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Protest Campaigns and Movement Success: Desegregating the U.S. South, 1960-61

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Protest Campaigns and Movement Success: Desegregating the U.S. South, 1960-61*

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When and how does protest matter? Although scholarship on the consequences of social movements has grown dramatically, our understanding of protest influence is limited. Most recent studies examine whether strong movement organization increases the chance of success, and few studies identify positive effects for disruptive protest. We examine the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins by black college students using an original dataset of 334 cities in the US South. We assess the influence of protest while considering the factors that generate protest itself. Specifically, we examine whether local movement infrastructure, supportive political environments, and favorable economic conditions account for the apparent influence of protest. Our analyses show that sit-in protest increased the likelihood of desegregation, and that protest in nearby cities also had a positive impact. This indirect effect reveals the diffusion of success: sit-ins in a nearby city made desegregation there more likely, which in turn facilitated desegregation in this city. These analyses also demonstrate that desegregation was more likely where movement opposition was weak, political conditions were favorable, and the economic power of the movement’s constituency was strongest.

After many decades of sustained focus on the origins of social movements, scholars have

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recently begun serious investigation into their consequences. We advance this growing body of scholarship by examining the success of protest campaigns to desegregate public accommodations during the Southern civil rights movement. As the first region-wide attack on Jim Crow segregation, the sit-ins have been a central and influential case in movement studies. However, most prior scholarship has concerned the origins and diffusion of protest (Andrews 2002; Killian 1984; Lofland 1981; McAdam 1983; Oberschall 1989; Polletta 1998). Why did lunch counters in some cities desegregate while others resisted change? More generally, was protest the central factor driving desegregation?

We argue that protest is likely to generate change by threatening established actors and by enlisting the support of bystanders. This view accords with a long tradition of social movement theory that conceptualizes protest as “politics by other means” (Piven and Cloward 1977; Schwartz 1976; Tilly 1978; Wilson 1961) and more recent theoretical accounts of protest influence (Andrews 2001; King and Pearce 2010; Luders 2006). Given how central this insight is to social movement theory, research supporting the claim is surprisingly sparse and less definitive than would be expected. Skeptics, however, contend that protest is unlikely to matter because the costs are trivial relative to other factors.

We assess the influence of protest while considering the factors that generate protest itself. Specifically, we examine whether local movement infrastructure, supportive political environments, and favorable economic conditions account for the apparent influence of protest. Unlike most prior studies, we consider whether protest in neighboring cities influences the likelihood of success because success itself may diffuse as elites adapt to new norms and preempt further protest. We show that protest was a powerful source of change, and we identify organizational, political and economic factors that enhance success.

Jim Crow, Black Protest, and Desegregation

The desegregation of public accommodations is a historically significant and, surprisingly, understudied aspect of the civil rights movement. The 1960 sit-ins challenged an elaborate and longstanding system of Jim Crow segregation that maintained white social dominance in the US South. The desegregation of lunch counters in the early 1960s constituted the beginning of the end of Jim Crow and was followed by successful challenges to segregation in restaurants, movie theaters, hotels, hospitals, libraries, beaches, parks, and other public accommodations.

Jim Crow segregation emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century as a durable and powerful institution for subordinating black Southerners. Litwack argues that Jim Crow is distinguished by its “thoroughness” that circumscribed “every conceivable situation in which whites and blacks might come into social contact: from public transportation to public parks, from the workplace to hospitals, asylums, and orphanages, from the homes for the aged, the blind, deaf, and dumb, to the prisons, from saloons to churches” (2010:233). Although
Southern states and cities enacted Jim Crow laws, segregation extended well beyond legal mandates and was sustained through daily routines in all spheres of life.

Jim Crow segregation solved a distinctively urban problem where “contacts between the races were inevitably more casual, because people jostled together much more haphazardly, the rules governing those contacts were defined all the more thoroughly” (Cell 1982:133). As such, segregation emerged in its earliest and most elaborate forms in newly industrializing cities like Birmingham, Charlotte, and Atlanta (Cell 1982; Rabinowitz 1978; Woodward 2001). In this way, segregation differed from the other major institutional mechanisms for maintaining racial inequality. Economic elites from the rural black belt championed political and economic mechanisms. Electoral disfranchisement was secured through violence, fraud, and by establishing new barriers to voting such as poll taxes and literacy tests (Kousser 1974). Sharecropping (or the crop lien system) emerged as the dominant way of organizing agricultural labor. By contrast, “urban progressive reformers” promoted segregation as a way to guarantee orderly, harmonious, and hierarchical relations between blacks and whites (Tuck 2011:94).

As a system of oppression, segregation subjected all black southerners to “the dailiness of…terror” (Chafe, Gavins, and Korstad 2003:xxx). As John Williams wrote, “Nothing is quite as humiliating…so murderously angering as to know that because you are black you may have to walk a half mile farther than whites just to urinate; that because you are black you have to receive your food through a window in the back of a restaurant or sit in a garbage-littered yard to eat” (Sitkoff 2008:88). Certainly, some black Southerners came into greater contact with whites than others, but the pervasiveness of Jim Crow guaranteed that all people were impacted regardless of age or social class.

Travel for work, shopping, or recreation increased the risks of humiliation and ritual deference—if not violence. Many used complex strategies to negotiate and sometimes resist segregation (Chafe, Gavins, and Korstad 2003; Litwack 2010). For example, parents were torn between shielding their children from Jim Crow or tutoring them in the forms of social deference required to minimize conflict with whites. Ralph Thompson recalled growing up in Memphis during the 1930s and 1940s where his “mother would always tell us to drink water before we left home. So we didn’t get caught into drinking water out” (Chafe, Gavins, and Korstad 2003:5). The NAACP’s Roy Wilkins framed the dilemma starkly when testifying before Congress:

How far do you drive each day? Where, and under what conditions can you and your family eat? Where can they use a rest room? Can you stop driving after a reasonable day behind the wheel or must you drive until you reach a city where relatives or friends will accommodate you and yours for the night? (Sitkoff 2008:76)

John Lewis, one of the Nashville student activists, recalls family trips organized by the “distances between service stations where it would be safe for us to stop” (Lewis and D’orso

Given how deeply rooted segregation was in the US South, the collapse of Jim Crow segregation constitutes a surprising and important social transformation. Although scholars have documented the gains and setbacks in electoral politics, school desegregation and social policies, there has been much less attention to the formal desegregation of public accommodations (Andrews 2004; Button 1989; Santoro 2002). This is surprising because the challenges to segregation became the center of mass participation in the movement in the 1950s and early 1960s (Wright 2013). Consider the iconic events and campaigns of the Southern movement such as the Montgomery bus boycott (1955-1956), the sit-ins (1960), the Freedom Rides (1961), the Albany campaign (1962), and the Birmingham campaign (1963). These events were all coordinated assaults on segregation in public accommodations.

**Sit-ins and the Challenge to Segregation in Public Accommodations**

Characterized as a “movement of movements,” the civil rights struggle encompassed numerous campaigns, organizations, and leaders pursuing a wide range of goals and targets (Isaac 2008). Challenging segregation was a central objective of local movements across the South. Reports in the *New York Times* show the centrality of desegregation in the early 1960s.\(^1\) The desegregation of neighborhoods, schools, public or commercial facilities was the primary claim at 71% of protest events in 1960 and 78% in 1961.\(^2\) Although scholars have focused on interaction with political authorities, businesses were a target of collective action for roughly half of the civil rights events occurring in the South in 1960 and 1961. By contrast, school desegregation strategy relied on litigation, and voting barriers were challenged using community organizing and voter registration campaigns (Andrews 2004).

The sit-in tactic propelled local challenges to segregation. Developed in the 1940s and 1950s by CORE and NAACP activists, the tactic was deployed primarily in Border States and in the North until 1960 (Meier and Rudwick 1975). Sit-ins involved the physical occupation of segregated public spaces thereby challenging and disrupting the normal operation of business. Lunch counters were the most famous site of protest, but the tactic was employed at many other targets including restaurants, libraries, public beaches, churches, and bus stations.

The initiating event for the 1960 protest wave occurred when four students in Greensboro, North Carolina began their protest on February 1 (Chafe 1980; Wolff 1970).

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1 Data from the Dynamics of Collective Action (www.stanford.edu/group/collectiveaction/). The South is defined here as the fourteen states used below.

2 If any of the four possible claims concern desegregation, the estimates are slightly higher: 75% in 1960 and 83% in 1961.
Protest then spread to nearby cities with large numbers of black college students. By mid-April sit-in campaigns had been launched in over 60 cities in every Southern state except Mississippi. Thousands of college students with little or no prior activist experience joined the sit-ins or related picket lines, demonstrations, and marches (Biggs 2006). Many more black Southerners participated by attending mass meetings, contributing to protest organizations, or supporting economic boycotts. Sit-in protest launched local campaigns that unfolded over many months leading to broad mobilization and protracted negotiations with white leaders.

The lunch counter sit-ins that swept through the South in the spring of 1960 constituted a major acceleration of the civil rights struggle and a key turning point. Earlier protest campaigns were typically isolated to one or a small number of cities, and most occurred outside of the core Southern states (Morris 1981). This changed quickly as college students throughout the South became involved in disruptive protest. Thus, the 1960 sit-ins are credited with revitalizing the Southern civil rights struggle and politicizing college students. Moreover, the sit-ins led to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that played a critical role in shaping the civil rights movement (Carson 1981). At SNCC’s founding conference, Ella Baker, a lifelong activist and mentor to many of the students, articulated the broader significance of the sit-ins as “bigger than a hamburger” and as “seeking to rid America of the scourge of racial segregation and discrimination” (1960).

*Dynamics of Desegregation*

Segregation in lunch counters and other public accommodations rested on “custom and tradition” rather than ordinances and laws (Pollitt 1960:316). National chain stores defended segregation as adherence to local customs and part of being a “good neighbor.” Protesters attempted to bring moral and economic pressure on local establishments. The initial responses of white business and political leaders suggest that many expected protest to would “fizzle” (Thornton 2002:305). In May 1960, one white store manager expressed the emerging view that “the end doesn’t show the slightest inkling of being in sight” (Wright 2013:83).

The Nashville movement achieved one of the earliest victories in the desegregation of lunch counters on May 11, 1960, followed by Winston-Salem on May 25 and Greensboro on July 25 (Oppenheimer 1963; Wolff 1970). However, successes were uneven. For example, some major cities such as Memphis and Atlanta resisted desegregation despite ongoing protest and sporadic negotiation between white and black community leaders (Jones and Long 1965; Oppenheimer 1963). Lunch counters in other cities desegregated even without local protest. The Justice Department tracked desegregation of theaters, restaurants, hotels, and lunch counters in 560 cities through the early 1960s and found substantial increases in cities with at least one desegregated facility.

Historical accounts of desegregation indicate that protracted negotiations preceded success (Jacoway and Colburn 1982; Jones and Long 1965; Oppenheimer 1966). Protest
presented a collective action problem for local businesses. Typically, protesters targeted all of the downtown lunch counters including chains and local establishments. In Atlanta and Jacksonville, for example, demonstrators were simultaneously dispatched to lunch counters at multiple establishments (Bartley 2000; Garrow 1989). Protest placed pressure on the business community as a whole. Although this pressure was felt most directly by the national chains because of their visibility, business managers were reluctant to act in isolation. For example, in Austin, Texas, managers of Woolworths and Kress would not desegregate unless locally-owned stores desegregated as well, so they could not be singled out as “Yankee Merchants” (Breihan 1960).

Desegregation was implemented through the coordination of multiple economic targets and usually through a formal committee that negotiated a desegregation plan. In Nashville, for example, the lunch counters at six stores desegregated simultaneously on a trial basis and without prior media coverage (Wynn 1991). Similarly, nine establishments in Durham complied with desegregation following significant pressure from local economic and political leaders (Greene 2005).

Given the strategic dilemma that local businesses faced, it is not surprising that civic and political leaders played an important role. Although desegregation campaigns targeted economic actors and negotiation typically included business leaders (Jones and Long 1965), mayors or city council members played prominent roles in seeking a resolution to local conflicts. In many locations, the city’s political leaders called for a “cooling off” period and established committees to investigate possible solutions (Barksdale 1986; Chafe 1980). In Albany, the city commission blocked the attempts of local businesses to concede to movement demands (Flanders 1988). Thus, political leaders facilitated successful desegregation in some cities, while thwarting it in others.

Established leaders of the NAACP and civic and ministerial associations were central to this negotiation process too. By contrast, students and militant adult leaders were not directly involved in most cities (Chafe 1980). The established leaders could play an important role when they had prior lines of communication with white business, political and civic leaders. This contrasts with the onset of protest where established leaders played a marginal role (Andrews and Biggs 2006).

In summary, the 1960 sit-ins initiated ongoing conflicts in cities throughout the South. Activists organized broader campaigns around the protest that entailed mass meetings, picket lines, boycotts and related movement activity. Protest spurred activity among supporters, opponents and bystanders in the white community. Next, we consider the broader debates regarding the potency of protest.

*Does Protest Matter?*

The question of whether and, if so, how movements matter has been a central question in the field. Beginning in the 1970s, scholars debated the relative importance of disruption and
formal organization and whether the apparent influence of movements was spurious (Gamson 1990; Giugni 1998; Goldstone 1980; Piven and Cloward 1977). In the intervening years, movement scholars have developed a much broader literature to gauge movement consequences. Amenta and colleagues (Amenta et al. 2010) provide one key indicator of this growth by identifying 38 articles on the political consequences of movements published in the top four sociology journals between 2003 and 2009.

Some scholars hold that protest can secure gains by imposing costs on targets. In the case of the sit-ins, much like strikes, the primary logic is clear. By disrupting normal operations, protesters may damage a target’s economic viability. This can occur by preventing the business to sell or produce goods or services or by mobilizing boycotts. Recently, Luders (2006; 2010) has developed an economic opportunity argument in which success depends on the vulnerability of targets to the costs movements impose. Applying this perspective to local civil rights movements, Luders argues that desegregation outcomes can be explained by considering the combination of “concession” and “disruption” costs faced by business actors in a community. Movements must alter the calculations of economic actors by making the costs of disruption outweigh the costs of concessions—as when whites refuse to patronize a store that desegregates. Protest may also influence targets by undermining the reputation of a particular company, a local business sector, or a larger industry (King and Pearce 2010).

Skeptics argue that protest is largely inconsequential. Burstein and Sausner note that collective action, including protest, is rare and, therefore, “has no impact on policy because there is so little of it” (2005:413) Instead, they argue that political parties and public opinion exert much greater influence on policy. In his study of ecology, anti-nuclear and peace protest, Giugni takes a different route to the same conclusion arguing that because movements are “minority actors that have little power…The source of policy change would lie elsewhere” (2007:54). In short, this view holds that protest is unlikely to impose meaningful costs on targets. Even worse, Amenta argues that “mass disruption is frequently counterproductive to winning policy concessions” (2014:17).

Where does past research stand on the question of protest influence? With the growth of event databases, many scholars have tackled the question of movement influence by aggregating protest within a country to estimate outcomes, such as adopting legislation, in the subsequent year (Agnone 2007; Burstein and Freudenburg 1978; Giugni 2007; Olzk and Ryo 2007; Santoro 2002). Among the studies in this tradition, most indicate that protest has no direct effect. Studying the link between environmental protest and policymaking, Olzak and Soule argue that, “institutional tactics rather than disruptive ones…assist movements in gaining an audience in Congress” (2009:219). McAdam and Su (2002) find that large and disruptive anti-war demonstrations encouraged Congressional attention but had a negative impact on pro-peace voting on the Vietnam War. However, Santoro (2008; 2002) finds that
black protest spurred the adoption of more comprehensive fair employment and voting rights policies.

The vast majority of scholarship on movement consequences examines policy change, but scholars have begun to assess the impact of protest on firms and other targets. Most of this research indicates that protest is consequential, but has modest and indirect effects on targets. King and Soule (2007) find that protest demonstrations reduce stock price returns over a window of weeks (see also Bartley and Child 2011). Similarly, Vasi and King (2012) show that environmental activism can jeopardize stakeholders’ perceptions of a firm and indirectly influence its broader financial performance. Jacobson and Royer (2011) find that violence at abortion clinics reduces abortion rates in the area surrounding the clinic, although this effect is short-lived and displaced by increased abortion rates in nearby areas.

Taken together, past scholarship indicates that protest rarely has direct effects on targets. We contribute to this core area of research by providing a rigorous test of the influence of protest while accounting for alternative explanations. Although many scholars argue that protest matters when activists imposes economic and reputational costs on targets, there is little evidence buttressing this claim. Skeptics contend that protest influence must be gauged alongside the other factors that encourage protest or desegregation independently. Here, we focus on movement infrastructure, political opportunity and economic opportunity perspectives as the most central, plausible, and well-developed theoretical accounts of movement success.

We avoid a limitation in many studies of protest influence by disaggregating data to the local level and tracing its impact over time. The more conventional practice of aggregating protest may obscure our ability to discern the influence of protest. For example, protest in a legislator’s district may influence her voting patterns but be irrelevant to the behavior of the broader legislative body. Studies of strike influence are a prime example of the strategy we adopt, because the immediate outcome can be assessed and it is clear whether workers gained concessions or not (e.g., Biggs 2002; Currie and Ferrie 2000; Geraghty and Wiseman 2008).

Our study is an important advance in this tradition of disaggregating protest because we assess direct and indirect links from protest to target response. In addition, most recent research focuses on characteristics of movement organizations (e.g., organizational density, membership, funds) rather than protest (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005; Burstein and Linton 2002; Uba 2009). Two-thirds of the studies that Amenta et al. (2010) reviewed focus on organizational determinants of movement influence without considering protest activity. And, most of the studies that examine protest influence fail to include measures of movement organizations (for exceptions, see Isaac, McDonald, and Lukasik 2006; Olzak and Soule 2009). Thus, our understanding of protest influence is uncertain.

**Toward a Synthetic Model of Protest Influence**

Alongside our core argument regarding the influence of disruptive protest, we advance four
interrelated claims about the conditions that favor movement success. Broadly, scholars have emphasized organizational, political, and economic factors that underlie the outcomes of movements. Building on and extending these approaches, we argue that desegregation is most likely where formal movement organizations are stronger, movement opposition is weaker, political conditions are favorable, and the economic power of a movement’s constituency is greater. We also consider whether protest influence can spread beyond the direct targets as nearby businesses may adopt a movement’s preferred changes to preempt further protest and conform to new norms. We explain the theoretical foundations for these expectations.

Our first expectation builds on the insights of movement infrastructure arguments emphasizing the importance of pre-existing organizations as the key determinant of outcomes. Proponents of movement infrastructure highlight the importance of leadership, organizational strength, and tactical diversity to the accomplishment of movement goals (Andrews 2004; Gamson 1990; Ganz 2000; Morris 1993; Olzak and Ryo 2007). In this line of thinking, disruptive protest generates pressure but formal organizations and leaders must negotiate with authorities to secure movement gains. In the context of broader campaigns, organizational diversity allows for specialization where some organizations play a primary role in protest while others are more central to negotiation and bargaining (Lind and Stepan-Norris 2011; Staggenborg and Lecomte 2009).

Scholars have identified factors beyond the movement that influence the likelihood of success. Political opportunity theorists argue that the conditions that facilitate movement emergence may account for their apparent influence (Kitschelt 1986). More specifically, this tradition holds that elite allies, political access, and weak or minimal opposition is necessary for movement success (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998). Amenta, Caren and Olasky (2005) argue that movement influence is indirect and requires the intervention or assistance of state actors. Movements will succeed when they find champions or alter the calculations of political authorities. Given that desegregation followed from prior coordination among a city’s political, economic, and civic leaders, we expect that city-level measures of economic and political characteristics will help explain why desegregation was achieved in some cities and not in others.

Strong counter-movements may undermine the effectiveness of protest. Counter-movements may attempt to suppress movement protest or alter the calculations of economic targets (Andrews 2004; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). For example, Luders (2010) argues that militant segregationists reduced the likelihood of desegregation because economic targets feared retaliatory boycotts by white customers. In her analysis of same-sex marriage bans, Soule (2004a) found that conservative supporters of bans tended to prevail over gay and lesbian movement organizations in influencing legislative outcomes. Historical accounts of desegregation indicate that political institutions and actors shaped the response to protest.
Police could arrest demonstrators, counter-demonstrators, or neither. There was significant variation in the political power and organization of white moderates (potential allies) and militant segregationists (opponents) (Black 1976; Thornton 1991).

Recently scholars have begun investigating the relationship between social movements and economic outcomes (Haveman, Rao, and Paruchuri 2007; King and Soule 2007; King and Pearce 2010; Schneiberg, King, and Smith 2008). The key insight emerging from this scholarship is that economic targets’ responsiveness varies depending on firm and market characteristics including a embeddedness in inter-firm relations (Schurman and Munro 2009; Weber, Rao, and Thomas 2009). Thus, firms will be unlikely to act in isolation and will be influenced by the behavior of peers in their broader field (Bartley and Child 2011). This line of argument dovetails with a longer tradition of scholarship on strike success (Griffin, Wallace, and Rubin 1986; Korpi and Shalev 1980; Schwartz 1976).

In terms of economic factors, Luders argues that “sectoral variation in the target vulnerability affects a movement’s overall prospects for success against economic targets” (2010: 9). Some types of economic actors were much more vulnerable to the disruption costs of protest such as downtown businesses, sectors that depended on black customers, and affiliates of national companies whose reputations could be harmed outside the South. Other economic actors were less vulnerable including agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Accounts of local desegregation lend support to this perspective by focusing on the varying responses of white business leaders to civil rights protest (Eskew 1997; Jacoway and Colburn 1982).

Finally, we consider the spatial diffusion of protest influence. Protest campaigns emerge and spread through diffusion processes with strong spatial clustering (Soule 2004b). Protest in one city may influence outcomes in that city and have indirect influence elsewhere. In a study of French coalminers, Cohn (1993) finds that failed strikes—under some circumstances—increased average wages in the same département. More recently, scholars have assessed the spatial structure of protest more systematically. For example, Ingram, Yue, and Rao (2010) examine the siting of Wal-Mart stores between 1998 and 2005. They find that Wal-Mart is less likely to open a proposed store when protesters had successfully blocked a store opening in a nearby city. They also find that proposed stores in isolated areas are more likely to open despite protest because, there is little threat that protest will spread (see also, Vasi and Strang 2009).

Elites and authorities learn from and are inspired by one another, just like protesters. Businesses may be reluctant to change if neighboring cities have not. This might help explain why lunch counters were desegregated in some cities—such as Orlando and Fredericksburg—with minimal protest and weak movement organizations, where protest occurred in neighboring cities. Conversely, lunch counters were not desegregated in other cities—such as Little Rock and Tallahassee—with strong organizations and considerable
protest, but which were geographically isolated from other hubs of movement activity. Thus, we consider whether protest increased the likelihood of desegregation and whether protest or success occurring nearby increased desegregation.

**Data and Method**

We examine the impact of protest on the desegregation of lunch counters in 1960 and 1961, controlling for factors—movement organizations, political opportunities, and economic characteristics—which could influence both protest and desegregation. Using archival sources and the 1960 Census, we investigate 334 cities in the eleven states of the former Confederacy, along with Maryland, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The unit of observation is an urban place having at least 10,000 people and 1,000 non-whites; only a handful of smaller places had sit-ins.

The outcome we examine is the desegregation of lunch counters. While segregation defined every aspect of public life in the South, department and other stores practiced especially blatant discrimination: they invited black customers to shop but prohibited them from sitting down to eat. Lunch counters were pervasive throughout the South at department and dime stores. Because they relied partly on black customers, these stores were vulnerable to economic pressure. Therefore lunch counters were generally desegregated before other commercial venues. In May 1963 the Department of Justice counted 204 cities as having desegregated at least one lunch counter. By comparison, hotels or motels had been desegregated in 163 cities, restaurants in 141, and theaters in 109 (Oberschall 1973:225).

The progress of desegregation was documented by CORE. Having pioneered sit-ins in the North from the late 1940s, it became involved in the Southern movement immediately after the Greensboro sit-in (Meier and Rudwick 1975). Six reports from August 1960 to December 1961 listed “Cities where Lunch Counters of Drug, Variety, or Department Stores have opened since February 1, 1960” (CORE 1960-1961). By the end of 1961, the list included 90 of our 334 cities (as well as a few smaller towns). As a check on these data, we use a similar tabulation by the Southern Regional Council (SRC), a leadership organization that promoted interracial cooperation. In September 1961, SRC listed “cities in which at least one establishment has desegregated its eating facilities” (1961). This list included 74 of our cities (as well as smaller towns). SRC and CORE provided the same classification for 92% of

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3 The three border states experienced significant protest in the spring of 1960: sit-ins occurred in 16% of their cities, compared to 20% in cities of the former Confederacy.

4 Sit-ins were not confined to the largest cities. They occurred in towns like DeLand, Florida and Monroe, North Carolina, each with 11,000 residents.

5 Directories for North Carolina (http://www.digitalnc.org/collections/city-directories/) confirm that all cities in the state had multiple lunch counters, including chain and local establishments. The average number of establishments was very similar for cities with sit-ins and without, 4.9 and 4.4.
cities, but CORE counted more cases of desegregation. We rely primarily on CORE because it enables us to trace change over time. However, we present cross-sectional analysis using both sources to confirm that our results are not an artifact of the particular source.

Table 1 calculates the hazard of desegregation: the probability of a segregated city (‘at risk’) undergoing desegregation by the end of the interval. Because the intervals vary in length, the daily hazard is more informative. We assume that the first interval commences on May 1, 1960, as the first instance of desegregation (Nashville, as mentioned) occurred early in that month. The pace of desegregation slowed noticeably after the fall of 1960. Even by the end of the period, only a quarter of all cities in the South had desegregated lunch counters. Figure 1 maps desegregation by the end of 1961. Two-thirds of cities in Virginia had desegregated lunch counters, while four states in the Deep South remained untouched.

To investigate the effect of protest on desegregation, we examine whether a sit-in—the physical occupation of space from which blacks were excluded—occurred between February 1 and April 14, 1960. Sit-ins were usually accompanied by other forms of protest such as picketing, boycotts, and demonstrations. Thus, we assess the impact of the broader sit-in campaign rather than a narrower assessment of one tactic. The period begins with the first sit-in at Greensboro; it ends on the day before the Easter conference of student activists at Shaw University, which led eventually to the founding of SNCC. Most importantly, the period ends before any Southern city desegregated its lunch counters, ensuring a clean separation between our measures of protest and outcome. In these ten weeks, sit-ins took place in 66 out of the 334 cities (Andrews and Biggs 2006). Subsequently protest continued at a much lower rate. The time series can be traced in the New York Times, focusing on protest for the rights of African Americans, targeted against businesses, taking the form of civil disobedience, and occurring in the South. Figure 2 shows the number of protesters, a total of around fourteen thousand.\(^6\) Half of that total came in the spectacular wave before Easter 1960. The remaining spikes come from two huge events in New Orleans (November 1960) and Atlanta (March 1961). Although the New York Times data covers a longer time period, it misses many cities where protest occurred. Before Easter 1960, it reported this kind of protest in only 34 out of 66 cities where sit-ins occurred. We therefore prefer our geographically comprehensive, albeit chronologically compressed, measure of protest.

The association between sit-ins and desegregation is shown in Figure 3. In cities where sit-ins had occurred before Easter, over a third had desegregated lunch counters by August 1960, when college students returned after their summer vacation. The strong association between sit-ins and desegregation does not demonstrate a causal relationship, of course. It

\(^6\) Data are from the Dynamics of Collective Action, described above. We exclude protest that occurred in a city after its lunch counters were desegregated.
could be that sit-ins occurred where the movement was well organized or where political or economic opportunity was greater, and in those places segregation was more easily overcome.

For multivariate analysis, we start with logistic regression:

$$\ln\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \alpha + \sum \beta_k X_k + \delta_i S + \delta T,$$

where \(p_i\) is the probability of desegregation in city \(i\), and \(\alpha, \beta, \delta\) are coefficients to be estimated. The characteristics of each city are measured by \(k\) variables, \(X_k\). \(S\) indicates whether a sit-in occurred in city \(i\), as described above. In addition, we expect that sit-ins nearby would also make desegregation more likely. \(T\) is a weighted sum derived from \(S\):

$$T_i = \sum_{j \neq i, j \neq i} \frac{S_j}{d_{ij}^\phi},$$

where \(S_j\) is coded 1 if a sit-in occurred in city \(j\), \(d_{ij}\) is the “great circle” distance (as the crow flies) between cities \(i\) and \(j\), and \(\phi\) is a parameter for spatial decay. We follow convention by setting \(\phi\) to 0.5 (e.g. Hedström, Sandell, and Stern 2000). \(T\) is lowest (1.8) for El Paso, Texas, and highest (5.5) for Kannapolis, North Carolina. In order to distinguish political boundaries from geographical distance (Braun and Koopmans 2010), two variants of \(T\) can be calculated: one for sit-ins within the same state as city \(i\), and one for sit-ins beyond the state. As this distinction is not significant, it is not reported here.

Other independent variables capture the effect of movement organizations, political opportunities, and economic characteristics. These include variables already found to predict the occurrence of sit-ins (Andrews and Biggs 2006). The Appendix provides descriptive statistics (Table A1), a correlation matrix (Table A2), and data sources (Table A3). Participants in the sit-ins were mainly black college students, and so we take the logarithm as the most basic control variable.

Movement organizations are measured before the wave of sit-ins in spring 1960. The largest organization was of course the NAACP. Our variable is branch membership (averaged from 1957 and 1959), transformed by taking the logarithm. Separate from the NAACP’s

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7 A multilevel model with random intercepts at the state level offers no improvement.

8 A few of the cities are very close to one another. To avoid giving them excessive weight, distances less than 10 miles are treated as 10 miles.

9 This value is superior or effectively identical to other values tested; see Supplement, Table S1.

10 Where the number is zero, it is transformed as \(\ln(1)=0\). The number of white college students (logged) has no effect. We use the number of black college students and of NAACP members, rather than percentage, on the grounds that a critical mass is what matters (as with total purchasing power). This also minimizes AIC\(_c\) (see Supplement).
branches were Youth Councils and College Chapters, and we define a binary variable for the presence of each (in 1958 or 1959). For SCLC, a binary variable is defined for the presence of an affiliated organization or member of the Executive Board (on February 3, 1960). For CORE, we code the presence of a Chapter that had applied to affiliate with the national organization (by the beginning of 1960).

Five variables capture political opportunities at the local level.\footnote{Neither the percentage of blacks registered to vote nor the ratio of black to white registered voters has any effect.} A binary variable is coded for the presence of affiliates of the Southern Regional Council (in 1955), which indicated allies among the white political elite. The remaining variables measure the inverse of political opportunities, and so are expected to reduce the probability of desegregation. The classic proxy for white supremacy is the percentage of blacks in the population. As Key (1949: 5) observed, “the hard core of the political South ... is made up of these counties and sections of the southern states in which Negroes constitute a substantial proportion of the population.” We measure this percentage at the city level. Three further variables are available only at the county level; our 334 cities belong to 282 distinct counties. Public support for segregation is measured by the percentage of the county’s electorate voting for strict segregationist candidates for Governor in the most recent election; candidates’ views on segregation follow Black’s (1976) coding of campaign speeches. A binary variable is coded for the presence of white racial organizations, like the White Citizens’ Councils, as identified by Matthews and Prothro (Matthews and Prothro 1966). A binary variable is coded for the occurrence of any racial violence between 1955 and 1959, as reported by the American Friends Service Committee (1959). These three county variables—segregationist vote, white racial organization, and racial violence—are not available for the three border states (containing 9% of cities), so we substitute the mean.

Beyond the locality, political opportunities also varied at the state level. Andrews and Biggs (2006) find that sit-ins were far less likely in the Deep South—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina—even after controlling for city characteristics. Instead of this geographical dichotomy, we prefer to construct a more informative proxy variable. Following the observations of Key and others (Matthews and Prothro 1966: 169), our proxy is based on the percentage of blacks in the state. This percentage is multiplied by the percentage of the population born in the South (Black and Black 1987: 17), thus adjusting for the substantial in-migration of non-Southerners to Florida and Maryland. The product (rescaled to 0-100) ranges from West Virginia (4) to Mississippi (40); it is strongly associated with the dichotomy between Deep and Upper South ($\eta^2 = .71$). One alternative would be to measure public opinion among whites at the state level, but few survey questions were answered by sufficient respondents. Gallup polls from 1956 to 1959 asked white respondents whether they would vote for a Negro president, and whether they approved of the Supreme
Court’s ruling against school segregation. Combining eight polls (2631 respondents) yields a measure of progressive opinion. Its association with the dichotomy between Deep and Upper South is weak (eta²=.29), and it is less plausible—placing North Carolina on a level with Alabama and Georgia. Negative answers to the questions apparently fail to differentiate between mild and extreme racism. Another alternative would be to measure the rate of lynching from 1889 to 1918 (Durso and Jacobs 2013), but its association with the geographical dichotomy is even weaker (eta²=.13).

The city’s overall economy is measured by three variables. Two variables are proxies for economic opportunity, meaning vulnerability to protest. Integration into the national economy is measured by the percentage of the city’s workers employed in manufacturing plants of the 1000 largest industrial corporations. The city’s dependence on the retail sector is measured by the percentage of workers employed in eating, drinking, and other retail establishments. Both variables are expected to increase the probability of desegregation. The strength of organized labor is measured by the number of local labor unions (divided by workers), though without clear theoretical expectation. Given the racist practices of many unions, this could conceivably hinder desegregation (James 1988; Wright 2013).

The economic characteristics of the city’s black community are captured by two key variables. One is (logged) aggregate annual income, measuring total purchasing power. (This is very highly correlated with (logged) black population, which is therefore omitted from the model.) The other variable is mean annual income, which provides a measure of economic prosperity. Both variables are expected to increase the probability of desegregation because local businesses will be more vulnerable to disruptions to commercial activity. (One might consider entering aggregate black income as a proportion of total income, but this is very highly correlated with percentage black.) Aside from income, different positions in the labor force offered more or less independence from white control. Four variables capture the percentage employed in the major occupational groups: professional and clerical (13% overall), crafts and operatives (26%), private household (21%), and other service workers (23%); the reference category is laborers (17%). Private household workers—including servants working for white families—are expected to have the least autonomy, and so this percentage is expected to reduce the probability of desegregation.

The determinants of sit-in protest and desegregation

We begin by examining the occurrence of the initial sit-in in the spring of 1960 using an event-history model. This allows readers to compare the factors that shaped protest with the factors that shaped desegregation. This analysis incorporates the diffusion of sit-ins within the period, replicating Andrews and Biggs (2006: 764, Model 2), but with many additional economic and political variables, which will enable comparison with our analyses of

---

desegregation. Model 1 in Table 2 reports the results for cross-sectional variables. Sit-ins were more likely to occur where there was an NAACP College Chapter or a CORE Chapter. Membership of regular NAACP branches had no discernible effect. Two aspects of political opportunities mattered at the local level. Sit-ins were more likely where fewer voters supported strict segregation. And sit-ins were most likely in cities where blacks made up about a third of the population, and least likely where blacks were a majority or a small minority. Our scale for racial oppression at the state level has a very strong negative effect. Finally, sit-ins were more likely in cities with numerous black college students.

Models 2 to 4 take desegregation as the dependent variable, using logistic regression. Model 2 analyzes desegregation by the end of 1960, and Model 3 by the end of 1961, as measured by CORE. Model 4 compares SRC’s measure of desegregation by the fall of 1961. The coefficients are presented as odds ratios ($e^\beta$). A model’s overall ability to discriminate between desegregated cities and cities remaining segregated is measured by the area under the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve, which can range from .5 (no discrimination) to 1 (perfect discrimination). This is very high in all three models, .93 or .94.

Model 2 analyzes desegregation at the end of 1960. Protest had a very strong effect, even controlling for the factors predicting protest. If sit-ins had occurred in a city, the odds of desegregation were quintupled. Sit-ins elsewhere also had a positive effect. Figure 4 shows predicted probabilities, setting all characteristics—aside from the two variables for sit-ins—at their median. The horizontal axis measures the influence of sit-ins elsewhere, ranging from the edge of Texas to the middle of North Carolina. The two curves show the predicted probability of desegregation depending on whether a sit-in occurred in the city or not. Among movement organizations, only NAACP membership had a clearly positive effect. Increasing membership from 22 (in the median city) to 354 (in the 90th percentile city) would almost quadruple the odds of desegregation. This finding contrasts with the absence of any effect on sit-ins (Model 1). The estimated effect of CORE on desegregation is large, but the estimate is too uncertain for any conclusion to be drawn.\footnote{Substituting a single binary variable for the presence of any activist organization (NAACP Youth Council or College Chapter, SCLC, or CORE) does not yield a significant effect.}

Political opportunities mattered at the local level, in that white intransigence made desegregation much less likely. Increasing the county’s vote for a strict segregationist from 58% (the median) to 98% (the 90th percentile) would reduce the odds of desegregation by three-quarters. The presence of a white racial organization would cut the odds by five-sixths. Our proxy for racial oppression at the state level was mainly negative, though with a non-monotonic twist. Desegregation was least likely in the most oppressive states, of course. Moving from Arkansas (corresponding to the median city on the scale, with value of 20) to...
Louisiana (90th percentile, with value of 30) would slash the odds of desegregation by a factor of 200. Unexpectedly, though, the odds of desegregation peaked at Tennessee, and then declined somewhat in states at the bottom of the scale (Kentucky and West Virginia).

One variable for economic opportunity has the expected sign. Desegregation was more likely where blacks had a higher average income. Increasing the income from $1517 (the median) to $2064 (the 90th percentile) would more than double the odds of desegregation. The statistically significant variables for the occupational distribution reveal an unexpected association. Desegregation was less likely where black workers were concentrated in the two highest-status occupational categories, compared to laboring jobs. The negative effect of professional and clerical employment could reflect the vulnerability of teachers. The negative effect of skilled and semi-skilled manual employment lacks any apparent interpretation.14

Model 3 advances a year, analyzing desegregation at the end of 1961. Although the effect of sit-ins in spring 1960 might be expected to diminish with the passage of time, it remains strongly positive. The occurrence of sit-ins almost quintupled the odds of desegregation. Sit-ins in other cities, though, had less effect than in Model 2. There are two major differences from Model 2. The negative effect of votes for strict segregation diminished and is no longer statistically significant. The probability of desegregation increased with aggregate black income. Raising this figure from $4 million (the median) to $22 million (the 90th percentile) would almost quintuple the odds.

CORE’s tabulation of desegregation is checked against SRC’s in Model 4. Most importantly, the estimated effects of sit-ins—in the city and in other cities—are even greater than in Model 3. Our scale of racial oppression now has a straightforward negative effect, without the non-monotonic twist found in Models 2 and 3. This reflects the fact that SRC recorded seven more desegregated cities in Kentucky than did CORE. Some variables are no longer statistically significant: NAACP membership, white racial organization, and the two occupational variables. Conversely, the percentage of employment in the retail and hospitality sector is now statistically significant. Increasing this percentage from 15% (the median) to 18% (the 90th percentile) would almost triple the odds of desegregation. The magnitude of this estimated effect appears implausibly large.

One potential objection to these findings is that differences across states are not adequately captured by our demographic proxy for political opportunity. This objection can be addressed by including a separate intercept for each state, thus explaining only the variation of cities within states. States where no desegregation occurred must be omitted completely: six states in Model 2 (N=215), and four in Models 3 and 4 (N=247). This severe test eliminates the significance of the effect of sit-ins elsewhere, hardly surprising as 90% of the variation in this variable comes from differences among states. This severe test does not,

14 Operatives and crafts are large enough to enter as separate categories; each has the same negative effect.
however, diminish the effect of the occurrence of sit-ins in the city: the odds ratios are respectively 4.3 \( (p=.02) \), 4.3 \( (p=.02) \), and 7.7 \( (p=.002) \). (See Supplement, Table S2.)

Another potential objection to the findings is that they are unduly influenced by a single observation. After all, the number of successful outcomes (ranging from 78 to 90) is modest, and the total number of observations is not large. This objection can be addressed by jackknife standard errors, calculated by replicating the model 334 times, dropping a single observation every time. Jackknife standard errors, averaged over replications, are inflated, and thus provide a more conservative test of statistical significance. The effects for sit-ins remain statistically significant, as do almost all the effects discussed above (see Supplement, Table S3). The average income of blacks, however, is no longer statistically significant at the .05 level.

A final potential objection is that the findings for sit-ins are sensitive to the selection of other independent variables in the analysis (Young 2009). This objection can be addressed by replicating the models, dropping each independent variable in turn (see Supplement, Table S4). In Model 2, the estimated odds ratio for sit-ins in the city falls to 2.8 when the percentage of craftspeople and operatives is dropped; this is just outside conventional statistical significance \( (p=.058) \). Otherwise the results for sit-ins, both in the city and elsewhere, prove remarkably robust.

In sum, then, we find strong evidence that disruptive protest did make a difference. The findings are derived from two different sources of data (CORE and SRC), and prove robust against potential objections. Sit-ins helped to bring about desegregation, not just in the city where they happened but also in surrounding cities. This demonstrated impact is remarkable given the inclusion of variables predicting the occurrence of sit-ins.

**The Diffusion of Desegregation**

Thus far desegregation in each city has been treated as independent of prior desegregation in other cities. Theoretically we expect desegregation to have diffused across cities. Testing this requires event-history analysis. Such analysis is possible using CORE’s tabulations (see Table 1). Analysis is handicapped by the imprecise dating of desegregation: we observe only the interval within which the event occurred, intervals are few, and their lengths are unequal. The first interval, when 43 cities desegregated, poses an insuperable problem: the effect of prior desegregation cannot be estimated. Excluding the first interval means dropping nearly half the desegregation events. This leaves 1350 (=1684-334) city-intervals at risk of desegregation.

We estimate the hazard of desegregation, \( h_{ip} \), for city \( i \) within interval \( p \), where \( p \) ranges from 2 to 6. With intervals of unequal length, a Cox proportional hazard model can be estimated by complementary log-log regression (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008):

\[
    h_{ip} = 1 - \exp \left( -\exp \left( \alpha_2 P_{2ip} + \ldots + \alpha_6 P_{6ip} + \sum \beta_i X_{ki} + \delta_i S_i + \delta_2 T_i + \delta_3 E_{ip} \right) \right)
\]
To absorb changes in the baseline hazard, a separate intercept ($\alpha_2$, ..., $\alpha_6$) is estimated for each interval. Binary variables $P_2$, ..., $P_6$ identify the interval, thus $P_{2p}$ is coded 1 if $p=2$ and 0 otherwise. The characteristics of each city are measured by cross-sectional variables described above, $X_i$, $S$, and $T$.

Prior desegregation elsewhere is measured by $E$, which varies by city-interval. This variable is derived from the sum of cities previously desegregated, offset by the inertial force exerted by cities maintaining segregation:

$$E_{ip} = \left( \sum_{j=1, j \neq i}^{l} \frac{D_{j,p-1}}{d_{ij}^\phi} \right) - \left( \sum_{j=1, j \neq i}^{l} \frac{1 - D_{j,p-1}}{d_{ij}^\phi} \right)$$

where $D_{jq}$ is 1 if city $j$’s lunch counters were desegregated by the end of interval $q$, otherwise 0.$^{15}$ Model fit is maximized by setting spatial decay $\phi$ to 1. $E$ is lowest (-1.0) for Augusta, Georgia in the second interval, and highest (0.2) for South Norfolk, Virginia, in the sixth interval. As with sit-ins in other cities ($T$), a variant of $E$ can be calculated to distinguish the effect of desegregation within the same state. This distinction, however, is not significant, and so is not reported here.

The assumption of proportional hazards enables estimation, given the sparse data: in the final interval, for example, only seven desegregation events occurred. This assumption can be tested by entering interaction terms between a variable and the period variables $P_3$ to $P_6$. The effects of sit-ins in the city ($S$) and of sit-ins elsewhere ($T$) do not change significantly across intervals (for each variable, the interaction terms tested jointly are not statistically significant at the .05 level). The effect of prior desegregation ($E$) does, however, change significantly in the final interval ($p=.003$). We therefore enter two terms derived from this variable: $(1-P_6)E$ and $P_6E$.

Model 5 in Table 3 shows the results. It should be emphasized that this analysis is restricted to cities where desegregation had not occurred by mid August 1960. Observations for the same city at different intervals are not independent, of course, and so robust standard errors are estimated with clustering by city.$^{16}$ The exponentiated coefficients ($e^\beta$) are interpreted as hazard ratios in continuous time, as normal for the Cox proportional hazards model.$^{17}$ The area under the ROC curve is .93, showing that the model is very good at discriminating between city-intervals with desegregation and those without.

The results for cross-sectional variables are similar to those in Model 2. The estimated hazard ratio for the occurrence of sit-ins in the city falls just short of conventional statistical

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$^{15}$ Multiplying the first sum by a factor such as 2 or 3, thus weighting desegregation more than segregation, makes no discernible differences to the results.

$^{16}$ A multilevel model with shared frailty (random intercepts) at city and state levels offers no improvement.

$^{17}$ The table omits the interval-specific intercepts ($\alpha_2$, ..., $\alpha_6$), which absorb changes in the baseline hazard over time.
significance ($p = .053$). This reflects the fact that cities with sit-ins were more likely to undergo desegregation during the first interval—which is excluded from Model 5—than in subsequent intervals, and so the effect is estimated from relatively few cities.¹⁸

Most importantly, the results demonstrate the diffusion of desegregation. Before April 1961, prior desegregation in nearby cities increased the hazard of desegregation. This result is not due to desegregation becoming more likely over time; in fact it became less likely, as Table 1 shows. To illustrate the magnitude of this effect, consider desegregation in the second interval (mid August to mid September 1960). Ranked by proximity to prior desegregation ($E$), the median city in the risk set is Tallahassee; the 90th percentile is Covington, Kentucky. Shifting location from the former to the latter—holding constant all other characteristics of the city—would quadruple the hazard of desegregation. The positive effect of prior desegregation disappears in the final interval. The estimated hazard ratio is far below one, but its confidence interval includes one. This result suggests that the diffusion of desegregation had petered out by the summer of 1961: proximity to desegregated cities was no longer making desegregation more likely.

As with the cross-sectional analysis, we can probe the robustness of these results in three ways (Supplement, Tables S2-S4). When separate intercepts for each state are included, this drops five states (leaving 890 city-intervals, 199 cities). Sit-ins elsewhere have no significant effect, as in the cross-sectional analysis with state intercepts. But the estimated hazard ratio for desegregation in other cities (before the final interval) falls only slightly to 72 ($p = .03$). With jackknife standard errors, the only variable to lose statistical significance is our proxy for racial oppression at the state level (and its squared term). When successive independent variables are omitted, the hazard ratio for desegregation remains large and highly statistically significant.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The civil rights campaigns to desegregate lunch counters provide an opportunity to evaluate the impact of protest. The case itself has strong theoretical and substantive importance given its centrality for understanding protest and racial inequality. Activists, scholars, and many others draw lessons about the efficacy of protest from this case. Unfortunately, most attention centers on a handful of well-studied campaigns, charismatic leaders, and major federal policies. Scholars have paid particular attention to the links between celebrated campaigns in Birmingham and Selma as catalysts for the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, respectively (Garrow 1978). Protest was far more diffuse and a large share targeted local businesses rather than federal policymakers. Our analysis demonstrates the critical impact of

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¹⁸ Out of the 66 cities with sit-ins, 24 experienced desegregation in the first interval, 17 experienced it in subsequent intervals, and 25 did not desegregate.
local protest across numerous cities well before passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In this way, the impact of civil rights movement followed a trajectory like other major social movements—including suffrage, old age assistance, and prohibition—in which local victories were ultimately consolidated in national legislation (Amenta 2006; McCammon et al. 2001; Szymanski 2003).

Despite a surge in research on the consequences of movements, most studies examine movement impact by focusing on characteristics of movement organizations. Among those that study protest, most find that disruptive protest has no direct effect. Moreover, many research designs make it difficult to appraise the impact of movements by employing aggregated measures of organizations or protest activity over large geographic areas or time periods. By situating the sit-in campaigns in their local context, we have gauged the extent to which protest was responsible for eroding segregation. We have also examined whether protest and desegregation in nearby cities increased the likelihood of desegregation. Our findings regarding the impact of protest are striking given the inclusion of numerous factors that account for protest occurrence.

We find that movement success diffused to nearby cities over time even in the absence of protest in a city. This pattern challenges the conventional practice of examining the characteristics of movement activity in isolation from what is occurring in other locales. Scholars should pay increasing attention to spatial processes in studies of movement consequences, and this task will be aided by the increasing access to GIS data and spatial analysis tools (Downey 2006). Taken together, the impact of protest and the spatial diffusion of movement success underscore our call for spatially and temporally disaggregating the analysis of movement consequences. Moreover, our analysis confirms the advantages of building datasets on a large number of campaigns alongside relevant measures of social, political, and economic contexts.

Our findings regarding the impact of protest campaigns are robust in that we include measures for movement infrastructure, political opportunity, and economic characteristics of a city. Movement infrastructure arguments focus on organizational and strategic capacity of movements. By comparison, theories of political and economic opportunity focus on exogenous factors that may enhance or diminish a movement’s likelihood of success. Comparing across 334 Southern cities, we find support for a key aspect of the movement infrastructure argument. Specifically, our analyses show that protest organizations like CORE operating as activist cadres facilitate the spread of protest while established, membership

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19 Building support for federal policy was contentious as well. Advocates working to build support for the Civil Rights Act were concerned, in fact, that provisions regarding segregation in public accommodations would undercut support for the bill exactly because resistance was so fierce (Burstein 1993; Jeong, Miller, and Sened 2009; Whalen and Whalen 1985).
organizations are important for securing movement gains. Although scholars have suggested that a tactical division of labor occurs in movements, this study provides an important test of and support for this claim. We also find that political and economic characteristics of a community mattered. We find that white segregationist organizations have a negative impact on the likelihood of desegregation. The measures of political opportunity that capture the most central ideas in the theory—elite allies and political access points—are not significant.

Comparing across all Southern cities, rather than a select subset, allows us to confirm some of the claims that have been made about the impact of civil rights protest while challenging other claims. We confirm Luders’ (2010) argument that disruptive protest secured significant victories by imposing costs on targets. Our findings regarding spatial diffusion are consistent with Wright’s argument that business owners resisted desegregation not out of ideological commitment but because they “harbored fears of being undercut by still-segregated rivals in competition for affluent white customers” (2008:15). News that businesses were desegregating in nearby cities, with minimal economic harm, would have aided the spread of desegregation. Consistent with Morris’ (1993) account of the Birmingham campaign, we find that local protest was crucial in securing favorable outcomes, and we find some evidence to support Morris’ claim that the strength of local movement organizations mattered for these outcomes. Our analyses challenge the argument that cities with stronger ties to the national economy were more likely to desegregate. However, we do find that desegregation was more likely in cities where black purchasing power was greater (Jacoway and Colburn 1982; Luders 2006).

Desegregation of public accommodations has three important characteristics that define the scope conditions of our analysis and theoretical claims. Most important, we consider an outcome where the target had the capacity to respond directly to movement demands. Even with chain stores, the national headquarters of companies like Kress and Woolworth deferred to local managers. In this way, desegregation of public accommodations differs from other outcomes such as school desegregation where federal intervention was more decisive for local outcomes (Andrews 2004; Luders 2010). Second, we suspect that organization building was more crucial in rural areas of the South where persistent repression made disruptive protest too dangerous to launch successfully (Andrews 2004; Payne 1995). Third, the sit-ins unfolded as a wave of protest that diffused rapidly throughout the South. Local protest campaigns that occur in isolation or in smaller clusters may fail to generate the kind of leverage observed here. Taken together, these characteristics capture many important social movements, and further research should examine how these conditions alter the capacity of protest to generate change.

We should highlight two important limitations of our study and analysis that point toward future directions in our own and others work. First, scholars have shifted to more complex measures of movement outcomes that differentiate among stages of the policy process and
the scope or comprehensiveness of policies (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005; Andrews 2001; Santoro 2008; Soule and King 2006). In our case, we were limited to a single indicator of movement impact. Arguably, theories may have greater leverage differentiating among more refined measures of the breadth or durability of desegregation. Second, scholars have begun to document the process through which movement impact occurs leading to new insights regarding the interactions between movements and targets (Ganz 2000; McCammon et al. 2008). Our analyses suggest that case studies focused on cities without protest would be especially useful. In fact, more cities desegregated without protest than with it. Thus, our study suggests that we would benefit most from studying exactly the cases we have been least likely to study in depth, and this would allow us to specify the indirect influence of protest and institutional change occurring elsewhere. For example, economic actors may desegregate as a way to preempt the further spread of protest. Subsequent work on the desegregation process may uncover important pathways through which movement actors and their targets shaped the outcomes. Despite these limitations, the findings presented here suggest that protest campaigns may be more consequential than is typically assumed, and they open new questions for subsequent research on movement impact.
APPENDIX

[Tables A1, A2, and A3 About here]
REFERENCES

American Friends Service Committee, Southeastern Office. 1959. "Intimidation, Reprisal, and Violence in the South's Racial Crisis." High Point, NC.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval ending</th>
<th>Cities at risk</th>
<th>Cities desegregated</th>
<th>Daily hazard(a)</th>
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<td>43</td>
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<td>291</td>
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<td>43</td>
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<td>279</td>
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<td>.104%</td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1684</td>
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\(a\) Calculated using actuarial adjustment, and assuming first interval begins on 1 May
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<th></th>
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<td>North</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
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**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

---

**Table 2: Determinants of shifts and desegregation in the South, 1960-1970**

<table>
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<th>Model</th>
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<td>Model 2</td>
<td><strong>Regression</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td><strong>Regression</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td><strong>Regression</strong></td>
<td>1990-2000 (CENSUS)</td>
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**Note:** Initial shifts in the South, 1960-1970.
Table 3: Determinants of desegregation in the South, 1960-1961

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<th>hazard</th>
<th>s.e.</th>
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<td>1.42</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>Other cities with sitins weighted by √distance</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.00 **</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAACP members (logged)</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.00 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP Youth Council</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAACP College Chapter</td>
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<td>4.53</td>
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</tr>
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<td>SCLC presence</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.53</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.01 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<td>Black % of state x % born in South squared</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers in major corporations as % of employed</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of labor unions / employed x 1000</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail/hospitality as % of employed</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income of blacks (logged)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate income of blacks in millions (logged)</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and clerical as % of black employed</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts and operatives as % of black employed</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private household workers as % of black employed</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers as % of black employed</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black college students (logged)</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation in other cities: Aug 1960 - April 1961</td>
<td>111.01</td>
<td>142.36</td>
<td>.00 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation in other cities: April 1961 - Dec 1961</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1350 city-intervals, 291 cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

hazard: hazard ratio; s.e.: robust standard error (adjusted for clustering on city);
p: p-value (two-tailed) *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

Cox proportional hazards model (interval-censored) estimated by complementary log-log regression
Figure 2: Civil disobedience against private racial segregation in the South, 1960-1961 (NYT)
Figure 3: Desegregation in the American South, 1960-1961

Proportion of cities with desegregated lunch counters

Cities with sit-in by Easter 1960

Cities without sit-in by Easter 1960

Figure 4: The effect of sit-ins on desegregation, setting other characteristics to median (Model 2)
### Table A1: Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>334 cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Sitin, Feb - April 1960</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Other cities with sitins weighted by (\sqrt{\text{distance}})</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) NAACP members (logged)</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>9.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) NAACP Youth Council</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) NAACP College Chapter</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) SCLC affiliate</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) CORE Chapter</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) SRC presence</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Segregationist organization in county</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Racial violence in county</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) Strict segregationist % of gubernatorial vote in county</td>
<td>58.13</td>
<td>31.29</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) Black %</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>12.93</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>65.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) Black % squared</td>
<td>779.17</td>
<td>721.89</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>4351.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) Black % of state x % born in South</td>
<td>19.90</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>40.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15) Black % of state x % born in South squared</td>
<td>483.97</td>
<td>414.13</td>
<td>18.73</td>
<td>1616.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) Workers in major corporations as % of employed</td>
<td>13.18</td>
<td>21.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>186.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(17) Number of labor unions / employed x 1000</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) Retail/hospitality as % of employed</td>
<td>14.71</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>22.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(19) Mean income of blacks (logged)</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>8.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20) Aggregate income of blacks in millions (logged)</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(21) Professional and clerical as % of black employed</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>32.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(22) Crafts and operatives as % of black employed</td>
<td>23.48</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>61.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(23) Private household workers as % of black employed</td>
<td>25.14</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>44.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(24) Service workers as % of black employed</td>
<td>22.62</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>59.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(25) Black college students (logged)</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1350 city-intervals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(26) Desegregation in other cities</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table A3: Description and Sources for Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAACP members</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Mean membership of NAACP branch in 1957 and 1959</td>
<td>NAACP Papers, Reel 3, &quot;Total 1957 Memberships and Freedom Fund Contributions Received from Branches&quot;; Reel 124, &quot;Total 1959 Memberships and Freedom Fund Contributions Received&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP Youth Council</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>1 if city had NAACP Youth Chapter, 1959; not available for Kentucky, Maryland, and West Virginia, where 1958 is substituted</td>
<td>NAACP Papers, Reel 14, &quot;Total 1958 Youth Membership Received, Youth and Student Memberships Received from Region V During 1959, &quot;Youth and Student Memberships Received from Region VI During 1959,&quot; &quot;Statement of Virginia Youth Memberships&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP College Chapter</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>1 if city had NAACP College Chapter, 1959; not available for Kentucky, Maryland, and West Virginia, where 1958 is substituted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCLC presence</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>1 if city had SCLC affiliate or was represented on the SCLC Executive Board, February 3, 1960</td>
<td>SCLC Papers, Reel 1, Part 2, &quot;Affiliates of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, INC., February 3, 1960&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORE Chapter</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>1 if city had CORE Chapter at beginning of 1960</td>
<td>CORE Papers, multiple reels; Meier and Rudwick 1973: 83-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black %</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Nonwhite population / total population * 100</td>
<td>US Bureau of the Census 1960, state reports, table 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial violence</td>
<td>county*</td>
<td>1 if county had any reported incident of racial violence, 1955-1959</td>
<td>Mattews and Prothro Southern County Data 1966; originally from American Friends Service Committee 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segregationist % of gubernatorial vote</td>
<td>county*</td>
<td>Percentage of vote cast for segregationist candidates as categorized by Black (1976); missing for four cities in Virginia, where the mean of other cities in the state is substituted</td>
<td>Black 1976; Bartley and Graham 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White racial organization</td>
<td>county*</td>
<td>1 if white racial organization existed in county, 1958</td>
<td>Mathews and Prothro Southern County Data 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers in large corporations as % of employed</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Employees in manufacturing plants of the 1000 largest US industrial corporations in 1961 / employed labor force * 100; we use midpoints of size bands, with 7500 for the highest; where the firm's size is missing, we use the overall median (100-499)</td>
<td>Fortune 1961; US Bureau of the Census 1960, state reports, table 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor union density</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>Number of union locals filing reports with Department of Labor at June 30, 1960 / employed labor force * 100</td>
<td>US Department of Labor 1960; US Bureau of the Census 1960, state reports, table 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail/hospitality as % of employed</td>
<td>Workers employed in eating and drinking places and other retail trade / employed labor force * 100</td>
<td>US Bureau of the Census 1960, state reports, table 75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black mean income</td>
<td>Aggregate annual personal income of nonwhites / number of nonwhites with income in 1959</td>
<td>US Bureau of the Census 1960, state reports, table 78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black aggregate income</td>
<td>Aggregate annual personal income of nonwhites in 1959; we use midpoints of income bands, with $7000 for the highest band</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and clerical as % of black employed</td>
<td>Nonwhites in categories of professional and technical, of farmers, of managers, officials, and proprietors, of clerical, and of sales / nonwhites in employed labor force, 1960 * 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts and operatives as % of black employed</td>
<td>Nonwhites in categories of craftsmen and foremen, and of operatives / nonwhites in employed labor force * 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private household workers as % of black employed</td>
<td>Nonwhites in category of private household workers / nonwhites in employed labor force * 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers as % of black employed</td>
<td>Nonwhites in category of service workers / nonwhite males in civilian labor force * 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black college students</td>
<td>Nonwhites enrolled in college</td>
<td>US Bureau of the Census 1960, state reports, table 77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black % of state X % born in South</td>
<td>(Negro population / total population) * (population born in the Census South / total population) * 100; the Census South also included Delaware, Oklahoma, and District of Columbia</td>
<td>US Bureau of the Census 1960, US summary, table 56, and state reports, table 98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit-in spring 1960</td>
<td>Whether sit-ins occurred between February 1 and April 14, 1960</td>
<td>Andrews and Biggs 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The 334 cities belonged to 282 distinct counties. Almost three-quarters of the cities (245) had a unique county. The greatest number of cities sharing one county was five (Palm Beach, Florida). Data not available for Kentucky, Maryland, and West Virginia, where we take the mean for Confederate cities.