the movements that mobilize on them, can be classified in many ways. In political science, the classic left-right distinction is the most well-known. Studies have shown that, on the individual level, left-wing people tend to participate more in protest than their right-wing fellow-citizens (Norris et al. 2005) and that the mobilizing force of left-wing movements to a large degree depends upon the position of government and opposition (Kriesi et al. 1995). But the left-right division is less useful when it comes to classifying issues and the movements that occupy them, and to distinguish first-timers from experienced protesters. In most countries nearly all mobilizing issues are situated on the left side of the left-right dimension; right-wing social movements are less frequent (and often incorporated by right-wing (opposition) parties) and they have less mobilizing force. Similarly, the majority of the protest events we covered are to be categorized as left-wing demonstrations. Using a one-dimensional left-right scale would too strongly reduce issue variance. The most established typology among social movement scholars distinguishes between 'old' and 'new' social movements. This typology is much more encompassing than the left-right scale as it entails a whole range of differences between both movement types with regards to ideology, scope, constituency, mobilization patterns, and organizational backbone. Old social movements deal with bread-and-butter issues and consist of the traditional left: trade unions, parties, and movements fighting inequality and defending the interests of weaker population segments. New social movements, in contrast, focus on post-materialist as well as often-called left-libertarian issues as there are the environment peace, third world, but also for instance women's and gays' and lesbians' rights (Klandermans and Tarrow 1988; Kriesi et al. 1995; Melucci 1989; della Porta and Rucht 1991). Recently, scholars have noticed the existence of a very specific type

movements and alongside protest upraises that do not fit within the old-new social movement categorization. Following Walgrave and Verhulst (2006), we preliminary call them 'new emotional movements', which come into existence after highly publicized events of random and senseless violence or are, more generally, directly reacting to a "suddenly imposed grievance" (Walsh 1981),. By adopting the term 'new emotional movements' we do not imply that other movements would not be emotional; as we argued above all movements and all mobilizations draw to some extent on emotions, and these are not the dichotomous counterparts of rationality (Turner and Killian (1987, p. 9); Jasper 1998). Neither do we assert that these movements and protests are 'new' in the sense that they are unprecedented in history, since new emotional movements are probably of all times, and some of them do evolve into more established social movements (see Walgrave and Verhulst 2006). The newness does however refer to their empirical uniqueness which makes that existing theoretical models of social movements and collective action does not fully grasp their genesis and development (Walgrave and Verhulst 2006) They do constitute a very specific type of movements and protest events on issues with a high emotional mobilizing capacity, and others have referred tot hem as 'pain and loss activism' (Jennings 1999), 'focusing event protests' (Birkland 1998; Goss 2001), protest resulting from 'moral shocks' (Jasper and Poulsen 1995) or 'social responsibility movements' (Morris and Braine 2001). They are 'a-typical' movements, in the sense that they are lacking several features which are deemed crucial for movement existence, the most important being strong movement leadership and organizational backbones. (Morris and Staggenborg 2004; Walgrave and Verhulst 2006), which are often substituted for by intense media attention and the mobilization force of deep-felt emotions (Walgrave and Verhulst 2006; Goss 2001).

As the issues and the three types of movements dealing with them differ dramatically, we expect the number of first-timers attending their typical protest events to differ too. In general, new social movements (NSM) display a high demonstration frequency and have a base of engaged supporters, often active on several related issues, and not seldom embedded with typical new social movement 'milieus'. Emblematic for the NSM issues is their universal scope and long-term perspective. Because of this we expect NSM demonstrations to attract relatively few first-timers: NSM demonstrations strive for general collective goods and first-timers thus must have overcome the classic collective action dilemma (Olson 1965; Klandermans 1997). Old social movements (OSM) protest less frequently but when they do they are often protesting massively. Not seldom, however, OSM demonstrations deal with particularistic bread-and-butter issues that concern short-term threats like corporate restructurings. Consequently the direct personal stakes are high as their demonstrations typically aim for immediate short-term success. Direct stakes and short-term effect expectations are expected to attract relatively many first-timers with a direct interest in the cause. New emotional movements and other 'reactive' movements (NEM), by contrast, are ephemeral and discontinuous phenomena. Short but explosive outbursts are followed by years of latency and silence until the next triggering event boosts issue attention. These movements are typically able to mobilize a heterogeneous public (Walgrave and Verhulst 2006) and thus attract the largest amount of first-timers. This leads to a

second aggregate-level hypothesis: *protest events staged by new emotional movements are attended by a larger share of first-timers than events staged by old social movements that, in turn, are attended by more first-timers than the protest events of new social movements* (H_ag2).

Our final aggregate hypothesis can be explained very briefly. Chances are high that large demonstrations attract more first-timers than small ones. All other things being equal, large demonstrations manage to mobilize more people from the fringes of the protest-staging organizations and we anticipate finding less experienced protesters there. More importantly, as numbers go up thresholds for participation go down. Many accounts have showed that one of the main motivators for protest participation is the expected turnout (Granovetter 1978; Klandermans 1984). Expected massive attendance may convince many potential participants to participate and it will, especially, persuade first-timers as they need more encouragement to take the protest participation step for the first time. This argument is closely related to the normalization of protest. Protest size can be considered as a proxy for normalcy: the more people participate in an event, the larger the chance that a more representative segment of the population participates in it and, hence, that there will be a considerable share of first-time participants (see also Walgrave and Verhulst 2009a). *The larger the demonstration, the larger the relativeshare of first-timers participating in it* (H_ag3).

Data and Methods

To answer the questions raised above we draw upon exceptional evidence consisting of survey data covering a broad range of Belgian and international protest events, all large demonstrations mainly in capital cities. Protest data were collected relying on an innovative protest survey methodology consisting of directly questioning participants at major demonstrations. The actual survey process used to establish a random survey of demonstration participants was twofold. First, fieldwork supervisors counted the rows of participants, selecting every Nth row, to ensure that the same number of rows was skipped throughout. Then a dozen interviewers were directed toward every Nth person in that row and distributed questionnaires to these individuals during the actual protest march. The selected participants were asked to complete a questionnaire at home and to mail it back. In addition to the mail-survey, for some of the covered demonstrations, participants were interviewed in person before they were handed over the envelope. These answers are used to test for response bias of the mail-back questionnaires. Earlier tests found that only age significantly affects response. Older people are more inclined to send back their questionnaire than younger people. For all other variables, previous studies found no systematic response bias. For more information and methodological tests of selection and response bias of protest surveys we refer to the work by Walgrave and Verhulst (2009b). All 18 protest surveys reported here (except one, which we will explain below) draw on this same field work method.

Our database covers a large variety of 18 separate demonstrations all staged in the 2003–2007 period. Of these 18 demonstrations, nine took place in Brussels, the

Belgian capital; the remaining demonstrations were staged in seven Western countries. The dataset thus covers two subsets of demonstrations that will be used in different empirical sections of the paper: eight anti-war demonstrations in different countries (2003) and ten demonstrations around various issues in Belgium (2006–2007).

First, the International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) covers anti-war demonstrations in Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, the UK, and the USA. All demonstrations were staged on February 15, 2003, the worldwide action day against the war on Iraq (Walgrave and Rucht 2009). February 15, 2003, probably, represents the largest protest event in history. An estimated 10 million people took to the streets in approximately 600 cities around the globe (Verhulst 2009). IPPS was fielded by an international team of social movement scholars in the eight nations under study. In all countries, a common questionnaire and the earlier described field work method was employed. IPPS covers a random sample of demonstrators engaged in eleven[1] different demonstrations in eight countries involving 5,772 respondents in total (Table 1).

Second, ten Belgian protest surveys were conducted in the 2006–2007 period and are incorporated in the Multi Issue Protest Survey (MIPS) dataset. Response rate and basic facts and figures about these protest events can be found in Table 2. MIPS covers a broad variety of protest events that can be categorized in the typology of new social movements, old social movements, and new emotional movements that we proposed earlier. There are three typical new emotional movement events in the dataset (March for Joe, Silent March, and March for Unity). The first two—March for Joe and the Silent March—were staged after the brutal killings of innocent people; the March for Joe constituted the largest demonstration Belgian witnessed in 10 years. The third demonstration, the March for Unity, was organized in reaction to the extremely difficult government formation process and the severe linguistic tensions that caused them. It shares with both other demonstrations in this type the typical 'reactive', emotional, and unorganized dynamic. MIPS also features three typical new social movement events: a demonstration for asylum-seekers, a protest against the military intervention in Iraq, and the Belgian demonstration on the 2007 Global Climate Action Day. The three events were all staged by typical new social movement organizations: solidarity groups with immigrants, the peace movement and the environmental movement. The dataset also contains four old social movement events. Three were staged by the trade unions on bread and butter issues: a demonstration against the planned restructuring (and redundancies) of the Belgian brewer InBev, the biggest beer company in the world; a demonstration against possible layoffs at the Brussels (Forest) Volkswagen car assembly factory, and a demonstration against lowering purchasing power. The fourth old social movement event was the Flemish March. It was organized by the typical 'old' Flemish nationalist movement that has been mobilizing since decades and consists of strong organizations. Altogether, MIPS counts 2,613 successful surveys.

[1] IPPS covered one demonstration in all participating nations, except for the US and the UK where respectively three (Seattle, Washington, San Francisco) and two (London and Glasgow) marches were covered. Since there were no significant differences between the respondents of these different locations, we aggregated the evidence on the country level.

Table 1 Response rate and facts and figures of International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS)

Country	US	UK	Spain	Italy	Netherlands	Switzerland	Belgium	Germany
Place	N.Y., Seattle, San Francisco	London, Glasgow	Madrid	Rome	Amsterdam	Bern	Brussels	Berlin
Time	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003	15 Feb 2003
Aim	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq	Stop war against Iraq
# participants	1,000,000	1,000,000	800,000	3,000,000	70,000	45,000	75,000	500,000
Questionnaires								
Distributed	1,500	1,400	1,200	1,025	1,000	1,200	1,100	1,500
Completed	698	544	445	1002	541	637	508	780
Response rate (%)	47	39	37	98	54	53	46	52

Table 2 Response rate and facts and figures of Multi Issue Protest Survey (MIPS)

Type	NSM	NSM	OSM	NEM	NEM	OSM	OSM	NEM	NSM	OSM
Name	Asylum-seekers	Anti-Iraq occupation	InBev	March for Joe	Silent march	VW forest	Flemish march	March for unity	Climate action	Purchasing power
Place	Brussels	Brussels	Leuven	Brussels	Antwerp	Brussels	Sint-Joost	Brussels	Brussels	Brussels
Time	Feb. '06	March '06	March '06	April '06	May '06	Dec. '06	May '07	Nov '07	Dec '07	Dec'07
Aim	Rights and respect illegal immigrants	Against occupation Iraq	Against restructu-ring InBev beer multi-national	Against violence + in memoriam Joe Van Holsbeeck	Against racism + in memoriam victims racist killings	Against restructu-ring and possible layoffs	Regional Flemish claim + Flemish indepen-dance	For the unity of Belgium	Against global warming and climate change	Against inflation and lowering purchasing power
# participants	10,000	5,000	2,000	80,000	20,000	15,000	1,500	35,000	3,000	20,000
Questionnaires										
Distributed	858	915	722	1018	1281	878	554	515	548	398
Completed	149	315	98	437	573	270	235	221	185	126
Response (%)	17	34	14	43	45	31	42	43	34	32

NSM new social movement; *OSM* old social movement; *NEM* new-emotional movement

Browsing through both the tables of IPPS and MIPS shows that response rates differ across events. In general, response rates approximate 40% which is very satisfying for a survey without reminders; most studies on targeted populations report much smaller response rates (Dillman 2000). In the IPPS dataset the 98% response rate of Italy strikes the eye. The reason simply is that the Italian research team decided not to distribute the questionnaires in the protesting crowd in Rome but to hand out the questionnaires in the trains transporting people to the demonstration venue and to later recollect the on the train completed questionnaires. Hardly anyone of the selected demonstrators refused to collaborate. As shown elsewhere (Walgrave and Wagemann 2009), differences between Italian and other IPPS nationals are probably partly due to methodological artifacts. Although the recorded number of first-timers is lowest in Italy, the Italian sample is in not really exceptional or outlying for the rest. We decided to keep it on board aware of the fact that we must be cautious when interpreting the Italian data. Second, in MIPS too response rates vary, although less dramatically. Especially the Asylum-seekers (17%) and the InBev (14%) demonstrations yielded low response rates. The reason for the Asylum-seekers event was that many of them—being (foreign) people 'without papers' (*sans-papiers*)—did not fully understand what a survey entails and had a problem with understanding the questionnaires' languages.[2] At InBev, the atmosphere was hostile and the questionnaire seemed not fit for surveying outraged manual workers (see for much more detail: Walgrave and Verhulst 2009b). Still, we think these lower response rates do not affect the validity of the results reported here. There is no aggregate correlation between response rates and the proportion of first-timers and the recorded first-timers in these events do not differ more from the recidivists than in any of the other events.

The two subsets of protest data, IPPS and MIPS, draw upon different versions of a gradually further elaborated questionnaire. Within IPPS and MIPS demonstrations, the same questionnaire was used throughout. Variables, scales, and measures are available in full detail in the Technical Appendix. As IPPS and MIPS draw on partly different measures it is difficult to merge the data. Therefore, both datasets will be used alternately. To test the aggregate-level hypotheses we will use both IPPS and MIPS. To test the individual-level hypotheses we will only draw on MIPS. Armed with this pile of evidence including a total of 8,385 protest participants across issues and countries, we now turn to testing our research questions. First, we examine whether the share of first-timers varies across issues and nations. Then, we tackle the individual level hypotheses, we test the aggregate-level hypotheses, and we combine both levels in an encompassing analysis.

First-Timers Across Issues and Nations

The study makes use of two different definitions of first-timers: (1) people who state that it is the first time *during the last 5 years* that they demonstrate; (2) people who

[2] By way of illustration; one of our interviewers at a certain moment was beleaguered by sans papiers, since they thought he was handing out official residence permits.

claim that this is the first time *ever* that they take to the streets. We asked the 'since 5 years' question in IPPS; we asked the 'ever-demonstrated' question in MIPS. Obviously, both measures gauge different things. People who have remained silent for 5 years and who re-engage in protest are, strictly speaking, no first-time participants. They are re-activated having been off the protest scene for a while. Studies have shown that activists' views on a range of issues in the most 'activist' period of their lives does not alter all that much for decades, although some extreme positions are likely to get moderated (Marwell et al. 1987). They are also likely to stay politically active and involved in political organizations throughout their lives (McAdam 1989). This way, we can assume that those who have retreated from the streets for a period of 5 years or longer will indeed differ considerably from the protest recidivists who are more likely to put continuous time and efforts in their activism. Under these assumptions, the same barrier mechanisms come into play, although probably to a lesser extent, when activating and mobilizing both real protest 'virgins' and those re-engaging in protest after at least 5 years of silence. Table 3 contains the basic figures for all demonstrations in our sample.

Differences in shares of first-timers are large. More than half (+54%) of the people who took to the streets in Amsterdam on February 15, 2003, to protest

Table 3 First-time protest participants in IPPS and MIPS datasets

Dataset	Country	% first-timers (past 5 years)
IPPS	The Netherlands	54.5
	UK	48.9
	US	29.8
	Switzerland	26.4
	Spain	20.7
	Belgium	23.4
	Germany	22.1
	Italy	9.4
	IPPS total	24.5
	Name demonstration	% first-timers (ever)
MIPS	March for unity	26.2
	March for Joe	23.1
	InBev	21.5
	Silent march	21.0
	VW Forest	14.8
	Climate action	14.2
	Asylum-seekers	11.6
	Flemish march	6.1
	Purchasing power	4.8
	Anti Iraq occupation	3.1
	MIPS total	16.2

Source: IPPS and MIPS datasets

against the imminent war on Iraq were demonstrating for the first time. In contrast, 3 years later, in March 2006, merely one in 30 (3%) of the Brussels demonstrators against the same war protested for the first time. Differences across issues are even bigger than differences across nations. On the one hand, all IPPS demonstrations against war in Iraq, with the exception of the Rome demonstration, witnessed a high to very high amount of first-timers. On the other hand, some issues attract many first-timers (e.g. March for Joe, Silent March, InBev, March for Unity etc.) while other issues draw very few first-timers (e.g. Flemish March, Purchasing Power). The figures in Table 3 will serve as dependent variables in the aggregate analyses in the next section.

Before proceeding to test the hypotheses we draw attention to the fact that our key measure of first-timership does exactly what it claims to do but no more than that: it measures whether people show up for a protest demonstration for the first time in their lives (or for the first time in 5 years). The notion of first-timership suggests, though, that there is more to follow and that people who participate for the first time stand at the beginning of an activist career with more subsequent participation in the future. However, our one shot surveys do not allow distinguishing initial participants who will adopt a militant career afterwards from one-shot participants for whom the first time will remain the only time. It is likely that many of the people that we define here as first-timers will turn out to be single-timers. For another study, we collected follow-up data surveying some of the same protesters a year later again (Verhulst and Van Laer 2009). Asking them whether they had participated in another protest event in the year that had passed since their first participation, only a quarter of them answered that they did so. A year is a short time of course, but we think it is safe to suppose that at least half of the first-timers in our study here are not at the beginning of an activist career but participate just once. In terms of the theory and hypotheses tested below, though, the fact that many first-timers happen to be one-shot participants does not make a difference. The basic idea that barriers for participation are higher for first-timers than for experienced protesters applies to 'career-starting' and one-shot participants alike. Also the theoretical (the link with normalization) and practical (for social movements) relevance of our results is not jeopardized by purely focusing on first-timers without knowing whether they will persist or not still makes a lot of sense. Recruitment of new militants for movements and protest normalization always involve first-time participation in some way or another. The fact that many of them quit afterwards does not change the fact that movements can only survive by attracting first-time participants and that the protest normalization process can only continue when first-timers are attracted.

Individual-Level Analyses: Do First-Timers Differ from Experienced Prostesters

For the individual-level analyses, we draw upon the MIPS-dataset containing 2,613 individuals participating in one of the ten Belgian demonstrations surveyed between 2006 and 2007. Variables, measures and scales are documented in the Technical

Table 4 Logistic regression models (individual-level only) predicting first-timership

	Model I ($N = 1804$) Exp (B)	Model II ($N = 1484$) Exp (B)	Model III ($N = 1294$) Exp (B)
Socio-demos (who)			
Age	.988**	.988*	.983**
Working (ref: full-time)			
Not working	1.329*	1.109	1.045
Part time	.910	.951	.937
Motivation (why)			
Anger/indignation		.920***	0.935*
Frustration/powerlessness	–	1.073**	1.079**
Success chance (instrumentality)	–	1.149**	1.092
Collective identity	–	1.218	1.415**
Mobilization (how)			
Organizational circle	–	–	.572***
Open/closed mobilization	–	–	.730***
Nagelkerke R^2	.010	.039	.119

Source: MIPS dataset

Notes: the dependent variable is first time "ever" participant, with 1: 'no' and 2: 'yes'. data are weighed on demonstrations, weighed to mean

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Appendix. We run binary logistic regressions on the MIPS dataset pooling the ten MIPS-demonstration in a single analysis. The data are weighed, giving all demonstrations the same weight. Table 4 contains the results. The coefficients in the table are odds ratios: a value above 1.0 refers to a positive and a value below 1.0 refers to a negative relationship.

The first thing that strikes the eye is the unspectacular explained variance (Adjusted R^2) the first two models. The explanatory power of the models grows from I to III but it remains fairly low. The primary conclusion we can draw is that first-timers, individually speaking, are not very different from more experienced demonstrators, at least not when it comes to the variables we measured here. Within the same demonstration, first-timers and experienced protesters display more or less the same features. To some extent, this was to be expected. After all *both* first-timers and experienced protesters show up at the *same* demonstration and exert the *same* behavior. It is natural, then, that they more or less resemble each other. That being said, we do find some significant differences between both types of participants that more or less confirm some of the individual-level hypotheses. We first discuss the socio-demographic hypothesis, then the motivational hypotheses, and finally the mobilization hypothesis.

Results in terms of age confirm the idea of biographical availability and underpin the first individual-level hypothesis (H_in1). Most first-timers can be found among the relatively younger. The professional situation—a second aspect of biographical

availability—does not yield strong results. The parameters behave consistently through models I to III—it is people with time on their hands who seem to participate more for the first time—but only the difference between full time workers and people who do not work is significant, and only in the first model. So, the arguments put forward above that it are the resources that come with a job rather than the job-related time-constraints that affect repeated activism get only weak support.

Three individual-level hypotheses regarded the demonstrators' motivations. In terms of their emotional motivation—the anger and indignation versus frustration and powerlessness driving the protesters—we confronted our respondents with a list of emotions and asked them to declare to what extent they experienced 'anger' and 'indignation', and 'frustration' and 'powerlessness' when thinking about the issue of the demonstration. We developed a simple additive scale of both sets of emotions. Both the anger/indignation as well as the frustration/powerlessness dimensions give robust and interesting results. First, first time protesters are *not* more angry or indignant than their more experienced counterparts, even the contrary is true. Both groups show considerable anger and indignation, but the more well-versed protesters even significantly more. First-timers' anger and indignation could very well be important in attracting them to the streets, but this is not to be made out based on our data. Clearly, protest experience is an emotions-reinforcing process, and the more one becomes an issue activist, the more the issue at stake becomes the object of hard-felt emotions of anger and indignation. Additionally we measured the degree to which the protest issue is the object of individual frustration and feelings of powerlessness. Again, this emotional dimension gives strong, robust and significant results. Protest first-timers experience more feelings of frustration and powerlessness about the protest issue. High levels of frustration on an issue are thus likely to lead new people to the streets, and this fits perfectly within the normalization theses: people who do not find a way to vent their dissatisfaction, a venue to address their complaints, or a more conventional insititution that occupies satisfyingly with the issue they care about, they will be more prone to hit the streets to vent their concerns. Clearly, our emotions' analysis works, but it does not fully reflect our expectations stating that first-timers are both 'more outraged' and 'more frustrated' (H_in2).

The instrumentality hypothesis stated that first-timers would be more optimistic about the potential outcomes of the protest (H_in3). Results are mixed. In Model II the instrumentality variable is significant, but the significance disappears when we control for the mobilization variables in Model III; clearly instrumental motivations are linked to network embeddedness. Still, the fact that Model II shows higher success chances is important in combination with the previous results, because this clearly shows that first-timers with higher levels of issue-related powerlessness and frustration do find that the demonstration they take part in does can change things in a favorable direction. In other words, this demonstration is truly a means for them to change their feelings on the issue. To conclude on the instrumentality hypothesis: in the first model expected success chance is significantly different for first-timers than for the experienced protesters. Consequently, the instrumental motivation hypothesis gets some support.

The collective identity hypothesis asserted that first-timers would identify more with their fellow-demonstrators (H_in4). Our identity variables seem to warrant that claim, although in model II significance is right above the threshold (0,051). In model III, the persons participating in a demonstration for the first time in their life have a significantly more optimistic view about the protest's unity and identity and they feel closer to their fellow demonstrators than those that have (had) experience in protest before. The predictive power of the variable seems to get stronger as we control for more other variables.

Finally, the mobilization hypothesis (H_in5) is strongly confirmed by the analyses. Mobilization type and both its indicators are robust predictors of first-timership. Membership of an organization that (co-)stages the event, or, if not, knowing someone who is a member, makes an excellent predictor of a continuing protest practice. The more people are member or know a member of an organizing organization, the higher the chance that they have participated before. Reversing this finding, it is likely that participation will lead to organizational membership, which, in turn, perpetuates participation. A second variable tapping mobilization is that of mobilization channels through which people came to attend the demonstrations. We rank-ordered the information channels people indicated to have mobilized them onto the streets according to the open versus closed mobilization logic (Walgrave and Klandermans 2009) (see Technical Appendix). Clearly, and as expected, are first-timers far more mobilized through 'open' mobilization channels like mass media, or friends and family, and far less by movements' mobilization efforts or organizational involvement. The mobilization hypothesis can be strongly confirmed.

Concluding the individual-level analysis, this micro-level approach did yield several interesting although admittedly not very strong results. First-timers and recidivists are not very different, but some clear patterns could be established. Biographical availability seems to play a role as the age variable indicates. Motivation is strongly associated with first-timership, but not always robustly, and not always in the expected direction. Emotions play an important role, not only in explaining first-timership, but also in explaining enduring participation. Instrumental motivations do distinguish first-timers from recidivists to some extent, and also the collective identity of both groups consistently differs. The strongest predictors are mobilization type and organizational membership. So, we substantiate the biographical availability hypothesis (H_in1) and in particular the mobilization hypothesis (H_in5), we cautiously maintain the instrumentality (H_in3) and collective identity (H_in4) hypotheses, and we partially confirm the emotions hypothesis (H_in2).

Aggregate-Level Analyses: Do Demonstration Features Matter for First-Timership

Some of the aggregate-level hypotheses regarding the share of first-timers in demonstrations may be tested comparing countries, others comparing issues. The hypothesis about protest waves (H_ag1) is tested drawing on the IPPS data of anti-war protests in eight countries in 2003. To tap the protest cycle in each of the

Table 5 First-timers (5 years), and protest wave per country (IPPS) with Pearson correlations and significance (one-tailed)

	NL	UK	US	SW	BE	GE	SP	IT	Corr.	Sig
First-timers (%)	54.5	48.9	29.8	26.4	23.4	22.1	20.7	9.4	–	
Protest wave (ESS)	2.8	4.4	–	7.7	8.4	11.4	16.1	11.2	−.820	.013

Source: IPPS dataset and European Social Survey 2002

countries, we use exogenous comparative data concerning the general level of demonstration activism in seven of the eight sampled countries in the period just preceding the IPPS protests; we lack similar US data. In fact, the second wave of the comparative European Social Survey (ESS) questioning representative samples of most European populations was fielded in 2002, just before the anti-war protest in February 2003. In seven of the countries under study sampled respondents were asked by the ESS whether they "had participated in a lawful demonstration during the past 12 months?".[3] As this question explicitly refers to participation 'during the past 12 months' we can use it to assess whether there was a heightened protest activity in those countries in the period just preceding the IPPS survey. So, the number of ESS respondents indicating that they had participated in a demonstration during the last 12 months is a good indicator of the fact whether the country was in a protest wave, a phase of heightened protest activity in a country, or not. Table 5 correlates the aggregate first-timers IPPS data with the ESS protest wave evidence.

The table indicates that there are quite some differences in general protest activity in the preceding period between countries. In Spain and Italy, for example, ESS data indicate that many people had participated in protest (mainly against their right-wing governments) while his is much less so in the Netherlands and the UK. Preceding national protest waves seem to matter a lot for the amount of first-timers in subsequent events: the correlation is very high and, even with $N = 7$, it is very significant. To test whether a single outlier created this statistically strong relationship with such a small amount of cases we produced a scatter plot represented in Fig. 1 showing how the various countries score on the two variables. The plot documents that the association between protest wave and share of first-timers is consistent and not due to a single outlying case.

The evidence, thus, strongly endorses the protest wave hypothesis (H_ag1). Whether a country has just witnessed a protest wave or not effectively determines the number of first-time participants. When there is hardly any protest for a while (at least 1 year), the first significant outburst of protest will be attended by many first-time protesters.

The two remaining aggregate-level hypotheses about issue type (H_ag2) and demonstration size (H_ag3) can be put to the test relying on the MIPS dataset. This allows us to compare not across countries but across issues. Table 6 contains the evidence.

[3] See www.europeansocialsurvey.org for more details.

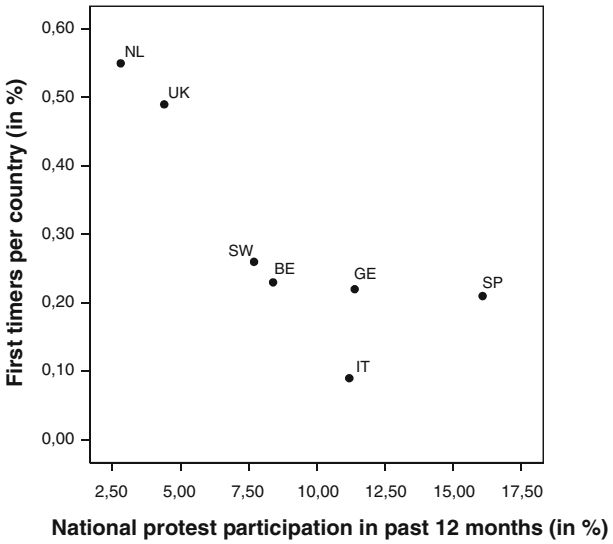

Fig. 1 Scatter plot with share of first-timers (IPPS) versus protest cycle stage (ESS)

Table 6 First-timers (MIPS) and correlation with issue type and demonstration size

Name demonstration	% first-timers (ever)	Issue Type (nsm = 1; osm = 2; nem = 3)	Demonstration size
MIPS			
Asylum-seekers	11.6	1	9,000
Anti Iraq occupation	3.1	1	4,000
Climate action	14.2	1	3,000
InBev	21.5	2	2,000
Flemish march	6.1	2	1,500
VW forest	14.8	2	20,000
Purchasing power	4.8	2	20,000
March for Joe	23.1	3	80,000
Silent march	21.0	3	20,000
March for unity	26.2	3	35,000
	N = 10	*Spearman's: .719 (sig .019)*	*Pearson's: .533 (sig .113)*

Source: MIPS dataset

Both hypotheses receive confirmation as is shown by the (nearly) significant strong correlations at the bottom of the table. The strongest predictor of the share of first-timers showing up is the type of movement staging the event (H_ag2). Events of new emotional movements appeal more to people who did not participate before than events set up by the old social movements; old social movement gatherings, in

turn, are populated by more first-timers than new social movement throngs. Protest size seems to matter too, albeit the correlation only approximates significance. As hypothesized, bigger demonstrations tend to bring more first-timers to the streets than smaller demonstrations (H_ag3).

Wrapping up the aggregate-level analysis, we can confirm our aggregate-level hypotheses. We were able to grasp a considerable part of the variation in the amount of first-time protesters in the 18 demonstrations under scrutiny.

Combining the Aggregate- and the Individual Level

So far, we treated both levels of analysis as separated entities and dealt with them in different sections. In reality, however, it is probably the *interplay* between individual characteristics and features of the demonstration that explains best who the first-timers are, why they take to the streets, and how they are mobilized (see also Martinez 2008). Therefore, in this section, we incorporate the aggregate-level variables in the binary logistic models. As a real multi-level analysis is not possible with only ten aggregate-level cases (level 2), we simply attributed the demonstration scores of Table 6 to the participants of the ten MIPS demonstrations. We included two aggregate-level variables: protest size and issue type—we do not have relevant protest wave data for the MIPS dataset. The binary logistic regression model in Table 7 contains the evidence. How does the inclusion of the aggregate-level variables in the individual-level regressions affect the results?

First of all, the explained variance of the model increases substantially, with an adjusted R^2 of .150. In terms of the individual-level predictors, the odds ratio's of the previous individual-level model variables remain significant. Adding the aggregate-level variables hardly affects them. This suggests that the individual-level variables do not depend on the context but are robust predictors of first-timership.

Turning to the macro variables, the protest size coefficient is not significant which challenges the protest size hypothesis (H_ag3). Size was a nearly significant predictor when not taking into account the individual variables; it turns out now that it was the specific composition of the demonstrations with many first-timers that was accountable for the size effect. Most striking and dominating the entire model is the strength of the protest type variable. The type of demonstration issue matters strongly for first-timership, even controlling for a whole range of individual level-characteristics. New emotional movements reacting on random violence or focusing events attract far more first-timers than new social movements and old social movements. Old and new social movements do not differ significantly which only partially validates the issue type hypothesis (H_ag2).

Wrapping up, we can state that the context of the protest plays a key role in driving people onto the streets for the first time. Whether people show up for the first time is not only a matter of their individual dispositions, their structural availability and their personal social networks that make them reachable for mobilization efforts. First-timership seems to be also a matter of supply on the

Table 7 Logistic regression model (individual-level and aggregate-level) predicting first-timership

	Model ($N = 1294$) Exp (B)
Socio-demos (who)	
Age	.977***
Working (ref: full-time)	
Not working	1.323
Part time	1.053
Motivation (why)	
Anger/indignation	.942*
Frustration/powerlessness	1.070*
Success chance (instrumentality)	1.078
Collective identity	1.320*
Mobilization (how)	
Organizational circle	.546**
Open/closed mobilization	.755***
Aggregate demonstration variables	
Protest size	1.000
Protest type (ref: NEM)	
NSM	.310**
OSM	1.249
Nagelkerke R^2	.150

Source: MIPS dataset

Notes: the dependent variable is first time "ever" participant, with 1: 'no' and 2: 'yes'.

Data are weighed on demonstrations, weighed to mean

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

protest market. When demonstrations are organized after a period of relative silence on the streets and, especially, when these demonstrations deal with typical reactive issues, the share of first-time participants lays significantly higher. Within that context, individual-level characteristics do play a role too. First-timers tend to be younger, they are more optimistic about the outcome of the protest, are less angry but more frustrated about the issue at stake, they identify more with their fellow-protesters, they are less members of, or mobilized through the protest-staging organizations, and more through mass media and their friends and family.

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of the study was to extend the existing knowledge of the dynamics of first-time participation in protest events. Although we start to know quite a lot about political (protest) activism, the research literature hardly tackles the important matter of who, why and how people participate in protest for the first-time. To embark on that puzzle we relied on extensive and innovative protest survey evidence covering 18 separate, large protest demonstrations in eight countries and across nine different issues. Of course, apart from participating in a large protest events there are other ways in which people can become engaged in

social movements and in politics; demonstration participation is just one of these ways (see for example Freeman 1975 and Whittier 1997 about recruitment in the women's movement; McAdam 1988 about recruitment in the Freedom Summer project; Jennings and Andersen on Aids activism, and many more). Yet, arguably, protest participation is one of the main avenues through which people can become activists. One of the most obvious reasons is that large protest demonstrations, much more than any other movement event, tend to attract many first-timers—apart from petitions they form the largest unconventional action repertoire (Norris 2002). In this study too, we found that substantial amounts of participants in the covered events—up to 54%—participated for their first time. Furthermore, using our protest survey method, we are able to compare between different protest events, which is an important benefit next to several valuable in-depth case studies.

What did we find? The individual-level models explained a modest amount of the variance among participants. Some hypotheses received confirmation; some others not or only mixed. New activism is affected by age, as the biographical availability thesis suggests, and by membership of organizing organizations as well as by mobilization channels as the mobilization hypothesis claims. There also is some evidence that identification with other demonstrations and optimism about the outcome distinguishes first-timers from protest veterans. Finally, emotions are important variables in singling out first-timers from protest recidivists. On the aggregate-level, we were much better able to predict consistently which demonstrations attract many first-time participants. Tests across nations and issues established that demonstrations staged during or right after a protest wave and demonstrations of the new emotional movements are on average attended by a larger share of first-time participants than other protest events. Clearly, context matters.

By and large, we found first-timers and recidivists to be not that individually different from each other, at least not concerning the variables incorporated in our questionnaires. To some extent these individual-level results were to be expected: after all both demonstrator types, new and veteran, displayed the *same* behavior as we compared demonstrators with… demonstrators. Moreover, a segment of the first-time participants we surveyed here will later turn out to become experienced protesters just like the recidivists we compared them with. It seems logical to suppose that these 'to become recidivists' among our first-timers already resemble the effective protest veterans to a large extent. Added to that comes the fact that our results could have been affected by our protest survey design. We only questioned people *after* their participation: we asked them to take home our questionnaire, to fill it in, and to send it back to us. It might be the case that first-timers *through their participation* have become more alike recidivists. Until their first-time participation, they may have held different ideas but living through the same demonstration experience they adopted the same or, at least similar, ideas as the experienced protesters. In fact, this process of homogenization through participation seems natural as our main claim we set this paper off with was precisely that demonstration activism should be learned and that it is a major socializing experience. To control for the homogenizing effect of participation, we should be

able to survey people (right) before and not only after their actual participation experience.

Although the lack of sufficient numbers at level 2 (aggregate) prevented us from really presenting integrated multi-level models, the combination of the individual- and aggregate-level determinants led to the best results. Like all social and political phenomena, individual demonstration and participation dynamics seem to be contingent; they depend on the context. Social movement scholars have predominantly focused on the social and political context in which social movements operate. Political scientists, in contrast, have mainly examined the individual-level correlates of participation without incorporating context. We believe our analysis shows that by tentatively combining both levels of analyses one can shed more light on why and how people (start to) participate politically. Even if people have the right attitudinal dispositions, even if they are available and reachable they will not engage in protest automatically. It depends on the right 'supply' on the protest market. Even if there is a strong and appealing offer on the protest market, we still see that some people more easily take all participation barriers and engage in politics for the first time than others. The better conceptual and empirical integration of context and individuals remains the most important but trickiest task ahead in participation and social movement studies alike (Jennings and Andersen 2003). To conclude: in our search to dinstinguish first-timers from recidivists, we found that biographies, *and* individual motivations, *and* mobilization *and* protest cycles *and* protest issues are important explananda.

Finally, our findings also have consequences for social movements and their mobilization dynamics. One of the most interesting findings is that especially reactive, emotional movements mainly dealing with random violence and solidarity with its victims—following Walgrave and Verhulst (2006) we preliminary called them 'new emotional movements'—attract a large amount of first-timers. The question then becomes whether these movements manage afterwards to solidify the temporary bond with their new activists. Since these movements are much less organized than both other types of movements studied here, the old and new social movements, we suppose they are less able to keep their large amount of first-timers on board for later actions (see also Walgrave and Verhulst 2006). This suggests the following speculative paradox: the more movements and their events are strongly organized, the fewer first-timers they attract but the better they are able to keep those fewer first-timers on board; the less organized and organizationally embedded a protest event, the more first-timers may be attending but the less the movement manages to forge enduring bonds between these numerous individuals and the movement and to turn them into long-term activists. The context in which individuals participate for the first time may have consequences for their later engagement.

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Technical Appendix: variables and scales

Variable	Question	Construction
First time ever	*Could you indicate how many times you have ever participated in a local, national or international protest demonstration or manifestation?*	Based on the categorization of the original variable (1) this is the first time ever; (2) 2–5 times; (3) 6–10 times; (4) 11–20 times; (5) more than 20 times, we constructed a dummy variable with the values (1) has ever engaged in protest before (2) has never engaged in protest before.
First time past 5 years	*Could you indicate how many times you have ever participated in a local, national or international protest demonstration or manifestation?*	Based on the categorization of the original variable (1) this is the first time ever; (2) 2–5 times; (3) 6–10 times; (4) 11–20 times; (5) more than 20 times we constructed a dummy variable with the values (1) has engaged in protest in the past 5 years (2) has not engaged in protest in the past 5 years.
Age	*How old are you?*	String variable
Profession	*What is your professional situation?*	Recoded into three categories: (1) not working (between jobs; retired; housewife/house husband); (2) working part time; (3) working fulltime
Emotions:	*When you think about the theme of the demonstration, do you feel…?*	Two separate sum scales, each constructed by adding the individual scores of two original emotions variables ranging from (1) not relevant at all to (7) highly experienced emotion. The first scale was constructed by adding the scores on the emotions 'angry' and 'indignated', the second by adding the scores on the emotions 'frustrated' and 'powerless'.
Success chance	*How high do you estimate the chance that this demonstration will help attain the goal that is the most important to you?*	Ranged on a scale from (1) very small chance to (7) high chance.
Identity scale	*I have a lot in common with the people present here today; I strongly identify with the others present here today; I enjoy being part of this group.*	Mean of the answers on three identity questions, to be answered on a scale from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree.
Organizational circle	*Are you a member of one or more organizations that set-up this demonstration? If not, do you know someone who is a member?*	Combined dummy variable, with categories 'no on both' (0) and 'yes on one of both' (1).

continued

Variable	Question	Construction
Mobilization channels	*How did you find out about today's demonstration? Was it through: (1) radio or TV; (2) newspaper; (3) ads/flyers; (4) posters; (5) members' magazine from an organization/as-sociation; (6) friends, family, neigh-bors, acquaintances; (7) people at school/work; (8) organization/asso-ciation's meeting; (9) (co-)members from an organization or association; (10) website from an organization/association; (11) e-mail from an organization/association.*	The variable was constructed 'open' mobilization channels to more 'closed' ones. Respondents were able to tick multiple answers: we took into account the most 'closed' channel. Scale values are: 1 = *1* or *2* 2 = *6* or *7* 3 = *10* or *11* 4 = *3* or *4* 5 = *5* or *8* or *9*
Protest type		Protest issue being (1) new; (2) old, or (3) new emotional.
Protest size		Protest sizes are attributed as a variable on demonstration level, as indicated in table 5.
Protest cycle	*Have you participated in a lawful demonstration during the past 12 months*	European Social Survey (2002) data, with no (1) and yes (2).

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