Black Voting During the Civil Rights Movement: A Micro-level Analysis

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This article examines why some black Southerners but not others were politically active during the early stages of the civil rights movement. Using a survey of more than 600 black Southerners in 1961, we investigate whether perceptions about opportunity and threat, politicized social capital and individual orientations toward social change shaped voting in the 1960 Presidential election. Perceptions of solidarity in the black community and repression against politically active blacks encourage voting, while the perception of white support for integration does not. Participating in civic and religious organizations and discussing politics with friends and co-workers (but not family members) increase the likelihood of voting. Our findings extend political opportunity and social capital theories in important ways while offering new insights into this historically important case of civic engagement.

We investigate the micro-level factors that shape electoral participation in settings where voting is highly contested and new groups are trying to expand participation in the polity. Specifically, we examine the voting patterns of black Southerners in the 1960 Presidential election. As the civil rights movement emerged as an important force for change, why did some blacks in the South but not others vote? Differential participation in politics and activism has been an enduring question for social scientists, yet research is often limited by data collected well after movements have subsided. We analyze survey data collected following the 1960 election and during the early development of the civil rights movement. Our synthetic framework builds on and contributes to political opportunity and social capital theories. With regard to political opportunity theory, we emphasize the key role that individual perceptions of political context play in shaping participation. Concerning

social capital theory, we identify the kinds of organizational affiliations and networks most likely to encourage political action.

Most of what we know about black political participation during the civil rights movement is based on two kinds of research. First, historians have generated rich accounts examining major organizations, campaigns, and leaders (Lawson 1976; Morris 1984). Second, political scientists and sociologists have used quantitative data to examine variation in political mobilization across communities and over time (Black and Black 1987; James 1988; Jenkins, Jacobs and Agnone 2003; McAdam 1983, 1999). As we detail below, both lines of scholarship provide important insights on which we draw. However, aggregate voting patterns do not allow us to examine why some blacks voted while others did not. Similarly, historical scholarship on major organizations, prominent leaders and government agencies has obvious limitations for understanding the factors that facilitated or constrained the participation of *individual* black Southerners. The 1960 presidential election provides a unique opportunity to examine black political participation as one of the closest elections in U.S. history and an election in which both candidates campaigned actively for the support of black voters (Lawson 1976).

Our theoretical framework extends the insights of social capital theories that emphasize the structural "supply-side" of mobilization including voluntary organizations and social networks. We also build on political opportunity theory and more recent cultural arguments emphasizing perceptions about opportunities and threats. Finally, we examine social-psychological attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold about social change. We use data from the Negro Political Participation Study (Matthews and Prothro 1966), a survey of black adults in the South conducted in 1961. This survey asked numerous questions that allow us to assess current theoretical debates about the factors that facilitate and constrain political participation, and we use quantitative methods that were not widely available at the time to generate new insights from this classic study.

The Civil Rights Movement and the Pursuit of the Ballot

Prior scholarship on the civil rights movement and black political participation can be framed in terms of political opportunity and social capital theories. Broadly, political opportunity theory contends that variation in political conditions – such as the availability of allies or repression – will shape patterns of protest and political participation. Political scientists and sociologists have used political opportunity theory to examine how formal and informal political arrangements shaped the emergence, growth and decline of the civil rights movement (Jenkins et al. 2003; McAdam 1999; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Nevertheless, this theoretical approach has

been criticized as overly structuralist and lacking a clear account linking micro-level action to macro-level opportunity. We highlight some of the key findings from this literature and point to the ways that our analysis extends and refines this theoretical approach. Similarly, social capital theory, alongside resource mobilization and social network approaches, has been used to account for individual and collective participation in movements. Social capital theory's key insight is that participation emerges out of established social organization – including formal organization and informal social relationships (Diani and McAdam 2003; Putnam 1993, 2000). One weakness has been the tendency to view all forms of social capital and all forms of collective action similarly. We contend that the kinds of social capital required for mobilizing under highly uncertain and risky conditions are distinct from those that would shape civic action under more politically stable conditions.

The Emergence and Growth of the Southern Civil Rights Movement

During the 1950s the organizational and tactical foundations of the civil rights movement emerged. The movement took hold in what Morris (1984) has called "local movement centers" – communities with activist black churches and protest organizations. Retrospectively, key events like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the *Brown* decision and the Little Rock school desegregation conflict can be seen as part of the broader growth in the black protest movement during the 1950s. However, there were relatively low levels of protest until the 1960s sit-in campaigns to desegregate public facilities (Andrews and Biggs 2006). The sit-in movement signaled a major shift in the civil rights struggle as a mass movement involving thousands of citizens. The sit-ins were quickly followed by the Freedom Ride campaigns in 1961, the SCLC campaigns in Albany in 1961-62, and in Birmingham in 1963. Major events followed in 1964 with the Mississippi Summer Project and 1965 with the marches in Selma, Alabama, led by Martin Luther King Jr.'s SCLC.

Thus, the Matthews and Protho survey was conducted shortly after mass mobilization and direct action protest had been initiated throughout the South but well before many of the major events of the civil rights struggle. We capture political participation at a historically crucial moment differentiating it from the larger body of research on black voting in the period after the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Re-casting these historical developments in theoretical terms, we can see that at the community level and, arguably, the regional level, the 1950s witnessed the growth in politicized social capital including formal and informal connections across communities that was crucial for shaping the subsequent development of the civil rights struggle. This growth in the movement's organizational

capacity was shaped as well by expanding political opportunities for black activism, including favorable Supreme Court decisions and congressional and executive level attention to civil rights.

The acquisition of political power was one of the major objectives of civil rights leaders, organizations and campaigns, and all of the major civil rights organizations developed projects to increase political participation during the 1950s and 1960s. Voter registration campaigns received less attention than protest. However, the push for greater electoral participation was a major element in the struggle for black equality. For example, the NAACP promoted voter registration especially following the Supreme Court victory of *Smith v. Allwright* in 1944 ending all-white primaries. Local NAACP leaders encouraged the formation of independent voter leagues that could recruit "beyond the national association's sphere of influence" drawing upon civic, fraternal and religious organizations (Lawson 1976:125). In 1958, SCLC initiated its first region-wide program, "Crusade for Citizenship," to support voter registration work in 22 southern cities by establishing "organizations of organizations" (Morris 1984:110).

Black voter registration had been increasing at a steady pace since World War II and the Supreme Court's decision in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944). From a low of 3 percent in 1940, black registration in the South increased to 16.8 percent in 1950, 29.4 percent in 1960, and 43 percent in 1964 – the year prior to the Voting Rights Act. This pattern challenges the conventional narrative of the civil rights movement, suggesting that black voting was suppressed until the 1965 Voting Rights Act. For example, Rosenberg (1991:61) claims that "there can be no doubt that the major increase in the registration of blacks came from the action of Congress and the executive branch through the 1965 Voting Rights Act."(see also Alt 1995) But Timpone (1995) shows that electoral competition for black voters in the 1960 election spurred increasing black voter registration. Furthermore, this change was uneven across the South (Lawson 1976). Local variation was shaped by local organizational efforts and political opportunities.

We derive three major points from this brief account of black political activity and the civil rights movement. First, contrary to one broadly held view, there was substantial black electoral activity by 1960 and well before the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Second, even though electoral participation is typically distinguished from protest participation, voting was intertwined with the broader movement as indicated by the importance that civil rights organizations attributed to voting. Third, we underscore the historical significance of the 1960 election as the "direct action" phase of the movement was getting underway. Certainly it is impossible to isolate any single factor for such a close and highly contested election. Yet most observers note the important role that black support played for Kennedy's slim victory in key states including South Carolina and Texas (Lawson 1976).

Aggregate Patterns of Black Registration and Voting

Social scientists have attempted to explain these changing patterns of black political participation by comparing localities. Three major factors, identified in Key's classic study, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949), have been central: (1. black occupational structure, (2. urbanization, and (3. percent black. In theoretical terms, these factors capture major structural characteristics of a community thought to underlie black mobilization. The arguments for each accords with current theoretical claims – that socioeconomic conditions facilitate more favorable political opportunity structures and the formation of politicized social capital that encourage voting.

Key (1949) claimed that voter registration rates were highest in cities, and the lowest levels were in rural counties where a large proportion of the population was black. Cities afforded blacks with greater resources and autonomy to create organizations and networks necessary to sustain collective action (McAdam 1999; Morris 1984). In contrast, political opportunities were few in the rural South where the mechanisms of social control were more pervasive and effective. Percent black is related to urbanization, but exerts an independent and curvilinear influence on black mobilization. At very low levels the black community lacks the critical mass to organize and participate in politics, and at very high levels whites mobilize in response to perceived threats and suppress black mobilization. Following Key (1949), Matthews and Protho (1966) used county data on black registration and argued that even when controlling for other community characteristics the proportion black is inversely related to black registration.

Key also asserts that "extremely sharp differences prevail in voting among Negro classes."(Key 1949:518) The influence of the black community's occupational structure on political participation has been the subject of ongoing debate. Salamon and Van Evera's (1973) influential paper examined majority black counties in Mississippi to determine the relative importance of "fear, apathy and discrimination" on electoral participation. They argued that measures of "fear" provide the best explanation for variation in black voting. Where blacks are economically dependent, they lack politicized social capital and are more vulnerable to repression. James (1988) analyzed county voter registration disparities between whites and blacks for seven Southern states in 1958, 1964 and 1967 finding that white and black class structures shape registration differences. Similar to Salamon and Van Evera (1973), James (1988) reported that greater concentration of blacks in economically dependent occupations generated greater voter registration disparities.

Several scholars have examined county-level political participation with more direct measures of political opportunity structure and social capital. For example, James (1988) found that the presence of white

race organizations increases registration disparities while black race organizations decrease disparities. White organizations constrain political opportunities by threatening or attacking blacks, and black organizations enhance politicized social capital. Similarly, Alt (1994) examined voter registration disparities in eleven states before the Voting Rights Act, finding that unfavorable political opportunities such as legal restrictions and white race organizations generated greater disparities while social capital such as black race organizations diminished racial disparities. Analyzing Mississippi counties, Andrews (1997) demonstrated how strong civil rights organizations generated electoral gains while violent repression undermined them. Finally, Timpone (1995) used time series models to examine the changes at the state level between 1940 and 1982 in black registration rates finding that movement-sponsored voter registration campaigns were critical as was electoral competition.

Overall, we find convergence concerning the factors that should facilitate or undermine black voting. Political opportunities including legal restrictions and repression and social capital such as civil rights organizations help explain electoral gains by black Southerners. Even structural characteristics such as the black/white composition ratio and the occupational structure can be understood theoretically in terms of political opportunity and social capital theories. However, prior research is limited in its ability to explain *individual* political participation of black Southerners. Moreover, political opportunity theorists have begun to differentiate the perceptions that individuals hold about opportunities and threats from more objective indicators. Finally, other important factors that are not amenable to community-level measurement have been neglected including involvement in religious congregations, personal networks and individual attitudes about social change.

Explaining Black Voting

Our paper advances the longstanding and broad theoretical question of what explains differential political participation in contexts where new groups are moving into the polity and where voting remains highly contested. This question can be reformulated into two primary research questions. First, do individual perceptions about possible threats and opportunities associated with political participation affect the likelihood of voting? Second, does social capital – including informal networks and organizational ties – influence the likelihood of voting? Finally, we ask whether these factors matter independent of the attitudes and beliefs (such as political efficacy) and demographic variables (such as education or occupation) that are typically used to explain political participation.

Perception of Opportunity and Threat

Most scholars assume that individual perceptions about their environment mediate the influence of context on political behavior (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Kurzman 1996; McAdam 1999). For example, Tarrow (1998:76-77) describes political opportunity as "dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success and failure." Nevertheless, studies of the civil rights movement employ objective measures to examine how political context shaped movement dynamics (Andrews 2004; McAdam 1999). In this case, we are able to differentiate perceptions of political opportunity from a community's political characteristics. Specifically we examine perception of group solidarity, group commitment to social change, elite support for social change, and violent and nonviolent repression against politically engaged individuals.

Collective action may depend more on assessments about the likelihood that others in their situation will act than on assessments about potential opposition, elite allies or the individual costs or rewards associated with participation (Fantasia 1988; Gamson, Fireman and Rytina 1982; Klandermans 1984; Kurzman 1996; Marwell and Oliver 1993). The role of group solidarity has been examined using experiments, formal models, case studies and individual surveys. We are interested in whether people believe that others will act in a unified way (group solidarity) and whether other members of one's group favor social change (group commitment to integration).

By elite support, we are focusing on the extent to which an individual believes that a large subset of whites are critical of the status quo of racial segregation. Thus, one could characterize this as elite dissensus – perception that elites disagree over the legitimacy of prevailing institutions. Civil rights scholarship has failed to examine the variability in white southern response to the movement (for an exception, see Chappell 1996). However, perceptions may be crucial. For example, student activists held more optimistic views about whether whites supported segregation than non-activists (Matthews and Prothro 1966).

Research on the effect of repression on political participation has generated contradictory findings. One U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1965) study examined the effect that awareness of repression had on political involvement by black teachers in Mississippi and found that awareness of repression reduced political involvement among teachers except when teachers heard about repression of individuals involved in civil rights activity, in which case repression increased political participation. This finding echoes a broader pattern in the literature where scholars show that repression can escalate or dampen activism

(Brockett 1993; Davenport, Johnston and Mueller 2005; Lichbach 1987; Opp and Roehl 1990; Rasler 1996).

Repression, especially when perceived as capricious, unjust or illegitimate, can encourage individual activism by cultivating anger and moral indignation (Brockett 1993; Jasper 1997; Opp and Roehl 1990; Wood 2001). However, repression can invoke fear that suppresses activism. Some scholars argue that repression is more likely to be interpreted as unjust and illegitimate when individuals participate in organizations or networks through which they gain the capacity for sustained collective action (Andrews 2004; Opp and Roehl 1990; Salamon and Evera 1973).

Although our analysis and discussion focuses on perceptions of opportunities and threats, we also include as control variables objective measures of these factors that have been identified in prior research. Our analyses provide a distinctive contribution by specifying the effects of perceived repression among individuals and by examining violent and non-violent repression.

Religion, Church and Politics

Did religion encourage or discourage militant attitudes and political participation during the civil rights era? This question has been the focus of much debate (Harris 1999; Hunt and Hunt 1977; Marx 1967; Nelsen, Madron and Yokley 1975). There is evidence that black congregations – especially large urban churches led by activist ministers – played an important role in civil rights mobilization (Harris 1999; McAdam 1999; Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973). However, not all black congregations were supportive of the civil rights movement. In an assessment of the Birmingham movement, Morris (2000) reported that at least 60 black churches supported the movement by holding civil rights meetings but more than 400 did not. The otherworldly orientation of many congregations likely discouraged them from engaging in political activism (Kurzman 1996; Payne 1995; Reed 1986). Additionally, as MacLeod (1991:15) notes in Holmes County, Mississippi, "almost all of the county's one hundred small black churches were pastored by part-time ministers whose full-time livelihoods made them as economically dependent on the white elite as anybody else." In sum, congregations varied considerably in their likelihood of encouraging or discouraging political engagement during the civil rights period.

Recent research on black political participation has demonstrated that it is not involvement in congregations per se that is most important, but involvement in politicized congregations (Brown and Brown 2003; Calhoun-Brown 1996). There is, thus, good reason to expect that blacks involved in politicized congregations would have been more active in civil rights activism than those who were not.

Civic and Political Organizations

Civic organizations such as the NAACP and black fraternal organizations also hold an important place in explanations of the civil rights movement's emergence and development (McAdam 1999; Morris 1984). For example, McAdam (1999) charts the growth of local NAACP organizations as an important institutional base in the decades prior to the movement's emergence. Like politicized churches, civic organizations could have facilitated mobilization in several ways including providing skilled leaders, establishing communication channels, and by sponsoring voter registration drives and other events. Black fraternal associations have also been credited with contributing resources and leadership to civil rights mobilization (Liazos and Ganz 2004). Historical scholarship on the civil rights movement does not provide clear expectations about the contribution of educational organizations or labor unions to political activity. However, broader research on civic engagement suggests that educational organizations may encourage voting (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995), while membership in labor unions is more uncertain (Delaney, Masters and Schwochau 1988; Juravich and Shergold 1988; Sousa 1993).

Beyond the civil rights case, numerous scholars have argued that civic organizations facilitate political participation. The theoretical observation can be traced to Tocqueville's writings on American democracy, and recent work on social capital and civic engagement has enlivened these debates (see, for example, Putnam 2000). Different mechanisms have been posited to account for the effect of civic organizations on political participation including their role as sites for learning civic skills, developing interest in community affairs, and sustaining social networks that foster political engagement. Leighley (1996) has distinguished between intentional and unintentional effects of group membership on political participation. Unintentional mobilization is the result of the opportunities provided for participation in organizational governance and the extent of a member's engagement in the organization. In a reanalysis of Knoke's (1990a) survey of national associations and their members, Leighley (1996) finds that unintentional mobilization increases political participation regardless of whether the group has explicitly political objectives or not. Our analyses allow us to assess the impact of membership in political and non-political organizations on electoral participation. We expect membership in all forms of civic organizations to increase the likelihood of voting while organizations with political objectives to be most important.

Politicized Networks: Family, Friends and Co-workers

Studies of black political participation and the civil rights movement have rarely examined informal networks using quantitative techniques. However,

the core concept has informed historical scholarship. For example, Morris (1984) argues that urbanization helped to increase the collective solidarity in the black community and reduced the social isolation and vulnerability to repression experienced in the rural South. Robnett (1996) argued that the civil rights movement's formal leaders and organization depended on numerous "bridge leaders" – often women – who provided legitimacy and credibility that mobilized a broader mass base for the movement.

Social networks have become one of the basic explanatory factors for a wide range of political behavior. Like formal organizations, social networks can become sites for explicit political recruitment and networks can facilitate political engagement through the indirect social influence of peers. We focus on politicized networks – whether one discusses politics with family, friends or co-workers – and we expect each will increase the likelihood of voting.

Individual Attitudes and Beliefs

Beyond perceptions of opportunities and threats, we examine further social psychological factors concerning an individual's attitudes and beliefs toward social change. Drawing from the social psychology of protest and voting, we examine an individual's sense of political efficacy, collective identity, and attitude toward integration (Klandermans 1984; Oliver 1989; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Rochon 1998; Snow and Oliver 1995; Verba et al. 1995). We expect each to promote voting. Because our primary theoretical interest concerns political opportunity and social capital theories, we focus especially on determining whether these factors attenuate the effects of perceptions of opportunities and threats, membership in religious and civic organizations, and embeddedness in politicized networks.

Research Design, Data, Variables and Methods

Data

We use data from Matthews and Protho's Negro Political Participation Study. Conducted during March through June of 1961 by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, this study interviewed a representative cross-section of blacks of voting age living in private households in the 11 states of the former Confederacy (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) using stratified, multistage probability sampling techniques. To minimize racial bias, SRC-trained black interviewers conducted all interviews. The response rate was 87 percent and 618 interviews were completed. The study included two other surveys – one with white Southerners and another with black colleges students. For further methodological details, see Matthews and Prothro (1966: Appendix A).

Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is voting in the 1960 Presidential election.[1] We constructed this variable from two questions in the survey. Respondents who indicated that they had voted in at least some of the presidential elections since they were old enough to vote were then asked whether they had voted in the Kennedy-Nixon election in the fall of 1960. We coded respondents who had voted in the 1960 Presidential election as one, and we coded those who had not or who said that they had not voted in at least some of the presidential elections since they were old enough to vote as zero. Consistent with aggregate voting studies from this era (Lawson 1976), a third of Southern blacks voted in this election (see Table 1).

Independent Variables

Perception of Threat and Opportunity
We measured perception of non-violent and violent political repression in a respondent's community using two questions. The first asked respondents whether they ever heard of something happening in their community to blacks who had voted or who had engaged in other political activity. For respondents who indicated that they had heard of something happening, they were then asked to report specifically what had happened. We coded responses from this question into either forms of non-violent political repression (such as economic sanctions or harassment by police) or forms of violent political repression (such as shootings or bombings).

We included three measures of perception of opportunity. To measure perception of group solidarity, respondents were asked whether they had heard of blacks in their community getting together to vote for the same candidates. To measure group commitment to integration, we distinguished three mutually exclusive dichotomous variables: (1. whether respondents perceived that "all or most," (2. "about half" or (3. "less than half" of blacks in their community favored racial integration. For perception of elite dissensus, we distinguished three mutually exclusive dichotomous variables: (1. whether respondents perceived that "less than half," (2. "about half" or (3. "all or most" of whites in their community supported segregation of the races.

Religious and Civic Organization Memberships
We included several organizational measures of religion.[2] First, we included a dichotomous measure of frequency of religious service attendance, coding those who attended church regularly as one and less than regularly as zero. Second, we constructed a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent belonged to a church group. Finally, to

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the Analysis

	Mean	S.D.
Dependent Variable		
Vote in the 1960 Presidential election	.337	.473
Independent Variables		
Perception of no repression	.835	.372
Perception of non-violent repression	.111	.314
Perception of violent repression	.054	.227
Perception of group solidarity	.244	.430
Perception that "all or most" blacks favor integration	.592	.492
Perception that "about half" of blacks favor integration	.163	.370
Perception that "less than half" of blacks favor integration	.151	.359
Perception that "don't know" how many blacks favor integration	.093	.291
Perception that "all or most" whites favor segregation	.473	.500
Perception that "about half" of whites favor segregation	.209	.407
Perception that "less than half" of whites favor segregation	.211	.408
Perception that "don't know" how many whites favor integration	.107	.310
Regularly attend church services	.503	.500
Politicized church	.348	.477
Church group	.873	.333
NAACP	.097	.296
Labor union	.060	.237
Fraternal organization	.244	.430
Education organization	.237	.426
Talk to family members about politics	.627	.484
Talk to friends about politics	.764	.425
Talk to co-workers about politics	.290	.454
Racial solidarity (interest in how blacks are getting along in the country)	.779	.416
Personally favor integration	.668	.471
Political efficacy	.626	.484
% of blacks per county	31.923	14.369
County population (logged)	11.239	1.339
Black organization in county	.743	.437
Violence against blacks in county	.429	.495
Female	.601	.490
Age of respondent	46.615	16.441
Married	.619	.486
Children under 18 in family	.561	.497
Some college education or more	.083	.276
Family income (logged)	7.568	.637
Vulnerable occupation	.251	.434
Employed	.636	.482
Military service (respondent or spouse)	.244	.430
Life-long deep Southerner	.492	.500
Rural native	.227	.419
Parents voted	.297	.457

measure politicized church, we coded respondents who reported that they attended churches where discussions of election campaigns occurred as one and otherwise as zero.

Our analysis considers four other types of voluntary organization memberships, each coded as one for membership and zero for no membership: NAACP, fraternal organizations or lodges, PTA or similar education associations, and labor unions.

Politicized Networks

We measure three types of politicized networks. In three separate questions, respondents were asked whether they ever talked to friends, family, or co-workers about public problems – that is, what was happening in the country or in their community. We coded each variable as one if respondents ever talked about public problems and zero if they did not.

Individual Beliefs and Attitudes

Collective identity is operationalized as a dichotomous variable for whether respondents said they had a good deal of interest in how blacks as a whole were getting along in the country vs. otherwise. Attitude toward racial integration is measured similarly – coded one if respondents personally supported integration and zero if they did not. Finally, we included a measure of political efficacy as a dichotomous variable; coding those who rejected the idea that there was not much use in people like them voting because all candidates were against what they wanted as one and zero if otherwise.

Demographic and Contextual Controls

We have drawn on the relevant literatures concerning civic engagement and voting to identify appropriate control variables (e.g., Verba et al. 1995). The following demographic variables were dichotomously coded: gender (1 = female), marital status (1 = married), children under 18 in the family (1 = have such children), educational level (1 = some college education or more), working status (1 = employed), occupation vulnerability (1 = most vulnerable),[3] military service (1 = respondent or spouse served or was serving), parental political participation (1 = parents voted), raised in and current region (1= native deep Southerner), and raised in and current residential location (1= rural native). Because the effect of age on voting is likely nonlinear, we included both respondent's age and age squared, both centered to reduce collinearity. We coded the five categories for the family income variable to their midpoints and then logged it to adjust for skewness.

We also included several important contextual variables mentioned above. To capture possible nonlinear effects of percentage of blacks in

the county, we included both percentage of blacks of the total county population in 1960 and percentage of blacks squared. We centered these variables to reduce collinearity. We also included a measure of total county population size (logged). The measure of percentage of blacks the total county population size in 1960 came from the County and City Data Book File, 1944-1977. Finally, we included a dichotomous variable for the incidence of violence against blacks in the county during this era (1 = violence) and a dichotomous variable for the presence of a black organization in the county during this era (1 = black organization) using Alt's (1994,1995) reconstructed version of Matthews and Protho's variables. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis.

Statistical Model and Strategy of Analysis

We employed logistic regression to analyze our dichotomous dependent variable for voting in the 1960 Presidential election. Coefficients from logistic regression represent changes in terms of logits (log of the odds). Given that changes in logits are not intuitive, we relied instead on odds ratios (e^{logits}) when substantively interpreting and discussing our results in the text. Because of geographic clustering of respondents in the sample, we estimated the logistic regression models using the svy command in Stata 8 (StataCorp 2003), which correctly adjusts the standard errors. Listwise deletion of cases with missing information reduced the original sample size from 618 to 569.

We first estimated four models that separately tested the effect of variables measuring political opportunity theory (perceptions of threat and opportunity), organizational and network dimensions of social capital theory (religious and other types of voluntary organization memberships and politicized networks), and individual attitudes and beliefs while controlling for the demographic and contextual variables mentioned above. This allows us to establish baseline effects for each set of our explanatory variables. In order to examine the robustness of these sets of variables, we next enter different combinations of our sets of explanatory variables. Our fifth model combined the measures of religious and civic organization memberships with the measures of individual attitudes and beliefs, while our sixth model combined the measures of politicized networks with the measures of individual attitudes and beliefs. We then jointly tested the effects of religious and civic organization memberships, politicized networks, and individual attitudes and beliefs in our seventh model. The final model introduced the perception of threat and opportunity measures to test the effects of all of our explanatory theories together.[4] In all models, we controlled for the demographic and contextual variables specified above, though we do not focus on their substantive results.[5]

Results

As Model 1 shows, both measures of perception of threat and two of the three measures of perception of opportunity were significant predictors of voting in the 1960 Presidential election. To underscore this key finding: perception of threat *mobilized* blacks in the South to vote. Controlling for demographic and contextual factors, the odds of Southern blacks who perceived non-violent political repression in their community were more than three times that of those who did not perceive any political repression, while the odds of Southern blacks who perceived violent political repression voting in this election were three times that of those who did not perceive political repression. We revisit the mobilizing effects of repression in Model 8, and in the conclusion we interpret these findings in the context of broader debates about the relationship between repression and mobilization.

Turning to perception of opportunity, we see that perceptions of group solidarity and group commitment to integration encouraged Southern black voter turnout. Southern blacks who perceived that blacks voted together in their community were 2.4 times as likely to vote as were those who did not perceive that blacks voted together. For Southern blacks who perceived a majority group commitment to integration in their community, the odds of voting were 3.2 times that of those who perceived that only a minority of blacks supported racial integration. And the odds of Southern blacks who perceived that about half of blacks in their community supported racial integration voting in this election were 2.9 times that of those who perceived less than half of blacks supported racial integration. Perceptions regarding broad support by blacks for one of the major goals of the civil rights movement – racial integration – was important. However, perception of elite dissensus was not important for black voting as indicated by the nonsignificant coefficients for both the perception of a majority and about half of white rejection of racial segregation. In fact, this suggests that the perception of a more "open" social and political context in terms of sympathetic white allies did not stimulate black voting. Rather, black Southerners' perception of the black community itself including its commitment to goals of the civil rights movement and its likelihood of engaging in unified action were the decisive perceptions of opportunity that drove blacks to the ballot box in 1960.

In Model 2, we test the effect of involvement in religious and civic organizations on voting. Concerning religious factors, only the coefficient for membership in politicized churches is significant. The odds of Southern blacks who were members of politicized churches voting in the 1960 Presidential election were over 1.9 times that of those who were not. Politicized church membership, then, significantly mobilized Southern blacks to vote.

The significant positive coefficients for membership in NAACP, fraternal organizations and education organizations in Model 2 support our expectation that civic organizations facilitated black electoral participation in 1960. For example, controlling for demographic and contextual variables, the odds of Southern blacks who belonged to the NAACP voting in the 1960 Presidential election were 2.9 times that of those who were not NAACP members. In contrast the insignificant coefficient for labor union membership supports broader findings on the inconsistency of union membership to mobilize electoral participation, especially voting (Delaney et al. 1988; Juravich and Shergold 1988; Sousa 1993; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995).

In Model 3, we test the effect of politicized networks, and in Model 4, we test the effect of individual attitudes and beliefs. Politicized friendship and co-worker networks are significant and positive. For Southern blacks who discussed politics with friends, the odds of voting in the 1960 President election were 2.4 times that of those who did not discuss politics with friends, while the odds of Southern blacks who discussed politics with co-workers voting in this election were 1.5 times that of those who did not discuss politics at work. Interesting, however, discussing politics with family members did not significantly encourage blacks to vote.

Looking at Model 4, we see that, holding other factors constant, only one of the social-psychological factors included significantly predicted Southern black voter turnout in 1960: political efficacy. As expected, there is a positive relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout, such that those who rejected the notion that voting was useless were more than five times more likely to vote than those who believed otherwise. Unless Southern blacks personally believed that their vote could make a difference, they were extremely unlikely to go to the ballot box and vote in 1960 (c.f., Klandermans 1984; Oliver 1989; Snow and Oliver 1995; Verba et al. 1995). Neither the variable for collective identity nor the one for support for integration was significant. This indicates that racial solidarity and personal alignment with one of the major goals of the civil rights movement were not sufficient to encourage voting in the 1960 Presidential election.

Model 5 enters the measures for political and voluntary organization memberships and individual attitudes and beliefs together, and Model 6 enters the measures for politicized networks and individual attitudes and beliefs together. There is little change in the coefficients between these models and prior models. The coefficients for politicized church membership, NAACP membership, fraternal organization membership and education organization membership remain significant and positive, as do the coefficients for political efficacy and embeddedness in politicized friendship and co-worker networks.

Model 7 combines the measures for political and voluntary organization memberships, politicized networks and individual attitudes and beliefs.

The coefficients for the measures of political and voluntary organization memberships and the measure for political efficacy remain significant and positive. However, in contrast to Model 6, where we combined only the measures of politicized networks and individual attitudes and beliefs, Model 7 shows that the while the coefficient for politicized friendship network is still significant, the coefficient for politicized co-worker network is not. It is possible that the effect of discussing politics with co-workers is largely indirect, mediated through political and voluntary organization membership. The underlying social process might have worked such that politicized networks – especially weaker ones – encouraged participation in religious and civic organizations during this period and that these organizations, in turn, facilitated voting in the 1960 Presidential election. This result may help explain why politicized co-worker networks mattered but family networks did not.

Model 8 introduces measures of perception of threat and opportunity alongside organizations, networks, and beliefs about social change. The continued significant positive coefficients for perception of non-violent repression, perception of violent repression, perception of group solidarity, and perception of group commitment to integration demonstrate that the effects of perception of threat and opportunity do not seem to be a function of political and voluntary organization memberships, politicized networks and individual attitudes and beliefs. Perceptions of threat and opportunity have robust effects on Southern black voter turnout for the 1960 Presidential election, net of these factors. The significant positive effect of political efficacy in previous models remains after controlling for the measures of perception of threat and opportunity. However, with the exception of NAACP membership and educational organization membership, there are substantial reductions in the effects of the political and voluntary organization membership measures when perception of threat and opportunity are included. The coefficient for politicized church membership drops from .568 to .423 and falls to nonsignificance, while the coefficient for fraternal organization membership drops from .728 to .610 and falls to nonsignificance as well. Taken together, these findings suggest that perception of threat and opportunity mediated the relationship between these organizational memberships and voter turnout. By heightening perceptions of threat and opportunity, these organizations likely mobilized Southern blacks to vote in the 1960 Presidential election.

Summary and Contributions

In this paper we advance ongoing debates concerning black political participation during the civil rights movement and contribute more broadly to work by sociologists and political scientists on differential participation

Table 2: Logistic Regression Coefficients Predicting Black Southerners' Black Voting

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Perceptions of Opportunities and Threats								
Perception of non-violent repression	1.178**	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.295**
	(.324)							(.432)
Perception of violent repression	1.096***	—	—	—	—	—	—	.870**
	(.211)							(.289)
Perception of group solidarity	.878**	—	—	—	—	—	—	.676*
	(.212)							(.297)
Perception that "all or most" of blacks favor integration	1.169*	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.345**
	(.482)							(.425)
Perception that "about half" of blacks favor integration	1.060+	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.184+
	(.594)							(.667)
Perception that "about half" of whites favor segregation	.318	—	—	—	—	—	—	.236
	(.341)							(.381)
Perception that "less than half" of whites favor segregation	.063	—	—	—	—	—	—	.046
	(.328)							(.318)
Religious and Civic Organizations								
Regularly attend church services	—	-.286	—	—	-.401	—	-.448	-.628*
		(.269)			(.267)		(.267)	(.253)
Politicized church	—	.674*	—	—	.633*	—	.568*	.423
		(.277)			(.275)		(.267)	(.254)
Church group	—	.628	—	—	.675	—	.672	.801+
		(.454)			(.456)		(.451)	(.396)
NAACP	—	1.063+	—	—	.986+	—	.978+	.949+
		(.549)			(.542)		(.552)	(.465)
Labor union	—	.284	—	—	.244	—	.211	.054
		(.656)			(.614)		(.622)	(.647)

Fraternal organization	—	.919*	—	.795+	—	.728+	.610
		(.379)		(.400)		(.400)	(.391)
Education organization	—	.852*	—	.774*	—	.681+	.807*
		(.349)		(.360)		(.378)	(.360)
Politicized Networks							
Talk to family members about politics	—	—	.267	—	.169	.221	.223
			(.253)		(.284)	(.309)	(.285)
Talk to friends about politics	—	—	.861*	—	.803+	.603+	.701+
			(.369)		(.409)	(.349)	(.393)
Talk to co-workers about politics	—	—	.396+	—	.480**	.315	.300
			(.202)		(.169)	(.209)	(.224)
Individual Attitudes and Beliefs							
Racial solidarity (interest in how blacks are getting along in the country)	—	—	.360	.214	.300	.175	.235
			(.356)	(.353)	(.322)	(.329)	(.290)
Personally favor integration	—	—	.467	.354	.372	.292	-.066
			(.448)	(.486)	(.480)	(.532)	(.517)
Political efficacy	—	—	1.630***	1.591***	1.657***	1.618***	1.758***
			(.208)	(.240)	(.215)	(.230)	(.240)
Constant	-5.807+	-4.274	-3.633	-3.580	-3.143	-3.113	-5.841+
	(2.939)	(3.440)	(2.690)	(3.200)	(2.759)	(3.229)	(3.338)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; number of cases for all models is 569. Also included but not shown are controls for all demographic and contextual variables listed in Table 1 (see Table A1 for results for these variables) as well as two dichotomous variables for the "don't know" perception variables.

+p < .10   *p < .05   **p < .01   ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

in electoral and contentious politics. Taking our analysis as a whole, we identify core factors that have consistent effects on Southern black electoral political participation in 1960. These specific findings support our broader theoretical account in which we build upon and extend political opportunity and social capital theories. We summarize our main findings and discuss their importance in turn.

The extent and nature of opportunities and threats have played a central role in explaining the emergence and development of social movements in general and the civil rights movement in particular. While aggregate studies of the civil rights movement have specified structural opportunities and threats that facilitated or impeded mobilization (Jenkins et al. 2003; McAdam 1999; Meyer and Minkoff 2004), our focus on the microfoundations of civil rights participation highlights the importance of *perception* of opportunities and threats. Perception of opportunities and threats are now recognized as critical for explaining participation in collective action (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Kurzman 1996; McAdam 1999; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Yet few studies have focused on them systematically. We differentiate among various types of perceptions of opportunities and threats and thus refine our understanding of the way individuals' perceptions of their broader context influence political participation.

Concerning perception of opportunities, we found that group solidarity and group commitment to integration mobilized Southern blacks to vote in the 1960 Presidential election, while perception of elite support for integration did not. Importantly, our findings do not support a central claim of the political opportunity perspective: that openness in the political system encourages mobilization. However, our survey lacked questions about the perceived openness of the electoral system in particular, a dimension of political opportunity that subsequent studies should examine. Nevertheless, we do find that perceptions of elite support had no effect while perceptions about the black community itself were very important for encouraging electoral participation.

Whether threat induces or constrains mobilization has been the subject of much debate. Consistent with other studies that identify a mobilizing effect of repression (Andrews 1997; Brockett 1993; Opp and Roehl 1990; Rasler 1996; Wood 2001), we found that *perception* of both violent and non-violent repression promoted electoral participation. As scholars have argued regarding the positive effect of repression more broadly, perception of repression likely facilitated Southern black voting through cultivating anger, injustice, and other emotions that motivate political action (Jasper 1997; Wood 2001). Repression is especially likely to generate these emotions and spur activism when it occurs in the ascendant stages of movements and when it comes to be defined as a

capricious and illegitimate attack on a group (Brockett 1993; Opp and Roehl 1990; Wood 2001).

Our contributions to social capital theory point to the significance of organizational attachments and personal relationships that draw individuals into broader contacts and expose individuals to salient political ideas. For example, we show that attending religious services in general did not encourage voting. Instead, we find that, on average, Southern blacks who participated in congregations that were politicized – where religious leaders address political issues from the pulpit – were more likely to vote in the 1960 Presidential election than those who did not. Although many black churches and ministers mobilized civil rights activism (Harris 1999; McAdam 1999; Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973), others never became involved in the civil rights struggle. Our results demonstrate the electoral consequences of this divide. Our findings help resolve longstanding debates and disparate findings that have persisted because of data limitations (Harris 1999; Hunt and Hunt 1977; Marx 1967; Nelsen et al. 1975). We also show an important mechanism through which politicized congregations promoted black electoral participation in 1960. With the inclusion of perceptions of opportunities and threats, the significant effect of politicized congregations on voting disappeared, suggesting that this relationship was largely a function of heightened perceptions of opportunities and threat. This finding comports with evidence from case studies on the civil rights movement that document how black churches mobilized members through other social-psychological processes, such as consciousness raising and solidarity building (Morris 1984).

Consistent with historical scholarship on the civil rights movement, we found that social capital generated through membership in other civic and voluntary associations generally had a positive impact on voting in the 1960 Presidential election. This was especially true for the NAACP which had an explicitly political orientation, but political participation was also higher for members of fraternal organizations and educational organizations. Like membership in politicized congregations, we found that perceptions of opportunities and threats largely mediated the relationship between membership in fraternal organizations and voting in the 1960 President election.

Our findings regarding the role of politicized networks are important as well. Southern blacks embedded in politicized friendship and co-worker networks in which they discussed public problems were more likely to vote in the 1960 Presidential election, but Southern black embedded in politicized familial networks – discussing public problems with family members – were not. The politicized co-worker finding is likely due to the greater likelihood of this network pulling people into civic and political organizations. With the inclusion of the variables for these organizations,

the effect of co-worker politicized network fell to nonsignificance. Perhaps because of exposure to more diverse political information and contacts, weaker (friends and co-workers) rather than stronger (family) politicized networks are more important for facilitating voter turnout.

Finally, while political efficacy strongly encouraged voting in the 1960 Presidential election, the other measures of individual beliefs and attitudes did not. Our finding that political efficacy facilitated electoral participation is not surprising. Prior studies have consistently established a positive link between political efficacy and political activity (Klandermans 1984; Oliver 1989; Snow and Oliver 1995; Verba et al. 1995). However, our result that collective identity and attitudes toward social change had no discernible effect on the likelihood of voting in 1960 is rather curious given the broader claims about these beliefs and attitudes for collective action (for a review, see Polletta and Jasper 2001). One possibility is that better measures of collective identity and attitudes about social change would have shown significant effects. Another possibility is that these particular attitudes and beliefs are crucial for broader participation in social movements but less important for voting and electoral participation.

Other findings call for further exploration as well. For example, we offer plausible arguments to explain the mobilizing effect of repression. However, the patterns we identified should be examined in future work through additional strategies such as in-depth interviews, field work, archival research and longitudinal surveys. For example, does the role of perceptions of opportunity and threat differ for other kinds of political participation and in other settings? Although we would expect perceptions of group solidarity to be important across very different types of collective action, we would also expect perceptions of repression to have variegated effects depending on the type of political participation and the broader political context.

We conclude by highlighting some of the broader implications of our analyses and ways in which subsequent work can build upon and advance the arguments presented in this paper. In terms of historical scholarship on the civil rights movement, our study points to important individual variation in political participation, and this attention to the micro-level should complement and extend the more traditional focus on prominent leaders, organizations, campaigns, and community-level processes of mobilization. This same logic can be extended to other movements in which challengers are broadening the polity by advancing the claims of formally excluded groups. Our goals here dovetail with recent theoretical efforts to make struggles over democratization central to the study of social movements and contentious politics (McAdam et al. 2001). Methodologically, this paper also underscores the importance of conducting systematic surveys like Matthews and Protho did in the midst of broader social movements.

Notes

1. The Matthews and Protho dataset includes other indicators of political participation such as registering to vote, donating money to a political campaign, attending a political meeting, working for a political campaign, and attempting to influence other voters. We have analyzed these outcomes along the lines reported for voting (results available from authors). However, we have not included them here because they do not hold the same theoretical relevance as voting which requires potentially risky engagement with the state, ambiguous question wording for these items, and historical significance of the 1960 election.

2. In auxiliary analyses, we examined religious tradition affiliation differences (e.g., Baptist versus Methodist) in the likelihood of voting in the 1960 presidential election. Since we found no differences, we omitted these variables from our final models.

3. We followed Salamon and Van Evera's (1973) coding scheme for vulnerable occupations.

4. We generated Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) to check for collinearity. No VIF exceeded 4.0 and thus collinearity was not a cause for concern (Menard 1995).

5. In terms of control variables, several measures stand out. Higher socioeconomic status (measured as college education) and employment encouraged voting in 1960. Individuals who grew up and remained in the Deep South had a significantly reduced likelihood of voting in 1960. Individuals with occupations that were greatly dependent on white control substantially decreased the probability of voting.

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Appendix. Logistic Regression Coefficients Predicting Black Southerners' 1960 Presidential Voting, Control Variables

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
% of blacks per county	-.083***	-.080**	-.078**	-.072**	-.079***	-.075**	-.081**	-.093***
	(.017)	(.021)	(.019)	(.019)	(.022)	(.019)	(.021)	(.021)
% of blacks per county^2	-.002*	-.002*	-.003*	-.003*	-.002*	-.003*	-.002*	-.002*
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
County population (logged)	.121	.164	.149	.063	.123	.098	.141	.203
	(.188)	(.205)	(.177)	(.163)	(.181)	(.156)	(.176)	(.195)
Black organization in county	-.313	-.483	-.365	-.383	-.669	-.511	-.762	-.815
	(.575)	(.654)	(.644)	(.580)	(.633)	(.616)	(.661)	(.641)
Violence of blacks in county	-.059	.096	.191	.292	.255	.309	.267	.023
	(.229)	(.232)	(.264)	(.210)	(.228)	(.244)	(.255)	(.317)
Female	.082	.039	.092	.269	.287	.396	.386	.419
	(.402)	(.406)	(.367)	(.386)	(.415)	(.405)	(.436)	(.476)
Age of respondent	.047***	.036***	.041***	.050***	.043***	.047***	.042***	.047***
	(.008)	(.008)	(.008)	(.008)	(.008)	(.008)	(.009)	(.010)
Age of respondent^2	-.002**	-.001**	-.002**	-.002***	-.001**	-.002***	-.001**	-.001**
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Married	.205	.288	.157	.207	.279	.190	.229	.234
	(.253)	(.253)	(.262)	(.283)	(.299)	(.303)	(.325)	(.313)
Children under 18 in family	.258	-.021	.114	.195	.009	.106	-.040	-.023
	(.216)	(.256)	(.183)	(.251)	(.259)	(.221)	(.248)	(.259)
Some college education or more	1.474**	1.044**	1.355**	1.293***	.935**	1.252***	.987**	1.109**
	(.437)	(.347)	(.347)	(.282)	(.282)	(.286)	(.311)	(.340)
Family income (logged)	.321	.119	.136	.084	-.104	-.104	-.243	-.194
	(.291)	(.353)	(.319)	(.308)	(.358)	(.314)	(.365)	(.373)
Vulnerable occupation	-.524	-.643	-.779+	-.820+	-.845+	-.949*	-.954*	-.915+
	(.464)	(.425)	(.395)	(.448)	(.446)	(.419)	(.419)	(.449)

Employed	.567	.561	.456	.671+	.675+	.521	.597	.749+
	(.423)	(.333)	(.371)	(.369)	(.342)	(.366)	(.363)	(.405)
Military service (respondent or spouse)	.246	.488*	.392+	.330	.457+	.366+	.487*	.411+
	(.198)	(.235)	(.196)	(.194)	(.222)	(.200)	(.231)	(.225)
Life-long deep Southerner	-.778*	-.739+	-.811*	-.869*	-.921*	-.939*	-1.000**	-1.018*
	(.329)	(.394)	(.388)	(.377)	(.411)	(.398)	(.423)	(.416)
Rural native	-.938*	-1.070*	-1.027**	-.898*	-.879+	-.856*	-.846+	-.719
	(.406)	(.393)	(.372)	(.393)	(.434)	(.408)	(.430)	(.431)
Parents voted	.561	.415	.415	.570	.381	.419	.289	.343
	(.335)	(.325)	(.350)	(.415)	(.376)	(.388)	(.393)	(.380)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; number of cases for all models is 569.

+p < .10   *p < .05   **p < .01   ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)