

DID BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS CHANGE PUBLIC OPINION?

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Overview

- Study the effects of protests on public support for the BLM movement in Iowa.
 - The murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 ignited BLM protests; BLM became one of the largest movements in the US.
 - BLM movement focuses on the unjust violence inflicted on Black people and communities, with a large focus on police brutality.
- Employ a measure of decayed-distance exposure to protests in Iowa linked to survey data on support for BLM.
- We find that respondents closer to protests showed increased support for BLM.

Theoretical Expectations

- Proximity to protests influences public opinion on related issues (Andrews et al. 2016; Wallace et al. 2014).
- H1: Exposure to BLM protests increases support for BLM.
- H2: Exposure to BLM protests increases support for defunding the police.

Data on BLM Public Opinion

- Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab Survey (Jan.13, 2021 - Feb.3, 2021).
- 1,000 responses collected through a respected web panel vendor.
- Quotas and weights used to increase representativeness.
- Two key questions (5-point scale):
 - support for the BLM movement (45% support or strongly support);
 - support for defunding the police in Iowa (63% oppose or strongly oppose).
- Included respondent zip code for geolocation.

Data on BLM Protests

- We use data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).
- 176 BLM protests identified in 43 Iowa cities through May 2021.
- Among them: 12 were violent, 13 involved police intervention, and 2 involved excessive force against protesters.
- Use protest city for geolocation.

Locations of Protests and Respondents

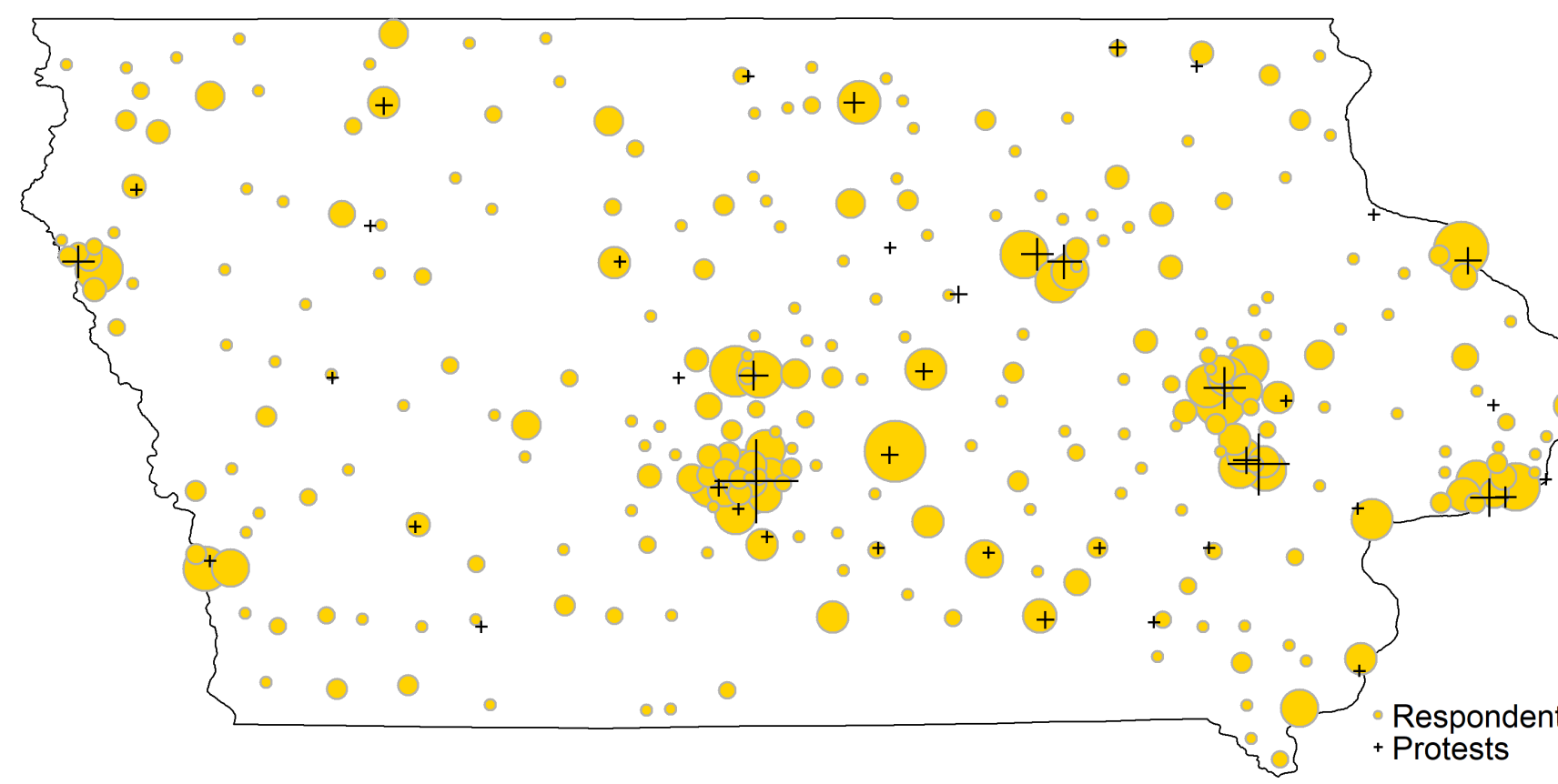


Fig. 1: Location of Protests and Respondents

Methods: Measuring Exposure

1. We count the number of protests within a fixed radius of each respondent.

$$E_i(D) = \#\{j : d_{ij} \leq D\}.$$

2. For individual i exposed to protests $1 \leq j \leq J$ at distances d_{ij} , we measure total exposure as follows:

$$E_i = \sum_{j=1}^J \exp(-\delta d_{ij}).$$

Methods: Decayed Exposure Illustrated

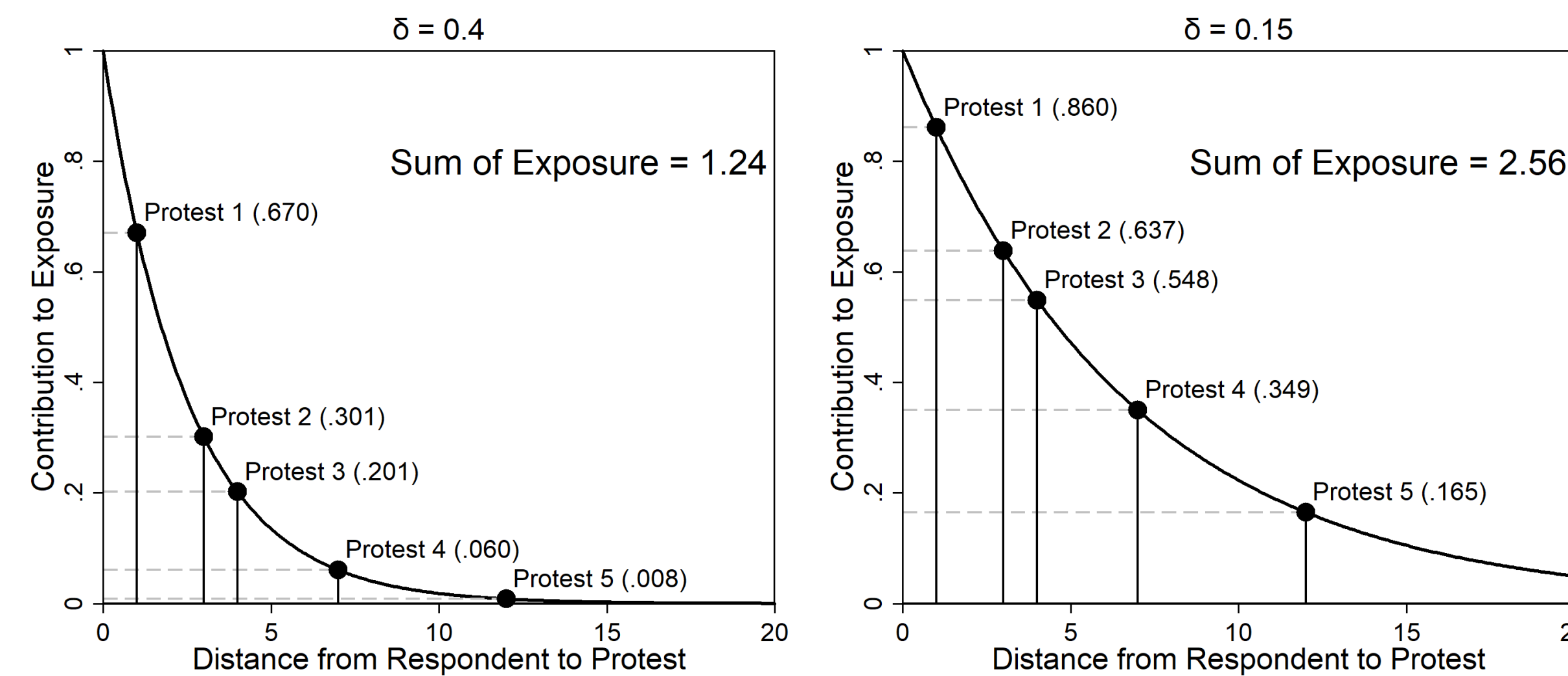


Fig. 2: Location of Protests and Respondents

Analysis: Protests and Opinion

- Use ordered logit for opinion measure as outcome.
- Include exposure along with other controls.
- Vary distance in miles or decay parameter for robustness.
- Results generally produce significant estimates of exposure.
- Decayed exposure models seem to perform better.
- Both indicate that only close protests matter.

Results: Decayed Exposure Effect

This figure plots the value of $\hat{\beta}_E \exp(-0.7d_{ij})$ using the estimates from corresponding the BLM and defund models when $\delta = 0.7$.

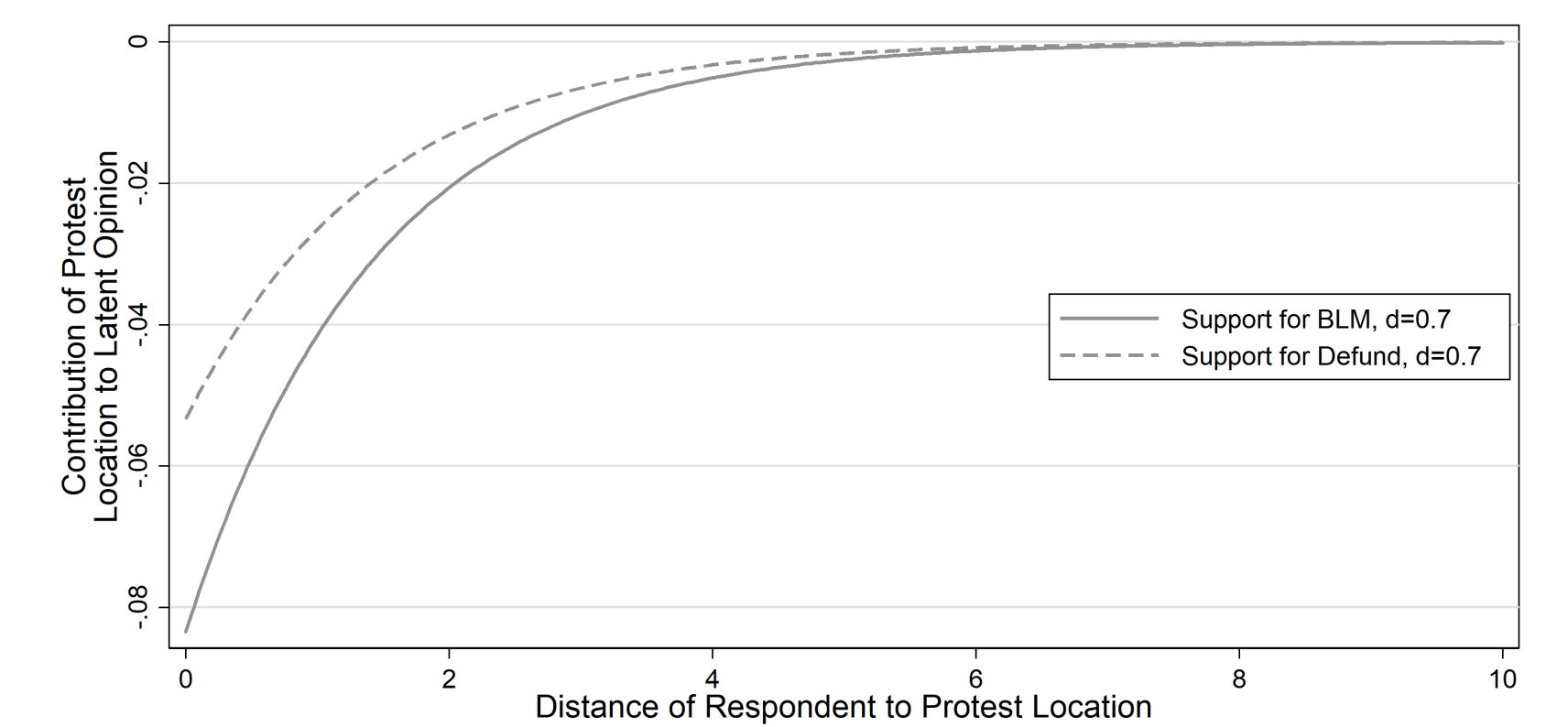


Fig. 3: Location of Protests and Respondents

Results: Exposure Increases Support

These plots show the predicted probability of a respondent strongly supporting BLM or defund from the ordered logit models.

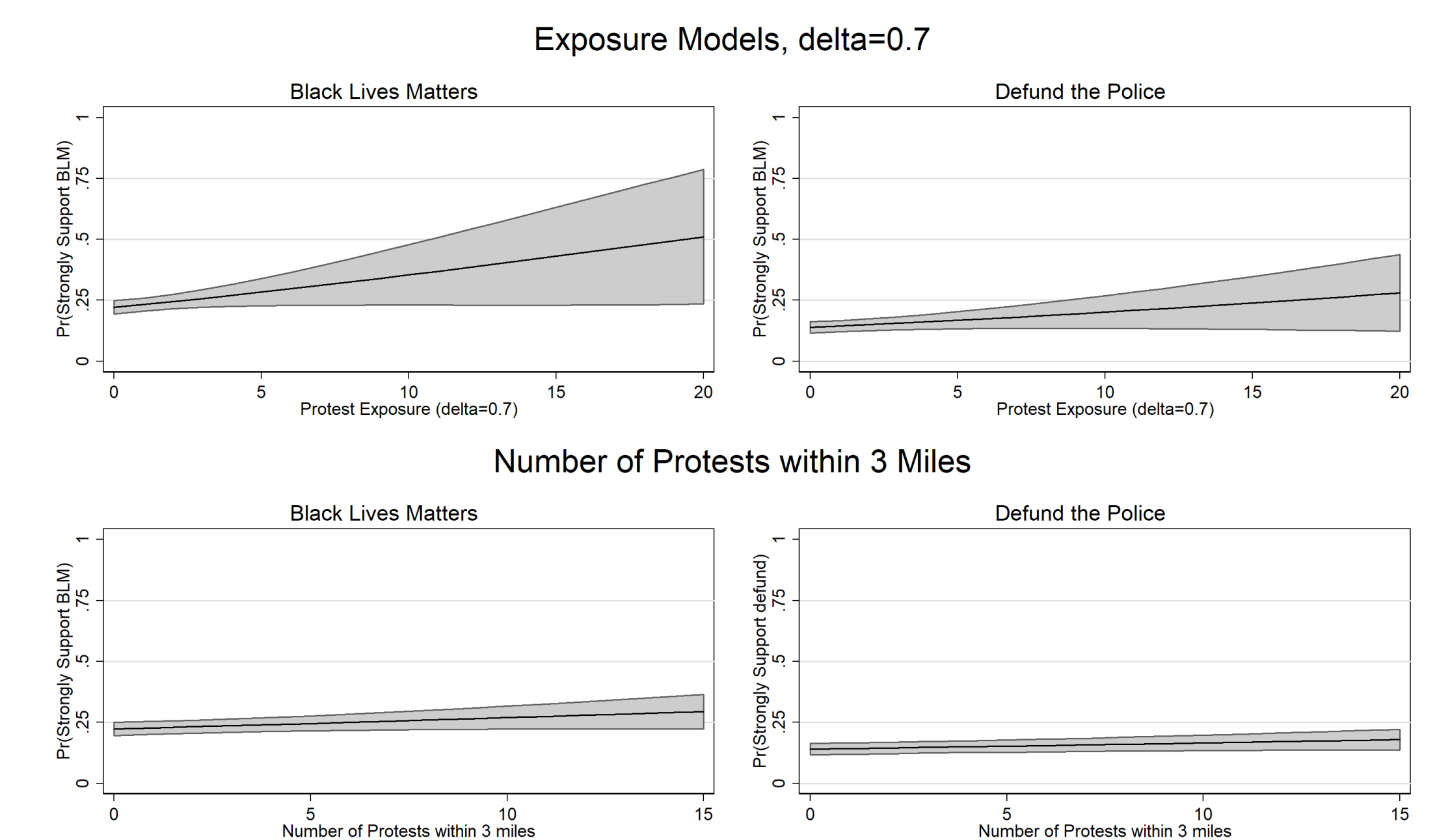


Fig. 4: Location of Protests and Respondents