LYNCHING IN THE U.S. SOUTH: 
INCORPORATING THE HISTORICAL RECORD ON 
RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER 

DISSERTATION 

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By 
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Between 1882 and 1930, nearly 3,000 people were lynched in the U.S. South. This brutal and violent phenomenon has been of long standing interest to both sociologists and historians, yet sociologists have not fully incorporated historical insights into their modeling of lynching events. This project, drawing from prior sociological and historical work, addresses issues of class, gender, and race that have been largely overlooked in empirical accounts of lynching events. Quantitative data and analyses are first used to identify broader race competition and social class processes that led to the occurrence of lynching in the aggregate, and the specific selection of cases takes into account gendered-racist justifications provided for the violence. Qualitative and quantitative content coding of archival material are then used to examine the ways in which local media drew on gender, race and class biases to legitimate lynching events. The findings suggest that previous work on lynching, while informative, is limited: the organizational base of elites with respect to racial exploitation must be considered; race and gendered beliefs had important consequences for lynching, shaping who was lynched and why; and, finally, gendered-racist framing legitimate both the brutality of lynching and prevailing stratification arrangements. While directly relevant to the sociological literature on lynching, my findings also extend to the study of contemporary stratification. In particular, the results inform and address (1) our understanding of an
historically important method of subordination and social control; (2) sociological conceptions of the relationship between race, class, and gender; and (3) the symbiotic relationship between structure and culture.
Dedicated to George and our children
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract........................................................................................................... ii  
Dedication......................................................................................................... iv  
Acknowledgments.......................................................................................... v  
Vita.................................................................................................................. viii  
List of Tables...................................................................................................... x  
List of Figures..................................................................................................... xi  

Chapters:

1. Introduction.................................................................................................... 1  
2. Sociological Approaches to Lynching: An Emphasis on Competition......... 16  
3. Integration of Sociological and Historical Accounts................................... 29  
4. Data and Analytic Strategy........................................................................... 49  
5. Elite-Race Interaction and Lynching: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis.......... 70  
7. Brutes, Ladies, and “Righteous Protectors:” Racial and Gender Ideologies in Lynching................................................................. 102  
8. Discussion and Conclusion......................................................................... 121  

Appendix A. Qualitative Coding Sheet. ............................................................. 136  
References......................................................................................................... 141  

ix
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Key Quantitative Variables and Descriptive Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Pearson’s Correlation of Black Tenancy in 1900, 1910 and 1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Coding Scheme for News Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>REM Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Competition Model’s Effect on the Lynching of African American Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>REM Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Class Exploitation Model’s Effect on the Lynching of African American Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>REM Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Interaction Model’s Effect on the Lynching of African American Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Binomial Logistic Regression Analysis of the Lynching of African American Male and All Female Victims; White Male Victims serve as the Reference Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Frequencies of Discrete Types of Lynching Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Binomial Logistic Regression Analysis of Reasons Given for the Lynching of White and African American Male Victims; White Men Lynched for Non-Sexual Offenses serve as the Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Frequency of Sexualized Lynchings in Georgia and in the Coverage of Georgia Newspapers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Number of Lynching Victims Per Year, 1882-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Total Number of Lynching Victims by State, 1882-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Race and Sex of Lynching Victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Justifications for Lynching Given by Lynch Mobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Conceptual Model of the Relationship between the Organizational Base of Elites and Lynching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Conceptual Model of the Role of Structure and Ideology on Lynching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Effect of African American Tenancy on the Rate of Lynching Across Levels of Elite Farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Frequency of Justifications for Lynching in Georgia, 1882-1930</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sociologists who study stratification, social movements, and social control have been interested lynching for some time. This should come as no surprise given lynching’s historical role as a method of social control of subordinate peoples, and because of its potential contemporary relevance (for instance, see Jacobs et al 2005; Messner 2005). Sociological research on lynching has relied almost exclusively on theories of racial competition to explain when, where, and why lynching occurred. From this perspective, racial and ethnic violence is more likely to occur when whites perceive a racial or ethnic threat, often related to declines in economic, political, or demographic resources. Indeed, there is empirical support for a relationship between competition and lynching (Corzine et al. 1983; Corzine Olzak 1990; Soule 1992; Tolnay and Beck 1995). While this work provides important insights into the phenomenon of lynching, there are relevant dynamics that warrant further exploration. The literature, for example, pays little attention to class dynamics that were most assuredly playing a role, and little sociological attention has centered on the ideological dimensions of lynching—two points upon which historians have been more explicit.

This project, drawing from prior sociological and historical work, addresses issues of class, gender, and race in the case of lynching that have been largely overlooked in
empirical accounts generally, and certainly in the modeling of lynching events. This approach will improve our understanding of an historically important method of subordination. It also speaks to and informs sociological conceptions of class and the intersection of gender, race and class.

*Historical Patterns of Lynching*

The act of lynching, while never commonplace, was relatively widespread throughout the U.S. South after the period of Southern Reconstruction. Between 1882 and 1930, nearly 3,000 people were lynched in the U.S. South. During this time, an average of 57 lynchings occurred each year in the region; by this count, just over one person was lynched every week between 1882 and 1930. The incidence of lynching peaked in 1892 when 129 people fell victim to lynching mobs, and began to decline at the turn of the 20th century. By 1930, the use of lynching as a social control mechanism was rare. Although the number of lynching victims fluctuated greatly from year to year, a general downward trend can be seen in Figure 1.1.

In most cases, only one person was lynched at a time, but there were incidences of several victims being killed together. In two of the most horrific attacks, 8 people were lynched at the same time. In Barnwell County, South Carolina, for example, 8 African American men were lynched together by a white mob for allegedly having committed murder, served as accessories to murder, or witnessing the murder. In another devastating case, David Walker, an African American man, was lynched in Fulton

---

1 In this study, the following states are included in the Southern category: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. This categorization is consistent with the approach taken by Tolnay and Beck (1995).
County, Kentucky for allegedly cursing at a white woman. His wife and six children—including a baby—were lynched with him for supposedly committing the crimes of “race prejudice” and “threats.”

![Graph showing number of lynching victims per year, 1882-1930.](image)

Figure 1.1: Number of Lynching Victims Per Year, 1882-1930

These brutal attacks were not distributed evenly across the South. Most of the lynchings occurred in the Deep South\(^2\), as is indicated in Figure 1.2. The greatest number of lynching victims were in the Deep South states of Mississippi and Georgia, while

\(^2\) Following Tolnay and Beck (1995) the Deep South refers to the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.
lynching was least common in North Carolina, a border state. The exception to this rule is South Carolina, which experienced a fewer number of lynchings than all other Southern states save North Carolina.

![Figure 1.2: Total Number of Lynching Victims by State, 1882-1930](image)

Even in the states where lynching was more common, however, lynching did not occur in all areas of the state. In fact, roughly one-third of Southern counties did not lynch any African Americans during the 48 year period between 1882 and 1930, while only 4% of counties lynched at least 1 person in each of the decades studied (see Table}
1.1). This led Tolnay and Beck (1995) to state that only 12.7% of Southern counties could be classified as “extremely prone” to racist violence against African Americans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Least One African American Victim</th>
<th>Percent of Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All five decades(^a)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four of five decades</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three of five decades</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two of five decades</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of five decades</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of counties</strong></td>
<td>883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) 1882-1889, 1890-1899, 1900-1909, 1910-1919, 1920-1929

Table 1.1 Proneness of Counties for White Mobs to Lynch African Americans

As can be seen in Figure 1.3, African American men were the most common victims of lynching. This pattern held in every state in every year between 1882 and 1930. Men were also the primary victims of lynch mobs, though 79 women were lynched between 1882 and 1930. Of these female victims, 74—all but 5—were African American. The vast majority of lynch mobs were white, but it was not entirely uncommon for African American mobs to engage in lynching. It should be noted that the victims of African American mobs were seldom white.
Also important to note are the justifications given by lynch mobs for their attacks. In most cases, lynching victims were accused of a crime prior to being killed. The mobs then used these accusations as grounds for lynching, even when the charges were not substantiated. It was not uncommon, in fact, for angry mobs to lynch people who had been found not guilty of the alleged crime, or to commit the lynching act before a not guilty verdict could be returned.
In most cases (56%) victims were lynched for murder, attempted murder, accessory to murder, and other similar charges. As seen in Figure 1.4, 27% were lynched for allegedly raping a woman—usually a white woman. Another 3% were lynched for committing acts of sexual impropriety (i.e. looking at a white woman, entering a girl’s bedroom, miscegenation). Property crimes (such as barn burning and horse theft) were used as justification for lynching 7% of the time, and other excuses (such as testifying in court and race prejudice against whites) were used in another 7% of cases.

Figure 1.4: Justifications for Lynching Given by Lynch Mobs
These trends in who was lynched, where, and why have been of longstanding interest to sociologists and historians. Sociologists interested in stratification, social movements, and social control have all studied lynching to gain insights into these issues, as well as contemporary race relations. Most often, sociologists have utilized racial competition theory to explain the occurrence of lynching (for example, Beck and Tolnay 1990, 1995; Corzine, Creech and Corzine 1983; Olzak 1990; Stovel 2001; Tolnay, Beck and Massey 1989).

**Sociological Perspectives on Lynching**

Studies of racist mobilization rely on a number of theories to explain this type of activity. Generally, sociologists seem interested in knowing why racist mobilization (be it violence, social movements, rioting, etc.) occurs and who benefits from these activities. Two theories commonly used are the competition and split-labor market approaches. Both of these theories claim some economic incentive for whites to engage in racist activity. Competition theory argues that working-class whites fear economic competition from racial minorities and immigrants, and thus engage in violence as a form of intimidation (Belanger and Pinard 1991; Jackman and Volpert 1996; McVeigh 1999; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1990; VanDyke and Soule 2002). Split-labor market theory, on the other hand, argues that it is white capitalists who benefit from overt racism. According to this theory, white elites encourage racial antagonism generally and racist violence specifically in order to prevent an interracial coalition of workers (Bonacich 1972, 1975, 1976). Each of these theories has been useful in explaining historical and
contemporary racial stratification (for example, Brown and Boswell 1995; Brown 2000; McVeigh 1999; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Reich 1981; VanDyke and Soule 2002), and may be important to our understanding of lynching as well.

Specifically, competition theory argues that perceived economic, political, and demographic competition between whites and racial minorities creates a sense of threat among whites—particularly the white working class. Competition theorists argue that working class whites respond to a perceived loss of resources by engaging in racist activity. Although political and demographic competition are theoretically relevant, the literature provides the most consistent support for economic competition. The evidence suggests that working class whites are more likely to engage in racial violence in times of economic crises, when they perceive a closing of the racial pay-gap, or when they fear they will lose their jobs (for example, see Beck and Tolnay 1990; Belanger and Pinard 1991; Jackman and Volpert 1996; McVeigh 1999; Olzak 1990; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Tolnay, Beck and Massey 1989; Tolnay and Beck 1995; VanDyke and Soule 2002).

Because most of the sociological literature on lynching is grounded in competition theory, research in this area has a tendency to either focuses exclusively on the working class or treats whites as a heterogeneous group with regard to class. While such analyses offer important insights into lynching, the singular focus on economic competition between working class whites and African Americans may limit our ability to fully explore both the spatial patterning of lynching and relevant ideological dimensions of this type of racist mobilization. Indeed, both the historical record and sociological theory suggest a more nuanced approach to lynching should be taken. Previous work indicates that the economic concerns of working class whites are
important predictors of lynching, but we should also consider the role of the economic elite.

Contrary to competition theory, split labor market theorists do consider the role of the white elite in instigating racial violence. These theorists argue that racial hostility occurs when the labor market is split along ethnic lines, with one group being paid significantly less than another for comparative work (Boswell 1986; Bonacich 1972, 1975, 1976; Brown and Boswell 1995). Specifically, conflict occurs between three groups: employers, higher paid labor, and low-wage minority labor. Employers are said to have an interest in obtaining and maintaining a cheap, docile labor force and rely upon the struggle between the laboring classes to do so. Higher paid laborers are, like the employers, typically members of the dominant racial group and feel threatened by the presence of their low-wage counterparts. Racial minorities and poor immigrants, on the other hand, usually serve as the low-wage laborers. Low-wage, minority labor is used by employers to undermine the position of more expensive labor through strikebreaking and undercutting (Bonacich 1972; Boswell 1986).

Both working class whites and African-Americans, according to split labor market theory, are ultimately hurt by the split labor market because wages are depressed for both groups (Beck 1980; Reich 1981). Although the inclusion of white elites may be a step in the right direction, split labor market theorists cannot fully account for all relevant aspects of lynching. Like competition theorists, split labor market theorists are unable to provide an appreciation of how the specific class dynamics of a given place and time may affect racist violence.
Within the sociological literature, the historical exploitation of African American labor and the use of ideology meant to justify lynching are seldom included theoretically, and even less so empirically, in either a competition or split labor market models of racist violence. Historians, on the other hand, do suggest that these are important considerations in the study of lynching. This is discussed below.

**Historical Accounts and Unique Foci**

In contrast to the primary sociological focus on the white working class, historians and some historically informed sociologists have explicitly noted important class differences among whites during the era in question, and have pointed to the dependence of white elites on the racial hierarchy of the South for the preservation of their economic and political power (e.g., Genovese 1989; Hahn 1983; Kouser 1974; Paige 1975). Indeed, some scholars argue that the landed-elite who relied most heavily on African-American labor were the most vested in the protection of the racial state (James 1988; Paige 1975). Further, those who did not rely on African-American tenancy were less fervent in their support of African-American disenfranchisement (Hahn 1983; Kouser 1974). This, of course, does not mean that racial conflict did not occur between working-class whites and African-Americans, that competition was unimportant, or that white elites were not involved in some way. Rather, it suggests that sociological research and modeling of lynching, often aggregate and spatial in orientation, must more adequately incorporate dimensions of social class into its theorizing and modeling.

The ideological foundations of lynching have also received little attention from sociologists. Historians, however, have suggested rather clearly that the dynamic
interplay between gender and racial belief systems were crucial in defining who was lynched and why (for example, Hall 1993; Hodes 1993; MacLean 1991; Simon 1996). The first sociological analysis of lynching, conducted by Ida B. Wells in the late 19th century also spoke of the intricate relationship between race and gender. Wells argued that the use of racist and sexist stereotypes of white men as noble and just; African American men as violent and sexually aggressive; African American women as sexually available; and white women as pure and in need of protection, had several important effects. Specifically, these ideologies led many Southerners to support the lynching of African American men believed to be rapists of white women (regardless of evidence), to not expect similar punishment of white men reputed to have raped African American women, and perpetuated the infantilizing of white women (1895). Yet no analysis of lynching, either historical or sociological, has empirically examined how gender and race ideologies shaped lynching.

A more thorough understanding of this historically important social control mechanism will provide important contributions to not only the lynching and racist mobilization literature, but will inform sociological conceptions of class and the intersection of gender, race, and class. By incorporating measures of white elites and historical reliance on African American labor into the models of lynching, and by taking into consideration the racist and sexist assumptions used to justify lynching events, sociologists will be able to examine the structural and ideological processes that relate to power dynamics.

These insights may further our understanding of contemporary events as well. Recent research suggests that the complex interplay of class, race, and gender dynamics
that supported lynching in the South historically may be of great relevance to our understanding of modern race relations and criminal punishment. Messner et al (2005) find that the contemporary murder of African-Americans at the hands of whites is positively and significantly related to historical patterns of lynching. This suggests that, although the way in which the murders take place differs and the crimes now lack public approval, the prevailing cultural and structural foundations that allowed lynching to occur may reach into the present. Jacobs et al (2005) also show that the number of death sentences given to African Americans is higher where lynching was used more frequently in the past. It is possible, then, that the extra-legal use of lynching as a mechanism of controlling minorities—African American men in particular—historically may have been replaced with the legal execution of African American men in the present time.

*Project Outline*

This research, drawing from prior sociological and historical work, addresses issues of class, gender, and race in the case of lynching that have been largely overlooked in empirical accounts generally, and certainly in the modeling of lynching events. The primary goal of this project is to contribute to our understanding of class, gender, and race, and to provide greater historical insight into the sociological study of lynching. The use of lynching as a social control mechanism varied drastically across time and place. So, too, did the economic context of regions, states, and even counties. It is important, then, that sociologists study the historical complexities that led to this variation, if we are to begin to understand the real motivations behind the use of lynching. Further, we must begin to explore the ideological component of lynching that not only allowed these
crimes to occur, but made lynching a crime largely committed by white men against African American men.

In chapter 2, I review and begin to evaluate racial competition and split-labor market theories with respect to racist mobilization. I note the insights of each theory, highlighting what they have contributed to our understanding of racist activity generally and lynching in particular, while also pointing out areas that need further exploration in the sociological literature of lynching. I then move to theory integration and development in chapter 3. More specifically, I argue both that sociological models of lynching could better account for nuances in class and race, and that historically important conceptions of, and insights pertaining to, gender and race should also be incorporated into the sociological literature.

In chapter 4, I outline an analytic method that accounts for these historically important nuances and ideologies. Since my interest lies in both the spatial patterning of lynching and relevant ideological dimensions, I employ a multi-method approach—one which makes use of unique quantitative and qualitative-historical data. Quantitative data and analyses are first used to identify broader race competition and social class processes that led to the occurrence of lynching in the aggregate, and the selection of cases takes into account gendered-racist justifications provided for the violence. Qualitative and quantitative content coding of archival material are then used to examine the ways in which local media used gender, race and class biases when reporting on the lynching events.

Chapters 5 through 7 provide empirical tests of lynching in the U.S. South between 1882 and 1930. Competition and split labor market models, the standard models
used to study racist mobilization, are tested in chapter 5 using time-series analysis, along with a more historically informed model suggested in chapter 3. I then test the applicability of the best fit model from chapter 5 to various discrete cases of the dependent variable in chapter 6. For example, I examine whether the sociological models of lynching explain the lynching of African Americans and whites equally well, if the power of the model varies based on the offense the lynching victim was supposed to have committed, etc. In chapter 7, I move to a qualitative exploration of the prevailing gendered-racist ideologies of the day, and their affect on lynching.

The insights gleaned from the analytic chapters are integrated in chapter 8. Here, I return to the major sociological approaches taken in the study of lynching, and once again suggest that a more historically complex and nuanced approach can better guide our analysis of lynching. Further, I argue that this approach not only improves our understanding of this historically important method of subordination, but that is speaks to and informs sociological conceptions of class and the intersection of gender, race and class, and also sheds light on the formation of contemporary race relations.
CHAPTER 2

SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO LYNCHING: AN EMPHASIS ON COMPETITION

The brutal and violent phenomenon of lynching has been of long standing interest to both sociologists (for example, Beck and Tolnay 1990; Corzine et al. 1983; Stovel 2001; Tolnay, Deane and Beck 1996) and historians (see, for instance, Harris 1995; MacLean 1991; Simon 1996; Waldrep 1996). This should come as no surprise given the historical role of lynching as a method of social control of subordinate peoples, and because of its potential contemporary relevance (for instance, see Messner 2005; Jacobs et al 2005). Scholars from both fields have pointed out the importance of class dynamics in the occurrence of lynching, though the emphasis of each discipline differs.

Sociological research in lynching has relied almost exclusively on theories of racial competition to explain when, where, and why lynching occurred. From this perspective, racial and ethnic violence is more likely when whites perceive racial/ethnic threat, often related to declines in economic, political, or demographic resources. Indeed, there is empirical support for a relationship between competition and lynching (Corzine et al. 1983; Olzak 1990; Soule 1992; Tolnay and Beck 1995). The relationship between economic competition and racist mobilization seems particularly strong. The literature indicates that whites are more likely to engage in racial violence in times of economic crises, when they perceive a closing of the racial pay-gap, or when they fear they will
lose their jobs (Beck and Tolnay 1990; Belanger and Pinard 1991; Jackman and Volpert 1996; McVeigh 1999; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1990; Tolnay, Beck and Massey 1989; VanDyke and Soule 2002). Because competition theory is concerned with economic crises, the theoretical emphasis is typically placed on the white working class who, presumably, are more vulnerable to economic shifts than white elites. As such, the majority of the empirical work focuses exclusively either on the working class or treats whites as a homogeneous group with regard to class.

On the other hand, class exploitation models of racist mobilization, particularly split labor market theory, tend to focus on the capitalist class. From this perspective, white employers attempt to keep wages down by encouraging racial divisions and racial violence (Bonacich 1972, 1975, 1976). Because the split-labor market approach places responsibility for racist action on the shoulders of white elites while competition theory emphasizes the role of the white working class, these perspectives are often thought to be in opposition to one another. The historical record, however, indicates that aspects of both theories may be important to our understanding of lynching.

**Racial Competition and Racist Mobilization**

Racist mobilization has frequently been linked to the economy within the literature. Social movement scholars have reported that ethnic conflict ensues when competition between two or more ethnic groups increases (Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1989, 1990; VanDyke and Soule 2002). According to this theory, ethnic insurgency becomes more likely as groups begin competing for the same economic, political and/or demographic resources. Such competition may arise when economic crises occur, if dominant group
members perceive a loss of political prowess, or the size of the minority population increases (Beck and Tolnay 1990 Belanger and Pinard 1991; Jackman and Volpert 1996; McVeigh 1999; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1990; Tolnay, Beck and Massey 1989; VanDyke and Soule 2002).

Blalock’s (1967) power-threat hypothesis supports this view. He argues that the total resources a group has at its disposal and the degree to which those resources are utilized interact to produce a group’s social power. Racial hostility, then, is the result of competition over resources and threats to the power of the dominant group.

The perceived competition for resources may be exacerbated given the zero-sum perspective of power and resources common in the United States (Blumer 1958). From a zero-sum perspective, if gains in minorities’ access to resources are made then the dominant group will experience a loss of resources. Theoretically, then, whites have a significant interest in maintaining racial inequality because it will secure that group’s access to valuable economic and political resources (Wellman 1993). Because of this, it is argued, whites will come to see racial minorities as competitive threats to their resources, status, and privileges (Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958; Bobo 2000).

The relationship between competition and mobilization seems to be especially important in the case of reactive mobilization\(^3\), such as lynching and other racist activity. Economic competition in particular has been shown to be an important factor in mobilizing reactive groups. The commercialization of agriculture and other agricultural crises, for example, have led to mass racist mobilization (Kimmel and Ferber 2000;

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\(^3\) In his classic work, Tilly (1978) defines reactive movements as groups that attempt to reassert control over resources they have either lost or perceived to have lost.
McVeigh 1999). Likewise, increased white unemployment, depressed wages among whites, and financial gains made by minorities appear to mobilize white supremacist organizations (Jackman and Volpert 1996) and increase rates of ethnic conflict (Olzak 1989).

In 1983, Corzine et al. (1983) found an inverse relationship between percent illiterate whites, which they used as a proxy for poor whites, and lynching. If this finding is accurate, it could cast some doubt on the theorized relationship between economic threat and lynching. Yet the preponderance of research conducted since that time provides support for this theory. Olzak (1990), for example, found that periods of economic depression are positively related to lynching in the U.S. South. Both Olzak (1990) and Soule (1992) found that higher rates of lynching occurred where unemployment rates were high. Research also indicates that lynching increased as the price of cotton decreased (Beck and Tolnay 1990; 1995; Olzak 1990). Conversely, as the price of cotton increased, the rate of lynching against African Americans decreased (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Similarly, Tolnay and Beck (1995) report that as inflation increased, so too did the occurrence of lynching in the South.

Like economic competition, political competition is also thought to increase racial discrimination. According to competition theory, as whites perceive a loss (or potential loss) of political power, they will mobilize to protect their claim to this important resource. This mobilization may manifest itself as intimidation in the form of racial violence. Increased voting on the part of women and racial minorities, for instance, appears to pose a perceived political threat to white men. Minority voting, in fact, has led
to increased Ku Klux Klan activity during each period of Klan resurrection (Chalmers 1987; Feldman 1997).

An increase in the number of women in office may also lead to increased mobilization (Kimmel and Ferber 2000; Olzak 1990; Van Dyke and Soule 2001). The militia movement, in particular, has been shown to mobilize at least in part due to increased numbers of women in office (Van Dyke and Soule 2001). This movement has actually incorporated the fear of political threat into their doctrine. They argue that feminists, Jews, and racial minorities have taken over the federal government and are denying the white militia members of their right to political and economic security (Kimmel and Ferber 2000). While the increase in the political power of women may not be specifically racial in nature (unless, of course, the newly elected women are racial minorities), this research provides further evidence of the link between inter-group competition and collective action. In this case, white men mobilize to protect their interest against women.

In the case of lynching, Olzak (1990) demonstrates that Populist threats to the political interests of the dominant group may also have increased racial violence, though all other empirical tests of lynching found no significant relationship between lynching and any form of political competition (see, for example, Soule 1992 and Tolnay and Beck 1995). It is possible, however, that these different findings are due to changes in the availability of data. Olzak’s paper was written before Tolnay and Beck’s incredibly thorough data set of Southern lynching—now considered the best lynching data compiled—was made available to other researchers. She thus relied on older, less
complete data that relied on national counts rather than state or county level data. The relationship between political competition and lynching is thus mixed at best.

Finally, competition theorists argue that demographic competition may be an important trigger for racist conflict, particularly when combined with economic and/or political competition. A number of studies show that an increase in an area’s minority population coupled with economic downturns may influence racist activity (Beck 2000; Koopmans 1996; McVeigh 1999).

Demographic shifts may be related to lynching. Reed (1972) found that lynching occurred most frequently in those places with particularly high percentages of African American residents. Specifically, he found that counties with an African American population of 80% or more sparked higher rates of lynching. Corzine et al (1983) similarly found a positive relationship between the size of the African American population and the rate of lynching, but only in the Deep South. Interestingly, they also found that this relationship was only significant before widespread disenfranchisement of African American men, suggesting that demographic competition is most salient when other forms of white power (i.e. political or economic) are being challenged. In 1996, however, Tolnay, Deane and Beck argued that the research conducted by both Reed and Corzine et al. relied on a statistical model that was predisposed to find a positive relationship between competition and lynching. After correcting for this problem, they found support consistent with Blalock’s theory; rates of lynching increased as the percent African-American in a county increased, but at a decreasing rate.

As a whole, the literature on competition theory provides strong support for a relationship between racism and competitive threat. In particular, the research suggests
that racist mobilization generally and lynching in particular may be a response to economic and demographic threat (be it real or perceived) to whites. There is an implicit assumption in competition theory that because working class whites are the most susceptible to declines in power, they are responsible for, and are the primary beneficiaries of, racial discrimination and violence. Empirically, though, competition theorists are not able to test this class assumption. As such, little distinction is made between whites in various positions of the class hierarchy, and whites are treated as a monolithic group. While this hole in the research is largely due to the unavailability of data, it is an area that needs exploration. Class exploitation theorists have been somewhat more successful in exploring class distinctions among whites, but, as I discuss below, these theories retain problems of their own.

Class Exploitation and Racist Mobilization

Theorists who take a class analysis approach to racial conflict agree with competition theorists that the economy is vital to our understanding of racial violence, but they differ from competition theorists in two important ways. First, they disagree with the conclusions of some competition theorists that the white working class benefits from racism. Rather, a class analysis of racist mobilization emphasizes the role of the white elite. According to these theorists, white elites instigate racist activity and benefit from it; the white working class—along with racial minorities—is harmed by racial

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4 It should be noted, however, that while competition theory assumes that social actors are aware of economic trends and act on the basis of them, this has not been empirically tested.
discrimination. In taking this approach, theorists in the class analysis tradition acknowledge class differences among whites.

Second, whereas competition theorists explore the relationship between competition (often in the form of economic downturns) and racial discrimination, a class analysis approach emphasizes the way capitalism as a class structure influences racist violence. Traditionally, class analysis examines the economic structure in terms of the way people relate to the mode of production and the way their activities maintain that system. In other words, a class analysis examines the relationship of the social actor to the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor that occurs within a capitalist system (Breen and Rottman 1995; Dahrendorf 1959; Reissman 1959). White elites, in an attempt to maintain control over surplus labor, are said to encourage racial antagonism among the working class.

As evidence of this, many scholars point to evidence that suggests the development of racism in the United States was intertwined with the development of capitalism (Edwards et al. 1986; Smith 1981). The exploitation of Africans and African Americans as slave labor is an obvious example of this, as is the use of Chinese immigrants as labor on the railroads and Hawaiian sugar and pineapple plantations (Johnson 2001; Takaki 1989). The historical interaction of race and class has led many to theorize that racism is a benefit to the capitalist class. Split labor market theorists, for example, are proponents of this view.

Split labor market theory argues racial discrimination occurs when the labor market is split along ethnic lines, with one group being paid significantly less than another for comparative work (Bonacich 1972, 1975, 1976; Boswell 1986; Brown and
Boswell 1995). Specifically, conflict occurs between three groups: employers, high paid labor, and low wage labor. Split labor market theorists argue that employers have an interest in obtaining and maintaining a cheap, docile labor force. Higher paid labor—usually of the dominant racial group—fear being replaced and are therefore threatened by the presence of low-wage labor. The low-wage labor—typically racial minorities and/or immigrants—are, in turn, used by employers to undermine the position of more expensive labor through strikebreaking and undercutting (Bonacich 1972). Typically, poor immigrants and minorities serve as the low-wage labor (Boswell 1986). As Reich (1978) states,

“…racial inequality exacerbates racial antagonisms and divisions between black and white workers. White workers develop racist attitudes and feelings that make it more difficult for them to ally with blacks and to see their common class interests against capital. The greater the racial income gap, the deeper are the divisions between black and white workers, and the weaker are unions and class solidarity. The consequences of these racial divisions is that the collective strength of labor is weakened in its bargaining with capital over the wage rate and income shares. Capitalists gain and white workers loose….” (page 552).

The class position of white elites is thus maintained by encouraging racial antipathy across class lines. Both working class whites and racial minorities, then, are ultimately hurt by the split labor market because wages are depressed (Beck, 1980; Reich, 1981b). In this way, racial minorities are used by white elites to compensate for declines in surplus value due to increases in the wages of majority workers’ (Turner 1986).

Traditional Marxist theory also argues that low-wage minorities are not only used to undercut the wage levels of all workers, but that racial and ethnic minorities are exploited in other ways as well. Specifically, they are kept as a reserve labor pool, forced
to perform work that the dominant group is unwilling to do, and “…are used as a vehicle for transferring surplus value to capitalists as compensation for the wage gains of majority labor” (Turner 1986). These class exploitation models, then, suggest that capitalists benefit from social control over African Americans (be it through slavery, tenancy, or lynching) because it allows them to exploit working class whites as well as African Americans.

There is empirical support for the argument that propertied whites benefit from racial antagonism. In 1978, for example, Reich found that racial inequality decreases the likelihood that workers will organize against business. There is also evidence that employers not only benefit from racial antagonism, but that they actually foster it (Brown and Boswell 1995; Brown 2000; Reich 1981). While tests of split-labor market theory do not test who benefits from racist activity, the theory implies that white elites encourage this form of violence because it is in their economic interest to do so.

To my knowledge, however, there are no empirical tests of the relationship between a split-labor market and lynching. Despite this, some limited support for this theory could be inferred from the lynching research. Olzak (1990), for example, found that the presence of low-wage immigrants is associated with increases in the lynching rate. While she does not make the connection to a split-labor market approach, her findings suggest some support for the theory, which argues that elites use poorly compensated immigrant and minority labor to split the labor market along racial lines. Other research which finds a relationship between a heavy economic reliance on cotton and the likelihood of a lynching occurring in a particular county (Tolnay, Deane, and Beck 1996) may also support a split-labor market view. Presumably, this relationship is
due to the particular agricultural arrangement that the cotton industry has historically needed to survive—large plantations and many tenants (who were, more often than not, African-American). Both Soule (1992) and Corzine, Corzine, and Creech (1988), in fact, found that higher levels of farm tenancy increased the likelihood that lynching would occur. While these authors support an interpretation of these results consistent with competition theory, it is possible, though never empirically tested, that heavy reliance on low wage African American tenants was used by plantation owners to instill fear and anger in white workers. If this is true, it could provide some support for a class analysis approach to lynching. This relationship may provide further support for class exploitation models of racial violence, given the large number of bourgeois plantation owners and low-wage African-American tenants, though further research is necessary.

While class exploitation theorists consider important divisions among whites based on class, they are less likely to acknowledge distinctions among the white elite. If a loss of surplus value is all that is needed for elites to encourage racial animosity and discrimination, then racist mobilization should occur whenever workers achieve economic gains. Historically, however, this is not the case. It seems prudent, as Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno (1996; 1997) suggest, to consider the reliance of elites on racial exploitation.

Limitations and the Historical Record

There is significant empirical evidence that economic conditions influence rates of racial violence generally and lynching more specifically. Competition theory and the research that draws on it suggests an important relationship between a heightened sense of threat
(be it economic, demographic, or perhaps political) and the prevalence of lynching in a
given area. Split labor market theory, meanwhile, suggests that a decline in surplus value
urges elites to instigate discrimination such as lynching. What these theories are less able
to do, however, is provide us with an appreciation of how the specific class dynamics of a
given place and time may affect racist violence.

While competition theory does provide insight into the emergence of racial
violence, it treats whites as a monolithic group. As such, while this research does
enhance our understanding of lynching, it is based on the faulty assumption of a classless
white South. Split labor market theorists certainly specify some class variation among
whites, but overlook differences among elites, thus neglecting historical elite dependence
on the system of racial hierarchy. The lynching literature, therefore, overlooks the
historical record which indicates important class differences between whites and, perhaps
more importantly, differences among elites with regard to the racial base of their
employees (Genovese 1989; Hahn 1983; Kouser 1974; Moore 1993; Paige 1975).

Just as the lynching literature tends to overlook historically important class
nuances, it also neglects the ways in which ideologies played a role in the activation and
concrete manifestations of lynching. Specifically, empirical work on the topic has been
less explicit about how the occurrence of and communal response to lynching are
ultimately filtered through, conditioned, and activated by ideological rationales and
justifications. These rationales and justifications are certainly race-based, but may also
be shaped by gendered and gendered-racist beliefs.

Several case studies of lynching events conducted by historians have argued that
gender ideology was crucial in explaining who was lynched and why they were lynched
(see, for example, Hodes 1993; MacLean 1991; Simon 1996). Sociologists Ida B. Wells (1985) and Patricia Hill Collins (2003) have also argued that the gendered and racist social arrangements prevalent during lynching’s hey day are important to understanding this phenomenon. These scholars suggest that the common stereotypes of all people, but particularly African American men and white women, were drawn on to encourage and justify the lynching of African American men. This is thought to be particularly true in cases where white women were said to be victims of African American men’s uncontrollable sexuality and violent tendencies.

If this theorizing is accurate, the large number of African American men who were lynched for committing sexually-charged crimes against white women are based in gendered and raced ideologies. The work of these historians and sociologists suggests, then, that we must understand more that the economic climate if we are to understand the causes and consequences of lynching; we must also understand the larger system of inequality. Despite this, there remains no empirically generalizable test of how gender and race intersected to support lynching.

In chapter 3, I argue that the historical record could be more fully incorporated into the sociological research on lynching. Doing so would provide a more theoretically and empirically robust understanding of lynching at both structural and ideological levels. It is my contention that a more historically sensitive approach will deepen not only our comprehension of lynching, but will shed light on broader issues of race and ethnicity both historically and contemporarily.
CHAPTER 3

INTEGRATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

The importance of class dynamics in the occurrence of lynching has been noted by both sociologists and historians, yet their approach to studying the relationship between lynching and these dynamics differ. While sociologists have emphasized the role of competition between the white working class and African Americans, historians (and some historically grounded sociologists) have paid greater attention to the class context present when a specific lynching event occurred. Historians have also moved beyond a class assessment of lynching and pointed to the importance of racial and gender systems in the perpetuation of racial violence, something that sociologists have tended to overlook in their empirical work. As a result, important nuances in class and economic organization that historians have drawn attention to are missing from the sociological literature on lynching. Likewise, sociologists have overlooked the ideological dimension of lynching, which, based on the historical record, most assuredly played a role.

It is my contention that sociologists should be mindful of the economic structure of an area, the class divisions among whites, and the cultural and ideological factors used to justify racial violence. Although the prevailing theories have provided important insights, it is my argument that a more historically informed analysis that treats structure
and ideology as complementary will improve upon our current understanding of lynching. This chapter begins with a discussion of the historical record with respect to class and race. Specifically, the important role of white elites and African American tenancy is assessed. The historical work on gender and race ideology, and its relevance to lynching, is then be explored. Finally, an alternative approach to the study of lynching, one that incorporates both history and sociological theory is presented

*The Historical Record: The Organizational Base of Elites*

The competition-oriented literature on lynching, while occasionally noting class differences among whites theoretically, tends to treat whites as a monolithic class empirically. Yet historians (and a few historical-sociologists who work outside the area of lynching) have noted quite explicitly social class differences among whites during the era in question (Genovese 1989; James 1986; Kouser 1974). To begin, there were variations in the size of farms that whites owned; these differences corresponded to differences in the type of work that they engaged in. Small farm owners were typically subsistence farmers before the Civil War, but were drawn into the production of cash crops at the War’s end. Large farm owners, meanwhile, had typically relied on the plantation system, used slave labor, and grew cash crops (especially cotton) before the war (Fligstein 1986). Moreover, it was a very small elite who controlled the majority of slave labor; a mere 7% of white landowners who owned three-quarters of the slave population (Moore 1966). Thus, it seems that not all landowners had access to the same resources.
Further differences can be noted among the plantation class. Fligstein’s (1986) work suggests that four types of plantation owners emerged after the Civil War. The first group lived on and worked the land with the aid of wage labor. The second group was made up of absentee landlords who had moved to the city and had little contact with the tenants who worked the land. Merchants, who bought land out from under farmers and supervised tenants closely, were a third group. The final group consisted of corporations and banks who, in a style similar to the merchants, obtained ownership of plantations.

It is quite likely that these differences were associated with varying levels of support for political progress. In other words, some plantation owners may have been more likely to support new racial and class hierarchies in the South than others. It seems reasonable to expect, for example, that long-time plantation owners who continued to be closely tied to their land would be more conservative than merchants and corporations who had recently purchased farm land. The plantation owners who remained on their land may have thought of the Southern plantation as a way of life, whereas the merchants may have seen it as a purely capitalistic enterprise.

Luebke (1990), in fact, suggests that this is precisely what occurred in North Carolina politics beginning in the 1970s. He divides North Carolinian politicians and other elites into two groups, modernists and traditionalists. The traditionalists have a strong faith in the economic benefit and social value of Southern agriculture. They believe, he argues, that the South should emphasize and support rural and small-town interests above those of the more industrialized cities. The modernists, on the other hand, value economic expansion and therefore support individual entrepreneurs and corporate interests. Although Luebke’s work deals with a very different time period than is at issue
in this study, there is reason to believe that this split began developing even prior to the
Civil War.

O’Brien’s (1986) study of powerful elites in Guilford County, North Carolina
between 1850 and 1880, for example, points out that by 1870, a growing number of
influential people in the county, quite likely the absentee landlords discussed by
Fligstein, were interested in promoting a new, less overtly racist image of the South. In
order to foster this image of a New South, white elites had to move away from racial
exploitation—at least to the extent expected by the North. To achieve this goal, they tied
their interests to Northern business beginning as early as 1870 (Fligstein 1986, O’Brien
1986). These now urban-based elites aligned themselves more closely with the emerging
urban-industrialist rather than agrarian elites.

 Scholars have also pointed to differences among elites concerning their
dependence on racial exploitation (e.g., Hahn 1983; Kouser 1974; Moore 1966; Paige
1975). As of 1850, for example, only 25% of white landowners were also slaveholders,
and, as mentioned above, a mere 7% of them owned the vast majority of the slaves
(Moore 1966). The degree to which plantation owners relied on the racial hierarchy to
maintain their position had important implications for political and racialized actions.

Moore (1966) argues that the prior to the Civil War, the slaveholding elite was a
political powerhouse, and that the best land and the power to make political decisions
were firmly in the hands of this group. The work of Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno
(1996, 1997) suggests that this relationship was present even after the Civil War. They
find that racial oppression is most likely when the economic organizational base of elites
is dependent on cheap, exploitable labor. Similarly, James (1988) and Paige (1975) argue
that those large landowners who employed large numbers of African Americans as tenants were the most ardent defenders of the racial state. This group of planters, they claim, could benefit economically by creating an African American labor force unable to demand higher wages.

Likewise, Hahn (1983) and Kouser (1974) suggest that support for the disenfranchisement of African Americans was stronger in areas with many large plantations. While most whites did not support the right of African Americans to vote, concern about this issue was strongest in areas where there were large plantations and a heavy reliance on African American tenants. The establishment of Jim Crow also helped to enforce formal segregation which confined African Americans to a position of subordination to whites, further reducing any power they might have gained (James 1988). In fact, it is precisely in those areas that relied on large plantations, James (1986) argues, that the planter class most effectively dominated state politics; as a result, the treatment of African Americans, while never positive, was worse in the cotton South (which typically relied on large elite-owned plantations and many African American tenants). James’ (1986) work also suggests that Klan violence directed toward African Americans was done with the support, and possibly the cooperation, of local police organizations, who, in turn, were dominated by elite land owners. If he is correct, then, it seems likely that the use of lynching as a social control mechanism should also vary by the presence of many landed elites who rely on the exploitation of minority labor.
The Historical Record: Gendered-Racist Ideology

While the sociological literature on lynching has focused almost exclusively on the location of lynching events, historians have given considerable attention to the justifications provided for these attacks. These scholars argue that we need to understand not just the structural conditions that affect lynching, but also the ideological dimensions that surround these brutal crimes. In particular, historians have pointed to the racial and gender assumptions that seem to have played a role in Southern lynchings.

After the demise of slavery, the fear of sexual relations between white women and African American men was heightened. While relationships between white women and African American men were never accepted, there is historical evidence to suggest that there was marginal acceptance for these relationships provided the woman was poor (Hodes 1993). Stereotypes of poor white women as sexually wanton combined with the complete control elite white men had over slaves combined to decrease the stigma attached to these “illicit” affairs, at least to some degree (Hodes 1993; Simon 1996).

Reconstruction, however, changed the nature of the relationship between whites and African Americans. Without slavery to clearly define “whiteness” in opposition to “Blackness”, whites had to use other means to demonstrate the perceived differences between white and African American men and white and African American women. This was achieved in a number of ways, one of them being the excessive concern with sexual relationships between white women and African American men. Harris (1995) notes:

As racial subordination was reimposed in the long process of ‘redeeming’ the South, racial boundaries had to be drawn in new ways. A taboo on sexual contact between black men and white women became central to
that boundary….Racial subordination also was continually recreated in the routine actions of the everyday world. In that world, racial etiquette and violence served to mark a new color line.

Largely due to this redrawing of racial distinctions along sexually charged gender lines, stereotypes developed of gender and race groups that reinforced the new racial order. African American women were characterized as sexually degenerate; in opposition, white women were typified as chaste and pure. African American men, meanwhile, were stereotyped as sexually aggressive and unable to control themselves sexually; this contrasted dramatically with the idea that white men were upright and moral. Not surprisingly, these stereotypes emerged in the forefront of lynching activities and debates (Hall 1993).

Whites, especially white men, believed that without the restraining power of slavery, African American men would rape white women (Hodes 1993). As such, new forms of social control were considered necessary to prevent sexual assault, as well as to prevent voluntary unions between African American men and white women (Hall 1993). Although murder was the most common reason given for lynching (see Figure 1.4 in chapter 1), rape was the justification most commonly discussed in the public discourse (Hall 1993). Moreover, even when murder was used as the justification for a lynching, female murder victims resulted in some of the most highly ritualized and excessively violent lynching events (Harris 1995). When rape, attempted rape, or other forms of sexual impropriety (i.e. looking at a white woman, talking with a white woman, entering

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5 While all lynchings are violent by definition, some involved greater levels of torture to either the victim or the corpse.
6 Police officers who were murdered were also more likely to be avenged in this manner.
a white woman’s room) are provided as justifications for lynching emerging race and
gender ideologies are reinforced (Hall 1993). As Bederman (1995) writes:

…by constructing black men as ‘natural’ rapists and by resolutely and
bravely avenging the (alleged) rape of pure white womanhood, Southern
white men constructed themselves as ideal men: ‘patriarchs, avengers,
righteous protectors’.

Lynching helped to reinforce these stereotypes and acted as an important form of
social control because information about these events were widely disseminated.
Because so many people read about the details of and justifications provided for the
lynchings, the general public became very aware of what was considered normal and
appropriate behavior for various racial and gender groups. Moreover, lynching is a
collective event, which demonstrates white male solidarity and commitment to these
social norms (Harris 1995). Bennett (1975), in fact, argued that lynching served to
control the behavior of all Southerners and to require “proper” racial behavior for whites
as well as African Americans: “The exigencies of the situation required men to kill some
white people to keep them white and to kill many blacks to keep them black.” The
implications for white women were strong.

When lynchings were committed to avenge rape or some other form of sexual
impropriety, the lynch mobs were believed to be protecting white women. This
“protection”, though, came at a price to white women. In order to receive the esteem of
white men, and to therefore be considered worthy of protection, women needed to be
ideal ladies. This, of course, restricted the range of acceptable behavior, thereby
controlling white women’s actions (Hall 1993). This differed greatly from the experience
of African American women, who were frequent targets of sexual assault, but rarely, if
ever, “avenged” by a lynch mob (Hall 1993). The actions of African American women were therefore also controlled, but through the threat of assault rather than the “need” for protection as was the case for white women. Thus, lynching activities were rooted in and justified through both racist and sexist ideologies.

It should be noted, however, that these ideologies cannot be separated from the social structure. The beliefs about natural divisions between whites and African Americans and between men and women would not have emerged in a society that was neither racialized nor patriarchal in its structure. Ideology and structure, then, should be thought of in complementary terms; the same is true of racism and sexism.

Theory-History Synthesis

It is important for lynching researchers to begin to grapple with the intricacies of class, race, and gender dynamics. As the historical record indicates, these systems of inequality are far more complex than the current sociological lynching literature suggests. Work in this area, both theoretical and empirical, should seek to incorporate historical nuances, such as those suggested above. Another key task is to explore how the interaction of race, class, and gender affected the incidence of lynching historically, and to examine both the structural and ideological dimensions of inequality as they affected lynching. I offer such a synthesis below. I first address issues of white elites before moving to a discussion of gendered-racist ideology.

Presently, the lynching literature relies heavily on competition theory to explain when and where lynching occurred. The thrust of this theory is that as African Americans began to compete with working class whites in the economic arena, these
whites felt threatened and were more likely to respond with violence. The central question in most lynching research, then, is *do counties with higher rates of economic competition between African Americans and whites experience higher rates of lynching?*

Competition theory thus suggests the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** Counties with higher rates of African-American tenancy will experience more lynchings than those with lower rates of African American tenancy.

**Hypothesis 2:** Counties with lower manufacturing wages will experience higher rates of lynching than those counties with higher wages in manufacturing.

Both of these hypotheses address different forms of competition between working class whites and African Americans. The first deals with the availability of work. If working class whites had to compete for jobs with African Americans, then theoretically they would be more prone to engage in acts of racial violence. The second hypothesis deals with the compensation for the work that was available. Competition with African American tenants should, theoretically, depress wages for whites, thereby increasing the sense of threat felt by the white working class and increasing violence.

As historians and historically informed sociologists have noted, however, those whites most likely to respond to increased competition from minorities—the white working class—are important, but were not the only class actors; elites were also heavily involved in the race-class hierarchy. Split-labor market theory, which assumes elite control over racist activities, would suggest that the lynching literature ask the following questions: *does the presence of elites affect the rate of lynching, and what impact does a racially split labor market have on lynching?* Depressed wages, one of the indicators of a
split-labor market, is thus important when testing split labor market theory. The second hypothesis (presented above) is therefore also be used as a test of this theory. In addition, the following hypothesis tests the relationship between elite presence and lynching:

Hypothesis 3: Counties with greater numbers of elite farms will have higher rates of lynching than those counties with fewer elite farms.

While the inclusion of elites is an important step, split-labor market theory does not account for variation among elites. Yet, as we have seen, differences among elites may have led to varying responses to changes in the racialized class system. Sociologists interested in lynching should thus ask two questions. *First, does the organizational base of elites in a community with respect to their dependence on racial exploitation correspond to the rate of lynching in that community? Second, what relationship, if any, exists between the organization of elites and racial economic competition?*

To begin answering the first question, and in order to more fully account for the historical record, I suggest using a model of elite-race interaction that neither treats whites as a monolithic group nor assumes constant elite activity across time and space. Rather, this approach remains sensitive to historical patterns of elite dominance and economic reliance on racial exploitation. As many scholars (e.g. Genovese 1989; Hahn 1983; James 1988, 1986; Kouser 1974; Paige 1975; Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno 1996, 1997) suggest, not all elites were equally dependant on African American labor. Given this, I argue that heavy dependence on minority labor will be associated with higher rates of lynching. Specifically, elite dependence on the exploitation of an African American workforce perpetuates the traditional relations of production that were present in slavery. This, as Bonacich (1972, 1975, 1976) and other split-labor market theorists
point out, polarizes the workforce along racial lines and increases the rate of lynching. Conversely, a lack of elite dependence on racial exploitation challenges traditional, racially charged relations of production and should be associated with fewer lynchings. This does not imply that either the economy or society generally were not highly racialized in areas with lower dependence on African American exploitation. What it does mean is that these different types of economies and elite dependencies led to different patterns of racial inequality.

A conceptual model describing the relationship between elite-race interaction and lynching is shown in Figure 3.1. The theoretical relationship expressed in the left hand column is expected to occur when the majority of elites in a given county are what Luebke (1990) refers to as modernizers. These modernizers believe they will derive economic benefit from expanding and modernizing the Southern economy. In order to achieve this goal, however, they needed to court Northern business and industry by promoting an image of a New South that was less reminiscent of the Slave South. They therefore reduced their own reliance on this type of racial exploitation which, in turn, changed the relations of production, thereby reducing the use of lynching as a form of racial control.
Modernizers make up the majority of the elite base

↓

Believe economic expansion is best for the state and themselves

↓

Need to promote the New South image

↓

Reduce economic dependency on racial exploitation

Traditional relations of production are not perpetuated

↓

Lynching is less likely to occur

Traditionalists make up the majority of the elite base

↓

Belief in the economic and social foundations of the plantation system

↓

Resist attempts to modernize

↓

Remain economically dependent on racial exploitation

Traditional relations of production are perpetuated

↓

Lynching is more likely to occur

Figure 3.1. Conceptual Model of the Relationship between the Organizational Base of Elites and Lynching
Meanwhile, the traditionalists (seen in the right hand column) wanted to secure the economic and social relations found in the plantation system. They therefore took steps to preserve the racial hierarchy, and lynching is used as a means to do so. The elite race interaction perspective thus suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Counties with concentrated elite power (e.g., large farms) coupled with high rates of African American tenancy will experience higher rates of lynching, on average, relative to locales with fewer elites and lower levels of African American tenancy.

The second question concerning the relationship between elite-race interaction and competition is also addressed in this research. Theoretically, consideration of the organizational base of elites does not suggest that racial competition is unimportant. It is reasonable to assume that working class whites felt a strong sense of competition with freed slaves regardless of elite activity. It is also likely that competition was especially important when coupled with a strong presence of elites who relied on African American labor. In other words, elite exploitation of minority labor likely enhanced the sense of threat among working class whites. I thus propose my fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: The effects of racial competition will be most pronounced in those counties with a homogeneous elite base that is especially dependent on African American tenancy.

In other words, I expect that inclusion of elite-race interaction will not only help explain lynching in itself, but that it will also increase the predictive power of competition theory. In this way, the theories are complimentary.

An emphasis on the economic structure, while important, cannot fully explain lynching in the U.S. South. Ideological factors must also be addressed. Whereas historians have been quite explicit about the role of racist and sexist ideologies in
lynchings, these important dynamics have not yet been incorporated into an empirical
have, like the historians mentioned above, argued that the gendered and racist social
arrangements prevalent during lynching’s hey day were important to understanding this
phenomenon. Writing nearly 100 years apart, both scholars suggested that the common
stereotypes of all people, but particularly African American men and white women, were
drawn on to encourage and justify the lynching of African American men.

Collins (1990), in particular, argues that race and gender cannot be separated into
different entities. A person, she states, is not, for example, African American and female,
but rather an African American female. In this way, she does not experience racial
inequality separately from gender inequality, but experiences a unique form of
discrimination based on both her race and sex simultaneously. This, in Collins’ words, is
gendered-racism. Thus, unique stereotypes form for African American men, African
American women, white men, white women, etc. A stronger understanding of lynching,
then, necessitates an examination of the unique ways in which groups of people were
affected. We must, in other words, avoid both dichotomizing racial and gender groups
and assuming similar experiences based on race and/or gender categories. Indeed, the
very notion that race and gender can be analyzed separately is problematic for
multicultural feminists. The question should be asked in what ways did gendered-racist
ideologies affect lynching?

If lynching was, as historians have alleged, an attempt to “protect” white women,
then men, regardless of their race, would have been at greater risk of being lynched for
attacking or interacting in “inappropriate” ways with white women than an African
American woman who, stereotypically, was not deserving of such protection. Further, because of the stereotypes of African American men as violent and sexually aggressive, this group should be particularly susceptible to being lynched for sexual assault—especially in the case of an attack on a white woman. In other words, it is not just the race of the alleged sexual offender that matters, but also the race of his alleged victim. I thus posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: African American men were more likely than white men to be lynched for allegedly committing crimes of sexual impropriety and sexual violence.

Although not all newspapers covered lynching events with the same frequency or detail, these attacks and the justification provided for them were often described in gruesome detail by the media (Perloff 2000; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Moreover, newspapers were often used as a control mechanism to enforce social hierarchies (Perloff 2000). Thus it seems that the media would likely frame lynching events in a manner consistent with sexist and racist ideologies that historians so often link to these events.

This should not be understood as a collective action frame, for it is not used as an attempt to justify change (Tarrow 1992). However, these accounts of lynchings did act as frames to the extent that the punctuated and defined an important “social problem” (violence against white women), assigned blame (African American men), and demonstrated a solution (lynching)—all important aspects of a frame (Snow and Benford 1992). It seems likely, then, that the portrayal of lynchings by newspapers would differ based on the race and sex of the lynching victim as well as by the crime that was supposed to have precipitated their murder as the following hypotheses suggest:
Hypothesis 7: African-American men accused of assaulting white women were portrayed in stereotypical ways that drew upon a generalized fear of African American men.

Hypothesis 8: In the case of lynchings justified by rape or sexual impropriety, white women were written about in protective, paternalistic ways.

Accounting for differences in the representation of lynch mobs, lynching victims, and rape victims is a step toward addressing the gendered-racist ideology that historians and some sociologists have argued are likely involved in lynching behavior.

Most historians and sociologists focus on either the structural or ideological dimensions of lynching. While the structure-ideology divide has been discussed since the days of Marx and Weber, I argue that these approaches are complementary and that incorporating both elements into our theories and models of lynching is necessary to gain a more complete understanding of these crimes. It is likely that both social-structural factors (such as the economy) and ideology (i.e. gendered-racist stereotypes) affected lynching, (which occurred on the interactional level). The act of lynching, in return, was likely an attempt to maintain power (be it racial, class, and/or gender), and in that way influenced local structure (by benefiting the economic elite and perhaps working class whites). Likewise, the presence of lynching stories in the public discourse (i.e. gossip and the media) may have served as controlling images, thus perpetuating as well as reflecting ideology (Collins 1990). Although the emphasis of this research is on the affects structure and ideology have on lynching, there is no doubt that these are self-reproducing effects. Figure 3.2 is a visual representation of this relationship. The paths highlighted in red are the relationships being studied in this project.
The theoretical approach outlined in this chapter does more than simply incorporate both ideological and structural elements, however. It also provides a more detailed understanding of both issues. The elite race interaction model, for example, grounds studies of racial violence more solidly in the social structure. While competition theory relies on a nebulous sense of threat that whites are presumed to have felt, the elite-race interaction model argues that the economic structure of an area has important implications for race relations. This more structural approach has several advantages. First, it is more directly testable, whereas historical perceptions of competition on the

![Conceptual Model of the Role of Structure and Ideology on Lynching](image)

Figure 3.2: Conceptual Model of the Role of Structure and Ideology on Lynching
individual level, which are at the heart of competition theory, are seldom empirically measured. Second, it can account for differing levels of competition across space. Presumably, emancipation should have increased the feeling of competition among whites across the South, but the use of lynching was concentrated in some areas and not others (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Differences in the economic system may help explain these variations in a way that more individual-centered theories cannot. Third, a class-centered approach infuses the sociological understanding of collective action with insights from stratification research. The elite-race interaction model allows researchers to examine how race and class compound one another as well as how individuals attempt to achieve and maintain racial and economic privilege. This theoretical model, then, treats lynching as an attempt to preserve power, one in which both the white elite and the white working class are complicit.

Along with patterns of class influence, the ideological component of lynching will be addressed more systematically than in prior work. Although a number of historians have talked about the role of gender and racial stereotypes in their work, the vast majority of them have focused on a single case study. Those who have discussed the role of gender and racial ideologies in lynching more broadly have pointed to important patterns, yet their conclusions are not based on an empirical examination of cases. Sociologists, for their part, have examined large-scale data sets on lynching, but have not included ideology into their analysis. Whiles this work has provided important insights—and I do not wish to understate the value of this significant work—an examination of gendered-racism within a more comprehensive set of lynching events will provide a more thorough
understanding of the role of ideology than is currently available. It will also bring in stratification research that deals with the intersection of difference in a more complete way than prior work. In the following chapter, I outline the data and methods that are used to examine these relationships.
CHAPTER 4
DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

The historical record indicates that both the economic structure and prevailing gender and racial ideologies affected who was lynched, where, and why. Despite this, empirical research in sociology has not fully examined how these factors contributed to the phenomenon of lynching. This project addresses these issues in three ways: 1) by assessing the affects of economic and elite organization on lynching, 2) examining variations in who was lynched based on race, sex, and the justifications provided for the attacks, and 3) exploring gender and race patterns in the portrayal of lynchings.

While related, these questions address various dimensions of lynching (the propensity of a location to experience a lynching, the likelihood certain types of people were to be lynched, and the way the violence was explained). Studying these questions therefore requires diverse data sources and a research strategy that utilizes multiple methodological approaches. I employ time-series analysis and binomial logistic regression along with a qualitative examination of media reports of rape-related lynching events in Georgia. This approach allows me to examine both the structural and ideological elements of lynching in a way that a purely quantitative or purely qualitative study could not. By dealing with each of these issues and using multiple methodologies, a more nuanced, historically accurate interpretation of lynching should emerge that treats structure and ideology as mutually reinforcing.
I begin by describing the data and the data collection process. The quantitative data are explained first, the qualitative data second. The chapter then moves to a discussion of my analytic strategy for both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the project. Finally, I discuss how the integration of these methods can advance our understanding of lynching specifically and inequality more generally.

Quantitative Data

For the quantitative portion of this project, I pulled together data from two sources: the Historical Census (1880-1920) and Project Historical American Lynching, referred to as Project HAL (Beck and Tolnay 1990; Project HAL). These data allow me to include structural variables as well as detailed information about specific lynching events. Analytically, this combination of data allows for analysis of the affects of the economic and racial structure on lynching generally and on discrete types of lynching.

I focus specifically on the occurrence of lynching in the U.S. South between 1882 and 1930. This time period was chosen for both practical and historical reasons. 1882 is the first year in which reliable data were collected on lynching; by 1930, lynching was no longer in widespread use in the South. While some prior work also uses his time period (see Beck and Tolnay 1990; Stovel 2001; Tolnay and Beck 1995), much of the sociological literature on lynching focuses on a smaller time frame (for example, Corzine, Creech and Corzine 1983; Olzak 1990; Tolnay and Beck 1992; Tolnay, Deane and Beck1996). Examining this time period, then, allows me to incorporate all of the available data on lynching and is either comparable to or exceeds previous research on a temporal level.
The definition of lynching used is consistent with that of the NAACP and previous lynching literature: a person must have been killed by an extra-legal mob of three or more persons claiming to be serving justice (Project HAL 2005). Lynching data were obtained from Project HAL, a publicly available data set on lynching put together by E.M. Beck and Stewart Tolnay. During years of widespread lynching, the NAACP, the Chicago Tribune, and Tuskegee University used local newspaper accounts of lynching to create a count of lynchings in Southern counties. Beck and Tolnay used these records as a starting point. They went back to the original news sources to verify the NAACP data and to collect additional information on the lynchings. These data include the names, race and sex of lynching victims, when and where they were lynched, the race(s) of lynch mob members, and the alleged reasons the victims were lynched.

Prior sociological research on lynching focuses exclusively on African American male victims. This is not surprising given that African American men were far more likely to be lynched than any other group (see Table 1.3 in chapter 1). Yet, there is good reason to extend the analysis. Examining differences in these groups is important given the historical evidence that lynching events were racially charged and motivated in part by paternally and prejudicial attitudes about African American men and white women. Incorporating several groups of victims, then, will allow me to begin exploring whether or not structural conditions may have affected different groups of people in varied ways with respect to lynching. In other words, comparing discrete groups of victims will

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7 Project HAL data are now maintained by Elizabeth Hines of the University of North Carolina, Wilmington and Eliza Steelwater. These data are available on-line through the UNC-W webpage.
8 See Tolnay and Beck (1995) for a discussion of the limitations that arise with this data. While biases are frequent when relying on newspaper data, this is the best lynching data available at this time. Further, lynchings that were “public” and reported were necessarily more collective in nature, and were likely motivated by and had different effects than did more “private” or unreported lynching events (Stoval 2001)
contribute to our understanding of the unique racial and gender dimensions underlying these brutal crimes.

In chapter 5, I follow the work of previous scholars and use African American male lynching victims as the dependent variable. In the sixth chapter, African American men, white men and females who were lynched all treated as the dependent variable in separate models. The ability of sociological theory to explain the lynching of members of these groups is compared.

In most cases, one person was lynched at a time. Yet in some cases, two or more victims were lynched together. In my analyses, the number of lynching victims is used as the dependent variable rather than the number of incidents in a county\(^9\). This is comparable to previous work (Beck and Tolnay 1990, 1995; Corzine, Creech, and Corzine 1983; Olzak 1990;). Moreover, Beck and Tolnay (1990) have shown that results do not differ based on the choice of measurement. Descriptive information on these (and all other variables used) are shown in Table 4.1.

Various justifications used to support incidents of lynching will also be used as dependent variables. Historians have suggested that lynching for alleged acts of sexual impropriety and rape are central to the phenomenon of lynching. I begin to examine if this may be the case by categorizing lynchings by their justification, and including these cases of lynching as dependent variables.

\(^9\) As shown in Table 1, these dependant variables are highly skewed. Preliminary analyses show that neither dropping the outliers nor logging the variable has much effect on the results. As such, the variable was kept in its original form.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynchings</td>
<td>Total number of people lynched</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Male Victims</td>
<td>Number of African American men lynched</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Male Victims</td>
<td>Number of white men lynched</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Victims</td>
<td>Number of men lynched</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexualized Offenses (1=Sexualized Offense)</td>
<td>Number of lynchings justified by alleged acts of sexual misconduct of any type (includes rape, attempted rape, and “minor” offenses such as looking at a white woman)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Tenancy</td>
<td>Log of the number of farms run by African American tenants</td>
<td>647.78</td>
<td>995.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Owned Farms</td>
<td>Log of the number of farms owned by African Americans</td>
<td>445.68</td>
<td>888.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>Log of the total manufacturing wages</td>
<td>277,778.84</td>
<td>1,290,049.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Farms</td>
<td>Number of farms 500 acres or more</td>
<td>43.94</td>
<td>41.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite-Race Interaction</td>
<td>Number of elite farms in a county multiplied by the number of African American tenants</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American Population</td>
<td>Percent of the population that is African American</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Region (1=Border South)</td>
<td>Presence of state in the Deep or Border South</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (1=Rural)</td>
<td>County primarily rural (more than average number of farms for the state) or urban</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Key Quantitative Variables and Descriptive Statistics
The following categorizations are included in the analyses: 1) all cases of lynching, regardless of the reason provided for the lynching events, 2) lynchings that were justified by alleged acts of sexual impropriety (ranging from looking at a white woman to rape) and 3) those lynching events in which sexualized violence or impropriety was not cited as the reason for the attack. If gendered and racist ideologies were at play in the execution of these attacks, then this should appear in the quantitative analysis.

The independent and control variables come from the 1880-1920 historical census reports provided by ISPCR. Data were aggregated to the county level for the analysis in chapter 5.

Competition theory argues that economic competition between whites and minorities is likely to increase racist violence. Accordingly, any perceived economic improvement on the part of African Americans or any direct competition between whites and African Americans for jobs should increase the rate of lynching in a county. Relative to this argument, I include 3 independent variables: the number of farms operated by African American tenants, the number of farms owned by African Americans, and wages earned in manufacturing.

First, the number of farms in a county that are reliant on African American tenancy is used as a proxy for possible employment competition. Theoretically, higher rates of African American tenancy should have reduced opportunities for working class whites, thus increasing both competition and lynching. My analysis, which spans 1880-1930, requires census data from every full decade (1880-1920) during this time.
Unfortunately, the figures on the race of tenants were not available in either the 1880 or 1890 census. For these years, then, I have used 1900 census data. While this is not an ideal solution, the correlation between the African-American tenancy variables in 1900, 1910, and 1920 are significant and quite high, as shown in Table 4.2. This suggests that the 1880 and 1890 data would be similar to the 1900 data used in the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>.947**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>.870**</td>
<td>.958**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Pearson’s Correlation of Black Tenancy in 1900, 1910 and 1920
**p<.01, two-tailed test

Second, as suggested by Corzine, Creech, and Corzine (1983), the number of African-American owned and operated farms is used as an explanatory variable. Like African American tenancy, this variable also deals with economic competition. Here, higher rates of African American farm ownership should be associated with increased competition, and thus lynching.

Consistent with Olzak (1990) and Soule (1992), total wages in manufacturing is used as a measure of income competition. Competition theory posits that as the wages of the white working class decreases, whites feel an increased sense of threat toward

---

10 Each of these three variables (African American tenancy, African American farm ownership, and manufacturing wages) were logged. This was done to correct for skewedness and because a log-linear curve is more theoretically plausible. In preliminary analyses, I also squared these variables and dropped outliers. Results indicate that in each case, logging the variables provided the best fit of the data.
racial minorities and respond with violence. Decreased wages should thus lead to more frequent lynchings because, with less money to go around, working-class whites fear for their economic livelihood\textsuperscript{11}.

This measure has two main weaknesses. First, it includes only manufacturing wages thereby excluding an important source of income—work in agriculture. Second, it does not provide a proxy of white to African-American earnings, which is at the heart of competition theories of racial violence. Unfortunately, this is the only wage data available in the historical census. Despite these problems, manufacturing wages may still provide insight into the economic conditions of a particular county (Olzak 1990; Soule 1992).

This variable can also be used as a measure of class exploitation, though the theorized relationship differs. According to class exploitation theorists, capitalists explicitly lower wages in part to instigate racial animosity. Wages are thus assumed to be negatively related to lynching. Wages alone, however, are not enough to support a class-exploitation interpretation of lynching—the presence of capitalists must also be accounted for in the analysis. Class exploitation theorists argue that elites are the true instigators and beneficiaries of racist mobilization. From this perspective, racial antagonism among the working class makes it difficult for workers to unite against the capitalist class. If this is accurate, a strong elite base should be associated with higher

\textsuperscript{11} Wage data is unavailable from the 1910 census. Data for this year was calculated using the mean of the 1900 and 1920 census years. Counties that did not exist prior to 1910 were dropped from the analysis.
rates of lynching. I account for the presence of landed elites with the “elite farms” variable.

The historical census provides data about the number of farms in several size intervals in each county. It also provides data on the mean size of farms for 1880, 1890, and 1900. For these decades, I began the process of coding elite farms by calculating the mean farm size in each state. A farm is considered “elite” if it fell into an acreage interval that was more than 2 standard deviations above the state mean. When the elite designation fell in the middle of an acreage interval, I went to the next highest interval, thus assuring that only the very largest farms in the county would be considered elite. The number of elite farms in a county, then, is the total number of farms in the elite acreage intervals. Between the years 1880 and 1900, a farm is considered elite if it is at least 500 acres in size.

The 1910 and 1920 census reports, however, do not include data on the mean size of farms in a county, making it impossible to calculate elite farms in the manner described above. For these decades, then, farms have been coded as elite if they are 500 or more acres, which is consistent with the coding scheme for the previous three decades. Given the consistency in this variable in prior decades (every county in every state at each prior time was coded elite if it fell in this size interval), and given that farms were more likely to become smaller rather than larger, I am confident that only the very largest farms are coded as elite using this method. Redding (1992) also suggests that any farm

---

12 The size intervals varied by decade. For comparability, I collapsed the intervals into the following categories: 0-19, 20-99, 100-499, 500-999, and 1000 or more acres.
13 This variable was also calculated using the mean for all Southern states and by using the mean for the Deep or Border South. The final categorization of elites farms was the same regardless of the measure.
larger than 200 acres was particularly large, providing further support for this coding scheme.

As discussed in chapter 3, large differences existed among white elites. The extent to which they relied on a large African American labor force (i.e. were modernizers or traditionalists) is one important distinction with respect to this topic. It is possible that the rate of lynching may have varied by elite presence depending on the degree to which those elites relied on a large base of African American workers. In other words, counties with a strong base of traditional elites who rely heavily on the exploitation of African American labor were likely to have experienced higher rates of lynching than counties whose elite had modernized and relied less heavily on racial exploitation. This is captured by the elite-race interaction variable.

Elite-race interaction is measured in two ways in this project. First, in chapter 5, it is measured as the interaction of elite farms and the number of African American tenants in a county. This measure allows for a closer examination of the economic structure of a county. In Chapter 6, elite race interaction is measured as elite farms multiplied by the percent African American in a county. This measure, as the previous one, allows for differences among elite, but it also relies on a more typical conception of racial competition. The theoretical implications for these measures are discussed in the quantitative analytic chapters as well as the concluding chapter.

Finally, three control variables are used in the analysis, as suggested by previous research. First, the size of the African American population is used as a control in the analysis. This is measured as a percent of the total population. I also take into account whether the county is primarily rural or urban. A county is coded rural if there are more
farms in that county than is average for the state. Third, because strong regional
variations within the South existed during the time, a dummy variable is included for the
Southern region of the state. Those states in the Deep South are coded as 1, while border
states are coded 0.

The quantitative measures described above will allow me to examine the effect of
class and the economic structure on lynching more fully than has been done in prior
work. With these data, I will be able to explore the relationship between competition
and lynching as well as the effects of a split-labor market on lynching. More noticeably,
these data provide me with the opportunity to assess the impact of elite economic
organization and racial exploitation on lynching in the Southern United States.
Moreover, the examination of the justifications provided for lynching (i.e. murder, rape,
etc.) will provide some initial insight into the racialized and gendered ideology at play.
In the analytic strategy section below, I describe how I will test these theories in greater
detail. Now, however, I turn to a discussion of the qualitative data.

*Qualitative Data*

While the quantitative data are useful as a starting point for exploring the role of racial
and gender ideology in lynching, a more thorough investigation of the ideological
dimensions of these crimes necessitates a closer look at the way lynching was portrayed
during this era. For this reason, I examine the media portrayal of rape-related lynching
events in Georgia from 1880-1930. This qualitative approach will provide greater insight
into whether or not gendered-racist stereotypes played a part in lynching, and if so, how.
Georgia is an appropriate case for a number of reasons. First, Georgia was progressive in some ways, while traditional in others. Because of this, it is similar to both other Deep South states and Border South states. Georgia’s economic, demographic, and political structures, in particular, closely reflect the rest of the Deep South (Soule 1992). For example, Georgia’s economic reliance on cotton and high percentage of African Americans is similar to other Deep South states. Also, as was typically the case in the Deep South, Georgia’s political system was heavily dominated by the Democratic Party (Beck, Massey, and Tolnay 1989).

However, Georgia was, in some ways, less repressive of African Americans than other Deep South states. For example, it did not enact a “disenfranchisement package” until after much of the Deep South had (Werum 1999). Further, African Americans in Atlanta were able to maintain some semblance of political leverage even after disenfranchisement was formalized (Bensel 1984; Werum 1999). Werum (1999) points out, for instance, that African Americans during this period mobilized influential voting blocks in Atlanta. Additionally, Atlanta was the first Southern city to house an NAACP chapter and was considered the intellectual center for African Americans in the South (Werum 1999). While Atlanta is unique in the state, it was pivotal in shaping state politics, and therefore had influence on rural politics (Key 1949).

This suggests that Georgia existed as a middle-ground between the Border South and the Deep South. While the state certainly retained elements of and an attachment to the “Old South,” there were strong attempts at modernization, particularly in the urban center of Atlanta. Using Georgia as a case study is thus in line with the theory presented in chapter 3, as both modernizers and traditionalists were active in the state. Further,
although Georgia may not be representative of all Southern states, it has important structural and ideological forces that are common to both of the regions in the South (Border and Deep South). The findings drawn from the Georgia data, then, may well have important implications for the rest of the South.

Second, Georgia newspapers frequently reported on lynching events that took place in the state, and did so in great detail (Soule 1992). Thus, while not all newspapers may have covered the events in the same way or to the same extent, there is an abundance of data from which to draw. The University of Georgia Library and other archives have also maintained complete or near complete collections of small local newspapers during the era being studied. Thus, detailed data for this state exists and is readily available.

Finally, my goal in this portion of the analysis is to expand on the historical work to see if stereotypical ideas about race and gender permeated the lynching mythos. While their work is insightful and instructive, historians typically rely on the study of a singly lynching event. Therefore, even after limiting my data to events that occurred in Georgia, I am able to draw on a larger sample of cases than has been done in previous work.

Given the historical emphasis on the fear of interracial (i.e. Black on white) rape as a marker of gender and racial boundaries, I am especially interested in these events. For this reason, the data have been limited to stories that report about lynchings that occurred in response to an allegation of rape, attempted rape, or other form of sexual impropriety. While stories about other lynchings may help inform our understanding of racist ideology, they are likely to be less instructive in our understanding of gendered and gendered-racist stereotypes. Narrowing the data to these specific stories will therefore
provide a more focused and thorough investigation of the relationship between gendered-racist ideology and lynching.

To collect these data, I returned to the original newspaper articles that Tolnay and Beck (1995) used to collect the quantitative data for Project HAL. Dr. Beck granted me access to their original coding sheets which include the name of the newspaper in which news stories were located, the dates the stories appeared, and the page numbers of those stories. Through several trips to the University of Georgia Library, I was able to locate and copy 154 articles that reported lynching events in Georgia that related to rape.

I rely only on local and state level newspapers for my data rather than using national sources such as the *New York Times*. Local and state level papers are generally considered more valid whatever the research question (McAdam and Su 2002), and it is plausible that this is especially true in the case of lynching. Further, given the deep division between North and South during this time, it is unlikely that Northerners interpreted the events the same way Southerners did; national accounts of lynching would be told from an outsider’s view. Because I am interested in the local cultural context of lynching, this perspective would not contribute to the analysis.

Media accounts of lynching are an important source of data for two reasons. First, as Perloff (2000) points out, the public had a voracious appetite for stories of lynching and most people received information about lynching events through newspapers. Second, media is an important site for the presentation and consumption of symbolic frames (Adams and Roscigno 2005; Gamson 1995; Morris 2000). Tolnay and Beck (1995) suggest that this is likely true in the case of lynchings. They write:
…we prefer to view the southern press during both eras [the rise and fall of lynching] as a tool that the certain segments of the white community used effectively to construct an image that served their own selfish interests. We must look beyond the machinations of the white press to the underlying social forces that committed some members of the white community to an altered racial climate, at least to the abatement of mob violence against African-Americans (p.204).

If, as historians suggest, lynchings were legitimated through the use of gender and racial stereotypes, then it is likely that the media would use these frames in their discussion of lynching.

It is important to note that these articles may not be reflective of what actually happened during a lynching, and that the lynch mob may have had a different perspective on the event than is presented in an article. What the stories do tell us, however, is how these violent attacks were portrayed in the local and state level media. In other words, it aids our understanding of how people during the time were informed about lynching. In this chapter, then, articles are not being used as evidence that a lynching occurred. Rather, it is being treated as data regarding the public discussion of the brutality.

*Analytic Strategy*

Previous studies of lynching have relied on aggregated counts of lynching events in counties, states, or even the nation. While interesting, this approach does not provide insight into the way that ideological factors influence lynching, and cannot fully account for variation in both space and time. This project will be the first to incorporate these elements. The Project HAL data described above will allow us to disaggregate types of cases based on the race and sex of the victim as well as the justification provided for the lynching. Quantitatively, this will allow for systematic examination of the relationship
between class dynamics, the race and sex of the victim, and their precipitating “crime.” This will allow for analyses sensitive to the specific justifications.

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, I use time-series analysis to compare the competing theories of competition and class exploitation, and to assess the utility of taking different forms of elite organization into account when modeling lynching. Second, I explore whether the economic and racial organization of a community affects the propensity of groups to be lynched based on race and sex, as well as the reasons given behind those lynchings. This is done using binomial logistic regression techniques, and allows me to take into account both the social structure and gendered-racist ideology when modeling lynching. Finally, I employ qualitative-historical methods to examine the use of gendered-racist ideology in media depictions of lynching events.

I begin my analysis in chapter 5 by examining the ability of competition theory, class exploitation theories, and an elite-race model to explain lynching in the U.S. South using pooled time-series analysis. Because pooled times series is used to analyze cross-sectional data over time—in my case, examining Southern counties across time—it is able to capture variations across both space and time (Sayrs 1989). It therefore not only allows me to make use of all of the available data, but also speaks more fully to my theoretical questions.

It also improves upon previous work (see, for example, Beck and Tolnay 1990 and Olzak 1992) that uses basic time-series techniques rather than a pooled analysis. While this work has provided invaluable insights into lynching, it cannot account for variation at the county level. Given that competition and class exploitation theories are grounded in concerns about local competition and interaction, state and national level
data may not be as accurate in explaining lynching as are county level data. Further, basic time-series techniques are unable to account for spatial variation, as data are only allowed to vary across time. By conducting a pooled time-series analysis of lynching using county level data, my project will be the first to account for both spatial and temporal effects, and thus will be better able to address theoretical concerns.

Using African American male lynching victims as my dependent variable, I begin chapter 5 by examining the effects of the competition model\textsuperscript{14} on lynching. I then test the class exploitation variables\textsuperscript{15} and elite-race interaction variables\textsuperscript{16}. Finally, I test a model that includes all of the variables. Because competition theory is the standard theory used in the lynching literature, an F test is conducted to compare each additional model to the competition model.

While I am interested in examining the competition and class exploitation models’ ability to explain lynching (see hypotheses 1-3 in chapter 3), I am especially interested in the effect of the elite-race model to shed light on the practice of lynching. The aim of this analysis, then, is to learn what, if any, affect the presence of a strong and traditional elite base has on the rate of lynching in a county (as described in hypothesis 4 in chapter 3), and to examine what effect this model has on the explanatory power of competition theory (see hypothesis 5 in chapter 3). I expect to find that the elite-race model does represent a significant improvement in the ability of researchers to explain lynching and that it will increase the predictive power of competition theory. In other

\textsuperscript{14} This model includes the following variables: African American tenancy, African American farms, wages, and population.

\textsuperscript{15} Elite farms, wages and population are used in the class exploitation model.

\textsuperscript{16} The elite-race model includes African American tenancy, elite farms, elite-race interaction, and population as independent variables.
words, those counties with many elite farms and high rates of African American tenancy are expected to have significantly more lynchings than those with fewer elite farms and lower dependency on African American tenancy.

If historians are correct that lynching was motivated by racial and gender stereotypes, this should appear in the form of race and gender differences in who is lynched. Our models should thus be able to explain the lynching of men better than the lynching of both men and women, and should be especially able to explain the lynching of African American male victims. Further, our models should explain the lynchings related to sexually charged crimes more fully than other types of lynchings (Hypothesis 6 in chapter 3).

The quantitative analysis presented in chapter 6 examines whether or not this is the case. Here, I use the best-fit model from chapter 5 to test discrete categories of lynching victims (white male victims, African American men, and females) and offenses (sexualized and non-sexual offenses) that allegedly precipitated their attack. These dependent variables reflect issues of race and gender that are given importance by historians. This analysis, therefore, includes both structural-level independent variables and culturally driven dependent variables.

In my final set of analyses, which appear in chapter 7, I use qualitative-historical methods to examine news articles of rape-related lynchings in Georgia. In this chapter, I focus on the gendered-racist ideologies that historians have long argued influenced patterns of lynching. The historical record indicates that stereotypes based on gendered and racialized assumptions, particularly of African American men and white women, were central in the phenomenon of lynching. As stated in Hypotheses 7-8 (presented in
chapter 3), I expect that media accounts of lynching should demonstrate elements of these ideologies in their portrayal of lynching events.

While coding, I allow for themes to emerge, but code with an eye to how lynching victims were described based on their sex and race. I am also interested in how the precipitating alleged rape was discussed (i.e. the presence or absence of a description; the level of detail; the presence, intensity, and type of emotive words used) and how the victims of those crimes were described. It is also important to note how the lynching event itself was portrayed by the author of the article and, when possible, by the larger community (for example, if the lynch mob left signs on the body, if a large group gathered to watch the lynching, etc). Table 4.3 details the codes used in my analysis.

It should be noted that the newspaper reports contain information from several sources. Clearly, the author is writing based on his or her knowledge about the subject, and therefore the reporter’s perspective is embedded in the article. This perspective may be obvious (i.e. the reporter outwardly condemns or applauds the efforts of the lynch mob), but it may also be difficult or impossible to detect (for example, if only factual information is reported). Occasionally, the thoughts of the lynch mob are also captured in an article. It was not completely uncommon, for example, for a mob to hang a sing on a victim’s body condemning the victims and justifying the lynching. Finally, it may be possible to glean some information about how the public perceived the lynching from the articles. In those cases that a large crowd gathered and cheered a lynching, for instance, it can be inferred that there was some public support for the violence. Similarly, some articles state public opinion, and suggest that the public generally thought the victim “got what was coming to him.” It is thus possible to use all of these sources (reporter, lynch
mob, and the public) when coding and examining patterns in the articles. The possible source of each code is listed in the last column of Table 4.3.

Following Hodson’s (1999) recommendation, I use a coding device for systematically analyzing news articles and converting the content into quantitative and descriptive summary statistics. For example, my analysis includes counts of the number of times reporters demonstrated support for lynching when rape was used as justification for the lynching. Once patterns are uncovered, quotes that represent the patterns were pulled out of the articles as examples. This should assure readers that my conclusions are well-founded, and that I am not merely looking for evidence to support a preconceived theoretical viewpoint.

By incorporating both the qualitative analyses and the quantitative modeling, a more thorough and complete picture of lynching can begin to emerge. Unlike prior work in the area, this project includes both structural and ideological factors and considers their role in lynching. Culture and structure are thus treated as complementary influences empirically as well as theoretically. This work also contributes to our understanding of stratification generally by examining how race, class, and gender influence one another and how they intersect to affect outcomes for groups based on both race and sex. This concern for the intersection of difference is seen in the following chapter, in which I examine the ability of an elite-race interaction model to explain lynching.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Source of Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paternalism</td>
<td>Actions or words that present women (regardless of race) in stereotypical terms, especially as subordinate to men.</td>
<td>Lynch Mob Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Lynch Mob Stance</td>
<td>News report and/or public demonstrate agreement with the actions of the lynch mob either through language, action, or explicit statement.</td>
<td>Public Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Lynch Mob Stance</td>
<td>News report and/or public demonstrate disagreement with the actions of the lynch mob either through language, action, or explicit statement.</td>
<td>Public Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynching Victim</td>
<td>The lynching victim is described disapprovingly.</td>
<td>Public Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrayed Negatively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape Victim</td>
<td>The alleged rape victim is described in favorable terms.</td>
<td>Lynch Mob Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrayed Positively</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Descriptors</td>
<td>Racial descriptions are used to describe either the lynching victim and/or rape victim</td>
<td>Lynch Mob Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racist Descriptors</td>
<td>Racially charged and/or stereotypical language is used to describe either the lynching victim and/or the rape victims</td>
<td>Lynch Mob Reporter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Coding Scheme for News Stories
In popular imagination, lynching was a common occurrence throughout the U.S. South. This is partially correct. Lynching was more common in the South, and the Deep South in particular, than in other areas of the country, but it was never particularly common, nor was it used with any uniformity. In fact, many Southern counties never experienced a single lynching, while many others lynched citizens with some frequency.

Typically, sociologists have called on competition theory to explain this variation. This theory argues that racial violence, in this case lynching, occurs most frequently when and where working class whites feel economically threatened by racial minorities. While research has provided support for this interpretation, and the work in this area has provided invaluable insights into lynching and racist violence, there is reason to believe that other factors should be incorporated into our theoretical and empirical understanding of these crimes.

The role of elites in particular may be an important factor in explaining lynching. Scholars who work in the class exploitation tradition, for example, have shown that white elites play an important role in instigating racist hostility (Bonacich 1972, 1975, 1976; Boswell 1986; Brown and Boswell 1995;). Meanwhile, historians suggest that there are
important divisions among elites that could play a factor in racist activism. In the South, for instance, there were differences among elites based on the extent to which they relied on African American labor (Fligstein 1986; Moore 1966). Such differences, what Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno have termed elite-race interaction, have been shown to affect racial subordination more recently (1996, 1997). This elite-race interaction may have also influenced rates of lynching historically.

This chapter evaluates and compares the utility of competition, class exploitation, and elite-race interaction theories as applied to lynching in the U.S. South between 1882 and 1930 in order to achieve two goals. The first goal is to assess whether or not the inclusion of elite-race interaction provides a significant improvement upon competition and exploitation theories that do not account for variation in elite dependence on minority labor. I am also interested in how inclusion of an elite-race interaction variable affects important predictors found in these other two theories. As such, the second goal of this research is to determine if and how this elite-race interaction model improves the explanatory power of previous models.

After a brief discussion of the methodological technique used for this research, I begin with an analysis of competition theory. This theory is the primary one used in the study of lynching, and has contributed greatly to our understanding of this type of racist violence. It is thus used as a benchmark to which alternative theoretical perspectives are compared. After presenting and discussing the results of the competition model, I present the exploitation and elite-race interaction models. The full model is then examined, and the contribution of the elite-race perspective is assessed. The chapter concludes with a
discussion of what these results mean relative to the research goals stated above, the study of lynching, and our understanding of race and class generally.

Methodology

Pooled time-series analysis is used to achieve these goals. This method is advantageous because it allows the researcher to examine change over both time and space. It is quite unlikely that racial competition, class exploitation, and/or elite dependence on racial exploitation remained constant either between counties or within counties over time. The ability to account for both spatial and temporal variation is thus necessary for my analysis.

When conducting pooled time-series analysis, there are two standard methods used to estimate models: Fixed Effect Models (FEM) and Random Effect Models (REM). There are two primary differences between the two. First, FEM does not allow time invariant variables in the model. Because of this, variables that do not change over time cannot be included in the analysis. This is not a problem for random effects models. Second, there are differences in the way the error structure is measured. REM does not require a constant error term across space, time, and time and space. This differs from FEM in that it requires that $\lambda_t$ and $\mu_n$ be fixed in the regression intercept (Sayrs 1989). As such, REM uses only 1 parameter for the error structure, and is more parsimonious and efficient than a Fixed Effects Model. Due to these statistical advantages as well as the theoretical and historical presumption of changes over time, I have used Random Effects Models to estimate the relationship between the various theories of racial violence and lynching.
Racial Competition Theory: Confirming Prior Research

Competition theory posits that any real or perceived competition between whites and minorities, particularly economic or demographic competition, can spur racial animosity and racist violence. Because working class whites are more vulnerable to economic threats than are wealthier whites, it is presumed that they are most likely to engage in violence as a means of preserving their racially privileged class position. This theory therefore suggests that lynching occurred when and where competition was highest.

Table 5.1 presents the results of the pooled time-series analysis of these predictors. If competition theorists are correct, we would expect that areas with larger African American populations, lower wages, higher rates of African American owned farms, and larger numbers of African American tenancy would be associated with lynching. Indeed, some support is found for the competition explanation of lynching. Each of the predictors is significant, though the direction of two of these variables runs counter to our expectations.

As predicted, the percent of the population that is African American is positively and significantly related to lynching. In counties with larger African American populations, it is possible that whites felt threatened and the likelihood of a lynching thus increased. This result is consistent with prior work (Corzine et al 1983; Reed 1972; Tolnay et al 1996).

The relationship between African American tenancy and lynching also follows the pattern predicted by competition theory. This theory suggests that when whites and minorities compete for jobs, whites are more likely to engage in racially motivated violence. If working class whites were concerned that their employment opportunities as
tenants were being threatened by freed African Americans, then lynching should be more likely to occur. Indeed, a positive relationship between tenancy and lynching has been found in prior work (Corzine et al. 1983; Soule 1992; Tolnay et al. 1996). The positive and significant affect of African American tenancy on lynching found here provides further support for this theory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Competition Model of Lynching (standard errors are in parentheses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural County (Rural = 1)</td>
<td>-0.08344 (0.0430)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region (Deep South =1)</td>
<td>0.0863 (0.0438)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American</td>
<td>1.1013*** (0.1283)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages in Manufacturing (logged)</td>
<td>0.0281** (0.0102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Owned Farms (logged)</td>
<td>-0.0891*** (0.0178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Tenancy (logged)</td>
<td>0.0756*** (0.0161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.1708 (0.1092)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, two-tailed **p<.01, two-tailed ***p<.001, two-tailed

Table 5.1: REM Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Competition Model’s Effect on the Lynching of African American Men
Interestingly, African American owned farms is significantly, but negatively, associated with lynching. A positive relationship between these variables would be predicted by a strict interpretation of competition theory: as white farmers compete with African American farmers, whites are more likely to respond with violence. The negative relationship shown in Table 5.1, however, suggests that in counties with more African American owned farms, lynching was less likely to occur.

Given the importance of agriculture in the South, it can be assumed that farm ownership bestowed a certain degree of power on the owners. This was probably also true of African American farm owners, though their power was likely more limited than that of white owners. Relatively powerful African Americans, it could be inferred, were less likely to be targets of racist violence.

Two important questions cannot be answered by this data. First, were African Americans more likely to own farms in counties that were racially tolerant for the period, or did their position as owners force a degree of tolerance in communities with larger numbers of African American farm owners? Second, how did class and status of African Americans affect lynching. For example, were African Americans with relatively high class standing better able to avoid lynching, and if so, through what processes were they able to do so? Future research should address these issues.

Wages in manufacturing is also significant, though not in the predicted direction. This is not surprising, however, since past research has also shown a positive relationship between wages and lynching (Soule 1992; Olzak 1990). A positive relationship is not necessarily contradictory to a competition theory of lynching, however.
Olzak (1992) has found a relationship between racial violence and union density. It is plausible that union activity served to both increase wages for whites and heighten a sense of racial competition among working class whites. Unfortunately, my data are insufficient to test this possibility. If unions can explain this result, however, it would be difficult to assess if the racism associated with union density is a result of racial competition, or if it was fostered by elites who felt threatened by unions, as class exploitation theorists would suggest.

Class Exploitation Interpretation: Mixed Results

While competition theorists emphasize the role of the white working class in racial violence, class exploitation theorists focus on the white elite. Essentially, they argue that powerful whites exploit racial tensions and encourage racial violence in order to prevent an interracial coalition among the working class. One of the ways this is done is by depressing wages to maintain social control over the masses. As such, lower wages and a higher number of elites should present conditions more favorable to lynching, as should greater numbers of elites.

The results of the class exploitation analysis are shown in Table 5.2. As was the case in Table 5.1, the size of the African American population, used here as a control variable, is significant. The key variables in this model, however, reveal mixed support for a class exploitation interpretation of lynching.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Class Exploitation Model of Lynching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(standard errors are in parentheses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural County (Rural = 1)</td>
<td>0.0686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0375)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region (Deep South =1)</td>
<td>0.0807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0427)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American</td>
<td>0.9976***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0941)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages in Manufacturing (logged)</td>
<td>0.0259**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0094)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Farms</td>
<td>0.0033***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.2935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, two-tailed  **p<.01, two-tailed  ***p<.001, two-tailed

Table 5.2: REM Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Class Exploitation Model’s Effect on the Lynching of African American Men

The effect of manufacturing wages on lynching in the exploitation model is positive and significant, just as it was in the competition model. Once again, this effect is not in the predicted direction. There are two possible explanations for this result. First, it could suggest that in the case of lynching historically, class exploitation took a different path. Given that the wages are specific to work done only in manufacturing, this explanation seems plausible. The second possible explanation is that higher wages reflect the earnings of whites. Given Boswell’s (1986) finding that elites instigated anti-Chinese
violence when forced to pay high wages to whites, a positive relationship could be interpreted as supportive of an exploitation theory. This may be related to the union affect found in Olzak’s (1992) work discussed above.

Further research is needed to better understand the relationship between wages and lynching. In particular, race specific wage data should be utilized to improve our understanding of the process by which higher wages increase the risk of racially motivated violence. If it is found that relatively higher and/or increasing wages among African Americans were associated with lynching, then a competition interpretation would be supported. If, however, lynching were most frequent in areas where elites pay relatively high wages, then class exploitation theorists would be correct. The relationship between unions, wages, and lynching should also be explored. At the present time, however, no claims about the relationship between wages and lynching should be made.

It is much easier to interpret the relationship between elite farms and lynching. As seen in Table 5.2, the number of elite farms in a county is significantly and positively related to lynching. Greater numbers of elites should theoretically increase the exploitation in that county, thus resulting in greater levels of racial violence. The results shown in Table 5.2, therefore, do provide some support for an exploitation interpretation of lynching. Given the uncertainly of the wage variable, however, this finding alone is not enough to claim that class exploitation theorists are accurate. It does suggest that the role of elites does need to be considered in our analysis of lynching. The historical reports of the importance of elite farmers in the U.S. post-antebellum South thus seems an important avenue of exploration.
Accounting for Elite-Race Interaction

The elite-race interaction theory outlined in chapter 3 does consider the role of elite farmers, though in a more nuanced way than is typical of class exploitation theories. This perspective takes into account both the presence of a landed elite and the racialized nature of the class system. Variation in the way that elites utilize and exploit African American labor, according to this view, affected lynching in unique ways. It is predicted that in counties characterized by large numbers of elite farms and widespread dependence on minority labor, lynching was higher; where elites were less dependent on the economic exploitation of African American labor, fewer lynchings occurred. The elite-race interaction perspective thus improves upon both the competition and class exploitation theories by considering the complex nature of class and race systems discussed by historians.

Results of a pooled time-series analysis of elite-race interaction do indicate support for this theory. This can be seen in the second model of Table 5.3\textsuperscript{17}. Figure 5.1 illustrates more concretely the way in which elite presence and African American tenancy interact to create differing outcomes with regard to lynching\textsuperscript{18}.

The elite-race interaction variables was measured in two ways. The number of elite farms was interacted either with (1) the number of African American tenants or (2) supplemented analyses that measure the effect of just the interaction term, the main effects and controls were also preformed, but are not reported here. The interaction affect was significant in this model as well. The value of elite-race interaction was calculated using the following formula: $b_1$ at $x_2 = b_1 + (b_3x_2)$ where $b_1$ is the coefficient for African American tenancy $b_3$ is the coefficient for the interaction effect and $x_2$ is the level of elite farms in the county. The levels of elite farms (referred to in Figure 5.1 as average, many, or few) represents the mean level of elites (average), the mean level plus one standard deviation (many), and the mean minus one standard deviation (few).
The percent of the population that was African American. Both terms were runt in the analyses, but only the interaction with African American tenants was significant. This suggests that elite attempts to control labor were key to lynching. In other words, African American men were more likely to be lynched in counties where white elites attempted to maintain control over their workforce.

Figure 5.1: Effect of African American Tenancy on the Rate of Lynching Across Levels of Elite Farms
It shows a dramatic difference in the relationship between African American tenancy and lynching based on the number of elite farms in a county. As expected, in counties with a large number of elites who rely on African American labor, lynching is relatively high. Conversely, in counties with relatively few elite farms, fewer lynchings were reported even when large numbers of farms were operated by African American tenants. Interestingly, the effect of elite farms on lynching becomes negative when the elite-race interaction variable is included and the effect of African American tenancy becomes insignificant. This provides further support for the interaction model.

Table 5.3 presents the results of the full model with and without the elite-race interaction variable. Both models include measures of competition and class exploitation; Model 2 adds the elite-race interaction effect. An F test indicates that inclusion of the elite-race interaction term provides a significant improvement upon the model that does not include the interaction (p=.0001). It thus appears that accounting for the ways in which elites depend upon minority labor—rather than ignoring the role of elites or assuming they are a monolithic group—is helpful in promoting our understanding of lynching.

This does not indicate, however, that either racial competition or class exploitation theories are not useful. Indeed, the role of elites is significant in every model, even those without the interaction. This suggests that exploitation theorists are correct in their position that elite activities do matter. Further, African American population, ownership, and tenancy are each significant throughout the analyses, providing strong support for the competition model. Elite-race interaction should thus be considered a complimentary, rather than competing, theory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1: Full Model without Interaction</th>
<th>Model 2: Full Model with Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(standard errors are in parentheses)</td>
<td>(standard errors are in parentheses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural County (Rural = 1)</td>
<td>0.0972* (0.0429)</td>
<td>0.0783 (0.0431)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region (Deep South =1)</td>
<td>0.0678 (0.0443)</td>
<td>0.0750 (0.0442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American</td>
<td>0.9822*** (0.1297)</td>
<td>0.8615*** (0.1326)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages in Manufacturing (logged)</td>
<td>0.0309*** (0.0097)</td>
<td>0.0299** (0.0097)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Owned Farms (logged)</td>
<td>-0.0754*** (0.0179)</td>
<td>-0.0648*** (0.0180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Tenancy (logged)</td>
<td>0.0553** (0.0186)</td>
<td>0.0197 (0.0204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Farms (logged)</td>
<td>0.029*** (0.0005)</td>
<td>-0.0044* (0.0018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite-Race Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0012*** (0.0003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.2509 (0.1098)</td>
<td>-0.0427 (0.1205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Test</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.26***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, two-tailed  **p<.01, two-tailed  ***p<.001, two-tailed

Table 5.3: REM Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Interaction Model’s Effect on the Lynching of African American Men
Summary

The results of this research point to the importance of including insights from historians when modeling past events. Indeed, the significant effect of the interaction term, as well as the improved model fit when this term is included, support the assertion that Luebke’s (1990) distinction between modernizers and traditionalists were consequential to the process of racial social control. In the case of the U.S. South, the different paths taken by modernizing elites and traditionalists clearly influenced lynching patterns. Modernizers hoped to move away from the extreme form of racial economic exploitation found in slavery, and depended less heavily on African Americans tenants than did traditionalists. Conversely, the traditionalists were firmly invested in the social, economic, and cultural norms associated with the slave state. They were more resistant to changes in this system, and continued to rely primarily on African American tenants to operate their farms. In many ways, this perpetuated the racial and class positions common before the Civil War. When traditional relations of production and traditional racial relationships were maintained, lynching was more prevalent.

These findings thus suggests that previous work on lynching, while informative, is limited in some ways. Racial economic and demographic competition is important, but they do not tell the complete story. The organizational base of elites with respect to racial exploitation must also be considered. Including measures of this type will not only improve our statistical modeling of lynching, but will ensure more historically accurate theorizing as well. As such, we will be able to develop richer, more complex understandings of lynching, racial violence, and systems of inequality.
This in no way means, however, that the role of the white working class was unimportant in the perpetuation of lynching. It does appear that perceived threats to the white working class, particularly in the form of employment and demographic competition were associated with an increased risk of lynching. When the economy is racialized, tensions occur at all levels of society, not just among the working class or the elites. Whites, regardless of their class position, must decide how to respond to changes in the system—be that by instigating violence, engaging in violence, or acceptance. Again, incorporating measures of elite presence and organization along with competition measures will improve our understanding of lynching by bringing in actors from several stratas.

Further, while most lynching research has focused on the position of whites, the class position of African Americans should be considered as well. The negative relationship between African American farm ownership and lynching suggests that class power in the hands of African Americans reduced the likelihood of a lynching occurring. Although the data cannot tell us why or how this occurred, it is possible that more privileged African Americans were better able to mitigate stereotypes, use legal means to settle disputes, or possibly avoid contact with whites. The primary victims of lynching should not be ignored in our study of this type of violence. This is true not just of the lynching literature, but racial violence and stratification literature more generally. While I do not assert that racial minorities and whites have equal power in racial relationships, it appears that racial oppression may take different paths depending on the class position of the minorities as well as the position of whites. Researchers need to be more sensitive to
the complexities of inequality, and to the ways in which different forms of inequality
interact.

It is clear from this research that race and class work together to affect lynching,
though more research is needed to determine how this occurs. Given the expansive work
of historians, it also seems likely that gender and race intersected to influence lynching
historically. The following chapter explores these issues in greater detail by examining
how differences in the elite-race economic structure influenced discrete types of
lynching.
CHAPTER 6

BRINGING GENDER AND RACE BACK IN:
A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LYNCHING VICTIMS AND THEIR
ALLEGED CRIMES

The previous chapter demonstrates that sociologists should consider taking a more nuanced approach to the class when examining lynching. Given the work of historians who discuss class divisions—both among whites generally and among the white elite—this makes sense. But historians also point to other important statuses that should be examined if we are to understanding lynching more fully. In particular, racial and gender dynamics were likely at play in the perpetration of lynching events. It seems necessary, then, to examine whether and how these statuses matter.

Certainly, race does enter into the discussion of sociological work in lynching. The theory most often used to explain lynching—competition theory—assumes that lynching is most likely to occur in places where there are greater levels of economic and demographic competition between whites and African Americans. Racial oppression is thus rightly assumed to be an important factor in the commission of lynching events. Moreover, the dependent variable in prior lynching research is the lynching of African American victims; in most cases, African American males are the only victims included in the analyses. Nonetheless, previous work does not explicitly examine the role of race in lynching. While limiting the dependent variable may assume a racial element to the
crimes, there is no empirical evidence that the assumption is correct. Racist intent, framing, and ideologies, and the role they play are merely assumed.

The effect of gender inequality is virtually ignored by sociologists in both theoretical and empirical accounts of lynching. Many historians, however, have made this a central focus in the study of lynching. Historians have argued that gender and racial stereotypes stemming from systems of white supremacy and patriarchy led to the lynching of African American men in order to “protect” white women (see, for example, Bennett 1975; Hall 1993; Harris 1995; Lewis 1977). While numerous case studies support this argument, no systematic account of lynching—either historical or sociological—has examined whether or not this might be the case.

In this chapter, I address the role of race and gender inequality in lynching by examining discrete cases of lynching events. In particular, I test whether or not the sociological theories of lynching vary in their ability to explain who was lynched (i.e. African American men versus white men) and why they were lynched (sexually based offenses versus non-sexual ones). If differences in the power of these theories to explain who was lynched and/or why victims were lynched exist, it would suggest that systems of gender and racial inequality are indeed important to the act of lynching and warrant further exploration by sociologists.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the methodological technique used for this analysis. I then move to a discussion of the importance of racial issues in the choice of lynching victims. This is followed by an analysis of the offenses lynching victims were accused of committing that led to their attacks. The role of gender and race is considered in this analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of what these
results mean for the sociological study of lynching, and how it can better inform our understanding of inequality more generally.

**Methodology**

The first set of analyses deal with the race and sex of the lynching victim. I test whether the elite-race interaction model used in chapter 5 better explains the lynching of African American and females than white males. The reference category in each case is white men. The dependent variables in these analyses are thus dichotomized. The chapter then moves to an examination of the offenses that the victims were alleged to have committed. In particular, I am interested in whether the lynching victims were accused of sexually-based offenses (i.e. rape, attempted rape, miscegenation, and the like) or crimes that were not sexually charged (i.e. arson, murder, etc.). In this set of analyses, white men lynched for alleged sexual offenses, African American men lynched for non-sexual crimes, and African American men lynched accused of sex crimes are compared to white men who were lynched for non-sex crimes. In each case, the dependent variable is binomial. The elite-race interaction model—the best fit model from chapter 5—is used to examine if and how the race, sex and offense of victims varies\(^{19}\). The number of events per county is added to the model as a control for how prone a particular county was to engaging in racist violence.

Binomial logistic regression is used for these analyses. Given the questions being asked, this method is superior to regular OLS regression for two reasons. First,

\(^{19}\) In this chapter, both African American tenancy and percent African American were used to calculate the elite-race interaction term. Unlike chapter 5, the use percent African American in the interaction produced significant results; calculating elite-race interaction with African American tenancy was insignificant. The theoretical implications of this are discussed in chapter 8.
some competition models, such as Blalock’s (1967) power-threat hypothesis, suggests a threshold effect of threat on racial violence. Some research (see, for example, Tolnay et al. 1989) suggests that this is true in the case of lynching in the U.S. South historically. Given that OLS estimates a straight line, this may lead to poor approximation at the extremes of the model. This is especially problematic when the dependent variable is highly skewed, as is the case with my data.

Second, when a dependent variable is binomial, the standard errors calculated in an OLS regression are heteroskedastic. As a result, significance tests are biased and inconsistent. Binomial logistic regression is thus used for both theoretical and methodological reasons.

*The Lynching Victims*

The vast majority of lynching literature centers on African American male victims. This makes sense given that competition theory, which is most often used to study lynching, is intended to be a theory of racist violence. Theoretically, working class whites become angry due to increased economic and demographic competition with racial minorities and engage in racially motivated hate crimes.

Historians have also argued that lynching is racist in nature. They argue, for example, that racial violence such as lynching was a systematic means of separating whites from African Americans in the turbulent times after the Civil War (Harris 1995). Moreover, historians argue that the overwhelming fear of white women being raped by African American men prompted whites to target them specifically, rather than both African American men and women. The sheer number of African American victims—
particularly African American male victims—also suggests that race and sex were an important part of the lynching phenomenon (see Figure 1.3 in chapter 1 and Table 6.2 below).

Yet, to my knowledge, the racial and gendered components of lynching have never been explicitly tested. That is, sociologists assume that the violence spurred by increased competition will be racist in nature; historians, meanwhile, have not engaged in a systematic analysis of lynching events. Here, I begin to examine the importance of race in the perpetration of lynching events by testing the ability of sociological theory to predict the race and sex of lynching victims.

As can be seen in the first model of Table 6.1, there are significant differences in the ability of sociological accounts to predict the lynching of African American men compared to white men. Interestingly, the probably of a lynching victim being an African American male is smaller than it is for white males in counties that were more prone to lynching. This could suggest that previous lynchings in a county served to keep African American men “in line” by instilling fear. This makes sense given Tolnay et. al’s (1996) finding that lynching events actually deterred future lynching events. It may also be indicative of a political and economic context generally where forms of popular justice or vigilantism were more readily accepted. Future research should utilize event history analysis to provide greater insight into these possibility. Specifically, sociologists should examine the effect of prior events on the lynching of victims by race.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1: African American Male Victims</th>
<th>Model 2: Female Victims (all races)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynching Events per County</td>
<td>-0.028* (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (rural=1)</td>
<td>0.436* (0.179)</td>
<td>0.212 (0.303)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep South (deep south=1)</td>
<td>0.529*** (0.166)</td>
<td>.195 (0.303)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American</td>
<td>3.374*** (0.724)</td>
<td>1.218 (1.555)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages (logged)</td>
<td>0.048 (0.039)</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.065)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Owned Farms (logged)</td>
<td>0.121* (0.072)</td>
<td>0.282* (0.135)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Tenancy (logged)</td>
<td>-0.052 (0.068)</td>
<td>0.280 (0.719)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Farms</td>
<td>0.000 (0.004)</td>
<td>0.009 (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Race Interaction (elite farms*Percent African American)</td>
<td>-0.010 (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.025 (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.044 (0.468)</td>
<td>-3.940*** (0.974)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²: 0.112 0.204

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 6.1: Binomial Logistic Regression Analysis of the Lynching of African American Male and All Female Victims; White Male Victims serve as the Reference Category (numbers in parentheses are standard errors)
Consistent with previous work (Tolnay and Beck 1995), region appears to have an important affect on who was lynched. Compared to the Border South, the probability of a lynching victim being an African American male is higher in the Deep South. This may be partially related to the heavily racialized nature of the economic system in the Deep South that more closely reflected slavery. This makes sense when interpreted with Hahn (1983) and Kouser’s (1974) historical work in mind. These scholars argue that attempts to disenfranchise African Americans was stronger in areas heavily populated by large plantations which, in turn, were concentrated more heavily in the Deep South. This interpretation is further supported by the significant and positive effect of the rural variable in Model 1.

The size of the African American population also has a significant effect on the dependent variable. The probability of a lynching victim being an African American man verses a white man is higher in counties with larger African American populations. This is consistent with the work done by competition theorists (see, for example, Corzine et al 1983; Olzak 1990; Reed 1972; Soule 1992; Tolnay et al 1996) who find similar relationships between this variable and the lynching of African American men. This finding thus supports the assumption made by competition theorists that increased competition spurs racist violence rather than violence more generally.

Interestingly, however, these data do not indicate a relationship between manufacturing wages and the race of the victim. The effect of this variable is not, in other words, significantly different for African American and white men. Likewise, elite-race interaction does not seem to affect the probability of one type of person being lynched over another. This does not indicate, however, that elite-race interaction is not
important; it simply means that it is not a significant predictor of the race and sex of a lynching victim. The overall affect of the elite-race interaction, seen in the previous chapter, remains significant and, as shown below, it is an important predictor when the alleged offense of the victim, as well as his race, are considered.

Model 2 of Table 6.1 compares the probability of a woman being lynched compared to a white man. Women of all races were included in this analysis. Only the number of farms owned by African Americans is significant in this model. This may be due to the relatively few number of women lynched and/or to the inclusion of both African American and white women in the dependent variable. As seen below and in chapter 7, however, gender remains an important element in the lynching process.

The Accusations

It is quite likely that systems of racial and gender inequality did not only affect who was lynched, as is seen above, but also why victims were lynched. The end of the Civil War marked a change in the relationship between Southern whites and African Americans. Historians note that in response to this change, whites instituted alternative forms of racial boundaries; in many cases, these changes called on gendered as well as racialized stereotypes. In particular, legitimate sexual access to white women was set up as the exclusive domain of white men. This issue became a central concern for many whites (Harris 1995; Hodes 1993; Simon 1996). As a result, fear of Black-on-white rape grew rampant. It is this highly gendered and raced context, that historians argue, led to the lynching of African American men who allegedly raped women—particularly white women—or other sexually based crimes.
Table 6.2, which presents frequencies of types of lynchings generally and based on the race and sex of the victim, provides some initial support for this argument. Of lynching victims, 84% were African American men. Indeed, African American men were lynched more frequently than other victims for every type of crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Lynching Event</th>
<th>All Victims</th>
<th>African American Men</th>
<th>White Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexually Charged Crimes</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sexual Crimes</td>
<td>1,976</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,806</td>
<td>2,364</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Frequencies of Discrete Types of Lynching Events

A closer look at the reason provided for a lynching also reflects the argument made by historians. While accusations of rape or other sexually charged crimes were not the most frequent reason provided for a lynching, more than a quarter (28%) of all lynching victims were attacked for allegedly committing some form of sexual assault or impropriety. Table 6.2 also shows that the vast majority of those attacked for sexually-based offenses were African American. In fact, African American men accused of sexual wrong-doings account just over 28% of all lynching victims. This is startling compared to the 27 white men who were brutalized for the same reason: this comparatively smaller group accounts for only 1% of all lynching victims. A chi-square test indicates that this difference is significant (p=.000).
Given these numbers and the work of historians, it seems prudent to examine statistical differences in the accusations associated with rape from a sociological perspective. Further, because of the interlocking and entrenched nature of class, race, and gender systems, it is important that sociologists attempt to gain a firmer understanding of how each form of inequality affected lynching. The analysis summarized in Table 6.3 begins to do just that.

Here, three groups of victims were compared to white men who were lynched for non-sexual offenses: white men charged with a sexual offense; African American men accused of non-sexual offenses; and African American men who were alleged to have committed sexually based crimes. White men who were not accused of sexual offenses are used as the reference group for theoretical reasons; if historians are correct, this group is the least likely to have violated racial and gender norms.

This allows an exploration of both the gendered aspect of the alleged crime (i.e. rape versus murder) and the racial element in deciding to use lynching as a form of punishment. The elite-race model of lynching is used once again; this allows class and race to be accounted for in the independent variables. While not perfect, such an analysis provides insights into how several forms of inequality (race, gender, and class) affected lynching in the U.S. South.

Model 1 compares groups of white men based on the types of crimes used to justify their lynching. Noticeably, no variables are significant in this model. The factors that led to the lynching of white men do not appear to differ based on the accusation levied against him. This was not the case in the following two models which compare the probability than an African American man will be lynched compared to a white man.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1: White Men Accused of Sexually Charged Crimes</th>
<th>Model 2: African American Men Accused of Non-Sexual Crimes</th>
<th>Model 3: African American Men Accused of Sexually Charged Crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynching Events per County</td>
<td>-0.060</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>-0.051***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (rural=1)</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>0.612**</td>
<td>0.354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.537)</td>
<td>(0.194)</td>
<td>(0.205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep South (deep south=1)</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>0.454*</td>
<td>0.587**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.501)</td>
<td>(0.180)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American</td>
<td>4.088</td>
<td>3.757***</td>
<td>3.760***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.461)</td>
<td>(0.785)</td>
<td>(0.886)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages (logged)</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.088*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Owned Farms (logged)</td>
<td>-0.135</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.237)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Tenancy (logged)</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.233)</td>
<td>(0.076)</td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Farms</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Race Interaction (elite farms*Percent African American)</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.024**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.948</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>-1.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.279)</td>
<td>(0.494)</td>
<td>(0.540)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 6.3: Binomial Logistic Regression Analysis of Reasons Given for the Lynching of White and African American Male Victims; White Men Lynched for Non-Sexual Offenses serve as the Reference Group (numbers in parentheses are standard errors)
The second model in Table 6.3 examines the probability than an African American man will be lynched in comparison to white men when neither group was accused of sexually charged crimes. While the type of offense did not appear to matter when comparing groups of white men, race does seem to matter when comparing men accused of the same type of crime. Specifically, when examining men who allegedly engaged in non-sexual crimes, African American men are more likely than white men to be lynched in rural areas and in the Deep South. The probability of an African American man being lynched is also higher in counties with higher percentages of African Americans.

Model 3 presents results for African American men accused of sexually-charged offenses—the group historians would suggest were the most in violation of gender and racial norms. These men were more likely than white men whose crimes were not sexual to be attacked in the Deep South and in areas with higher wages or a potentially competitive labor market. The probability of someone in this group being lynched was also lower in counties that had higher number of lynching events.

Interestingly, the elite-race interaction variable is significant in this model. There is a lower probability that an African American man will be lynched for sexual impropriety in counties with large numbers of elite farms and large African American populations. While such a result may seem counter-intuitive at first, it makes sense when one considers the reason for including an elite-race effect in the model and the historical data on gender and race. According to the elite-race perspective, traditional elites helped to maintain the racialized economic state found in slavery even after Reconstruction by continuing a system of large plantations that relied on African American labor. As a
result, traditional racial relationships were more likely to be maintained. Historians have also pointed out that during slavery, fears of interracial sex/rape were not as heightened as they were once the slave system broke down (Hodes 1993; Simon 1996). In other words, the maintenance of traditional and racialized relations of production may have actually reduced the probability that African American men would be lynched for sexual-charged crimes.

This, however, should not be interpreted as an indication of racial tolerance in any way. As seen in chapter 5 (refer to Table 5.3), counties characterized by many elites who exploited African American labor were associated with higher rates of lynching, generally. What it does mean is that those victims were simply less likely to be African American men accused of sexually-based crimes than were victims who were lynched in other types of counties.

The significance of this variable has important ramifications for competition theory. Here, elite-race interaction was measured as elite farms multiplied by the percent of the population that was African American. This population measure is more closely aligned with traditional competition ideas of racial violence than when tenancy is used in the interaction.

The significant effect of the interaction term here suggests that competition is important, but the way in which it matters varies under different circumstances. Model 3 indicates that competition processes were likely at play when African American men were lynched for sexually charged criems, but that effect was altered by the organizational base of white elites. This finding provides strong evidence, then, that the
roles of and organization of both working-class whites and the white elite need to be addressed in our theories of racist violence.

Summary

Historical research clearly shows that race and gender were important aspects of Southern culture and structure during the “lynching era.” Stereotypes about how people should act based on their race and sex were always in place, but the demise of slavery strengthened them while simultaneously encouraging new rules of racial etiquette (Harris 1995; Hodes 1993; Simon 1996). Similarly, just as it was during slavery, the post-slavery Southern economy was still divided along racial lines (Fligstein’s 1986; Hahn 1983; Kouser 1974; Luebke 1990; Moore 1966; Paige 1975).

Because of this, historians have argued that gender and race were key in the perpetuation of Southern lynchings. While sociological accounts have assumed race to be a factor, it has not been explicitly tested. Likewise, with the exception of Ida B. Wells, sociologists have virtually ignored gender issues in their empirical and theoretical accounts of lynching. The results presented in this chapter suggest that sociologists should indeed take the work of historians into consideration when studying lynching, particularly with respect to race and gender.

These data indicate that the conditions which are likely to give rise to the lynching of an African American man are quite different than those that lead to the lynching of a white man. The data indicate clear differences in the probability that a lynching victim will be an African American or white man based on the local economy (agricultural or manufacturing), region (Deep or Border South), and county demographics. Further, no
such differences exist when comparing groups of white men. Race thus appears to be a key element of the lynching process—one that needs to be given a more central role in the study of this phenomenon.

Likewise, gender also needs to be brought into the sociological study of lynching. While our theories do not, according to these data, account for the lower probability that a woman will be lynched when compared to a white man, gender remains salient. In particular, the justifications given for lynching events is of great importance. This is especially true when the race of the victim is accounted for.

Not only were African American men significantly more likely to be lynched than white men, they were also more likely to be lynched for violating sexual laws and norms. This was particularly true in the Deep South where gender and racial norms were more strictly observed. It was also true in counties that had lower levels of social control of African American men due to lower levels of elite power over minorities. Perhaps without elite presence, direct racial competition and threat was manifested between poorer whites and African American in the Jim Crow South.

Such findings are relevant not only to the study of lynching, but to the study of inequality more generally. The importance of examining both the race of the victim and the gendered aspects of their alleged offenses supports the claims of some feminist scholars who argue that race and gender intersect. Further, the elite-race interaction variable, which is significant in some models but not in others, indicates that the economic and social class structure of an area affects who is lynched and why. Thus, the way in which Southerners were oppressed by lynching differs depending on gender, race and economic situation. Giving one of these statuses primacy over the others would,
therefore, be an injustice in our understanding of what occurred and why. While this research is far from what Collins (1990) had in mind when she argued that forms of inequality intersect, it none-the-less shows the importance of such an approach when studying stratification issues. The following chapter further explores intersecting notions of race and gender through a qualitative examination of media accounts of lynchings in Georgia, and specifically how lynching was legitimated. As these accounts show, racial and gendered beliefs were extraordinarily important at the most proximate levels.
CHAPTER 7

BRUTES, LADIES, AND “RIGHTEOUS PROTECTORS”: RACIAL AND GENDER IDEOLOGIES IN LYNCHING

In *A Red Record* (1895), Ida B. Wells noted that both race and gender were an essential component of lynching in the U.S. South. The systematic oppression of African American men, she argued, made it more likely that members of this group would be lynched. Since Wells wrote, many historians have continued to find these patterns in their analyses of lynching events. Hall (1993) and Harris (1995), for example, argue that stereotypes of African American men as sexually uncontrollable and violent paired with stereotypes of the chaste and helpless white woman increased fears of interracial sexual assault. These fears are thought to have instigated the lynching of many African American men (Hall 1993; Hodes 1993) which, in turn, may have actually perpetuated the initial stereotype. The subordinate position of white women also had a part in the occurrence of lynching, not as lynching victims, but as the sexual victims of those who were lynched (Bederman 1995; Hall 1993).

Despite the foci in historical work, sociologists rarely if ever incorporate gender into their analyses of lynching. Further, the case-study method typically employed by historians (in which only one lynching event is examined), while critical to our understanding of lynching, has left us without a systematic and theoretically informed investigation of how gendered-racist ideologies were incorporated into lynching. This is
unfortunate as the results in chapter 6 revealed that factors shown in prior research to increase the rate of county-wide lynching differ depending on whether the victim was white or African American. Further, African American men were significantly more likely to be lynched for allegedly engaging in some form of sexual impropriety. Thus, a closer examination of these issues is clearly warranted.

If historians are correct, then distinct patterns should emerge not only in who was lynched and why, as shown in the previous chapter, but also in the public discourse relevant to lynching. In this regard, this chapter addresses the use of gendered-racist stereotypes used in the discussion about and justifications for lynching. More specifically, media accounts of sexually-motivated lynchings (those in which the victims were accused of engaging in some form of sexual wrong-doing) in Georgia are used to explore how race and gender were used in the framing of news stories to legitimate lynching events in that state.

After a brief discussion of the data and methodology used for the qualitative-historical analysis, I discuss how African American men were treated in the news media in Georgia as lynching events unfolded. This is followed by an analysis of the description of white women and men in the articles. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the need to simultaneously incorporate both structural and cultural dimensions into the study of lynching and inequality.

Data and Methodology

The focus of this chapter centers on the way the public drew on notions of gender and race to legitimate sexually-charged lynchings in Georgia. This is a departure from prior
sociological work on lynching and from the previous two chapters which speak to
dimensions of a given county that may have facilitated lynching in the aggregate. I
utilize qualitative data and methods rather than the statistical analyses used in previous
chapters.

The data are drawn from newspaper accounts of lynching in Georgia between
1882 and 1930. More specifically, articles in which the victim was lynched for allegedly
engaging in some form of sexual impropriety were used. As discussed in chapter 4,
Georgia is an ideal case study because the state had structural and ideological forces that
were common to both the Deep South and Border South at that time. It is likely, then,
that any conclusions pertaining to the Georgia case will have utility for understanding the
cultural dimensions of lynching throughout much of the South. Narrowing the data to
news articles of sexually-charged lynchings further allows for a systematic, qualitative
focus on the gender and gendered-racist ideologies of the time.

Articles were obtained from the Atlanta Constitution and numerous local papers. In
total, 154 articles were used. It should be noted that these articles do not represent 154
separate lynching events; in some cases, a single lynching was written about multiple
times. This is particularly true when the alleged offense was deemed especially
gruel. The purpose of this research is not to discover the truth of specific events,
however, but rather to provide some insight into the public perception of lynching and the
relevant statuses of race, gender and class. As such, including several articles that refer

20 the Albany Herald, the Athens Banner, the Atlanta Journal, the Augusta Chronicle, the Bainbridge Democrat, the Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun, the Elberton Star, the Herald-Journal, Macon Daily Telegraph, the Miller County Liberal, the Monroe Advertiser, the Morning News, the Moultrie Observer, the North Georgia Citizen, Savannah Morning News, Statesboro Bulloch Time, the Vienna News, the Waycross Herald
to the same event is not problematic. To the contrary, including an article about a lynching from both a local newspaper and a more widely distributed paper such as the *Atlanta Constitution*, for example, may provide a deeper understanding of the social forces at play.

![Figure 7.1 Frequency of Justifications for Lynching in Georgia, 1882-1930](image)

Figure 7.1 Frequency of Justifications for Lynching in Georgia, 1882-1930

Figure 7.1 presents the justifications provided for lynchings by Georgia mobs. Murder was the most frequent explanation given, but sexualized violence was a close
second. Lynchings related to sexual offenses accounted for 169—or 37 percent—of lynchings in the state of Georgia.\footnote{Sexually charged accusations accounted for 30% of lynchings in the Southern states.}

Of these sexually charged lynchings, all but five were attacks on African American men. Four white men and one man of unknown race were lynched for similar reasons. My data include five articles about white men and one about the man whose race was not specified; all four of the white men are represented with the data. The rest of the articles are about attacks on African American men.

Table 7.1 compares the accusations made against lynching victims with those levied in the news data I collected. As can be seen in the table, there is an oversampling of articles pertaining to attempted rape and other non-rape accusations and an undersampling of articles in which the victim was charged with rape. This should not be problematic in terms of the conclusions drawn from the data. If anything, claims may be understated because the type of crime most feared—rape—appears less often in my data than in the population of articles.

To ensure reliability, all articles were read and coded by two people: myself and a research assistant. Demographic and descriptive information about the lynching victim and his alleged victim were collected from the data. Information about the lynching event, the lynch mob, any people/crowd that may have witnessed the attack, and the apparent support (or lack thereof) for a lynching on the part of the public and/or reporter were also collected. The coding sheet can be found in the Appendix.

After the articles were coded, the coding sheets were used to identify themes relevant to gender and racial ideology. The scheme presented in chapter 4 provided the
basis for this work. Theoretically relevant patterns were then identified and representative quotes pulled out to provide examples of these patterns. These findings are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alleged Offense</th>
<th>Frequency of Sexual Offense Lynchings in Georgia</th>
<th>Frequency in Sexual Offense Lynchings in Georgia News Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>102 (60.36%)</td>
<td>81 (53.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Rape</td>
<td>59 (35.00%)</td>
<td>61 (39.61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8 (4.70%)</td>
<td>12 (7.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>169</strong></td>
<td><strong>154</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1: Frequency of Sexualized Lynchings in Georgia and in the Coverage of Georgia Newspapers

**African American Men**

Historians have argued that the lynching of African American men was often related to the stereotype of these men as dangerous and violent. If this is true, then, we would expect to see African American men systematically described in these terms. The data

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22 “Other” includes African American men entering and/or peeping into the home of a white woman or girl, an African American man insulting a white woman, and a case in which an African American man covered a white woman’s head with a blanket and ran away when she screamed. Accusations of incest and miscegenation are also included in the “other” category. Each incest related lynching appears twice in my data, thus accounting for the higher number of articles in the “other” category than actual lynchings.
were thus examined for patterns in the use of racial (i.e. referring to African American men by race) and racist (i.e. using racial slurs or drawing on stereotypes) terms. The data show great support for this claim.

Of the 148 articles about African American male lynching victims, just over a third described the victim using only racial descriptors. In other words, the victim was referred to by name or race only. Although the terms “black” and “colored” were occasionally used, “negro” was by far the most frequent word used to describe these men. While “negro” is an offensive term, it has been coded as a racial descriptor rather than racist given the time and place in which the articles were written.

At first glance, the use of only racial descriptors and the absence of racist ones may seem to contradict the theoretical perspective that racist stereotypes were strongly related to lynching. A closer reexamination, however, reveals that many articles referred to the lynching victims primarily as “the negro” rather than by name, even when the name of the victim was known. This was not the case in any of the three articles about white victims.

Similarly, lynchings were publicly discussed as if they were messages to the entire African American population. Both lynch mobs and reporters generalized their anger toward all African American men. In once case, the lynch mob’s chants were aimed at all African Americans rather than alleged rapists:

The body was placed in a delivery wagon, which was followed through the streets for over a mile by a crowd of over 500 men and boys, who shouted: “Save the county money,” and “teach the niggers a lesson” (the Atlanta Constitution February 15, 1912).

In 1898, a reporter sent this warning to African American men:
After making sure their work was well done the crowd quietly left the scene and returned to their homes, but ready and willing to assemble again and as often as black fiends commit the greatest of crimes (the Atlanta Constitution August 9, 1898).

By referring to the victim’s race rather than his name (or some other status or feature), his race becomes the primary identifier. Thus, one does not read that Jon Doe committed a heinous act or that Jon Doe is a brute; rather, one reads about “another negro” or a “negro brute” who committed an outrage. This is similar to the modern convention of showing pictures of African-Americans in news stories related to crime or poverty, which many scholars (Gilens 1996) claim perpetuate prevailing stereotypes of African American men. The cumulative effect of reports in which a generalized “negro” was accused of sexual assault, then, was likely to have spread common white fears of African American men.

This effect is compounded in the other two-thirds of articles in which racial slurs were used and/or negative adjectives were paired with the racial descriptors. For example, the terms “brute” and “negro brute” were the most frequent terms used to describe the African American lynching victims; The terms a “negro fiend,” “negro villain,” “desperate negro” and the like were also used liberally in the articles analyzed. Racial slurs, such as “coon” and “black devil” can also be found throughout the articles, though to a lesser extent than the other phrases.

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23 Terms such as brute (and others listed below) are not necessarily racist. They do become racially-charged, however, when repeatedly paired with the word “negro.” Even when “brute,” “fiend,” and the like were not immediately paired with a racial descriptor of the lynching victim, the earlier identification of the victim as an African American man was likely sufficient to have made the point.

24 The following is an exhaustive list of racially-charged and racist terms used to describe African American male lynching victims (in alphabetical order): bad character, black devil, black wretch, black-hearted wretch, brutal rapist, brute, burly, callous, coon, cowering prisoner, dangerous character, darky, desperate, dog, fiend, ignorant, jet black, lowest type, mad man, miscreant, mulatto, negro wretch, object of terror, poor wretch, ravisher, repulsive, ruffian, scoundrel, suspicious, tramp, vile wretch, villain, weak-minded, wretch.
Racial stereotypes were also employed by the reporters. For example, the African American men were labeled “ignorant” and “weak minded” in several articles. The following quote evokes a long-held stereotype about African Americans:

The next morning the matter [of the alleged rape] became known and a pursuit was organized. The negro became aware of the chase and evaded the pursuers. His course, however, was marked up to noon by watermelon patches through which he passed and in which he ate watermelons (the Atlanta Constitution, July 28, 1887).

The common caricature of African American men as both feeble and brutish is thus a common theme in the articles analyzed.

Another frequently used technique was to describe the lynching victim’s physical appearance in a negative and/or threatening way. Many victims, in fact, were referred to as “burly.” Other terms, referring to the victims’ race, such as “darky” and “jet black” were also used. One victim, Reuban Hudson, was described in the following way:

Hudson was almost black. He was about five feet ten inches tall, and weighed 180 pounds. His face was covered with a growth of short beard, and [he] was repulsive to the extreme (the Atlanta Constitution, July 28, 1887).

This not only reminds the reader that the lynched man was African American, but reaffirms the common belief that African Americans are not physically attractive; in this case, the man is actually “repulsive.”

Interestingly, there was one article in which the physical appearance of a lynching victim was presented in a positive light. In this case, the victim had a solid alibi for the time of the crime and there was other evidence that suggested his innocence. In fact, the governor had granted him several pardons before he was ultimately lynched. He was described in the article as

a bright mulatto with a Roman nose and features like a white man—a
face once seen readily remembered (the *Atlanta Constitution* May 2, 1888). Here, the innocent man was identified as biracial and said to look like a white man.

The contrast between the “repulsive” African American male with attractive “white” features highlights an important theoretical insight suggested by historians. It sets white men apart from African American men in appearance as well as behavior, thus dichotomizing the two and presenting white men as superior. It also suggests that no white woman would choose to engage in a sexual relationship with an African American man, thus reaffirming the belief that these relationships were coerced.

In using racial slurs and stereotypes to describe the African American male victims of lynching, a pattern begins to emerge in which all African American men may have become suspect. A *Jessup Sentinel* article written August 27, 1892 provides an example of this:

> His actions until yesterday had been quiet and orderly and leave no sign of his being the desperate character he finally showed himself to be.

This, and other articles that describe the once law-abiding behavior of the alleged rapist, may serve to create the fear that no African American man can be trusted. White women, on the other hand, were thought to be easy targets.

*White Women*

Feminist scholars have long been critical of the term “lady.” They argue that the word creates expectations that women should be demure, quiet, and passive; it is also often charged that this word has strong racial implications, suggesting that, because of strongly held stereotypes, only white women are able to be regarded as “ladies” (see, for example,
Kleinman 2004). Some historians have drawn on this interpretation when studying lynching, suggesting that the protection of women from sexual assault was reserved for women who best personified the image of “lady” (Hall 1993; Lewis 1977). While my data cannot speak to the issue of whether or not protection was limited to proper ladies, they do suggest that the idea of lady was central to the lynching discourse.

In particular, the paternalistic treatment of white women suggested by Hall (1993) appears in the data in three ways. First, white women are more often discussed in terms of their relationship to men than as individuals. The suggestion that the alleged sexual assault victims were “respectable,” “pure,” and “helpless” ladies is also a frequent occurrence. Finally, the physical appearance of white women is stressed. The image of alleged assault victims as beautiful, helpless ladies was thus a corollary to the ugly negro brute discussed above.

Just as African American male lynching victims were written about primarily with regard to their race, white women were noted for their relationship to white men. In some cases, the white woman’s name was printed, but the name and/or position of a male relative was stated as well. In other cases, the white woman’s name was not printed, but her identity was revealed through the identification of male family members. The following quote is an example:

The victim is the fifteen year old daughter of Mr. T.A. Kendrick, a highly esteemed citizen (the Atlanta Constitution February 7, 1887).

25 The use of the word alleged to refer to these women should not be taken as an implication that a sexual assault did not or could not have occurred. Rather, it is used because legal procedures were not used in many of these cases and, when they were used, the racial bias in the justice system makes it difficult to impossible to know if an attack actually took place. In fact, several of the African American lynching victims claimed to have not raped a white woman, but to have had an affair with one, even though that offense would also likely result in their death.
As this example indicates, when the male family members were particularly well-off and/or respected in the community, their status was a point of focus. One alleged victim of attempted rape, for example, was described as “the proprietress” (Herald Journal April 14, 1894). While phrases such as “wife of a respectable farmer” and “daughter of a prosperous farmer” were the most common, some articles did elaborate on the status of the white woman’s family. The following example states that the alleged rape victim was both wife and daughter to respectable men:

[She is married to a] well-to-do farmer…. and she is the daughter of ex-Tax Collector Digby….The entire family is well connected, belonging to the very best of agricultural people (the Atlanta Constitution September 12, 1898).

The family and status associations appear to be more that mere trivia. In some cases, this appears to be the basis of concern for the alleged victim:

[The alleged rape victim is a] lady of high respectability, her father and family being well-known in this county and is well worthy of the sympathy of the whole community (the Atlanta Constitution August 21, 1882).

In this example, it is not just the status of the family that is important, but the respectability of the white woman as well. This is an important theme in the data.

The white women in these articles were frequently referred to as ladies. In fact, the terms “respectable white lady” and “highly respectable lady” were among the most common phrases used to describe the alleged assault victims (they trail just behind “wife” and “daughter”). These white women were also described in ways that suggested their lady-like reputation. Claims that a white woman was “pure and honest” or “pure minded,” for example, appear frequently in the data. Others, such as a young women written about in February 1915, was said to be of “most beautiful character” (the Atlanta Constitution, February 15, 1915).
Other stereotypes associated with white women were present in the articles. Women were, for instance, frequently referred to as “helpless”. One young woman, who was, according to the reporter “quite intelligent” was also a called a “defenseless lady” (the Atlanta Constitution April 7, 1894). Still others did not even have the benefit of intelligence and were instead labeled “simple minded.”

Claims of white women’s beauty were also frequent in the articles. One Atlanta Constitution article, for example, mentioned a girl’s “fine form and features” (September 11, 1886) while another highlighted a young woman’s “beautiful long hair” (August 31, 1906). This stands in stark contrast to the description of African American male lynching victims who were described as unattractive throughout the data.

Alleged attacks on white “respectable” women were taken quite seriously, as well they should have been. In many ways, however, community members thought of the “outrages”—as rape was often called—as violations of racial norms. As such, it was not just the alleged victim who had been attacked.

There has been great excitement in town for the past twenty-four hours over the horrible crime committed upon the person of Mrs. Heard. There was an indignation meeting held by the best citizens of the town last night, in which they gave suitable expression to their feelings….they felt that they had been outraged… (the Atlanta Constitution July 13, 1884, emphasis added).

This sentiment, in part, may have contributed to the belief many white men held that it was their duty to avenge such an injustice.

White Men

Although the focus of the news articles is on African American men and white women, white men played an important part in these accounts. They were not just the fathers and
husbands of victimized white women, but their protectors as well. The mobs themselves made it clear that they believed their actions were both necessary and chivalrous, and the articles often made note of that. Further, many articles commented on how orderly and quiet white mobs were. Writing about the white male mobs in this manner has important racial and gender implications for white men as well as African American men and white women.

Generally speaking, the data examined did not give any insights into how the lynch mob themselves understood their actions. The reporters wrote the crime the lynching victim was accused of committing, but the mob itself tended not to provide an explanation. Yet occasionally, the mob did make their justifications for the lynching known. Most often, this was done in the form of signs that were left on or near the victims’ bodies.

These messages had strong implications about race and gender. The white lynch mobs seemed to believe that by killing (and often torturing) an African American man accused of sexually assaulting a white woman they were ensuring the safety of all white women. Inscriptions claiming “THIS IS THE WAY WE PROTECT OUR HOME” (the Atlanta Constitution August 19, 1889) and “Our children must be protected” (the Atlanta Constitution February 28, 1890) were common. The following quote makes the relationship between alleged sexual assault, lynching, and the “protection” of white women clear:

…today THE CONSTITUTION representative found his lifeless body hanging to a limb, riddled with bullets, and wearing a placard which read as follows: “Expiation of a heinous crime. Thus we protect our wives, our mothers and our daughters” (the Atlanta Constitution November 1, 1890).

115
Reporters also promoted this message in their writing:

Men who held the honor of women sacred were present to receive the crimiant and the officers (*The Atlanta Constitution* July 28, 1887).

Race was an important element of these warnings. In part this is because the messages were left on the bodies of African American men. Often, however, the signs themselves spoke to race. This quote, which tells of the lynching of an African American man who allegedly raped a white woman, is an example:

Lee Lawrence [an African American man] is now hanging to a limb adorned with a placard which reads: “To all negroes! This is your fate if you perpetrate such a crime. We will always protect our women.” (*The Atlanta Constitution* October 9, 1894).

This warning is addressed to “all negros” which indicates a concern that all—or at least many—African American men were potential rapists. This echoes the finding about African American men discussed above. Similarly, the concern about “protecting” white women in these quotes supports the findings concerning white women: they are presented as defenseless ladies in need of protection. Further, the use of the phrase “our women” denotes ownership over white women. What is perhaps more interesting about these warnings, however, is what they say about white men.

In her study of the social construction of masculinity, Bederman (1995) argues that through lynching, white men worked to define themselves as the “patriarchs, avengers, and righteous protectors” of white women. It seems clear from these data that white lynch mobs saw themselves in this way. By engaging in violence against African American men, these white mobs attempted to present themselves as strong, just, and heroic. Thus, they drew on notions of masculinity that were racially dichotomous, with white men serving as the ideal.
The irony is, of course, that by participating in lynch mobs, white men were engaging in the very type of activity they claimed to be above—violence (Bederman 1995). The brutality of white men, however, was made to seem reasonable by the concern for white women. The data show a clear pattern in which African American men were believed to have assaulted white women because they were unable to control themselves. White men, on the other hand, were thought to have attacked African American men because they had no choice; it was incumbent upon them as the protectors of white women.

Of course, not everyone agreed with the actions of the lynch mobs. While most of the news articles examined did not take a clear stance on the violence, thirty-three of the thirty-six articles that did take a side were supportive of the lynching and claimed that the alleged sexual assault needed to be avenged. Likewise, the public generally approved of the lynching of African American men, though splits in the public perception often occurred along racial lines.

Regardless of the stance taken by the reporter or the public, the articles show a clear pattern of describing the lynch mobs in positive terms. While a few articles made reference to whisky induced anger, claims that mobs were “quiet,” “orderly,” and “well organized” were far more common. When articles spoke of mob participants, the lynchers were typically well regarded.

26 27 of the articles that demonstrated support for the lynchings were printed in the Atlanta Constitution. Generally speaking, the Atlanta Constitution also gave the greatest level of detail about both the alleged sexual assault and the lynching itself. Although I cannot be certain, it is likely that the relative distance from the place the lynching and alleged assault took place resulted in the more graphic depictions in the Atlanta Constitution. Readers of local papers were more likely to have seen the body and heard about the alleged sexual violence, so an in-depth description was not required.
The men who composed the crowd of lynchers are men whose faces are seen on our streets daily, and are among the best citizens (the Atlanta Constitution February 2, 1890).

This is once again indicative of a discourse that polarized African American and white men. Even when engaging in violence, white men were talked about in ways that indicated intelligence, reason, and a concern for justice. One article went so far as to suggest that a lynch mob treated their victim “very humanely” (the Atlanta Constitution May 16, 1904). African American men, on the other hand, were fiendish brutes who were perhaps capable of calculating their attacks, but not of showing compassion or reason.

Summary

Prior sociological research on lynching (for example, Beck and Tolnay 1990; Corzine et al. 1983; Olzak 1990; Soule 1992; Tolnay, Deane and Beck 1996) has focused on the spatial and structural dimensions of lynching, ignoring gendered-racist ideologies that were most assuredly at play. Historians, meanwhile, have long pointed to the need to examine these issues, but their work has tended to focus on either a single lynching event (for example see MacLean 1991) or gender in the post-antebellum South generally (Hall 1993; Harris 1995; Hodes 1993). While both of these approaches have contributed a great deal to our understanding of these horrible crimes, it has left us without a systematic study of the relationship between gender, race, and lynching. The analysis offered in this chapter—a systematic analysis of sexually-motivated lynchings in Georgia—is an important first step in this regard.
Indeed, racial and gender stereotypes discussed by historians are present in the data. Notably, patterns of emphasizing the race of African American men and calling on stereotypes in media descriptions of African American male lynching victims occur. Similarly, white women, who were typically the alleged victims of African American male predators, were identified through their male relatives and described in paternalistic ways that emphasized their dependency on white men. In contrast to this, descriptions of white men who participated in lynch mobs were described—by themselves as well as others—as chivalrous and reasonable, their actions motivated only by the need to protect “their” women.

In the media accounts of sexually-charged lynchings in Georgia, African American men played the villains, white women were the damsels in distress, and white men were the heroes. These stereotypes, it should be noted, cannot be separated from one another. Notions of white masculinity, African American masculinity and white femininity are intertwined; each stereotype exists in contrast to the others. White men are able to be protectors because another group—African American men—is dangerous, and another—white women—needs to be protected.

These gendered and raced preconceptions could easily be drawn on to justify lynchings. Stereotypes of violent African American men, for example, make it easier for the white public to believe an African American man would commit rape. Similarly, the belief that the majority of white women were chaste makes it difficult to believe that a white woman would consent to a sexual relationship with an African American man. White men, meanwhile, were able to draw on the perception of themselves as protectors to explain away the violence they engaged in—regardless of the race of the victim.
These ideologically driven justifications of lynching are a missing piece in most sociological accounts of lynching. While class competition and the economic structure of a local community surely play a part in lynching events, the importance of this cultural component should not be ignored. It appears likely that lynch mobs not only drew on these stereotypes to justify their actions, but also that the media coverage itself perpetuated the stereotypes.
CHAPTER 8
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Historians and sociologists have, by and large, approached the study of lynching quite separately. While scholars in both disciplines emphasize dynamics of inequality, the focus of their attention differs. Historians (see, for instance, Hall 1993; Harris 1995; MacLean 1991; Simon 1996; Waldrep 1996), for example, frequently address the relevant gender and racial aspects of lynching. They also place a great deal of importance on the lynching victim and local cultural context. Sociologists (for example, Beck and Tolnay 1990; Corzine et al. 1983; Olzak 1990; Soule 1992; Tolnay, Deane and Beck 1996), on the other hand, focus largely on racial competition between working class whites and African Americans; their emphasis therefore tends to be on the white working class and the structural factors that incited whites to lynch.

Though there is little crossover between historical and sociological accounts of lynching, these foci are quite complementary. Although race, gender, and class are given varying degrees of attention by historians and sociologists, scholars in both disciplines agree that systems of stratification are essential to our understanding of lynching. Likewise, both structural and cultural dynamics were at play and should be considered. I have argued that each of these factors should be incorporated into our empirical and theoretical accounts of lynching in a more complete way.
Using a multi-method approach, I synthesized historical accounts of lynching and class-race dynamics, the sociological lynching literature, and feminist theory that treats categories of race and gender as mutually reinforcing. Such an approach allows me to assess how multiple forms of oppression affected who was lynched, where, and why. It also better tackles issues of structure and culture, providing support for the claim that both were important in the perpetration of lynching. Moreover, it speaks to issues of racial and gender control systems. The implications of this research thus reach beyond the study of lynching and should contribute to sociological understanding of inequality and social control more broadly. Below I summarize these findings and discuss possible limitations and directions for further research. I then discuss larger conclusions that can be drawn from the results with regard to the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender; and the relationship between structure and ideology; and methods of social control. I conclude the implications of this research on lynching research, inequality more generally, and contemporary social issues.

*Traditionalists and Modernizers: Accounting for Elite-Race Interaction*

Sociologists—split labor market theorists in particular—have long explored the relationship between white elites and racist mobilization (Brown and Boswell 1995; Boswell 1986; Bonacich 1972, 1975, 1976). They argue that elites foster racial division and encourage whites to mobilize along racial lines when it is in the economic interest of elites to do so. Yet to my knowledge, the role of elites has not been previously considered with respect to lynching. Rather, the bulk of the lynching literature focuses on the white working class (Beck and Tolnay 1990; Corzine et al. 1983; Olzak 1990;
Soule 1992; Tolnay, Deane and Beck 1996). The empirical research that indicates elite importance in other forms of racial violence, however, does suggest that elites should be accounted for in the lynching research.

Historical work not only suggests that elites should be incorporated into our study of the Southern class system, but also warns against treating elites as a monolithic group. Many historians have pointed to differences among Southern white elites (Fligstein 1986; Hahn 1983; Kouser 1974; Luebke 1990; Moore 1966; O’Brien 1986; Paige 1975). Among these differences, the degree to which elites relied on slave labor (Fligstein 1986; Moore 1966) and the desire of some elites to maintain a plantation-like economic system (Leubke 1990) seem central to the study of racist violence and lynching. The differences between economic traditionalists and modernizers likely affected the economic structure of a county.

In Luebke’s (1990) terms, traditionalists were those elites who were heavily dependent on African American labor. They attempted to secure the economic and social relations found in the plantation system, thus preserving the racial hierarchy. Modernizers, on the other hand, believed they would derive economic benefit from modernizing the Southern economy. To do so, they courted Northern business and industry by promoting an image of a “New South” that was less reminiscent of the Slave South. They reduced their reliance on the exploitation of African American labor, which, in turn, changed the relations of production. Theoretically, the shift in relations of production would have reduced racist violence.

Indeed, the results shown in chapter 5 suggest that these differences had important affects on Southern lynching. Lynching was most frequent in those counties where a
strong base of white elites relied on large numbers of African American tenants. In counties with few elite farms, however, the relationship between lynching and reliance on African American tenancy is negative. Of course, racial social control still occurred in the new “modernized” South, but lynching was less common in these areas than in those counties controlled by traditionalists.

It should be noted that elite-race interaction was measured differently in chapter 5 than it was in chapter 6. In chapter 5, this variable was measured as the number of elite farms in a county multiplied by the number of African American tenants in that county. In chapter 6, however, the percent of the population that was African American was used in place of African American tenancy. Both measures were run in the analytic chapters, but only the interaction term that was significant was included in the findings presented.

This difference in statistical power points to another important issue in the perpetration of lynching events. In chapter 5, all known attacks on African American men were included in the analysis regardless of the justification given for their assault; chapter 6 separated sexual and non-sexual crimes that allegedly precipitated the lynching. It seems, then, that the lynching of African American men generally is related to economic control and the maintenance of slavery, while specific forms of lynching are related more closely to larger competition issues. Thus, elites likely played a part in lynching generally in an attempt to preserve racial and class control, while working class white men demonstrated their angst through concern for the alleged sex crimes against white women.

The importance of elite organization does not, however, indicate that the white working class was unimportant. Far from it, working-class whites fears of demographic
and economic competition remain salient even when elite organization is considered. This indicates that both the organization of the white elite and the white working class need to be incorporated into our theories of lynching, as both were of great importance.

The position of African Americans in the larger social structure should also be explored more thoroughly in future research. This work, as is true of lynching research generally, has focused on the class position of white Southerners. While whites are clearly an important part of the story, it is a detriment to our research and theory building to ignore African Americans. Excluding African Americans from the analysis treats them as passive actors and limits the questions that can be asked (and answered) about the lynching issue.

Exploration of African American class positions is one way to include African Americans in the research more explicitly. The results shown in chapter 5, for example, indicate a negative relationship between African American farm ownership and lynching. This suggests that some African Americans—mostly likely those with some (though likely quite limited) economic power were able to use their individual and collective resources to protect themselves. Exactly how this was done is an important avenue for future research. Qualitative studies of the African American response to, and participation in, lynching should also be conducted. Putting the primary targets of lynching at the center of the research will undoubtedly provide new insights that historians and sociologists alike have overlooked.
Sociological research on lynching has typically focused on attacks made against African American male victims. This makes sense given that African American men were more likely than others to be lynched. Further, theories of competition commonly used to study lynching assume racial violence—rather than violence generally—is the result of competition. In other words, if racial competition results in violence, then the violence should be directed toward racial minorities. It makes sense, then, that the focus would be on African American victims. Historian Lerone Bennet Jr. (1975), however, argues that lynching had the effect of keeping whites “in line” in much the same way that it served as a social control mechanism for African Americans. This suggests, then, that the lynching of African Americans and whites may be more similar than competition theory acknowledges.

There has been little to no research assessing whether or not the similarities and differences in the causal patterns of lynching vary by the lynching victim’s race and/or sex. Because of this, race and gender are effectively overlooked in much of our empirical analyses. While race and gender certainly affect the statistical results in lynching research, the relationship is not explicitly explored. In order to examine issues of race and gender in lynching more closely, I compared the lynching of African American men, white men and African American and white women. I also compared the lynchings by both race and by the stated motivation behind the lynching (sexualized or not sexualized crimes). While Tolnay and Beck (1995) did consider accusation types in a chapter of their seminal work *A Festival of Violence*, they studied only African American male
victims. It is important, however, to examine the race of the lynching victim as well as the crime he or she was accused of committing.

While Bennett’s (1975) assertion that the lynching of some whites ensured “proper” racial behavior among many whites is undoubtedly accurate, it appears that there are significant differences between the lynching of African American men and white men. Indeed, competition variables better explain violence directed toward African American men than white men. Race thus appears to be an important element of the lynching process—one that should be given a more central role in the study of lynching.

Gender, too, should be given greater consideration in sociological accounts of lynching. Differences exist not just in the race and sex of the lynching victim, but also gendered explanations for their attacks. African American men were not only more likely to be lynched, they were also more likely to be lynched for violating sexual mores. This supports the work of historians who argue that gender—and sexualized violence in particular—were an important part of the lynching phenomenon.

Norms of sexual accessibility and sexual property gave white men greater access to women of all races, while African American men were prevented access to white women. This, combined with the common belief that African American men were sexually uncontrollable and white women were highly desirable, likely contributed to African American men being accused of and lynched for, sexualized crimes such as rape, marrying white women, and entering a white woman’s room. This relates to research on similar issues in contemporary times. While lynching is seldom seen today, African American men alleged to have sexually assaulted a white woman are treated more harshly in the criminal justice system than white men accused of assaulting minority
women (LaFree 1980). Race and gender appear to work together to create different experiences with lynching based on the race of the lynching victim. Although is not tested here, the race of the alleged sexual assault victims likely matters as well. In fact, my data show no instances of a white man being lynched for assaulting an African American woman. The economic structure and geographic region also appear to interact with race and gender in the process of lynching. This can be seen in the significant elite-race interaction term, region, and rural effects present in the models. The relationship between several forms of difference is a key finding in this work and needs to be explored further.

Spatial and temporal dimensions should also obviously be accounted for. Number of lynchings affects African American and white men differently. In particular, the number of lynchings in a county is negatively related to the lynching of African American men, but has a positive association with attacks on white men. However, without accounting for space and time more thoroughly, any claims about why this difference exists is only conjecture.

Legitimizing Violence: Examining Gendered-Racism in Media Accounts

Systems of race and gender affected who was lynched and why, but they also played an important part of the lynching mythos. In fact, racist and sexist stereotypes were frequently used in the media framing of lynching events. This cultural element of lynching is missing from empirical accounts of lynching in the sociological literature. This is unfortunate, as the data pertaining to sexually motivated lynchings in Georgia
show patterns of drawing on stereotypes of race and gender to justify the actions taken by lynch mobs.

Stereotypes abound in media accounts of lynching. When African American men were lynched, their race was usually emphasized. In fact, the African American male lynching victims’ race, rather than their names or some other status, was used to refer to the lynch victims with great frequency. This was not the case in the five articles written about white male lynching victims (though the population of white victims for sexual reasons in Georgia is too small to make any strong claims).

It was also common for the African American men who were lynched to be referred to as brutes, fiends, or some other racially charged term. While these terms in and of themselves may not carry racial implications, the repeated use of such terms to describe African American men reinforce stereotypes about them. This racialized message becomes even stronger when paired with the term “the negro,” as was frequently done. Reporters typically refrained from calling white lynch mobs “brutes,” thugs,” and the like, all of which would certainly have applied, which provides further evidence that these terms carry strong racial implications.

White women, who were the alleged sexual assault victims, were described in very different terms than the African American men who were said to be their attackers. While African American men were depicted as big, burly aggressors, white women were often referred to as respectable, but helpless, ladies. Their relationship to white men (as their daughters and/or wives) was also emphasized. We thus see patterns in the articles of white women described in paternalistic ways that emphasized their dependency on white men.
White men who participated in mob violence, meanwhile, were frequently applauded as chivalrous and just. Descriptions of white men, in fact, stood in opposition to both African American men and white women. White men were not described as the helpless victims white women were said to be. Quite the contrary, white lynchers by their own accounts, as well as that of news reporters, rode to action to protect “their” women. Further, though they were in engaging in horrendous acts of torture and violence themselves, these white men were described as “reasonable” and as “good citizens.” This is a stark contrast to the description of African American men were characterized as violent.

Class was also an important element in the media descriptions of lynching; the status position of white female victims of sexual assault were commented on with some regularity. While my data cannot speak to this issue, some historians (for example, Hodes 1993; Simon 1996) have suggested that sexual contact between white women of high status and African American men was considered worse than similar relationship with poor white women. Future research should address how patterns of class and status affected the Southern dialogue on lynching.

It is clear from these depictions that notions of white masculinity, African American masculinity, and white femininity are intertwined; each stereotype exists in contrast to the others. White men could only be described as chivalrous because white women were thought to need help protecting themselves from African American men.

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27 While references are frequently made to high status women, my data do not include enough instances of articles that explicitly state that an alleged white victim of sexual assault was working class or poor to make proper comparisons.
who, in turn, were perceived as threats. They cannot—and should not—be analyzed as separate or unrelated ideologies.

There are, however, several limitations to this research. First, while Georgia serves as a useful case study (see discussion in chapter 4), comparison across the South would be informative. The quantitative data indicate differences in the Deep and Border South; regional variations may also be apparent in the qualitative data. Another limitation of the selection of data is the type of stories that were included in the analysis. Specifically, the data were limited to news articles. Including editorials written about lynching would provide further insight into the public discussion of lynching.

It would also be useful to have more articles written about white lynching victims. In Georgia, only four white men were lynched for an act of sexual violence or impropriety, and my data include five articles about these events. Although only one of these white men were described negatively—and there were no racial overtones in the description of him—an examination of more articles would allow for a better comparison of African American and white male lynching victims. That said, the relatively small number of white men who were lynched for sexual crimes compared to African American male victims (see Table 6.2) speaks volumes about the racial ideologies of the time.

Inequality and Intersecting Forms of Difference

These findings speak to several important sociological issues: the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender; the symbiotic relationship of structure and culture; and social control. As such, the results of this research are relevant not only for the lynching
literature, but extend to the study of contemporary inequality as well. It also demonstrates the need to incorporate the historical record into historical-sociological work.

This project demonstrates that neither race nor class alone can be relied on to explain the phenomenon of lynching. Indeed, the significant affect of the elite-race variable indicates that the local economic structure interacted with the racialized nature of that system. The results shown in chapters 6 and 7 go further, suggesting that the complex relationships between forms of difference should also be considered.

In fact, these divergent experiences with lynching based on both gender and racial categories provide some support for the feminist theorizing that argues race and gender should not be regarded separately. Such an approach would be beneficial not just for the study of lynching, but inequality more broadly. While this approach is methodologically difficult and is arguably outside the mainstream of sociological scholarship, important contemporary implications could be gleaned if more scholars engaged in this type of work. Research that does not fully account for multiple dimensions of inequality necessarily reproduces dichotomous thinking, which minimizes the intricacies of inequality.

That said, while I have attempted to be sensitive to multiple forms of difference while engaging in this research, this project is not a test of intersectionality or multicultural feminism. One of the primary arguments of the intersectionality perspective is that minority voices be central in the study of inequality (Collins 1990). Since my data were created by white men (i.e. news reporters and editors) and record the perception many whites had of lynching, the African American male and white female
experience with lynching is understood from the white perspective. Similarly, African American women’s stories have not been included in this research as they are notably absent in my data. Yet by acknowledging the absence of these women and exploring the gendered-racist framing of lynching discourse, I have been able to find evidence to suggest that inequality is as complex as these feminist scholars argue.

_Inequality, Culture, and Media_

Many studies have examined racial and gender inequality in the media. Television, for example, has been accused of portraying racial, gender, and class stereotypes (see Andersen 2005 for a good overview); print and television advertisements have been criticized for similar reasons (Kilbourne 2000). Several scholars have also noted how white supremacist organizations use the internet to promote their ideology (Adams and Roscigno 2005; Burris et al. 2000; Donelan 2001). Similarly, social movement theory addresses the use of media in producing collective frames of understanding and collective identity (for example, see Adams and Roscigno 2005; Roscigno and Danaher 2001). This work is important, but should be embedded in a historical understanding of media’s place in inequality.

Further, just as gender and race should be treated as intersecting dimensions of inequality, structure and culture should be treated as partners in the creation and perpetuation of inequality. Typically, sociologists have focused on more structural explanations for lynching such as wage structures, demographics, and political climate. Historians, meanwhile, have tended to emphasize the ideological aspects of the lynchings. My results, however, indicate that they structural and cultural elements of
lynching are both important pieces of the lynching story. Acknowledging only one side of these dynamic oversimplifies the social processes that led to lynching.

Inequality and Social Control

The historical examination of lynching has important contemporary implications as well. Messner et al (2005), for example, find that the contemporary murder of African-Americans at the hands of whites is positively and significantly related to historical patterns of lynching. Similarly, Jacobs et al (2005) show that the number of death sentences is higher where lynching was used more frequently in the past. Further, as discussed above, there seems to be parallels in the lynching of interracial sexual assault in the lynching South and contemporary times (see, for example, LaFree 1980).

Modern patterns of gendered and racist social control thus have clear roots in historical discrimination. Other historical forms of gendered-racism, such as Jim Crow and anti-immigration laws should also be brought into research on contemporary discrimination. While the specific form gendered-racism takes (e.g. lynching versus the death penalty) has changed over time, the degree to which race, gender, class, etc. are embedded in our social fiber has not. As many have argued, both race (see, for instance, Bonilla-Silva 1996; Wellman 1993) and gender (Hartman 1981; Reskin 1988) are institutionalized in the United States. Thus, systems of subordination like white supremacy and patriarchy have not declined over time; rather, the way we engage in inequality has changed as the culture becomes more or less accepting of them. Making connections between contemporary racial and gender norms and control, therefore, is a worthy endeavor.
Summary

This project examines lynching events that occurred in the U.S. South between 1882 and 1930. Drawing on historical insights and using a multi-method approach, I incorporate race, class, and gender into the sociological lynching literature with greater nuance than prior work has done. This analysis indicates that while, as is suggested in previous research, racial competition is important to our understanding of lynching, class variation among whites generally and among elites specifically is also important to consider. Further, the research indicates that both race and gender need to be brought into our theories of lynching and racist violence more explicitly.

While the focus of this research is on lynching, it is, at the core, a study of social inequality. Questions of who was lynched (or who was not lynched), why they were attacked, where the lynchings occurred, and how all of it fits into the larger social landscape remain important today. Our history informs our present, and we must take it seriously. It is important, then, that sociologists not only engage in historical research, but that we incorporate historical knowledge into our work as well.
APPENDIX A

QUALITATIVE CODING SHEET
Coding Sheet for Lynching Articles Related to Rape and Sexual Impropriety in GA, 1882-1930

Coder’s Initials: _________________________ Date Coded: ___________________

Source: Newspaper ________________________________________________

Date (mm-dd-yyyy) ___________ Page/Column _________

Alleged: Rape [ ] Attempted Rape [ ] Other [ ]

If “other”, describe ____________________________________________

Was a non-sexual crime also involved (i.e. murder, robbery)? _________

If so, what crime (be specific)?___________________________________

Did the lynch mob publicly state their justification? _________________

If so, how (i.e. sign left on body, chanting)? _______________________

Lynching: Race ________________ Age______________

Name(s)_______________________________________________________

Are there any indications about the class/status position of the lynching victim?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

137
What terms/phrases were used to describe the lynching victim?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Rape/Other: Race _____________ Sex_________ Age______________

Victim

Marital Status _______________________________________________

Family Status (i.e. daughter) ____________________________________

Are there indications about the class/status position of this victim? _____

If “yes”, explain: _____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

What terms/phrases were used to describe the rape/other victim?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

If more than one victim, describe others here: _______________________

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Lynching: Date/Time Lynched (mm-dd-yyyy) ______________________________

138
Event

How was the victim attacked (i.e. hung, shot, etc.)? __________________
__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

What was done with the body? ____________________________

What was the size of the lynch mob? _______________________

What terms/phrases were used to describe the lynch mob? ______
__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Were any on-lookers present? If so, how large was the crowd? ______

If a crowd was present, what were they doing? _________________
__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

How was the crowd described? __________________________

Was an attempt made to prevent or stop the lynching? _________

If so, who made the attempt and how? _______________________
__________________________________________________________________

Response: What was the reporter’s position about the lynching?

Supportive [ ]  Unsupportive [ ]  Uncertain [ ]

What evidence of this position is there? _______________________
__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

What was the public’s position about the lynching?

[ ]  [ ]

139
Supportive □ Unsupportive □ Split Uncertain

What evidence of this position is there?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Other Information:

What other information about this article is important? Are there any quotes that stand out?

Other Information Continued….
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