Confrontation, Consumer Action, and Triggering Events

An exploratory analysis of effective social change for nonhuman animals

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Summary

> *"Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue."* - Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

Confrontational tactics like protests, sit-ins, marches, and other public demonstrations seek to disrupt existing institutions, norms, behaviors, and beliefs regarding a specific social issue in order to create a tension that forces society to reconsider its practices in that area, intending to create widespread positive social change.

This essay explores confrontation and related ideas from a perspective of effective altruism, considering whether activists — especially those working to help nonhuman animals — should support confrontational or nonconfrontational activism with their limited marginal resources. It considers evidence from historical and modern social movements, psychology research, and other sources.

Overall, the evidence considered in this essay suggests confrontation has a useful ability to spark moral outrage, facilitate productive discourse, and raise awareness for a social issue. This ability, which seems crucial for effective social change, may extend quite well to some nonconfrontational approaches but not as well to others. This suggests the animal advocacy movement should consider reducing its focus on nonconfrontational tactics that seem to mostly lack this upside, like directly changing consumer behavior with the "Go Vegan!" approach, and increasing its focus on actions that are more likely to create nonlinear change through moral outrage and launching animal rights into public discourse. Examples of nonconfrontational tactics that fit this criterion include undercover investigations, speeches, essays, op-eds, and other literary works, especially those that highlight the personal stories of suffering animals. Examples of promising confrontational tactics include marches and other forms of direct action, although they seem to involve considerable risk of backfire effects and encouraging a powerful opposition, making their effectiveness highly dependent on certain conditions.

1. Introduction

Activists[1] throughout history have utilized a wide variety of tactics to effect social change.[2]

These tactics range from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, a novel intended to portray the tragedy of immigrant factory workers, to the recent Baltimore protests in response to the death of Freddie Gray in a police vehicle. Every activist faces a decision of how to allocate limited time, money, and other resources to promote their cause, but little research exists for someone who wants to make this decision on the basis of effectiveness.

This essay attempts to break down the effectiveness of confrontation, an important and hotly debated feature of some activism strategies, from the perspective of maximizing social impact. Examples of usually confrontational approaches include marches and demonstrations while leafleting and boycotts are examples of usually nonconfrontational approaches. Instead of trying to establish a precise, technical definition of confrontation,[3] this essay will simply appeal to your intuition as a reader, the mechanisms and examples of confrontation discussed, and guiding questions like: How much does a specific tactic make its audience uncomfortable? How much does it disrupt people from their normal routine? How much does it evoke anger or other forms of emotional arousal?

This essay also considers two related strategies that usually, but not always, accompany confrontation: polarization — creating a strong divergence in views among the relevant audience — and radicalism — using messages that are ideologically distant from the mainstream views on an issue.

There are three important disclaimers to make about this research.

i. Selection of Evidence

Social movements differ greatly in their goals and the nature of the ideology being promoted. For example, the anti-slavery movement seeks to change the specific institution of slavery on a global scale and requires public support in order to achieve reform. The recent 'effective altruism' movement seeks to achieve the greatest positive impact on the world,[4] which is a

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[1] I use "activist" in a broad sense to mean anyone working to effect social change for a particular altruistic cause, rather than a term restricted to those who use particular tactics. Upton Sinclair, for example, was acting as an activist when he wrote *The Jungle* in this definition.

[2] We could also say "movement building" here. I prefer "social change" because it seem broader, including impacts that occur entirely outside of the movement at hand. Although activists can also work to prevent social change.

[3] Although establishing a technical definition would be necessary to identify some borderline cases for a systematic and quantitative analysis across social movements, it's probably unnecessary for the qualitative reasoning used in this essay. Moreover, my use of the term confrontation is somewhat arbitrary, even though I try to match the most common usage.

[4] Effective social change is actually a form of effective altruism. "Effective altruism is a philosophy and social movement that applies evidence and reason to determine the most effective ways to improve the world." (Wikipedia)

much broader goal not restricted to any specific institution or audience. Given differences like this, I expect some streams of evidence to have highly variable weighting for activists working on different movements, and, in turn, I expect the most effective tactics to vary substantially.

The examples and conclusions of this essay are centered on finding the most effective ways to help nonhuman animals,[5] a goal that tackles numerous related institutions, requires public support in most cases, and focuses on a specific oppressed group. As such, this essay will likely be most useful for those working to help nonhuman animals or accomplish similar goals. Caution should be exercised if translating these lessons to different purposes.

ii. Judgment Calls
Rigorous and substantive evaluations of effective social change involve numerous subjective judgment calls to synthesize the diverse collection of evidence available. Instead of trying to avoid these judgment calls, this essay seeks to make my judgment calls explicit so that an interested reader can follow its reasoning and substitute their own judgment calls if necessary.

iii. Robustness of Evidence
The nature of social evidence is often unclear and qualitative. The robustness of evidence is often much weaker than in some other forms of effective altruism, like human health or economic interventions in the developing world. Societies seem to function very differently than individuals and the ability to run randomized controlled experiments on the level of an entire society is, at present, largely out of our grasp. Research into effective social change is difficult, but those same factors also make it fascinating, important, and deeply rewarding.

2. How Can We Learn From Historical Social Movements?
A natural place to begin thinking about effective social change is the numerous social movements[6] throughout history. Some academic literature attempts to extract tactical lessons from historical social movements. For example, Aldon Morris and Dan Clawson, sociologists, proposed some lessons the 1960s Civil Rights Movement could teach the workers' rights movement:[7]

> The civil rights movement indicates that workers' rights can be won only if workers launch a mass movement, take risks, engage in direct action, demonstrate an ability to disrupt the normal functioning of society, and maintain that disruption until concessions are won.

Both the Civil Rights and workers' rights movements, they argued, faced seemingly insurmountable challenges given the pervasiveness and strength of their oppression. Each

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[5] Specifically, this essay will focus on farmed animal advocacy, since farmed animals make up the vast majority of animals used by humans and the suffering of farmed animals seems especially tragic. This is a common focus of effectiveness-minded animal activists.

[6] I use social movements broadly to include any large group of people working towards a specific positive change, or resisting a specific negative change, in society's beliefs and behaviors.

[7] *Lessons of the Civil Rights Movement for a Workers Rights Movement*, 2005.

movement also confronted similar counter-arguments like claims that the oppressed groups are already being treated fairly or that the existing power structures are sufficient to address any grievances the oppressed groups might have. Because of these similarities, Morris and Clawson argue the success of mass mobilization and direct action in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement should weigh in their favor for the workers' rights movement.

The basic assumptions underlying these conclusions are (i) if a historical social movement found success using a particular tactic, then existing social movements should favor that tactic, and (ii) the evidential weight of the lessons from a historical social movement should be proportional to the similarity between the two movements being compared.

This logic seems reasonable, yet limited. Ideally, we would consider all previous social movements that have used the tactic in similar circumstances. Unfortunately, this is difficult due to the dearth of information about many movements, especially less successful movements, and our limited research capacity. One consequence of this is the difficulty in discerning between "tactics that are effective" and "tactics that are common," as well as between "tactics that are most historically salient" and "tactics that were most important." For example, court cases, violent revolts, and popular literature all seem particularly easy to find and investigate in historical research for reasons other than effectiveness — like being exciting and easy to describe quickly, whereas campaigns focused on leafleting or storefront protest seems less likely to show up prominently for those reasons. Of course, this also indicates the former tactics might more easily promote social change due to their sticking power in the public conscience. These limitations are important to keep in mind as we research and apply lessons from previous social movements.

3. How Does Confrontation Effect Change?

Morris, Clawson, and others claim the primary mechanism by which confrontation effects social change is to create a crisis such that society must resolve the issue at hand to regain order. Additionally, it can threaten the current social system by presenting a radical yet viable alternative. This can elicit concessions from the institutions in power in order to appease the potentially conflicted public. Confrontation excels at creating these crises because it is naturally dramatic and interesting, lending increased personal and public attention to the issue at hand.

One example of such drama is when confrontation causes the institution it opposes to take antagonistic action to repress the confrontation. For instance, when black people in the South attempted to register to vote during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, it provoked a violent denial of voting rights from Southern authorities.[8] In Alabama, two black ministers were beaten when they attempted to integrate a public library. Both these reactions evoked public sympathy and polarization by providing disturbing and provocative examples of the oppressive system. This appears somewhat similar to the effect of undercover investigations in the modern animal

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[8] Many of the historical claims in this essay lack specific citations. Most of these, like those about big events in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, seem uncontroversial in their validity. Historical facts about smaller or less studied events are cited when appropriate.

rights movement, which have provoked a harsh and disagreeable response from the animal agriculture industry in the form of "ag-gag" laws.[9]

Notably, no model of confrontation I know of involves an immediate, agreeable response from the audience. Many nonconfrontational activists will cite the lack of immediate, positive response to confrontational activism as evidence against it. In my view, this does not constitute substantial evidence against the tactic because we would expect it to occur whether or not the confrontational model is working. An immediate, agreeable response seems quite unlikely in most cases and would probably just indicate the audience already strongly supports the cause being advocated. This lack of easy falsifiability in the confrontational model will be addressed later in this essay.

4. Example Social Movements

There are countless social movements to date, and one of the most difficult steps in learning from them is integrating the lessons of each into a coherent and meaningful strategy for tactical choices. In this section, I present individual conclusions from a few select movements, and, at the end of this essay, my best guess of the most reasonable synthesis. The movements below, selected for their likelihood of yielding useful insights, represent only a small number of the total movements we can examine. Expanding this analysis to additional movements, especially tracking down failed social movements, which are notoriously difficult to investigate, and deepening the analysis into the movements described below, is an important path for future research on confrontation and other advocacy topics. This is one reason I'm excited about the case studies being conducted by Animal Charity Evaluators.[10]

i. 1960s Civil Rights Movement

The 1960s Civil Rights Movement is one of the most recent and largest social movements in US history. It consisted largely of confrontational tactics such as protests, sit-ins, and marches. These actions ostensibly led to several major legislative achievements like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that banned employer discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. In the later 1960s and early 1970s, the movement grew more violent with urban riots and the Black Power movement.

This period of confrontation and legal reform roughly began with the success of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, in which the Supreme Court ruled against the segregation of public schools for white and black students. Prior to this, the movement focused primarily on nonconfrontational education. Interestingly, the success of Brown v. Board of Education seemed partially caused by foreign policy concerns, although the role of the US civil rights movement,

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[9] "Ag-gag is a term used to describe a class of anti-whistleblower laws in the United States and Australia that apply within the agriculture industry. Coined by Mark Bittman in an April 2011 *New York Times* column, the term 'ag-gag' typically refers to state laws that forbid the act of undercover filming or photography of activity on farms without the consent of their owner." (Wikipedia)

[10] http://www.animalcharityevaluators.org/research/foundational-research/social-movements-project/

specifically the legal work of the NAACP, was crucial.[11] This and other important events that catapulted civil rights into the public discourse seem to have played significant roles in its success.[12]

The sweeping success of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement coinciding with the adoption of confrontational tactics suggests favorably for using confrontation in other movements. However, because the confrontational work came distinctly after the nonconfrontational work, it could also be the case that the size, timing, or other features actually led to the success of the 1960s. The cascade of successes during the 1960s might have been unavoidable because the key progress was made by nonconfrontational actions beforehand. The confrontation could have been a consequence rather than an example of effective activism. I think this is a serious concern.

When applying this evidence to animal rights or other movements of interest, we must also consider how similar the movements are. Most noticeably, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement seemed to be much older, possessed much more existing support, and drew upon a much lengthier track record of success in its field, like the abolitions of slavery in the 1800s, than the modern animal rights movement. These differences seem to substantially weaken the evidence with respect to the animal rights movement. I think the 1960s Civil Rights Movement is a useful and interesting example for refining confrontational tactics but only provides weak general evidence in favor of confrontation over nonconfrontational strategies. I think this evidence is least weak when considering movements with bases of support similar to that of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

ii. Anti-Slavery

The Early Anti-Slavery Movement (-1806)
Movements against slavery existed for centuries before the widespread abolition of the practice. One of the earliest regional abolitions occurred in 1315 as Louis X declared all slaves in Metropolitan France — the portion in Europe — free. Although France and other European countries continued the Atlantic slave trade until the 1800s, there was social impetus against slavery for several centuries before that. Much of the activism during this period centered on legal work and court cases.

For example, in 1771, a writ of *habeas corpus* was filed on behalf of James Somerset, an escaped slave in London. The judge seemed to rule that because no law existed explicitly recognizing slavery in England, Somerset could not qualify as a slave while in England. The exact details and legal precedent of the decision are debatable, but it seemed to provide substantial momentum for the anti-slavery movement, despite the fact that the law only directly

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[11] Moreover, the Supreme Court's major argument, "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," appears remarkably analogous to the animal rights argument that, "raising animals for food is inherently cruel."

[12] In the section on child labor reform, we will establish the terminology of "triggering events" to refer to occasions like these.

affected slaves in England, without direct consideration for the very large number held elsewhere in the British Empire.[13]

In conjunction with legal advocacy, the most notable forces in the early anti-slavery movement were small groups and individual abolitionists that produced literature like the 1688 Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery. Quakers, Mennonites, and others drew connections between slavery and their own religious persecution, making them a natural ally for slaves. In the 1688 petition, they argued against slavery on the basis of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." They also argued that new settlers and slaves would realize the injustice of slavery and revolt against the system, being justified by to the Golden Rule. Finally, they cited examples of Europeans being taken as slaves to evoke empathy. Other petitions, articles, and books of the 1600s and 1700s seemed to establish precedent and support for the more visible anti-slavery movement of the 1800s.

One potentially crucial non-activism force in the British anti-slavery movement was the end of the American Revolution. The British defeat sparked a wave of self-evaluation for the nation. The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson wrote "As long as America was our own, there was no chance that a minister would have attended to the groans of the sons and daughters of Africa, however he might have felt for their distress."[14] He and others founded the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, a prominent British organization that published books, pamphlets, and other literature in addition to organizing rallies and speaking tours advocating the abolition of the slave trade. Even fashion was an important tactic in the famous "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?" medallion featuring a slave holding his hands up in chains, which became a trendy accessory for British women. Also around this time, several black abolitionists were promoting anti-slavery. Most notably, the freed slave Olaudah Equiano authored *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, a very successful autobiography describing the tragedy of his own enslavement and his achievements afterward. He also wrote newspaper articles and traveled on speaking tours, which seemed successful in changing public opinion.[15]

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[13] Interestingly, one could argue that similar events are taking place in the animal rights movement. For example, in April 2015:

> For the first time in history a judge has granted an order to show cause and writ of *habeas corpus* on behalf of a nonhuman animal. This afternoon, in a case brought by the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP), Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Barbara Jaffe issued an order to show cause and writ of *habeas corpus* on behalf of two chimpanzees, Hercules and Leo, who are being used for biomedical experimentation at Stony Brook University on Long Island, New York.

Although chimpanzees used for biomedical experimentation represent a tiny fraction of the total number of animals used by humans, this case or a similar one could bolster the animal rights movement in a similar fashion to the Somersett case.
(http://www.nonhumanrightsproject.org/2015/04/20/judgerecognizes-two-chimpanzees-as-legal-persons-grants-them-writ-of-habeas-corpus/)

[14] *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade: In Two Parts*, 1788

[15] In the section on child labor reform, we will establish the terminology of "rhetorical ammunition" to refer to works like this and the previous literary pieces in the anti-slavery movement.

The tactics of the early anti-slavery movement seem remarkably nonconfrontational relative to those of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. From its inception, however, the activists focused on a radical call for complete abolition, rather than incremental reform for slaves or individually changing the behavior of slave-owners or consumers of slave-produced goods. Most of the modern farmed animal advocacy movement, on the other hand, focuses on consumer dietary change and improvements in the living conditions of farmed animals. Although the comparison between the abolition of slavery and abolition of animal agriculture weakens if we view the abolition of animal agriculture instead as an analogous goal to the achievement of racial equality. In that case, the entire anti-slavery movement was focused on an incremental goal like most of the farmed animal advocacy movement is today.

Supporting this alternative analogy, one apparent difference between the practices of slavery and eating animals is in how fundamental each issue is to humanity. Nearly every human in every culture since humanity's emergence has eaten animals. Slavery, although a long-standing practice for humanity, was not practiced by virtually every human prior to its widespread abolition. Racial prejudice, however, seems to be more similar to animal agriculture in this regard. For this reason, the great reduction in racial inequality achieved in the 1960s in the US could be a more analogous goal to the abolition of animal agriculture in the US.

On the other hand, animal agriculture may resemble human slavery as an institution more closely than it resembles racial inequality. For example, no animal advocates are calling for the rights of animals to vote or the integration of educational facilities between species. Moreover, there doesn't seem to be any concrete, obvious intermediate goal between the current practice of animal agriculture and the abolition of animal agriculture comparable in scale and salience to the abolition of slavery between the slavery of the 1700s and the goal of racial equality.

Another potentially relevant contrast between these movements is the major difference in the external state of the world in the 1700s relative to the world of 2015. For example, the existence of the internet, radio, and television could affect the baseline level of confrontation in society by changing the nature of social interactions, which could affect the optimal level of confrontation for social movements. It is unclear whether this consideration points in favor or against confrontation, but this could be an interesting topic for future research. Some recent social movements like gay rights seem to have progressed relatively quickly, which might indicate an increase in the rate of social change possible from effective activism.

Altogether, I think the early anti-slavery movement is one of the most similar movements to today's farmed animal advocacy movement, particularly once there had been several writings strengthening the cause and a modest number of activists involved. The movement's success with literature, legislative advocacy, and other nonconfrontational approaches weighs in their favor. It also makes me favor more radical messages, such as advocating more strongly for the abolition of animal agriculture rather than solely the marginal improvement of living conditions

for farmed animals. It also makes me think that literary works like books and op-eds are more important than I previously believed, as well as their modern analogs like documentaries.

The Late US Anti-Slavery Movement (1807-)

In 1807, the British Empire and the United States abolished their international slave trades. Although this did not abolish the actual practice of holding slaves, the enforcement of the British Royal Navy and the political influence of the British Empire set the stage for the abolition of slavery in the coming decades. At this point, the anti-slavery movement had widespread support and seemed poised for eventual success. Because the animal advocacy movement has not yet achieved this level of social momentum, I believe animal activists should give less evidential weight to the tactics used after 1807 than those used before.

In the early to mid-1800s, a major force in the discussion of US slavery was the American Colonization Society (ACS). The ACS was a joint venture between abolitionists and slave owners that sought to move free black people to Liberia. Some abolitionists saw this as a way to provide better lives for some black people, while some slave-owners saw it as an opportunity to placate their opposition, avoid slave rebellions, and remove the free black people whom they saw as morally inferior and dangerous. The ACS saw limited success in this endeavor and its influence on US policy because emigration was so expensive, locations open to newcomers were hard to find, and there was significant opposition from other activists in the abolitionist community.

This stagnation was in stark opposition to the great success of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), which grew to 250,000 members in just five years from 1833 to 1838. The AASS openly and aggressively opposed slavery, provoking violent responses from its opposition. Encyclopædia Britannica describes, "The society's antislavery activities frequently met with violent public opposition, with mobs invading meetings, attacking speakers, and burning presses."[13] In 1839, the organization broke apart due to tactical differences, but its members continued to organize and eventually formed the Free Soil and Republican political parties. These radical abolitionists are usually considered the driving social force behind the eventual abolition of US slavery.

It seems that the evidence from the later portion of the US anti-slavery movement should cause us to favor confrontational and radical approaches due to the success of the AASS and related groups, although animal advocacy and other young movements seem too different from antislavery for this evidence to carry much weight.

The Free Produce Movement

Interestingly, some anti-slavery activists did try an approach very similar to the dietary change approach that is overwhelmingly popular in today's animal advocacy movement. The Free Produce Movement, a boycott of slave-made goods, received strong initial support from

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[13] http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19269/American-Anti-Slavery-Society

antislavery activists. William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the AASS, promoted the Free Produce Movement in 1840, but he and others denounced the movement as ineffective a few years later.

Abolitionists did, at times, utilize targeted boycotts to galvanize existing public support. From 1791 to 1792, in response to Parliament's rejection of an abolition bill, anti-slavery activists were able to reduce demand for slave-grown sugar by over a third. Although this boycott did not economically cripple the industry, it served a useful purpose in uniting activists in a concrete demonstration of opposition to slavery.[14]

The minimal success of consumer action in the anti-slavery movement suggests a heavy focus on consumer action in similar movements might not be most effective, as echoed in the lessons from civil rights, child labor reform, and environmentalism. This raises concerns about the heavy focus on consumer action in farmed animal advocacy.

iii. Child Labor Reform: "Protection for the Powerless: Political Economy History Lessons for the Animal Welfare Movement"

An analysis of the child labor reform movement's implications for farmed animal advocacy actually exists, written by law professor Jerry Anderson.[15] Although Anderson frequently draws upon insights from other social movements, he emphasizes the remarkable similarity between the animal advocacy and child labor reform movements. Both movements were largely sparked by changes in industrial methods that produced especially cruel practice in the name of economic efficiency. Human children and animals are both politically powerless groups, meaning they lack the ability to organize and politically advocate for their own interests. Instead, they require altruistic human adults to speak out on their behalf and amplify their voices. Human slaves, although they were quite powerless to advocate for themselves, at least sometimes had the ability to revolt or escape, and freed slaves sometimes had the ability to organize and engage in political advocacy.

One concern I had in agreeing that human children are powerless was the apparent existence of natural allies — politically powerful people with interests closely tied to their own — in their parents and families. However, in the 1800s this connection seems to have been much weaker than it is today, especially in poor families who, as Anderson highlights, often depended on the child's income for economic survival.

It's also worth noting that even the child labor reform movement seems not to have emphasized consumer action, despite its similarity to animal advocacy. Anderson notes that although boycotts and other consumer action are important parts of animal advocacy strategy, largely for building activist identity, they are unlikely to be the most important strategy for helping farmed animals.

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[14] http://abolition.e2bn.org/campaign_17.html

[15] "Protection for the Powerless: Political Economy History Lessons for the Animal Welfare Movement", 2011.

Anderson's research, unfortunately, does not actually include a thorough empirical investigation into the tactics of the child labor reform movement like we have for the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the anti-slavery movement. It is difficult to find such information, but this is a promising avenue for future research. There's also a concern that child labor was already in decline when the legislation against it in the UK was passed. Economist Douglas Galbi claims there was a reduction in the percentage of children in a small sample of water and cotton mills in England and Scotland from roughly 1788 to 1835, two years after the first major anti-child labor legislation and before it had taken full effect, from roughly 50-65% down to 35-50%. Galbi suggests this is partially due to a simple generational shift because child labor filled a temporary gap in the labor force after the Industrial Revolution.[16]

In the following sections, I examine two of the tactics addressed by Anderson that seem particularly important for evaluating the usefulness of confrontation — rhetorical ammunition and triggering events. Both these tactics came up in the analyses of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and anti-slavery movement, and they seem to be some of the most important factors in effecting social change.

Rhetorical Ammunition

Anderson notes the importance in the child labor movement of developing ethical arguments and authoritative citations by scholars, writers, or authority figures that provide "rhetorical ammunition" for activists. I expect academics to be biased towards the importance of such tactics, but it does seem that the intelligentsia beget several of the key talking points used by child labor activists, such as the need for regulation of the free market due to the risk of abuse, an argument that countered the free market rhetoric used by industry to justify the harsh conditions of child labor. This discourse frequently comes up in modern social movements, and it is important that these ethical arguments have greater strength than arguments the industry appeals to in order to justify the unethical practices. For example, in animal advocacy, we might say the norms often used in defense of eating animals — free markets, tradition, and naturalness — can be outweighed by the norms against the practice of eating animals — compassion, science, the analogous rights of companion animals, and the similarities between eating animals and other historical atrocities.

One major source of this rhetorical ammunition is popular literature. In the child labor reform movement, this is exemplified by Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, a popular novel that associated a personal story with the cruel treatment of children in parts of British society. There are numerous examples of similar stories that paved the way for other social movements. And although the animal advocacy movement has produced a few landmark books about animal rights like Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, we have yet to see a popularized book that described the plight of farmed animals in a way comparable to the landmark books of other movements. This could be a key area of tractability for animal advocates, although it's unclear how much social change the literature itself creates relative to the efforts of activists and other forces supporting and popularizing the literature.

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[16] "Child Labor and the Division of Labor in the Early English Cotton Mills", 1994.

A notable example of rhetorical ammunition is the shallow pond argument in Peter Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," published in 1971. This argument illustrates a proposed moral obligation to use one's affluence as a citizen in the developed world to help less fortunate humans in developing countries. It has become a powerful example to illustrate the importance of acting to alleviate suffering, even if that suffering is far away. This argument is frequently utilized in the 'effective altruism' movement.

Similarly, an important way to achieve authoritative support is through developing moral leadership. In the child labor reform movement, a politician named Sir Robert Peel pushed a bill through the UK parliament in 1802 that would guarantee some rights to apprentices in the cotton industry. Although this bill was ineffective in its immediate aims, it was crucial in breaking legal ground for the rights of child laborers. Another example is when a factory owner named Robert Owen publicized the cruel conditions of workers, inserting inhumane labor conditions into the public conscience. This adoption allowed activists to appeal to authority and popular rhetoric in their favor.

Triggering Events

Like major pieces of literature, popular events can force an issue into the public conscience. For example, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 triggered major news coverage of the tragedy and the inhumane working conditions of immigrant workers. The Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989 led to the 1990 Oil Pollution Act. Although these events are not caused by activists, they do seem confrontational, according to our working definition. They disrupt the audience from their everyday routine and certainly make the audience uncomfortable and even angry. Interestingly, there are no clear examples of such events during the child labor movement.

These tragedies are obviously not viable tactics for activists since they are caused by the problem itself, so can we learn anything from them regarding the effectiveness of confrontational tactics? In animal advocacy, such tragic events have not yet triggered severe public reactions. Frequently, huge numbers of farmed animals are killed before slaughter due to extremes in temperature, diseases, or other events. One possible reason this is less triggering is that the deaths of farmed animals are commonplace, and indeed, inevitable parts of animal agriculture. Another example of such tragedy is the devastating costs of neglected tropical diseases in developing countries. Because these tragedies are so persistent, unlike, say, natural disasters, and the people are so removed from our usual moral circles, it seems difficult to achieve a sudden spike in public attention through a specific event.

Anderson suggests undercover investigations of animal farms can provide activists with artificial triggering events. Investigations seem confrontational because they immediately threaten a specific company like the triggering events described above, causing disruption, discomfort, and strong emotions. Some animal activists believe that investigations can backfire when they antagonize a specific company because the industry as a whole can shun that specific company or even just a specific farm or specific workers, leading to a continued complacency with the industry. However, when viewing investigations in the context of triggering events, this effect

might be outweighed, as seen in the analogous cases described above. Activists can also emphasize that the blame rests on the entire industry and the abuse is commonplace.

Finally, Anderson notes that legal cases might be able to serve as triggering events. In child labor reform, the Keating-Owen Act sought to regulate interstate commerce in goods produced with child labor. A Supreme Court ruling against the Keating-Owen Act shoved child labor reform into the public spotlight and motivated activists to push harder for reform. This is consistent with the seeming importance of legal cases in the civil rights and anti-slavery movements.

It isn't clear what the importance of rhetorical ammunition and triggering events indicates with respect to the use of confrontation in activism since it seems both confrontational and nonconfrontational activism can fill these roles. One concern is that confrontation might reduce the respectability of the cause and put off authority figures, who seem important for providing rhetorical ammunition. One possible example is PETA and its use of sex appeal in promoting animal rights. Although this tactic succeeds in drawing publicity, it probably makes the cause less appealing for mainstream authority figures who want to avoid association with such tactics. This concern might sometimes dissipate, however, due to the numerous uses of confrontation and direct action in previous, successful, and now well-respected social movements, which has created associations of confrontation with authority and respect. Most of today's ideological leaders, in hindsight, would very much want to be associated with the pioneers of, for example, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Of course, confrontation has also been used by very disagreeable groups like the Westboro Baptist Church or Ku Klux Klan.

This leads to a potential distinction between various confrontational activities. Confrontational activism that seems more similar to the tactics of previous successful social movements, such as sit-ins, marches, or strikes, might receive the benefits of confrontation (e.g. disruption and attention that forces the mainstream establishment to address the issue) without the drawbacks (e.g. reduced respect for the movement and dissuasion of authority figures). Other forms of confrontation that seem less respectable, laughable, 'gimmicky', or overly-aggressive and offensive might bear the full brunt of these potential drawbacks because they are not associated with the respectable social movements and, at worst, are associated with the problematic social movements. Activists should be mindful of these possible associations, especially when using a confrontational approach.

5. Emotional Arousal and Moral Outrage

One of the key components of confrontational activism is the effect of emotional arousal and moral outrage. If you have ever experienced a protest or even watched a video of one online, you probably experienced some sort of heightened emotion, much more so than occurs when you hand out or receive a leaflet. Because of this association, we can develop some understanding of the effect of confrontation by investigating the effect of emotional arousal and moral outrage, while keeping in mind that it is possible for some non-confrontational tactics to still have similar effects.

i. "What makes online content viral?"

The most certain effect of emotional arousal seems to be its ability to increase the virality — or tendency to spread — of a social message. This is a strong intuition and has experimental evidence from Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman.[17] Using a three-month data set of New York Times articles, they investigate which characteristics increase probability of an article making the "most emailed list." They find that facilitators of high arousal emotions, anger (negative) and awe (positive), increase the probability by 34 and 30%, respectively. They also tease out causality of this association with experiments that asked participants whether they would share an article while varying the emotional content between participants. This is an important confirmation of the mechanism behind confrontational activism outlined previously.

ii. System Justification

Often the most difficult roadblock faced by activists is simply the sticking power of the status quo and the need people feel to justify it. This psychological sticking power, known as system justification, comes from the desire of people to hold positive attitudes about the systems they are a part of, even if these systems are not what they would choose from an objective perspective. This effect is well-documented, mostly in terms of social and economic inequality, and intuitively apparent in many of the issues addressed by activism.

Our intuition would suggest that moral outrage is an effective way to defeat system justification, and a study by business professor Cheryl Wakslak confirmed this.[18] She drew from previous research that showed moral outrage, e.g. "I feel really angry when I learn about people who are suffering from injustice," is an important motivation for people driven to help those suffering from social and economic inequality. The study found an association between increased social justification ideologies and (i) reduced moral outrage, (ii) reduced attitudinal support for redistributive social policies, and that the moral outrage mediated the effect on attitudinal support. The paper hypothesized that system justification provides an alternative mechanism to mitigate the distress caused by thinking about inequality and suffering, instead of actually supporting redistribution.

The researchers also conducted an experiment by varying system justification. One group received "rags to riches" stories of heroic achievements, which increased the system justification ideologies, and another group received stories of innocent victims, which decreased these ideologies. The researchers measured affect, moral outrage, and support for communityservice programs. Again, moral outrage mediated the effect of system justification on support for such programs.

As almost anyone who advocates for animals can attest to, some of the most common arguments used to justify eating animals involve it being a "natural" thing to do and that being a farmed animal means you somehow "deserve" that fate, indicating a strong tendency to support animal agriculture due to system justification. Thus, interventions that can overcome this

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[17] "What Makes Online Content Viral?", 2011.
[18] "Moral Outrage Mediates the Dampening Effect of System Justification on Support for Redistributive Social Policies", 2007.

specific roadblock seem especially promising, and insofar as confrontation is the best way of achieving moral outrage, this consideration seems to weigh heavily in its favor.

6. Activist Effects

Although most activism primarily targets a public audience, it is important to consider the effects on the activists themselves. Several outcomes are desirable here, including maximizing participation and boosting motivation.

i. Maximizing Participation

Holding other impacts of activism equal, we should probably prefer the type of activism that other activists will be most likely to join. The simplest way to investigate this is to consider the average response to a question like, "Think of a cause you deeply believe in (e.g. environmentalism, civil rights). If you had a free Saturday afternoon and your friend asked you to participate in activism for this cause, which type of activism would you rather do?" It seems clear that the average respondent would prefer to take part in non-confrontational activism.[19] Unfortunately, the actual situation we want to consider is more complicated since the kind of activism I support doesn't necessitate my audience can only support that kind of activism. For example, if I tell you I am a strict vegan, i.e. I avoid all animal products, it's plausible this could make you more likely to adopt just a vegetarian diet, i.e. avoiding animal meat, than telling you I am only vegetarian. This is similar to the foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face techniques of individual persuasion.

There might be personal anecdotes or intuitions that make the case here stronger in either direction, but personally, I think it's fairly unclear which direction this consideration points on the effectiveness of confrontation.

ii. Activist Motivation

There seems to be clearer evidence and intuition on how confrontation affects activist motivation. Much of this stems from the existing evidence on emotional arousal and moral outrage. For example, social psychologist Bert Klandermans argues that anger and emotional arousal are important motivators for political activists.[20] He notes other predictors of engagement in activism, including social identity and perceived efficacy.

I think most people would also agree that confrontation does more than nonconfrontation in sparking emotional arousal, especially anger, in activists. It also seems fairly clear how confrontation affects the social identity of activists. Engaging in confrontational activism forces intensive bonding and identity formation between activists like any other stressful situation. But if the activist has strong ties outside of the activist community and people in these other

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[19] I conducted a quick online survey to confirm this intuition. The results were as expected, but it is not included here since it wasn't a formal study.

[20] "Embeddedness and Identity: How Immigrants Turn Grievances into Action", 2008

communities are put off by the confrontational activism, then it could weaken how much they identify with the cause. The consideration of perceived efficacy doesn't seem to point clearly in either direction, so given the effects on emotional arousal and social identity, I think the consideration of activist motivation should weigh in favor of confrontation.

7. Polarization

"My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension.' I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth."
- Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail

Activists are not the only people who get angry as a result of confrontation. As evidenced by online videos and pictures of activists being harassed, tear gassed, and even beaten, there is clearly an issue of how confrontation affects and provokes the movement's opposition. The nature of this opposition varies across movements, but most social change is directed at some practice in which a specific group has a vested interest. These groups are often powerful institutions. For example, the climate change movement, arguably, faces opposition from most of the energy, transportation, and manufacturing industries. The animal activism movement is clearly at odds with the animal agriculture industry. And campaigns against racial inequality often threaten the elevated social and political positions of the entire racial majority group. So is polarization a good thing for social movements? How can we best mitigate its potential downsides while encouraging the potential upsides?

One of the major potential downsides of polarizations is that individuals can react counterproductively to opposing views when strongly presented. For example, in December 2014, in the middle of a cascade of high-profile cases of white police officers killing black people and the associated mass protests, a poll showed that white people were actually more confident than ever that black people were treated fairly by the police in their local communities.[21] A plausible explanation is that the intense disruption created by these events and their responses caused white people to react defensively by increasing confidence in their own local police force. They might have even been doing this as a result of sympathy due to the perceived aggression towards police officers.

Some well-publicized psychology experiments showed a similar "backfire effect."[22] Researchers showed participants fake newspaper articles arguing one side of the issue on some touchy political issues like the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, stem cell research, and tax reform. Participants were then shown fake corrections of those articles, which substantiated the opposing view to the participants. When the researchers measured these

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[21] http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/12/09/whites-are-more-confident-than-ever-thattheir-police-treat-blacks-fairly/

[22] "When Corrections Fail: The persistence of political misperceptions", 2006.

participants' confidence in their own personal beliefs on the issues, the results showed people becoming more confident in their previous view after reading the corrections that provided evidence to the contrary.

Even if these are extreme examples, it's clear that promoting one side of an argument, especially through confrontation, can provoke the opposition into taking more action to defend their side than they would have otherwise.

Activists differ in whether this polarizing effect is good or bad. For example, facilitating a strong support base and a strong opposition seems like it will increase publicity. Debates and conflict make for good news stories. And often simply getting the issue on the table is one of the first and largest obstacles to social change. Similarly, igniting the opposition can draw support when other people take the view: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Some activists say this is an important reason for US social movements to seek out conflict with the Republican Party because that will incentivize Democrats and the mainstream left to increase support for the cause. Political polarization is especially interesting. Do social movements benefit greatly from adoption by the mainstream left? Many of the recent, great social movements like civil and workers' rights seemed to greatly benefit from the support of the mainstream left. However, one case study that could point in the opposite direction and provide useful lessons for what sorts of polarization to avoid is the climate change movement. Despite the scientific evidence for climate change, there now exists a powerful political force that denies the existence of human-made climate change and opposes environmentalist policies to reduce climate change. It's unclear whether and how climate change activists could have avoided this.

Some activists believe an angry opposition is a strong indication of tactical effectiveness. For example, the numerous ag-gag laws that have come up in state legislatures indicate the animal agriculture industry sees undercover investigations as serious threats to its profits. As mentioned before, this sort of backlash from oppressive groups can feed the dramatic story of activists, evoking sympathy and garnering extended public attention. In the example of ag-gag laws, it seems like they are not substantially curtailing the distribution of information regarding the horrors of animal agriculture, although they take up quite a few activists' time and effort in working to fight them. They also create news stories for animal activists and have brought in substantial camaraderie from related social movements that have interests in free speech and whistleblower freedoms. Given how important alliances with other movements and institutions have been for other social movements, this seems quite valuable.

It seems the impact of the opposition's strength and ease of provocation is the key consideration when deciding whether polarization is an effective strategy. If the opposition is likely to be as successful as the climate change denial movement, that seems worth avoiding. When possible, activists should encourage the less competent opposition while convincing the more competent opposition that they are not a threat. Activists should also avoid turning potential allies into enemies. The practical strategies for accomplishing these goals is a promising avenue for future research.

8. Radical Flanks

Confrontational and nonconfrontational activism, as well as radical and nonradical messages, often coexist within a social movement, which makes their effects on each other important factors in their effectiveness. Much of the existing research on these interactions is on the effects of confrontational and radical groups on moderate groups.

Sociologist Herbert Haines studied this effect.[23] In the 1960s, he claimed, radical black organizations and urban riots increased the financial contributions received by moderate groups. These positive radical flank effects can occur through various mechanisms. Most obviously, radical groups can serve as foils for the moderate groups, so when someone says, "Oh, you're not PETA, right?" and the activist answers that they are more moderate than that group, this might legitimize their activities and make their messaging seem less radical and unusual than if the radical group did not exist. This radical flank effect can be described as shifting the window of views on an issue that are considered acceptable in mainstream discourse, known as the Overton Window. Indeed, moderate groups might actually benefit from rebuking the radical groups as too extreme in order to legitimize and build rapport for their own messages. If this is the case, it would produce quite a strange dynamic for a diverse movement seeking to maximize effectiveness.

It seems most moderate activists think radical groups are harmful to their work. But this is largely based in intuitions and the common responses activists hear from the public. For example, many animal activists have heard something like, "Oh, you're not PETA, right?" as PETA is known for their confrontational tactics and radical messages, and felt like their reputation was harmed by the association. Haines gives numerous other examples. This negative radical flank effect seems to occur when moderate groups are associated with radical groups and this leads to a preemptive dismissal of their messages.

Recall that one of the primary mechanisms for confrontation to effect social change is through creating a political crisis that the institutions in power are forced to resolve it. The existence of moderate groups seems necessary for this mechanism if we assume that institutions in power would be unwilling to give in entirely to the radical demands because moderate groups provide an avenue for less radical concessions. However, the historical evidence indicates that focusing on a radical alternative might actually be the best strategy. The early anti-slavery movement, for example, seemed to have focused primarily on a message of abolition rather than intermediate goals like improvements in living conditions and achieved great success.

If we think radical ends can serve as viable alternatives to the existing system, then it's plausible that the less radical alternative offered by moderate groups is actually harmful because it prevents the institutions in power from endorsing the more radical alternative. This would depend on a variety of factors, including the ease of implementing various reforms and the difference in their benefit.

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[23] "Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957-1970", 1984.

People seem to be biased to think less future change will occur than actually does. On a personal scale, this is referred to as the "end of history illusion." Although not without its critics, the proposition is that people tend to think they have undergone serious personal change but will undergo much less in the future. When thinking about social change, it seems that prior to the success of several major social movements like anti-slavery or civil rights, the majority of the general population held beliefs like, "The economy would collapse if slavery were abolished so it will continue to exist," although it's difficult to know whether these beliefs are rational because we lack a good understanding of what proportion and sort of social movements fail. This would also fit with the general finding that people are biased towards the status quo and against significant change. Therefore, I think we probably naturally underestimate the amount of social change that can occur and should adjust ourselves towards optimism for radical goals.

Another way to explain this risk is that given the presence of radical groups, society has at least two options — maintaining the status quo and adopting the radical demands. The addition of moderate groups creates, or at least facilitates, a third option between these two. So if the radical option is sufficiently likely and the impact of the moderate option would be sufficiently weak, increasing the likelihood of the moderate demand being accepted could be harmful. This comes up frequently in legal reform for farmed animals, where many activists argue incremental reform makes the public content and reduces the likelihood of future progress. There is some evidence, however, that media coverage of animal welfare does reduce consumption of animal products.[24] Future research on this topic would be valuable, especially considering the evidence in favor of triggering events for promoting social change.

Another important factor is how much of each approach is currently being tried in the social movement at hand. Holding effectiveness equal, we might prefer the more neglected tactic to grab the low-hanging fruit. For example, if there are no moderate activist organizations working directly with companies to make improvements in their relevant policies despite several companies being interested in making such changes, then the first activist organization to do corporate outreach will likely have decent returns on their efforts. We also might prefer neglected tactics for their learning value. If few activist groups are working on outreach for a particular audience, and someone tries it, it could turn out that this audience is surprisingly amenable and then other activists will be able to shift their focus.

9. Additional Considerations

i. For-Profit Marketing

For-profit companies almost exclusively engage in nonconfrontational advertising seeking to directly change consumer behavior. Is this substantial evidence against confrontation from an activist perspective? It could be, but I think the choices and constraints of activists are too different from those of for-profit companies for it to constitute meaningful evidence. For example, it would seem wildly inappropriate, and possibly illegal, for a company to fund

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[24] "U.S. Meat Demand: The Influence of Animal Welfare Media Coverage", 2010.

protesters to chant and yell outside their competitor's headquarters, whereas it is socially acceptable for many nonprofits to take such actions towards companies they oppose.

This, to me, creates a fundamental and intractable difficulty in using the lack of confrontation in for-profit marketing as evidence against it for activism. If confrontation is a very effective strategy for creating social change, I think it'd still be very unlikely that for-profit companies utilized it.

There are still useful results from for-profit marketing to be applied to activism, mainly when it comes to optimizing on a small scale like design of a logo, leaflet, slogan, or single-issue campaign. But for-profit marketing seems unlikely to provide many insights into the broad, tactical questions like whether we should use confrontational approaches.

ii. Differences in Timelines

Confrontational activism usually works on a longer timeline than on-the-ground, nonconfrontational activism. This has at least two potential implications:

(i)   Nonconfrontational activism provides shorter feedback loops for refining effectiveness within tactics, e.g. optimizing the effect of a leaflet on self-reported dietary change in the next three months. I am personally skeptical of this argument because confrontation has its own short-term measures activists can optimize, e.g., optimizing the effect of a video by the amount of views it receives online.

(ii)   If you have a high discount rate for future impact, perhaps simply due to general uncertainty of the future, then that should weigh in favor of nonconfrontational activism.

iii. Farm Workers Movement

The farm workers movement of the 1970s and 1980s could provide useful insights into successful social movements. Led by Cesar Chavez and other farm worker activists, this movement contains perhaps the most positive example of a mass boycott as part of the Delano Grape Strike against California producers of table grapes. This boycott, coupled with strikes, rallies, and other tactics, forced the grape producers to agree to improved working conditions.

One proposed mechanism for this boycott's success was that it gave the general public a way to concretely show support for the cause, thus cementing their social identities as supporters. This could be an important role for boycotts in social change. For animal activism, on one hand, it seems much easier to do this when boycotting a single product or company rather than a large group of products like with veganism. On the other hand, the heavier commitments might strengthen commitment enough to outweigh the difficulty.

iv. "Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement"

There is an interesting paper studying the effectiveness of Tea Party protests on "Tax Day" in 2009.[25] David Yanagizawa-Drott and Daniel Shoag, public policy professors, use exogenous variation in rainfall, which affects protest attendance, to show that these protests had significant impact on movement strength, public support for the Tea Party, Republican voting in the 2010 midterm elections, and actual policy-making.

Although the Tea Party movement seems quite different from the other social movements considered in this essay, this is still strong evidence for the general principle that, "Protests can work." It is also notable for its rigorous and scientific methodology, something severely lacking in much of the social movement literature.

v. Environmental Movement

The environmental movement, especially the movement against climate change, seems like a particularly interesting case study for effective activism. Much of environmentalism, whether advocating for ecosystems, future generations, or wild animals, focuses on politically powerless groups. In addition to seemingly having more polarization than other movements, environmentalism seems to have utilized a heavy focus on consumer action, encouraging the purchasing of green products and practice of green individual behaviors.

It seems these tactics are thought to have been largely ineffective and many believe they have been actively harmful by displacing more effective environmental actions. Indeed, researchers Nina Mazar and Chen-Bo Zhong found that "people act less altruistically and are more likely to cheat and steal after purchasing green products than after purchasing conventional products,"[29] although the results of a single laboratory study deserve substantial skepticism.

The focus on consumer action might have led to the practice of "greenwashing," where companies deceive consumers into thinking their actions are environmentally friendly. This practice seems to have reduced the effectiveness of environmental activism by bolstering the public perception of ethically harmful companies and industries.

10. Discussion

We can roughly divide the activism considered in this essay into three categories.

- **Confrontation** - confrontational, on-the-ground activism such as protests, marches, and demonstrations, usually focused on shifting attitudes and rallying activists.

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[25] "Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement", 2013. [29]

"Do Green Products Make Us Better People?", 2010.

- **Consumer Action** - nonconfrontational, on-the-ground activism such as leafleting, payper-view, tabling, and classroom presentations, usually focused on directly convincing its audience to change their consumption.
- **Triggering Events** - publications and events such as novels, documentaries, conferences, and investigations.

These categories are far from definitive. Confrontation can achieve the press coverage necessary to function as a triggering event. Some types of activism like legal reform and support activism, e.g. improving collaboration and resources for existing activists, don't seem to fit well into these categories. Triggering events might qualify as nonconfrontational because they infrequently disrupt day-to-day activities and sometimes emphasize changing individual consumption, but they seem different enough from the on-the-ground work to merit separate consideration.

There is historical precedence for both confrontational and one-off activism in successful social movements. The precedence for nonconfrontational, on-the-ground activism is weaker. The evidence in social psychology regarding activist motivation and overcoming system justification suggests the importance of moral outrage and emotional arousal in changing minds on political issues. Confrontation seems to excel in producing both of these outcomes. Factors that seem to facilitate the effectiveness of confrontation include:

- A broad base of support, similar to that of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement after Board vs. Board of Education.
- Using tactics similar to well-respected social movements like the salt march led by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian independence movement or the sit-ins and marches of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and dissimilar to poorly-respected movements like the Ku Klux Klan.
- Using messages similar to well-respected social movements like nonviolence or the rights of oppressed people.
- An aggressive, yet sufficiently ineffective opposition. The violence or hostility provoked against the activists can evoke public sympathy and agreement.
- Opportunities to elicit moral outrage in the audience through confrontation like storytelling or surprising facts about the issue.
- A lack of natural triggering events to raise the issue in the public conscience such as oil spills or factory fires.
- A need to draw support from the general population, rather than only a specific group like the intelligentsia or a few specific companies.
- The confrontation will bolster relationships with potentially supportive social institutions rather than scare them away.

Triggering events seem to reap similar benefits and remain less susceptible to the potential backlash of confrontation. First, they force the issue into public discourse. If a particular company is called out for their disturbing practices, it easily creates an interesting story for media coverage. Second, they often provoke the moral outrage and dramatize the issue in a similar way to confrontation. My primary concern with the evidence behind these tactics is that

they probably appear more important than they actually were due to the ease with which such works fit into the historical record. But this also indicates these tactics could more easily promote social change due to their sticking power in the public conscience. There is also a concern that the apparent success of these events is actually a result of other factors, meaning that if these events did not occur, activists and pundits would have simply made the next best event go viral.

Consumer action tactics seem less effective, at least when they are a heavy focus of a social movement. Although these tactics do some good in the short-run by immediately reducing production of the harmful products, they lack the excitement and drama that seems necessary to cause widespread nonlinear change. And at least in the animal advocacy movement, these tactics also frequently frame the message as a personal decision rather than a social imperative, which seems to substantially weaken the message's strength and virality, putting potential supporters on the defensive by focusing on their individual actions instead of the people suffering. One of the most important effects of consumer action seems to be in building social identity. Additionally, shifting consumption can lead to attitude change by mitigating cognitive dissonance.[26] For this reason, encouraging easy yet salient changes in consumer behavior seem like a useful component of social movement strategy. Also, just as prominent events and publications are likely favored in the historical record due to reasons other than effectiveness, leafleting and other on-the-ground nonconfrontational tactics are likely unfavored in the historical record, especially due to their prominence before other means of mass communication. This might indicate that these tactics are harder to embed in the public conscience, reducing their effectiveness. Further information about the relative use of such tactics in various social movements would be quite useful for understanding their effectiveness.

The evidence also suggests that radical flanks serve an important role as foils to the moderate majority and shift the window of acceptable ideas on an issue. Moderate flanks for radical movements might serve a similarly useful role by providing a feasible alternative for mainstream institutions to appease a concerned public, but they carry the risk of effecting a less impactful concession than otherwise possible. Generally, radical and moderate groups seem to benefit from coexistence, although emphasizing radical messages has shown some promise in the civil rights and anti-slavery movements and does seem more effective at provoking moral outrage.

It seems much more research is needed in the field of effective social change. The most promising examples include:

- Case studies of failed social movements throughout history
- How social transmission has changed over time, and what that means for the usefulness of historical evidence for social change
- How to reduce the effectiveness of a movement's opposition
- The effect of media mentions, like coverage of undercover investigations, on public attitudes and consumption
- The effectiveness of various tactics in animal advocacy to date

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[26] "Don't Mind Meat? The Denial of Mind to Animals Used for Human Consumption", 2011.

- How the focus on consumer action and intense polarization in the environmentalist movement have contributed to its successes and failures
- The role of economic changes in previous movements, e.g. the profitability of slavery, the change in industrial labor demand during the child labor reform movement
- How activists can best support and facilitate rhetorical ammunition and artificial triggering events
- Which tactics best strengthen connections between the social movement and existing, respected social institutions

Overall, the evidence considered in this essay suggests confrontation has an important ability to spark moral outrage, facilitate productive discourse, and raise awareness for a social issue. This ability, which seems crucial for effective social change, may extend quite well to some nonconfrontational approaches but not as well to others. This suggests the animal advocacy movement should consider reducing its focus on nonconfrontational tactics that seem to mostly lack this upside, like directly changing consumer behavior with the "Go Vegan!" approach, and increasing its focus on actions that are more likely to create nonlinear change through moral outrage and launching animal rights into public discourse — nonconfrontational tactics like undercover investigations, powerful speeches, popular essays, and other literary works, especially those that highlight the personal stories of suffering animals — and confrontational tactics like mass marches and other forms of direct action, although the considerations outlined previously should be taken into account.