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ALLIANCES AND DIVISIONS WITHIN THE
“MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS”:
SURVEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2005 WORLD SOCIAL FORUM*



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Abstract

Little systematic research has been done on the social composition of the hundreds of thousands of people that attend the World Social Forum, or how their background characteristics and political affiliations might shape their political views. This paper addresses these questions through an analysis of original survey data of 640 participants of the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. We found that most WSF participants were young, from Brazil and neighboring countries, expressed radical views, and actively participated in social movements. Most also belonged to relatively privileged social groups; most were highly educated (a proxy measure for class), and “white” was the most common racial identity. Results from our logistic regression analysis indicate that there were statistically significant differences among respondents’ political goals and preferred strategies for social change based on their world system position, race, and membership in different types of organizations; there were not statistically significant differences in respondents’ political views based on their gender, age, or years of education however.

Keywords: World Social Forum, global justice movement, political views, social movements

Introduction

While transnational social movements date back to at least the late 18th century, the scope and scale of international ties among social activists have risen dramatically over the past few decades, as they have increasingly shared information, conceptual frameworks and other resources, and coordinated actions across borders and continents (Callas; Moghadam 2005; Santiago-Valles 2005). Greater transnational cooperation among labor, environmental, feminist and human rights activists was forged through their participation in international conferences organized by the United Nations, cross-border labor struggles, transnational lobbying campaigns, and global protest events, such as the demonstrations that disrupted the 1999 meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle. In the 1980s and 1990s, the number of formal transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) rose by nearly 200 percent. While TSMOs are still largely housed in the global north, a rising portion are located in, and have ties to, the global south; the number of TSMOs with multi-issue agendas increased significantly, from 43 in

1983 to 161 in 2000 (Smith 2004a: 6-7, 2004b: 266). Uniting across borders through such formal organizations or more informally, activists have occasionally posed serious challenges to transnational, regional, and domestic institutions, although their influence varies considerably across movements, issues, and institutions.

Reflective of, and contributing to, the rise of both transnational and cross-movement links among activists is the impressive growth of the World Social Forum (WSF). Initially organized by the Brazilian labor movement and the landless peasant movement, the WSF was intended to be a forum for the participants in, and supporters of, grass roots movements from all over the world rather than a conference of representatives of political parties or governments. The WSF was organized as the popular alternative to the World Economic Forum, which brings together elites to develop global policies. The WSF has been supported by the Brazilian Workers Party, and has been most frequently held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, a traditional stronghold of that party.^[1] Whereas the first meeting of the WSF in 2001 reportedly drew 5,000 registered participants from 117 countries, the 2005 meeting WSF drew 155,000 registered participants from 135 countries. In opposition to Margaret Thatcher who declared that, “there is no alternative” to neoliberal globalization, WSF participants proclaim that “another world is possible.”

The WSF is both an institution—with its own leadership, mission, and structure—and an “open space” where a variety of social actors—activists, policy experts, students, intellectuals, journalists, and artists—from around the world can meet, exchange ideas, participate in multi-cultural events, and coordinate actions. The WSF is open to all those opposed to neoliberal globalization, but excludes groups advocating armed resistance (Teivainen 2002). Participants vary in terms of their affiliations with particular movements and types of organizations; they include both participants in unconnected local and national campaigns as well as long-time veterans of transnational organizations and internationally coordinated campaigns (Smith 2004c). The WSF has inspired the spread of hundreds of local, national, regional, and thematic social forums, especially within Western Europe and Latin America (Byrd 2004; Della Porta 2005b).

To date, there has been little systematic research on the social composition and views of the hundreds of thousands of people participating in the WSF and its leadership body, the International Council. Previous research on the WSF is mainly based on scholars’ observations of workshops, official and unofficial reports produced by participants, and media reports (Byrd 2005; Hammond 2003; Ponniah and Fisher 2003; Smith 2004c). Other research is based on observations of, or selective interviews with, members of the International Council and the Organizing Council (Patomaki and Teivanen 2004; Schönleitner 2003). Della Porta (2005a, b) provides the most extensive research on Social Forum participants; her work combines data from surveys, participant observation, interviews, and documentary analysis, but it focuses on local and regional social forums in Western Europe (della Porta 2005a, b).

Our study contributes to an emerging literature on transnational civil society and global democracy. *Civil society* is a residual category of social organizations that are not

^[1] In all years except 2004, when the WSF was held in Mumbai, India, the WSF has been held in Porto Alegre, Brazil; a series of regional social fora meetings will be held in 2006 rather than an international meeting.

encompassed by either the state or the market. It includes the family, informal networks, social clubs and voluntary associations, non-state religious organizations, and social movement organizations. We use the term *transnational civil society* to mean those in civil society who are consciously communicating, cooperating, and organizing across national boundaries. We are studying a particular portion of transnational civil society – that segment that actively participates in, or is allied to, the *global justice movement*. This movement includes all those who are engaged in sustained and contentious challenges to neoliberal global capitalism, propose alternative political and economic structures, and mobilize poor and relatively powerless peoples. While this movement resorts to non-institutional forms of collective action, it often collaborates with institutional “insiders,” such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that lobby and provide services to people, as well as policy-makers (Tarrow 2001: 10-14; Tarrow 2005: 55-56; Keck and Sikkink 1998). The global justice movement and its allies includes a variety of social actors and groups: unions, NGOs, social movement organizations (SMOs), transnational advocacy networks, as well as policy-makers, scholars, artists, journalists, and other individuals.

Based on surveys of 639 WSF participants, our study aims to provide a more accurate understanding of the social and ideological bases of solidarity and division among participants and allies of the global justice movement. Our paper is divided into six parts. First, we put our research on the WSF into the context of the broader struggle for global democracy. We then discuss the particular challenges for coalition building faced by the global justice movement, which brings together socially, culturally, and politically diverse groups fighting for a number of related, but also distinct, goals. We then review our main research hypotheses regarding the social basis of political divisions within the global justice movement that we derive from world systems theory, multiracial feminist theory, and the literature on social movements. After describing our data and methods, we then discuss our findings regarding the social composition of WSF participants and their political activity. Finally, we discuss the relationships we found between WSF participants’ views and their social background characteristics and political affiliations.

The Global Justice Movement and the Dynamics of Social Movement Coalitions

The nation state, hitherto the most significant instance of political decision-making and focus point of people’s identities, has been challenged in these traditional functions by international organizations, especially multinational corporations, regional governing bodies, such as the European Union, and other global governance institutions, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Markoff 1999; Held 1997). Such institutions show a notable democratic deficit. They lack democratically appointed legislative arms, ombudspersons, and formal policy evaluation mechanisms (Scholte 2004: 211). Scholte points out that, “relationships between national governments and global governance agencies have mainly flowed through unelected technocrats who lack any direct connection with

citizens,” and that national governments have given “suprastate bodies considerable unchecked prerogative in operational activities” (ibid.:212).

Given this democratic deficit, it is no surprise that social movements, NGOs, and transnational civil society coalitions are making collective efforts to re-gain political influence and demand justice within the global economy (Pianta 2001; Smith 2004a). At the same time, historical notions of “hyperglobalization” are misleading, insofar as international regimes and trade agreements are still negotiated and ratified by national officials; the decisions of transnational governance institutions and multinational corporations are also implemented, and experienced, at the local level. Participants in the global justice movement thus often seek to empower civil society groups at multiple geographic scales and frequently draw connections between global, national, and local issues.

While there have been a number of criticisms made of the WSF by activists, many see the WSF as an important instrument for increasing the cohesiveness of the global justice movement and preparing the public to actively participate within, and influence the decisions of, global governance institutions.^{2[2]} For example, Smith (2004c: 420) argues that the WSF is a “foundation for a more democratic global polity,” since it enables citizens of many countries to develop shared values and preferences, to refine their analyses and strategies, and to improve their skills at transnational dialogue. Likewise, Byrd (2005: 158) concludes that, “the Forums’ informal organizational frameworks and decentralized forms of authority serve to make it one of the most promising civil society processes that may both contribute significantly to global democratization initiatives and work to constitute such an initiative in itself.” Patomaki and Teivainen (2004: 151) suggest that the WSF “forms a loosely defined party of opinion” from which global parties could emerge and wield influence on world politics.

Whether or not the WSF can actually fulfill such goals, however, depends on how inclusive the WSF is and whether participants can overcome the usual barriers that have long frustrated attempts to build strong and enduring social movement coalitions as well as new challenges associated with transnational collaboration. All social movements are coalitions in the sense that they bring together divergent groups and actors who are united around common goals. Social movement coalitions involve joint activity among social movement actors; they vary in terms of their duration, breadth, size, formality, and structure. Tarrow (2005: 59) distinguishes short-term event coalitions, which bring together diverse groups for a particular protest event, medium-term campaign coalitions, and federated coalitions, which are more formal and enduring. A rising share of

^{2[2]} For example, critics charge that the format and size of plenary sessions and workshops reinforces the power of celebrity activists and intellectuals and stifles dialogue and active participation among those attending the WSF. Others point to the lack of transparent decision-making by non-elected and exclusive decision-making bodies (i.e., the Organizing Council and the International Council). Other critics charge that the WSF has been coopted by mainstream NGOs and unions and through reliance on government and corporate funding and support. Other criticisms have led to increased efforts to practice ecological sustainability and participatory economics within the WSF and to pay greater attention to issues affecting people of color and women (Byrd 2005: 159; Patomaki and Teivainen 2004; Smith 2004c).

transnational coalitions are regional, but many cross north-south divides; most form around particular kinds of issues, such as environmental or peace issues (Smith 2005; 2004b).

Consistent with political process models, research on the global justice movement and transnational civil society networks emphasizes the importance of threats and opportunities for uniting activists across national boundaries and policy domains. It suggests that the increasing importance of international political structures, regional trade agreements, and multinational corporations, and rising inequalities within the world's economy, creates powerful incentives and opportunities for transnational collaboration. Inequalities within global governance institutions, such as the marginalization of countries from the global south within the WTO, also provide powerful allies for the global justice movement (Tarrow 2002; Smith 2004a, b, 2005). Research also emphasizes the importance of the availability of resources for collaboration within the global justice movement, especially given the high cost of international travel. For example, surveys of participants at five global protest events shows that organizations played an important role in notifying participants, bringing them to the protest, and supporting their travel; this was especially true for non-local participants (Fisher, Stanley, Beerman, and Neff 2005). Case studies also document how the growth and effectiveness of grassroots transnational SMOs depended on access to grants and researchers (Batliwala 2002).

Yet, the willingness and capacity of the global justice movement to cooperate across policy domains and national borders depends on much more than external opportunities and access to organizational resources. It also depends on their social cohesion and their ability to unite around common goals and strategies. Research suggests that groups are more likely to be better integrated, and more united, when they hold broadly similar political goals and beliefs, use similar tactics, have cultural or social similarities, and prior social ties (Delgado 1994; Rose 2000; Stein 1993; Arnold 1995; McCammon and Campbell 2002; Obach 2005). This is why the presence of “bridge-builders” (Rose 2000: 143; see also Obach 2005) with cultural and social similarities with, or network ties to, several groups is often critical for building sustained social movement coalitions.^{3[3]}

The challenges of building coalitions across socially and culturally heterogeneous groups are particularly great within the global justice movement. As a family of movements, the global justice movement brings together activists with many disparate goals and priorities, such as the reduction of toxic emissions, ending the war in Iraq, or the expansion of women's reproductive choices. Even within particular movements, differences over political ideologies and organizational form cause strain among participants. For example, Batliwala (2002) suggests that transnational organizations led by, and accountable to, grassroots constituents are increasingly challenging the role of transnational NGOs run by policy experts. Ideological differences between anarchists, socialists, and religious activists also divide the global justice movement (Starr 2000). When they cross north-south divides, transnational coalitions confront deep inequalities in participants' access to power, resources, and legitimacy. Yet, even when they are regionally concentrated, transnational movements must also grapple with considerable

^{3[3]} Too much overlap in goals and constituents, however, can foster inter-organizational competition (Krinsky and Reese 2005; Hathaway and Meyer 1997).

linguistic, social, and cultural diversity among participants (Della Porta 2005a, b). Tarrow (2005: 59) aptly summarizes the multiple challenges of building sustained transnational coalitions: “To become more enduring, coalitions must overcome cultural differences, correct imbalances in resources, and bridge the differences in opportunities and constraints that their different states and societies impose on activists once they return home.” They must also overcome divisions in their political goals and strategies.

Tarrow (2002, 2005: 56) suggests that the “global justice” frame has been instrumental in building bridges between otherwise disparate movements, but is skeptical of the coherence, depth, and strength of activists’ collective identity. Della Porta’s (2005a) findings from focus groups with members of the Florence social forum suggest that the development of “tolerant identities” has been an important source of political unity within the global justice movement. Such identities are “characterized by inclusiveness and positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization,” that has been forged through collaboration on campaigns for “concrete” goals, an emphasis on dialogue and participatory decision-making processes rather than unity around ultimate goals, and identification with multiple movements, organizations, and social categories (Della Porta 2005a: 187).

Even with a unifying frame, and despite the spread of “tolerant identities,” the global justice movement remains divided over goals and strategies. Ponniah and Fisher (2003) identify five general debates within this movement that emerged from the 2002 meeting of the WSF: (1) whether to reform existing social structures and global governance institutions or to fundamentally transform them, (2) whether to create more economic growth in order to meet workers’ demands for employment and goods or to reduce growth in order to protect the environment, (3) whether upholding international social and labor standards will protect human rights or simply protect Northern workers’ interests at the expense of Southern workers’ interests, (4) whether to uphold Western values as universal goals, to respect cultural diversity, or to reconstruct universal values in order to acknowledge the experiences of the marginalized, and (5) whether to prioritize democratic initiatives at the local, national, or global levels. Other scholars emphasize the importance of political differences over leadership and organizational structure, such as the debate among advocates of vertical and horizontal forms of organization (Byrd 2004; della Porta 2005b). Even those advocating the creation of more democratic forms of global governance are divided over institutional designs and mechanisms (Held and McGrew 2002: 98-117). Some argue that global democracy requires restructuring global governing institutions, possibly even the formation of a world government, in order to better regulate the international economy so that it better responds to public needs and desires, while others prefer more local and decentralized forms of social organization (Patomaki and Teivainen 2004; International Forum on Globalization 2002; Held and McGrew 2002).

Explaining Solidarity and Division: Research Hypotheses

We believe that political divisions within the global justice movement, such as those described above, are related to differences in activists’ social backgrounds, organizational and movement affiliations, and their home countries. Our theoretical perspective combines insights from the literature on social movements, the world-systems perspective, and multiracial feminist theory.

Scholars, such as Meyer and Tarrow (1998), McAdam (1999[1986]), and Jenkins and Eckert (1986), suggest that when SMOs rely on external sponsors for financial support, this tends to moderate their political demands and tactics; if they are too radical or militant, external sponsors are more likely to feel threatened by them and are likely to withdraw their funding. Following these insights, we hypothesize that activists affiliated with political organizations that are reliant on private donors and foundations would be more likely to hold reformist positions than those affiliated with labor unions or other political groups funded primarily with membership dues. Organizations also vary in terms of their level of politicization and tactics. Many NGOs simply focus on providing services to their constituents, while others advocate on behalf of them. Some NGOs, because of their status as non-profits or the requirements of their funding, are forbidden from taking positions on political issues. For these reasons, NGOs vary in terms of their level of politicization. Similarly, unions also vary with regard to this; some, especially in the global north, focus mainly on providing services to their members and winning improvements in work contracts or policies through collective bargaining agreements or lobbying, using social movement tactics and alliances with community groups only on rare occasions. In contrast, SMOs tend to focus on mobilizing grassroots constituents and often use non-institutionalized tactics such as protests. For these reasons, we would expect members of SMOs to be more highly politicized, and more supportive of collective action, compared to other participants, who might be affiliated with NGOs, unions, or have no affiliations.

***Hypothesis 1:** WSF participants affiliated with self-financed groups and unions would be more likely than others to favor radical changes in the global political economy, such as the abolition of capitalism, the IMF and the WTO; Participants in NGOs would be more likely than others to call for reforming such institutions. Members of SMOs are more likely to express greater support for collective action proposals compared to participants without such affiliations.*

In line with Karl Mannheim (1952), research indicates that there are distinct “political generations” whose ideological beliefs are shaped by important historical events and trends that occur when they are young adults (Klatch 1999; Zeitlin 1967). Smith (2004a) suggests that there are significant generational differences among transnational activists in terms of their level of cooperation with international governance institutions and their level of militancy and radicalism. Many NGOs participated in the international conferences, sponsored by the United Nations, on various policy issues in the 1980s and 1990s, where they advocated for policy reforms in a period when the UN was fairly responsive to public input. In contrast, younger transnational activists lack such experiences; they tend to focus on confronting transnational corporations and international institutions such as the WTO, emphasize corporations’ rising influence on the UN, to be more explicitly anti-capitalist, and to participate in international social forums organized by movement activists, rather than the UN.

***Hypothesis 2:** Compared to older activists, younger ones would be more likely to favor radical changes in the global political economy, such as abolishing capitalism, the IMF, and the WTO, but to also be more skeptical of proposals for establishing democratic global governing institutions.*

Other scholars contend that activists' views on global policies will differ according to their country's position in the world-system. Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2002 [2000] suggest that participants from the global south, where the benefits of global capitalism are most in doubt, are more likely to hold anti-capitalist views and more likely to call for the abolition of the WTO and the IMF than are activists from the global north, who are more likely to seek reforms. We would also expect that, given southern nations' long history of being marginalized within, and dominated by, existing global institutions, they would tend to be more skeptical of proposals to create more democratic global institutions or a democratic world government. Boswell and Chase-Dunn (2000) propose that effective anti-systemic movements and states are more likely to emerge from the semiperiphery than the periphery because semiperipheral countries have more resources and can take bigger risks. This implies that activists from semiperipheral countries (e.g. Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, India, South Africa, Korea) may be more likely espouse radical views than activists from either the core or the peripheral countries.

***Hypothesis 3:** Compared to participants from the global north, those from the global south would be more likely to favor radical changes in the global political economy, such as abolishing capitalism, the IMF, and the WTO. We also expect participants from the global south to be more skeptical of proposals for establishing democratic global governing institutions compared to those from the global north.*

Scholars working in the multiracial feminist tradition suggest that our social location within multiple relations of domination, especially those rooted in class, patriarchy, and racism will shape world views and guide strategies for social change. While they acknowledge the role of agency and culture, they suggest that those located in subordinate positions tend to develop more critical perspectives on, and a deeper awareness of, the kinds of social relations that oppress them and the need for collective action than those in dominant positions (Hill Collins 1990; Baca Zinn and Dill 2006).

***Hypothesis 4:** Women, people of color, and working class participants of the global justice movement would be more likely than men, whites, and middle class professionals, to favor radical changes in the global political economy, such as abolishing capitalism, the IMF, and the WTO and to be more favorable to calls for collective action.*

Data and Methods

To our knowledge, Fundacao Perseu Abramo's (FPA) survey of participants at the 2001 meeting and our own survey of participants of the 2005 meeting are the only two surveys of WSF participants. Our survey focused on the social characteristics of participants, their political activism, and their political views. We collected a total of 639 surveys in three languages (English, Spanish, and Portuguese).^{4[4]} Although we were unable to survey all linguistic groups, we sought to ensure that we had a broad sample of WSF participants; we conducted our survey at a wide variety of venues, including the registration line, the opening march, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's speech (which drew tens of thousands), various kinds of thematic workshops, solidarity tents at multiple locations, outdoor concerts, and the youth camp.

^{4[4]} Our project web page contains our 2005 survey instrument. See <http://www.irows.ucr.edu/research/tsmstudy.htm>

Our six-page survey asks participants' opinions on a set of questions designed to capture the main political divisions within the global justice movement described in previous research (Byrd 2005; Smith 2004c; Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2002 [2000]; Starr 2000; Ponniah and Fisher 2003; Teivainen 2004). Other survey questions request information about activists' social background and their affiliation with various movements and political organizations.

To examine the influence of respondents' background characteristics and organizational affiliations on their political views, we used logistic regression to analyze the results of our surveys. To gauge whether respondents were radicals or reformists, we used the results of two survey questions. The first question asked respondents whether they wanted to abolish and replace capitalism or to reform it. The second question asked respondents whether they believed that the IMF and WTO should be abolished or reformed. To gauge the support for global strategies for change, we used the results from three questions. The first question asked respondents if they favored the creation of democratic global institutions (as opposed to strengthening nation-states or empowering local communities) as the best way to solve global social problems. The second question asked respondents whether or not respondents supported or opposed the creation of a democratic world government. The third question asked respondents whether the WSF should take public positions on political issues, or simply remain an open space for political debates. The first two questions measure respondents' support for democratic global governance institutions as critical mechanisms for addressing global social problems. Support for the WSF making political statements, on the other hand, indicates support global collective action by civil society groups; it also indicates into respondents' levels of politicization.

To measure respondents' world system position, we used the World Bank's categorization of their residential country's level of affluence for 2005, which was based on gross national income per capita. We coded respondents from "high-income" nations as residing in the global north and considered all other respondents to be from the global south. To measure respondents' class, we used their years of education. Respondents over the age of 25 with 16 or more years of education were considered to be middle or upper class, whereas respondents under the age of 25 with less than 16 years of education were considered to be part of the working class. Respondents' race was coded based on how they identified their race/ethnicity in an open-ended question. We excluded respondents that did not answer the question, identified as part of the "human" race, or identified their race/ethnicity in terms of their nationality or religion. Respondents' gender was coded as male or female, depending on which box they checked (we excluded the one respondent that checked the box labeled "other").

We used responses to three questions to characterize respondents' organizational affiliations. The first asked respondents if they belonged to at least one organization that was funded solely by its members. The second asked respondents if they were attending the WSF on behalf of a self-funded organization. The third asked respondents to check a box if they were affiliated with a labor union, a non-governmental organization, or a social movement or political organization. Although we also asked if respondents were affiliated with a governmental agency and political party, very few respondents reported

those kinds of affiliations. For that reason, we did not include these variables in our analysis below.

Harbingers of Global Democracy? Characteristics of WSF Survey Respondents

Critical observers complain, and our survey results of participants of the 2005 WSF corroborate this criticism, that participation at the WSF is marked by active participation by representatives of NGOs and an overrepresentation of Latin American and European activists, affluent people with high levels of formal education, and whites. For those viewing the WSF as a democratic global public sphere, this is problematic since it means that discussion at WSF would be excessively influenced by the interests and opinions of the more privileged, whereas the voices and interests of the most marginalized groups, especially from Asia and Africa, would, once more, be excluded (Smith 2004c; Patomaki and Teivainen 2004; Schönleitner 2003; Teivainen 2002; Byrd 2005: 161).

FPA found that most respondents were from South America followed by Western Europe; fifty-five percent were Brazilian (Schönleitner 2003: 137). In our 2005 sample, which showed an almost identical composition, most respondents were from South America (68%), followed by Western Europe (13%) and North America (9%); fifty-four percent were Brazilian. Only 8% of all respondents were Asian and only 2% were African, none of them from North Africa and the Mahgreb. The finding that over half of our respondents were Brazilian is consistent with Tarrow's (2005) and Fisher et al's (2005) claim that participants of the global justice movement are mainly "rooted cosmopolitans" (i.e., locally based activists working on "global" issues). In line with this, Fisher et al (2005) found, in their surveys of participants of five global protest events, that 95% or more of all respondents were from the country where the protest took place.

Like FPA's 2001 survey, we found that there were slightly more men than women among our respondents. FPA found that most of their respondents were highly educated, with 73% having begun or finished their university education and that 75% were trained in the social sciences (Schönleitner 2003: 137). Similarly, we found that 51% had at least 16 years of education and that 51% were students, mostly in universities. We found that nearly 51% of those with educational degrees were trained in the social sciences.

According to the FPA survey, 25% of participant organizations were NGOs; 22% were unions or professional associations, and 13% were SMOs (Schönleitner 2003: 138). We found that a similar share (34%) of our respondents attended the WSF on behalf of a NGO. However, more of our respondents were attending on behalf of a SMO than a union (37% versus 15%). Whereas 51% of FPA's respondents were aged 35 to 59 (Schönleitner 2003: 137), about 70% of our respondents were aged 35 years or less. FPA found that 50% of their respondents identified as white; we found that only 36% of our respondents identified as white; however, many of the 30% of respondents refusing to identify their race or ethnicity or answering in terms of their nationality appeared to be white. Thirteen percent of all respondents identified as black.

Research suggests that most WSF participants identify as being left of center in their political orientation and are politically active. FPA found that 81% of their respondents identified as leftists, extreme leftists, or center leftists, with 60% identifying as part of the left (Schönleitner 2003: 129). Likewise, we found that most of our respondents expressed leftist views. In contrast to claims that the WSF has been coopted

by moderate forces, we found that 58% of WSF participants that we surveyed expressed a desire to abolish and replace capitalism. Our survey also found that 66% of respondents participated in at least two protests in the past year and nearly one-third participating in five or more protests. Most respondents claimed that they actively participated in at least two kinds of social movements and strongly identified with at least five of them.

Social and Political Bases of WSF Participants' Views

The results of our logistic regression analysis are provided in Tables 1-4. These tables report findings using our full models and so indicate the independent effect of each variable on each of our four dependent variables, controlling for effect of the other factors included in these models. Consistent with our first hypothesis, we found that there were statistically significant differences in respondents' support for radical goals depending on their organizational affiliations. Consistent with our first hypothesis, we found that those affiliated with organizations funded solely by their members were significantly *more* likely than others to favor the abolition of capitalism as well as the IMF and WTO (see **model 1 in Tables 1 and 2**). As **Table 1, Model 2** shows, respondents affiliated with NGOs were significantly *less* likely than others to favor abolishing and replacing capitalism (rather than reforming it). In contrast, we found that that respondents affiliated with social movement organizations (SMOs) were significantly *more* likely than those without such affiliations to express anti-capitalist sentiments. There was also a positive relationship between union membership and anti-capitalist views, but it was not statistically significant at the 0.10 level (see **model 2, Table 1**). Also consistent with our first hypothesis, those affiliated with SMOs and unions were significantly *more* likely than those without such affiliations to want to abolish, rather than reform, the IMF and the WTO. Contrary to our first hypothesis, we found that there was not much of a relationship between NGO affiliation and support for reforming the IMF and WTO. As expected, the results in **Table 3** indicates that organizational affiliations had no statistically significant relationship on the odds of favoring global rather than non-global strategies for social change. Results in **Table 4**, however, indicate that those affiliated with self-funded organizations and with NGOs were significantly *more* likely than those who were not to favor world government proposals. This finding is intriguing as we might expect NGOs and members of self-funded organizations to take different political positions on this question given that the latter groups are less beholden to powerful donors compared to the former ones. Consistent with our expectation that members of SMOs would be more supportive of collective action proposals, we found that those affiliated with SMOs were significantly *more* likely than those without such affiliations to favor the WSF becoming more than simply a "talk shop," and to make collective statements on political issues; this finding was not consistent across models however (see **Table 5**).

Contrary to our second hypothesis, we observed that older participants were more likely than younger ones to favor the abolition of capitalism and the abolition of the IMF and WTO, although these relationships were not statistically significant (see **Tables 1 and 2**). The greater concentration of radical views among older participants could be capturing the impact of the 1968 generation of activists, who came of age during an international wave of protest, and many of which identify as revolutionaries and internationalists. Consistent with Smith's (2005) suggestion that younger activists tend to

be more skeptical of global institutions and more militant than older ones, we found that older participants were more likely than younger ones to favor proposals for a democratic world governments and to favor the WSF making political statements. Controlling for other factors, these generational differences were not statistically significant however. Contrary to Smith's (2005) argument, the effects of age are inconsistent across models in terms of support for using democratic global institutions to solve global social problems and not statistically significant (see **Tables 3, 4, and 5**).

Our results provide partial support for hypothesis 3. Contrary to this hypothesis, we found no statistically significant relationships between world system position and support for radical goals, such as abolishing capitalism, the World Bank, and the WTO, and the direction of the relationship was inconsistent across models (**Tables 1 and 2**).^{5[5]} Consistent with hypothesis 3, we found that those from the global south were more likely than those of the global north to prefer local or national strategies rather than democratic global institutions for solving global social problems; southern respondents were also more likely than northern ones to oppose proposals for a democratic world government (**Tables 3 and 4**). This finding is not surprising, given their long history of being more marginalized within institutions of global governance, such as the WTO and the United Nations. However, these relationships were not statistically significant except in Table 4, model 2. We also found, that respondents from the global south were significantly more likely to favor the WSF making collective political statements, but this finding was not consistent across models (**Table 5**).

Contrary to our fourth hypothesis, **Tables 1 and 2** indicates that there were not statistically significant effects of gender or race on the odds of favoring the abolition of capitalism and the abolition of the IMF and World Bank (as opposed to reforming them). We also found that, after filtering out younger respondents, years of schooling (our measure of class) did not significantly affect the odds of holding these radical views (results not shown).

Table 3, model 2 indicates that people of color were significantly less likely than whites to favor prefer the use of democratic global institutions for social change, rather than strengthening the nation-state or empowering local communities. Results in model 1, show a similar pattern, but were not statistically significant. The greater reluctance of people of color to support the use of global democratic institutions might reflect their assessment of the greater disadvantages among communities of color, which often lack the organizational resources of white communities; such inequalities might make it more difficult for them to influence global institutions and to favor more local initiatives instead, especially grassroots efforts to empower their communities. Respondents' race had no significant effect on their evaluation of world government proposals however (see **Table 4**). Similarly, results in **Table 5** indicate that people of color were less likely than whites to favor the WSF making political statements, but this finding was significant only at the 0.10 level in model 2 and not statistically significant in model 1. The effect of gender on support for proposals to create democratic global institutions and a democratic world government was inconsistent across models (see **Tables 3 and 4**). Contrary to our

^{5[5]} We measured world system position based on Jeffrey Kentor's measure, which takes into account political as well as economic resources (Kentor 2005).

fourth hypothesis, **Table 5, model 1** shows that women were significantly *more* supportive than men of keeping the WSF an open space for political debate; the significance of this relationship is not found in model 2 however. We also found that, using any of our three measures and after filtering out younger respondents, years of schooling (our measure of class) did not significantly affect the odds of favoring global strategies for change (results not shown).

Conclusion

The challenges of building sustained, transnational coalitions within the global justice movement, a “movement of movements,” are many, especially in light of the tremendous social heterogeneity and diverse political visions and goals contained within it. Our research provides insight into the social bases of political divisions within this movement through a survey of WSF participants. Many credit the WSF, which drew 155,000 registered participants in 2005, with helping to strengthen this movement and paving the way for global democracy by increasing the dialogue and strengthening alliances across political, social, and geographic divides.

Our findings suggest that, although the WSF drew participants from 135 countries, most came from the local region. More than half of our respondents were Brazilian and nearly 70% were from South America. Less than 10% of our respondents were from Africa and Asia, less than half the portion that came from industrialized nations. Although we may be under-estimating the participation from the former regions because our survey was only conducted in three languages (English, Spanish, and Portuguese), surveyors noted that it was difficult to find participants from those regions, and their under-representation has also been criticized by organizers of the meeting. We also found that most of our respondents were young, mostly under 35, and were relatively privileged, with high levels of education and the largest share identifying as white. Given the costs of international travel and time needed to participate in the five-day forum, it is not surprising that most respondents were from the region where the WSF took place and socially privileged. While critics have charged that the WSF has been co-opted by political moderates and mainstream NGOs, we found that most of our respondents (including most of those affiliated with NGOs) expressed anti-capitalist sentiments; most had participated in at least two protests in the past year; a larger share of respondents also belonged to SMOs than to NGOs.

Previous research suggests that the global justice movement is divided between radicals and reformists and in terms of those favoring local, national, and global strategies for social change. We found that such political differences were related to respondents’ organizational affiliations. First, we found that respondents belonging to self-funded organizations and SMOs were more likely than other respondents to want to abolish capitalism and the IMF and World Bank. Although most NGO members also expressed these opinions, greater shares of them wanted to reform capitalism compared to other respondents.

We found that there was little relationship between world system position and support for radical goals (i.e., the desire to abolish capitalism and the IMF and World Bank). However, we did find that smaller shares of respondents from the global south than the global north supported proposals to create global governing institutions,

especially world government proposals; these relationships were not statistically significant in all models however. Greater skepticism towards global institutions probably reflects the long history of nations in the global south being marginalized within global institutions, such as the United Nations, and being pressured by global institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, to adopt unpopular social and economic policies, such as structural adjustment programs. On the other hand, results from one model indicate that southern respondents were more likely than northern respondents to favor the WSF making political statements. Thus, while southern participants may be more leery than northern participants of the democratic potential of global governing institutions, they are apparently more supportive of making the WSF into a global political actor. Thus, it may not be levels of support for global strategies per se that divides northern and southern participants at the WSF, but the kind of global strategies that are considered. Nevertheless, the similarities in political views across world system positions are also striking, with a majority of respondents from all world system positions favoring the abolition of capitalism, the abolition of the IMF and World Bank, the strengthening local communities (as opposed to national and global strategies for change), and (at least in theory) the creation of a democratic world government.

We did not find any statistically significant differences in respondents' views across age groups or class (as measured by years of education). We found that, in one of our two full models, women and people of color were more likely than men and whites respectively to favor keeping the WSF an open space for political debate. Although this might indicate that female and non-white respondents are less highly politicized compared to others, this is not necessarily the case. Instead, this finding might reflect these groups' greater concern about the politics of representation within the WSF. Indeed, this finding is consistent with popular critiques of the WSF as dominated by men and whites; such complaints might make women and people of color understandably more cautious about the capacity of the WSF to represent their points of view. We also found, at least in one model, that people of color were less supportive than whites of using of global democratic institutions to solve global social problems, rather than strengthening nation-states or empowering local communities. Arguably, global democratic institutions that might counter the power of transnational corporations within the global economy might provide the greatest benefits for the poorest and most socially disadvantaged groups. However, disadvantaged groups, such as communities of color, which have fewer organizational resources compared to other groups, may have good reason to prioritize local initiatives to empower local communities. After all, without empowered communities, proposals for democratic global institutions are not likely to function in very democratic ways.

Our findings have important implications for both social activists and the organizers of the WSF. First, our findings provide us even more reason to be concerned about the fact that privileged social groups in terms of race and world system position are over-represented at the WSF. Since such social background characteristics tend to shape one's political views, it is likely that the over-representation of these groups at the WSF is shaping the content and outcomes of the debates that take place there. Second, advocates of global strategies for social change should be attentive to the concerns of those who are more reluctant to adopt such strategies. Such reluctance is often too readily dismissed as political backwardness. Instead, it may reflect greater experiences, which

are linked to world system position, race, and gender, with the oppressive dimensions of existing global institutions, greater concerns about the politics of representation, and a deeper understanding of the ways in which those running such institutions can use them for their own benefit at the expense of others. Third, our findings lend support to concerns raised that the “NGOization” of social movements may limit their political aims. Members of political groups that are self-financed appear to be more radical in their views than members of NGOs, which are heavily reliant on wealthy donors. On the other hand, radical activists should not be too quick to label all NGO members as moderates or dismiss their role within social movements out of hand; our survey findings indicate that there is considerable political division among NGO members and that most of NGO members held quite radical views, including the abolition of capitalism.

Table 1: Logit Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Odds for the Regression of Support for Abolishing and Replacing Capitalism

Variable	Model 1 Coefficient S.E. Odds	Model 2 Coefficient S.E. Odds
Global South	-.182 (.396) .833	.287 (.312) 1.332
Age: 26-35 years (reference category =0-25 years)	-.155 (.422) .857	-.303 (.303) .739
Age: 36-85 years (reference category=0-25 years)	.119 (.424) 1.126	.275 (.306) 1.317
People of Color	.237 (.344) 1.267	.244 (.248) 1.277
Male	-.048 (.335) .954	.038 (.245) 1.039
Belongs to a self-funded Organization	.960** (.432) 2.611	-----
Attending WSF on behalf of Self-funded organization	-.132 (.416) .876	-----
NGO Affiliated	-----	-.600** (.255) .549
Union Affiliated	-----	.247 (.301) 1.280
SMO Affiliated	-----	1.394** (.261) 4.032
Constant	-.120 (.580)	-.448 (.427)

* statistically significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2: Logit Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Odds for the Regression of Support for Abolishing the IMF and the WTO

Variable	Model 1 Coefficient S.E. Odds	Model 2 Coefficient S.E. Odds
Global South	-.363 (.642) .696	.026 (.439) 1.026
Age: 26-35 years (reference category =0-25 years)	.688 (.654) 1.989	.550 (.447) 1.733
Age: 36-85 years (reference category =0-25 years)	.536 (.634) 1.709	.072 (.414) 1.075
People of Color	.835 (.542) 2.305	.477 (.358) 1.612
Male	-.578 (.555) .561	-.582 (.359) .559
Belongs to a self-funded organization	1.491** (.620) 4.444	-----
Attending WSF on behalf of Self-funded organization	.162 (.635) 1.176	-----
NGO Affiliated	-----	-.027 (.371) .973
Union Affiliated	-----	1.001* (.535) 2.720
SMO Affiliated	-----	.864** (.402) 2.372
Constant	.932 (.887)	1.399 (.602)

*statistically significant at the 0.10 level

** statistically significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3 Logit Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Odds for the Regression of Favoring Global Democratic Institutions to Solve Global Social Problems

Variable	Model 1 Coefficient S.E. Odds	Model 2 Coefficient S.E. Odds
Global South	-.609 (.474) .544	-.424 (.335) .655
Age: 26-35 years (reference category =0-25 years)	-.053 (.548) .948	-.591 (.350) .554
Age: 36-85 years (reference category =0-25 years)	.214 (.537) 1.239	-.176 (.334) .839
People of Color	-.083 (.424) .920	-.782** (.278) .458
Male	-.337 (.416) .714	.036 (.275) 1.037
Belongs to a self-funded organization	-.565 (.535) .568	-----
Attending WSF on behalf of Self-funded organization	.704 (.533) 2.021	-----
NGO Affiliation	-----	.168 (.287) 1.183
Union Affiliation	-----	.241 (.328) 1.272
SMO Affiliation	-----	-.188 (.286) .828
Constant	-.707 (.696)	-.147 (.467)

** statistically significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4: Logit Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Odds for the Regression of Support for Democratic World Government Proposals

Variable	Model 1 Coefficient S.E. Odds	Model 2 Coefficient S.E. Odds
North/South	-.913 (.472) .401	-.937** (.356) .392
Age: 26-35 years (reference category =0-25 years)	.144 (.451) 1.155	-.019 (.307) .982
Age: 36-85 years (reference category=0-25 years)	.368 (.449) 1.444	.273 (.316) 1.314
People of Color	.183 (.368) 1.201	-.159 (.252) .853
Male	.192 (.360) 1.212	-.014 (.250) .986
Belongs to a self-funded organization	1.010* (.460) 2.745	-----
Attending WSF on behalf of Self-funded organization	-.554 (.463) .575	-----
NGO Affiliated	-----	.531* (.264) 1.701
Union Affiliated	-----	.146 (.312) 1.157
SMO Affiliated	-----	.395 (.264) 1.484
Constant	.893 (.641)	1.080 (.463)

* statistically significant at the 0.05 level

** statistically significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5: Logit Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Odds for the Regression of Support for the WSF Making Political Statements

Variable	Model 1 Coefficient S.E. Odds	Model 2 Coefficient S.E. Odds
Global South	.051 (.374) 1.052	.614** (.285) 1.849
Age: 26-35 years (reference category =0-25 years)	-.119 (.416) .888	-.020 (.286) .980
Age: 36-85 years (reference category =0-25 years)	-.481 (.415) .618	-.231 (.286) .794
People of Color	-.096 (.327) .909	-.454* (.233) .635
Male	.652** (.321) 1.919	.122 (.228) 1.130
Belongs to a self-funded organization	.232 (.397) 1.261	-----
Attending WSF on behalf of Self-funded organization	-.014 (.389) .986	-----
NGO Affiliated	-----	-.223 (.236) .800
Union Affiliated	-----	-.013 (.275) .987
SMO Affiliated	-----	.558** (.239) 1.747
Constant	-.180 (.543)	-.283 (.394)

* statistically significant at the 0.10 level

** statistically significant at the 0.05 level

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