

Opposing the Civil Rights Movement (with Sahar Parsa and Hanna Yu)

Abstract

In 1961, around 60% of white Americans thought that the freedom riders were hurting the chances of integration in the South. The share was larger among those who thought that integrating schools was a mistake: 80%. This pattern holds throughout the 1960s: opponents of integration were consistently more likely to say that the Civil Rights Movement was hurting the cause. They were also more likely to say that the protestors themselves did not really care about the cause (for instance, that they were just communist troublemakers), and that integration would not happen. We discuss broader implications for interpreting reactions to protest movements.