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FROM BOSTON HARBOR TO ZUCCOTTI PARK: A STUDY OF ECONOMIC CHANGE
AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT MOBILIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

MARINA STINELY
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Lee Ann Banaszak
Professor of Political Science
Thesis Supervisor

Gretchen Casper
Associate Professor of Political Science
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how macroeconomic change influences social movement mobilization. Specifically, I analyze all social movements in the United States that were reported by the New York Times from 1960-1995. I utilize two competing theories of social movement phenomena, strain theory and resource mobilization theory, to explain the possible relationship. My findings consistently negate my hypotheses associated with strain theory. In contrast, I find significant results that resource mobilization theory explains the relationship between macroeconomic change and social movement mobilization, except when looking at changing unemployment and number of social movement organizations involved in protest activity. These findings have important implications for scholars in the fields of sociology, economics, and political science, among others, and can be helpful for organizers and activists attempting to mobilize people and resources to affect meaningful change.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The United States (US) formed as a result of civil unrest and dissatisfaction with the status quo under British rule. One of the turning points in American colonial history took place in Boston, Massachusetts in the winter of 1773. In the preceding months, colonists had grown increasingly upset with oppressive British taxation. Great Britain was heavily indebted after the French and Indian Wars and looked to the colonies to garner tax revenues. The Sugar Act of 1764 introduced a heavy tax on sugar, the Stamp Act of 1765 levied a tax on all paper products used in the colonies, and the Tea Act of 1773, among others, imposed taxes on the importation and sale of tea. American colonists became extremely upset with Britain's unrelenting tax laws and decided to take action through protest. On the night of December 16, 1773 a group of disgruntled colonists dumped approximately 90,000 pounds of tea into Boston Harbor (Alexander 2002). This protest has become known as the Boston Tea Party and is one of the most iconic events of American history.

Prior to the American Revolutionary War, British Laws of Trade, Navigation Acts, and taxes on American-made goods led to unrest and dissatisfaction with imperial control. American colonists were unable to prosper from the products of their own labor. Despite colonial efforts to express grievances concerning their taxation without representation, British rule continued to exploit colonial production. Many scholars argue that this economic dissatisfaction played a key part in leading the American colonists to collectively act, declare its independence from Great Britain, and fight a revolutionary war for sovereignty. Reid (1978) suggests that the reasons for

the American Revolution are many, but the preponderance of economic burdens from Britain played a key role in sparking the colonists' rebellion. Since its independence, US history has seen a multitude of social movements that have had various effects on American life.

In more recent US history, adherents in the Occupy Wall Street movement, or Occupy movements, also expressed grievances with regard to labor conditions, financial regulation, and inequality in the US (Calhoun 2013: 26-27). Some scholars have suggested that the Occupy movements' collective behavior was spurred by the "Great Recession." Gitlin (2013) suggests that the political-economic establishments, which preceded the economic breakdown of 2008, illuminated economic inequalities and motivated the collective action of Americans from many backgrounds. The perception that economic dissatisfaction leads to collective behavior is consistent with deprivation theory, structural strain theory, and, to an extent, resource mobilization theory.

Scholars have developed many theories about how and why people collectively act and what influences groups' ability to mobilize people and resources. Buechler (2004) argues that collective behavior occurs due to grievances that arise from a breakdown or strain in the status quo. Javelin (2003) suggests that it may not be grievances that mobilize individuals to collectively act; rather, it is the ability to attribute changes in the status quo to a specific culprit that mobilizes individuals. Other studies look at how access to resources influence specific instances of collective behavior. Snow et al. (2005) studies how homeless movements in the US mobilize economic and social resources. Van Dyke and Soule (2002) observe how economic changes assist and detract from the ability of patriot and militia groups to organize and mobilize in the US. There is a significant amount of current literature that addresses the impact of economic factors on mobilization of specific movements in the US. This leads me to my interest

in how economic change can broadly influenced social movement mobilization across all protests. I want to know how macroeconomic change may influence the occurrence of social movement mobilization. Specifically, “How has inflation and/or unemployment influenced the mobilization of social movements in the US since the 1960s?” In my research I build upon and apply existing theories in a new way through my own research question and design.

In this paper, I test the mobilizing effects of a variety of threats caused by economic changes. I consider that changing economic conditions may produce threats which inspire reactive mobilization, “mobilization in response to the real or perceived loss of power or resources” (Van Dyke and Soule 2002: 498). To assess this argument, I conduct a regression analysis of mobilization factors over time, examining how these factors influence the number of social movement events and the number of social movement organizations involved.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I will outline background information and review the previous literature and main theories that guide my research project. Second, I will identify the hypotheses that will test my research question. Third, I will discuss the methods and theories that I used to collect and organize my data. Fourth, I will analyze my data, results, and findings. Fifth, and finally, I will summarize my major findings, their implications, the limitations of my research, and describe possible suggestions for future research in the study of social movement mobilization.

Chapter 2

Arguments and Literature

Social Movement Theory

Many scholars in the fields of Political Science and Sociology, among others, have studied social movements (SM) and social movement mobilization. A social movement has been defined as, “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society,” (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1217-18). Over time, the study and understanding of social movements has changed. In turn, the theories that dominate the field have changed. Two important theories in the study of social movements are strain theory and resource mobilization theory. In comparing and contrasting these theories, I suggest that economic changes may lead to mobilization across all social movements in the US from January 1960 to January 1995. My analysis will focus, primarily, on the similarities and differences between strain and resource mobilization theories with respect to social movement mobilization.

Some of the first dominant theories in the study of SM were strain, breakdown, and deprivation theories. These theories often argue that groups mobilize when they are faced with broad social changes, such as economic crisis, economic restructuring, loss of supporting social institutions, and more. Many of these perspectives hold that “discontent produced by some combination of structural conditions is a necessary if not sufficient condition to an account of the rise of any specific social movement phenomena” (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1214). According

to Buechler (2004: 49), several key assumptions describe strain theories. “First, collective behavior is triggered by some breakdown, strain or disruption in normal social routines. Second, as such, collective behavior is sharply set off from conventional behavior, with elements of contagion, excitability, spontaneity, and emotionality as prevalent themes.” This theory often framed collective behavior to be irrational, disruptive, dangerous, and excessive, which contributed to the theory’s ultimate decline. Deprivation theories focus on individual psychological reactions, but the ultimate source of discontent and frustration with the status quo is often attributed to large-scale socioeconomic changes (Khawaja 1994). The claim of many strain theories is that social movements result as a response from social strain. However, these theories tend to ignore political context and assume a linear relationship between macro-level strains and micro-level, individual behavior (Buechler 2004). This assumed linear relationship evokes the level of analysis problem, a condition in which one incorrectly assumes that processes evident at one level of analysis (aggregation) are operative at another (Singer 1961). Critics argued that the theory portrayed collective behavior as deviant behavior rather than political action to affect meaningful change (Buechler 2004). Thus, new theories arose that shifted the existing paradigm and study of SM altogether.

One of these theories was resource mobilization. McCarthy and Zald (1977) worked on developing a partial theory on resource mobilization, which challenged previous understandings of collective behavior and SMs. The authors claim that grievances are not always sufficient for social movement mobilization because grievances and discontent can be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and elite groups. “The resource mobilization approach emphasizes both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups,

the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements,” (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1213). The authors emphasize the aggregation of resources – money and labor – as crucial to understanding collective social conflict. Resource mobilization theories often assert that social movements mobilize in response to increases in resources and the availability or access to organizations that coordinate social action. One way that individuals are able to aggregate resources to collectively act is through the support of social movement organizations (SMO).

A social movement organization has been defined as “a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals,” (p. 1218). “SMO involvement requires greater commitment of time, risk, and energy,” to coordinate and guide movement action (Stoecker 1995: 113). SMOs often have “target goals,” which are a set of preferred changes that the organization works toward. In order to achieve these goals, SMOs must overcome collective action problems in order to mobilize people, resources, and ideas. Because SMs provide public goods, individuals have a tendency to free ride on the actions of others in order to reap the rewards of collective action without having to bear the costs of participation. Thus, the ability to convert non-adherents into adherents and adherents into constituents of SM activity are key aspects to mobilization.

Strain theorists and resource mobilization scholars tend to disagree in the ways that changes in available economic resources impact the likelihood of social movements. The two theories can be compared and contrasted based on their main assumptions. Traditional arguments from strain theory emphasize that new grievances generate social change. Strain theories often treat strain associated with societal grievances as the context for social

movements. While resource mobilization theories often assert that society provides the opportunities for social movements to mobilize resources and affect favorable change. Moreover, resource mobilization theorists suggest that grievances are constant and changes in resources, organization, and opportunities allow for collective action to occur (Jenkins 1983). However, resource mobilization theory does accept that suddenly imposed grievances, including environmental disasters and state-organized repression, may trigger mobilization. Despite these differences, “there is considerable conceptual overlap between what classical theorists mean by strain or breakdown and what resource mobilization theorists mean by opportunity” (Buechler 2004: 61). Although I do not address debates about which theories most accurately describe social movement phenomena, they are important in analyzing my findings and understanding their implications.

These social movement theories are important in understanding motivations for mobilization. However, I am also interested in how macroeconomic change influence mobilization. In the following section, I explain the importance and implications of macroeconomic change on society. In addition, I describe how social movement theories provide competing explanations about how macroeconomic change influence mobilization.

Economic Theory

My analysis primarily focuses on macro-level economic changes that can impact the social movement mobilization. I argue that the two theoretical frameworks described above suggest different explanations about how economic changes in the business cycle may affect mobilization. Specifically, I am curious as to whether or not social movements occur during

declines in the business cycle, when resources – money and labor – are scarce and possibly more difficult to aggregate for the collective. The vicious circle in the study of social movement mobilization, described by McVeigh (1999), is the same conditions that create favorable conditions for collective action by one movement may present an increased threat for another. In addition, the same conditions that are explained by one theory may be rejected by another theory and vice versa. For this reason, the results of this time-series analysis of all social movements recorded in the US from 1960 to 1995 may be inconclusive.

Van Dyke and Soule (2002) utilize the assumptions of strain theory to suggest that reactive social movements, which involve a group's attempt to reassert claims to resources it has lost, may be, at least in part, a function of threats caused by economic structural change. According to strain theories, macroeconomic changes could be considered a disruption in the status quo, alter the flow and accessibility of resources to a group, and be perceived as threatening. Any or all of these factors could lead to social mobilization. In contrast, “[r]esource mobilization . . . [does] not make predictions about threats produced by macro-level structural change,” (Van Dyke and Soule: 498). However, resource mobilization theory suggests that decreased access to resources, especially economic resources, may decrease opportunities for mobilization. I have chosen to look at how macroeconomic changes impact mobilization, either through increasing grievances or decreasing access to mobilizing resources.

Many people have assumed that all aspects of recessions and troughs in the business cycle have the same effect, but I question if this assumption is true. There are several aspects of macroeconomic change that can lead to recessions and troughs in the business cycle. In this study, I assess two types of macroeconomic change: rising inflation and rising unemployment. I use the consumer price index (CPI) as a measure of inflation and unemployment rate as a

measure of unemployment. I believe that changes in these economic indicators may influence mobilization, because macroeconomic analysis provides information that consumers need to understand and react to current economic conditions and help to predict future conditions (Hubbard and O'Brien 2013: 288).

One important macroeconomic indicator is inflation, the percentage increase in the average prices of goods and services from one year to the next (Hubbard and O'Brien 2013: 329). Changes in inflation affect all consumers in the US. Inflation is one of the most closely watched national economic indicators. Businesses use inflation to determine prices of their products and the wages and salaries of their employees. Each year, the federal government increases the Social Security payments made to retired workers based on the increase in inflation during the previous year. In setting alimony and child support payments in divorce cases, judges often order that the payments increase each year by the inflation rate (Hubbard and O'Brien 2013: 330).

High inflation rates influence large proportions of the population. Individuals and households that are on fixed incomes, such as pensioners, suffer during times of high inflation because the things that they buy are rising in price, but their funds to pay for them are not. During periods of high inflation people with lower incomes typically spend a greater proportion of their income gas, electricity, and food. If incomes are suppressed or frozen and do not rise to meet inflation, then workers will see their purchasing power decline. Finally, high rates of inflation typically correspond with periods of low interest rates. This means that individuals' savings are not gaining much value in the bank. Thus, changes in inflation could be considered a potential source of grievances caused by disturbances in resource flows to the household. Specifically, if the economy is experiencing a period of inflation, prices are rising, and

consumers have an incentive to purchase needed items as soon as possible to avoid having to buy them at even higher prices. When the economy experiences a period of deflation, prices are falling, and consumers have an incentive to put off buying goods in anticipation that prices may fall even more.

Another important macroeconomic indicator is unemployment. Typically, unemployment signals problems in a nation's economy. Unemployment can signal disconnect between levels of human capital in the labor force and types of industries in a nation. Workers may be over- or under-qualified for the jobs that are offered in the nation's economy. High unemployment can also signal changes in the structure of the economy via changes in technology or changes in taste. If unemployment is "higher or lower than expected, investors are likely to change their views on the health of the economy. . . . Good news about unemployment usually causes stock prices to rise, and bad news causes stock prices to fall" (Hubbard and O'Brien 2013: 314). In addition, changes in unemployment can have important political implications. "In most presidential elections, the incumbent president is reelected if unemployment is falling early in the election year but is defeated if unemployment is rising" (Hubbard and O'Brien 2013: 314). This phenomenon is associated with "sociotropic voting," which suggests that voters consider a rough estimate of the well-being of the economy as a whole. In addition, this phenomenon could be associated with "pocketbook voting," which suggests that voters consider immediate and tangible changes in their personal financial situation when determining candidates (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981). Moreover, high rates of unemployment have often been associated with periods of disruption and upset in communities. For example, during the Great Depression, high levels of unemployment and economic instability led to protests across the US, especially in major cities. Many protestors attributed the economic disaster to elite members of

society, similar to grievances expressed during the time of the American Revolution and the Occupy Wall Street movements.

Changing inflation and unemployment can impact different groups of society in a variety of ways. Strain theory and resource mobilization theory suggest different explanations for how these changing macroeconomic variables can influence mobilization. This leads me to develop multiple hypotheses on the relationship between economic change and social movement mobilization.

Hypotheses

In this paper, I propose two sets of competing hypotheses to explain the relationship between economic change and social movement mobilization. Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b align with the assumptions of strain theory, while hypotheses 1c, 1d, 2c, and 2d align with the assumptions of resource mobilization theory. Understanding how economic change affects all consumers around the country leads me to my first set of hypotheses.

H1a) – If CPI rises there will be an increase in SM demonstrations

H1b) – If CPI rises there will be an increase in the number of SMOs involved

I hypothesize that if there is a rise in inflation, via the CPI, there would be an increase in SM mobilization. When there is inflation, prices of goods increase, and there is an incentive to purchase goods today, for fear that prices of the same goods will be even higher tomorrow. From the perspective of strain theory, the pressure to consume from high inflation may put strain on the household and increase grievances with the status quo, leading to mobilization for change. During periods of deflation, strain theory suggests that individuals, specifically low income

individuals, would be less aggrieved and social movements would be less frequent. While, at the same time, deflation could upset wealthy individuals seeking low mortgage rates and individuals in debt searching for low interest rates, leading to mobilization.

If CPI rises there could also be an increase in the number of SMOs involved. The negative effects of rising inflation can also impact organizations. Organizations' whose operations rely on stable prices can become aggrieved by rising inflation. According to strain theory, SMOs may become more involved in SM activity during times of high inflation because their ability to achieve target goals has been hindered by changes in the status quo. At the same time, during periods of deflation, organizations that seek high levels of inflation and low interest rates may be upset and more inclined to participate in SMs.

Conversely, I could expect that a rise in CPI could lead to declines in SM mobilization.

H1c) – If CPI rises there will be a decrease in SM demonstrations

H1d) – If CPI rises there will be a decrease in the number of SMOs involved

Typically, when inflation rises, interest rates decrease, making it more reasonable to purchase more expensive goods with credit. For example, homeowners may benefit during times of high inflation because they can receive lower mortgage rates. Higher rates of inflation, and lower interest rates, also assist individuals in debt. Over time, the value of the debt will decrease because rising inflation makes the amount borrowed worth less than when originally borrowed. In addition, if wage rates rise to accommodate for the increasing prices of goods, then there would not be a net change in the status quo. In these cases, consumers may be satisfied with economic conditions and would have access to resources needed to potentially mobilize. From a resource mobilization perspective, a rising CPI could limit the amount of resources available to a lower income household and decrease ability and opportunities to mobilize. In contrast, during

periods of low inflation or deflation, resource mobilization theory suggests that low income individuals could have increased access to resources and could, in turn, increase mobilization.

If CPI rises I could expect that the number of SMOs involved would decrease because during periods of inflation, prices are rising, and SMOs may not have access to the resources they need to maintain their goals or organizational structure. According to resource mobilization theory, during periods of high inflation SMOs may not be able to extend support to a SM, even if their goals align, because of scarce resources. In addition, during periods of deflation, SMOs that desire low interest rates may not have access to the resources they need to achieve their goals and, in turn, will be less involved in SM activity.

My second set of competing hypotheses involves unemployment. Unemployment is often used by strain theorists as a measure of deprivation and a source for collective activity. In an attempt to test this theory, Kerbo and Shaffer (1986) discovered that the relationship between unemployment and collective action varied considerably between 1890 and 1940, suggesting that there were other variables are needed to understand the phenomena. In addition, a study by Van Dyke and Soule (2002) found little relationship between the mobilization of US patriot and militia organizations and unemployment; however, results may be different when studying the relationship across all protest activity.

H2a) – If unemployment rises there will be an increase in SM demonstrations

H2b) – If unemployment rises there will be an increase in the number of SMOs involved

I hypothesize that if there is an increase in the unemployment rate in the US there will be an increase in the occurrence of SM mobilization. These hypotheses could be plausible based on assumptions of strain theory. When unemployment increases, a new population of deprived individuals develops that do not have jobs and can no longer provide for their households. Strain

theory suggests that this disturbance in the status quo could lead dissatisfied individuals to mobilize. This idea is similar to the power preponderance thesis, which suggests that those who are satisfied with the status quo will not attempt to upset the existing power structure (Organski 1958). However, those that are dissatisfied with the status quo may become revisionist and attempt to challenge the existing power structure.

In addition, if the unemployment rate rises I could expect more SMOs to be involved in SM activity. Typically, SMOs assist SMs with organizing and gathering resources for movements in which it shares similar goals or interests. According to strain theory, SMOs whose constituents rely on low unemployment rates may become more involved in SM activity if their members become aggrieved as a result of changing unemployment. Additionally, in the past, SMOs have been closely related to special interest groups and organizations. If a special interest group has interests in maintaining low unemployment or whose constituents lose their jobs, the interest group may seek out or employ SMOs to assist in organizing SM activity to affect favorable change.

Conversely, I could expect that a rise in unemployment could lead to a decrease in the occurrence of SM mobilization.

H2c) – If unemployment rises there will be a decrease in SM demonstrations

H2d) – If unemployment rises there will be a decrease in the number of SMOs involved

Specifically, resource mobilization theory, suggests that the loss of a job and, in turn, access to steady income may decrease ability to mobilize. If the unemployment rate rises I could expect that the number of SMOs involved in SM activity would decrease. According to resource mobilization theory, SMOs may not be able to assist SM activity because its constituents may be affected by unemployment. Not only could changes in unemployment limit an SMO's ability to

garner supporters, but it could also limit resources available to mobilize. Individuals who are unemployed or have been recently unemployed may not be able to devote time or money an SMO or SM activity. In addition, special interest organizations and outside groups that support SMOs and SM activity may be unable to provide consistent flows of resources if changes in unemployment affect their constituents, employees, or organizations as a whole.

These hypotheses directly relate to my research question and guide my theoretical models and data analysis. Similar to some of the studies in the literature listed above, my hypotheses consider the definition of SM mobilization and economic factors that impact the business cycle and may be found to influence SM mobilization. Through my research I hope to find a relationship between economic factors and the occurrence of SM mobilization across all movements in the US from 1960-1995.

Chapter 3

Data and Methods

My analysis is conducted on quarterly data from the first quarter of 1960 to the fourth quarter of 1995. The data available for this time frame limited the possible tests and models performed. I utilize a time series analysis to estimate the dynamic effects of change in inflation and unemployment on social movement mobilization over time. I also include control variables of short term and long term macroeconomic change. Furthermore, I use a time lag of the dependent variables in my theoretical model to understand not only how much of an effect changes in x have on y, but also when the effect occurs.

Theoretical Regression Models

- 1) y (number of events)_t = $\alpha + \beta_1 (y_{t-1}) + \beta_2$ (change in CPI_t) + β_3 (change in unemployment rate_t) + β_4 (change in GDP per capita_t) + β_5 (recession indicator_t) + e
- 2) y (number of SMOs)_t = $a + \beta_1 (y_{t-1}) + \beta_2$ (change in CPI_t) + β_3 (change in unemployment rate_t) + β_4 (change in GDP per capita_t) + β_5 (recession indicator_t) + e

In these theoretical models, β_2 and β_3 are positive when utilizing strain theory analysis of social movements, while β_2 and β_3 are negative when using a resource mobilization theory analysis of mobilization.

I am primarily interested in the relationship between macroeconomic changes and the occurrences of social movement mobilization. As a result I include dependent variables

concerning social movement mobilization and independent variables describing economic changes in the US. Additionally, I include controls for short-term and long-term economic change.

In much of the literature on SMs, scholars utilize newspaper analysis to collect data about protests. Despite this, there are few cumulative databases that have recorded SM activity over time. My data are taken from the Dynamics of Collective Action data set. This data source collected and coded collective action events recorded in daily NYT articles from 1960 to 1995. The data set from Stanford University was published by Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, Susan Olzak, and Sarah Soule (2009). The data set was meticulously coded to include extensive details of SM events and activities, including: group type, activity type, estimated participants, claims, and more. However, the data set has limitations with regard to accounting for all social movements throughout the US because it only acquired data from one national newspaper located in the Northeast region of the country. Although this data set is not an unbiased collection of all social movement events from the time frame, it does provide a good representation of the events that received high levels of visibility and could have informed public debate and decisions on the issues of the time (Banaszak and Oserin 2010).

Social movement mobilization, in this paper, is characterized by number of SM events and number of social movement organizations (SMO) reported by the New York Times (NYT) from 1960 to 1995. I use two indicators of SM mobilization chosen based on basic goals shared by many SMs and SMOs, including: expressing their intentions/frustrations/wants, spreading their message, and garnering support. The first indicator of mobilization is number of demonstrations, which is measured by number of social movement events reported during a specific year and month. This variable helps me understand how often social movements

activities occurred, which may influence a SM's ability to attract adherents and share their goals. The second indicator of mobilization is the number of SMOs involved, which is measured using the approximate number of SMOs reported at SM events and activities during a particular month and year. The number of SMOs at a specific event is not measured. Understanding how many SMOs were involved with and supported SM activity helps to determine a SM's ability to garner support and employ resources.

I use two variables to measure economic changes: CPI and unemployment rate. I also use two control variables that account for economic change: GDP per capita and recession indicator. These economic variables were chosen based on prior research, available data, validity, and reliability of the measures. Each economic indicator measures the effect of economic changes on different sections of the population. "For many people, the state of the economy can be summarized in just two measures, the unemployment rate and the inflation rate." (Hubbard and O'Brien 2013: 314). Although the unemployment rate and inflation rate can provide insight into short-run economic problems, the long-run success of an economy is assessed by consistently high levels of GDP per capita and infrequency of recessions. The two control variables are important to understanding the well-being of the economy as a whole via changes in production, but are not as effective in understanding individual grievances, behavior, or well-being. Consequently, it is important to look at multiple indicators of economic change, because no single measure can provide a completely accurate description of the well-being of a household or the national economy.

One way to measure inflation is with a GDP deflator. The GDP deflator is one of the broadest measures of inflation. However, this measure can be misleading when trying to understand how inflation influences a typical household, because GDP deflator includes changes

in prices of industrial machinery and other goods that are not purchased by households. To avoid misinterpretation, I chose to look at the CPI as a measure of inflation, because this index comes closest to measuring changes in the cost of living for the average household. The CPI is “an average of the prices of the goods and services purchased by the typical urban family of four” (Hubbard and O’Brien 2013: 329). The CPI is calculated to reflect the spending patterns of two groups, all-urban consumers and urban wage earners, which represent approximately 85% of the US population. The CPI measures inflation with respect to price changes in a set market basket of consumer goods, but it does not measure ability of individual consumers and households to consume.

One way to measure unemployment in a country is with the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate measures the number of people who are employable, over the age of 16, and who have lost their jobs or have sought for jobs in the last four weeks and are still actively seeking employment. This economic indicator represents a very specific portion of the population and does not take into account discouraged workers, those who are unemployed and have not sought work in the last four weeks, or the under-employed. The unemployment rate is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by the total labor force (all employed, unemployed, and first-time job-seekers). Unemployment rate provides only a partial story about the labor market, but it can help understand the severity of economic highs and lows.

The GDP per capita is the value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given year, divided by the average (or mid-year) population for the same year. There are limitations to using the GDP per capita to measure economic well being because the benefits and harms associated with increases and decreases in GDP per capita are not equally distributed

among a population. I chose to include the GDP per capita in my study, despite its limitations, because early on in my data analysis the GDP per capita was found to be correlated to the CPI. In my final data analysis, I include three models that systematically include and exclude GDP per capita to ensure that the collinear relationship between the two variables does not significantly influence my results. In addition, including the GDP per capita can signify short-term economic changes.

The recession indicator measures changes in the business cycle. A recession is generally identified by a fall in GDP in two successive quarters, measuring the period between an economic peak and trough. This economic indicator represents macroeconomic changes in GDP across the nation, but does not represent how declines in GDP influence the population. Including an indicator for recessions can signify long-term economic changes over multiple fiscal quarters.

In general, I am interested in how economic change influences social movement mobilization, not the values alone. Thus, the independent variables and control variables, with the exception of the recession indicator, have been assessed as change scores of their original values. When I say “change in,” I refer to the difference between the values of the variables at time $t-1$ compared to time t . The data used to assess these variables were collected from two US government sources. Data sets from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statists (BLS) were used to determine CPI and unemployment statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/home.htm>). Information on GDP per capita and recession indicators were taken from data sets by the U.S. Federal Reserve (FRED) (<http://research.stlouisfed.org/>). These economic variables may not be representative of all economic changes that influence social movements during the time frame, but they may have implications on mobilization.

Chapter 4

Analysis

Theoretically, I expect to find a relationship between economic change and social movement mobilization. My competing sets of hypotheses assess the relationship from two theoretical points of view: strain theory and resource mobilization theory. To test these hypotheses I conduct numerous regressions of the independent variables on the dependent variables using Stata. Based on my results, and statistically significant findings, it appears that resource mobilization theories are more strongly supported in my analysis.

Before reviewing my regression analysis, I provide two figures that attempt to visually represent the relationship between macroeconomic change and social movement mobilization. Figure 1 includes a bar graph of changes in inflation and unemployment over time, and compares the data to a graph of social movement events over time. Figure 2 includes a bar graph of change in inflation and unemployment over time, and compares the data to a graph of social movement organization involvement, over time. These figures seem to show that there is more social movement activity and SMO involvement at times when there is limited macroeconomic change. This visual representation can be useful in interpreting my results and understanding their implications.

Figure 1: Graph of Economic Change and SM Events over Time

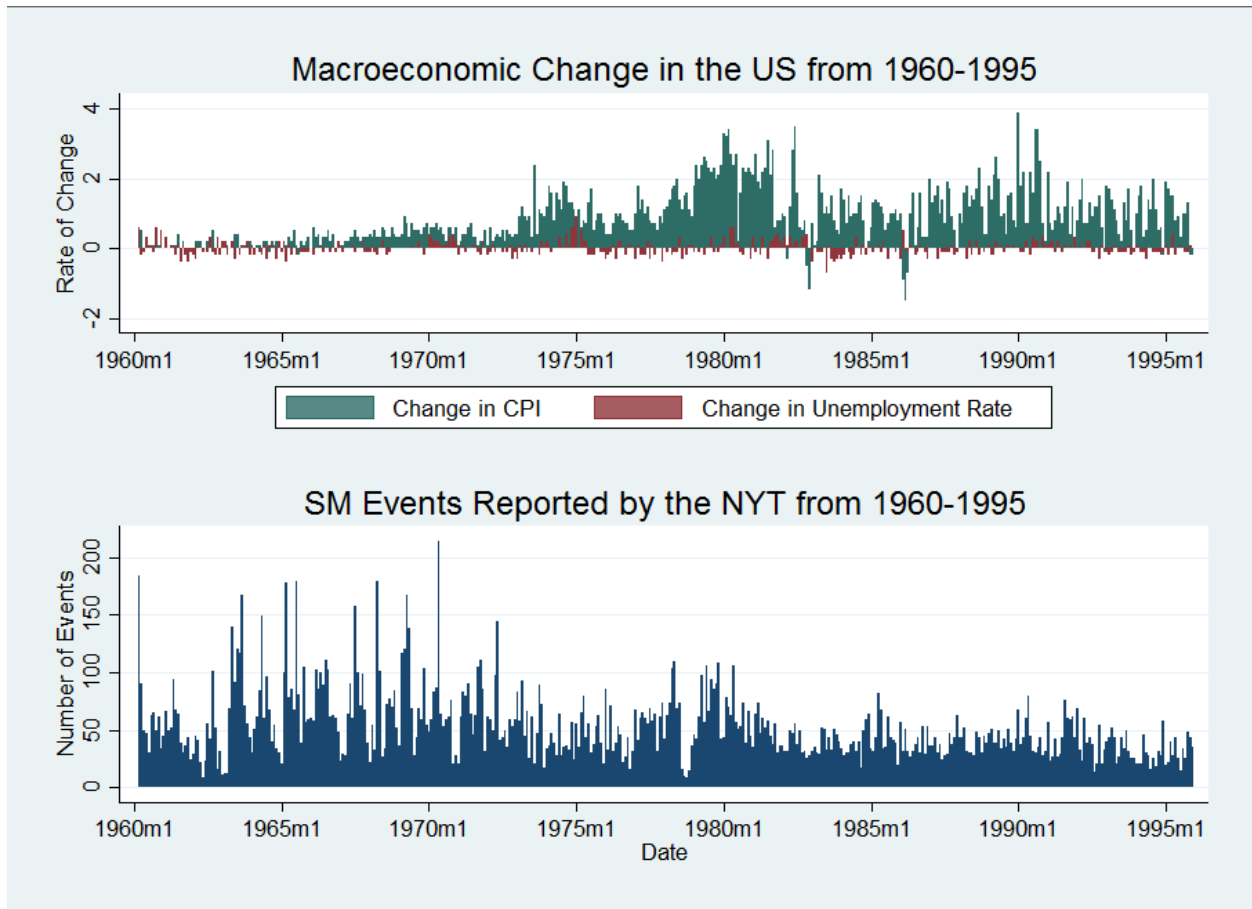
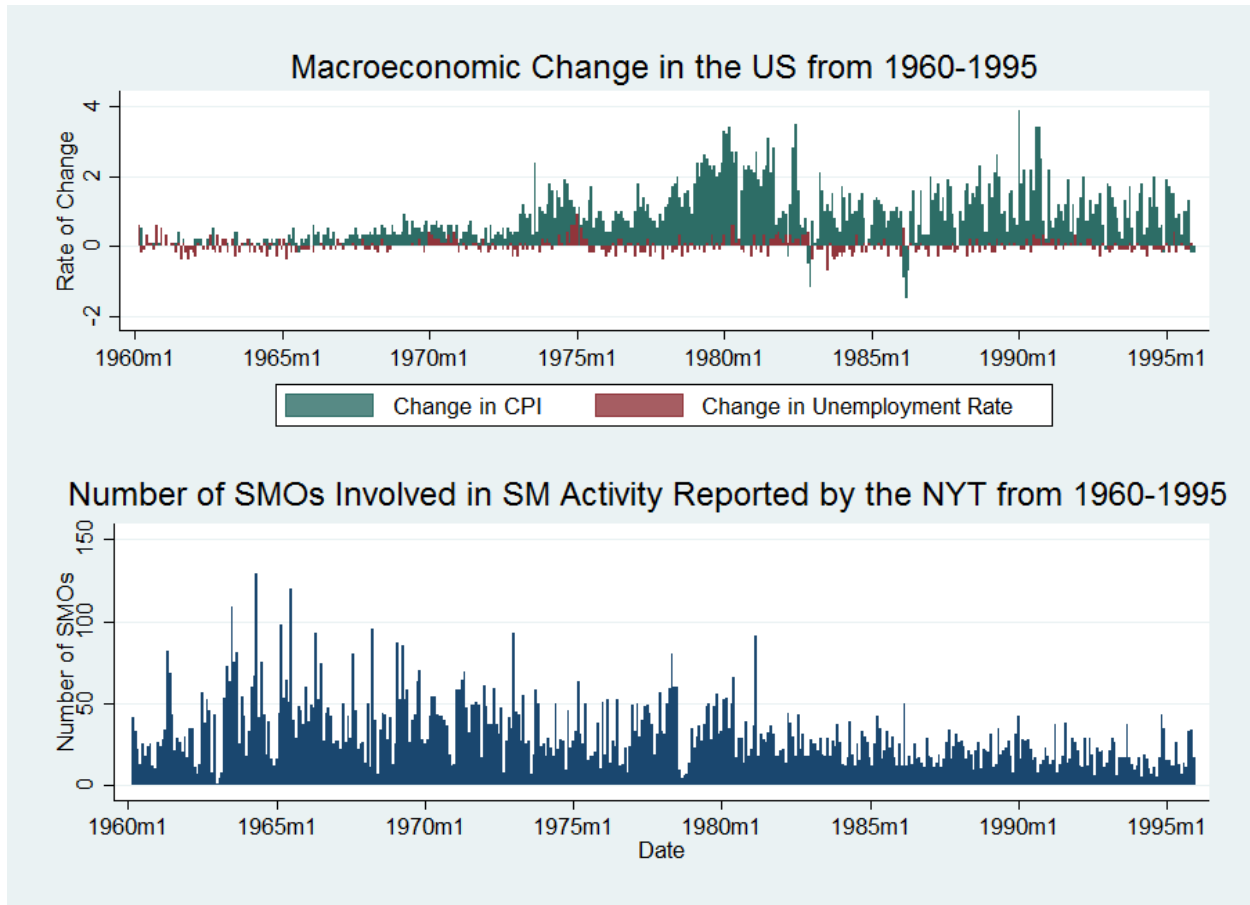


Figure 2: Graph of Economic Change and SMO Involvement over Time



Now that I have visuals of what my data represents, it is important to interpret the statistical analysis of my data. The multivariate regression analysis in Table 1 tests the relationship between the number of social movement events recorded by the NYT from 1960 to 1995 and selected economic change variables recorded over the same time period.

Table 1: Results of Regressing Number of Events on the IVs

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Change in CPI	-2.60 *	-2.52 *	
	1.60	1.60	
	-1.62	-1.57	
Change in unemployment rate	-4.80	-6.05	-4.62
	7.71	7.64	7.72
	-0.62	-0.79	-0.60
Control Variables			
Change GDP per capita	0.04		0.04
	0.03		0.03
	1.18		1.11
United State recession	0.21	-0.76	-0.64
	4.10	4.01	4.07
	0.05	-0.19	-0.16
Lag of Dependent Variable: Number of events	0.48 ***	0.48 ***	0.49 ***
	0.04	0.04	0.04
	11.32	11.26	11.46
Intercept (constant)	28.86 ***	29.93 ***	26.50 ***
	3.20	3.07	2.85
	9.02	9.75	9.29
N-value	430	430	430
R-squared	0.24	0.24	0.24
One Tailed Test: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01			
The values under the coefficients are first standard errors and then t-values.			

Model 1 in Table 1 includes both independent variables, control variables, and a lag of the dependent variable. This model accounts for 24 percent of the variation in the dependent variable. There is an inverse relationship between change in CPI and number of events recorded, because the direction of the coefficient is negative. The relationship is also significant at $p <$

0.05. The value of the coefficient is -2.60, which means with a one unit increase in CPI I expect to see a 2.60 decline in the number of protest events recorded, holding all other things constant. This finding negates Hypothesis 1a, but is consistent with Hypothesis 1c.

Model 1 also shows that there is an inverse relationship between change in unemployment rate and number of events recorded, because the direction of the coefficient is negative. However, the coefficient is not significant. This finding fails to reach traditional significance, and thus the results are inconclusive regarding the relationship between the variables. Thus, I cannot find support for Hypotheses 2a or 2c. A study by Van Dyke and Soule (2002) explaining the mobilization of patriot and militia groups in the US observed similar results. The authors found that changes in the unemployment rate did not significantly influence patriot and militia group organizing. This could be due to the idea that national changes in unemployment do not have as much of an impact on ability to organize as region and local changes in unemployment.

In Model 2, I remove the change in GDP per capita variable to see if its presence influences the significance or direction of the other variables. In removing this variable, the results account for the same percentage of variation in the dependent variable and remain consistent with regard to the results of Model 1. For the change in CPI and change in unemployment rate the significant variables remain significant, the directions of the variables remain the same, and the magnitude of change in the coefficients does not vary greatly.

In Model 3, I remove the change in CPI variable for the same reasons as Model 2 and find no changes in the accountability, significance, direction, or magnitude of unemployment. Thus, my inability to find an effect of unemployment on protest activity seems to hold,

regardless of the other variables that are in the model. In Table 1, it seems as though only changes in inflation have an effect on protest activity.

The multivariate regression analysis in Table 2 tests the relationship between the number of SMOs recorded at social movement events reported by the NYT from 1960 to 1995 and selected economic change variables recorded over the same time period.

Table 2: Results of Regressing SMO Involvement on the IVs

Independent Variables	Model1	Model2	Model3
Change in CPI	-2.33 **	-2.29 **	
	1.07	1.07	
	-2.17	-2.14	
Change in unemployment rate	-9.49 **	-10.22 **	-9.31 **
	5.13	5.08	5.15
	-1.85	-2.01	-1.81
Control Variables			
Change GDP per capita	0.02		0.02
	0.02		0.02
	1.02		0.93
United State recession	1.75	1.19	1.01
	2.73	2.67	2.72
	0.64	0.45	0.37
Lag of Dependent Variable: Number of SMOs	0.42 ***	0.41 ***	0.43 ***
	0.04	0.04	0.04
	9.51	9.45	9.77
Intercept (constant)	19.50 ***	20.11 ***	17.29 ***
	2.06	1.97	1.80
	9.47	10.20	9.61
N-value	430	430	430
R-squared	0.20	0.20	0.19
One Tailed Test: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01			
The values under the coefficients are first standard errors and then t-values.			

Model 1 in Table 2 includes both independent variables, control variables, and a lag of the dependent variable. This model accounts for 20 percent of the variation in the dependent variable. There is a significant inverse relationship between change in CPI and number of SMOs recorded, because the direction of the coefficient is negative. The value of the coefficient is -2.33, which means with a one unit increase in CPI, I expect to see a 2.33 point decrease in number of SMOs mentioned, holding all other things constant. This finding negates Hypothesis 1b, but is consistent with Hypothesis 1d.

In contrast to Table 1, Model 1 in Table 2 shows that there is a significant and inverse relationship between change in unemployment rate and number of SMOs recorded, because the direction of the coefficient is negative. The value of the coefficient is -9.49, which means with a one unit increase in unemployment rate, I expect to see a 9.49 point decrease in SMOs mentioned, holding all other things constant. However, the summary statistics of my data (Appendix A) show that change in unemployment only varies from -0.7 to 0.9. Thus, I decided to multiply the coefficient by 0.19, the standard deviation, I get -1.80. This value is closer to the change that would most likely be found. Overall, these findings negate Hypothesis 2b and are consistent with Hypothesis 2d.

In Model 2, I remove the change in GDP per capita variable to see if its presence influences the significance or direction of the other variables. In removing this variable, the results remain consistent with my first model and account for the same percentage of variation in the dependent variable. The variables remain significant, the directions of the variables remain the same, and the magnitude of change in the coefficients does not vary greatly.

In Model 3, I remove the change in CPI variable for the same reasons as Model 2 and find no changes in the accountability, significance, direction, or magnitude of my results. These results consistently negate my first set of hypotheses that are consistent with the assumptions of strain theory and consistently support the hypotheses that are consistent with the assumptions of resource mobilization.

These results show that change in both economic variables, inflation and unemployment, are inversely related to social movement mobilization. These findings negate the hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b; which are associated to strain theory. However, the findings provide mixed results with hypotheses associated to resource mobilization theory. The findings provide support for hypotheses 1c, 1d, and 2d, but do not support hypothesis 2c. This signals that resource mobilization theory may not be applicable in understanding the relationship between changing unemployment rate and number of events. When additional models were added to check for robustness, the results remained the same. Although my hypotheses associated with strain theories do not appear to explain the relationship between macroeconomic change and social movement mobilization across all movements in the time period, strain theories may explain how macroeconomic change affects mobilization with respect to specific movements during the time period. In addition, hypothesis 2c does not appear to explain the relationship between changing unemployment and protest activity using resource mobilization theory. This may be because changes in national levels of unemployment do not represent ability to protest in specific regions. This finding could also be because decreases in unemployment do not translate into increased availability of mobilizing resources. In general, my findings lead me to believe that, at times, resource mobilization theory explains the relationship between macroeconomic change and

social movement mobilization better than strain theory, across all recorded movements from 1960 to 1995.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

There are many factors that influence ability to mobilize to affect favorable change. Moreover, the motivations for change are diverse and dynamic. Citizens mobilize for political, social, and economic reasons, among many others. In the US, there have been a significant number of movements that cite economic change as motivation for protest. Over time, social movement scholars have proposed a variety of theories to explain these phenomena. In this study, I tested the ability of two theories, strain theory and resource mobilization theory, to explain the relationship between macroeconomic change and social movement mobilization. My analysis of 23,593 recorded social movement events during the 430 months from January 1960 until January 1995 suggests that changes in inflation and unemployment are related to social movement mobilization from the perspective of a resource mobilization theorist. My data analysis provided mixed results in support of the claim that resource mobilization theory describes the relationship between economic change and social movement mobilization across all movements better than strain theory. My results did not provide support for my hypotheses associated with strain theory. I did find support for my hypotheses associated with resource mobilization theory, except one that attempted to explain the relationship between decreasing unemployment rate and number of protest events. Despite this exception, I found consistent, statistically significant results supporting resource mobilization theory and social movement mobilization.

When looking at the SM activity from the American Revolutionary War era and during the Occupy Wall Street movement, it may be important to look at how access to resources, rather than deprivation of resources, may have led to mobilization. Prior to and during the American Revolutionary War, the colonists had limited resources to support an army and, thus, received a great deal of support from France. According to resource mobilization theory, this support from an “elite ally” assisted the mobilization of American colonists against British domination (Snow et al. 2005). Despite receiving help from France, American colonists had access to a great deal of wealth. De Tocqueville suggests, at the time of the revolution, Americans were restless to pursue fresh gratifications while in the midst of abundance (1981). British taxation and claims to profit constrained the ability of Americans to accumulate increasing amounts of wealth, land, and power. From a theoretical perspective, it was economic grievances that triggered protests leading to the American Revolution, but they were grievances for more resources not deprivation from resources. In more recent history, resource mobilization theory suggests that the Occupy Wall Street movement may have been able to demonstrate over a longer period of time if it had greater access to mobilizing resources. Understanding how resource mobilization theory explains mobilization may have been useful for organizers and adherents of the Occupy Wall Street protests. This leads me to the important implications of my findings.

There are several reasons why my study is important. First of all, the findings could be important for scholars in a variety of fields. Sociologists will be interested in how resource mobilization theory was successfully applied across all social movement activity in the time frame, because many sociologists focus on specific movements rather than taking a large view of social movement phenomena. In addition, economists may be interested in understanding how macroeconomic change influences mobilization. Economists tend to only look at how change in

inflation and unemployment impact macroeconomic policy made by the Federal Reserve System and the US government; while my study provides alternate implications of macroeconomic change. Additionally, these findings could be useful for individuals or organizations attempting to mobilize. Understanding that mobilization may be easier when there is greater access to economic resources could help SMs achieve their goals more efficiently. If possible, activists should be aware of the resources needed to support their cause and ensure access to those resources is available before attempting mobilization.

There were several limitations to my analysis. First of all, I had access to a protest data set that was limited by time frame and possible recording errors. The data set I utilized only recorded a certain number of social movement events based on articles from one newspaper source. Thus, some important protest activity could have been unintentionally excluded. Additionally, I utilized national values of economic change. This could have led to inconsistencies between national values of economic change and regional social movement activity, which could have skewed my results. The limitations in my study provide direction for future research in the field.

My analysis suggests several areas for future research. First of all, I believe it is important to examine how strain and resource mobilization theories apply to specific regional social movements during the time frame. This could allow researchers to understand how regional economic change influences mobilization for specific social movements and, in turn, see if resource mobilization continues to better explain the relationship. Second, it may be important to separate protest activity by the economic status of its constituents – poor, middle-class, and upper-class – and then test how the theories apply. This analysis may alter the relationship between economic change and movement mobilization. Finally, I received mixed results in

describing the relationship between changing unemployment and social movement mobilization.

I suggest that future researchers utilize more and different economic indicators, social movement mobilization indicators, and analyze more social movements over a longer time period to get a more complete understanding of how economic change influences mobilization across all movements.

Appendix A
Summary Statistics

Summary Statistics						
	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Total (N)
SMEvents	430	52.972	29.967	8	214	23,593
SMO Involvement	430	31.281	19.402	1	129	10,024
CPI	430	228.882	124.692	88	460.3	-
Unemployment rate	430	6.151	1.511	3.4	10.8	-
Change in CPI	430	0.865	0.800	-1.5	3.9	-
Change in Unemployment rate	430	0.002	0.189	-0.7	0.9	-

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ACADEMIC VITA

MARINA VERONICA STINELY
3323 Regent Street, Erie, PA 16506
mstinelyb1@gmail.com

Education

The Pennsylvania State University; University Park, PA June 2011 – May 2015
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science
Minors in Economics and Environmental Inquiry

Honors and Awards

Pennsylvania State University Paterno Fellow
Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Honors College
Dean's List all semesters

Association Memberships/Activities

Penn State Political Science Association August 2011 – May 2015
Vice President

- Connected with fellow officers to arrange debates among political clubs at Penn State
- Helped organize club events and outreach with professors and community leaders

Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON: Operations (OPP) August 2011 – May 2014
Committee Member, Student Volunteer

- Fundraised for the world's largest student run philanthropy to support pediatric cancer research
- Served as Kids' Mail chair, Secret Buddy chair, and Icebreaker chair on three committees
- Raised over \$3,000; \$1,700; and \$2,170 for THON's 2012, 2013, and 2014, respectively

Knitivism: Penn State August 2012 – May 2015
Vice President/Secretary

- Knit and crocheted garments to donate to charities, hospitals, and non-profit organizations
- Promoted student empowerment and awareness of social issues via on-campus fiber art installations

Biological Science 003: Environmental Studies January 2014 – May 2014
Teaching Assistant

- Facilitated lab exercises and discussion of course material
- Worked with students and professor to promote open learning environment
- Graded and returned weekly assignments for two sections of 12 students each

Relay for Life: Penn State March 2012 – 2015

Professional Experience

Quota International Inc., Washington D.C.

August 2014 – December 2014

Public Policy Intern

- Researched and developed organization's Wikipedia page using HTML-style programming
- Edited and wrote articles and documents about deaf legislation for *Quotarian* magazine and blog

The Kahkwa Club of Erie, PA

May 2012 – 2014

Waitress and Banquet Server (Seasonal)

Penn State West Halls Food Services: Sisu Store

August 2011 – May 2013

Store Support and Food Prep

Publications and Papers

Stinely, Marina V. (2013). "The Benefits of Wikileaks are Transparent." *Penn Statements* 32.