

Striking Differences: Hunger Strikes in Israel and the USA

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ABSTRACT *Although certain repertoires of collective action have been around for a very long time, many actors choose not to use them. Why does this happen? Applying a comparative framework, this paper examines hunger strikes in Israel and the USA over a period of twenty-six years. After showing that hunger strikes are much more widespread in Israel, the paper puts forward five explanations for this 'striking' difference. It argues that (1) Israelis' socialization with fasting, (2) together with the American creed, explain the different levels of awareness of, and access to, this repertoire. (3) In the USA, Congresspersons' constituent services, absent from Israel's nationally elected Knesset, solve numerous problems, prior to their culmination into hunger strikes. (4) Israel's parliament and statist tradition provide clear protest targets that in the USA's multi-layered government are more difficult to find. (5) Since the USA is a vast country, local strikes do not reach national media visibility, limiting awareness of this repertoire. The paper argues that hunger strikers should be regarded as rational actors, who base much of their decision-making processes on their socialization and the political action alternatives open to them.*

KEY WORDS: Hunger strikes, repertoires, Israel, USA, social movements

Some of the supporters of the law claim that it is impossible to force conscription on the ultra-Orthodox because conscription offends their beliefs – religious or ideological . . . They better start realizing that I also have ideological beliefs. (Yuval Lester (2000), former soldier on a seven-day hunger strike, in attempt to block the Tal bill, which proposes a draft exemption to yeshiva students)

I'm no Gandhi or Martin Luther King, but I felt I exhausted every avenue open to me in trying to bring my opinions to light, and get the university to move. (Marcel Agueros (1996), Columbia University student on a fourteen-day hunger strike demanding the creation of an ethnic studies department)¹

One of the striking features of repertoires of collective action is that while some of them have been around for a long time, many actors chose not to embrace them. Such is the case with hunger strikes. How can we explain this?

Overall, hunger strikes and other non-collective repertoires of collective action, like self-immolation, have largely been ignored by students of social movements. Of sixteen major recent books in the social movements' literature only three mention hunger strikes.²

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There are two main reasons for this neglect. One lies in the difficulty in gathering sufficient empirical data. Another reason is that repertoires such as hunger strikes are perceived to be pathological and/or individualistic by nature (Simeant, 1998, pp. 98–99). I will argue that it is time to recognize the hunger strike as a common and legitimate form of collective action – not the act of a crazy individual, but a rational path that follows some deliberation and is based on individuals' socialization and the political action alternatives open to them.

Following a brief introduction to hunger strikes and the literature, I will posit a more holistic approach to the study of hunger strikes, which fuses cultural and institutional approaches into a strategic and socially constructed theory of hunger strikes. Applying a comparative framework, I examine all reported hunger strikes that took place in the USA and Israel over a period of twenty-six years (as they appeared in major newspapers in both countries), looking at their nature, frequency, and the actors who use them. After presenting the methods used to collect the data, I demonstrate that hunger strikes are much more common in Israel, both in frequency and in the scope of actors across the political spectrum that use them. Then I attempt to explicate the findings through the institutional and cultural differences that exist between, and sometimes within, the two countries. The paper concludes with some suggestions for future research.

Origins of the Hunger Strike

One cannot start explaining the development of the hunger strike without elaborating first on fasting. Fasting was first adopted in ancient times for the limited purpose of fighting demons, in days of mourning and for receiving ecstatic revelations (Chatham, 1987, pp. XV–XVII). However, as new civilizations developed so too did new uses for fasting. The Greeks, for example, not only used fasting to achieve enlightenment but also to sustain their physical well-being. Fasting also came to have an integral role in all new major religions, from Judaism through Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. During the biblical period, for instance, Jews employed fasting mainly to avert or terminate a calamity by eliciting God's compassion.

It was exactly this same rationale that was later embraced when appealing to rulers and other civic figures, transforming the fast into a hunger strike. We must remember that those ancient rulers were seen as either demi-Gods or at least as chosen by God; thus, an appeal to the ruler on civic matters seemed as natural as an appeal to God.

The first documented civic hunger strike was carried out in the third century by 'one Lysurgus who starved himself, because people tried to change his laws' (Vandereycken & Deth, 1994, p. 74). One of the first cases in which a large group of people used the hunger strike as a claim-making tool towards a civic entity took place on 1 June 1774 by the order of the Burgess of Virginia. The people of Virginia and Massachusetts began their fast the same day the British began their embargo on Boston's port. Although part of the fast was an appeal to heaven, the colonists also sought to express their dissatisfaction with England (Chatham, 1987, p. 96).

In 1908 hunger strikes were employed again for broad political purposes, as suffragettes in England used them extensively to fight for the right to vote. Alice Paul, who at the time was a graduate student there, first participated and then exported the hunger strike to the USA. Much like in England, once tried and sentenced to seven months in prison, Paul and her colleagues began a hunger strike, which authorities tried to end by force-feeding them (Lunardini, 1986, pp. 132–134).

Although the most famous hunger strike struggle may be that of Mahatma Gandhi,³ probably the most astonishing one was that of Terence MacSwiney, the Irish liberator, who while in prison in 1920 refused to eat for 74 days, becoming the first known person in history to starve himself to death for a political purpose (Vandereycken & Deth, 1994, p. 75).⁴

Struggles such as those led by the suffragettes and Gandhi enlivened this political tool, transforming it into one of the most accessible political weapons at the hands of the weak or desperate.

Why Do People Go on Hunger Strikes?

Unfortunately, not much has been written on hunger strikes. While substantial contributions have been made to our understanding of contained instances of hunger striking, especially the 1981 Irish hunger strike (Beresford, 1987; O'Malley, 1990), and we better comprehend today certain facets of hunger strikes, thanks to psychoanalytic (Orbach, 1986) and media studies (Mulcahy, 1995), not enough has been written to generate a cross-national and cross-cultural theory that can explain why certain people go on hunger strikes while others do not. Since hunger strikes are an integral part of political activism it is imperative to reach beyond specific hunger strike accounts by means of a more encompassing analysis.

A potential starting point for explaining hunger strikes is the concept of repertoires of collective action introduced by Charles Tilly. Tilly observed that any given individual or group possesses 'a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice' (Tilly, 1995, p. 26). This is the individual's or group's repertoire. In other words, people are likely to take action, such as going on a hunger strike, according to two simple principles: awareness of the possible actions available, and a sense that the chosen action has the greatest chance to achieve the goals set by those who take the action.

Let us begin with the first principle: awareness. As people are socialized to their own culture, they not only learn who they are (many times in contrast to who they are not), but also the social norms and behaviors expected of them. In the realm of social protest, each culture's norms and history limits its members to certain routines that we call repertoires. In his attempt to explain the famous hunger strike by ten IRA convicts, who in 1981 starved themselves to death in North Ireland's infamous Maze prison, sociologist Michael Givant (1982) posits the actor's culture as the key explanatory factor. In order to understand 'what led these IRA men to choose a slow death by voluntary starvation', says Givant, one must look at the Irish culture, especially the 'powerful in-group/out-group theme; a theme of martyrdom; and a speculative theory of socialization', the latter meaning the frustration, aggressiveness and hostility towards the British among members of the Republican movement (Givant, 1982, p. 120). The problem with Givant's work is that while it perceptibly explains what led these men to resort to extreme measures, it does not tell us why, for example, they chose to go on a hunger strike and not take other actions, like trying to overpower prison guards, rioting or even committing suicide.

Confronting this problem, Johanna Simeant (1998) suggests we differentiate between cultural dispositions and identity, that is, between the general socialization likely to lead to an extreme form of collective action, and the secondary socialization conducted through institutions, in which people with the propensity to resort to extreme social action learn the

'know-how' on hunger strikes. Through her work on hunger strikes in France, she argues that although cultural dispositions have an important impact on people's willingness to resort to hunger strikes, they cannot by themselves explain why, for instance, the 'hunger strike is a classical means of all undocumented migrants in the world' (Simeant, 1998, p. 103), when the latter do not share the same culture or familiarization with fasting. Thus, she suggests that scholars should take into account not only a general socialization but also a secondary socialization through institutions, such as labor movements and prisons. It is through this secondary socialization that people obtain the 'know-how', some previously gained resources like a group's prior experience that 'familiarized them with a whole set of 'violence against the self'' (Simeant, 1998, p. 105).

Much has been written on awareness, the first repertoire principle, yet little space has been devoted to the second principle: the sense that the chosen action has the greatest chance to achieve the strikers' goals. While Simeant is probably the first to recognize that hunger strikers follow some rationale, first in resorting to self-imposed starvation as the last means, and second in their awareness of the adversary, the audience, and the efficacy of their actions (Simeant, 1998, pp. 107–108), much is still left unanswered.

To begin with, other than secondary 'know-how' socialization, what is the contribution of institutions? For example, we know that media coverage may help a hunger strike gain public sympathy. For instance, the success of the Irish hunger strike 'was due in great measure to the attention the media gave to what may be best described as a steady stream of corpses coming out of the Maze' (Givant, 1982, p. 122). But what roles do the media play in fostering awareness of hunger strikes, their outcomes, and the legitimacy of using them? Moreover, while the secondary socialization provided by some institutions, like prisons, is not negligible (Simeant, 1998, pp. 104–105), more attention should be given to what is potentially a much more influential institution – the state. It is the state that sends potential hunger strikers the most important cues: is it legal to go on a hunger strike? Does the government negotiate with hunger strikers? Is the government more receptive to people who use less radical measures? Finally, is it possible that the state's greatest impact on the practice of hunger striking is less direct (i.e. via criminalization) than indirect, by making the government accessible to people who otherwise may have gone on a strike?

To better understand why people resort to hunger strikes we need to return to Tilly's concept of the repertoire. As previously mentioned, Tilly observed that any given individual or group possesses 'a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice' (Tilly, 1995, p. 26). Regrettably, just as much of the literature on repertoires is under-theorized (Crossley, 2002) work on hunger strikes places the lion's share of the explanatory power on culture and on secondary institutional socialization (know-how), saying very little on the role that institutions play in primary socialization and on the choices actors make.

This is not surprising. Previous hunger strike studies usually focused on a single movement or at most on a single country, generating a limited and at times even distorted view of their causal dynamics. At that level of analysis, culture and secondary socialization carry much of the explanatory power. Leaving aside the issue of our ability to generalize from these studies, even more comprehensive studies, such as Simeant's work on French hunger strikes over a twenty-year period, can lead to erroneous conclusions, such as the assertion that hunger strikes very often occur after all other means are exhausted (Simeant, 1998, p. 108), which, as I show below, does not hold in other contexts.

A comparative research design not only overcomes some of these limitations but more importantly sets the proper theoretical structure: actors and their actions are socially *and* institutionally constructed. For too long, hunger strikes were dismissed as either irrelevant (i.e. non-collective) and/or irrational (pathological or culture driven). It is time that we regard those who go on hunger strike as strategic actors, who base much of their decision-making processes on their socialization and the political action alternatives open to them.

By moving to a cross-national study looking at the phenomenon over a long period of time, this paper brings the hunger strike back from the hysterical anorexic individual (Simeant, 1998, p. 99) to the normal political actors who use it as an effective, if extreme, method of political participation. Further, I will show that political institutions, as well as culture, structure conduct (Skocpol, 1985). Last, the data prove that while the hunger strike is probably the most extreme and least collective repertoire (except for self-immolation), for many movements and actors it is has become the most common form of collective action.

Method

Applying a comparative framework, this paper attempts to address these questions by examining all reported hunger strikes that took place in the USA and Israel over a period of twenty six years (as they appeared in major newspapers in both countries). Since individual actors across countries go on hunger strikes, a ‘most-different-systems’ research design is adopted, for its ability to identify individual or subsystem variables that can explain the similar observed behavior – i.e. the act of going on a hunger strike (Przeworski & Teune, 1970, p. 36). However, the research design employed here is closer to a hybrid most-different-systems research design (Shamir & Sullivan, 1983, p. 914), since I expect cross-national or cross-systemic differences to also significantly influence striking patterns in both countries.⁵

In order to learn about the frequency and nature of hunger strike usage in Israel and the USA I examined five newspapers: three American (the *New York Times*,⁶ *Washington Post* and *USA Today*) and two Israeli (*Yediot Aharonot*, Israel’s highest circulating daily and the *Jerusalem Post*, Israel’s English daily). Using Lexis-Nexis and the *Yediot Aharonot* news abstracts archive I first searched for all articles that contained the words ‘hunger strike’ in either title or text, from 1976 until 2001 (with the *Washington Post* available from 1977 and *USA Today* from 1989). Then, to take a closer look at the nature of these strikes, I compared the US sources with the *Jerusalem Post*, which, unlike *Yediot Aharonot*, is available through Lexis-Nexis starting from 1989. Following the same search criteria, I looked for all hunger strike stories during the months of March, April, May, September, October, and November of each year from 1989 to 2001 inclusive. This enabled me to look closely at the two countries over a considerable period of time, during the most politically active months of the year (December, January and February are filled with holidays and cold weather; June, July and August are the vacation season.).

The reason why three American newspapers were selected is because the USA is such a vast country, and looking only at one newspaper might have created a partial and/or biased view of the whole nation. In Israel, on the other hand, the *Jerusalem Post* covers the whole country adequately.⁷ Since all of them are in English, they enable an easier comparative analysis, eliminating problems of translation, interpretation and nuance. Beside *USA Today*, all other newspapers are highly respected and reliable sources of information,

being seen as 'newspapers of record' (Mulcahy, 1995, p. 454). *USA Today* was added due to its potential contribution in adding stories that the more localized papers may not cover. The information collected from each story was: the date the story was published, and when available, the issue of the strike, number of strikers, target of the strike (government, institution, etc.), and the demographics of the strikers.

Newspapers are probably the best sources for acquiring collective action data across countries and long periods of time (Olzak, 1989), yet they are far from perfect (Mueller, 1997). To begin with, newspapers are affected by their own selection bias. In his study of public protest in Israel, Sam Lehman-Wilzig found that only about 56 percent of all protest events make it to the paper (1992b, p. 14). This problem can sometimes be solved by using police reports (McCarthy *et al.*, 1996; Hocke, 1998), or by weighting for those events that are underrepresented (when compared to police reports), or modeling the selection mechanism (Hug & Wisler, 1998). However, since most hunger strikes involve only a small number of people and often require no police permit, police records are not as useful here.

Because a hunger strike is considered an 'exceptional behavior' (Wolfsfeld, 1997, pp. 20–21) it has a great advantage over other repertoires – it has no need to escalate to get on the news in that it is already radical in nature. While hunger strikes have been somewhat routinized, once they escalate (i.e. have continued for several days) they are too good a story to ignore, becoming genuinely newsworthy. Therefore, selection bias is probably not a significant problem for press coverage of hunger strikes.

A second problem that newspaper data present is partial information. Numerous stories lack the total number of participants and the strike's duration; the story may appear days before the strike ends, as the ending of strikes often does not make it to the newspaper. In some, it is even impossible to determine the strike's target (see under institutional explanations below), or after how many days it ended and why. The latter two are extremely important measures, but because many stories are too brief it is impossible to derive any meaningful generalizations (from those stories that do report the total duration of the strike there seems to be no major difference between the two countries, ranging from days to a couple of months in both cases). Still, for the most part, the data enable determination of the strikers' identity, their number and their objective.

Previous research on general protest participation in the two countries shows that levels are slightly higher in Israel (21.5 percent) than in the USA (18 percent) (Lehman-Wilzig, 1992b, p. 64; for similar data see Wolfsfeld, 1988, pp. 25, 27). We can trace this to the observation that Israelis are guided by the politics of provocation, 'a cultural syndrome in which direct action becomes the predominant means of making demands on government . . . based on a belief that politicians are much more likely to respond to pressure than to persuasion' (Wolfsfeld, 1988, p. 2).⁸ Hence, following the overall protest levels in both countries, I expect hunger strikes to be somewhat more common in Israel than in the USA.

In the section to follow, I will go beyond the 'politics of provocation' explanation and propose additional cultural and institutional explanations to account for protesters' awareness of hunger strikes and their willingness to use them.

Striking Differences

As can be seen in Table 1, hunger strikes are clearly more common in Israel than in the USA. Whereas 312 events were found in the USA from 1976 until 2001, for the same time

Table 1 Number of hunger strike events, 1976–2001: total per year, accounting for population

Country	Number of events	Events per year per 1,000,000 citizens
Israel	164	1.0513
USA	312	0.0421

Source: *Yediot Acharonot* news abstracts, *New York Times*, *Washington Post* (1977–2001) and *USA Today* (1989–2001).

period 164 events took place in Israel. This may look as if hunger strikes in the USA are twice as common as in Israel (events), but when accounting for population size (events per capita) it means that hunger strikes are about twenty-five times more common in Israel than in the USA.⁹

However, there is a chance that some stories were not reported or not covered by the newspapers selected here. Although there is no reason to believe that the report rate in Israel is different from that of the USA, one can also look at the number of participants per event (disregarding those for which the number of participants is unknown) as an alternative method of assessing the popularity of hunger strikes. By using this measure it is possible to set aside the ‘degree of coverage’ problem and concentrate on levels of participation in those events covered in each country.

Shifting from the *Yediot Acharonot*’s abstracts to the *Jerusalem Post*’s full text 1989–2001 data, one can go beyond the frequency of events to the hunger strikers themselves. As can be seen in Table 2, the data show that in the USA 1,335 people participated in ninety-six hunger strikes, making the average numbers of participants per event 13.91, while the numbers for Israel are 3,069 participants in thirty-four events with an average of 90.26 participants per event. This not only demonstrates that when hunger strikes do take place the turnout in Israel is more than six times greater than in the USA, but, more significantly, in contrast to common perception, it shows that hunger strikes are truly a repertoire of collective action.

One could argue that these figures are skewed by the presence of several unusual hunger strikes. Two such events in Israel include a massive prison strike in which a third of Israel’s prison population (1,600) went on a hunger strike protesting against violence by wardens and demanding better conditions for a fellow prisoner in confinement, and another strike where, as part of the campaign to maintain Israeli presence in the Golan Heights, 1,000 protestors went on a one-day hunger strike. In the American case there are five large strikes in which prisoners or INS detainees (ranging from 75 to 158) took part. As can be seen in Table 3, even when we eliminate these extreme cases, the turnout per event in Israel is almost double that of the USA. And if we were to include all prisoner and

Table 2 Number of hunger strike events and participants per event ratio, 1989–2001

Country	Number of events	Events with known number of participants	Total number of participants known	Participants per event ratio
Israel	44	34	3,069	90.26
USA	113	96	1,335	13.91

Source: *Jerusalem Post*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

Table 3 Number of hunger strike events and participants per event ratio, 1989–2001 (without mass events)

Country	Events with known number of participants	Total number of participants known	Participants per event ratio
Israel	32	469	14.66
USA	91	702	7.71

Note: Does not include events with more than seventy-five participants.

detainee cases in both countries and remove only the Golan Heights as an anomaly, the ratio would have been 4.5 to 1 (62.7 participants per event in Israel and 13.9 in the USA).

To further understand this repertoire one must go beyond the numbers and look more closely at the people who embrace the hunger strike as a claim-making tool, for it is possible that the answer to these differences lies in the unique circumstances some of these strikers are in. Hence, I differentiate between three groups in each country: inmates (both convicted criminals and detainees awaiting a trial or undergoing one), detained illegal immigrants, and political activists. Detained illegal immigrants and inmates should be treated separately from political activists for several reasons. First, they are held in a state of detention, and unlike free citizens they have little or no ability to participate in other forms of collective action except hunger strikes. Second, while detainees' and prisoners' hunger strikes may resonate with general issues of human rights and even gather public support, they can also be seen as instrumental by the general public. The reason lies in the fact that since release from prison is usually out of the question, all that is left to negotiate is the improvement of confinement conditions and not confinement itself. Thus, many people see the recent 'death fast' in Turkey the way the government framed it, i.e. a refusal by political prisoners to move to 'better' prisons (US-style super-max) in an effort to keep the old ward system, which perpetuates illegal actions, enables political prisoners to 'brainwash' other prisoners and control illegal operations outside prison, and not as the hunger strikers see it, i.e. as a struggle to halt the move to new prisons, in which they are more likely to be abused by the guards and given 'inhuman' solitary confinement (Bargu-Hasturk & Waismel-Manor, in preparation).

As can be seen in Table 4, while hunger strikes by political activists in Israel account for 75 percent of all strikes, in the USA the number is about 60 percent. This confirms that even after accounting for the inmates and prisoners, hunger strikes are still more common in Israel than in the USA. Looking at the other two groups, while the figures are about the same for inmates, the numbers differ greatly with respect to illegal immigrants. This is not surprising, as many illegal immigrants try to enter the USA each year and are held in

Table 4 Number and percentage of hunger strike events by groups

Country	Political activists (% out of total)	Inmates (% out of total)	Illegal immigrants (% out of total)	Total
Israel	33 (75.0%)	10 (22.7%)	1 (2.3%)	44 (100%)
USA	67 (59.3%)	23 (20.35%)	23 (20.35%)	113 (100%)

Note: Four out of the ten inmate strikes in Israel involved settlers protesting in jail.

Table 5 Key groups among hunger strike users (without inmates or illegal immigrants)

Group	Israel	%	Group	USA	%
Settlers	4	12.1	Latino	19	28.4
Labor/work	4	12.1	Students	18	26.9
Politicians	4	12.1	Labor/work	8	11.9
Other	21	63.6	Other	22	32.8
Total	33	(100)	Total	67	(100)

Note: Four US strikes involved Latino students fighting for Latino causes within the university. Since it was difficult to determine whether it was the student or the Latino in them that was driving them to hunger strike, I placed two events in each category. Similarly, three events in which Latinos participated in labor struggles were divided following the two groups' striking ratio – two for the Latino group and one to the Labor/work group.

detention camps. Israel, understandably, is not a very popular target for illegal immigration, since those who do wish to enter are mostly Jews who are free to enter it by law.

So far I have shown that hunger strikes are more common in Israel than in the USA, but what about the scope of its users? Table 5 displays the key groups within the 'political activists' category from Table 4. These groups could be identified either by the nature of the claim (e.g. labor/work) or by the characteristics of the participants (e.g. settlers, Latinos, students, and politicians). The threshold to be considered a group was set at 10 percent of the total 'political activists' events category (i.e. four stories for Israel and seven stories for the USA).

Looking at Table 5, one can see that except for labor/work struggles that account for 12 percent of all hunger strikes, certain groups, like settlers and politicians in Israel, Latinos and students in the USA, are over-represented in the striking population. These groups' familiarity with the repertoire and its use will be further explained in the next section. For now, let us focus on the 'other' category. While this aggregate of uncategorized events accounts in the USA for a third of all strikes, in Israel it accounts for almost two-thirds. Unfortunately, the number of events that remains when we remove inmates, illegal immigrants, and the other key groups is too small to enable a systematic analysis of the 'others' category. Nevertheless, looking closer at the people who use it in both countries, one notices certain differences.

In the USA there are twenty-two events, four by pro-environment/animal activists, three on behalf of the poor or the homeless, three for prisoners or against the death penalty, two by gay activists, two by black activists protesting in relation to discrimination against African-Americans, and two by non-US-born American citizens for a cause related to their country of origin. The others events were conducted by a Congressperson, who, together with celebrities and students, called attention to hunger, a person – probably a priest – protesting against parish mergers, a politician protesting against exclusion from a televised debate, church members supporting their indicted pastor, a comedian/social activist protesting against police brutality, and an eccentric activist protesting against the regulation of psychics, artists, astrologers and healers.

Israel's twenty-one events include three with Golan Heights residents¹⁰ demanding the maintenance of Israel's sovereignty in the Golan; high school students demanding access to the Temple Mount; comrades and the father of a soldier who died in battle and their supporters demanding electoral reform; a patient asking not to prolong his life; basketball fans protesting against a lack of funds that would drop their team to a lower division; Soviet immigrant doctors who want easier licensing procedures; Druze leaders who want the government to cover their councils' debt and equalize levels of service; a peace activist calling for the cancellation of a law which prohibits meetings with the PLO; illegal settlers who demand their town (not in the occupied territories) be recognized; high school students demanding a freeze on peace negotiations; parents of POWs asking the government to hold all Palestinian prisoners; a mother fighting to get her child back from foster care; a veteran demanding Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon; immigrants demanding affordable housing; Israeli women calling for the release of Palestinian detainees; parents demanding their children be allowed to enroll in a certain school; university students demanding a 50 percent tuition cut; Ethiopian Israelis demanding to bring new waves of immigrants to reunite their families; and a person demanding the USA to release an Israeli spy.¹¹

Undoubtedly a study of forty-three events is somewhat limited, yet as one looks at the Israeli list it appears to be more diverse in its actors than the American one, and less minority oriented. Moreover, the claims by the Israeli protestors are also more universal, relevant to most Israelis, in contrast to those in the USA, which are more particularistic (benefiting or concerning a minority of Americans).

To further establish that this is the case, I compare the number of political participants in these events (non-prison or detention) across the two countries as an additional indicator. In the USA the overall number of actors in these events (those in which the number is reported) is 164, or 7.8 participants per event. The figures for Israel are 1,228 and 76.75 respectively. Even if we treat the massive Golan Heights strike as an outlier, the numbers for Israel would still be 228 and 14.25, respectively. This shows that even if American journalists, in contrast to their Israeli counterparts, choose to write fewer hunger strike stories than actually take place, which is highly unlikely, we still know that for those reported, the number of participants per event is much lower in the USA than in Israel.

Last, the fact that since 1989, and perhaps even since the suffragettes, no major widespread struggles in the USA embraced hunger strikes as part of their tactics illustrates its triviality in the USA versus the central role they play in Israel. Ever since being used against the British mandate over Palestine, hunger strikes have been utilized on many occasions. Two of the most notable ones are the struggle against the withdrawal from Sinai in 1981, and a two-week strike by 3,000 public hospital doctors, who in 1983 demanded higher wages. Moreover, while not even one US hunger strike had any implication on the general population or in shaping a key policy area, two hunger strikes in Israel had major political consequences. The Golan Heights strike, with more than 1,000 participants and the 250,000 who came to their protest site to support them, made it evident to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his government that any accord with Syria demanding Israel's complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights would be received unfavorably by a majority of Israelis, even those from Rabin's Labor Party. The second strike, as mentioned above, began with two comrades and the father of a reserve officer who died in battle, sitting in a tent in front of the Knesset, demanding electoral reform. After a few weeks it was transformed into a massive protest movement, with a demonstration of about 150,000

people and a petition signed by 500,000 citizens – a sixth of all eligible voters. On 18 March, less than two years after the hunger strike began, the Knesset reformed its electoral system.¹²

In sum, the data clearly prove that the use of hunger strikes in Israel is significantly more common than its use in the USA. In the following section I propose possible reasons for this difference.

Explanations

While the literature suggests that hunger strikes should be up to 30 percent more common in Israel than in the USA, following the customary ‘politics of provocation’ in Israel, the differences in the use of strikes found here are too large to be explained by previous studies. With no reason to believe that Israel’s state of conflict or the psychological involvement of its citizens should increase the use of hunger strikes disproportionately to other forms of protest, I propose two cultural explanations and three institutional arguments to justify these differences in the use of strikes.

Cultural Socialization With Self-starvation

For people to go on a hunger strike they first must be familiar with self-starvation. Not knowing what hunger means places a large barrier in front of those who are considering partaking in a hunger strike. To understand why hunger strikes are much more common in Israel than in the USA, one must understand the magnitude of Israeli Jews’ cultural socialization with self-starvation and the lack of such socialization among Americans.

Jews, whether religious or secular, are very familiar with fasting through the Day of Atonement, or, as it is mostly known, Yom Kippur. Sixty-seven percent of all Israeli Jews regularly fast in Yom Kippur and an additional 10 percent fast occasionally (Katz *et al.*, 2002, p. 7). Moreover, because everyone has family members, friends and neighbors who fast, taking place on a day in which people do not drive, and all shops and businesses are closed (including radio and television), it makes the Yom Kippur experience for all Jews, religious and secular alike, an all-encompassing one.¹³

The awareness of fasting itself facilitates not only open-mindedness to the idea of hunger strikes as a political weapon but also the decision to initiate one. Yet why is it the case that Latinos are more disposed than other US actors to go on hunger strikes? Why is their share in all hunger strikes twice their size in the population (28.4 percent and 14.5 percent, respectively)?

There are two possible explanations. The first is somewhat similar to the Israeli Jews, and that is religion. Being predominantly Catholics (about 75 percent for Mexicans and Cubans and 65 percent for Puerto Ricans (de la Garza *et al.*, 1992, p. 57)), Latinos have a familiarity with fasting, through Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. However, while these fasts were observed in the past, since Pope Paul VI reorganized the Church’s practice of public penance in 1966 (*Poenitemini*), the National Conference of Catholic Bishops determined that during those days Catholics are only required to avoid meat, have only one full meal and two smaller ones (Paul VI, 1966, Canon 1253). Clearly, this practice hardly familiarizes Catholics with hunger.

The second possible explanation is that it is part of their culture’s repertoire of collective action, rooted in the history and traditions Latinos brought with them to the USA. In his

study of the Latino community in New York City, Michael Jones-Correa (1998) argues that Latinos have done just that for other repertoires. Looking at the caravan (a popular means of electioneering and protesting in Latin America in which placard-covered vehicles drive in line, honking their horns) he observes that Latinos have tried, somewhat unsuccessfully, to adapt this form of action to the New York setting. While a familiar repertoire may not be the most effective form of action in a new setting, old habits are hard to break (Jones-Correa, 1998, pp. 136–141).

To test whether hunger strikes are part of Latinos' protest repertoire, a political tradition they brought with them to the USA, I looked at Mexico's dailies *La Jornada* and *El Excelsior* for the two full years they are available through Lexis-Nexis (Mexico was chosen because Mexicans are the largest Latino group within the USA). The number of events during the March–May to September–November period (seventeen for 1997 and fifteen for 1998) suggests that hunger strikes are more than five times more popular in Mexico than in the USA, when population size is accounted for. In fact, hunger strikes are so common in Mexico that even the country's former President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, staged a hunger strike in 1995 to defend his honor against accusations by his successor's administration (DePalma, 1995, p. 3). This explains not only why Latinos are so willing to use the hunger strike but also more generally it demonstrates that a group's socialization with a repertoire increases their chances of utilizing it. It would be interesting to see whether future generations of American Latinos will continue to use this repertoire. The current body of data does not lend itself to prediction.

Self-reliance and the American Creed

Another cultural difference that might explain why hunger strikes are less popular in the USA is their inconsistency with major themes within the American creed: individualism, egalitarianism and laissez-faire (Lipset, 1996, p. 19). Individualism neutralizes much of the claim-making, because in comparison to other countries, such as Israel, in which actors demand rights and privileges based on their geographical locality, ethnicity, religion, or their contribution to the nation (paying taxes, serving in the military), American citizens 'have been expected to demand and protect their rights on a personal basis' (Lipset, 1996, p. 20). Rights in America lie in the individual, not in his or her religion, color or class. Egalitarianism also places a burden on claim-making. As Tocqueville has observed, in America egalitarianism means equality of opportunity, 'not of result or condition' (Lipset, 1996, p. 19). The American dream is achieved 'through the practice of industry, frugality, and sobriety' (Wyllie, 1954, p. 6), not claim-making. Last, while Americans since the New Deal have been enjoying the services they receive from the federal and state governments, paradoxically they still hold that the best government is the one that governs least (Paine, 1995, p. 5). Government is seldom the place where people go seeking solutions.

The Protestant religion is another contributor to the self-reliance ethic. Max Weber was the first to identify 'sectarian beliefs as the most conducive to the kind of rational, competitive, individualistic behavior' found in America (in Shafer, 1991, p. 19). With this Puritan heavy emphasis on hard work and success, it is not difficult to understand how Benjamin Franklin's 'Poor Richard' came to dominate American thought.

Hunger strikes do not sit comfortably with the American creed. It is one thing to march to make a claim, because the person is taking an active role for or against something. In such acts the person is willing to be physically active or at least is willing to bear the price

inflicted upon him by an external force for his actions (being arrested, face a confrontation with rivals, etc.). It is another thing to say 'I will not eat until my demands are fulfilled', for it has a passive connotation, an expectation to get something without working for it, even though the act may be more physically demanding than marching or picketing.¹⁴ It delivers the guilt and responsibility for the hunger strike and its possible outcome – death – to the other side. Thus, we see that, especially for hunger strikes, self-reliance becomes 'an instrument of social control [rather] than as an instrument of social progress' (Wyllie, 1954, p. 161).

In Israel, on the other hand, there is no tradition of individual self-reliance. The nation was born statist in nature, and for the most part continues to be statist to this day. The state always had a major role in supplying the needs of citizens, first through the political institutions of the Mapai Party and later, more institutionally, through the formal ministries and agencies. Until recently the state was the sole player in Israel, the entity that owned most of the industries, and assisted one literally from womb to tomb. Moreover, the state is the entity that all must serve for two to three years in the military (except Israeli Arabs and Orthodox Jews), so why shouldn't it be the one to which people 'come' in a moment of need?

National Versus Single District Elections

As shown in Simeant's work, cultural explanations take us a long way, but they do not take us far enough for 'the repertoire is at once a structural and a cultural concept, involving not only what people do when they are engaged in conflict with others but what they know how to do and what others expect them to do' (Tarrow, 1998, p. 30). Thus, be it a petition or hunger strike, repertoires are not only 'circumscribed . . . by prior experience and by the material, organizational, and conceptual resources they find readily at hand' (Traugott, 1995, p. 43) but also by the 'ways in which pairs of actors make and receive claims bearing on each other's interests' (Tilly, 1995, p. 27). Once this is understood, it is imperative that we bring the institutions 'back in', for it is the experience from prior interactions between the protestors' actions and institutions that prescribe future actions to be taken and the extent to which they may be successful.

One explanation for the differences found between the two countries lies in their different government structures, particularly with respect to their legislative branches and the people they represent. Congress is a bicameral and federal institution. Hence, its members, especially in the House of Representatives, represent narrow districts with specific concerns. The Knesset, on the other hand, is a national body, in which the 120 MKs represent all Israeli citizens as a whole. This distinction is at the very heart of the differences I observed between the two countries' unique patterns of claim-making.

In the USA people employ hunger strikes less often partly because many claims that could potentially culminate in a hunger strike are taken care of by Congressmen's constituent service. Constituent service can be described as an activity 'providing help to individuals, groups, and localities in coping with the federal government' (Fenno, 1978, p. 101). In his famous work, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* (1977), Fiorina found that 'members of the House spend well 30 percent of their time on constituency service, while their staffs spend well over half their time on such matters' (Fiorina, 1989, p. 55).

As can be seen in Table 6, Congressmen have repeatedly increased their staffs, and precisely for that reason. These days, nearly half of all House personal staff work in District offices, with some Members locating nearly three-quarters of their staff in the District. Is this all done for the sole purpose of helping the citizens? Not quite. Fiorina has shown that by providing these services Congressmen significantly increase their chances for reelection, especially due to their personal appeal, even to a person from the other party. In Israel, however, there is no incentive for MKs to help constituents, because the former are elected nationally and within parties. Any constituent service in a national setting may help the party get reelected but probably not the representative who performs it (Wolfsfeld, 1988, p. 15). Moreover, Israeli MKs have only two staff members each, hardly an adequate number to provide extensive aid to constituents.

What is the connection to hunger strikes? In *The Personal Vote* (1987), Bruce Cain, John Ferejohn and Morris Fiorina conducted a survey of US citizens in which they found that 15 percent of all respondents have either got in touch with a Congressman or his office. More than 90 percent received a response (the remaining 10 percent being mainly those who wrote or called to express opinions), with 52 percent being highly satisfied with the response (Cain *et al.*, 1987, p. 53). Israelis, on the other hand, have to use more vocal and public methods to publicize their grievances. Poll data seem to confirm this. While about three-quarters of all Israelis and Americans approve of lawful, non-violent protest (Lehman-Wilzig, 1992b, p. 117), Gadi Wolfsfeld found that when asked what they would do to change a law, 65 percent of Americans said they would contact their leaders, and only 0.3 percent said they would demonstrate. Israelis, on the other hand, are reluctant to contact their leaders (5.4 percent), but much more willing to demonstrate (13 percent). Clearly, 'each culture has its own conventional paths of response' (Wolfsfeld, 1988, pp. 22–23).

Table 6 Personal staffs

Fiscal year	Authorized staff
1919	1–2
1940	3
1945	6
1949	7
1955	8
1956	9
1961	10
1965	11
1966	12
1969	13
1971	15
1972	16
1975	18
1979	22

Source: 'Personal staffs', House of Representatives Historical Overview (2002).

Locating a Protest Target

One more issue that should be considered is the fact that Israel is a small country with a traditionally paternalistic central government (Lehman-Wilzig, 1992a, pp. 22–26, 1992b, pp. 121–122); for that reason the state becomes the natural target, almost the sole one, for any protest (Lehman-Wilzig, 1992b, p. 69). In contrast, the USA is by nature a multi-target system having, on the one hand, many layers of government (town or city, county, state and federal governments) and, on the other, a country in which the legislature and the executive are independent branches, both with powers and limitations of their own. Thus it is not only more difficult in the USA to find the correct target (the one responsible for the problem or the one able to resolve it), but also in having so many of them it is unlikely that any one would ‘volunteer’ to place themselves in front of the claim-making individual or group.

Event data seem to confirm this explanation. As it is difficult in many cases to determine who or what the target is, I have tried to find the answer by looking at those hunger strikes in the two countries in which the executive or the legislature was definitely *not* the target of the strike. I found that in the USA the federal government or Congress was not the target in 64 out of 113 strikes (56.6 percent), while in Israel the government or Knesset was definitely not the target in only fourteen out of forty-four events (31.8 percent). This difference suggests that if at any given time you are looking for an individual on hunger strike in Israel, you are most likely to find him or her in front of the Knesset than anywhere else.

Media Consumption and Coverage

Although through much of human history ‘forms of contention varied significantly from one place, actor, or situation to another’, since the late nineteenth century they have become modular, meaning that ‘the same forms served many different localities, actors, and issues’ (Tilly, 1995, p. 34). One of the major developments that brought about this change was the emergence of the mass media. No longer was one repertoire confined to a single area or group. The media raised people’s awareness about new possible forms of action, especially for repertoires that involve a small number of protestors, and enhanced ‘collectiveness’ by bringing the action to the audience.

The media are a significant tool that enables actors to learn what others are doing and to what extent their methods are successful. Both news consumption and coverage contribute to people’s awareness of a repertoire and its use. Starting with news consumption, figures from several sources seem to indicate that national television news consumption in the USA and in Israel is about the same – around 30 percent (with a local news viewership of 56 percent in the USA (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2000, p. 7; Israel Audience Research Board, 23 April 2000–6 May 2000)).¹⁵ Because the numbers do not differ much and since other studies found little difference in political news readership between the two countries (Wolfsfeld, 1988, p. 21), I move from consumption to the issue of coverage.

It has already been argued that newspapers are likely to cover hunger strikes due to their radical nature and human interest potential. The question now is whether television news has the same priorities. While there are no publicly available transcripts of television news programs for Israel, US data show that hunger strikes hardly ever make it to the network

news. Looking at *ABC News* transcripts from 1989 until 2001 (twelve months a year) I found seventy-two hunger strike stories. Forty-five of those were broadcast during the evening news, while the remaining twenty-seven were aired on other *ABC News* programs, such as *Nightline*, *20/20*, *This Week*, and *Good Morning America*. Only thirty-three out of the seventy-two stories covered hunger strikes in America. Looking closer at those thirty-three, I found that thirteen were stories about Randal Robinson's strike to change US policies towards Haitian refugees and seven were about Dr Jack Kevorkian's hunger strike during his detention. That leaves thirteen hunger strikes. These thirteen, which together with the previous two amount to fifteen unique hunger strike events in thirteen years, can hardly make people aware of this repertoire (the chances of viewers seeing and remembering one of these stories is minimal), but even if it did, surely the infrequency of them sends a clear message that this is not a common or acceptable form of collective action.

Due to the vast nature of America, it is only natural that the three networks and cable news will pay less attention to local stories such as hunger strikes. Israel, by contrast, is only as big as the state of New Jersey. Therefore Israel's nightly news is more likely than US networks to cover hunger strikes. But even in the unlikely case that the coverage of hunger strikes on Israeli television is as sporadic as in the USA, the variation found for newspapers alone could help explain the different levels of familiarity with this repertoire across the two countries.

Conclusion

The data presented here not only support the hypothesis that hunger strikes are more commonly used in Israel than in the USA, but more importantly show that repertoires are not equally applicable across different countries. Cultural and institutional factors greatly contribute to individuals' awareness of hunger strikes and their willingness to use them and their perceived effectiveness. Moreover, hunger strikes, like the one conducted for keeping Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, or the various strikes by low-income workers in the USA, clearly refute the idea that hunger strikes are pathological or individualistic in nature. Hunger strikers are strategic actors embedded in their cultural and institutional contexts who believe that a hunger strike can best advance their cause. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, the data clearly show that the hunger strike is a repertoire of collective action.

Much more work is still to be done in this uncharted terrain on the margins of repertoire literature. Already the tragic 'death fast' in Turkey has drawn some interest from scholars (Bargu-Hasturk & Waismel-Manor, in preparation). Yet we still face significant methodological problems. For instance, press collective action data often lack information on the strike's success and sometimes even on its purpose. In the worst cases, the end of the strike does not make it to the newspaper, so it is impossible to learn what was achieved; even when such information is available it is difficult to determine what constitutes success (Gamson, 1975; Goldstone, 1980). Perhaps a more systemic analysis of multiple case studies, such as looking cross-nationally at one type of hunger strike, like prisons or labor struggles, will provide us with some answers.

For too long we have shunned the study of hunger strikes, or treated hunger strikers as pathological or desperate people. Three 'normal' hunger strikers in Israel triggered a massive movement that brought about the most extensive (some may say tragic) electoral

reform in Israeli history. If there is something crazy here it is not their actions, but the fact that they succeeded. Regardless of methodology or area of interest, it is time to bring hunger strikes back to where they belong – the realm of politics.

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Notes

1. Quotes from Aaron Izenberg, 'Opposition grows as gov't approves Tal C'tee recommendations', the *Jerusalem Post*, 3 July 2000; and David Wallis, 'Starving for attention', *New York Times*, 30 June 1996, respectively.
2. Three books (see listing below) mention hunger strikes: one in telling the story of the suffragettes (Hamel *et al.*), another as one example among many of the force of commitment (Della Porta & Diani), and only one using it as a way to show the complexity of social movements (Giugni *et al.*, 1999). The books examined were: R. R. Aminzade *et al.*, *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); A. N. Costain & A. S. McFarland (Eds), *Social Movements and American Political Institutions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); D. Della Porta & M. Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); M. G. Giugni, D. McAdam & C. Tilly (Eds), *From Contention to Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); M. G. Giugni, D. McAdam & C. Tilly (Eds), *How Social Movements Matter* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); J. A. Goldstone (Ed.), *States, Parties, and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); P. Hamel *et al.*, *Globalization and Social Movements* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); D. Imig & S. Tarrow (Eds), *Contentious Europeans: Protest and Politics in an Emerging Polity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); J. C. Jenkins & B. Klandermans (Eds), *The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (Eds), *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds), *Methods of Social Movement Research* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); D. McAdam, S. Tarrow & C. Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds), *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); D. S. Meyer, N. Whittier & B. Robnett (Eds), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); C. Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); M. Traugott (Ed.), *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
3. Gandhi himself did not consider it a hunger strike, which he saw as a coercive method, but rather a satyagrahic fast conducted to 'sting' the conscience of the wrongdoer (Sharp, 1973, p. 367).
4. Hunger strikes and death may seem to go hand in hand, but only a miniscule number of strikes ever go that far. I found no record of any Israeli or American ever dying from a hunger strike. The only instance is that of an Ethiopian who starved himself to death in an American prison. While all hunger strikers threaten to starve themselves to death, hardly any do, or need to: either the person gives up or stops once some demands are met. Two other common exit strategies are the need for medical treatment (for the most part dehydration, but in some extreme cases loss of consciousness) and requests from public figures, family members or friends to stop the strike. Hunger strikes in which individuals are really willing to die, such as the current Death Fast in Turkey or the 1981 Maze Prison strike in Northern Ireland, are rare and should be studied separately.
5. Some may argue that since Israel is comparable to none (Barnett, 1996, p. 6) and America is exceptional (Lipset, 1996), a research design which includes these two countries must be futile. Nevertheless, there is still much we can learn by comparing the two (see, for example, Shamir & Sullivan, 1983).
6. The *New York Times* data are actually much richer, because Lexis-Nexis includes, within its *New York Times* search, its Information Bank Abstracts that include, among others, the *Miami Herald* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

7. The *Jerusalem Post* was selected for its Lexis-Nexis availability. To assure its credibility it was compared with *Ha'aretz*, Israel's most respected newspaper, for the period *Ha'aretz* is available through Lexis-Nexis and for which there were hunger strike stories in it (July 1999–January 2001). Searching these nineteen months for the term 'hunger strike' anywhere in the article I found eighty-two articles in the *Jerusalem Post* and forty-one in *Ha'aretz*. After removing articles about strikes outside Israel, multiple articles about the same strike, and strike threats, there remained ten *Jerusalem Post* stories and eight in *Ha'aretz*, with the only difference being that the *Jerusalem Post* did not cover one strike by the handicapped and one by illegal aliens in detention, and *Ha'aretz* missed four strikes, by an individual calling for the release of an Israeli spy in US custody, AIDS activists, Russian immigrants, and MK asking for larger budgets for Druze townships. All the other six stories were exactly the same. This demonstrates that the *Jerusalem Post*'s hunger strikes' reporting record is no worse than *Ha'aretz*, and thus is a valid source of news for this research.
8. This has not always been the case. Only in the 1960s and especially in the 1970s we witness a rise in protest activity in both countries due to social struggles (the civil rights movement, Israel's Black Panthers), war (Vietnam War, Yom Kippur War), and scandals (Watergate, the Lavon affair). Yet, while American citizens regained some of their institutional efficacy and went back to channel their participation to and through institutions, Israelis, with a much higher level of psychological involvement and growing sense of blocked opportunities, chose protest as their 'first course of political action' (Wolfsfeld, 1988, p. 1. See chapter 1 for a broader discussion).
9. Israel's figures include all events regarding Israeli citizens (Jews and non-Jews) but no Palestinians. While it would be interesting to see how Palestinians in the occupied territories use the hunger strike as a tool in their struggle against Israel, the aim of this paper is only to compare Israelis with Americans.
10. In Israel most people differentiate between those Israelis who live in the Golan Heights (mit'iashvim) and those who live in Judea and Samaria (mit'nachlim). Although both words mean 'settlers' the first one carries a neutral undertone, while the second one, framed by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, carries mostly a negative connotation. Hence, since they are perceived as regular residents, the Golan Heights strikers were not coded as 'settlers'.
11. Even without going much into detail, this list clearly shows that people's lives don't have to be 'mired in drudgery and desperation' (Tarrow, 1998, p. 20) to adopt this extreme and risky repertoire. For many, going on a hunger strike is as accessible and immediate as writing a letter to the editor, requiring no real prior desperation.
12. This last strike, like dozens of other hunger strikes across the two countries (perhaps with the exception of labor strikes), clearly shows that unlike the French (Simeant, 1998, p. 108), many Israelis and Americans often resort to hunger strike as their first means to solve a problem, not the last.
13. In fact, there are many other dates and occasions in which Jews become acquainted with fasting, although these are observed mostly by religious Jews: the Ninth of Av (commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples), the Seventeenth of Tamuz (the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem in the First Temple period), the Tenth of Tevet (in memory of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar), Zom Gdalyah (in memory of the slaying of Gdalyah and his associates), the Fast of Esther (the day before Purim), the anniversary of a parent's death, and on several other occasions.
14. Another aspect of this phenomenon can be observed when comparing the practices of charity in the two countries. Charity is widespread in both countries, yet it takes different forms. In Israel, money or product contributions are almost the sole method of charity, whereas in the USA it is common for money to be accompanied with a reward (buy overpriced candy from a co-worker for his kid's little league) or an action (pay to actually walk or run in a money drive, instead of just giving the money to that organization).
15. The dates selected for Israeli data are the closest to the dates in the Pew Research Center study. The number of Americans who watch the local news is much higher, at around 56 percent; however, since local news does not cover stories outside its locality, it is highly unlikely that a local news viewer will encounter hunger strike stories. For that reason I compare the national/network news consumption.

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