

Protests Intervention Report

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Overview

Protests are a frequently used intervention in animal advocacy. We [estimate](#) that between 40 and 80 animal advocacy protests occur each week in the U.S. alone. Despite their prevalence, the purpose and effects of protests are poorly understood. One common misconception is that protests are intended to change public opinion; in fact, organizers often report that protests are intended to disrupt existing states of affairs in order to spur more systemic change.

Evaluating the effectiveness of protesting as an animal advocacy intervention is a complicated task, particularly because protests vary widely in implementation and context. Our report focuses on paradigmatic gatherings of activists that are disruptive¹ and nonviolent, but even these comprise a heterogeneous group. Because there is little empirical research on the effects of protests in animal advocacy, we draw from research on the effects of protests in other social movements. Our conclusions are inevitably uncertain, as questions remain about whether or to what extent evidence from other social movements generalizes to the animal advocacy context.



ANIMAL CHARITY
EVALUATORS

¹ We consider protests to be “disruptive” if they challenge, interrupt, or prevent the typical operations of their target.

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Intervention description and outcomes

Description

Protests occur when groups of activists join forces and confront an opponent in an attempt to spur change. Animal advocacy protests take many different forms, including but not limited to: rallies, demonstrations, picketing, sit-ins, marches, and vigils. Groups like [Direct Action Everywhere](#) (DxE) and [Collectively Free](#) stage small disruptive events in places that support the use of animals, including grocery stores, restaurants, and political rallies. [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#) (PETA) stages public stunts intended to capture the attention of bystanders and perhaps the media. [The Save Movement](#) holds regular vigils at or near slaughterhouses, stockyards, and other facilities in order to “[bear witness](#)” to the suffering and slaughter of animals. Groups like [The Humane League](#) (THL) and [Mercy For Animals](#) (MFA) stage silent protests at targeted institutions and make highly specific demands.

We [estimate](#) that there are 40–80 animal advocacy protests each week in the U.S. alone.² We estimate that, together, Collectively Free, DxE, and PETA staged approximately 300–400 protests in 2016.³ These protests generally had no more than 200 participants, with an approximate median size of seven participants.⁴ The Save Movement holds approximately 850–1,000 vigils in the U.S. each year.⁵ We estimate that groups like THL and MFA organize approximately 60–100 additional protests each year as a component of corporate campaigns. Of course, many other groups and individuals also organize protests.

² This range is a 90% subjective confidence interval (SCI). An SCI is a range of values that communicates a subjective estimate of an unknown quantity at a particular confidence level (expressed as a percentage). We generally use 90% SCIs, which we construct such that we believe the unknown quantity is 90% likely to be within the given interval and equally likely to be above or below the given interval.

³ We used these three charities’ websites, blogs, and social media pages to collect data on the protests they organized during the first six months of 2016. This project was not scientific, but it helped us get a rough sense of the number of protests that occur each year, as well as some of their outcomes. If you are interested in more information, please contact us.

⁴ The median size of the protests we observed during the first six months of 2016 is seven.

⁵ At our request, the Save Movement surveyed their local U.S. groups and received a count of 408 vigils organized in 2017. That count does not include the vigils held by their largest group, Los Angeles Animal Save, who they estimate organized approximately 100 vigils in 2017. Forty-one other groups did not respond. If each of those groups organized monthly vigils, that would be an additional 500.

Outcomes

Most likely short-term outcomes

Positive

- Positive attention from targets and witnesses
- Favorable media attention⁷
- Mobilizing and increased enthusiasm on the part of existing activists
- Recruitment and training of new activists
- Disruption of a corporation's normal operations (e.g., by blocking an entrance) such that management must step in to resolve the issue or face potential costs to their reputation
- Disruption of public affairs (e.g., by blocking a street) such that politicians or others in power must step in to resolve the issue
- Prompting of key influencers to become allies to the movement
- Prompting those in the countermovement to defect (e.g., to become whistleblowers on farms and in laboratories)

Negative

- Negative attention from targets and witnesses
- Unfavorable media attention
- Alienation of some potential activists from the cause
- Stress, legal trouble, and (rarely) physical harm to activists
- Prompting of key influencers to become opponents of the movement
- Less time spent by activists on other projects

⁷ There is some evidence of a negative correlation between media coverage of animal welfare and meat demand. See, for example:

Tonsor, G. T. & Olynk, N. J. (2010). [Impacts of Animal Well-Being and Welfare Media on Meat Demand](#). *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 62(1), 59–72.

Cordts, A., Nitzko, S., & Spiller, A. (2014). [Consumer Response to Negative Information on Meat Consumption in Germany](#). *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, 17(A), 83–106.

Tiplady, C. M., Walsh, DA. B., & Phillips, C. J. C. [Public Response to Media Coverage of Animal Cruelty](#). *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 26(4), 869–885.

Most likely intermediate-term outcomes

Positive

- Heightened public awareness of animal issues
- Solidification of some activists' commitment to the cause
- Corporate concessions
- Economic damages to corporations and industries
- Alliances with sympathetic corporations, politicians, or other movements
- Changes in public discourse and the political agenda

Negative

- Burnout for some activists
- Counter-mobilization on the part of corporations
- Backlash of support for corporations or industries

Most likely long-term outcomes

Positive

- Shifts in social norms (e.g., stigmatization of eating meat)
- Increased capacity of the animal advocacy movement
- Rights and protections for animals encoded in the law

Negative

- Damaging public perceptions of vegetarians and/or activists
- Legislation targeting activists
- Criminalization of activism

Theory of change

Diagram

To communicate the process by which we believe protests create change, we use [theory of change diagrams](#). It is important to note that these diagrams are not necessarily complete representations of real-world mechanisms of change. Rather, they are simplified models that ACE uses to represent our beliefs about mechanisms of change. For the sake of simplicity, some diagrams may not include relatively small or uncertain effects.

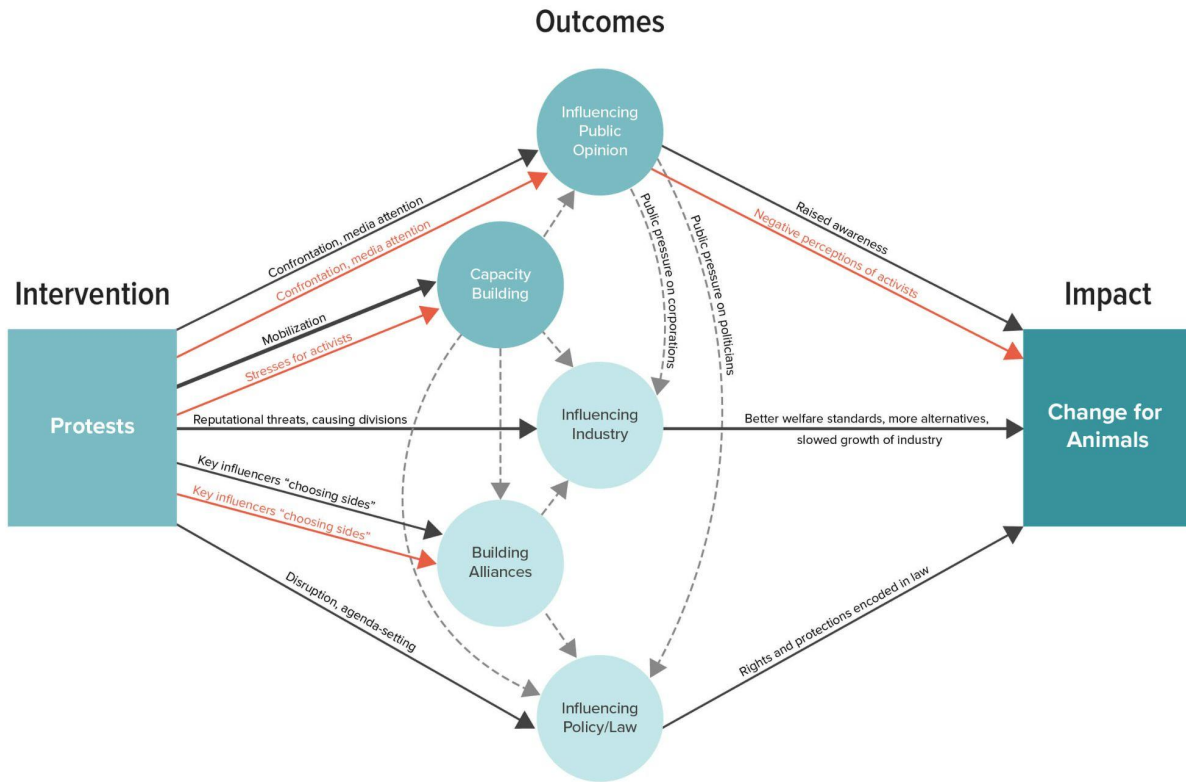









Fig. 2: Theory of change diagram for protests

Table 1: Legend for theory of change diagram

	Black arrows represent positive change for animals.
	Red arrows represent negative change for animals.
	Thinner arrows represent effects that we believe are relatively small.
	Thicker arrows represent effects that we believe are relatively large.
	We use dashed arrows to represent the effects that one type of outcome has on another type of outcome.
	Darker blue circles indicate the types of outcomes that we believe are relatively strongly influenced by the intervention.
	Lighter blue circles indicate the types of outcomes that we believe are relatively weakly influenced by the intervention.

Evidence for our theory of change

In this section, we will provide some evidence for the relatively direct links between protests and the outcomes that are represented in our theory of change diagram. Since this project is mainly concerned with the direct effects of protests, we do not focus here on the effects of one outcome on another (e.g., the effects of public opinion on industry).

Influencing public opinion

Protests seem to have a mixed effect on public opinion.

On the one hand, protests likely elevate public awareness of animal welfare, particularly through media stories. (People who learn about protests from the news likely outnumber those who witness them in person, by far.) On the other hand, there's some evidence that protest news items tend to be shorter and less balanced than non-protest items (Wouters, 2015). This suggests that there may be better approaches to media outreach.

One way that protests may draw non-activists into the movement is by producing “moral shocks:” situations that cause observers to be outraged. However, advocacy tactics that produce moral shocks can also backfire and produce extremely negative reactions in some witnesses (Mika, 2006).

Evidence from the Tea Party movement suggests that increased turnout at protests can influence public opinion favorably towards the protest’s cause (Madestam et al., 2013). On the other hand, protests may also damage public perceptions of activists, which can lower the public’s willingness to affiliate with the cause (Bashir et al., 2013). Feinberg et al. (2017) argue that the strongest predictor of mobilization is whether or not observers of collective action identify with the group being advocated for. They point to evidence that observers tend to distance themselves from anyone who is disruptive or challenges the status quo.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Approach	Context	Key Findings	Key Limitations
Mika, M.	2006	Framing the Issue: Religion, Secular Ethics and the Case of Animal Rights Mobilization ⁸	Focus group research	Investigates reactions to real animal advocacy campaigns in the U.S.	Campaigns intended to produce "moral shocks" effectively reached some non-activists, but produced extremely negative reactions in others.	This is a study of reactions to animal advocacy campaigns in general, not protests in particular. Focus groups may be subject to effects

⁸ Research related to animal advocacy

						like moderator bias. This study's sample is small (52) and is composed entirely of college students.
Bashir, N. Y., Lockwood, B., Chasteen, A. L., Nadolny, D., Noyes, I.	2013	The Ironic Impact of Activists: Negative Stereotypes Reduce Social Change Influence	Randomized controlled trial	Investigates participants' attitudes toward feminist and environmental activists	Participants' negative stereotypes of activists were associated with lower "willingness to affiliate" with the activists. The authors suggest that negative social perceptions play "a key role in creating resistance to social change."	The study investigated perceptions of "typical activists," not specifically protesters. Also, perceptions of feminists and environmental activists may differ from perceptions of animal activists.
Madestam, A., Shoag, D., Veuger, S., Yanagizawa-Drott, D.	2013	Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement	Observational study (uses rainfall as an instrumental variable)	Investigates the effects of political protests	Survey evidence indicates that the Tea Party protests raised public outrage at the status quo as well as support for some of the Tea Party's political views. ⁹	It's unclear whether and to what extent evidence from the Tea Party movement generalizes to the animal advocacy movement.
Wouters, R.	2015	Patterns in Advocacy Group Portrayal: Comparing Attributes of Protest and Non-Protest News Items Across Advocacy Groups	Observational study	Investigates 17 Belgian advocacy groups	"[A]cross all advocacy groups, protest [news] items are less frequently balanced and significantly shorter than non-protest items."	It's unclear whether and to what extent evidence about news coverage of social movements in Belgium generalizes to news coverage of the animal movement in the U.S.
Feinberg, M., Willer, R., Kovacheff, C.	2017	Extreme Protest Tactics Reduce Popular Support for Social Movements ¹⁰	Randomized controlled trial	A working paper Investigating bystander support for three movements (including animal advocacy) immediately after reading about their protests	This study suggests that those protest tactics which get the most media attention (e.g., protests that are inflammatory, disruptive, counter-normative, or harmful to others) are associated with lower levels of popular support for the movement than other protests.	In the study of perceptions of animal activists, the two "extreme" treatment groups involved fictional stories of activists breaking into labs. The protests we investigate in this report do not involve illegal activity. Still, the "extreme" Black Lives Matter and anti-Trump protests used in the study did not involve illegal

⁹ Counties with better weather during the tax day protests had significantly stronger Tea Party movements in the long term, as measured by public opinion surveys and increased Republican voter turnout in the next election.

¹⁰ Research related to animal advocacy

						activity and also showed an effect.
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Other evidence of the effects of protests on public opinion

- We estimate that U.S. animal advocacy protests generate a minimum of 200 local, national, and international news stories each year.¹¹
- Our informal online research¹² of protests suggests that witnesses occasionally react positively to protests, and sometimes even vow to change their behavior.¹³ However, reactions of apathy or anger are far more common.
- Zach Groff, a former organizer for Direct Action Everywhere (DxE), tells us that, in his experience, the most common witness reactions to protests are apathy and amazement, followed by anger. He suggests that interacting one-on-one with witnesses (e.g., by leafleting during a protest) can lead to more positive reactions.¹⁴
- We have observed that, occasionally, protests increase sympathy and support for the target of the protest.¹⁵

Capacity building

Protests seem to have a mixed, but net positive, effect on the capacity of the animal advocacy movement.

One way that protests can build or deplete the movement’s capacity is through their effects on activists.

Protesting may build capacity by drawing in new activists, providing them with a social network, raising

¹¹ We’ve identified approximately 100 news stories covering U.S. protests that took place during the first six months of 2016.

¹² We used online videos, Facebook posts, and news items to investigate the effects of approximately 160 protests that took place in the first half of 2016. This project was not scientific, but it helped us gain a sense of witness reactions to protests. Please feel free to contact us for more information.

¹³ For instance, a member of Collectively Free–Raleigh [reports](#) that one witness told him: “After seeing this, when I go home I’m going through my fridge. We’re making some changes.”

¹⁴ “The most frequent reactions are apathy and amazement, followed by anger. Typically at smaller events apathetic reactions are more common, while at larger events reactions such as amazement or anger become more common. Leafleting during protests provides the opportunity for person-to-person interactions, and Zach notes that reactions are often 3-1 in favor of positive reactions, and really only about 10% of witnesses display anger.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

¹⁵ For instance, when activists [disrupted](#) a Q&A with Carly Fiorina at the Iowa Pork Congress, Fiorina defended the pork industry and suggested the activists should care as much about fetuses as they do about pigs. Fiorina drew [applause and praise](#) from attendees.

their enthusiasm, and sometimes helping them build organizational, interpersonal, and public speaking skills that can be used in other forms of advocacy. They may also deplete the movement’s capacity by causing stress, legal trouble,¹⁶ problems with self-identity,¹⁷ and (very occasional) physical injury to activists.¹⁸ Some of these harms disproportionately affect activists with marginalized identities.¹⁹

Some activists might experience burnout or even retire from activism as a result of the harms of participation in protests. However, we often see that protesters react to setbacks with renewed commitment to their cause.^{20, 21} Some evidence suggests that anger in response to an unsuccessful protest and pride in a successful protest both predict intentions to continue protesting (Tausch & Becker, 2012). These findings are consistent with the dynamic dual pathway model of protest participation (van Zomeren et al., 2012).

There is weak evidence that protests lead to increases in grassroots organizing, the size of subsequent protests, and donations to the cause (Madestam et al., 2013). These effects may be due to the mobilizing influence of protesting on activists, since more committed and enthusiastic activists may be more likely to draw their social networks to the cause.

It’s possible that protest groups and other relatively extreme components of a movement can have either a positive or a negative effect on the efficacy of more moderate components of the movement. On the one hand, the extreme components (or “radical flanks”) might impose fear on the movement’s opponents, thereby giving moderate components greater leverage. On the other hand, radical flanks can lead to

¹⁶ For instance, DxE activists who disrupted a football game in 2015 [faced](#) fines, court appearances, and legal fees.

¹⁷ Participating in protests can lead activists to incorporate negative stereotypes of protesters into their self-identity (Einwohner, 2002).

¹⁸ We are aware of five incidents in which activists were physically harmed during the 160 protests we identified that took place in the first half of 2016. There may be more such incidents of which we are not aware.

¹⁹ “The heightened police attention at protests is taking its toll on [Collectively Free] activists, particularly those with marginalized identities. Raffi grew up in Brazil and was granted political asylum in the U.S. based on sexual orientation. If they get arrested, they could be deported. [Collectively Free] has made an effort to recruit members with more privileged identities—particularly in Washington D.C.—who are willing to take the risk of arrest and who have less to lose in doing so.” —[ACE Interviews: Collectively Free](#) (2017)

²⁰ For instance, Wayne Hsiung, a leader of DxE, was assaulted during a protest in Asheville. DxE Asheville [reported](#) on Facebook that “[a]fterwards, the sense of community and optimism amongst us was stronger than ever.”

²¹ In our research, we were probably less likely to hear about activists who have retired from protesting than about activists who have continued protesting. Thus, our sense that many activists continue despite setbacks may be skewed.

greater counter-mobilization. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) write that “[t]here is no consensus among social scientists about the conditions under which radical flanks either harm or help a social movement.”

Table 2.2. Evidence of the Effects of Protests on the Movement’s Capacity

Author(s)	Year	Title	Approach	Context	Key Findings	Key Limitations
Einwohner, R.	2002	Bringing The Outsiders In: Opponents' Claims and The Construction of Animal Rights Activists' Identity ²²	Review	Uses three years' worth of data from fieldwork with an animal organization	The perceptions of people outside of the animal advocacy movement (e.g., that animal activists are "overly emotional" or "irrational") affect animal activists' sense of self-identity.	It’s possible that there was something specific about the culture of the organization studied that influenced the results.
Chenoweth, E., Stephan, M. J.	2011	Why Civil Resistance Works , pgs. 42–46	Case study research	Examines the effects of violent and nonviolent resistance on building alliances in the context of regime change	“Radical flanks” of a movement can have either positive or negative effects on the more moderate components of a movement.	Does not find a consensus regarding the conditions under which radical flanks have a net positive or net negative effect.
Van Zomeren, M., Leach, C. W., Spears, R.	2012	A Dynamic Dual Pathway Model of Approach Coping With Collective Disadvantage	Review	Considers previous social psychological research on protests	The authors propose a model that explains individuals' motivation to protest. It emphasizes that (i) the decision to protest is driven by both a cost-benefit analysis and emotions (particularly anger), and (ii) the motivation to protest is dynamic. Participating in a protest can heighten participants' motivations to continue protesting.	The authors propose a model of motivation to protest in response to collective disadvantage, not the motivation to protest specifically for animals.
Tausch, N., Becker, J. C.	2012	Emotional Reactions to Success and Failure of Collective Action as	Longitudinal study	Investigates student protests in Germany	The authors investigate the role of emotional reactions to protests in motivating future participation in protests. They find that pride in a	As this was a longitudinal study, there may have been external influences on students’ reactions. Additionally, results from the one context may not

²² Research related to animal advocacy

		Predictors of Future Action Intentions			successful protest and anger at a failed protest both predict intentions to continue protesting.	generalize to others. Finally, intentions to continue protesting may not predict future behavior.
Madestam, A., Shoag, D., Veuger, S., Yanagizawa-Drott, D.	2013	Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement (same as above)	Observational study (uses rainfall as an independent variable)	Investigates the effects of political protests	The Tea Party seems to have raised turnout for Republican voters. The authors estimate that each Tea Party protester is associated with a 7 to 14 vote increase in Republican votes. Tea Party protests were also associated with increases in grassroots organizing, size of subsequent protests, and donations.	It's unclear whether and to what extent evidence from the Tea Party movement generalizes to the animal advocacy movement. We suspect that Tea Party protests have a greater influence on the public than animal protests, in part because about 44% of Americans identify as or "lean" Republican and the Tea Party is associated with the Republican Party.
Stuart, A., Thomas, E. F., Donaghue, N.	2015	Social (Dis)incentives to Participate in Collective Action	Survey research	Investigates participants in social movements	The authors found that activists are often ambivalent about continuing to participate in collective action. Rather than stopping due to disinterest, activists often stop participating due to perceived social consequences and concerns about self-identity.	This is a manuscript, which has not been peer-reviewed or published. It concerns protests in general, not animal advocacy protests specifically.

Other evidence of the effects of protests on the movement’s capacity

- Collectively Free, DxE, and The Save Movement, three organizations that organize protests, all seemed to grow quickly in size in their early years. Collectively Free was founded in New York City in 2014 and by 2017 they had established [chapters](#) in the USA, Canada, Mexico, and Australia. DxE was founded in 2013 in the Bay Area of California and by 2017 they had established at least 40 [chapters](#) in 13 countries. The Save Movement was founded in 2010 in Toronto, Canada and by 2017 has had over 170 [chapters](#) in more than 20 countries. (This evidence is anecdotal. We do *not* have data on the total number of animal organizations devoted to protests, the average rate of growth of such organizations, or the average rate of growth of animal organizations that do not use protests. It is unclear whether these quick growth rates will

continue.)

- Taylor Ford, Director of Campaigns at The Humane League (THL), [reports](#) that THL’s protests seem to draw a group of volunteers who may not have gotten involved in animal activism through other interventions. He believes that organizing protests has helped THL build a support base in each of the cities where they have offices.

Influencing industry

Protests can affect positive corporate change, particularly when they are one component of a broader corporate outreach strategy.²³ One way they can do this is by disrupting a corporation’s typical operations. When a corporation senses potential damage to its performance or reputation, it may take steps to resolve the problem (McDonnell et al., 2015). Another mechanism for protests’ success in this area is creating or heightening internal divisions in a corporation such that some people within the corporation advocate for changes (Soule, 2009; Chenoweth & Olsen, 2016).

Some evidence suggests that protests and other activist challenges to corporations are likely more successful when repeated within a given campaign. When Chenoweth and Olsen (2016) investigated activist challenges to corporations in the developing world, they found that “21% of civil resistance efforts that included only one event were successful in achieving partial or full accommodation of their requests, but 49% of efforts that included at least two events were successful; the more events, the more likely it was that the corporation made concessions.” Activist challenges to corporations may have an even higher success rate in the U.S.; Chenoweth and Olsen report that their success rate is positively associated with the “robustness” of the rule of law in the country in which they take place.

Protests are particularly successful when they target corporations with existing vulnerabilities (Jasper & Poulsen, 1993). McDonnell et al. (2015) argue that a campaign may be more successful if targeted against a corporation that has been the target of similar campaigns in the past. One way that corporations respond to activist threats is by developing “social management devices,” like board committees devoted to social responsibility. While these responses may be intended to protect the company’s image, they can incidentally increase the company’s accountability and receptivity to future challenges (McDonnell et al., 2015).²⁴

²³ “Combining protests with other tactics really elevates the protest’s success.” —Conversation with Taylor Ford (2017)

²⁴ On the other hand, Jasper and Poulsen (1993) argue that movements tend to become less effective as they become more visible because corporations can learn how to respond strategically. Jasper and Poulsen had limited data from

Table 2.3. Evidence of the Effects of Protests on Industry

Author(s)	Year	Title	Approach	Context	Key Findings	Key Limitations
Jasper, J. M., Poulsen, J. D.	1993	Fighting Back: Vulnerabilities, Blunders, and Countermobilization by the Targets in Three Animal Rights Campaigns ²⁵	Case study research	Examines campaigns to end research on animals at three separate U.S. institutions	The authors attribute campaign successes to corporate vulnerabilities, including internal divisions, particularly unpopular practices, and making strategic mistakes. They argue that organizations can learn better ways to respond to activists. They suggest that movements may become less effective as they become more visible.	It's unclear whether and to what extent the conclusions drawn from case studies can be generalized, especially because it is from 1993 and does not account for more recent data. This piece does not consider possible benefits of greater visibility for social movements.
Soule, S. A.	2009	Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility	Book	A history and analysis of direct challenges to U.S. corporations by social movements	This book argues that civil resistance targeting corporations has increased in recent decades. Suggests that civil resistance to organizations may be particularly effective when the organizations are undergoing leadership changes or experiencing internal divisions.	This book examines civil resistance generally, not animal advocacy protests specifically.
McDonnell, M., King, B. G., Soule, S. A.	2015	A Dynamic Process Model of Private Politics	Longitudinal data analysis	Tracks 300 large companies between 1993 and 2009	The authors propose a dynamic process by which activist challenges lead corporations to	This study investigates the effects of activist challenges generally, not protests

just three case studies and, in our view, did not consider some important benefits that social movements gain from having greater visibility.

²⁵ Research related to animal advocacy

					become more receptive to social concerns over time.	specifically.
Chenoweth, E., Olsen, T.	2016	Civil Resistance and Corporate Behavior	Literature review and pilot study	Observed the effects of civil resistance to corporate human rights abuses in Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa	This piece suggests some important lessons for predicting the success of direct action targeting corporations. For instance, multiple events are more effective than one-off events. Corporations operating in countries with "more robust rule of law" are more likely to make concessions to protesters than other corporations.	This was just a pilot study and did not establish any causal claims. It's unclear whether and to what extent lessons about resistance to human rights abuses in the developing world generalize to resistance to animal rights abuses in the U.S.

Other evidence of the effects of protests on industry

- Ford [believes](#) that protests have played an important role in some of THL’s successful corporate campaigns, including those against Farm Foods and Subway.
- According to Global Campaigns Manager Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen, MFA has used protests as a component of successful corporate campaigns, including a recent campaign against Safeway.
- In 2016 the Ringling Bros. Circus announced that they would no longer use elephants in their acts.²⁶ In 2017, they [announced](#) plans to close, citing a drop in ticket sales. Animal activists have been protesting the circus since at least [1980](#). We believe that protests bear some responsibility for the circus’ closure, though it’s not clear precisely how much.²⁷

²⁶ Ringling’s decision to remove elephants from their lineup seems likely to be a concession to animal advocates, but it’s not clear how much the decision was motivated by ongoing protests rather than other factors, like their prolonged (though victorious) [legal battle](#) with The Humane Society of the United States and other groups. Ringling [denies](#) that their decision was a response to animal advocates at all, but they do acknowledge that they took the public’s growing concern for their elephants into account. It seems likely that protests played a significant role in the public’s perception of Ringling’s elephants.

²⁷ The CEO of Feld Entertainment Company (which owns Ringling Bros.) [said](#) in a press conference that the circus’ closure is “not a win for animal rights activists.” However, ticket sales [dropped sharply](#) after Ringling removed

- Occasionally, small, disruptive protests achieve small changes—such as altering or shutting down events.²⁸

Building alliances

It seems highly plausible that protests can help the animal advocacy movement to build alliances with sympathetic politicians or other influencers. Some animal activists have used protests to build alliances with other social justice movements, which [we believe](#) is a neglected goal within the animal advocacy movement as a whole.

Large, high-profile protests seem more likely than small, low-profile protests to prompt key influencers to adopt and/or voice a position. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) report that in their survey of regime change efforts, the chance that the largest campaigns made alliances with defectors from the security force was more than 50% greater than the chance that the smallest campaigns made such alliances.

Most likely, if high-profile protests can prompt key influencers to become allies with the protest group, they can also prompt key influencers to become opponents for the protest group. In fact, [in 2017](#) DxE used the threat of continued protests to convince a Berkeley meat shop to post a sign in their window acknowledging that “killing [animals] is violent and unjust.” Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin responded in a [statement](#) that the protests were “harassment—plain and simple.” Having asserted in the same statement that he “respect[s] people’s passion for social causes as well as their right to express their opinions,” it’s possible that Arreguin might have supported the animal activists had they used different tactics.

While we believe that protests can build both alliances and opposition between a movement and powerful influencers in theory, we have little evidence that protests have had many such effects within the animal advocacy movement thus far. Perhaps few animal protests have been sufficiently high-profile to capture key influencers’ attention. It may also be because, as Tarrow points out, “elites are unlikely to be persuaded to make policy changes that are not in their own interest” (168).

Table 2.4. Evidence of the Effects of Protests on the Movement’s Alliances

Author(s)	Year	Title	Approach	Context	Key Findings	Key Limitations
Tarrow, S.	2011 Ed.	Power in Movement.	Book (draws from	A frequently cited book	Tarrow suggests that protests present opportunities for	Tarrow studied social movements for

elephants from their acts, so protests are probably responsible for the closure at least insofar as they were responsible for the decision to remove the elephants.

²⁸ For instance, when DxE Colorado [disrupted a bull sale](#) in 2016, the auctioneer ended the event 45 minutes early. More recently, DxE’s Bay Area protests [induced](#) a local butcher shop to hang a sign in their window acknowledging animals’ right to life.

		Chapter 8	case studies and social movement theory)	on social movement theory	political elites to take a position on an issue. However, politicians are unlikely to adopt any position that is not in their interests, so they are rarely moved to do so by protests alone.	human-related causes.
Chenoweth, E., Stephan, M. J.	2011	Why Civil Resistance Works , pgs. 46–50	Book (draws from case studies and social movement theory)	Examines the effects of violent and nonviolent resistance on building alliances in the context of regime change	Nonviolent resistance can cause members of the elite or of the elite's supporting forces (e.g., security forces) to shift loyalties or sympathies. The authors report that "the largest nonviolent campaigns have about a 60% chance of producing security-force defections."	Civil resistance movements aimed at overthrowing a regime are quite different from the animal advocacy movement in the U.S. For instance, regime change campaigns have more specific and tangible opponents.

Other evidence of the effects of protests on the movement’s alliances

- During the 2016 Democratic primaries, approximately one month after DxE activists [first disrupted](#) a rally for Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton [added a page](#) to her website about “protecting animals and wildlife.” It’s unclear whether the page was added in response to the disruption, but the timing is suggestive.²⁹
- Some protests offer an opportunity for animal activists to build alliances with other movements. For instance, Mercy For Animals has participated in [Pride parades](#). Collectively Free activists integrated anti-sexist and anti-homophobic messages into their [protests](#) of Chick-Fil-A. Other animal activists have [participated](#) in environmental protests and found environmental activists to be receptive to their message.

Influencing policy and law

There is some evidence from other movements that protests can influence policy and law. As Sidney Tarrow explains, “disruption obstructs the routine activities of opponents, bystanders, or authorities and forces them to attend to protesters’ demands.” It also “broadens the circle of conflict. By blocking traffic or interrupting public business, protestors inconvenience bystanders, pose a risk to law and order, and draw authorities into what was a private conflict” (101).

²⁹ Felsing (2016) [suggests](#) that Clinton may have added animal protection to her platform in order to gain an endorsement from Russell Simmons.

Walgrave and Vliegenthart (2012) found that protests influenced the political agenda in Belgium. While political agenda-setting does not necessarily lead to policy change, it may be a necessary precursor. The Tea Party protests seem to have had a clear effect on U.S. policy, though we believe that the political influence of the Tea Party was likely greater than the potential political influence of the animal movement—due in part to the Tea Party’s overtly political nature and association with a major political party.

Based on evidence from the 1960s’ black insurgency, Wasow (2017) argues that protests can affect policy by influencing political elites, swaying public opinion, and changing voting patterns. It appears that protests can also influence policy by amplifying the political effects of public opinion. For instance, Agnone (2007) found that environmental protests increased the political effects of public support for environmental legislation. This finding is consistent with Giugni and Yamasaki’s (2009) conclusion that protests hold more political power when they have greater public support, as well as more political alliances.

Table 2.5. Influencing Policy and Law

Author(s)	Year	Title	Approach	Context	Key Findings	Key Limitations
Agnone, J.	2007	Amplifying Public Opinion: The Policy Impact of the U.S. Environmental Movement	Observational study (uses time-series analysis)	Studies protests in the U.S. environmental movement	This study suggests that protests impact policy by amplifying the policy effects of public opinion.	The study only investigates the effects of protests that were covered in <i>The New York Times</i> before 1998. It’s unclear whether and to what extent studies of environmental protests generalize to animal protests.
Giugni, M. G., Yamasaki, S.	2009	The Policy Impact of Social Movements	Reanalysis of a previous study (uses qualitative comparative analysis)	Investigates the policy impact of antinuclear, ecology, and peace movements (measured by protest activity) in the U.S., Switzerland, and Italy	This reanalysis finds support for a joint-effect model of social movement outcomes, suggesting that powerful alliances and public support both increase the policy impact of social movements.	It’s unclear whether and to what extent research on antinuclear, ecology, and peace movements generalizes to the animal advocacy movement.
Tarrow, S.	2011 Ed.	Power in Movement	Book (draws from case studies and social movement)	An important book on social movement theory	Disruptive action can create change by (i) demonstrating activists’ determination, (ii)	Tarrow studied social movements for human-related causes.

			theory)		obstructing routines, and (iii) posing a risk to “law and order.”	
Walgrave, S., Vliegenthart, R.	2012	The Complex Agenda-Setting Power of Protest: Demonstrations, Media, Parliament, Government, and Legislation in Belgium, 1993–2000	Observational study (uses time-series analysis)	Measures the political agenda in Belgium from 1993–2000	Suggests that protests influence the political agenda, but that the causal mechanisms underlying their effects are "complex and contingent." Finds that mass media plays a mediating effect.	This study does not measure actual policy change. Though it’s a study of Belgium’s political system, which is smaller and more fragmented than the U.S. political system, the authors “cautiously corroborate” findings from similar studies in the U.S.
Madestam, A., Shoag, D., Veuger, S., Yanagizawa-Drott, D.	2013	Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement (same as above)	Observational study (uses rainfall as an independent variable)	Investigates the effects of political protests	This study suggests that the Tea Party protests affected policy through the political activity of incumbents as well as through elections. In addition, the protests’ effects on public opinion led more Democratic incumbents to retire.	It seems likely that the Tea Party would exert much greater political influence than the animal advocacy movement, since the Tea Party is an overtly political movement and is associated with a major political party.
Wasow, O.	2017	Do Protests Matter? Evidence from the 1960s Black Insurgency	Observational study	A working paper using data on protest activity, Congressional speeches, public opinion, and voting patterns during the 1960s black insurgency	This study suggests that protests can affect policy by influencing political elites, swaying public opinion, and changing voting patterns.	It’s unclear whether and to what extent we can generalize from the black insurgency to the animal advocacy movement, especially given the extent to which civil rights dominated social discourse in mid-1960s.

Other evidence of the effects of protests on influencing policy and law

- When the Berkeley Animal Rights Center (ARC) was threatened with eviction, activists [rallied](#) outside of City Hall and attended a City Council meeting. At the meeting, the council amended the ARC’s lease to ensure their right to stay. It is unclear to us whether the council was influenced by the rally.
- Shortly before the Berkeley City Council voted to ban the sale of fur in Berkeley, DxE staged a [protest](#) of over 100 people in support of the ban. Jay Quigley, secretary for the Berkeley Coalition

for Animals (BCA), tells us that in his view, the most important factors in passing the ban were the [personal relationships](#) between BCA activists and councilmembers. The second most important factor, in his view, were petitions and email campaigns. Quigley feels that the protest was primarily helpful for mobilizing activists to care about the campaign.^{30, 31}

Discussion

The above table includes some evidence for each of the mechanisms represented in our theory of change. However, many of the studies cited above have important limitations. For example:

- Perhaps most importantly, some of them do not directly investigate the impact of protests, but of civil resistance, direct action, or other more general approaches. Most of them investigate social movements other than the animal advocacy movement. The animal movement seems relevantly different from many other movements, particularly those that are closely associated with major political parties or those with which large portions of the population identify.
- Many of the studies of attitude or behavior change are short-term studies, though we are at least as interested in the longer-term effects of protests on attitudes and behavior.
- Many studies of participants’ reactions to protests use interventions that are importantly different from the way people are typically exposed to protests.
- Some of the research includes historical case studies, which (i) may be subject to survivorship bias and (ii) present difficulties for drawing conclusions about causation.

Despite these limitations, we believe that the body of evidence presented above suggests that protests can, at least in some contexts, influence public opinion, the movement’s capacity, industry, alliances, and policy. These outcomes can lead to meaningful social change. We think that, *if protests are* an effective animal advocacy intervention, they are most likely effective via their production of these outcomes in the ways described above.

Overall, we think that the strength of the evidence supporting this theory of change is **moderate** (but closer to “weak” than “strong”):

Poor	Weak	Moderate	Strong
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³⁰ Private communication with Jay Quigley, July 5, 2017

³¹ Note that Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue that the mobilizing power of protests is one of the most important factors in their success, in part because mobilizing activists increases the chances that some activists will have personal relationships with key influencers.

Little is understood about the underlying causal mechanisms of this intervention.	There is some understanding of the underlying causal mechanisms of this intervention, weakly supported by evidence.	There is a good understanding of the underlying causal mechanisms of this intervention, moderately supported by evidence.	There is a strong understanding of the underlying causal mechanisms of this intervention, tested and supported by evidence.
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Discussions of protest effectiveness

While there is some research suggesting that protests can produce both positive and negative outcomes for animals, many additional questions have a bearing upon the effectiveness of protests as an animal advocacy intervention. For example:

- To what extent can we draw lessons from other movements about the effectiveness of protests in the animal advocacy movement?
- Does the effectiveness of protesting change throughout the development of a movement?
- Are there other animal advocacy interventions that produce the same positive outcomes as protests, particularly without producing negative outcomes?
- Are protests a *necessary* component of successful movements?

Experimental research cannot fully resolve all of these questions, but there has been some relevant discussion of these questions among animal advocates and social movement theorists. In this section, we summarize some of those discussions.

To what extent can we draw lessons from other movements about the effectiveness of protests in the animal advocacy movement?

Much of the evidence regarding the effects of protests comes from studies of other movements, usually for human-related causes. Felsing (2016) argues that the animal advocacy movement is importantly different from human rights movements, and that the success of protests for human rights movements does not necessarily imply that protests will lead to success for the animal advocacy movement. Progress for human rights, he argues, has often simply required the public to accept new laws, but not to significantly change their behavior. On the other hand, achieving legal rights for animals will require changing individuals’ “habitual behaviors.” Felsing suggests that prohibiting the sale of meat, for

instance, will face public opposition similar to that of failed efforts like [alcohol prohibition](#) or the [war on drugs](#).

In a response to Felsing, Groff (2016) argues that the goals of the animal advocacy movement are perhaps not as radical as they seem. He suggests that there are “more regulations on [the use of animals] than there were laws protecting other oppressed classes before their movements started.” This is consistent with Felsing’s point; it’s possible that the animal movement is both *less radical* than many human rights movements (in the sense that animals might already have more legal protection than other groups) and *more radical* than many human rights movements (in the sense that its progress will require more change from more individuals). However, there do seem to be important counterexamples to the claim that the animal rights movement requires more change from individuals than previous movements; for instance, the abolition of the slave trade, the civil rights movement, and various battles for women’s rights have all deeply permeated the lives of individuals in the U.S. Moreover, emerging food technology like [cultured meat](#) may well decrease the personal demandingness of animal rights advocacy.

It’s tempting to think that, if the goals of the animal advocacy movement are easier to achieve than—or similar to—the goals of other movements, tactics that work for other movements should work for the animal advocacy movement. Similarly, it’s tempting to think that, if the goals of the animal advocacy movement are harder to achieve than the goals of other movements, tactics that work for other movements will not necessarily work for the animal advocacy movement. In [Why Civil Resistance Works](#), Chenoweth and Stephan explain that they deliberately chose to study “maximalist” movements, including regime change, anti-occupation, and secession movements. They suggest that “campaigns with goals that are perceived as maximalist (fundamentally altering the political order) may be less likely to succeed than goals perceived as more limited in nature (e.g., finite political rights) (69). According to Perry (2015), Chenoweth believes that her findings should generalize to the animal movement.³²

Even if the goals of the animal movement are—in at least some ways—relatively modest, it doesn’t follow that tactics that have worked for other movements will necessarily work for the animal movement. The animal movement seems relevantly different from human rights movements in many ways, aside from the ambition of its goals. First of all, in contrast with the movements studied by Chenoweth and Stephan, it’s not entirely clear what the animal advocacy movement’s goals are, or whether all animal

³² She also [notes](#) that, in some ways, the animal advocacy movement may be more controversial than many of the movements she studied.

advocates agree on them.^{33,34} Unlike the movements studied by Chenoweth and Stephan, the animal movement doesn't have a specific state adversary. Some of the movements Chenoweth and Stephan studied had support from external governments,³⁵ whereas the animal movement seems to have few powerful allies. The animal advocacy movement might be less diverse than other movements. Finally, the animal rights movement is not directly led by a disenfranchised group, but rather by its allies.³⁶ Such differences might have a bearing upon the effectiveness of various tactics. We think it is an open question whether (and to what extent) the lessons of other movements generalize to the animal advocacy movement.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Venue or Publisher	Context	Key Findings
Felsingner, A.	2016	Direct Action Leading Where? ³⁷	Medium	An essay that raises some questions about the research that is often taken to support the effectiveness of protests	This essay argues that the animal advocacy movement is importantly different from other movements and that it should focus on education and earning greater credibility <i>before</i> mobilizing for protests.
Groff, Z.	2016a	Four Reasons Why Direct Action Leads to Animal Liberation ³⁸	Medium	A response to Alex Felsingner's essay, written by former DxE organizer Zach Groff	This response argues that the animal advocacy movement is similar to other movements in some respects, and it should use protests in order to mobilize more activists.
Perry, J.	2015	Why Vegans Should Pick Up a Protest Sign ³⁹	DxE Blog	A brief summary of a conversation between	According to DxE activists, Chenoweth believes that her

³³ Remember that we are considering the goals of the entire animal advocacy movement, which is relatively large and heterogenous, rather than the farmed animal advocacy movement, which is relatively small and perhaps more united in its goals.

³⁴ Chenoweth and Stephan suggest that “achieving unity around shared goals and methods” is a “crucial determinate” of campaign outcomes (41).

³⁵ “A resistance campaign may also achieve leverage over its adversary through diplomatic pressure or international sanctions against the adversary” —Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) (53)

³⁶ Arguably, the ally-led nature of the animal advocacy movement could be relevant to its effectiveness. Since nonhuman animals are virtually unable to organize themselves, the animal advocacy movement—unlike other movements—lacks a broad base of individuals who might be mobilized by their own collective disadvantage.

³⁷ Research related to animal advocacy

³⁸ Research related to animal advocacy

				Erica Chenoweth and DxE activists, with a link to their notes	findings should generalize to the animal movement. She also notes that the animal advocacy movement may be more controversial than many of the movements she’s studied.
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Does the effectiveness of protesting change throughout the development of a movement?

The effectiveness of protests likely depends on many factors that can change throughout the development of a movement. Perhaps most importantly, it seems to depend on the number of people who are mobilized to participate in the protests. Chenoweth and Stephan found that, for protest movements, “[t]he trend is clear that as membership [i.e., the number of participants in a movement] increases, the probability of success also increases” (39).

The idea that larger protest movements are more effective than smaller ones raises several important questions for the animal advocacy movement. If protests are ever an effective use of resources, at what level of participation are they effective? Similarly, if protests are ever a counterproductive use of resources, at what level of participation are they counterproductive?

According to Chenoweth (2013), all major nonviolent resistance movements that have achieved the participation of 3.5% of the population have succeeded.⁴⁰ Some animal activists seem to take her research as evidence that, once a movement achieves sufficient support, protests can cause it to succeed. For example, DxE activists frequently [argue](#) that “[i]f we can mobilize 3.5% of the population in sustained and nonviolent direct action, we can almost certainly win.”⁴¹ Some animal activists also seem to take Chenoweth’s research as evidence that protests are effective for the animal advocacy movement now, though it has [not yet mobilized](#) 3.5% of the population.⁴² “Although I do not think that 0.00058% of the

³⁹ Research related to animal advocacy

⁴⁰ Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) define “participation” as “the active and observable engagement of individuals in collective action” (30).

⁴¹ See: “[Five Reasons Why We Can Make Animal Liberation Happen](#)” —Priya Sawhney (2016)

“[Why Activism, Not Veganism, is the Moral Baseline](#)” —Wayne Hsiung (2015)

“[Why Vegans Should Pick Up a Protest Sign](#)” —Julianne Perry (2015)

⁴² Mobilization should not be confused with public support. As Jay Shooster (2017) points out, a 2015 Gallup poll suggested that “an *overwhelming majority* of Americans said that they were concerned about the treatment of animals used in the circus, in sports, and in research, and almost a full third of the population said they were ‘very

population mobilized is enough to change the world,” argues Zach Groff (2016b) “[...] a small mobilization is the best way to get to a larger one.”

We take Chenoweth’s work to be only weak evidence for the claim (made by activists) that protests *cause* movements with at least 3.5% mobilization to succeed. It might be that achieving a high level of protest mobilization and succeeding are correlated because they have a common outside cause. For instance, in the cases of civil resistance that Chenoweth studied, the unpopularity of the ruling government might have caused both higher levels of participation and eventual success. We do think it’s plausible that protests can help small movements grow into larger ones because of the evidence we summarized in the “Capacity building” section of this report. We are not sure, however, whether protests are *the best way* to help a movement grow.

While protests may help small movements begin to mobilize, it’s also possible that protests produce more unwanted effects for smaller movements than they do for larger ones. Felsing (2016) argues that protests reinforce stereotypes of vegans and might dissuade the public from “participating in radical action due to their fears of social ostracism.” It seems this risk would be mitigated if more of the public participated in and normalized protests.

Aside from the relatively low level of participation in today’s animal advocacy protests, there may be other reasons why protesting now is less likely to succeed than protesting later. Protests might be more effective after the animal movement achieves more public support or more powerful allies. Of course, it’s possible that, even if protesting would be more effective later than it is now, it’s still an effective tactic now. However, because it can be difficult to sustain a protest movement over a long period of time,⁴³ it may be unwise to invest significant resources in protests before they have their best chance of succeeding.

Table 3.2. Sources

Author(s)	Year	Title	Venue or Publisher	Context	Key Findings
Tarrow, S.	2011	Power in	Cambridge	This is an important book on	Tarrow argues that disruptions

concerned’ with these issues.” However, we estimate that between 0.0005% and 0.003% percent of Americans are *mobilized*, or active participants in protests. (This range is based on our estimates of the number of protests that occur each week, the mean size of those protests, and an assumption that protest participants attend an average of 2–5 protests each, per year.)

⁴³ One reason it’s difficult to sustain protest movements is that, over time, opponents of the movement might [counter-mobilize](#). Another reason is that they require a high level of commitment from activists, which can be hard to sustain. A third reason is that protests create change through disruption, and as protests continue over time and become more routine, they become less disruptive (Tarrow, 103–104).

	Ed.	Movement	University Press	social movement theory that explores (i) the development of the modern social movement, (ii) political opportunities and threats for movements, and (iii) the dynamics of collective action.	are a social movement's "strongest weapon," but that they are difficult to sustain.
Chenoweth, E., Stephan, M. J.	2011	Why Civil Resistance Works	Columbia University Press	This is an important book that analyzes data from 323 regime change, anti-occupation, and secession campaigns and compares the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance to violent resistance.	This book provides some of the most compelling large-scale evidence for the effectiveness of nonviolent protests. The authors find that mobilization correlates with success for protest movements.
Chenoweth, E.	2013	My Talk at TEDxBoulder: Civil Resistance and the "3.5% Rule"	TEDx talk and blog post	In this talk Erica Chenoweth presents some of her research at TEDxBoulder.	All of the resistance movements in Chenoweth's study which achieved the participation of 3.5% were nonviolent, and all of them succeeded.
Groff, Z.	2016b	A (Potential) Summary of Disagreements and Agreements on Direct Action ⁴⁴	Medium	A summary of the points of agreement (and disagreement) between Felsing and Groff, written by Groff.	A main point of contention between Felsing and Groff is whether protests can be successful without robust mobilization.
Shooster, J.	2017	Polls Show America is Ready for Aggressive Animal Advocacy ⁴⁵	The Huffington Post	Uses Gallup polls to argue that Americans are ready for animal protests.	Argues that, while favorable public opinion is not necessarily essential for the success of a social justice movement, at least some animal advocacy messages have at least as much public support as other social justice causes that use protests.

Are there other animal advocacy interventions that produce the same positive outcomes as protests, particularly without producing negative outcomes?

If the primary purpose of protesting at this early stage in the animal advocacy movement is to mobilize activists, it's worth considering whether there are other ways to mobilize activists that have fewer

⁴⁴ Research related to animal advocacy

⁴⁵ Research related to animal advocacy

drawbacks. In his [presentation](#) at the 2017 National Animal Rights Conference, Jacy Reese⁴⁶ notes that one way that protests mobilize activists is by creating moral outrage. As we noted in the Theory of change section of this report, creating moral outrage (or “moral shocks”) can mobilize some individuals, but it can also produce extremely negative reactions in others. Reese wonders whether there are other ways to mobilize that are less likely to backfire. He recommends [open rescues](#) and [investigations](#), though he thinks that if the media becomes saturated with information from open rescues and investigations at some point,⁴⁷ those interventions may have diminishing returns.

Other interventions that could perhaps accomplish the same positive outcomes as protests (with fewer drawbacks) are local political organizing and the development of new food technology. Local political organizing can have a mobilizing effect but carries a lower risk of countermobilization. It could also be argued that the development of new food technology will ultimately do more than protests to mobilize the animal advocacy movement, with very few drawbacks. Providing omnivores with alternatives to animal products may decrease individuals’ resistance to the movement.

Table 3.3. Sources

Author(s)	Year	Title	Venue or Publisher	Context	Key Findings
Reese, J.	2017	The Power of Confrontation in Advancing Animal Rights ⁴⁸	Presentation at the National Animal Rights Conference	This is a presentation by Jacy Reese, previously a researcher at ACE and currently Director of Research at Sentience Institute.	Reese suggests that confrontational tactics can cause change by inspiring moral outrage, and discusses whether other interventions can cause moral outrage with less risk of backfiring.

Are protests a *necessary* component of successful movements?

Even if protests are less effective than other animal advocacy interventions at this stage in the animal advocacy movement, it still may be the case that they are necessary for the success of the movement (and thus, highly effective at least up to some threshold). If so, we should surely continue to allocate resources towards them—though it may remain an open question whether we should allocate greater, fewer, or the same amount of resources that we have in the past.

⁴⁶ Reese was formerly a researcher for Animal Charity Evaluators and is now Director of Research at Sentience Institute.

⁴⁷ Arguably, the U.S. media is already saturated with stories from undercover investigations.

⁴⁸ Research related to animal advocacy

One argument for the necessity of protests is that they may be the only way for animal activists to express that they will not settle for anything less than radical change.⁴⁹ Without continually demanding radical change, it may be that the animal movement would achieve some limited welfare reforms for animals and then stagnate. In fact, we have already achieved some welfare reforms, and there's a reasonable concern that they could lead to public complacency or misconceptions about the conditions on industrial farms (Francione, 2008).

It may even be that the use of protests has been necessary for achieving the types of welfare reforms we've already achieved. There is some evidence that using relatively extreme tactics can improve the effectiveness of relatively moderate tactics. Robnett and Trammell (2004) argue that a movement's "radical flanks" (i.e., relatively extreme components) tend to increase the effectiveness of more moderate components of the movement "during the peak of activism," before significant concessions are won.⁵⁰

Another argument for the necessity of protests (and the last one we will consider here, though there may be others) is based on the premises that: (i) it may be necessary for the animal advocacy movement to use protests in order to align itself with other social justice movements, and (ii) it may be necessary for animal advocacy movement to align itself with other social justice movements in order to succeed.⁵¹

One reason to think the movement must use protests in order to align itself with other social justice movements is that, historically, nonviolent protest has been a hallmark of social justice movements.⁵² It may be that, in order to [build bridges](#) with today's social justice movements, the animal advocacy movement must emphasize its similarities to those movements by using similar tactics and standing in opposition to all forms of oppression.

One reason to think the movement must align itself with other social justice movements in order to succeed is that joining a coalition of movements might cause it to resonate with a much larger, more diverse segment of the population. Some of the most compelling evidence for the movement building and policy-influencing effects of protests comes from Madestam et. al's (2013) study of the Tea Party

⁴⁹ "Contentious collective action serves as the basis of social movements, not because movements are always violent or extreme, but because it is the main and often the only recourse that most ordinary people possess to demonstrate their claims against better-equipped opponents or powerful states." —Sidney Tarrow (1995) (7–8)

⁵⁰ On the other hand, Robnett and Trammell warn that radical flanks tend to have a negative effect on a movement after some significant concessions are won.

⁵¹ This argument was suggested to us by an activist and philosopher named Tyler John in private communication on August 21, 2017.

⁵² "Contention is not limited to social movements, though contention is their most characteristic way of interacting with other actors." —Tarrow (1995) (10)

movement,⁵³ but it seems likely to us that a larger portion of the population identified with the Tea Party movement than with the animal movement because the Tea Party movement was associated with a major political party from its inception.⁵⁴ The animal advocacy movement might benefit from a similar association with the political left. It's true that associating with the political left will likely alienate some potential animal allies on the right, but the benefits of an alliance with a major political movement might outweigh the costs. Moreover, insofar as the animal advocacy movement is [already associated](#) with the political left, animal advocates who make an active effort to remain politically neutral may alienate some potential allies on the left.

We think it's [likely](#) that the animal advocacy movement would benefit from presenting a more unified front with other social justice movements, but we think it's unclear whether doing so is necessary for its success.⁵⁵ Moreover, if protesting in order to align with other movements *is* necessary for its success, it's still possible that the animal movement should focus on movement building now and protesting later.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Venue or Publisher	Context	Key Findings
Robnett, B., Trammell, R.	2004	Negative and Positive Radical Flank Effects on Social Movements: The Influence of Protest Cycles on Moderate and Conservative Organizations	Presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association	Examines data from the Civil Rights movement and the AIDS social movement	This presentation argues that “radical flanks” can make more moderate components of a movement either more effective or less effective depending on the stage of the movement’s development.
Francione, G.	2008	Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal	Columbia University Press	A series of essays arguing against the regulation of animal	These essays argue, among other things, that humane reforms “may actually increase

⁵³ For further discussion of the Madestam et al. study and its implications for the animal advocacy movement, see Zach Groff’s essay “[A Potential Summary of Disagreements and Agreements on Direct Action.](#)”

⁵⁴ “This ‘movement’ did not begin at the grassroots, as its more militant supporters liked to claim. Instead it was triggered on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange [...]. The agitation attracted the attention of Glenn Beck, Fox News avatar of the populist right, who founded what he called ‘the 9.12 project.’ Beck went well beyond opposing the financial mess and healthcare reform to excavate every shibboleth of the ‘values’ Right: ‘things like honesty and hope and courage’ and more politically tinged principles such as belief in God and hard work and independence.” —Tarrow (96)

⁵⁵ The question of whether working with other movements is necessary for the success of the animal advocacy movement is further complicated by the underdetermined concept of “success.”

		Exploitation		welfare and for the abolition of all human uses of animals	consumption by people who had stopped eating animal products because of concerns about treatment and will certainly provide as a general matter an incentive for continued consumption of animal products” (16).
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Discussion

Many open questions remain that have a bearing upon the effectiveness of protests for the animal advocacy movement. We hope that further research will investigate these questions so that we can make more informed, evidence-based decisions about how to allocate our movement’s resources. In particular, we hope to see further research on the features of movements that influence the effectiveness of protests, specifically those that may change throughout the movement’s development. Tarrow emphasizes that, while disruptive protests are a movement’s “strongest weapon,”⁵⁶ they are “by no means the most common or the most durable” (103). Because protests can produce negative effects and they can be difficult to sustain, it seems critical for a movement to begin implementing protests only when they are reasonably likely to succeed.

One source of evidence that we are watching with interest is the growing animal advocacy movement in Berkeley, CA. DxE considers Berkeley to be their “[seed city](#),” the concentration of animal activists is higher there than it is elsewhere, and DxE hopes to build a “critical mass” of support and, [eventually](#), restrict the sale of meat in the city. We will be watching to see whether protests are more effective in Berkeley, where they have a relatively high level of participation, than they have been in other parts of the country. Of course, if they are, it might still be the case that we should focus on other forms of movement building in the rest of the country before investing further in protests.

⁵⁶ “Because disruption spreads uncertainty and gives weak actors leverage against powerful opponents, it is the strongest weapon of social movements.” —Tarrow (103)

Overall, while there are some compelling arguments for the necessity of protests in the animal advocacy movement, the current evidence supporting the effectiveness of animal advocacy protests is **weak**, relative to other interventions.^{57, 58}

Poor	Weak	Moderate	Strong
There is little to no evidence to support this choice of intervention. Or, the evidence suggests an intervention may have no effect or a negative impact.	There is weak evidence to support this intervention but it is either exploratory in nature, weak in effect or the studies are of low quality.	There is moderate evidence to suggest this choice of intervention.	There is strong, high quality evidence to support this choice of intervention.

Case study analysis

Case studies provide a useful way to gain insight into implementations of an intervention as well as providing data for a cost-effectiveness analysis. Case studies can provide rich data, though it is usually at the expense of generalizability.

We completed a case study of [The Humane League](#)'s (THL) protest program following our [conversation with Taylor Ford](#), Director of Campaigns at THL.

Case Study: The Humane League	
People Interviewed	Taylor Ford, Director of Campaigns
Other Data Sources	ACE's 2017 cost-effectiveness model for THL
Description of Intervention	THL uses protests as one component of their corporate campaigns
Implementation Description	THL recruits volunteers to silently protest restaurants or corporations by standing in a line outside holding signs. There is a trained organizer present at each protest who can speak with the target of the protest or the press as needed. THL uses protests in conjunction with other interventions, such as leafleting and

⁵⁷ We recognize that there is a large variation of the types of protest we are considering here, and as such it is likely that their effectiveness varies significantly. This is a difficulty we encounter when we evaluate many interventions. In the Overall assessment section of this report, we identify some ways that protests can vary, and we offer some advice for organizing particularly effective protests.

⁵⁸ We are not claiming here that animal advocacy protests are ineffective; rather, we are claiming that there is currently little evidence supporting their effectiveness.

	delivering petitions.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff time - \$60.00–\$72.00 for 5–6 reusable generic signs - \$60.00–\$72.00 for 5–6 signs tailored to the specific protest
Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteers are involved and enjoy it - Press coverage - The target of the protest makes concessions
How does this intervention work, according to the interviewee?	<p>According to Ford, THL’s protests work by two primary mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting volunteers involved - Intimidating corporations
Were there outside factors/influences that may have influenced outcomes? Were there indicators to suggest that the intervention caused any of the measured changes?	<p>Since THL combines protests with other interventions, there are many other factors that could contribute to the success of their corporate campaigns. However, there are some indications that protests have been responsible for some of their corporate outreach achievements. For instance, they have occasionally obtained a pledge from a corporation very soon after organizing a protest, when their other interventions hadn’t been working.</p>

Our case study suggests that protests can be an important component of successful corporate campaigns. When a corporation makes a concession to an animal charity, it is often hard to know how much responsibility to attribute to the charity. It’s even harder to know how much responsibility to attribute to the charity’s protests in particular. Still, Ford noted some signs that THL’s protests do have a causal impact on corporate activity. For instance, he notes a campaign that did not succeed for months, and finally succeeded two days after THL organized their first protest against the corporation.⁵⁹

Based on our case study, we estimate that THL’s protests spare approximately -50–150⁶⁰ farmed animal years per dollar.⁶¹ These ranges are our [90% subjective confidence intervals](#). The wide range of our

⁵⁹ Of course, anecdotal reports should not be taken as strong evidence of causation.

⁶⁰ The ranges from five computations from the Guesstimate model were: -48 to 130, -45 to 140, -50 to 180, -47 to 140, -46 to 120 animals. The method we use does calculations using Monte Carlo sampling. This means that results can vary slightly based on the sample drawn. Unless otherwise noted, we have run the calculations five times and rounded to the point needed to provide consistent results. For instance, if sometimes a value appears as 28 and sometimes it appears as 29, our review gives it as 30.

⁶¹ We attempted to make a similar estimate in terms of volunteer hours, but our estimate was highly uncertain and we felt it was not useful. We expect, however, that protests are currently an effective use of volunteer time—particularly because it seems that many volunteers who protest would not necessarily volunteer their time to help animals in other ways.

estimates indicates our high degree of uncertainty about the [cost-effectiveness](#) of THL’s protests. For more information, see our [cost-effectiveness model](#).

Discussion

Because THL uses protests as part of their exceptionally successful corporate campaigns program, their protests are probably more cost-effective than most. We expect that protests that are not part of a corporate campaign are not nearly as cost-effective, at least in terms of effects that are relatively short-term and easily measurable.

All protests likely have difficult-to-measure, longer-term outcomes that we are unable to account for in our cost-effectiveness models. Perhaps most importantly, we are not currently able to measure the effects of capacity building in terms of animals spared or years of suffering averted per dollar.

We did not make a cost-effectiveness estimate for smaller, grassroots protests because their impact is primarily long-term and difficult to measure. However, we did make a rough estimate of the cost of such protests, as well as the total costs of U.S. protests each year. Whereas we estimate that THL’s protests cost approximately \$140–\$550 each, we estimate that smaller, grassroots protests cost approximately \$15–\$65 each. We estimate that, in the U.S., the animal advocacy movement currently invests approximately \$120,000–\$240,000 in protests each year. These ranges are our 90% subjective confidence intervals. For more information, see our [model of the numbers and costs of U.S. protests](#).

While our cost-effectiveness estimate for THL’s protests was highly uncertain, our conversation with Taylor Ford provided us **weak** evidence to support the use of protests in corporate campaigns:

Poor	Weak	Moderate	Strong
Development of a case study did not provide evidence to support this intervention choice.	The case study provided weak evidence to support this intervention choice.	The case study provided moderate evidence to support this intervention choice.	The case study provides strong evidence to support this intervention choice.

Conversations in the field

Conversation summaries

To learn more about the use of protests as an animal advocacy intervention, we spoke with:

- [Raffi Ciavatta and Lili Trenkova of Collectively Free](#)
- [Taylor Ford of The Humane League](#)

- [Zach Groff of the Save Movement \(formerly of Direct Action Everywhere\)](#)
- [Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen of Mercy For Animals](#)

We asked each activist why they protest, how they think protests effect change, and how they measure the success of their protests. Summaries of our conversations are available at the links above. *We only spoke with animal advocates who choose to engage in protests, so the opinions of the people we spoke with may be systematically more positive towards protests than the opinions of most animal advocates.*

Discussion

The activists we spoke with conduct protests in different ways. The Humane League (THL) and Mercy For Animals (MFA) use protests as one tool to convince corporations to implement specific changes. Both THL and MFA make an effort to organize protests that appear professional. Their demonstrations are silent, with neatly arranged signs and protesters in business attire. They use messages that can be communicated to the media clearly and effectively. Whereas MFA has moved towards organizing one-off protests, THL is moving towards organizing ongoing protests at the same location. THL also holds multiple protests targeted at the same company in different cities. Their goal is to reach local management in different cities and have the local management contact upper management.

Collectively Free's and DxE's protests are usually not intended to pressure a corporation to make a specific concession. Rather, they are designed to draw attention and challenge or disrupt the status quo. These groups are more inclined to take dramatic actions in unexpected places. For instance, Collectively Free protested inside [St. Patrick's Cathedral](#) and DxE protested several [Bernie Sanders rallies](#). Both organizations counted these events among their biggest successes, in part because of the attention they generated.

We asked each organizer which factors contribute to protest success. Ciavatta and Trenkova find that more creative, theatrical protests lead to better engagement with audiences. They report that “[t]here is a lot of luck involved in organizing a successful protest, and it also requires a lot of persistence.” They recommend alerting the press to the best protests and following up afterwards. Ford emphasizes the importance of strategically choosing the time and place of each protest, as well as combining protests with other interventions, like leafleting, petitioning, and phone calls. Groff cited research on the importance of avoiding violence at protests. He also emphasized that in order for protests to positively influence the movement, it's important for activists to leave each protest feeling “energized and excited for change, rather than exhausted or otherwise disempowered.” Finally, Nielsen mentioned the importance of considering the visual impact of each protest in order to improve the likelihood of gaining media

attention. MFA makes an effort to set their protests against a [backdrop](#) that features the name of the target, and they use professionally printed signs and wear professional attire.

Our conversations seemed to provide support for our [theory of change](#) for protests. Groff and Nielsen both mentioned that protests tend to get mixed reactions from witnesses,⁶² though Groff, Nielsen, and Ciavatta all agreed that influencing public opinion is not the primary goal of protests.⁶³ Ford and Groff both noted that protests seem to be an effective way to draw new activists to the cause; in fact, they both feel that movement building is one of the primary ways that protests achieve change.⁶⁴ Ford and Nielsen both report that protests have been components of successful campaigns to influence industry, and Groff reports that DxE protests have had some influence on corporations like Whole Foods and Costco.⁶⁵

⁶² “There are multiple and varying reactions that witnesses might have to protests. The most frequent reactions are apathy and amazement, followed by anger.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

“[MFA’s protests] get car honks, usually in support though sometimes not.” —Conversation with Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen (2017)

⁶³ “The success of a protest isn’t about the immediate reactions of the audience.” —[ACE Interviews: Collectively Free](#) (2017)

“One common misconception is that the main focus of protests is on the effects on and reactions of witnesses. Although witness reactions are important to take into account, focusing on this aspect can lead to ‘strawman’ arguments.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

“It’s great that people see the signs walking and driving by, but that’s not the main purpose of the protests—the main point is to be a disruption to the company and get on the news.” —Conversation with Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen (2017)

⁶⁴ “Protests are a meaningful way for people to get involved, especially those who wouldn’t normally go out leafleting. The volunteers really like being part of a professional, powerful event [...] We also take individual photos of everyone, so they can post it on their social media [...] Everyone seems to really like it.” —Conversation with Taylor Ford (2017)

“A joint [study](#) conducted in 2011 by Harvard University and Stockholm University [...] demonstrated that a major source of social impact from these protests was the motivation of protesters to become more politically active and to encourage others to become so as well.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

⁶⁵ “Protests are also incredibly scary for companies. When we started doing protests, it seemed that companies really reacted to them more than they would react to social media adverts or email campaigns.” —Conversation with Taylor Ford (2017)

“During a campaign, pressure is applied in many different ways—so it’s difficult to be certain whether a protest was the defining part of a successful campaign. Recently, there was a protest against Safeway that was part of a winning campaign on which MFA worked alongside other groups.” —Conversation with Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen (2017)

“In addition, the degree to which DxE has sustained their campaigns, particularly those against Costco and Whole Foods, has also been successful. They have received responses from the organizations; they forced a Costco store to shut down for a day and caused Whole Foods to make changes in their marketing strategies.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

Ciavatta, Trenkova, and Groff agree that protests can provide an avenue for building bridges with other movements, though Ciavatta and Trenkova warn that not *every* protest is a good opportunity for multi-issue activism (because trying to connect animal advocacy to other issues can be seen as derailing) and Groff points out that other interventions, like leafleting, can also be used to advocate for multiple issues at once.⁶⁶ Our interviews did not focus on the long-term effects that protests might have on law or policy, though Groff noted that the current political context (in which there have been many high-profile protests) may lead to a period of institutional instability in which protests are more likely to achieve institutional change.

Overall, our conversations with activists and organizers provided **moderate** evidence to support the effectiveness of protests, particularly when they are one component of a larger corporate strategy.

Poor	Weak	Moderate	Strong
Our field conversations do not provide evidence to support this intervention choice.	Our field conversations provide weak evidence to support this intervention choice.	Our field conversations provide moderate evidence to support this intervention choice.	Our field conversations provide strong evidence to support this intervention choice.

Overall assessment

Variance of protest effectiveness

Since protests vary widely in their implementation, they probably also vary widely in their effectiveness. In the course of our research, we’ve compiled some provisional advice for organizing particularly effective protests:

To maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects that protests have on **public opinion**, activists should consider the following:

- Consider combining protests with other interventions, like leafleting, to allow protesters to better engage with witnesses.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ “The animal rights movement tends to be very single-issue. Protests can provide an opportunity to support more than one cause at a time, though not all of them do.” —[ACE Interviews: Collectively Free](#) (2017)

“Protests may not be significantly more inclusive than other kinds of activism. Other interventions, like leafleting, can also cover multiple issues.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

⁶⁷ “Leafleting during protests provides the opportunity for person-to-person interactions, and Groff notes that reactions are often 3:1 in favor of positive reactions, and really only about 10% of witnesses display anger.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

- Take a compassionate, rather than a “shaming” tone at protests, and target institutions rather than individuals.⁶⁸
- Contact the press to notify them of the protest and follow up with them afterwards.⁶⁹
- Have at least one person present at each protest who is prepared to speak with the target of the protest and/or the press.⁷⁰
- Because visually impressive protests are more likely to gain press coverage, consider the backdrop, signs, and attire of activists.⁷¹

To maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects that protests have on the movement’s **capacity**, activists should consider the following:

- Try to ensure that protesters leave each protest feeling inspired rather than defeated.⁷² Tausch & Becker (2012) found that anger at a failed protest and pride in a successful protest both predict intentions to continue protesting.
- Recruit a large and diverse community of activists. Chenoweth & Stephan (2011) argue that the diversity of activists leads to the diversity of tactics, which increases the likelihood of a movement’s success.⁷³
- Because some types of protests can pose a higher risk for protesters who have relatively marginalized identities, organizers should:

⁶⁸ Jay Shooster [points out](#) that shaming institutions, rather than individuals, is in line with the work of Jennifer Jacquet. See, for example: Jacquet, J. (2016). *Is Shame Necessary? New Uses for an Old Tool*. New York: Penguin Random House.

⁶⁹ “Alert the press to your actions, but only the best ones. Hot topics are much more likely to draw media attention. Also be sure to follow up with the press.” —[ACE Interviews: Collectively Free](#) (2017)

⁷⁰ “We learned over time that volunteers respond better when the lead person understands the issue, is a strong leader in the community and can answer any questions and empower people and make them feel that the protest really had a big impact.” —Conversation with Taylor Ford (2017)

“A spokesperson—usually an MFA staffer—will have talking points and will have had media training.” —Conversation with Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen (2017)

⁷¹ “One of the main things MFA tries to do is get good media coverage. To this end, they aim to set up events to look really good visually.” —Conversation with Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen (2017)

⁷² “It is also an indication of the success of a protest when the protesters leave the protest energized and excited for change, rather than exhausted or otherwise disempowered, because protests are generally quite removed from their effects.” —Conversation with Zach Groff (2017)

⁷³ “Diverse participation also increases the likelihood of tactical diversity, since different groups and associations are familiar with different forms of resistance and bring unique skills and capacities to the fight, which makes outmaneuvering the opponent and increasing pressure points more plausible” (40).

- Understand and communicate the risks of protests to all activists
- Consider recruiting protesters who have relatively privileged identities to engage in riskier activities, such as protesting⁷⁴
- Ensure that there are safe ways for activists to participate if they can't or don't want to protest

To maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects that protests have on **industry**, activists should consider the following:

- Protests seem to be most effective when used in conjunction with other interventions, like petitions, phone calls, and email campaigns⁷⁵
- Protests and other activist challenges to corporations are likely more successful when repeated (both within a given campaign and in subsequent campaigns) at the same corporation (Chenoweth & Olsen, 2016)
- Corporations undergoing leadership changes are more susceptible to activist challenges (Chenoweth & Olsen, 2016).

To maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects that protests have on the movement's **alliances**, activists should consider the following:

- We [believe](#) that the animal advocacy movement would benefit from building stronger coalitions with other social justice movements. Much of our [general advice](#) about supporting other movements is highly relevant for protesters. (For example: “Do not advocate for your issue in ways that are racist, sexist, heterosexist, cissexist, sizeist, ableist, ageist, classist, etc.”)
- Consider attending protests for consonant movements and advocating for animals as well as other issues represented there.⁷⁶ However, be careful not to do so in a way that detracts, or could appear to detract, from the primary goals of the protest.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ “CF has made an effort to recruit members with more privileged identities—particularly in Washington D.C.—who are willing to take the risk of arrest and who have less to lose in doing so.” —[ACE Interviews: Collectively Free](#) (2017)

⁷⁵ “Combining protests with other tactics really elevates the protest’s success.” —Conversation with Taylor Ford (2017)

⁷⁶ For instance, animal activists successfully joined an [environmental protest](#) and advocated for animals in addition to the environment.

⁷⁷ “It is important to be open and genuine, to attend meetings, and to avoid shaming others for not focusing primarily on animal issues. Listen to how others organize their activism, and pay attention to the way they discuss the many different and interconnected forms of oppression. Discussing the connections between animal oppression and other

To maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects that protests have on **policy and law**, activists should consider the following:

- Protests are more likely to influence policy when they have high public support and powerful alliances (Giugni & Yamasaki, 2009; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011).

Evaluative questions⁷⁸

To what extent does this intervention achieve positive outcomes for animals?				
Discussion:				
<p>In the short term, protests achieve both positive and negative outcomes. They can garner positive or negative attention from their targets, witnesses, and the media. They can mobilize some activists but alienate others. They can prompt key influencers to become allies or opponents of the animal advocacy movement. None of these outcomes directly affect animals.</p> <p>In the longer term, we believe that the effects of protests will be net positive for animals. Protests have already played a role in convincing some corporations to make concessions, and there is some evidence that, by using protests, activists can advance their cause on the nation’s political agenda. By visibly asserting their uncompromising position, protesters might also create a shift in social norms that will benefit animals.</p> <p>Since protests cause change over the long term, we have substantial uncertainty about many of their outcomes. Moreover, since protests interact with many other animal advocacy interventions, it’s difficult to determine how much responsibility they bear for the change that they seem to produce. For example, protests may favorably influence public opinion in conjunction with education and other interventions, but not alone. Even if protests are not a particularly effective intervention on their own, we think that there are some compelling arguments that protests are a necessary component of successful social movements.</p>				
Scale:				
1	2	3	4	5
This intervention does not create net positive change (and might even create net negative change) for animals.		This intervention creates a small amount of net positive change for animals.		This intervention creates a large amount of net positive change for animals.
Level of Certainty:				
1	2	3	4	5
We are highly uncertain about the impact this		We are moderately certain about the impact this		We are highly certain about the impact this

systems of oppression can cause backlash. It may be seen as a derailing or a betrayal.” —[ACE Interviews: Collectively Free](#) (2017)

⁷⁸ We score interventions on the questions in this table from 1–5, and we provide our confidence level on a scale of 1–5. Each research team member provides individual scores, and then we discuss each question to reach a consensus. Highlighting multiple scores indicates that the intervention varies such that some instances of the intervention receive a lower score and some instances receive a higher score.

To what extent does this intervention achieve positive outcomes for animals?				
intervention has for animals.		intervention has for animals.		intervention has for animals.

To what extent does the available evidence support our theory of change for this intervention?

Discussion:

There is some evidence for each of the mechanisms represented in our theory of change, as described in the Theory of change section of this report. However, much of the evidence comes from studies with important limitations and may not be generalizable to animal advocacy protests. Many of the studies do not directly investigate the impact of protests; rather, they investigate the impact of civil resistance, direct action, or other more general approaches. Most of them investigate social movements other than the animal advocacy movement. The animal movement seems relevantly different from many other movements, particularly those that are closely associated with major political parties or those with which large portions of the population identify. The uncertain generalizability of much of the relevant evidence limits the extent to which it supports our theory of change.

Scale:

1	2	3	4	5
The available evidence does not support our theory of change.		The available evidence provides moderate support for our theory of change.		The available evidence strongly supports our theory of change.

Level of Certainty:

1	2	3	4	5
We are highly uncertain about the extent to which the evidence supports our theory of change.		We are moderately certain about the extent to which the evidence supports our theory of change.		We are highly certain about the extent to which the evidence supports our theory of change.

To what extent is this intervention cost-effective when compared to other interventions we have evaluated?

Discussion:

We have substantial uncertainty about the cost effectiveness of protests compared to other interventions, and we think that different kinds of protests likely vary in their cost effectiveness. The cost effectiveness of protests that are used as one component of a corporate campaign seems to be above average relative to other interventions. The cost effectiveness of protests with less specific targets and less specific asks seems to be below average relative to other interventions, *at least in terms of effects that are relatively short-term and easily measurable*. We recognize that all protests likely have difficult-to-measure, longer-term outcomes that we are unable to account for in our cost effectiveness models.

Scale:

1	2	3	4	5

This intervention is not cost-effective compared to other interventions we have evaluated.		This intervention is comparable to the other interventions we have evaluated, in terms of cost effectiveness.		This intervention is cost-effective compared to other interventions we have evaluated.
Level of Certainty:				
1	2	3	4	5
We are highly uncertain about the cost effectiveness of this intervention.		We are moderately certain about the cost effectiveness of this intervention.		We are highly certain about the cost effectiveness of this intervention.

Should the animal advocacy movement continue to devote the same amount of resources to protests that it does currently?
<p>Discussion:</p> <p>We think that the animal advocacy movement should allocate slightly greater resources to protests than it does currently. We encourage organizations that use protests as part of their corporate campaign programs to continue using them. Organizations who do corporate outreach but have not yet implemented protests may want to consider incorporating protests into their strategy. Donors who wish to support a plurality of advocacy methods may want to allocate at least a small portion of their donations to protest groups. Finally, we feel that protesting is a relatively effective use of volunteer time, particularly because, as Ford reported, protests seem to draw activists who may not otherwise volunteer their time to help animals.⁷⁹</p> <p>Though we are <i>not</i> confident that protests are more cost-effective than other interventions, we think that protests currently receive too small a portion of the movement’s funding given that they are plausibly at least as cost-effective as many other interventions. For example, we think that protesting is plausibly at least as cost-effective as leafleting, yet protests receive just \$120,000–\$240,000 from the animal advocacy movement each year. We do not have an estimate of the total funds devoted to animal advocacy leafleting, but Vegan Outreach, a single organization known for its leafleting, devoted \$1,043,000 to their direct outreach efforts in 2016.^{80, 81}</p> <p>Rather than investing the vast majority of its resources in a small number of interventions, we believe that the animal advocacy movement should invest in a wide range of interventions. Chenoweth & Stephan (2011) argue that tactical diversity increases a movement’s chances of success (40). Using a wide range of approaches can help draw more people to a movement. Protests seem to draw activists who may not have gotten involved in the movement through other avenues, like leafleting. We think it’s likely that leafleting similarly attracts activists who may not have gotten involved in the movement through avenues like protesting. By employing many different interventions, the animal advocacy movement can best mobilize activists.</p>
Scale:

⁷⁹ There may be a point at which so many activists engage in protests that it is no longer an effective use of marginal volunteer time. However, we believe we are a long way from that point.

⁸⁰ Vegan Outreach’s “direct outreach” includes both leafleting and tabling.

⁸¹ It’s not necessarily the case that equally cost-effective interventions should receive equal amounts of funding; different interventions may require different resources. Protests seem to require fewer printed materials and more volunteer time than other interventions.

1	2	3	4	5
The animal advocacy movement should devote far fewer resources to protests than it does currently.		The animal advocacy movement should continue to devote the same amount of resources to protests that it does currently.		The animal advocacy movement should devote far greater resources to protests than it does currently.
Level of Certainty:				
1	2	3	4	5
We are highly uncertain about the amount of resources that the animal advocacy movement should devote to protests.		We are moderately certain about the amount of resources that the animal advocacy movement should devote to protests.		We are highly certain about the amount of resources that the animal advocacy movement should devote to protests.

Conclusion

We would like to see the animal advocacy movement invest more heavily in protests, primarily because protests currently receive a tiny portion of the movement’s resources and are plausibly at least as cost-effective as interventions that receive much more. We think that protests contribute to the diversity of the movement’s tactics, which might help attract a greater number of activists to the cause.

Because protesters employ a wide range of different strategies, some protests are likely more effective than others. Of course, we believe that more resources should be devoted to more effective protests and fewer resources should be devoted to less effective protests. We have some uncertainty regarding which kinds of protests are most effective, but we do provide some provisional advice for organizing effective protests in the Overall assessment section of this report. In short, we think that the most effective protests are those that are conducted professionally (i.e., with a strategy for making a visual impact and a designated individual on site to speak with the press), with a specific target and a specific “ask.”

We hope that future research will further investigate the effects of protests, as well as the relative effectiveness of different kinds of protests. In particular, we would like to see the following questions addressed:

- In what circumstances are protests most effective?
- We would like to see more studies on individual reactions to protests or protesters, as well as the role of:
 - Repeated exposure to the protest or protesters

- Emotional intensity of the protest
- Messages used
- Theatrics, satire, and comedy
- What roles do the following factors play in protest effectiveness?
 - Protest size
 - Level of public support
 - Type of target (e.g., individuals or institutions)
 - Alliance with a major political party
 - Leadership by allies as opposed to those whose rights are most affected
- What role have protests played in other ally-led movements (e.g., environmentalism or children’s rights movements⁸²)?
- How concerned should we be about the lingering effects of countermobilization and backlash?⁸³

⁸² Jacy Reese discusses the role of confrontation in the child labor movement in his essay, “[Confrontation, Consumer Action, and Triggering Events](#),” as well as some parallels between the child labor movement and the animal advocacy movement.

⁸³ In his essay, “[Did Confrontation Really Work in the Civil Rights Movement?](#)” Zach Groff discusses the lingering backlash effects of confrontation in the civil rights era.