Power of the Pulpit: The Effect of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Speeches on the Civil Rights Movement*

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Abstract

This paper quantifies the effects that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had on the Civil Rights Movement. I utilize the variation in timing and location of Dr. King's speaking engagements throughout the United States in an event study to estimate large increases in non-violent protest activity following a speech. King's speeches also resulted in an increase in Black voter registration in the South. An instrumental variable design (IV) is inspired by Dr. King's frequent travels from his home in Montgomery, AL. Instrumenting for the location of King's speeches using direct flights to Montgomery, I find dramatic increases in high-stakes protest activities: a King speech motivates others to become Freedom Riders and participate in sit-ins at lunch counters. The IV analysis also reveals that the increase in Black registered voters following a King speech contributed to vote share gains by Democrats in the 1968 Presidential election and losses for the third-party segregationist candidate George Wallace.

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1 Introduction

> *"Protest was right and even divine and Martin Luther King was the moral figure and prophet divinely inspired to lead the movement."* -Aldon Morris (1986)
>
> *"Voting is the foundation stone for political action*" - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is considered one of the greatest orators of the 20th century and his soaring rhetoric made an indelible impact on the consciousness of US Americans.[1] Witnesses to Dr. King's speeches have shared how powerfully moved they were to fight peacefully for social justice.[2] Noted civil rights activist Septima Clark stated that King's speeches, "made people feel that if they worked hard enough, they really could make justice roll down like water." [3] Dr. King exhorted thousands to fight against institutionalized racism and has come to personify the Civil Rights Movement.[4]

To what degree did King influence the movement? Civil rights activist Ella Baker stated: "You see, I think that, to be very honest, the movement made Martin rather than Martin making the movement. This is not a discredit to him. This is, to me, as it should be."[5] Others, such as Aldon Morris, have argued that King's leadership was instrumental in facilitating the Civil Rights Movement and is clearly not a "by-product of the movement."[6] Was King a revolutionary or a reflection? I examine this question using two outcomes that are intrinsically tied to King's legacy: non-violent protests and voter registration. It should be stressed that King's considerable legacy is firmly cemented in US history. In a recent and highly praised biography of King, Jonathan Eig argues that King should be considered a "founding father" of the US.[7]

I compile a dataset of many of Dr. King's major speaking engagements during the Civil Rights Movement based on the Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.[8] I record the month and year of over one thousand speaking events in US cities during the 1955-1968 period. I link this data to city-level protest event data that allows me to track non-violent Black civil rights protests on a city by month level.[9] To address concerns about reverse causality (i.e. King

[1] (Lucas and Medhurst, 2009)

[2] (Morris, 1986)

[3] (Morris, 1986:98)

[4] (Levinstein, 1963). See Carson (1987) for a thoughtful essay on the dangers of the singular focus on King as a leader of the civil rights movement.

[5] Britton (1968)

[6] (Morris, 1986:279-285). C. Eric Lincoln and Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites also argue for the revolutionary role that Dr. King played in the civil rights movement (Frazier and Lincoln, 1974: 114; Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites, 2005:7).

[7] See preface of *King A Life* (Eig, 2023).

[8] (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1992)

[9] Protest data was constructed using data from: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective

was invited to speak at protests), I remove all of King's speeches delivered at protests. In addition, I measure high-risk protest activity: the sit-in movement at lunch counters in 1960 and the Freedom Rides of 1961 that involved interracial teams that rode interstate buses throughout the South. To measure Black enfranchisement, I use relatively newly digitized county-level data on voter registration in the South which records Black voter registration in over nine hundred counties for the years 1958, 1960, 1965, and 1968.[10]

King prioritized advocacy for civil rights and fundraising when determining where to speak. The advocacy was wide-ranging and included both major speeches such as "I Have a Dream" at the March on Washington in 1963 as well as numerous talks and sermons delivered at churches and service organizations. King's schedule, health, and unexpected events caused idiosyncrasies in the timing and locations where King spoke. For example, King frequently declined speaking invitations due to preexisting engagements or under physician's orders because of his constant battles with exhaustion. Factors outside King's control also led to the cancelation of numerous talks and included both violent attempts on his life as well as numerous arrests and legal actions against him.

Two research designs are used to estimate the effects of King's speeches. The first is an event study analysis that utilizes the variation in cities and timing of Dr. King's speaking events. The second design is an an instrumental variable strategy (IV) motivated by King's reliance on civilian air travel to maintain his busy speaking schedule. As Anke Ortlepp (2017) notes in writing about the role of airports during the Civil Rights Movement, King's "writings reflect a busy national travel schedule whose *connecting dots were the nation's airports*." King was the head pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and even in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement would frequently travel back to Montgomery, Alabama to preach on Sundays (Garrow, 2023). I therefore use direct flights to Montgomery, Alabama as an instrument for whether King spoke at a location.

The first result is that King's speeches had a meaningful impact on non-violent protest activity. The event study analysis documents that in the month when Dr. King speaks there is over a twenty-fold increase in the likelihood of a non-violent protest.[11] IV results collaborate this finding. The IV results also reveal that in cities where King speaks there is a greater likelihood of a sit-in at a lunch counter and someone participating in a Freedom Ride.

Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011; Olzak and West, 1995).

[10] Voter Registration data comes from the reports from the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and were digitized by Koch et al. (2021).

[11] Non-violent protests were relatively rare events on a city by month level.

The second result is that King motivated Black individuals to register to vote. Both the event study and IV estimates point to King having a meaningful impact on Black voter registration in the South. Conservative estimates show that King's speeches led to a 14 percentage point increase in Black voters. This increase in Black enfranchisement had subsequent effects on elections. In the 1968 presidential election, the Democratic party was continuing a realignment that involved it being the standard bearer for civil rights. The third-party segregationist candidate George Wallace mounted a successful campaign in the South by appealing to conservative white voters who historically voted Democrat. Using the IV results, in counties where King spoke, Humphries gained 3.4 percentage point points of vote share while Wallace lost 6.1 percentage points.

What explains these results beyond King simply inspiring others to act? Protests and voter registration drives are both forms of collective action that require coordination. Successful protests require mass participation, voter drives need large turnout. King's speeches brought people out in droves. As Lischer (2020: 253) notes "(King) was recognized as a mass-meeting phenomenon whose voice was required to activate small-town marches and voter registrations. These people came in crushing numbers to hear him and to touch him." Many individuals listening to King were motivated to participate in the Civil Rights Movement, what they were seeking were "assurances" that others would join them and that the goals were attainable (Chong, 1991). Even a person with strong moral convictions would not want to protest alone or fight for a hopeless cause. King was a unique figure to provide these assurances; his speeches persuaded many to join the cause and that the cause itself was right and achievable.

A number of limitations to this study should be noted. First, I do not have the entire universe of Dr. King's speaking events. To the best of my knowledge, there are no systematic sources that contain the complete itinerary of all of King's speech events. The estimates I present are thus attenuated and generate a lower bound.[12] A second limitation is that Dr. King's speaking events may also have involved meetings prior to and after the speech. These meetings between King and local leaders may have also resulted in greater protest activity and voter registration. I am unable to separately identify the effects of the speech from any of the ancillary meetings that took place in the periods around the speech. In the following section, I will contend that King's uniqueness among civil rights leaders stemmed from his oratory prowess rather than his organizational or interpersonal skills.

This study contributes to the literature that examines the origins of the Civil Rights

[12] I assume that Dr. King's speeches never demotivated people from participating in protest activity or registering to vote.

Movement.[13] Undoubtedly there were a confluence of factors that gave rise to the movement.[14] The strength of local Black churches and civil rights organizations such as the NAACP provided a firm foundation for the mobilization of a mass movement.[15] The post World War II period also provided increased political opportunities for collective action.[16] King was one of many Black leaders that courageously risked their lives for the cause of justice. On both a national and local level, leaders arose from the Black community to organize and inspired thousands to participate in non-violent mass action. John Lewis, Roy Wilkins, James Farmer, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Ralph Abernathy, Rosa Parks, Fred Shuttlesworth, Bayard Rustin, Dorothy Cotton, and A. Philip Randolph are just a few of the leaders that dedicated their lives to the movement. What made King different? Keith Miller in *Voice of Deliverance* (1998) writes, "The answer to this question can be stated in a single word: language. King's unmatched words galvanized blacks and changed the minds of moderated and uncommitted whites."[17] To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to empirically estimate the effects that King's speeches had on the Civil Rights Movement using credible identification strategies.

In addition, this paper contributes to the growing literature on leadership. A leader's words can strongly influence individual behaviors that collectively shape society (Ajzenman et al., 2023; Antonakis et al., 2022; Bassi and Rasul, 2017). Recent papers have used novel data collection and methods to demonstrate strong effects that leaders have on motivating individuals to engage in high risk activities to achieve broad political goals. Dippel and Heblich (2021) document that former German revolutionaries who moved to the United States motivated many men to enlist in the Union Army during the US Civil War. Cage et al. (2021) show that soldiers who were led by an autocratic French general during World War I increased their likelihood of being Nazi collaborators in subsequent years. Other studies have established how leaders can encourage antisocial behaviors that take the form of racism (Grosjean et al., 2022) and xenophobia (Bursztyn et al., 2020).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a background on Dr. King's speaking engagements. Section 3 describes the data used. Section 4 discusses the research designs and Section 5 presents results of King's speeches on non-violent protest and Black voter registration respectively. Section 6 concludes.

[13](Morris, 1986; McAdam, 2010; Carson, 1987; Fairclough, 1990; Levy, 2019; Branch, 1989; Garrow, 1986; Oberschall, 1973)
[14](Morris, 1986; McAdam, 2010)
[15](McAdam, 2010: 230; Morris, 1986; Carson, 1987)
[16](McAdam, 2010)
[17](Miller, 1998:10)

2 Background

2.1 King's Speeches

The year 1955 was a defining period in King's life. This year closely coincides with both the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement and King's full-time career as a minister (King Jr. and Carson, 2001).[18] Most importantly, 1955 is the year that Rosa Parks was arrested for violating bus segregation laws in Montgomery, Alabama, and marks the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott that catapulted King into the national spotlight (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2007; Garrow, 1986). King dutifully accepted leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), which organized the bus boycott, and gave powerfully motivating speeches at rallies and mass meetings (King Jr., 1960). As the bus boycott received national attention, King became one of the most sought after speakers in the country (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2007).

While King's words could be read in newspapers or heard on radio and television, there are key distinguishing characteristics of hearing King's words delivered live and in-person.[19] First, King had a distinct voice and baritone that made a powerful impression but was lost in newspapers and attenuated through radio and television (Golway and Beeman, 2012). Listening to King's speeches in-person may also allow someone to detect non-verbal cues that were lost in print or radio (Cassell et al., 2001; Tudor et al., 2014). King's interaction with the audience was also important: as a preacher, King fed off the feedback from the audience; King would be encouraged by exhortations from audience members that could strengthen the tone and delivery of his speeches (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1992: 94). And the effect of an audience wasn't limited to the speaker - the impact of a speech can be enhanced within the audience as well.[20] Finally, a King speech could rally people together; facilitating valuable connections within the audience that could lead to collective action.[21]

There are common themes that appear repeatedly throughout King's speeches and

[18] King was installed at Dexter Avenue Baptist church in October 1954 (King Jr. and Carson, 2001). The year 1954 is considered by many to be beginning of the US Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century (Houck and Dixon, 2009; Yamasaki, 2007).

[19] This is not to discount the role that media played in the Civil Rights Movement. Increased coverage by major network news programs may have played an important role in the movement. For example, network news coverage of the violence on Bloody Sunday where peaceful marchers in Selma, Montgomery were assaulted by police officers may have facilitated the passaged and strengthened the Voter Rights Act (Bodroghkozy, 2012; Garrow, 1978).

[20] Studies in music and theater have posit a shared emotional experience as a leading reason for attending live performances - see Kozak (2019, 2021); Brown and Novak (2007).

[21] Examples of rallies and events leading to collective action amongst politically conservative audiences can be found in Skocpol and Williamson (2013) and Madestam et al. (2013).

sermons. During King's years in seminary and graduate school, he wrote and delivered numerous sermons influenced by social justice and personalism theology (Parr, 2018; Eig, 2023). By the time he rose to national prominence in 1956, King already had a large canon of speeches and sermons that he could rely on to prepare for virtually any speaking engagement (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2007, 22; Lischer, 2020, 8-81).

How did King decide where to speak? There were both push and pull factors in play. On the push side, King and his advisors were largely focused on events that would further the Civil Rights Movement or raise funds for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (Morris, 1986:227-228).[22] King's impassioned advocacy for civil rights included speeches given at major events such as the March on Washington, but also included numerous talks at universities, churches, and service organizations where King sought to influence public opinion. The pull side was the plethora of invitations from a diverse group of hosts. King received a fair number of invitations that arose from personal connections. King's network encompassed friends from his days at college and graduate school as well as church leaders from the National Baptist Convention. These invitations would frequently involve guest preaching. As King rose to prominence, he received invitations from nationally recognized leaders such as A. Philip Randolph, Howard Thurman, and Eleanor Rosevelt. But invitations, including ones that King accepted, were not limited to friends and prominent leaders - a number of invitees were leaders of local organizations.[23] This combination of push and pull factors led King to speak widely and his audiences were racially and economically diverse. As Jonathan Eig writes in *King: A Life*, "King's genius in later years would be his ability to deliver messages that inspired Black and white listeners alike, messages that made racial justice sound like an imperative for all" (Eig, 2023: 78). King's yearning to connect with as many audiences as possible led to engagements that seem quite puzzling, such as King's appearance at the Knife and Fork club in Sioux Falls, South Dakota - held in a hotel where King was not allowed to stay (Jazzmine, 2022).[24]

Based on the push factors alone, the types of locations that King spoke at were not randomly chosen. As we will see in the data, King was both pushed and pulled into predominantly urban environments.[25] However, I argue that the timing and specific locations

[22]The SCLC targeted churches, trade unions and foundations for their fundraising efforts. Morris (1986) argues that most of the SCLC's early funding in the North came from the Black religious community. (See Morris, 1986: 116-119).

[23]Examples include leaders of local branches of the YMCA and NAACP.

[24]Thanks to David Garrow for pointing out this appearance.

[25]King writes in a November 1959 letter to Paul Landis, "I have very little knowledge of rural communities in Alabama. In the last few years, I have been so involved in the struggle to break down the barriers of segregation and discrimination the urban South that I have not had a chance to look into the rural situation."

that King spoke at is idiosyncratic in nature due to multiple factors.

The first of these factors is scheduling. Andrew Young refers to King as the busiest man in America during the 1960s (McDonald, 2013). Coretta Scott King would have supported this notion when she observed that over the course of a year in 1958, "King traveled 780,000 miles and delivered two hundred and eight speeches. (King, 1969)" Given King's multiple roles as a speaker, pastor, organizer, leader of the SCLC, and author, his calendar was almost always full. It was King's schedule that served as a primary constraint that prevented him from accepting speaking engagements. How booked was King? In a December 1956 response to an invitation from Wyatt T. Walker, King writes, "I am sure that this sounds strange to you, but my calendar reveals that I have accepted almost as many engagements as my schedule will allow for the whole of 1957." (Appendix Figure A.1). Walker would go on to become the executive director of the SCLC in 1960, so King's declining of Wyatt's invitation does not appear based on a lack of personal connection. In fact, King does go on to write, "Please know that my non-acceptance at this point is not due to lack of interest, but to the acceptance of already long standing engagements."

In the vast correspondence in the Papers Project, a pattern emerges where King seems to genuinely want to honor his existing commitments even if invitations arrive from prominent figures. For example, in February 1958, Eleanor Roosevelt invited King to a reception in New York. Instead of jumping at the opportunity to meet with Roosevelt, King instead went to Cal Tech where a series of preexisting talks were scheduled by the local YMCA (Appendix Figure A.2; MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2000: 372). A second example involves King mentor Dr. Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse College. Dr. Mays invited King to speak at Moorehouse in May of 1956, but King respectfully declines due to his writing commitment for a manuscript that would become *Stride Toward Freedom* (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1997: 222).

A second factor that limited King's speaking engagements was his health. King's grueling schedule created fertile grounds for physical and mental exhaustion. When questioned about this, King responded to one interviewer with, "Four hours of sleep is enough for me" (Garrow 1986: 558). Doctors sought to limit his public appearances in an effort to preserve King's health and even at times ordered hospitalization (Garrow, 1986: 389). In fact, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 while hospitalized in Atlanta for exhaustion (Eig, 2023: 385). In a letter to Arthur Johnson, the executive director of the NAACP in Detroit, King wrote that he was unable to accept a speaking invitation because in addition to a previously scheduled sermons and a book deadline, his doctor ordered him to limit his appearances (Appendix Figure A.2).

(MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2005: 322)

A third factor determining King's speaking appearances were unexpected events and crises. Legal actions by local authorities designed to intimidate King and suppress direct action movements caused King to cancel numerous speaking events. In March 1956, King was scheduled to speak at Boston University in a talk sponsored by Professor Allan Chalmers (treasurer of the NAACP). At the last minute, King cancelled his talk when he was pulled into a trial in Montgomery, Alabama and was convicted of violating state anti-boycott laws (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1997,173; King Jr., 1960). Unexpected events include bombings of Black churches in Montgomery that led King to cancel talks in Chicago and Tuscaloosa (MLK Jr. Papers Project 1997; 2000). King also had multiple attempts on his life before his assassination in April 1968. While King was in Harlem, New York, promoting his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, he was stabbed in the chest on September 20, 1958 (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2000). As King was recovering from this near fatal attack, Coretta Scott King took his place and spoke at the Youth March in Washington, DC, in October 1958 (King Encyclopedia, 2017).

To summarize, while the push and pull factors did lead King to speak in more urban settings, the specific locations and the timing of King's speaking events were somewhat idiosyncratic due to a combination of preexisting engagements and factors outside of his control.

2.2 Protests and Voter Registration as Collective Action

Non-violent protests and voter registration are both forms of collective action that required individuals to bear costs in order to attain public goods such as civil rights. For example, an individual may risk arrest and violence to participate in a protest designed to pressure businesses to desegregate; the benefits of desegregation accrue to all. A prominent question in the civli rights literature is how is collective action initiated and sustained? Using the rational agent theories in Dennis Chong's influential study, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement* (1991) I argue that King through his speeches played a pivotal role in coordinating collective action.

A rational model begins with an individual weighing the benefits and cost of collective action. The possible benefits are myriad: moral convictions, altruism, expressive behavior, and reputational concerns. The most salient costs are the threats of violence and arrest; segregationists frequently used incarceration as a tactic to discourage protest activity. One way that King altered this calculus was by enhancing certain benefits. During the Birmingham campaign King heightened the reputational benefits of protest when he lectured local Black ministers stating, "I'm tired of preachers riding around in big cars,

living in fine homes, but not willing to take their part in the fight . . .If you can't stand up with your own people, you are not fit to be a leader!" (Morris, 1986: 263). King was also able to persuade others that the costs of of protesting were actually benefits that raised one's reputation in the Black community.[26] Bayard Rustin stated, "In the Black community (before King's inspirational lectures) going to jail have been a badge of dishonor. Martin made going to jail like receiving a Ph.D."[27]

While a rational agent will participate in collective action if the benefits outweigh the costs, it is only a necessary condition. For even a highly motivated civil rights activist will not protest if: a) no one else joins them and b) the goals are unrealistic. No one protests alone for a hopeless cause. What an individual agent requires are "assurances" that there will be mass participation in the action and that the goals are attainable. King by his presence and words can assure his audience that many will join the cause whether it be a protest, boycott, or voter registration drive. Wyatt Walker observed, "Martin Luther King's great leadership came from the fact that he was able to get more warm bodies in the street at one time than anybody else we've ever seen in American history. That's what gave him his tremendous influence and power."[28] King could also inspire confidence in his followers that their actions will lead to results. An attendee at one of King's speeches remarked, "Just listening to him (King) speak gave you the courage to go on."[29] Because of King's early success with the Montgomery Bus Boycott he could credibly persuade others that their collective actions would not be in vain. It was King, through his speeches, that brought assurances that collective action in the name of civil rights could be successfully undertaken.

3 Data

3.1 MLK, Jr.'s Speaking Events

To document King's speaking events I rely on *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volumes 1-7* (1992; 1994; 1997; 2000; 2005; 2007; 2014a), *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Encyclopedia* (Carson et al., 2008), and the Online King Records Access (OKRA). These publications were a result of the herculean effort of the MLK, Jr. Papers Project, a part-

[26] Chong (1991) writes that, "King possessed an extraordinary capacity to make his followers focus on the pleasure than than the travails of their struggle to achieve racial equality. . . The hostilities, threats, and injuries that each would have to endure were a testimony to their dignity, self-esteem, and courage."

[27] (Raines, 1983: 56)

[28] (Morris, 1986: 92)b

[29] (Garrow, 1986: 325)

nership between the King estate, The King Center, and Stanford University. The Papers Project is the most comprehensive source of all of King's writings and public statements (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1992) and the speeches included in the Papers Project represent the most significant ones delivered (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2014b).[30] In total, I have 1,031 speaking events between 1955-1968. Each speaking event has a date (month and year) and location (city).[31] For a subset of the speeches, I have information on the venue where the speech was delivered (80% of speeches), the tile of the speech (65%), the event at which the speech was delivered (55%), and the topics that were covered (42%). King spoke widely on topics ranging from poverty, Communism, labor movements, and war but was also incredibly focused on subjects such as discrimination, segregation and race. And to little surprise, non-violence is the most cited topic in King's speeches.

Figure 1 presents the spatial distribution of MLK speaking events by geolocating the 212 cities (183 counties) where King made a speech. It appears that King spoke widely throughout the United States, with the exception being the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states. Figure 2 shows that for a majority of the cities in the sample (74%), King made either one or two visits. Cities where King spoke 5+ times include: New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and Montgomery.

I will now revisit two concerns that I noted in the introduction. The first is that I do not have the universe of King's speeches. The best evidence we have is that King made over 2500 speeches throughout the world over his lifetime (Nobel Prize Committee, 1964). This suggests that I have accounted for at least 40% of King's domestic speeches. I will discuss in more detail the potential bias that this might generate in the research design sections. The second concern is that King was invited to speak at protest events and thus a protest would have occurred regardless if King spoke. To assuage this concern I use the available data on a speech's venue, title, and event and identify which ones were given at a protest and exclude these speeches from the analytical sample.

[30] The MLK, Jr. Papers project began in the mid-1980's and was first led by Dr. Clayborne Carson at Stanford University. The research and editorial process for the project was and continues to be painstaking. As noted in the Paper's project website, "Each volume of the King Papers Project requires years of research and, on average, a review of over five thousand documents. Of the many documents, we select the most significant speeches, sermons, correspondences, meeting minutes, interviews and more." (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2014a)

[31] The exact date of all speeches is not available. Dates are sometimes determined by circumstantial evidence when the speech does not contain a date (MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 2014b).

3.2 Protest Activity

3.2.1 Non-Violent Protests

To compile a city-level measure of non-violent protest activity, I utilize three sources: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011; Olzak and West, 1995). Each source documents the date and location of an event. DCA and ECA collect data on all collective action events that are defined as "one in which individuals collectively make a claim or express a grievance on behalf of a social movement organization or category" (McAdam et al., 2009b).[32] Claims seek a change in the system and the events are initiated by groups that do not have institutional power. A civil rights protest is thus defined as collective action involving a public showing (march, sit-in, boycott) to advance claims such as dismantling segregation or barriers to voting for African Americans. Given that SPEED is focused on destabilizing events (where the initiating actor can be the state), I harmonize the definition of Black civil rights protest as a protest advocating for the support of Black civil rights.

Figure 3 presents the total number of Black civil rights protests annually from 1955-1968 based on the data. We see a dramatic increase in the number of protests starting in 1960 and then a decrease in protest activity after 1965. The timing of the decline coincided with the passage of the Voter Rights Act of 1965 and King reportedly said, "There is no more civil rights movement. President Johnson signed it out of existence when he signed the voting rights bill."[33] The spatial distribution of protest activity can be seen in Figure 4 where a Black civil rights protest occurs at least once in over 500 US counties. A map that overlays MLK speaking events and non-violent protests can be found in Appendix Figure A.3.

While protests lasting multiple months such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott or Albany movement are the more salient ones in public consciousness, a vast majority of the protests in the data are between one to two days in duration (Figure A.4) About 80% of protests last a single day while an additional 6% last two days. When examining protest size, there is considerably more variation. About one-third of protests involve between 2-49 participants and another one-third involving 100-499 protestors (Figure A.5)

The protest data provides information if there were violent acts during the event. Black civil rights protests that don't have any documented violence are coded as non-violent.

[32] Collective action events include non-protest activities such as press conferences and legal action.
[33] (Chong, 1991: 194)

When a protest event does involve violence, I am not able to distinguish if the violence was initiated by protestors or by the state (i.e. police officers assaulting protestors). The measure of non-violent Black civil rights protest that I use in the analysis therefore may undercount the true number of protestor-initiated nonviolent actions. Perhaps the most salient example of this is the Bloody Sunday protest march in Selma, Alabama where peaceful protestors led by John Lewis and Hosea Williams were violently assaulted by state police officers.

Finally, it is important to note that the primary source for the protest data is the *New York Times*. Given that King was known to attract media attention, a concern emerges: Were reporters more likely to cover protests in cities where he spoke? It turns out that protest coverage in the *Times* was sourced in two ways. Major protests like the Birmingham campaign were covered by staff reporters, while two wire services (Associated Press or "AP" and United Press or "UP") supplied reports from local papers on protest activity. For most of the Civil Rights Movement, the *Times* had a single Southern bureau with a handful of staff reporters assigned to it. It wasn't until 1964 that the *Times* instituted the "King rule," where a reporter was assigned to follow King anytime he gave a major speech (Roberts and Klibanoff, 2008: 378). This means that *Times* staff reporting wasn't ubiquitous in the South - it focused on big stories that could appear on the front page. AP and UP reporting was different as it involved many local newspapers reporting "minor" stories throughout the South; these were stories more likely to end up in the back pages of the *Times*. Wire services were practically ubiquitous in their coverage because they were sourcing from so many local newsrooms. In fact, the *Times* had a "rewrite" desk which would take wire stories and summarize a daily round up of protests for the back pages of the *Times* (Klibanoff, 2022). Thus, the concern about reporters following King and then reporting on protests that coincided with his locations is tied to reporting by *Times* staff and not from the wire services. While I do not have bylines from the protest articles, I do have the page numbers of where they were published in the *Times*. When examining the page distribution (Appendix Figure A.6), I find that over 80% of protest events are based on articles found starting on page 10 or later. These results suggest that a majority of protest coverage in the Times was sourced from wire services and minimizes concerns that protests were covered simply because there was a reporter following King nearby.

3.2.2 Freedom Riders and Sit-ins

High stakes non-violent protest involved volunteers putting their lives at risk to challenge the Jim Crow regime of segregation and racial discrimination in the South. The Freedom

Rides on interstate buses and the sit-in movement at segregated lunch counters in the early 1960s exemplify this type of protest.

The Freedom Rides arose following the US Supreme Court decision on *Boynton v. Virginia* which ruled that racial segregation on interstate transportation was illegal (a violation of the Interstate Commerce Act). While the ruling banned segregation on interstate buses and terminals, many regions in the South continued to maintain segregation via white-only seating areas and bus terminals. CORE (Congress of Racial Equity) organized groups of interracial volunteers (known as Freedom Riders) to ride buses throughout the South and test whether the federal government would intervene. Specifically, pairs of Black and whites would sit together on buses and at least one Black rider would sit in the whites-only section of the bus. At various stops, the Freedom Riders would use whites-only waiting rooms and facilities at segregated terminals. The personal costs to the Freedom Riders was high. Widespread arrests of Freedom Riders were made by local police when the riders disembarked. Arrest alone was probably a "good" outcome for a Freedom Rider as a number of them were also savagely beaten by angry white mobs. Local police would frequently share information about the Freedom Rides with white supremacy groups such as the Klu Klux Klan and at times coordinate attacks where police would turn a blind eye to assaults on Freedom Riders before arresting them. Raymond Arsenault's definitive work *The Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Arsenault, 2006), provides biographies of the 462 Freedom Riders who participated in the protest. I digitize this information which includes data on race, gender, age, and most importantly city of residence. I thus can link on a city-level the location of Freedom Riders and King's speaking events.

The wave of sit-ins in the South in 1960 began when four Black college students sat at a whites-only lunch counter at Woolworths in Greensboro, NC with the goal of desegregating these establishments. News of this spread quickly and within a few months, sit-in protests occurred at over 60 cities in the South. I employ data from Biggs and Andrews (2015) who construct a city-level dataset of sit-in protests that includes 334 cities in the South.[34]

[34] Biggs and Andrews (2015) collect data on all cities in the South that had at least 10,000 people and 1,000 non-whites baed on the 1960 Census.

3.3 Voting Activity

3.3.1 Voter Registration Data

Voter Registration data comes from reports of the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and were digitized by Koch et al. (2021). Following passage of the 1957 Civil Rights Act, the CCR was created and began the painstaking process of collecting African American voter registration data on a county level for states in the US South which include: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia (Walton et al., 2012). Voter registration data is available for the years 1958, 1960, 1965, and 1968 and the registration data in 1965 consists of the period prior to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

It is important to note that some counties do not report data for all years. One reason is that state officials actively worked to suppress the reporting of this data. For example, the state attorney general of Mississippi ordered county registrars to not cooperate with the CCR in its efforts to collect voter registration data (Walton et al., 2012: Ch 23).

3.3.2 Voter Education Project (VEP)

The Voter Education Project (VEP) was a southern-based program that received both federal and philanthropic funding and was managed by the Southern Research Council in Atlanta. It was born partially as a response by the Kennedy administration's concern that the Freedom Ride protests were being too disruptive; leaders of the Freedom Rides were lobbying Kennedy to provide federal protection for Freedom Riders. Robert Kennedy (attorney general) proposed that these protests cease in order to focus on Black voter registration (Faulkenbury, 2019). The VEP would give grants to both major civil rights organizations (SCLC, CORE, SNCC, NAACP, and the National Urban League) as well as local grassroots operations to fund voter registration drives (Wright, 2013: 186; Garrow, 1986: 163). What was known as the first VEP wave occurred between March 1962 and October 1964 and was credited with registering about 688,000 voters across the South (Faulkenbury, 2019: 4). I digitize all of the VEP maps created byFaulkenbury (2019) that document the organizations receiving VEP grants including location (county) and years the grant was received.

3.3.3 Vote Share Data for 1968 Presidential Election

By the time of the 1968 election, the national Democratic party was widely seen as the party most supportive of the Civil Rights Movement. In the South, George Wallace, the

governor of Alabama, broke away from the Democratic party and ran as a third-party segregationist candidate. I utilize county-level vote election data from (Clubb et al., 2006) that tallies vote share for Nixon (Republican candidate), Humphrey (Democrat), and Wallace for all counties in the South. In addition, I am able to track voter-turnout and vote share for both Presidential and Congressional elections from 1948 to 1955.

3.4 Additional Data

US census data from the *Historical, Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: The United States, 1790-2002 (ICPSR 2896)* (Haines, 2010) provides county-level demographic data for 1950. City-level data is available on all cities with a population of at least 25,000 in 1950. County-level data on the number of NAACP branches is sourced from Estrada and Hermida (2022).

3.5 Analytical Samples

There are two main analytical samples used in the analysis (see Figure 5). The first is the *protest sample* which links MLK speaking events to non-violent protest activity on a city-level. A monthly panel is constructed that contains 8119 cities and towns in 630 counties for all months between the years 1955-1968 and tracks King speaking events and the occurrence of nonviolent protests.[35] Since data on Freedom Riders and sit-ins are only reported for a single year (1961 and 1960 respectively), I generate a cross section of cities. The first cross section consists of all cities with a population of at least 25,000 and tallies the number of non-violent protest from 1955 to 1960 and the number of Freedom Riders that originated from each city.[36] A second cross section uses the Biggs and Andrews (2015) data of Southern cities (population +10,000) and adds an indicator if a sit-in protest occurred. Limiting the cross sectional analysis to larger cities is pertinent to the IV strategy which relies on using direct flights to Montgomery, AL to predict where King speaks; many airports are located in urban areas.

The second analytical sample is the *voter sample* that links King speaking events to voting outcomes. The sample consists of 1197 counties in 10 Southern states for the years 1958, 1960, 1965, and 1968. For each of these years, I document whether King spoke in a county. Similar to the protest sample, both a panel and cross sections are

[35] Months is the preferred time unit because a subset of MLK speeches only include the month and year of the event. n addition, nonviolent protests are a rare event, so aggregating time to the month level improves power.

[36] The number of non-violent protests between 1955-1960 is winsorized at the top .05%.

generated for analysis. The voter panel tracks counties over the four years where voter registration data is available. The voter cross section adds data from the Voter Education Project and 1968 Presidential election (both outcomes are reported for a single year).

As noted earlier, some counties do not report voter registration data for for all years. For the baseline year (1958), I use state averages to impute black voter registration for missing counties (21 of 1023 counties or 2% of counties in 1958). Counties that do not report voting data in later years (1960, 1965, 1968) are left as missing and generates an unbalanced panel. One concern is if treatment (MLK speech event) is correlated with the reporting of voter registration data. To address this, I regress indicators if a county reports voter data for each year (1955, 1960, 1965, and 1968) on an indicator if MLK ever speaks in a county and a set of county-level controls. I find that in counties where MLK gave a speech, there does not appear to be a significant increase in the likelihood of a county reporting voter registration data (Appendix Table A.1).

4 Empirical Strategies

4.1 Event Study

I use the variation over space (city or counties) and time (months or years) in a difference-in-difference framework to estimate the impacts of King's speeches on protest and voter activity. Specifically, I use the following event study:

$$y_{jt} = \sum_{l=\underline{l}}^{\bar{l}} \beta_l MLK_{j,t+l} + \lambda_j + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{jt} \tag{1}$$

where y_{jt} is the outcome of interest in either city or county j for month or year t. MLK_{jt} is the accumulated number of times King makes a speaking appearance in group j by time t. Time and group fixed effects are denoted λ_t and λ_j respectively. Estimates of average treatment effects on the treated (ATT) assume parallel trends between treated and control groups and no anticipatory effects. Standard errors are clustered at the group j level (city or county).

Since King speaks in some cities multiple times, the treatment is discrete (0,1,2,3 . . .). To account for this, I use the Schmidheiny and Siegloch (2020) estimator ("SS estimator") that assumes homogenous treatment effects across groups.[37] I also use the

[37] How plausible is this? This assumption requires that MLK's speeches were just as inspiring in Montgomery and Atlanta in 1955 as they were in Washington D.C and New York in 1960. One argument in favor of this stems from MLK's sermon preparation. MLK relied on approximately 100 sermons that formed

de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2024) estimator ("dCDH estimator") that is robust to heterogenous treatment effects that could potential bias estimates from standard two-way fixed effects models (Goodman-Bacon, 2021; Roth et al., 2023; de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille, 2020; Sun and Abraham, 2021).[38]

For robustness, I estimate the event study by limiting the analysis to the first King speaking event in a city or county by excluding from the analytical sample all group by time observations that have been treated two or more times. The event study then uses a single binary treatment with staggered adoption. For this analysis, I use both two-way fixed effects (TWFE) and the Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) estimator ("CS estimator") that is robust to heterogenous treatment effects.

To gauge the plausibility of parallel trends, I use the 1950 census which was collected prior to King rising to national prominence in 1955. I compare county-level characteristics between places where King spoke (treatment) to those where he did not (control). Table 1 presents this comparison. Panel A compares cities in the protest sample, while Panel B compares counties in the voter sample. I standardized all 1950 census variables using z-scores and then regress each of these covariates on an indicator if MLK ever spoke at the location. Columns 1 and 6 present the mean for never treated cities (counties) and columns 2 and 7 report the difference in standard deviations. We see in both samples (Panels A & B) that King is more likely to speak in higher populated urban areas that have a higher share of non-whites. These are also the areas where NAACP chapters are more likely to form (NAACP 1942) and suggests that locations where King is speaking at having an existing base of Black political organization.

To address concerns that these baseline differences can lead to differential trends, I condition parallel trends with the county-level covariates in Table 1 using inverse probability weighting (IPW). This refines the identifying assumption to be that cities (counties) with similar covariates will follow parallel trends.[39] When IPWs are applied to the the protest

his canon and had similar themes and topics and he pulled and synthesize parts of these sermons when preparing to preach (Lischer, 2020). It also appears that MLK's sermons heavily influenced his speeches with the primary difference being the deemphasis of explicit Biblical passages from his speeches (Miller, 2022; Dorrien, 2022). MLK's advocacy of non-violence in the pursuit of justice for Black Americans is a constant theme throughout MLK's speaking career. However, it may be the case that the reception to these speeches may have changed over time, as the composition of his audience may have diversified as MLK became more widely known

[38]The dcDH estimator requires that some cities have the same period one treatment (see de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2024) "Design Restriction 1.") In this study, it is straightforward to satisfy this requirement since the first period of the sample is Jan 1955 and is prior to when King was going on speaking tours throughout the US; thus all period one treatments would be zero. Two cities are notable exceptions which are Montgomery and Atlanta where King spoke prior to Jan 1955. I therefore remove both cities from the analysis.

[39]Specifically, estimates from the logistic model are used to predict treatment status, and then inverse

sample (Panel A), we see that differences across pre-treatment characteristics are dramatically reduced (Table 1: Columns 4 & 5) and that there are no longer any statistically significant differences at the 5% level. When a joint-test is done on whether the covariates predict treatment status, the joint F-statistic dramatically falls from 12.8 to 1.8 (Columns 3 & 5) when comparing the unweighted to the weighted sample. Similarly, IPWs better balance the voter registration sample (Columns 9 and 10) with the joint F-statistic falling from 10.13 to 1.31.

4.2 2SLS-IV

The instrumental variable approach is motivated by King's use of civil aviation to meet the demands of his busy speaking schedule. From 1955 to 1960, King served as the head pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama which was his primary source of income at the time. Even in the midst of a demanding speaking schedule, King felt a responsibility to preach on Sunday mornings at his home church as much as possible.[40] King was therefore reliant on civil air transportation to traverse the nation making speeches and appearances. Ortlepp (2017) notes in King's papers that, "his writings reflect a busy national travel schedule whose *connecting dots were the nation's airports*." It appears that King relied on air transportation to not only travel outside the South, but also within it as well (Ortlepp, 2017).

I use data from the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) Air Traffic Survey which provides a listing of all origination-destination city pairs and includes the number of direct flights between each pair of cities. Using the September 1955 Air Traffic Survey, I record all cities that have a direct flight to Montgomery (CAA, 1955) and use this information to predict the cities where King speaks. The survey I use was collected prior to the Montgomery Bus Boycott that catapulted King to national prominence which minimizes concerns that King's own scheduling generated new direct flight routes. Given the long bureaucracy of authorizing new routes, the direct routes in 1955 are most likely predictive of direct routes during the Civil Rights Movement (Carlson, 1996).

Using the protest and voter cross section samples, I estimate the following 2SLS-IV equations:

probability weights are constructed for each observation. Weights less than .005 are trimmed from the sample.

[40] King was the lead pastor while at Montgomery. When King moved to Atlanta, his role did not require him to preach on every Sunday morning, freeing up his time to speak in other locations as well as to lead the SCLC. I thus focus on flights to Montgomery and not Atlanta as an instrumental variable.

$$Y_j = \beta MLK_j + X_j'\Gamma + \lambda_s + \varepsilon_{js} \tag{2}$$

$$MLK_j = \gamma Direct_Flight_j + X_j'\zeta + \lambda_s + u_{js} \tag{3}$$

where Y_j is the outcome of interest for either a city or county j. MLK_j is an indicator if King spoke in city or the number of years King speaks in a county (0 = King never speaks in a county and 4 = King makes a speaking appearance in all four years 1958, 1960, 1965, and 1968). X_j' are either county or city level controls, and λ_s are state fixed effects. I instrument for locations where King speaks using $Direct_Flight_j$ which equals one if there is a direct flight from city j to Montgomery, AL (protest sample) or if there is a direct flight from county j to Montgomery (voter sample). Standard errors are clustered on the state level except when the sample is limited to the South where clustering is on the State Economic Area (SEA) due to the small number of states.[41]

Which cities have direct flights to Montgomery (MGM)? I generate a list of the cities sorted by population that have direct flights and compare them to cities without direct flights (Table 2). Panel A uses cities outside the South while Panel B limits the analysis to cities in the South. Overall, major metropolitan areas are represented in both groups (Panel A: direct flight to MGM vs. no direct flight to MGM), but that cities with direct flights tend to have larger populations. With cities in the South (Panel B), the pattern holds with cities with larger populations having a higher representation in the group with direct flights to MGM. What is interesting to note is that in the South, the variation induced by direct flights to MGM is not limited to large cities; a number of much smaller cities such as Tallahassee, FL and Hattiesburg, MS also have direct flights. To account for differences in city size, I condition on population in addition to all of the demographic controls (percentage Black, high school graduates, male) and political controls (voter turnout and NAACP branches) found in Table 1.

To examine whether direct flights to MGM are predictive of King's speaking appearances, I estimate the first stage (equation 3) and present results in Table 3. Across all specifications, a direct flight to MGM is strongly predictive of where King is speaking. In the protest sample (Columns 1-2), cities with a direct flight to MGM increase their likelihood of a King speech by about 40 percentage points. First-stage F-statistics for cities and Southern cites exceed the 16.38 benchmark (Stock and Yogo, 2005), but the F-statistic is considerably lower for Southern cities; this may be due to the greater importance of air

[41] The census bureau defines SEAs as "groups of contiguous counties within the same state that had similar economic characteristics" in the 1950 census. See https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/SEA#description_section.

travel for King outside of the South. For the voter sample (columns 3-7), a direct flight to MGM increases the exposure that King has in a county; in the 1968 sample (column 6), a direct flight to MGM predicts almost a single additional visit year. To account for the weaker first-stage in the South, I report both Anderson-Rubin and tF 95% confidence intervals which are robust to a weak first-stage (Andrews et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2022).

Identification of local average treatment effects (LATE) requires both the exclusion restriction and that direct flights are not correlated with the error term after conditioning on controls (independence assumption). It seems plausible that direct flights that predate the Civil Rights Movement should not have any direct effects on either protest activity or voter registration and hence satisfy the exclusion restriction. For the independence assumption, I do various tests involving the first-stage equation which I describe below.

The first test is a placebo exercise to examine whether there is a spurious relationship between direct flights to MGM and King speaking events. I take all the cities and counties in the sample and randomize which ones have a direct flight to MGM. I then estimate the first-stage (equation 3) and obtain the F-statistic. I repeat this 150 times and report the distribution of placebo F-statistics in Figure 6. In both the protest and voter sample, all F-statistics from the placebo IV are below 10, and a majority of them are below 2; the placebo IV appears to have little predictive power and provides evidence that actual direct flights to MGM are an important determinant of King's speaking locations.

As we saw in Table 2, it maybe the case that direct flights from regional airports such as MGM are simply picking up larger cities. I thus do a test comparing MGM to to two other regional airports: Jackson Airport in Mississippi (JAN) and Craig Air Field in Selma, Alabama (SEM). JAN was selected because Jackson, MI was the closest in population and percentage non-white to Montgomery (out of 325 cities in the South) and SEM is one of the closest airports to Montgomery. If the direct flights of regional airports are simply picking up large cities, then MGM, JAN, and SEM should all have similar predictive power of King's speaking locations. I do a "horserace" and estimate the first-stage (equation 3) using MGM, JAN, and SEM simultaneously and compare the F-statistics between each of them (Figure 7). In the protest sample (left panel), we see that MGM still has a first-stage F-statistic of 49 (18) for the city (Southern city) sample even when JAN and SEM are included in the first-stage equation; the F-statistics for both JAN and SEM never exceed 2 in either set of estimates. For the voter sample (right panel), we see in every year (1960, 1965, 1968), the F-statistics for MGM is between 12 to 13 where as F-statistics for JAN and SEM are considerably lower. Overall, these results point to direct flights to MGM vastly outperforming similar airports in predicting which King is speaking. As an additional exercise, I also estimate the first-stage for MGM, JAN, and SEM separately

and the comparison of the first F-statistics generate a similar result: MGM outperforms comparable airports (Appendix Figure A.7).

The final test is an indirect one of exogeneity which involves estimating the first-stage but replacing the outcome with measures of political activity that predate the Civil Rights Movement (1955). Figure 8 presents the results. Each figure plots the estimate for γ in equation 3 with 95% confidence intervals for each outcome listed on the y-axis. Many of the coefficients in the protest and voter samples hover around zero, and I am unable to reject any of them at the 5% level. These results suggest that direct flights to MGM are not correlated with pre-existing political conditions that may have directly affected protest or voter activity.

5 Results

5.1 King's Impact on Protest Activity

Was King an impetus for the wave of direct action that swept the nation during the Civil Rights Movement? Event study results suggest that King's speeches had an immediate and meaningful impact on non-violent protest activity. Figure 9 presents the results. Visually, pretends appear relatively flat and a placebo test fails to reject the joint nullity of the pre-period coefficients at conventional levels (p-value > .05; de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille, 2024).

The effect of King's speaking events appear concentrated in the month that King makes a speech (period 0). Using the more conservative estimates, in the month of a King speech, there is a 2.5% increase in the likelihood of a non-violent protest amounting to a 27-fold increase.[42] While the magnitude of the effect is large, it should be noted that non-violent civil rights protests were a relatively rare event with a mean of .10% across all city months. The effects of a King speech dissipate quickly such that after a month, there is no noticeable treatment effect. This may speak to the fact that protests are difficult to sustain over a long period. Protestors may have had to miss work or school and movement leaders had to be constantly organizing to sustain protests. The notion that sustained protesting is difficult is consistent with the data - about 80% of protests last a single day (see earlier discussion in section 3.2). Protests spanning weeks or months such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Albany Movement were certainly historically salient but not representative of the vast majority of protests.

[42] Estimates of $\hat{\beta}_0$ are 5.0% (Schmidheiny and Siegloch) and 2.7% (de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille).

An important thing to keep in mind is that all of King's speeches that I could identify as being delivered at a protest are removed from the analytical sample, and so the results are not being generated by reverse causality. I also estimate event studies that limit the analysis to King's first speaking event in a city. The results are fairly similar with estimates for period 0 effects from TWFE and CS estimators of 3.0% and 5.9% respectively. (Appendix Figure A.8: left panel).

One concern is that I don't have the complete universe of all of King's speeches. Assuming homogenous treatment effects, the estimates would be attenuated and represent lower bounds. Under heterogenous treatment effects, missing speech events pose a greater threat to identification as there is a possibility that I am comparing treatment cities to previously treated cities that are not reported in the data. Depending on the timing of treatment, this can generate negative weights and lead to a sign reversal for estimates of the ATT. In other words, the positive effects of King's speeches on protest activity might actually be negative. There are two ways of assuaging these concerns. First, while possible, it is difficult to envision that a King speech would demotivate his listeners and make them less likely to engage in nonviolent protests. Myriad of historians have documented the powerful and inspiring effects of King's speeches on his audience. Nonviolence is also practically analogous with King's name. Second, the data on King's speeches is primarily sourced from the MLK, Jr. Papers Project. Due to funding and timing, the Project was able to document a greater number of King's speeches between 1955 to 1963. It therefore seems plausible that there is a a lower likelihood of a missed speech in this time period and I thus redo the event study analysis using this abbreviated time frame. Estimates are similar to the main results but with reduced precision due to the smaller sample size (Appendix Figure A.8: right panel).

The evidence so far points to King having an immediate effect on protests. To evaluate longer-term impacts, I use the IV approach with the city-level cross sections. Table 4 presents both the reduced from and 2SLS-IV estimates. The first set of results (Columns 1-2) look at King's effect on the total number of non-violent protests in a city. Reduced form estimates reveal that cities with a direct flight to MGM have a greater number of nonviolent protests. Using the 2SLS-IV estimates, a King speech leads to an increase of 1.30 nonviolent protests in a city, and the treatment coefficient is relatively stable when we look at Southern cities (column 2). Similar to the event study analysis, the magnitude of the effect size is large: a King speech induces over a 4-fold increase in the number of nonviolent protests in a city. Reassuringly, both Anderson-Rubin and tF confidence intervals which are robust to weak instruments cover a positive interval and exclude zero. The IV results on non-violent protests collaborate the event study results that King is a

catalyst for this form of collective action.

I now turn to higher-stake protest activities. Does King inspire others to take extraordinary risks to further the cause of the Civil Rights Movement? In columns 3-4, we see evidence that King motivated people to risk their lives to challenge Jim Crow laws as a Freedom Rider. Using the 2SLS-IV estimates for the city sample (column 3), a King speech increases the likelihood of a Freedom Rider by 51% which is about a 3-fold increase (mean = .156); this result is consistent in the South as well (column 4). The biographical data of the Freedom Riders allows me to differentiate the race of these courageous volunteers. King appears to have a strong effect on Black Freedom Riders (Column 5 & 6); a King appearance inspires an 4 additional Black Freedom Riders. King's effect on white Freedom Riders is mixed. While in the city sample (Column 7), the coefficient (3.92) is similar to the effects on Black Freedom Riders (but less precisely estimated), King's influence all but disappears when looking at white Freedom Riders in the South (Column 8). There were most likely fewer white liberals in the South, and even fewer who were willing to attend a King speech and participate in a high-risk protest activity (the average number of white Freedom Riders in the South was .018). In the final result on protest activity, I find that King increases the likelihood of a sit-in by 42 percentage points, but I note that while the Anderson-Rubin CI rules out zero, the tF CI does not.

5.2 King's Impact on Voter Registration

I now turn to King's impact on a key outcome of the Civil Rights Movement: Black voter registration. Figure 10 presents the event study results using the voter panel (section 3.5). Before discussing the results, it is important to be upfront about the limitations in this analysis. The voter panel is limited to only four time periods making it difficult to assess pre-trends. The number of years between time periods also varies ranging from two (1958 to 1960) to five years (1960 to 1965). The event study results for voter registration should thus be interpreted with caution and can serve to supplement the IV-analysis which will be discussed later.

The event study results reveal that King's speeches led to a meaningful increase in the number of Black registered voters in a county. Using the more conservative estimates of $\hat{\beta}_0$ (+1143 de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille), a King speech results in a 76% increase in the number of Black registered voters (mean = 1504) and these treatment effects appear relatively stable in latter periods (period 1). What explains the longer-term results in period 1? It is important to note that the last year of the voter registration data is 1968 which follows the enactment of the Voter Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). The VRA was one

of the crowning achievements of the Civil Rights Movement and paved the way for large expansions of Black voter registration in the South. King's speeches may have planted the idea that voter registration was crucial and that when conditions were favorable (the passage of the VRA), more Black individuals took up the cause and registered to vote.

The IV analysis provides further evidence of King's influence on Black voter registration. I estimate equation 2 using the voter registration cross sections where Y_j is the change in the number of Black registered voters from 1958 to the year of each sample (1960, 1965, 1968). The changes in voter registration allows me to account for pre-existing levels of registered voters. Estimates from the reduced form and 2SLS-IV are presented in Table 5. Overall, it appears that in each of the registration years (Columns 1 - 3) King had a positive impact on voter registration that is reflected in both the reduced form and IV estimates which all produce positive coefficients that are significant at the 1% level. Both Anderson-Rubin and tF confidence intervals have positive lower bounds which is important to emphasize given that first-stage results for this analysis were relatively weaker (see Table 3: Columns 3-7). Conservatively relying on the lower bound of the tF confidence intervals, I find that a King speech event leads to a change of 731 Black registered voters (Column 2) which is about a 50% increase.

While there are differences in the magnitude of treatment effects between the event study and IV analysis, both sets of results point to King having a large positive effect on Black voter registration.[43] To put these results in historical context, the VRA is widely considered to have been the most effective measure during the Civil Rights Movement to increase Black enfranchisement. Southern states affected by the VRA saw an average increase of 22.7 percentage points in Black voter registration rates following passage of the law (Cascio and Washington, 2014). Using the most conservative estimates (lower bound of tF CI in 1965), a back of the envelope calculation shows that King's speeches led to an average increase of 14.5 percentage points. The effect of King's speeches amounts to about three-fifths of the impact of the VRA - an extraordinary testament to King's influence .[44]

One important intermediary linking King to Black voter registration was the Voter Education Project (VEP). As discussed earlier (section 3.3.2), the VEP was a program that funded major civil rights organizations to initiate voter registration drives. I find that King's speaking events led to an increase in the number of organizations receiving a VEP grant (Columns 4 & 5); by 1965, a King appearance increases the number VEP grantees by

[43] One explanation for the differences in coefficients between the event study and IV analysis is that the parameters of interest are different: the event study is estimating an ATT while the IV specification is estimating a LATE.

[44] Data from Koch et al. (2021) reports an average of 5015 eligible Black voters in a county.

1.31 which is over a 4-fold increase. These results highlight a potential channel through which King's speaking appearances led to increases in voter registration.

Does the increase in Black registered voters tip the scales during elections? I examine the 1968 presidential election where a vote for the Democratic candidate (Hubert Humphrey) was seen as supportive of the Civil Rights Movement and a vote for the third-party candidate George Wallace signaled support for segregation. In counties where King spoke, Humphrey benefits from higher vote share (Table 5: Column 6), where Wallace loses support (Column 7). IV estimates suggest meaningful impacts (+3.4 ppt for Humphrey & -6.1 ppt for Wallace). Three of the four weak-IV robust confidence intervals also point in the same direction as the aforementioned estimates: King's speeches drove votes from Wallace to Humphrey. Notably and sadly, the 1968 election occurs after King was assassinated. These election results add to one of many of King's legacies that carried on after his death.

6 Conclusion

King stated the following when reflecting on himself as a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement:

> At times I think I'm a pretty unprepared symbol. But people cannot devote themselves to a great cause without finding someone who becomes the personification of the cause. People cannot become devoted to Christianity until they find Christ, to democracy until they find Lincoln and Jefferson, and Roosevelt, to Communism until they find Marx, Lenin and Stalin. I know that this is a righteous cause and that by being connected with it I am connected with a transcendent value of right. (Eig, 2023: 228)

This study finds that King was more than a symbol. I find that King's speeches led to an increase in non-violent protests and Black voter registration. King's soaring oratory was an impetus for others to engage in the movement. And while King was the leading symbol of the movement, there were a countless number of Black and white Americans involved in fighting for racial justice. Black church leaders that preceded King paved the way for the movement. The tireless legal action of the NAACP led to landmark Supreme Court rulings. Courageous individuals risked their lives sitting at segregated lunch counters and riding on interstate buses to protest segregation. Marchers put themselves in harms way to demand voting rights. The list goes on. Future research can help quantify the contributions that other leaders and direct actions had on the movement.

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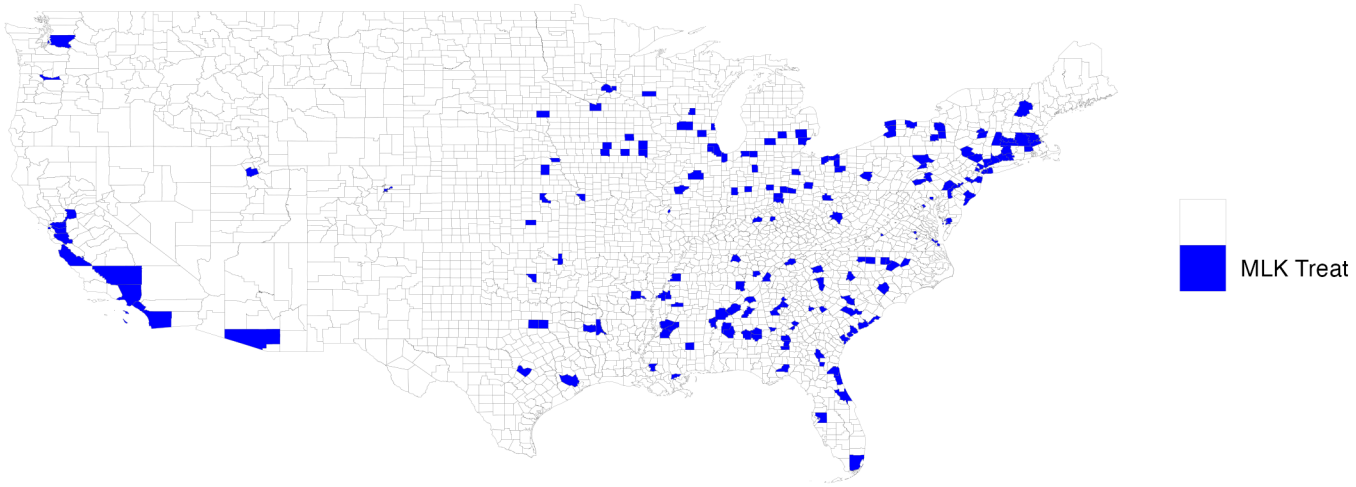
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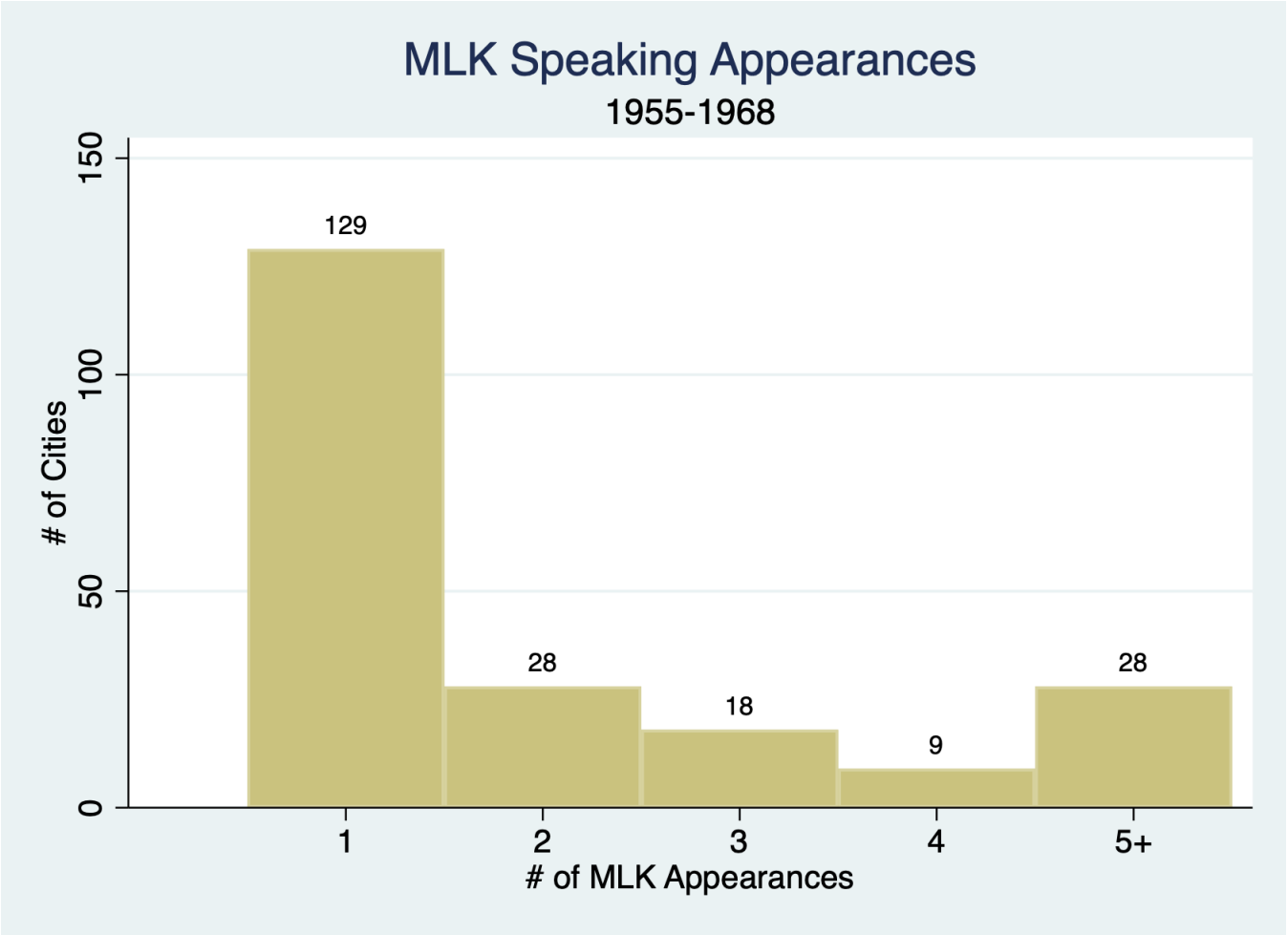
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Figure 1: Locations of MLK, Jr. Speaking Events



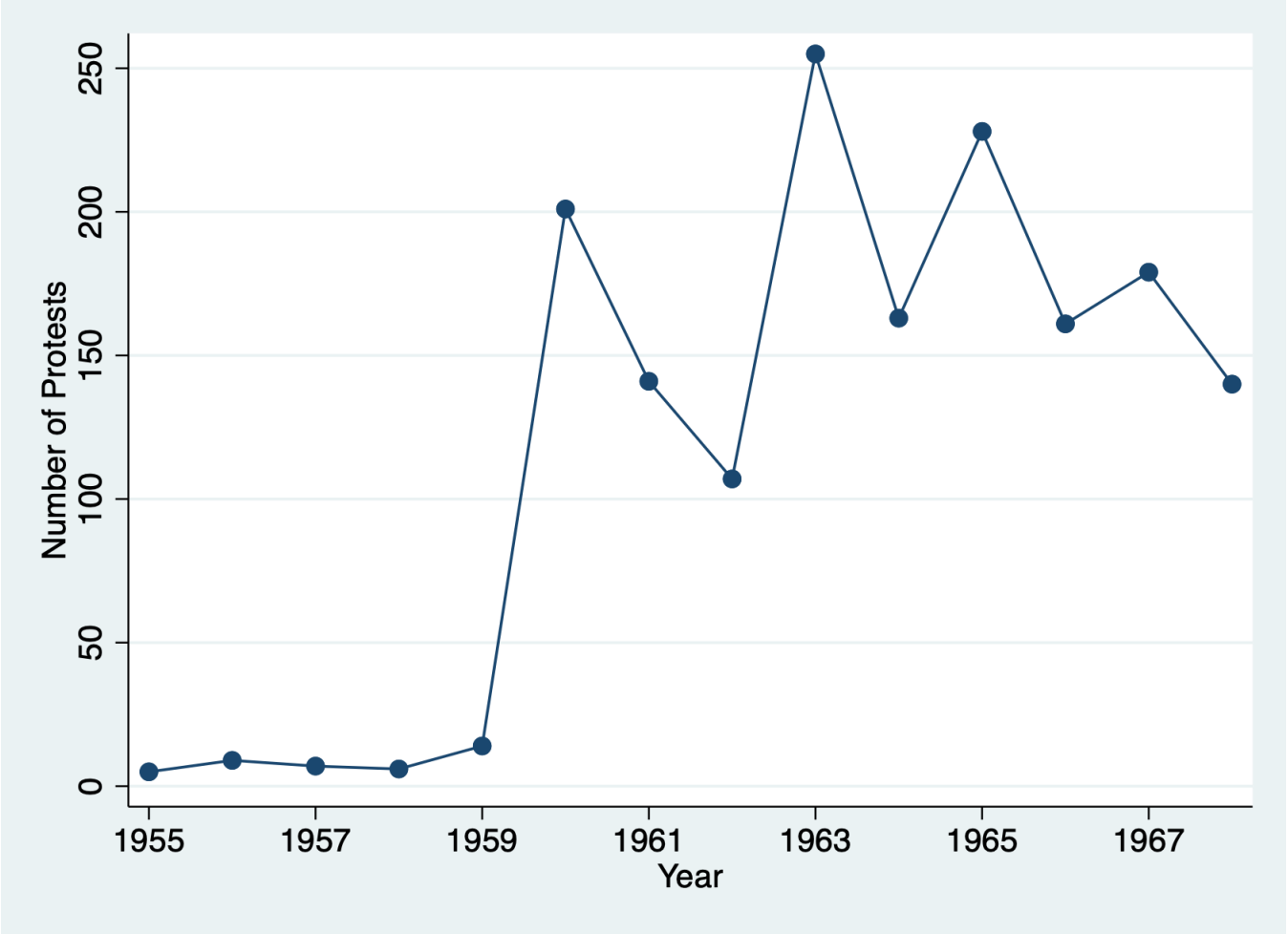
Map is generated from the sample described in section 3.1 and is based on *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volumes 1-7* (1992; 1994; 1997; 2000; 2005; 2007; 2014a), *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Encyclopedia* (Carson et al., 2008), and the Online King Records Access (OKRA). A total of 1,031 speaking events between 1955-1968 are documented that occurred in across 212 cities in 183 counties. The map above presents all of the counties that King spoke in based on the data that is available. As noted in section 3.1, it is a subset of all of King's speaking events.

Figure 2: Distribution of MLK Speaking Appearances



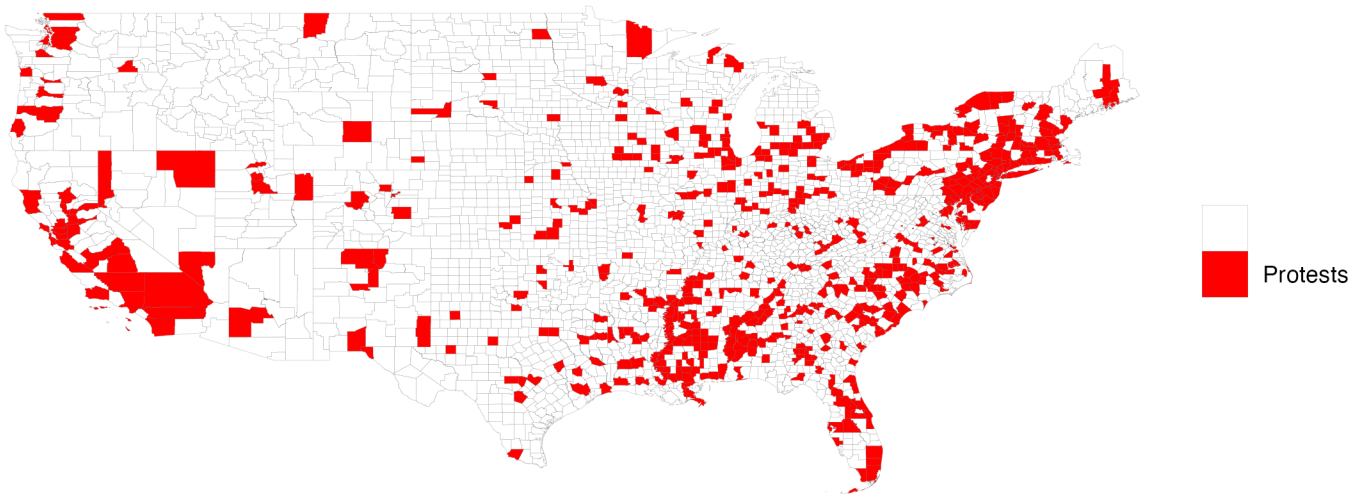
The distribution above is generated from the sample described in section 3.1 and is based on *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volumes 1-7* (1992; 1994; 1997; 2000; 2005; 2007; 2014a), *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Encyclopedia* (Carson et al., 2008), and the Online King Records Access (OKRA). The x-axis is the number of times King speaks in a city and the y-axis shows the number of cities (out of a total of 212 cities).

Figure 3: Black Civil Rights Protests: 1955-1968



Protest data utilizes three sources: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Olzak and West, 1995; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011) and is described in section 3.2. The figure plots total number of protests for each year in the data.

Figure 4: Locations of Black Civil Rights Protests 1955-1968



Protest data utilizes three sources: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Olzak and West, 1995; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011) and is described in section 3.2. There are a total of 3,025 Black civil rights protests occurring in 412 cities across 332 counties. The map above presents all of the counties where a Black civil rights protest occurred between 1955-1968.

Figure 5: Analytical Samples

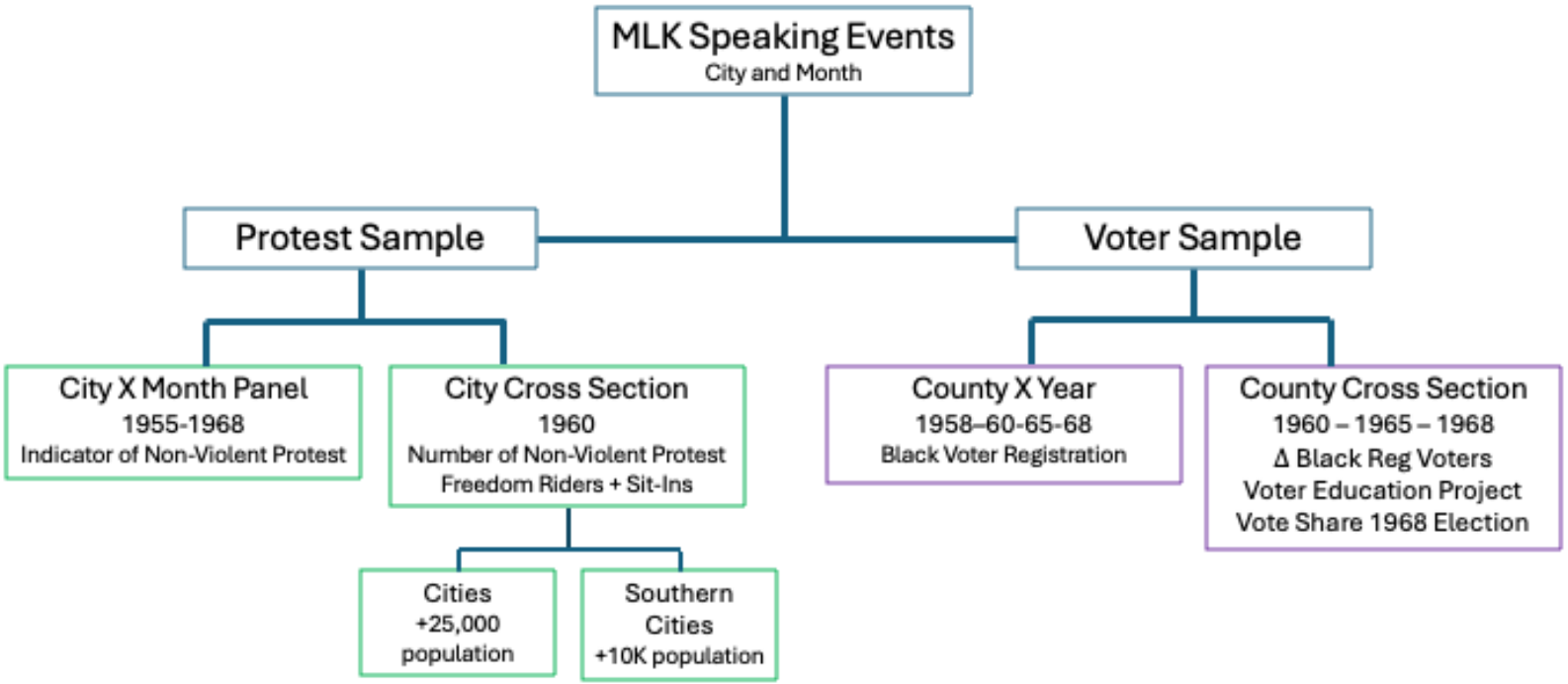
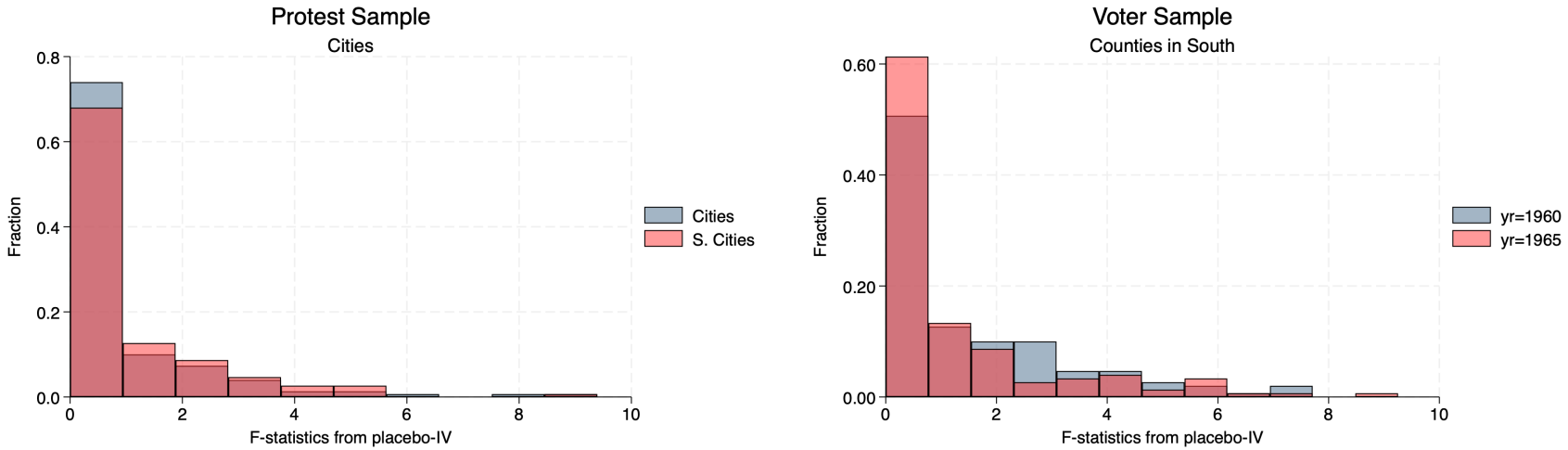


Figure 6: Placebo Test: Randomize Direct Flights to MGM



The panels above report the distribution of first-stage F-statistics from placebo estimations using the protest and voter samples. The cities sample are cities with a population over 25,000 in 1950. The S. Cities sample are cities in the south from Biggs and Andrews (2015). The placebo test involves randomly assigning 57 of 467 cities (49 of 325 cities) a direct flight to MGM in the cities (S. Cities) sample. The number of flights corresponds to the actual number of direct flights to MGM in each sample. The first-stage (equation 3) is then estimated using this placebo flight schedule and the corresponding F-statistic is recorded. This placebo test is then iterated 150 times. The right panel reports the distribution of first-stage F-statistics from placebo estimations using the voter sample consisting of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021). The placebo test involves randomly assigning 22 of 774 counties (34 of 753 counties) a direct flight to MGM in the 1960 (1965) sample.

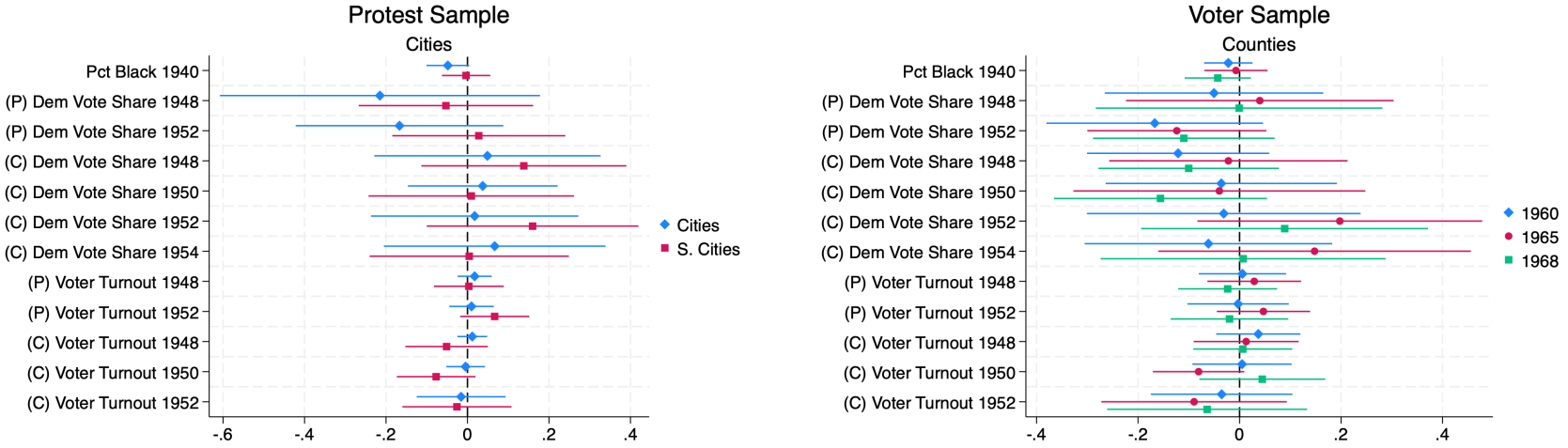
Figure 7: Horserace between MGM and similar airports (JAN, SEM)



The protest sample consists of "Cities" with a population over 25,000 in 1950 and "S. Cities" in the south from Biggs and Andrews (2015). The voter sample consisting of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021).

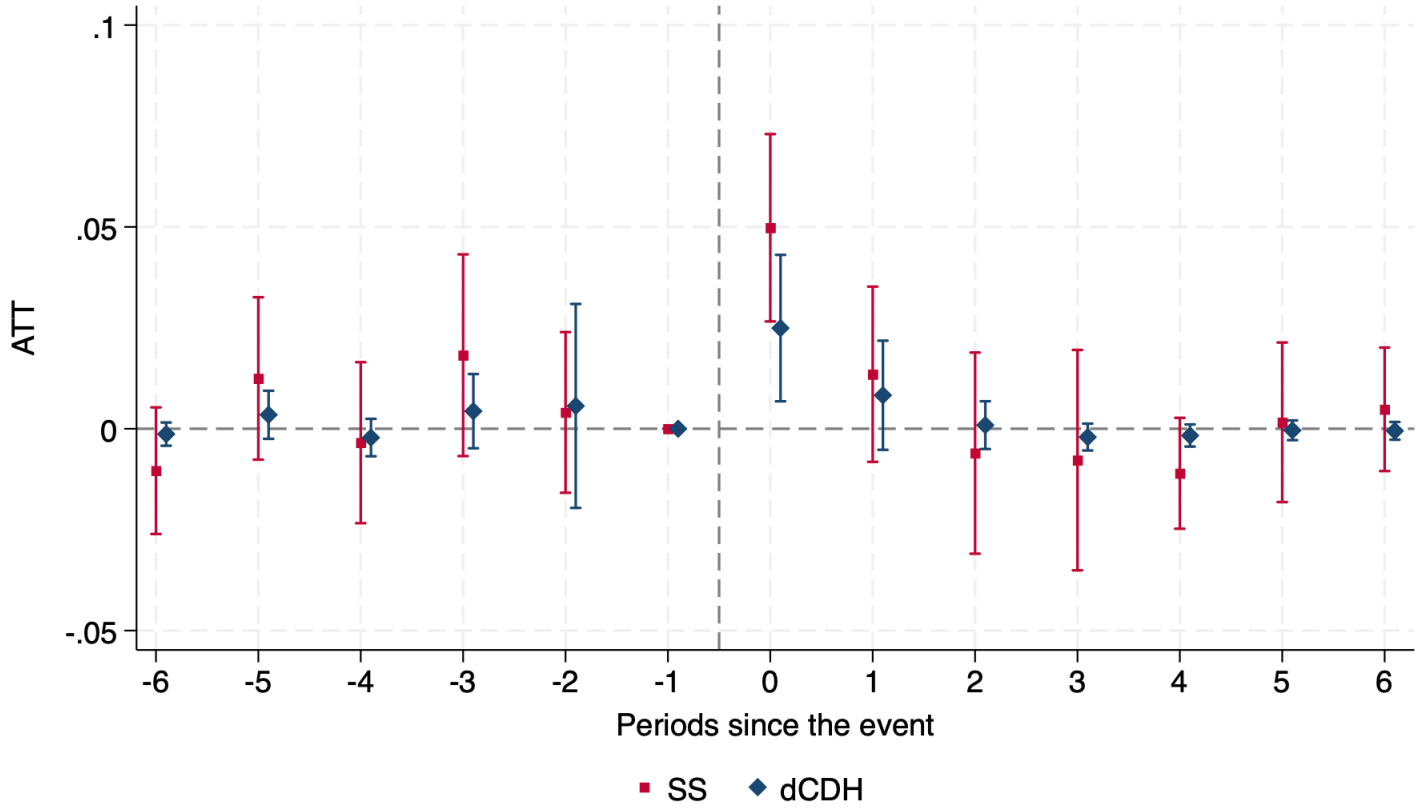
The horserace involves estimating the first-stage (equation 3) using direct flights to MGM, JAN, and SEM. F-statistics for each airport are then reported. The left panel (Protest Sample) consists of two estimations of the first-stage using the Cities sample and then the S. Cities sample. The right panel (Voter Sample) consists of three estimations of the first-stage for the years 1960, 1965, and 1968. Standard errors are clustered on the state-level for the City sample and on the SEA level for S. Cities and the Voter samples.

Figure 8: Exogeneity Test: Direct Flights to MGM and Pre-Civil Rights Movement Outcomes



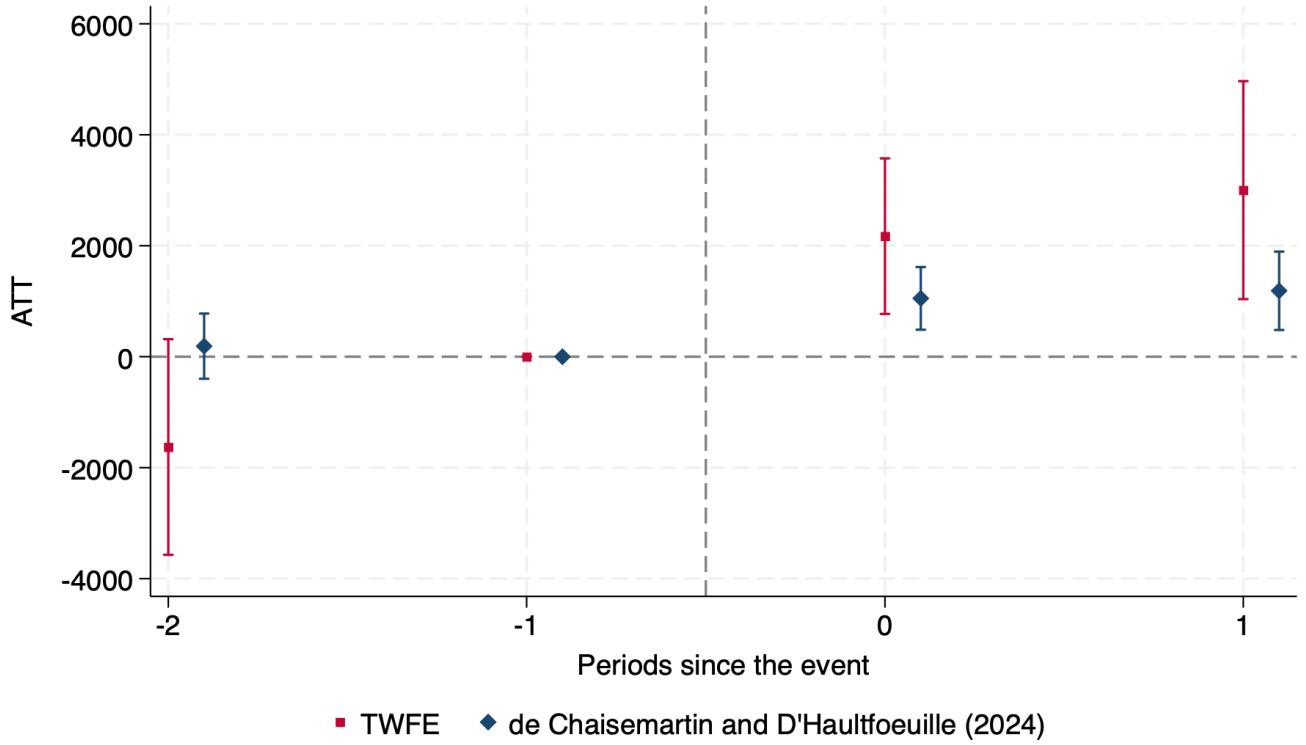
The protest sample consists of "Cities" with a population over 25,000 in 1950 and "S. Cities" in the south from Biggs and Andrews (2015). The voter sample consisting of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021). The figures presents estimations of equation 3 where the outcomes are various measures of political activity prior to 1955. All outcomes are normalized using z-scores and the figure above plots estimates of the correlation between each outcome and the number of direct flights to Montgomery, AL conditional on 1950 census covariates (population, % urban population, gender, % Black, and % with a high school diploma) and measures of political activity (NAACP chapters and voter turnout in 1952). The data used in this analysis consists of county-level data for the states in the US South detailed in Section 3. The figure presents estimations of equation 3 where the outcomes are various measures of political activity prior to 1955. All outcomes are normalized using z-scores and the figure above plots estimates of the correlation between each outcome and the number of direct flights to Montgomery, AL conditional on county-level covariates from Table 1.

Figure 9: Event-Study Analysis: Non-Violent Black Civil Rights Protests



The sample in this analysis is the protest panel (Section 3.5) and consists of monthly city-level data from 1955-1968. The reference period is month = -1 and is normalized to zero. Estimates of β_t from equation 1 are plotted above. SS refers to the TWFE estimator from Schmidheiny and Siegloch (2020). dCDH refers to the de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2024) estimator. The likelihood of a non-violent civil rights protest is .001 (mean of the outcome). Standard errors are clustered at the city level.

Figure 10: Event Study Analysis: Black Registered Voters



The sample in this analysis is the voter registration panel (Section 3.5) and consists of county by registration year in the South for the years 1958, 1960, 1965, and 1968. The reference period is year = -1 and is normalized to zero. The figure plots estimates of β_t in equation 1. The TWFE estimates follow Schmidheiny and Siegloch (2020). Standard errors are clustered on the county level for all specifications. The average number of Black registered voters is 256 in 1965 and 706 in 1968.

Table 1: Differences in Pretreatment Characteristics

	Panel A: Protest Sample (Cities)					Panel B: Voter Sample (Counties in South)				
		Unweighted		Weighted			Unweighted		Weighted	
	Non-MLK Mean	MLK Difference	p-value	MLK Difference	p-value	Non-MLK Mean	MLK Difference	p-value	MLK Difference	p-value
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Log Population	11.87	0.24	<.01	-0.02	0.77	9.79	1.49	<.01	-0.29	0.46
Pct of 1950 County Population:										
in Urban Area	0.61	0.42	<.01	0.01	0.91	0.22	1.43	<.01	-0.19	0.57
Male	0.50	-0.24	<.01	0.16	0.10	0.50	-0.77	<.01	-0.02	0.90
nonwhite	0.10	0.23	<.01	0.01	0.66	0.23	0.49	<.01	0.25	0.07
+12 years education	0.20	0.18	<.01	0.04	0.36	0.10	0.98	<.01	0.07	0.63
Voter Turnout 48-52	0.51	-0.02	0.35	-0.03	0.34	0.31	-0.36	<.01	0.07	0.52
NAACP 1942	0.76	0.29	0.02	0.06	0.43	0.11	1.21	<.01	0.02	0.96
Joint F-Stat			10.37		1.43			10.13		1.31
p-value			<.01		0.19			<.01		0.25

The table compares county-level characteristics from the 1950 census (pre-treatment period) between locations where MLK never spoke (Non-MLK or control group) and where MLK did speak (treatment group). Columns 1-5 compare all US cities (8141 cities in 714 counties) and columns 6-10 compare counties in the US South with voter registration data (1197 counties). All variables are standardized using z-scores. Columns 1 and 6 present means in the control group and columns 2 and 7 present treatment differences expressed in standard deviations. Treatment differences are estimated by regressing each of the covariates on an indicator if MLK ever spoke in a city or county and include state fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at either the county-level (columns 2-5) or the SEA level (columns 7-10) . Columns 4 and 9 present treatment differences after inverse probability weights (IPW) are applied to the sample. IPWs are generated using logistic model to predict MLK treatment status using the county-level characteristics in the above table.

Table 2: Comparison of Cities with Direct Flights to Montgomery, AL

Panel A: Cities outside South						Panel B: Cities in South					
Direct Flight to MGM			No Flight to MGM			Direct Flight to MGM			No Direct Flight to MGM		
City	State	Pop 1950	City	State	Pop 1950	City	State	Pop 1950	City	State	Pop 1950
Largest Cities						Largest Cities					
NEW YORK	NY	7,891,957	LOS ANGELES	CA	1,970,358	BALTIMORE	MD	949,708	NORFOLK	VA	213,513
CHICAGO	IL	3,620,962	SAN FRANCISCO	CA	775,357	HOUSTON	TX	596,163	AUSTIN	TX	132,459
PHILADELPHIA	PA	2,071,605	PITTSBURGH	PA	676,806	NEW ORLEANS	LA	570,445	EL PASO	TX	130,485
DETROIT	MI	1,849,568	MILWAUKEE	WI	637,392	DALLAS	TX	434,462	KNOXVILLE	TN	124,769
CLEVELAND	OH	914,808	BUFFALO	NY	580,132	SAN ANTONIO	TX	408,442	SAVANNAH	GA	119,638
ST. LOUIS	MO	856,796	MINNEAPOLIS	MN	521,718	MEMPHIS	TN	396,000	CORPUS CHRISTI	TX	108,287
WASHINGTON	DC	802,178	SEATTLE	WA	467,591	LOUISVILLE	KY	369,129	LITTLE ROCK	AR	102,213
BOSTON	MA	801,444	KANSAS CITY	MO	456,622	ATLANTA	GA	331,314	SAINT PETERSBURG	FL	96,738
CINCINNATI	OH	503,998	NEWARK	NJ	438,776	BIRMINGHAM	AL	326,037	HUNTINGTON	WV	86,353
INDIANAPOLIS	IN	427,173	DENVER	CO	415,786	FORT WORTH	TX	278,778	WACO	TX	84,706
WILMINGTON	DE	110,356	OAKLAND	CA	384,575	MIAMI	FL	249,276	PORTSMOUTH	VA	80,039
PROVIDENCE	RI	248,674	PORTLAND	OR	373,628	RICHMOND	VA	230,310	AMARILLO	TX	74,246
COLUMBUS	OH	375,901	SAN DIEGO	CA	334,387	JACKSONVILLE	FL	204,517	LUBBOCK	TX	71,747
						Smallest Cities					
						TALLAHASSEE	FL	27,237	LAGRANGE	GA	25,025
						HATTIESBURG	MS	29,474	LAUREL	MS	25,038
						ROME	GA	29,615	TEMPLE	TX	25,467
						DAYTONA BEACH	FL	30,187	MORGANTOWN	WV	25,525
						BROWNSVILLE	TX	36,066	PANAMA CITY	FL	25,814
						SPARTANBURG	SC	36,795	CHARLOTTESVILLE	VA	25,969
						LAKE CHARLES	LA	41,272	KEY WEST	FL	26,433
						MERIDIAN	MS	41,893	GAINESVILLE	FL	26,861
						WEST PALM BEACH	FL	43,162	ROCKY MOUNT	NC	27,697
						PENSACOLA	FL	43,479	JOHNSON	TN	27,864

The table documents the largest cities by 1950 population that either have a direct flight to Montgomery, AL or not. Panel A consists of all cities with a population over 25,000 in 1950 and are outside of the south. Panel B consists of cities in the south from Biggs and Andrews (2015). In Panel A, there are only 13 cities outside of the south that have a direct flight to MGM.

Table 3: First-Stage Results

	Protest Sample		Voter Sample				
	Cities	Southern Cities	Counties in South				
Year	1960	1960	1960	1965	1965	1968	1968
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Direct Flight to MGM	0.416	0.389	0.630	0.797	0.734	0.974	0.883
	(0.054)	(0.081)	(0.149)	(0.170)	(0.167)	(0.203)	(0.199)
p-value	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01
F-Statistic	58.9	23.0	17.9	21.9	19.3	23.1	19.8
N (Cities or Counties)	467	325	774	753	608	753	569
Clusters (State or SEA)	48	137	112	104	95	104	80
Mean Outcome	0.18	0.12	0.047	0.092	0.098	0.116	0.138
Counties w/ BVR			Y	N	Y	N	Y

The protest sample consists of all cities with a population over 25,000 in 1950 (column 1) and all cities in the south from the Biggs and Andrews (2015) data (column 2). The voter sample consists of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021). Estimates of γ from Equation 3 are presented in the table. Counties w/BVR = counties with Black Voter Registration data (as not all counties report this data for each time period). Standard errors are clustered on the state level or SEA level.

Table 4: IV Estimates for Protests

Outcome	Non Violent Protest		Any Freedom Rider		Black Freedom Riders		White Freedom Riders		Sit-In
Sample	Cities	S. Cities	Cities	S. Cities	Cities	S. Cities	Cities	S. Cities	S. Cities
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Reduced Form	0.54	0.68	0.21	0.20	1.71	1.56	1.63	0.05	0.16
	(0.186)	(0.197)	(0.075)	(0.078)	(0.682)	(0.676)	(1.485)	(0.052)	(0.074)
p-value	< .01	< .01	< .01	0.012	0.02	0.02	0.28	0.33	0.03
2SLS-IV	1.30	1.76	0.51	0.51	4.11	4.01	3.92	0.13	0.42
	(0.486)	(0.510)	(0.195)	(0.190)	(1.664)	(1.667)	(3.442)	(0.125)	(0.172)
p-value	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01	0.014	0.016	0.26	0.30	0.014
Anderson-Rubin CI	[0.40, 2.63]	[0.85, 3.03]	[0.16, 1.07]	[0.16, 0.97]	[1.01, 8.78]	[0.90, 8.03]	[-3.31, 12.50]	[-0.13, 0.40]	[0.09, 0.81]
tF CI	[0.29, 2.31]	[0.52, 3.01]	[0.11, 0.92]	[0.05, 0.97]	[0.65, 7.56]	[-0.06, 8.07]	[-3.23, 11.07]	[-0.17, 0.43]	[-0.10, 0.96]
N Cities	467	325	467	325	467	325	467	325	325
Clusters (State/ SEA)	48	137	48	137	48	137	48	137	137
Mean Outcome	0.302	0.417	0.156	0.094	0.448	0.393	0.340	0.018	0.196

The cities sample consists of all cities with a population over 25,000 in 1950 (columns 1,3,5,7). The S. Cities sample are all cities in the south from the Biggs and Andrews (2015) data (columns 2,4,6,8,9). Estimates of β for equation 2 are presented in the 2SLS-IV row above. Standard errors are clustered on either the state or SEA level (denoted in the row "Clusters (State/SEA)").

Table 5: IV Estimates for Voting

Outcome	Change in Black Registered Voters			VEP		Dem Share	Wallace Share
Year	1960	1965	1968	1965	1968	1968	1968
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Reduced Form	1232	1947	3529	1.05	0.74	3.3	-5.9
	(470)	(571)	(744)	(0.195)	(0.326)	(1.50)	(1.75)
p-value	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01	0.03	0.03	< .01
2SLS-IV	1955	2652	3995	1.31	0.76	3.4	-6.1
	733	764	912	0.27	0.30	1.45	1.84
p-value	< .01	< .01	< .01	< .01	0.012	0.02	< .01
Anderson-Rubin CI	[650 , 3957]	[1291 , 4739]	[2587 , 6847]	[0.87 , 2.07]	[0.15 , 1.46]	[0.59 , 6.89]	[-10.95 , -2.80]
tF CI	[182 , 3729]	[731 , 4572]	[1728 , 6262]	[0.63 , 1.99]	[0.01 , 1.51]	[-0.19 , 6.99]	[-10.63 , -1.52]
N Counties	774	608	569	753	753	753	753
SEA Clusters	112	95	80	104	104	104	104
Mean Outcome	134	476	1526	0.29	0.29	24	47

The samples consist of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021) (Section 3.5). Estimates of β for equation 2 are presented in the 2SLS-IV row above. Standard errors are clustered on the SEA level.

Appendix

Figure A.1: Letter to Wyatt T. Walker

Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, Minister
The Gillfield Baptist Church
209 Perry Street
Petersburg, Virginia

Dear Tee:

This is just a note to acknowledge receipt of your very kind letter of October 16. I should say to you in the beginning that I must be intensely interested in you and your work, because this is about the first letter that I have dictated to my secretary since the incident in New York. My doctors have urged me to rest at least another month without even dictating letters. But for Tee Walker, I am willing to disobey the doctors orders.

Because of the unfortunate incident in New York, my physicians have urged me to limit my speaking engagements for the next year. They suggest this in order to assure a complete recovery. In an attempt to follow this request from my physicians, I find that I must not accept any additional engagements for 1959. I will be very happy to consider your 1960 invitation. As soon as I begin accepting engagements for 1960, I will let you hear from me.

I am glad to know that you are interested in being an agent for the distribution of my book in Petersburg. I will discuss this matter with Rev. Tilley in just a few days.

It was certainly good hearing from you. Give my best regards to your lovely family.

Yours very truly,
Martin L. King, Jr.

Source: MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1997.

Figure A.2: Letter to Eleanor Rosevelt and Arthur Johnson

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

On returning to the office, after being out for several weeks I found your letter of January 16. I was more than happy to know that you will be giving a reception in honor of Aubrey Williams on Wednesday, February 26, in New York City. I was deeply honored to receive an invitation to attend this reception. Unfortunately, however, my calendar reveals that I have a long standing commitment in California at that time. In the light of this it will be impossible for me to accept your gracious invitation.

I have admired you and your work for a long, long time. I hope it will be possible for me to meet you personally in the not too distant future.

Very sincerely yours,
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Minister

Mr. Arthur L. Johnson, Executive Director
Detroit National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
606 East Vernor Highway
Detroit 1, Michigan

Dear Arthur:

On my return to the office, I found your letter of March 6th expressing your disappointment in learning of my inability to assist in your Freedom Fund Campaign.

Certainly, it was with the deepest regret that I declined the invitation in the beginning. I did so only because it was impossible for me to take on any additional engagements during my visit to Detroit. The Detroit Council of Churches had planned a schedule for me which kept me busy, too busy, every hour in the day.

On Tuesday evening, the evening that you wanted me to appear, I had a speaking commitment at the Highland Park Presbyterian Church after which I had to attend a reception at the Statler Hotel. Every evening was spent speaking at a different church. As you know, I had to speak at Central Methodist Church every day at noon.

Between this period, I was either appearing at luncheon or dinner groups or making tape recordings for broadcasts. Along with all of this, I attempted to get some writing done on my book which, by the way, the publishers are demanding by the middle of April.

Because of the pressing responsibility of this book, I find it necessary to limit my engagements in almost every city I visit. These are only some of the reasons I found it impossible to accept your invitation. I do hope you will understand that my non-acceptance was not due to a lack of interest, but to the tremendous pressures of an overcrowded schedule.

My physician has insisted that I slow down or face the tragedy of a physical break down. There are ever so many things that I would like to do, that I would enjoy doing, such as being with you on your Freedom Fund program, but they are physically impossible.

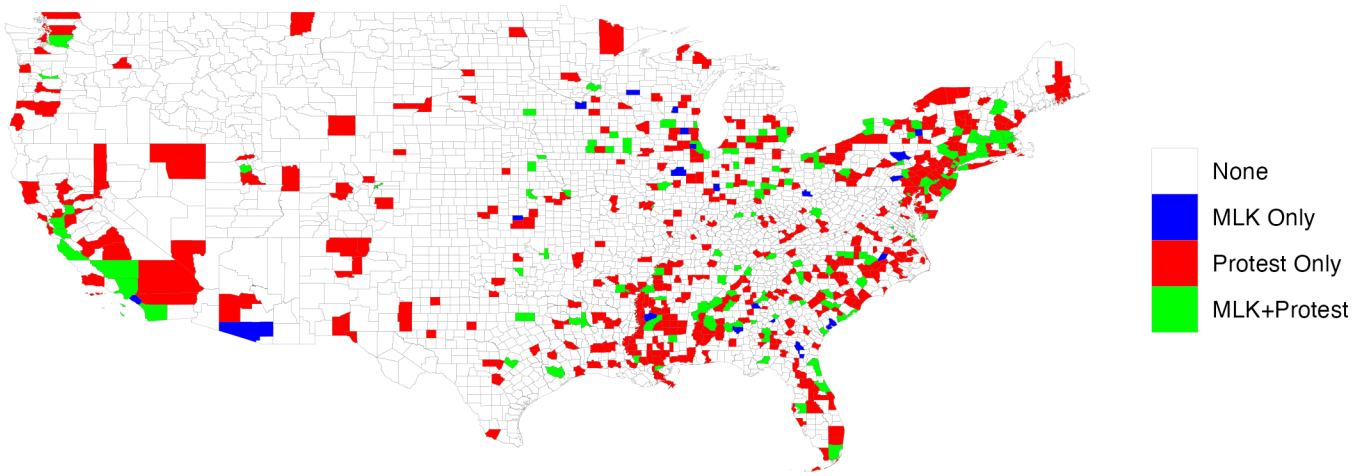
Please express my deepest regrets to the other members of your committee who so graciously joined you in extending the invitation. I do hope that it will be possible to serve you at another time.

Let me commend you for the great work you are doing with the Detroit branch. I am always happy when I hear of your success. You are doing a job, not only for Detroit and the Negro, but for the whole of American democracy. You have my prayers and best wishes for continued success in all of your endeavors.

Sincerely yours,
Martin Luther King, Jr.

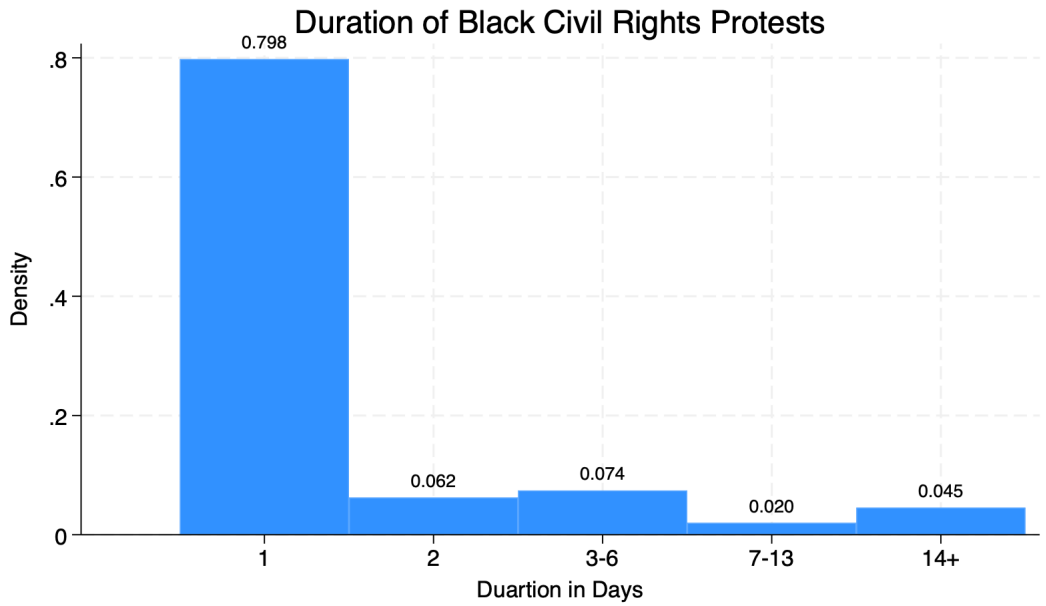
Source: MLK, Jr. Papers Project, 1997.

Figure A.3: Locations of MLK, Jr. Speaking Events and Black Civil Rights Protests



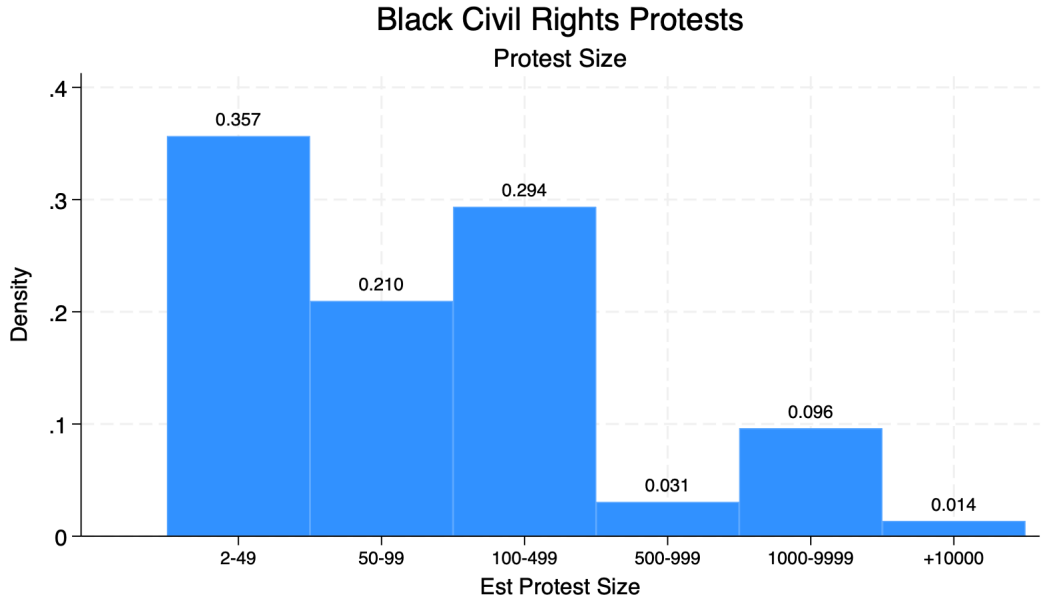
The map above combines data from Figures 1 and 4. MLK speaking events are based on *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volumes 1-7* (1992; 1994; 1997; 2000; 2005; 2007; 2014a), *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Encyclopedia* (Carson et al., 2008), and the Online King Records Access (OKRA). Protest data utilizes three sources: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011; Olzak and West, 1995).

Figure A.4: Duration of Protests



Protest data utilizes three sources: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011; Olzak and West, 1995)

Figure A.5: Protest Size



Protest data utilizes three sources: Dynamics of Collective Action (DCA) , Ethnic Collective Action in Contemporary Urban United States (ECA), and the The Social, Political and Economic Event Database Project (SPEED) (McAdam et al., 2009a; Cline Center for Democracy, 2011; Olzak and West, 1995)

Figure A.6: Coverage of Protests in NY Times

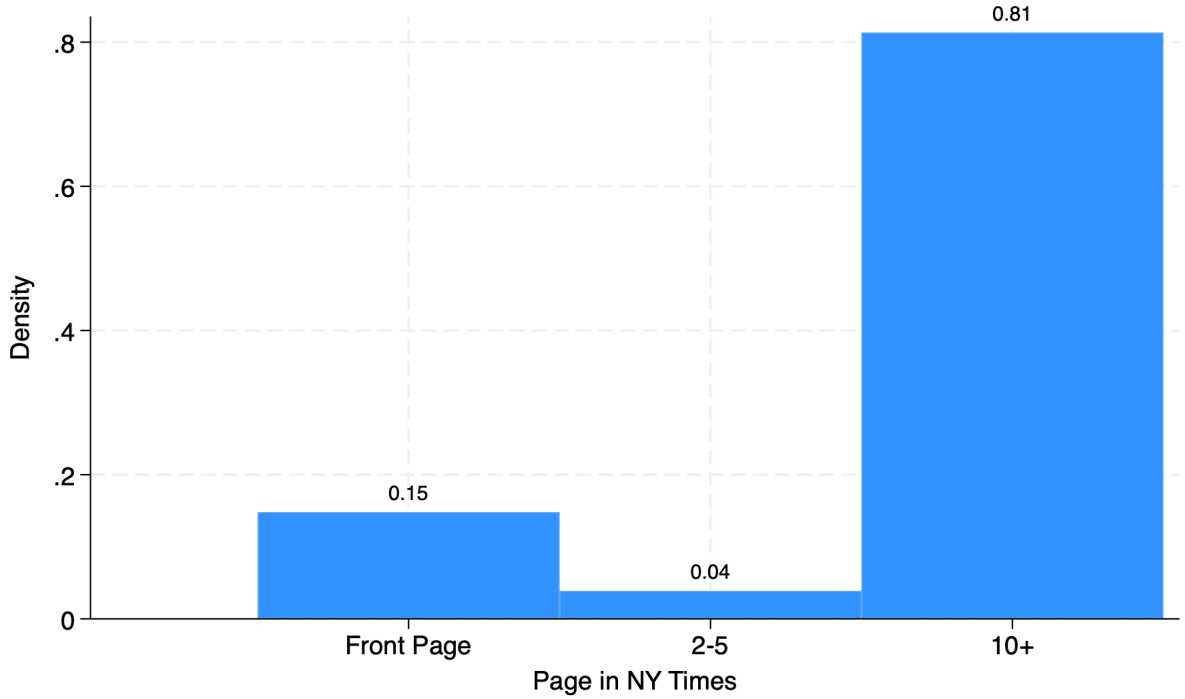
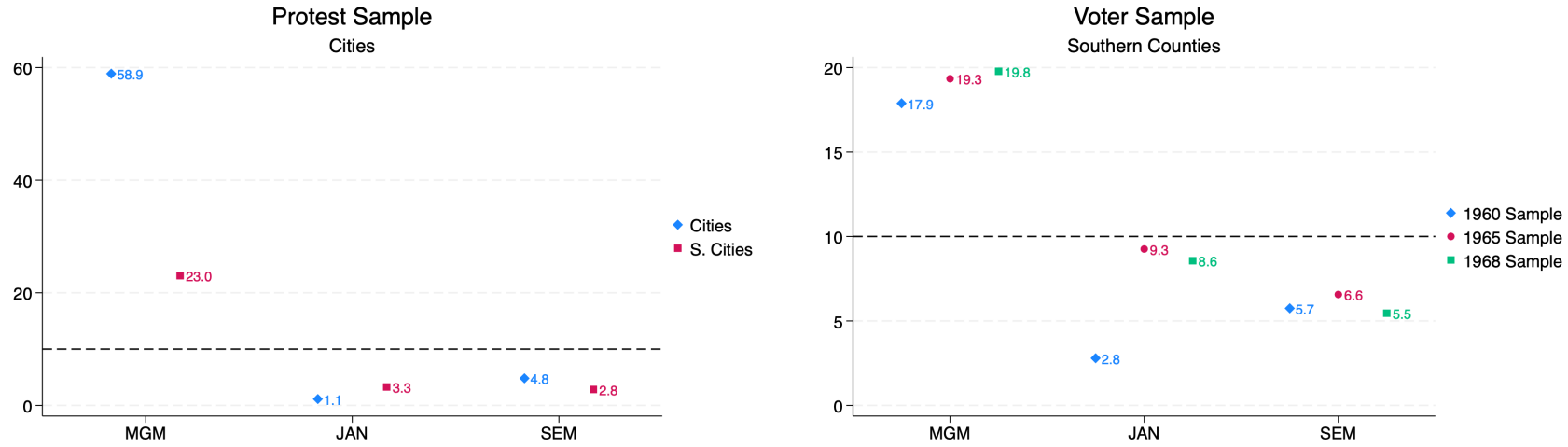


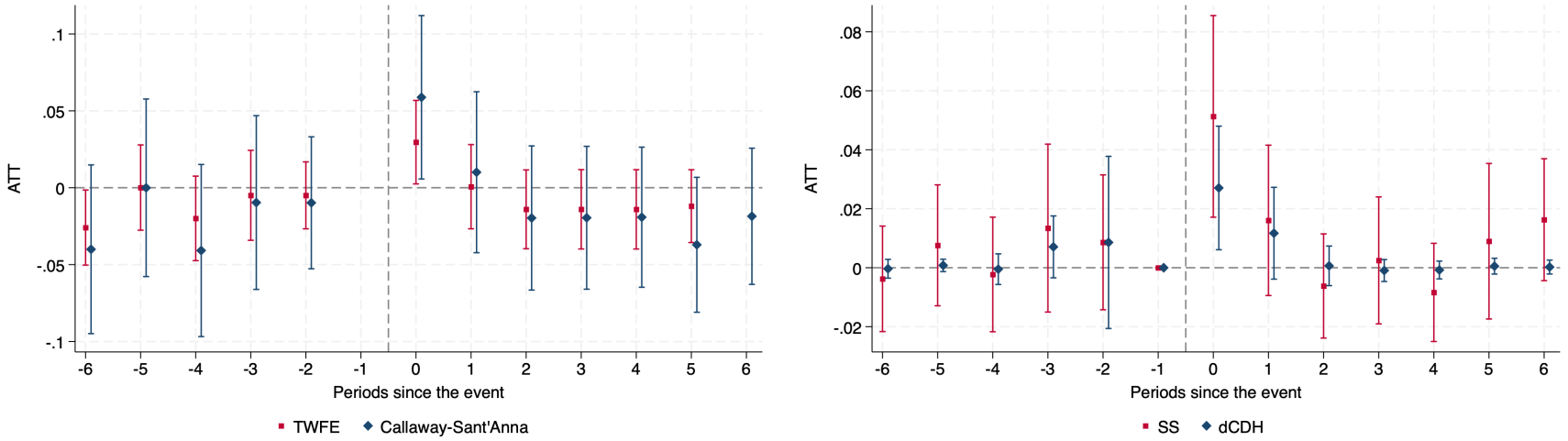
Figure A.7: First-Stage F-Statistics between MGM and similar airports (JAN, SEM)



The protest sample consists of "Cities" with a population over 25,000 in 1950 and "S. Cities" in the south from Biggs and Andrews (2015). The voter sample consisting of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021).

The first-stage equation (3) is estimated using direct flights to MGM, JAN, and SEM **separately**. F-statistics for each airport are then reported. The left panel (Protest Sample) consists of six estimations of the first-stage using the Cities sample and then the S. Cities sample. The right panel (Voter Sample) consists of nine estimations of the first-stage for the years 1960, 1965, and 1968. Standard errors are clustered on the state-level for the City sample and on the SEA level for S. Cities and the Voter samples.

Figure A.8: Event Study Analysis: Protests



The left panel consists of monthly city-level data from 1955-1968 (the protest panel) where all city by month observations are removed when King speaks a second time. The analytical sample therefore contains only the first instance of King speaking and all following months up until the time of King's second speech event. The reference period is month = -1 and is normalized to zero. The event study plots estimates of β_t from equation 1. The Callaway-Sant'Anna estimator is implemented using the STATA command csdid2 (Rios-Avila et al., 2022). The likelihood of a non-violent Black cvil rights protest is .001 (mean of the outcome). Standard errors are clustered at the city level.
The right panel consists of monthly city-level data from 1955-1963. The reference period is month = -1 and is normalized to zero. Estimates of β_t from equation 1 are plotted above. SS refers to the TWFE estimator from Schmidheiny and Siegloch (2020). dCDH refers to the de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2024) estimator. The likelihood of a non-violent civil rights protest is .001 (mean of the outcome). Standard errors are clustered at the city level.

Table A.1: Counties Reporting Voter Registration Data and MLK Speaking Events

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Registration Year	1958	1960	1965	1968
MLK Treatment	0.0341	-0.0488	0.0522	0.0522
	(0.0413)	(0.0614)	(0.0605)	(0.0605)
Observations	1,181	1,181	1,181	1,181
R-squared	0.286	0.183	0.319	0.936

The samples consist of counties in the south that were documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) (1959; 1961; 1968) and digitized by Koch et al. (2021) (Section 3.5). The outcome is an indicator if a county reports data in a specific registration year. Standard errors are clustered on the SEA level.