

Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility

This book examines anticorporate activism in the United States and includes analysis of anticorporate challenges associated with social movements as diverse as the Civil Rights Movement and the Dolphin-Safe Tuna Movement. Using a unique dataset of protest events in the United States, the book shows that anticorporate activism is primarily about corporate policies, products, and negligence. Although activists have always been distrustful of corporations and have sought to change them, until the 1970s and 1980s, this was primarily accomplished by seeking government regulation of corporations or through organized labor. Sarah A. Soule traces the shift brought about by deregulation and the decline in organized labor, which prompted activists to target corporations directly, often in combination with targeting the state.

Using the literatures on contentious and private politics, which are both essential for understanding anticorporate activism, the book provides a nuanced understanding of the changing focal points of activism directed at corporations.

Sarah A. Soule is the Morgridge Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. She received her BA from the University of Vermont in 1989, her MA from Cornell University in 1991, and her PhD from Cornell University in 1995. Before joining the faculty at Stanford, she was a faculty member at the University of Arizona and Cornell University. Her most recent articles have appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *American Sociological Review*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, and *Mobilization*. She has recently completed another book (with David Snow) entitled *A Primer on Social Movements* and was a coeditor of *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*.

Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics

Editors

Mark Beissinger, *Princeton University*
 Jack A. Goldstone, *George Mason University*
 Michael Hanagan, *Vassar College*
 Doug McAdam, *Stanford University and Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences*
 Suzanne Staggenborg, *University of Pittsburgh*
 Sidney Tarrow, *Cornell University*
 Elisabeth J. Wood, *Yale University*
 Deborah Yashar, *Princeton University*

Ronald Aminzade et al., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*
 Javier Auyero, *Routine Politics and Violence in Argentina: The Gray Zone of State Power*
 Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*
 Charles Brockett, *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*
 Gerald F. Davis, Doug McAdam, W. Richard Scott, and Mayer N. Zald, *Social Movements and Organization Theory*
 Jack A. Goldstone, editor, *States, Parties, and Social Movements*
 Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*
 Sharon Nepstad, *War Resistance and the Plowshares Movement*
 Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*
 Silvia Pedraza, *Political Disaffection in Cuba's Revolution and Exodus*
 Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*
 Ralph Thaxton, Jr., *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village*
 Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000*
 Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances*
 Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*
 Stuart A. Wright, *Patriots, Politics, and the Oklahoma City Bombing*
 Deborah Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-89840-9 — Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility
Sarah A. Soule
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility

SARAH A. SOULE

Stanford University



Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-89840-9 — Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility
 Sarah A. Soule
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
 It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521898409

© Sarah A. Soule 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Soule, Sarah Anne, 1967–

Contention and corporate social responsibility / Sarah A. Soule.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in contentious politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-89840-9 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-72706-8 (pbk.)

1. Corporations – United States. 2. Social responsibility of business –
 United States. 3. Anti-globalization movement – United States.

I. Title. II. Series.

HD2785.S59 2009

338.6–dc22 2009022131

ISBN 978-0-521-89840-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-72706-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy
 of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication,
 and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
 accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel timetables, and other
 factual information given in this work is correct at the time of first printing but
 Cambridge University Press does not guarantee the accuracy of such information
 thereafter.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-89840-9 — Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility
Sarah A. Soule
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For Alice, Ben, and Bill

Contents

<i>Figures</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Tables</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, CONTENTIOUS AND PRIVATE POLITICS, AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES	29
3 ANTICORPORATE PROTEST IN THE UNITED STATES, 1960–1990	53
4 THE EFFECT OF PROTEST ON UNIVERSITY DIVESTMENT	80
5 PRIVATE AND CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN THE POST-1990 ERA	104
6 CONCLUSION	145
<i>Appendix A. Description of Data Used in Chapter 3</i>	161
<i>Appendix B. Modeling Technique Used in Chapter 3</i>	164
<i>Appendix C. Sources of Data for Analysis in Chapter 4</i>	165
<i>Appendix D. Modeling Technique Used in Chapter 4</i>	166
<i>Bibliography</i>	167
<i>Index</i>	189

Figures

1.1	Media Attention to Corporate Social Responsibility, 1970–2007	<i>page</i> 24
2.1	The Nested Nature of Factors External to Social Movements	47
3.1	Proportion of Protest Targeting Businesses in the United States, 1960–1990	54
4.1	Number of Colleges and Universities Divesting, 1977–1989	94
4.2	Number of Shantytowns in the United States, 1977–1989	95
6.1	The Targets of Anticorporate Activism	150

Tables

1.1	Tactics of Anticorporate Activists in the United States	<i>page</i> 18
2.1	Internal Factors Influencing the Consequences of Anticorporate Social Movements	43
3.1	Logistic Regression Models Predicting Police Presence and Police Use of Force and/or Violence at Protest Events in the United States, 1960–1990	74
4.1	University and College Divestment in the United States, 1977–1989	96
5.1	The Targets and Issues of Anticorporate Activism: Case Illustrations from the Post-1990 Period	105

Preface

This project on anticorporate activism began in the early 1990s when I became interested in understanding the diffusion of innovative protest tactics and the effects these can have on organizational decisions. This became the subject of my dissertation project, which was on the student divestment movement and its effects on university divestment from South Africa. But, like so many other projects, this was only the beginning. As an assistant professor at the University of Arizona, I watched the United Students Against Sweatshops take over the administration building in an effort to force the university to stop buying university apparel from companies using sweatshop labor. And I was in Tucson when the Earth Liberation Front took responsibility for torching a McDonald's restaurant in protest of that company's poor environmental and animal rights record. These and other events outside of Tucson in this period demonstrated to me that anticorporate activism was alive and well in the 1990s and was not something that collapsed with the fall of apartheid and the end of the student divestment movement. But, as someone drawn to the history of the labor, peace, and civil rights movements, I also recognized that anticorporate activism was not something that the student divestment movement had invented.

While at Arizona, I began collaborating with Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Susan Olzak on the daunting task of collecting protest event data on all public protests that occurred in the United States between 1960 and 1990 and was reported in the *New York Times*. In our deliberations about what to include on our coding mechanism, we decided to include a code for whether or not the protest event in question targeted a business or corporation. We did this in large part because of what we saw going on in Tucson and the rest of the nation at the time, but I don't

Preface

think we imagined that so many of the protest events we would ultimately collect would, in fact, target businesses. This fact made me realize that the anticorporate protest I was watching in the 1990s and knew to exist in the civil rights, labor, student divestment, and peace movements, was more widespread than I imagined.

Thus, I decided to write this book to illustrate the continuity in anti-corporate activism in the United States, from early events such as the Boston Tea Party, to current activism against corporate homebuilders. While the bulk of my data, as readers will see, come from the 1960 to 1990 period, I hope that this book illustrates commonalities in themes, claims, and tactics over a much longer period. And I hope that the book will provide some theoretical ideas for others interested in anticorporate activism, whether they are trained in sociology, political science, or organizational studies.

Along the road to completion of this book, I have had a great deal of support and assistance from colleagues, friends, and loved ones. The person who deserves the most thanks for his assistance, advice, and sound criticism is Sid Tarrow. Sid was present when I began my dissertation research in the early 1990s and shaped that work in important ways. But he was also present when I began this book many years later, offering advice on how to craft it, offering ideas on literatures, and offering much-needed moral support. I also owe a great deal of thanks to Christian Davenport, who encouraged me to think about writing this book to begin with and who, with his ability to see the big picture on such projects, offered invaluable advice on how to pull the many threads of it together. My collaborator and friend, Brayden King, deserves thanks for encouraging me to think about outcomes of protest that transcend state policy change and to look in more detail at the work of organizations scholars in business schools for different frameworks for understanding this phenomenon.

I am also deeply appreciative of my former colleagues at the University of Arizona. While historically and presently a terrific group of scholars, for the topic of this book I could not have asked for a better set of colleagues and friends with whom to talk about the core ideas herein. In particular, Lis Clemens, Joe Galaskiewicz, Kieran Healy, Doug McAdam, Miller McPherson, Woody Powell, Marc Schneiberg, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and David Snow all contributed to the formation of many of the ideas in this book, as did many of the other faculty members and graduate students at Arizona.

Preface

Along the way, others have served as sounding boards for my ideas and have provided comments or support and/or played a major role in the collection of the data used in this book. I owe these people thanks, too. They include: Jenn Earl, Jeff Larson, John McCarthy, David Meyer, Deb Minkoff, Mike Mulcahy, Susan Olzak, Huggy Rao, Alan Schussman, Verta Taylor, Nella Van Dyke, Liz Warburton, and Mayer Zald.

I also thank the Cornell Institute for Social Sciences and especially the members of the Contentious Knowledge Project, where I was a Fellow when I began this book, and I thank the National Science Foundation for providing funding for the collection of much of the data used in this book. I also thank Libby Wood and Lew Bateman of Cambridge University Press for their comments, insight, and support through this process. It has been a wonderful experience to work with the Cambridge team.

Finally, and perhaps most centrally, I wish to thank my family for their role in the completion of this book. David and Ivan Geraghty were the source of sanity throughout this process, forcing me to realize that there is, in fact, a world beyond the computer and the boxes and boxes of coded protest events. Their patience and love made this possible, despite a move from Cornell to Stanford when I was completing this book. And my sister, Elizabeth Soule, helped me immensely by picking up the slack with family matters in ways too innumerable to mention. I wish many thanks to you all for your guidance and support. While the book is dedicated to my parents and stepfather, I could not have completed it without the help of these family members who are present to read it and share my joy in its completion.

Palo Alto, California