Movement–Countermovement Dynamics and the Emergence of New Institutions: The Case of "White Flight" Schools in Mississippi*
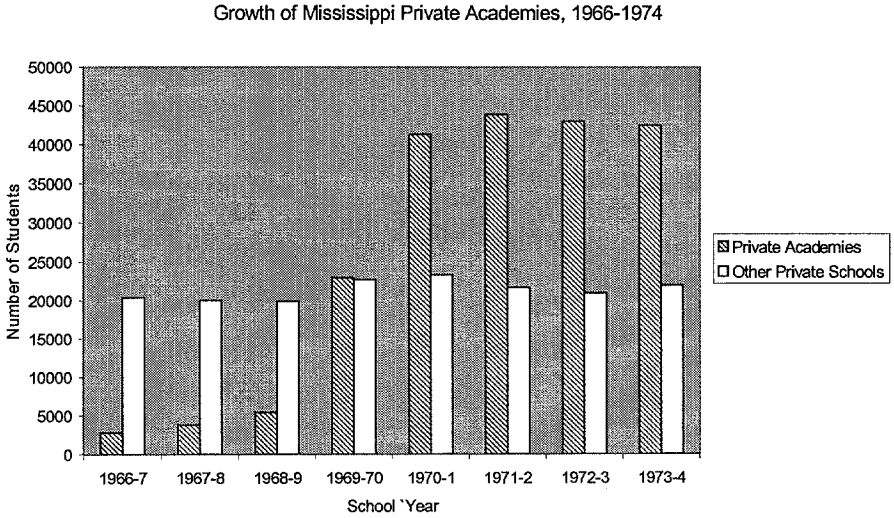
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Abstract

This article examines the foundation of private segregationist academies that emerged throughout the U.S. South in the wake of court-ordered desegregation. I focus on the state of Mississippi where private academies grew dramatically from 1969 to 1971. I provide an analytic history of civil-rights and school-desegregation conflicts in Mississippi, and I use OLS models to examine county-level variation in local support for private academies during this period. My analysis shows that the formation of academies occurs as a response to desegregation (1) when there is a credible threat that desegregation will be implemented (implicitly signaling the "success" of the movement); (2) when blacks have the organizational capacity to make claims and voice protest within newly desegregated schools; and (3) when whites have the organizational capacity to resist desegregation. These three specifications extend models of racial competition that have been used to explain white countermobilization. I argue that the establishment of academies was a countermovement strategy that flowed out of the prior history of organized white resistance to the civil-rights movement. In other words, whites were not only responding to court intervention and the proportion of African Americans in their community, but to the social movement mobilization of that community.

Students of social movements, public policy, and political conflict have all attempted to analyze the dynamics of countermobilization. Under what conditions

FIGURE 1: Growth of Mississippi Private Academies, 1966-74

Growth of Mississippi Private Academies, 1966-1974

do groups mobilize against new policies? The implementation of school desegregation in the 1970s is a classic case of a policy that met popular resistance in many communities throughout the U.S.

In this article, I examine the pattern of white resistance to school desegregation in Mississippi. Resistance took a distinctive form — the emergence of a system of segregationist private academies.[1] As we can see in Figure 1, enrollments in these private academies grew dramatically between 1968 and 1970.[2] In this short time, a parallel system of schools emerged in Mississippi that has survived to the present day. Similar institutions developed throughout the South. Nevin and Bills (1976) estimated that approximately 750,000 students in 1975 attended segregationist academies in the South.

I argue that resistance to school desegregation was part of a much broader pattern of resistance to the modern civil-rights movement. Collective and individual responses to the movement took a number of distinct forms and ranged widely in magnitude. Examining these responses helps us understand the type and extent of institutional change at local, state, and national levels (Quadagno 1994). I argue that the history of conflicts between movements and countermovements shapes the trajectories of institutional formation. I provide a detailed, analytic account of the emergence of the system of all-white private schools. Using county-level data

for Mississippi, I assess the impacts of ecological, political, social movement, and countermovement variables on the formation of private academies. I test alternative explanations, finding substantial support for an argument that emphasizes (1) underlying "structural" processes of racial competition and conflict, (2) court intervention, and (3) movement–countermovement dynamics. The combination of a viable threat to school segregation (in the form of a Supreme Court decision) with the organizational capacity of African Americans to act on that threat and whites to resist that threat explains the rapid development of private schools in some locales and their absence in others.

On the whole, we know very little about the impacts of social movements on institutions (Clemens 1998; Katzenstein 1998). There are some noteworthy exceptions to this trend (e.g., Gamson [1975] 1990), but the major thrust of recent scholarship has been to explain the origins and ongoing maintenance of movement organization and participation (Jenkins 1983; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1988; Morris & Herring 1987; Tarrow 1998). Research on movement outcomes has focused on the direct impacts of mobilization on policy or state structures (Burstein, Einwohner & Hollander 1995; Button 1989; Gamson [1975] 1990). To fully understand the process of institutional change, we should examine the unintended consequences of movements. Further, where movements engage in sustained conflicts with mobilized oppositional groups, that is, countermovements, we should also analyze the impacts of movement–countermovement dynamics (Meyer & Staggenborg 1996).

I begin with a discussion of recent developments in social movement theory and review alternative explanations of racial contention with particular emphasis on periods of rapid, widespread desegregation. I move, then, to the specific case of Mississippi, providing historical context for the development of Mississippi's primary and secondary schools, the development of the Mississippi civil-rights movement, and the emergence of segregated academies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Private academies emerged soon after the Supreme Court's *Alexander v. Holmes County* decision mandating desegregation for thirty Mississippi school districts in the middle of the 1969–70 school year. By the fall of the 1970–71 school year, a system of private academies was fully established that served slightly less than 20% of the white primary and secondary students in the state. I present an OLS regression model that tests alternative explanations for the emergence of private academies in Mississippi. I conclude by revisiting the major theoretical issues raised by this study.

The Consequences of Social Movements

The conceptual framework that shapes this article extends the political process approach to social movements. This perspective views the dynamics of movements as part of political conflicts in which movements pursue goals in struggles over political, social, and economic resources (McAdam 1982; Schwartz 1976; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978). Theorists argue that changes in the political process open the door for successful mobilization on the part of "challengers" — those who do not have routine access to the polity (Gamson [1975] 1990; Tilly 1978).

I follow a key distinction that arises in debates about the impacts of social movements (and countermovements). Specifically, scholars have attempted to assess the relative importance of factors within a movement's control and those in the broader political opportunity structure (Burstein, Einwohner & Hollander 1994; Giugni 1998). This approach can be traced through the early studies of movement impact such as Gamson ([1975] 1990), Goldstone (1980a, 1980b), and Piven and Cloward (1977). There are several limitations to prior research that are instructive for analysis of movement outcomes. First, we should separate the goals of a movement from outcomes so that we can examine the unintended consequences of social movements (Amenta & Young 1999; Paul, Mahler & Schwartz 1997; Snyder & Kelly 1979; Tilly 1999). Establishing whether the movement achieves its explicitly stated goals is important, but to understand the consequences of movements we must dig deeper than that. Second, when movements engage in conflict with countermovements, our focus should shift to the consequences of movement–countermovement dynamics.

The interactions between movements and countermovements can produce outcomes that neither would have anticipated at early stages of the conflict. Schwartz (1976) provides a general formulation of the relationship: "When a protest organization challenges [social structures], they act to defend themselves in a variety of ways which evolve from and respond to protest activities" (150). This implies a dynamic model of political interaction in which mass action forecloses choices for other groups (especially elite groups) — a complex process of social change can ensue. In the next section I discuss possible explanations and review empirical evidence drawing from theories of racial competition and conflict, political sociology, and social movements.

Contending Explanations of White Countermobilization

STRUCTURAL CONTOURS OF RACE

A number of arguments have been made in efforts to explain the rise of anti-integrationist movements. Competition theorists suggest that the primary determinant of white resistance is the level of contact between blacks and whites

that would result from changes in existing institutions. Olzak, Shanahan, and West (1994) argue that "both anticipated fears that racial contact will rise and actual shifts in interracial contact foster racial conflict that has been generated by competition processes" (201). According to competition theorists, labor markets are key sites of interracial competition and conflict. Competition theorists have also found support for this claim in venues beyond the labor market. For example, a recent study finds that the rate of antibusing protests in U.S. cities was predicted by "(1) increases in whites' exposure to African Americans, (2) decreases in school segregation, and (3) decreases in whites' residential isolation levels" (Olzak, Shanahan & West 1994:232). Examining a diverse set of cases including lynching and urban labor markets, Olzak (1992) and Olzak, Shanahan, and West (1994) have built a model based on the structure and overlap of ethnic niches. Research on "white flight" finds strong support for competition theory and shows that the proportion of the population that is black plays an important role in "virtually all" the studies reviewed by Rossell (1983), a leading scholar of school desegregation. In a study of the thirty Mississippi school districts affected by the *Alexander* decision, Munford (1973) argues that "a demographic factor — the Negro percentage within the school district's boundaries — appears to have an extraordinary influence on white resistance to unitary desegregation" (23; see also Bullock & Rodgers 1976).

A variation on competition theory argues that white resistance does not target all African Americans (or the total proportion within a population). Rather, (middle- and working-class) white resistance targets poor and working-class African Americans. This argument suggests that whites are less motivated by racial prejudice than by class prejudice (see Bullock & Rodgers 1976; Conlon & Kimenyi 1991). Conlon and Kimenyi (1991) support this line of argument in their analysis of county-level patterns of 1980 private school attendance in Mississippi. They find that class and race characteristics of the county shape private school attendance and argue that white parents are motivated by potential contact with poor blacks but not with poor whites.

I agree that structural characteristics are important factors shaping the pattern of resistance to desegregation. However, I argue that proximate political factors play a highly consequential role during periods of rapid institutional change. In the next two sections I discuss the political factors (court intervention and movement–countermovement dynamics) that play an independent role in shaping white countermobilization.

COURT INTERVENTION — THE ROLE OF LEGAL CHANGE

Social movement theorists have long held that state action shapes social movement mobilization (McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978). Courts, in particular, have played a critical role in shaping the dynamics of U.S. social movements. The *Roe v. Wade* decision is one of the most prominent examples of a court decision that became

a target of popular contention (Luker 1984; Rosenberg 1991). In addition, courts played a central role in the Boston busing crisis during the 1970s (Taylor 1986; Useem 1980).

Similarly, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision generated countermobilization throughout the South. The Citizens' Council, often characterized as a middle-class version of the Ku Klux Klan, formed in the immediate wake of the decision. Shortly thereafter, a small group met in Indianola, Mississippi, to resist "Black Monday," the day the *Brown* decision was handed down. Citizens' Councils were established throughout the South and employed legalistic tactics to resist school desegregation and the civil-rights movement more generally (McMillen 1971).

Legal victories associated with a social movement seem especially likely to generate countermobilization. As Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) note, the success of movements creates opportunities for countermovements. They go on to suggest a curvilinear relationship between success and countermovement mobilization in which "movement victories that are truly decisive preclude the possibility of countermovement action in alternative arenas" (1637). Less decisive victories provide opportunities to countermovements. Zald and Useem (1987) add

> a victory or defeat in one arena or battlefield shifts the locus of attack, the nodal
> point for the next major battlefield. For instance, once the pro-abortion forces
> won the Supreme Court to its side, antiabortion forces shifted to the issue of
> federal funds for abortion (251).

This insight is crucial for understanding the "opening" created by the *Alexander* decision for advocates of an all-white private school system.[3]

The examples noted here suggest that court action can be a significant factor propelling countermobilization. In Mississippi some counties were included in the *Alexander* decision while others were not. In the analysis that follows, I examine whether counties targeted by court intervention were more successful in establishing private academies.

Movement–Countermovement Dynamics

The theories discussed above offer plausible accounts of the contextual factors that influence white resistance to integration. However, I argue that prior movement and countermovement mobilization in a community shapes the form and extent of resistance to school desegregation. In this section I address three conceptual issues: (1) the distinction between movements and countermovements, (2) the claim that academies were part of a broader countermovement, and (3) the advantages of examining movement–countermovement dynamics.

Countermovements are often distinguished from social movements along a number of key dimensions, the most important of which are membership, structural position, tactics, and goals (see Lo 1982; Meyer & Staggenborg 1996; Mottl

1980; Zald & Useem 1996). Scholars attempting to define countermovements have confronted a number of difficulties. In particular, there is a tendency to conflate conservative movements with countermovements and assume that countermovements are by definition reactionary. In contrast, Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) provide the most useful definition: "a 'countermovement' is a movement that makes contrary claims simultaneously to those of the original movement" (1630). The issue is primarily sequencing (the temporal order of movement emergence) and the nature of the claims (whether the second movement's claims are framed in reference to the first). They argue that the distinction becomes insignificant, however, if the movement and countermovement persist over an extended period of time. In these cases, we should abandon the movement–countermovement label and analyze opposing movements.

Mottl (1980) argues that one of the ways countermovements can be distinguished from social movements is their greater access to resources because they defend established patterns of inequality and draw on significant personal and collective resources in their struggles. While I disagree with Mottl that this is a defining characteristic of countermovements, Mottl's description does seem to apply to efforts to form segregationist academies. In Mississippi the formation of academies required the mobilization of substantial resources, in contrast to less costly strategies like antibusing protests or letter-writing campaigns. This difference in the cost of the strategy helps to differentiate the establishment of academies as an elite-sponsored strategy from antibusing movements, which seem to have a working- and lower-middle-class base (James 1989; Mottl 1980; Olzak, Shanahan & West 1994; Rubin 1972).[4] In the case of large metropolitan areas, upper- and middle-class whites are likely to move from school districts experiencing desegregation (Rossell 1983). This strategy was less viable for white elites (and nonelites) in Mississippi.

Should the formation of private academies be treated as part of a broader social movement? In many cases white flight has been regarded as the aggregation of individual calculation rather than the consequence of movement dynamics (e.g., Conlon & Kimenyi 1991). In Mississippi, whites faced a situation where the two most obvious individual strategies (moving to different school districts and attending already established private schools) were either not available or not sufficient to accommodate resistance to integrated schools. Certainly, some whites pursued individual strategies for dealing with the perceived consequences of desegregation. For example, in Natchez, where a system of zoning was implemented, the school superintendent found many whites submitting change of address forms to remain in a majority white school (Reed 1969). Because Mississippi had repealed its compulsory attendance law in 1956, parents also had the option of withdrawing their children from school altogether. Collective strategies included boycotts and other protests by some parents (Wooten 1970c). However, the main

strategy of resistance took the collective form of building new educational institutions.

The formation of segregationist academies can be conceptualized as a countermovement because there were links to a broader countermovement aimed at resisting the civil-rights movement. If my argument is correct, prior countermovement activity — both violent and nonviolent — should shape the later development of academies. In Mississippi there was a broad set of formal organizations and informal networks that facilitated local countermovement activity. Movement theorists (Buechler 1990; Staggenborg 1998) have used the term "social movement community" to characterize the type of local infrastructure that formed, which I describe in greater detail below.

Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) and Zald and Useem (1987) suggest moving toward an analysis of strategic interaction when studying movements and countermovements. Zald and Useem (1987) also warn that the tactical interaction does not always take the form of a "tight spiral." Rather, in many cases we find a "loosely coupled tango" in which countermovements mobilize in response to and against the "success" of their opponents rather than against the movement itself. The tactical interaction between movements and countermovements is often obscured because the relationship is mediated by political authorities and institutions. What is most important in an analysis of outcomes is to trace the partial and fragmented effects of movement–countermovement dynamics as they become embedded within social institutions (Mottl 1980; Paul, Mahler & Schwartz 1997). Whites were responding not only to court intervention and the proportion of African Americans in their community, but to the *social movement mobilization* of that community — the history of protests, boycotts, voter canvassing, legal action, and other activism. In addition to movement mobilization, more conventional electoral mobilization such as black candidates running for office should have a similar effect of escalating white resistance.

As McMillen (1971) notes in his history of the Citizens' Council, white mobilization consistently peaked in response to indigenous black mobilization or the threat (perceived or real) of federal intervention:

> The story of Council expansion, then, was not one of steady progress. Represented graphically, its growth in Mississippi, and elsewhere in the South, resembled a fever chart with peaks occurring in periods of racial unrest when the white population's perception of the imminence of desegregation was greatest. (28)

To the extent that segregationist academies are linked to movement–countermovement dynamics, they reveal the underlying political nature of educational institutions (James 1989). Rossell (1983) notes that "few studies have examined systematically the effect of [white] protest and leadership support for desegregation on white flight, primarily because the costs of collecting such data are quite high" (35). I would add that studies that examine the political mobilization of blacks are even less common. In a study of the school districts

affected by the *Alexander* decision, Munford (1973) argues that the proportion of blacks in a school district is the single most important factor explaining white flight. At the end of his study, he reflects on the factors associated with the relative proportions of blacks and whites, and he speculates that the perceived threat of black political power is the motivating force for parents exiting the public school system. Munford is thinking primarily of an electoral threat in which blacks constitute a larger proportion of the electorate. The question that Munford does not pose is whether black mobilization has an impact independent of the latent challenge posed by a large black population.

Social movements, in the process of mobilizing toward particular goals, always engage other social actors, whether countermovements, state agencies, legal institutions, or the news media — to name a few (Burton 1984; Gale 1986; Maguire 1993). This engagement can have unintended and escalatory effects that lead to major changes in social institutions.

SUMMARY

Three themes run through the above discussion: the formation of private schools occurs as a response to desegregation (1) when there is a credible threat that desegregation will be implemented (implicitly signaling the "success" of the movement); (2) when blacks have the demonstrated organizational capacity to make claims and voice protest within newly desegregated schools based on the legacy of prior mobilization; and (3) when whites have the organizational and resource capacity to resist desegregation. These three themes extend the models of racial competition and class-based theories of white flight by specifying more precisely the mobilization process that leads to significant countermobilization and institutional change.

The analysis presented in this study focuses on an unintended and largely unanticipated consequence of the Mississippi movement, which was the establishment of all-white academies as a resistance strategy pursued by whites. Below I summarize the expectations derived from the prior discussion:

1. The black proportion of a county's population (especially the school-age population) should be positively related to the establishment of academies.

2. Greater levels of black poverty should be positively related to the establishment of academies as whites attempt to avoid contact with lower-income blacks.

3. Counties covered by the *Alexander v. Holmes* Supreme Court decision should respond more effectively in the formation of private schools.

4. Prior civil-rights mobilization within the black community should be positively related to the establishment of academies.

5. Prior electoral mobilization by blacks should be positively related to the establishment of academies.

6. Greater economic resources for white households should be positively related to the establishment of academies.

7. A history of resistance to the civil-rights movement by whites whether violent or nonviolent should be positively related to the establishment of academies.

The Mississippi Movement and the Politics of Schools

In this section, I outline the broad contours of the civil-rights movement's development in Mississippi (see, e.g., Carson 1981; Dittmer 1994; McAdam 1988; Payne 1995).[5] I also present a chronology of the legal struggles that took place over education as a context for the quantitative analysis of county-level data (for further background, see Parker 1987; Wirt 1970). The Mississippi case is especially intriguing because of the wide array of strategies used to undermine the movement and to dilute its impact, including violence, intimidation, and legal strategies (Colby 1987; McMillen 1971; Parker 1990).

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND BLACK MOBILIZATION

The Mississippi civil-rights movement lagged behind other areas of the South because of the highly repressive political context. After the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, white Mississippians formed the Citizens' Councils, an organization that became influential throughout the state (McMillen 1971). During the 1950s, the primary focus of NAACP leaders in Mississippi was expanding the organization throughout the state. Few efforts were made to launch direct, public challenges to racial inequality until the early 1960s (Dittmer 1994).

In the early 1960s, the Mississippi movement was invigorated by the efforts of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who adopted a community-organizing approach focused on voter registration and the development of an indigenous leadership (Payne 1995). Community organizers worked in towns throughout the state attempting to register new voters and expand the organizational capacity for future mobilization. In 1964 the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), an umbrella organization for civil-rights groups in Mississippi, sponsored Freedom Summer, bringing college students from across the U.S. into Mississippi's community-organizing projects (McAdam 1988).

Directly after Freedom Summer, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party led an unsuccessful effort to unseat the all-white Mississippi delegation to the Democratic Party's national convention in Atlantic City. Undoubtedly, electoral politics dominated the goals and tactical choices of the movement, a dominance reflected in the historical scholarship. The civil-rights movement also played a

critical role, however, in the desegregation of the public schools in Mississippi, and the movement's opponents were highly mobilized around the issue of education.

LITIGATION AND THE STRUGGLE OVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Resistance to desegregation in Mississippi passed through several phases, each marked by distinct strategies. The first wave of widespread mobilization followed the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. As noted above, the *Brown* decision's major impact in Mississippi was the consolidation of white resistance in the Citizens' Council. Efforts were made in a handful of school districts to act on the implication of *Brown*. In Yazoo City, Clarksdale, Natchez, Vicksburg, and Jackson, petitions for desegregation were circulated through some of the most established NAACP chapters in the state. Dittmer (1994) shows that the Citizens' Council's response was two-pronged: (1) public announcements, including full-page advertisements in local newspapers listing the names of petition signers and (2) economic retaliations, including firing employees and boycotting black business owners. In short, moves toward implementation of the *Brown* decision were met by swift "massive resistance," a term used to describe the various legal and political strategies employed throughout the South.

In the early 1960s, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the U.S. Justice Department began to file desegregation suits. In addition, after the passage of the 1964 Civil-Rights Act, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) was authorized to withhold federal funds from school districts that were not desegregating. Parker (1987) points out that this pressure generated a two-stage process. The first stage was "freedom of choice" plans, which were obvious stalling mechanisms generating very little change. These plans allowed parents to register children at any school within the district. Before the *Alexander* decision in 1969, HEW reported that 88% of blacks attended all-black schools and 12% of whites attended all-white schools (Munford 1973). In other words, there was token integration; in most school districts a handful of black children attended formerly all-white public schools. Parker (1987) concludes that the first stage "generally left the black schools all-black, and resulted in very little integration of the white schools" (691).[6]

The second school integration stage began in 1969–70, and it was initiated in Mississippi by the Supreme Court's decision in *Alexander v. Holmes County* (for detailed accounts of the court case and implementation, see Parker 1987, Rosenberg 1991, and Wirt 1970). The decision combined a set of nine Justice Department suits and sixteen NAACP Legal Defense Fund suits. The outcome of the cases' complex trip through the legal system was an end to freedom of choice plans in thirty-three school districts and a court order to desegregate thirty districts in the middle of the 1969–70 school year.[7] In summer 1969 the Fifth Circuit Court of

Appeals ordered desegregation for the upcoming school year. This was followed by an unusual intervention on the part of the Nixon Administration, when the secretary of HEW, Robert Finch, requested a delay in the implementation of the decision. While the Fifth Circuit panel of judges granted the delay, that decision was quickly reversed by the Supreme Court on October 29, 1969 (Munford 1973). Parker (1987) notes that "Within ten months [of the Supreme Court decision], 146 of Mississippi's 148 school districts had been forced to abandon ineffective freedom of choice plans and to adopt new desegregation plans that revised attendance boundaries and employed zoning, pairing, busing, and other remedies to achieve fully integrated school systems" (693). As Figure 1 illustrates, a large number of students exited the public school system between 1969 and 1971. There was a slow trend of increasing enrollments in private academies through the 1960s followed by rapid growth at the end of the decade.

THE CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION OF WHITE RESISTANCE

As noted, countermovements often draw on significant pools of resources. In this case the emerging academies secured support from the state and from private groups and individuals. State support included tuition grants, tax exemption, and school materials transferred from the public to the private school system. The flow of each of these resources was ultimately challenged by civil-rights groups, but this was after an initial boost was provided to the new, private institutions by the state (Graham 1970; Rosenthal 1970). For example, the state legislature provided a tuition stipend of $240 annually to students attending private schools (Wooten 1970a). In addition to the flow of resources from public to private institutions, the public school system sustained a $12 million dollar budget cut by the state legislature because of the loss of students ("Mississippi Advances" 1970).

Other private resources diverted were small and large donations of money, land, materials, and labor. In Canton, for example, parents and students spent part of the Christmas break renovating a former tent factory to serve as a new private school (see also Nevin & Bills 1976). One teacher noted that whites in Canton "have decided that the battle with the Federal Government is over and that there is nothing left to do but either let their kids go to school with the coloreds or pay tuition to keep them apart" (Wooten 1970b:28). Additional resources came from religious institutions like the Baptist Church, which attempted to organize and support academies, and local banks, which provided loans to the new academies (Reed 1969, 1970). In some cases, Nevin and Bills (1976) report, "entire student bodies moved from formerly all-white public schools to new private schools. They took along the trappings of the old school, its colors, its teams, mascots, symbols, its student newspaper, leaving behind the shell of the building" (14).

To what extent were academies linked to the prior organizational foundation of the Citizens' Council? While the Citizens' Council claimed to sponsor 150 academies throughout the south by 1969, the exact shape of that sponsorship is

vague (Bigart 1969). Only a small percentage of the academies in Mississippi were actual "Council Schools," and these were concentrated in Jackson, the state capital and the headquarters of the organization. While the Citizens' Council did not play a direct organizing role in most academies, it did play two pivotal roles. First, the Jackson headquarters "served as 'a clearing house of information,' maintaining a register of private schools and available instructors and administrators, as well as potential physical facilities" (McMillen 1971:303). By the mid-1960s, much space in the organization's monthly newsletter was devoted to articles such as "How to Start a Private School" and "Private Schools Continue to Increase." The second role played by the Citizens' Council was the residue of informal ties solidified in many Mississippi communities from earlier organizing. As social movement scholars have noted, one of the most important legacies of a movement organization is the networks left behind when the organization collapses (Tarrow 1998). These ties were also mobilized in the Mississippi Private School Association (MPSA), a statewide organization that linked academies and sponsored activities such as athletic events. The MPSA held its first statewide meeting in 1968 building upon the earlier foundation of the Citizens' Council and the Council School Foundation (see Carroll 1981; Mathis 1975; Sansing 1975). While historians have had difficulty estimating precisely the impact of the Citizens' Councils on the development of the academies, I attempt to examine this potential linkage in greater detail.[8] With this historical background in place, I now turn to the quantitative analysis.

Data and Measures

My empirical questions focus on movement dynamics at the local level. This allows me to examine the substantial variation at the county level within Mississippi. This design strategy of conducting a case study with multiple subunits allows scholars to effectively combine the historian's concern with case specificity with the more sociological objective of theory building and testing, and this strategy has been used with increasing frequency by historically oriented sociologists (Amenta 1991) and provides a useful model for examining processes of historical change.

For the data set I use counties as the unit of analysis ($N = 81$) for several reasons.[9] In southern politics counties have much greater political significance than in the politics of other parts of the U.S. (Krane & Shaffer 1992). In addition, the Mississippi movement organized itself county by county and its attempts to build organizational structures occurred at the county level. As a case Mississippi provides significant variation on key variables such as the size of the black population, the presence and strength of local movements, and the amount of change in local schools. The analysis presented here uses OLS regression methods to assess the research questions I have outlined. The variables with source information are given in Table 1. I discuss them in greater detail below.

TABLE 1: Descriptions of Variables Used in Analysis

Variable	Description	Source	Mean	S.D.
Students attending white academies	Number of students attending white academies-grades K-12; selected years	Mississippi St. Dept. of Education, Nonpublic Schools, Selected Years	4.217	2.863
White school-age children	Number of white children in 1970 (ages 5-17)	U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972)	3862.	4111.1
Number of school districts	Number of school districts in county	Mississippi St. Dept. of Education (1971)	1.963	1.077
School expenditure per student, 1969-70	School expenditure per student, 1969-1970	Mississippi St. Dept. of Education (1971)	454.35	74.31
Proportion black among school-age children	Proportion calculated based on 1970 Census data for ages 5-17	U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972)	5.83	12.44
Median white family income	1970 median white family income (calculated)	U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972)	4286.67	9503.57
Prop. white household with annual inc. > $15,000 (1970)	U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972)		.0883	.0385
Black poverty	Proportion of black households below poverty level, 1970	U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972)	.61	.103
Alexander v. Holmes decision	Dichotomous variable—whether county's school districts were included in *Alexander v. Holmes* decision	Reported in Munford (1973)	.259	.441
Freedom Summer volunteers	Number of Freedom Summer volunteers working in county, summer 1964	SNCC Papers, Schomburg Center for the Study of Black Culture, A:XV:197, Reel 39	5.83	12.44
Black candidates running for office (1967)	Number of black candidates running for office in the 1967 county and state elections	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party microfilm collection, Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, Reel 2; and Rims Barber Papers, Tougaloo College, Box 1, File 7	1.383	2.732
Violent resistance index	Number of incidents of attack/assault on civil rights workers, 1960-9	Colby (1987)	11.53	19.01
Citizen's Council	Dummy variable — whether county had a Citizen's Council organization in January 1956 (earliest date available); 1= presence, 0 = absence	Citizens' Councils of America (1956)	.69	.46
Ku Klux Klan organization	Presence of organization in county c. 1964	U.S. House of Representatives (1965)	.5	.46

The dependent variable in the analyses below is the natural log of academy enrollments during the 1970–71 school year. I log the dependent variable because preliminary analyses showed that the raw count was sensitive to influential cases.

Control Variables

Three measures are included as control variables. The total number of white school-age children is included as a control for the potential enrollment. Some counties include multiple school districts, and so I have included the number of school districts in the county in each model. Arguably, multiple school districts gives parents a possible institutional mechanism for subverting school desegregation. I have also included a measure of the total expenditure per student in the 1969–70 school year.[10] This tests for another possible argument: that private academies are formed in counties that have underfunded public school systems.

RACIAL STRUCTURE

The percentage of black school-age children and percentage of black households in poverty measure the aggregate characteristics of the population. These measures test two possible arguments. The first variable examines whether counties with relatively larger black populations are more likely to form private academies. The second measure assesses the influence of black poverty as a separate possible determinant of academy enrollments.

COURT INTERVENTION

The *Alexander* decision is measured as a dichotomous variable indicating whether the county's school districts were covered by this major Supreme Court case. This variable allows me to determine whether court intervention has an impact on countermobilization.

CIVIL-RIGHTS AND BLACK ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION

I use two measures to determine the impact of black mobilization on the establishment of academies. Freedom Summer measures the number of staff and volunteers working in the county during the 1964 summer project. I treat the variable as an indicator of the movement infrastructure of the early 1960s. The black candidates variable measures the number of candidates for office in 1967, which was the first set of county elections after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Even though few black candidates won elected positions, the variable indicates the extent of electoral mobilization in the late 1960s, which represented a potential threat to white electoral power (Andrews 1997).

RESOURCE CAPACITY OF WHITE COMMUNITY

I use two variables to measure the resource capacity of the white population in a county. I measure the median white household income and the proportion of households with annual incomes above $15,000. The academies required a minimum number of students whose parents could afford the tuition. As noted, the academies often benefited from large outlays of capital for buildings, land, and equipment. The second measure is an indicator of the potential resources for this type of support.

PRIOR COUNTERMOBILIZATION

Finally, I include three measures of prior countermovement activity. The Citizens' Council measure is a dichotomous variable indicating presence or absence of a chapter in the county. The measure is recorded in 1956 when the Citizens' Council presented this information in its monthly magazine. Ideally, I would prefer an indicator closer in time to the formation of the academies, that is, from the mid-1960s. However, I believe the 1956 measure is still valuable because it tells us whether the same counties that had organized resistance to desegregation in the 1950s were similarly organized in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I include a similar measure for the presence of a Ku Klux Klan organization in the early 1960s. The Citizens' Council and Klan measures provide indicators of the two main organizations that attempted to mobilize against the civil-rights movement in Mississippi. The violence index is a composite measure of violent incidents compiled by Colby (1987). This measure covers the period from 1960 to 1969 and includes incidents of violence toward civil-rights workers in the county. Colby's sources include the archival collections of the major civil-rights organizations and newspaper coverage.

Analysis

The first piece of the analysis presented in this article is a preliminary description of the historical trend for academy expansion. Figure 1 presents annual totals of the number of students attending academies and other private schools (primarily parochial schools).[11] Notice in particular the striking increase in the enrollments for the 1969–70 school year over the 1968–69 year. Enrollments nearly quadrupled and were followed by substantial increases in the early 1970s. The figure also shows that the growth occurred through the formation of new institutions rather than the expansion of established institutions, such as Catholic schools. The enrollments in nonacademies remain relatively constant throughout this period (see also Nevin & Bills 1976).

TABLE 2: OLS Regression Analysis for Number of Students Attending Academies, 1970-1971

	Dependent Variable Academy Attendance 1970-71 (Logged)
Independent variables	
Number of white school-age children 5-17 (1970)	8.543E-06 (.000)
Number of school districts (1969-70)	−.431* (.244)
Proportion black among school-age children (1970)	10.835*** (2.126)
School expenditure per student (1969-70)	−5.59E-05 (.003)
Proportion of black households in poverty (1970)	−5.169 (3.705)
Median white household income (1970)	2.092E-04 (.000)
Proportion of white household with annual income above $15,000 (1970)	7.877 (9.750)
Alexander v. *Holmes* (1969) — whether county was covered by Supreme Court decision	2.505** (.605)
Number of Freedom Summer staff and volunteers (1964)	.044* (.024)
Number of black candidates running for office (1967)	−.163 (.099)
Violent resistance index (1960-69)	−.014 (.014)
Citizen's Council organization (1956)	.915* (.487)
Ku Klux Klan organization (1964)	.961* (.498)
Constant	−.219 (−3.409)
R^2	.689
Adjusted R^2	.628

* p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Some studies of white flight find that after the implementation year a substantial number of whites reenter the public school system, offsetting some of the initial enrollment decline (Rossell 1983). The aggregate data suggest that this was not the case in Mississippi. In general, the academies that were established and survived several years were likely to continue beyond the 1970s.

By fall 1970 the desegregation orders that applied to the *Alexander* school districts were affecting many more school districts. The wider application of the decision accounts for the fact that the aggregate pattern observed in Figure 1 shows a substantial lift in the 1969–70 school year followed by a near doubling of enrollments for the 1970–71 year. This makes the 1970–71 school year the pivotal year for the establishment of academies. Table 2 presents an OLS regression model predicting the logged number of students attending private academies in a county for the 1970–71 school year.[12]

The proportion of black school-age children has a statistically significant relationship to white academy enrollment in the model.[13] The data presented here lend support to the argument that aggregate characteristics of the populations shape white responses to school desegregation. Further, the data support Olzak, Shanahan, and West's (1994) "competition theory," which states that "competition is maximized when ethnic and racial groups occupy overlapping regions of social structure" (201). In their study of antibusing protest, Olzak, Shanahan, and West find that potential competition results in protest campaigns. In Mississippi, the prospect of competition results in widespread abandonment of public schools, which required extensive mobilization.

The number of school districts has a statistically significant negative effect on academy enrollment. I suspect that this result arises because in counties with multiple districts there were other avenues available for whites to subvert desegregation orders: for example, if district lines could be drawn to place racially identifiable areas of a county in separate districts. To systematically evaluate this interpretation, I would require more detailed data on the composition of districts and the strategies of parents and school authorities within those districts.

I do not find support for the argument that countermobilization was shaped by the relative proportion of blacks in poverty. The measures of resource capacity (median white household income and proportion of white households with income above $15,000) are nonsignificant. This is surprising, considering the financial costs of establishing academies. Apparently the key issue was organizational rather than the level of economic resources for white households. Finally, the level of school expenditures does not have a statistically significant effect on academy enrollment.

Political Processes:
Court Intervention, White Mobilization, and Local Insurgency

A central claim of this article is that white flight cannot be explained by reference to latent structural characteristics alone. The model examines the impacts of distinct forms of political action on the formation of academies. The counties covered by the *Alexander v. Holmes* case had significantly higher enrollments than counties not covered by the decision. Academy supporters may have received a tactical advantage in the establishment of academies. These counties were part of one of the key desegregation decisions to go before the Supreme Court and received enormous public attention. The weightiness of the situation combined with an external actor to mobilize against seem to have given local countermovements a ripe context within which to organize. In addition, the final decision called for desegregation to take place at the beginning of the second semester; the disruptiveness of the proposed plan may have provided extra incentive to those tempted to organize a private academy or send their children to one. In the covered counties during the first half of 1970, whites were likely to be busy organizing academies while their counterparts in the counties not covered were watching to see what happened next.[14] One academy supporter noted that the court orders "gave us five to ten years of growth compressed into one year" (Nevin & Bills 1976:25).

Is the development of academies part of a broader pattern of countermovement within the county? In the regression model, the presence of a Citizens' Council organization and a Ku Klux Klan organization are statistically significant independent variables. The link between prior organization and academies conforms to the prediction of resource mobilization theory that the formal and informal linkages between activists is a key resource for movements. The case of Mississippi academies suggests that this is true for countermovements and fits the pattern found in studies of antibusing movements (Taylor 1986; Useem 1980). With the available data it is impossible to determine whether these organizations played a direct or an indirect role. As my comments above indicate, I believe the Citizens' Councils played a modest direct role, but the primary contribution made by both organizations was through the informal ties established within the county.

Next consider the measures of black mobilization. Using the Freedom Summer variable, counties with greater levels of social movement mobilization in the 1960s had higher academy enrollments. The measure of black electoral mobilization is not significant, and, contrary to my expectations, the coefficient is negative. The fact that very few black candidates won elections in the 1967 elections may have made electoral politics appear less than threatening. In contrast, Freedom Summer and the civil-rights movement more generally was pivotal in many Mississippi counties. Arguably, the noninstitutionalized mobilization represented by the civil-rights movement generated greater uncertainty in a way that electoral mobilization did not. Nevertheless, the argument advanced at the beginning of the article that academies are the outcome of movement–countermovement dynamics is

supported by these data. Social movements increase the level of white resistance, creating the solidarity necessary for later backlash. Scholars have found a similar phenomenon occurred with voter registration: increases in black voter registration escalated white voter registration (Alt 1992). These findings underscore the need for attention to the interaction between movements and countermovements to understand their enduring consequences.

In sum, I find that the following measures have statistically significant effects: countermovement organization (Citizens' Council and Ku Klux Klan), court intervention (*Alexander v. Holmes*), civil-rights mobilization (Freedom Summer), the proportion of black school-age children, and the number of school districts. In addition, some of my theoretical expectations were not supported — in particular, that greater levels of black poverty, greater levels of white resource capacity, and greater levels of black electoral mobilization would be positively related to countermobilization. In sum, the analysis supports competition theory and demonstrates that insights derived from social movement theory help explain patterns of white countermobilization.

Discussion

The research presented in this article addresses several unresolved theoretical debates in the study of social movements and provides further insights into the process of institutional formation and social change. Patterns of racial contention are shaped by racial competition as proposed by ecological theories. However, political processes and movement dynamics have effects independent of these aggregate structural characteristics. The primary questions addressed here concern the relations between social movements, the political opportunity structure, and institutional outcomes. This article helps clarify these questions by combining the strengths of an in-depth analysis of the Mississippi case with a quantitative analysis of county-level data.

The research presented here demonstrates that strategies of white resistance were shaped by broad features of the local social structure — in this case, the relative size of the black population. The salience of this factor may model perceived threat of interracial contact in schools, or it could be related to the indirect factor of white institutional control of schools and an electoral-political threat to white political dominance at the municipal and county level.

Aggregate structural characteristics are important but provide incomplete explanations of this particular case of countermobilization. This study finds support for the arguments of social movement theorists (especially political process and resource mobilization) as explanations of white resistance to desegregation. As political process arguments would suggest, the Supreme Court's *Alexander v. Holmes* decision had differential effects for Mississippi school districts that is reflected in

the higher levels of support for academies in the covered counties. The decision provided a window of opportunity when a new pathway of institutionalized resistance was open to would-be challengers. This study finds that the organizational capacity of movements and countermovements shape the extent of white resistance to school desegregation. Some scholars have noted that the process of movement mobilization sets in motion the process of countermobilization (Lo 1982; Luker 1984; Meyer & Staggenborg 1996; Schwartz 1976; Zald & Useem 1987). However, few have specified beyond a narrative or descriptive level the interactive aspects of this process and the outcomes generated by these dynamics. Further, analyses of movement consequences have most often examined impacts that fall within the broad goals of movement actors. This study shows that we should focus as well on the unintended consequences of movement–countermovement dynamics.

By focusing on the process of institution building and transformation, this article challenges prior research that focuses on education and white flight after the institutions have been established. Once a county had established a set of private schools, little change took place. The period of crisis presented a window of opportunity in which one dimension of a county's social structure could undergo significant change. In short, the formation of new institutions requires a historical explanation that accounts for the social and political origins of the institutions.

McAdam (1982) observes in his study of black insurgency that contrary to elite theory's "image of an elite comfortably in control of the political environment, it would seem more accurate to see the elite as a harried group scrambling to manage or contain numerous challenges that arise to threaten the fundamental prerogatives of class rule" (233). This insight dovetails with the analysis presented here. In short, this study cautions against an overly voluntarist view of historical processes that fails to consider the way strategic decisions are shaped by political institutions and conflict dynamics. When social movements directly or indirectly challenge the prevailing structures of inequality, local powerholders typically respond by defending existing institutions or by attempting to reconstitute institutional control in new venues. In similar fashion, the white academies were the outcome of long-term and short-term processes of political contention at the local and regional level.

Notes

1. In urban areas and in the North, resistance took other forms, for example, mass demonstrations (Olzak, Shanahan & West 1994) and the shifting of school district boundaries (James 1989).

2. Figure 1 is discussed in greater detail later in the article. I have separated enrollment in the private academies from other private schools (the most important example being Catholic schools that predated the academies). These other private schools were not used widely for resisting school integration.

3. It is not surprising that the establishment of private all-white academies created a new set of tactical dilemmas for the civil rights movement. The most important was how to stop the flow of public resources into the private school system.

4. However, there is substantial evidence that movement leadership in antibusing movements had an elite base (Mottl 1980; Zald & Useem 1987).

5. For studies examining the impact of the Mississippi movement on electoral politics, see Andrews (1997), Colby (1986), and Stewart and Sheffield (1987); on social policies, see Andrews (2001), Quadagno (1994), and Colby (1985).

6. Aiken and Demerath's study (1967) of two Mississippi counties documents the general problems of the "freedom of choice" plans.

7. Three of the boards of education named in the *Alexander* case controlled only transportation systems (Munford 1973).

8. As noted earlier, movements often change their goals over the course of their development. In the case of the Citizens' Council, it is both interesting and revealing that the primary goal of the organization had shifted in slightly more than ten years from a thorough defense of segregated public institutions to a rearguard attempt to establish private institutions.

9. I have excluded Hinds County from the OLS regression analysis reported here. Hinds County is an outlier because of its large population size, so its inclusion biases the estimates of the models presented here. In the models, residual values are beyond three standard deviations from the predicted values.

10. I also ran the models with a variable measuring the total instructional expenditure per student. Arguably, parents would be more concerned with funds directed toward the classroom than with total funds. However, the two indicators produce very comparable results because they are so highly correlated ($R^2 = .96$).

11. Operationally, academies are defined by their membership in the Mississippi Private School Association; see the description in the text. The data set excludes enrollment figures for parochial and all-black private schools. Enrollments at parochial schools remained relatively constant before and after 1969 and was not the strategy pursued by whites resisting school desegregation in Mississippi. For the most part this is because parochial schools were concentrated in counties other than the counties where academies were established in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

12. Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) for the model suggest that multicollinearity is not significant. I ran additional models to test for spatial autocorrelation using SPACESTAT (see Amenta, Dunleavy & Bernstein 1994 for an example). The spatial error term was nonsignificant (results available from author).

13. A measure of the black proportion of the voting age population would produce similar effects, making it impossible to determine whether white support for academies is shaped by white fear of integrated education or of a more indirect fear of black political/ electoral power. The underlying threat could have been the concern that a majority black electorate would elect blacks to key positions in school districts, counties, and municipalities and thereby gain greater control of public institutions.

14. There has been substantial research on the impacts of law on social movements (see Rosenberg 1991). One of the major constraints of law as a mechanism of change is that court orders often lack an effective institution to oversee and enforce decisions. The *Alexander* decision may be unique because of the extensive interaction between HEW, the Justice Department, and the courts. For that reason, it would be inaccurate to attribute the effects of the *Alexander* decision measured in the models to the courts exclusively. Rather, there was a coordinated federal effort in these counties greater than was present in other locales.

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