

Our Past Betrays Us: Collective Memory, Homicide and Southern Lynching

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Abstract

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Recent sociological research shows enduring impacts of historical patterns of lynching between 1882 and 1930 in the southern U.S. on a variety of modern societal outcomes. In particular, Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen (2005) find that lynching is associated with contemporary white-on-black homicide. While they link violence to lynching, the mechanisms responsible for this relationship remain obscure. In this paper I define and estimate mediating institutional- and population-based mechanisms that transmit a collective memory of racial domination consistent with lynching that affect modern white-on-black homicide in the South. These mechanisms include: a measure of white-flight segregationist academies, two variables for the level of political support for the segregationist U.S. Presidential candidates, Strom Thurmond and George Wallace, and measures for county net-migration rates between 1950 and 1980. Analyses reveal that the positive and significant association between lynching and white-on-black homicide is attenuated and becomes non-significant with the inclusion of all of the mechanisms. I interpret these results to suggest that the racist cultural schema manifested through lynching is transferred to intervening institutions and upheld by population dynamics that influence contemporary white-on-black homicide. These findings have implications for the role of collective memory in explaining temporally distant events and interpersonal racial conflict.

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Our Past Betrays Us: Collective Memory, Homicide and Southern Lynching

In the American South – Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee – 2,462 documented lynchings¹ of black men, women, and children occurred between 1882 and 1930 (Tolnay and Beck 1995). During this era, Jim Crow laws accompanied vigilante behavior such as lynching, which ensured the almost total subjugation of the southern black population (Jacobs, Carmichael and Kent 2005). A variety of explanations are offered for the lynching that occurred during this epoch, including whites' desire to restore antebellum social structure (Blackmon 2008), to eliminate economic competition (Loewen 2005) and to create and ensure moral solidarity throughout their communities (Bailey and Snedker 2011). Even though the racist and violent practice of lynching mostly ended 80 years ago we are still witnessing its residual consequences today. Recent research evinces a lasting relationship between historical lynchings and a variety of modern outcomes. Homicide, increased imprisonments and the use of the death penalty are generally higher in the areas where lynching was more common (Jacobs et al. 2005; Jacobs, Malone and Iles 2012; Messner et al. 2005). In addition, the enforcement of federal hate crime laws is weaker in locations with a history of lynching (King, Messner, and Baller 2009). While many have linked various modern socially negative circumstances to lynching, the mechanisms responsible for these associations remain unclear.

In this study I endeavor to define and estimate historical mediating institutions and population processes that allow for the transmission of a culture of racial domination consistent

¹ Lynching is defined by the NAACP as an illegal killing done by three or more people “under the pretext of service to justice or tradition” (Tolnay and Beck 1995).

² Argument homicides include: homicides under the influence of alcohol or drugs, in addition to homicides about money or lovers' triangles and other instances. Additionally, I use the shortened phrase of “white-on-black homicide” throughout the paper interchangeably with “white-on-black argument homicide.”

³ These Southern states are: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

⁴ Jacobs et al. eliminate Nebraska from their analysis because the non-partisan legislature in the state makes their

with historical lynching that affects modern white-on-black argument homicide² in the South. That white-on-black argument homicides were more common where lynching occurred is established by Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen in their article “The Legacy of Lynching and Southern Homicide” (2005), which appeared in the *American Sociological Review*. Discovering the empirical intervening mechanisms within this important and perplexing relationship will further inform how a southern culture steeped in the domestic terrorism of blacks through lynching has perpetuated an oppressive collective culture towards blacks throughout the 20th century, culminating in current white-on-black violence. More broadly, this study will clarify the conditions in which historical racial violence can be transferred over time to affect contemporary society.

Theoretically, insight into the relationship between past lynching and recent white-on-black homicide can be found in the theory of *collective memory*. According to Griffin (2004) individual and collective behaviors in the present are partly influenced by events of the past and can generate present action. Moreover, it is theorized that actions that have a strong collective psychological impact on a society, culture, or group can facilitate individual behaviors that arise from their shared understanding of the event (Pennebaker, Paez, and Rime’ 1997). The racial enmity epitomized by lynching is a phenomenon that is potentially potent enough to generate a collective memory of black racial oppression among Southern whites. Drawing on the theory of collective memory, my investigation strives to determine whether the ideology of racial antagonism that fueled lynching is embodied in intervening institutions and sustained through migration dynamics, which in turn affect present white-on-black homicide.

To test this hypothesis I first replicate the statistical results from the research done by

² Argument homicides include: homicides under the influence of alcohol or drugs, in addition to homicides about money or lovers’ triangles and other instances. Additionally, I use the shortened phrase of “white-on-black homicide” throughout the paper interchangeably with “white-on-black argument homicide.”

Messner et al. (2005) that finds a positive and statistically significant association between lynching and white-on-black argument homicide in the South at the county-level between the years of 1986 and 1995, net of a large set of relevant control variables. I then include intervening variables that represent a climate of racial animus and white supremacy, in addition to population processes that lie temporally between the end of the lynching era and before the homicide events to the models estimated by Messner and colleagues. This will allow me to assess their effect on the association between lynching and white-on-black homicide. An attenuated relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide, while accounting for the proposed mechanisms, will support my hypothesis that an ethos of lynching is carried on by surrogate means to affect contemporary interpersonal racial violence.

Historical Lynching and Modern Outcomes

Past findings linking lynching to various negative modern outcomes are plentiful in the social sciences. Beginning with the article, “The Legacy of Lynching and Southern Homicide,” Messner et al. examine multiple theories concerning lynchings’ abiding effect on homicide, in addition to exploring various combinations of offender-victim race combinations (e.g., all races perpetrators and all races victims). I have chosen to highlight the theory they extend for white-on-black argument homicide – the brutalization effect – and the results of their related statistical analysis (Messner et al. 2005). Brutalization theory asserts that capital punishment provides a continued cultural example of killing that degrades life. Bowers argues that when a potential killer has an argument with someone, their victim may be seen as an individual who deserves death, mirroring what they have witnessed with capital punishment (1984:274). Messner et al. (2005) reason that lynching is possibly an even more powerful example of killing for social control than capital punishment because it bypasses state law, which in turn supports the cultural

underpinnings for current white-on-black homicides (Ayers 1984; Tolnay and Beck 1996).

Hence, according to Messner and colleagues, it is possible that the specter of lynching provides a psycho-behavioral structure for conflict resolution for some southern whites that see it as their right to enact, what they perceive as, justice when they have a grievance. And the statistical evidence for this argument reveals that when controlling for various predictors of homicide, lynching displays significant and positive affects on white-on-black homicide. But Messner et al. (2005) recognize that their research is limited in that their interpretations are based upon intervening processes that are not examined directly and that should be “explicated more fully and assessed more rigorously in future research.”

In another article, “Contemporary Hate Crimes, Law Enforcement, and the Legacy of Racial Violence,” King, Messner, and Baller (2009) posit that contemporary hate crime policing and prosecution is less vigorous where lynching was prevalent prior to 1930. Expanding on the racial threat hypothesis and social control theories, they affirm that majority populations and those in power recognize a large or growing minority group as threatening (Blalock 1967). Such threats spur a multitude of responses from whites in the South that historically have been severely detrimental for blacks, such as right-wing voting habits and racist attitudes (King et al. 2009). Ultimately, King, Messner, and Baller find that an increasing black population and past lynching in the South are associated with decreases in police reports of hate crimes that target blacks, police compliance with hate crime law, and the probability of prosecuting hate crimes. King et al. assert “lynching is ultimately an indirect proxy for an intervening mechanism—cultural tradition... and that this general cultural orientation has dissipated but not completely evaporated over time” (2009). What King et al. are declaring is that lynching is a representation of a cultural

climate of white racial dominance that continues across generations to play a role in modern society.

Jacobs, Carmichael, and Kent (2005) explore lynching's relationship to current capital punishment in their article "Vigilantism, Current Racial Threat, and Death Sentences." Jacobs et al. state that white southerners practiced vigilante legal and extralegal violence against a black minority to maintain a system of racial dominance (Black 1976) that provided them economic advantage (Blackmon 2008; Mandle 1992; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Thus, lynchings during the Jim Crow era are a prime example of vigilantism, used as a tool of terrorism (Raper 1933) by southern whites to keep blacks oppressed in a system that provided them scant opportunity for upward mobility. This leads Jacobs et al. (2005) to hypothesize that a "historical residue of the rancorous and violent conflicts about slavery still influences the ultimate criminal punishment"—the death penalty. They find that capital punishment counts among blacks in the lower 48 states and in a separate group of 10³ southern states are the result of an interaction between historical lynching of blacks and the current racial threat of a large black population. In other words, states with a larger black population and a record of black lynchings more frequently use the death penalty (Jacobs et al. 2005).

Jacobs, Malone, and Iles (2012) have investigated the affects of lynching on criminal justice outcomes. In their article, "Race and Imprisonments: Vigilante Violence, Minority Threat, and Racial Politics" they find that, net of controls, lynch rates and the threat of increasing black residents explain the rise in penal admission rates in their 49 state sample⁴ between the years of 1972 to 2000 (Jacobs et al. 2012). They discover statistical evidence that the vigilante

³ These Southern states are: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

⁴ Jacobs et al. eliminate Nebraska from their analysis because the non-partisan legislature in the state makes their variable for Republican strength immeasurable.

practice of lynching continues to influence current punitive justice. This supports Alexander (2010) who argues that current penal discrimination towards blacks is rooted in a historical system of racial control that is now applied in a supposedly “colorblind” fashion.

Each of the aforementioned studies demonstrates the robust findings of lynching’s coupling to present day outcomes. Nevertheless, this past research has left us relatively uninformed about the specific mechanisms responsible for the enduring importance of lynching. In the following section I will address this issue by proposing potential mechanisms that might account for lynching’s lasting effect on current interpersonal racial violence in the South.

Collective Memory and Lynching

Messner et al. have established that lynching (events that happened some 80 years ago) affects current white-on-black homicide rates, which leads to the question: How is that association possible? To provide a potential solution to this conundrum I will discuss how a racist cultural schema expressed through the communal act of lynching could be imparted into ancillary institutions that affect contemporary white-on-black homicide. For instance, political and educational institutions potentially served as surrogates for the discriminatory apparatus of lynching as it started to wane in the 1930s and allowed it to influence the prevailing culture of the South. Collective memory theory might provide a framework for understanding this phenomenon. According to collective memory theory, individual and collective behaviors in the present are partly influenced by events of the past (see Booth 2006; Griffin and Bollen 2009; Olick and Robbins 1998). This can occur through a communal remembrance of an event that is sustained through storytelling, family and community traditions, monuments, along with other sites where shared histories and values are remembered. These sites support a framework for the

memories of the past to have context in the present, and to provide action and energy to future endeavors (Griffin and Hargis 2008) for individual actors and social institutions.

It has been theorized that emotionally charged events, such as lynchings, make people think and talk about why they happen, leading communities to create a collective memory that is capable of being passed on (Griffin and Bollen 2009). Often when lynchings transpired, stories about them spread throughout the South for those who could not participate directly in the activity. The southern white population had indirect access to the collective community through the major media outlets of the era. For instance, newspapers would frequently publish sensationalist lynching stories, providing information about the manhunt, and graphic details of the lynching itself (Rushdy 2012). Newspaper stories reporting the details of lynching incidents appeared regularly throughout this time period, with one lynching occurring nearly every week (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Likewise, knowledge of lynching was circulated throughout the South on postcards made from photographs taken at the events. These postcards were sold in drugstores, soda parlors, and some businessmen would sell them door-to-door (Allen 2000). The mass distribution of lynching events through the media allowed the broader southern population to connect vicariously to the white community that used brutal violence against the black population (Tolnay, Deane, and Beck 1996).

A necessary and obvious component of the media sensationalizing a lynching event was a lynching happening within a community. An example of this comes from Rowan County, North Carolina. In his book *Troubled Ground*, Clegg recounts a lynching of three black men accused of murder – Nease Gillespie, John Gillespie, and Jack Dillingham. These men were abducted by a mob from their jail cells and taken eight blocks to a baseball field where Nease and John’s brothers, Harrison and James, were lynched four years earlier. All three men were hanged from

an oak tree and then “Sanguinary butchers stepped forward and deprived the corpses of fingers, toes, and ears” as souvenirs for the onlookers (Clegg 2010). The next morning, hundreds of men, women and children visited the oak tree where the alleged murderers dangled.

Hence, the repetitive act of lynching is a reflection of racial norms, culturally concretized through its ritualistic and ceremonial structure, and disseminated widely by the media.

Accordingly, lynching could be representative of a broader zeitgeist of racial superiority of southern whites that could have had a lasting influence on the shared consciousness and culture of contemporary southerners due to its intense and communal character. Consequently, collective memory theory would propose that the ethos of extreme racial domination manifested through lynching has most likely extended past 1930 to infiltrate institutions that lie temporally between lynching and modern white-on-black homicide.

Also, collective memories might be tied to place, in that they possibly render “immobile the people and events associated with them, and in so doing they become locales of the preservation of the past, sustaining frameworks for remembrance” (Booth 2006). The historical memory of racist cultures and institutions can be embedded locationally, perhaps partially accounting for the spatial variation in the frequency and association between lynching and white-on-black homicide (see Messner et al 2005). In his book, *Sundown Towns*, James Loewen (2005) provides an excellent example of the operation of collective memory and its connection to specific locations. He writes of present day towns that have continued folklore around “hanging trees,” where past lynchings happened. These “hanging trees” are symbolic of white supremacy and keep violent stories related to the past alive, along with the race-based beliefs they represent.

Possible Mechanisms

I will explore how two types of mechanisms, institutional-based and population-based, facilitate the transmission of a collective memory of racial control. Institutional-based mechanisms are social structures that allow individuals to express culturally defined roles that are based upon a shared history to achieve the collective goals of a community. Population-based mechanisms occur around the migration behavior of people, both into and out of communities; either strengthening or weakening the racist climate of an area.

One important institutional-based intervening mechanism is situated within the system of educational segregation. While white-on-black lynching began to recede around 1930, prior studies clearly demonstrate that southern white racial subjugation of blacks remained strong in the educational arena (Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Woodward 1955). Educational segregation had been the norm in the South and was solidified by the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which argued that segregation did not infringe upon the Fourteenth Amendment. This court decision allowed black schools to be undervalued, rendering them inferior to white academies, and effectively limiting southern blacks' accrual of human capital. But in 1954 the separation of black and white educational facilities was deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case *Brown v. Board of Education*. Yet this was not the end of segregated schools in the South. Many wealthier whites placed their children in white-flight segregationist academies to keep them separated from blacks. And, due to the tuition and fees required by these private institutions, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for blacks to enroll. Andrews (2003) asserts that the establishment of white-flight segregationist academies (WFSAs) was a countermovement through which whites resisted the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, segregated private academies were cultural sites that allowed white communities to continue imposing racial separation in schooling, despite the Supreme Court's ruling, and continued

pressure from civil rights activists. Those communities that initiated these programs not only provided a focal point of racist expression for those who organized them, but most likely fostered corresponding discriminatory beliefs in the children who attended those academies.

Southern politics represent a second potential institutional-based mechanism connecting historical lynching and modern white-on-black homicides. During the lynching era (1882-1930) established southern politicians espoused violent practices towards blacks. For instance, Tom Watson, a U.S. Congressman representing Georgia from 1891 to 1893 and later as a U.S. Senator between 1921 to 1922 stated,

In the South, we have to lynch him [the Negro] occasionally, and flog him, now and then, to keep him from blaspheming the Almighty, by his conduct, on account of his smell and his color...Lynch law is a good sign: it shows that a sense of justice yet lives among the people (Woodward 1963).

What Watson is arguing is that the physical dominance of blacks is a necessary aspect of a just society. Another example of a racist political stance came from Jeff Davis, Governor of Arkansas from 1901 to 1907 and U.S. Senator from 1907 to 1913 who stated, "I say that 'nigger' dominion will never prevail in this beautiful Southland of ours, as long as shotguns and rifles lie around loose, and we are able to pull the trigger" (Logue and Dorgan 1981). Davis' comment reveals the type of vitriolic attitudes that fueled southern lynching. A quote from Ben "Pitchfork" Tillman in 1897 on the floor of the U.S. Senate demonstrates the same violent position as Davis,

We of the South have never recognized the right of the negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be equal to the white men, and will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and daughters without lynching him. (Logue and Dorgan 1981).

With this statement, Tillman encapsulated many southerners' perspectives on the issue of blacks in the South: that blacks were inferior to whites and vigilante violence was required to control them.

This pattern of political, race-baiting rhetoric was continued, but with less severity, by two U.S. Presidential candidates from the South, Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George Wallace in 1968, who ran on a segregation platform and received large support from voters. Thurmond won in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, while Wallace won Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Here is an instance of a racist comment made by Thurmond in regard to the federal government pressing for social integration,

I wanna tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that there's not enough troops in the army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigger race into our theatres into our swimming pools into our homes and into our churches (Philpot 2007).

And Wallace's viewpoint on racial segregation did not deviate from Thurmond's. Here is an instance of the political rhetoric that voters heard from Wallace in his inaugural address after his election as governor of Alabama, "In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." These statements made by Thurmond and Wallace exemplify their well-known segregationist viewpoints that were shared by many of their southern constituents. Hence, those that voted for Thurmond and Wallace demonstrated their allegiance to a system of segregation and social structure present in the lynching era.

An example of a population-based mechanism is related to population churning. It is likely more difficult to maintain a culture of extreme racial hostility across decades where there

is higher turnover in the white population as a result of geographic mobility. Both high levels of out-migration and in-migration could lead to the culture of southern racial hostility diluting through an influx of new ideas from individuals who are not directly associated with the racist events of a particular location, or because those who leave weaken the pre-existing racist culture through their exodus. Conversely, those counties that had small amounts of out-migration and in-migration experienced greater population stability and the collective memory of racial oppression associated with lynching could continue relatively unchanged, passed on from one generation of community residents to the next.

These institutional-based and population-based mechanisms represent an interconnected system of racial control that varied in intensity across the South. Each institutional-based mechanism assisted the broader agenda of white southerners preserving the racial caste system that existed during slavery. After the legal end of slavery, lynching was employed as a coercive tool of social control. But once lynching diminished in frequency, educational segregation and support for segregationist politicians were instruments that potentially continued the lynching legacy of racial persecution towards blacks in less physically violent, yet still culturally destructive ways. Moreover, the population-based mechanism of population churning either allowed racial domination to occur through population stagnation or dissipating racist ideas through high levels of population change, which disturbed the cultural schema that supported the racial hierarchy. Therefore, the collective memory that supported the norms and values of racial persecution embodied in lynching could be transported to the current era through educational segregation, political support for avowed white supremacist candidates, and migration dynamics. These social forces worked in conjunction to transmit a local culture of racial subjugation that

might account for the peculiar relationship between lynching and modern white-on-black homicide documented by Messner et al. (2005).

Research Question and Hypotheses

In the statistical analyses that follow, I evaluate the ability of a set of possible mechanisms to explain the persistence of a culture of racial supremacy across two distant historical eras. Specifically, I add measures of the institutional and demographic mechanisms discussed above in a sequential fashion to Messner et al.'s original model that reveals a relationship between lynching and modern white-on-black homicide. The mechanisms I include in my analysis represent the creation and maintenance of racially oppressive collective memories in specific locales in the South. Moreover, these variables fall temporally between the lynching era and white-on-black argument homicide. The first intervening mechanism reflects the existence of white-flight segregationist academies that spread throughout the South between 1954-1975, after the verdict on *Brown v Board of Education*. The next mechanisms are based on the level of political support for the segregationist U.S. Presidential candidates, Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George Wallace in 1968. The last mechanism measures county net-migration rates between 1950 and 1980 that provide insight on the effect of population churning on the association between lynching and white-on-black homicide.

My primary objective is to assess the extent to which the baseline association between lynching and homicide shown by Messner and colleagues is attributable to institutional- and population-based mechanisms. And if there is attenuation in the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide, how large is that change? Answers to these research questions will help provide understanding on how the long ago practice of lynching has continued to be related to contemporary interracial violence in the South.

Data and Methods⁵

Lynching, Homicide, and County Clusters

It is important to replicate as closely as possible the original finding of a positive relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide found by Messner et al. because my research questions are dependent on their results. Therefore, with respect to their data and methods, I follow their measurement and modeling decisions, with the exception of the proposed mechanisms. To evaluate the effect of mediating influences on the association between southern lynching and modern white-on-black homicide rates I have confined my analysis to cross-sectional county and county clusters in ten southern states where data sources are available: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. These are the same southern states included in the study by Messner et al. (2005).

Over the 100-year time period that my analysis investigates, counties were created, others disappeared, and some were re-configured in my ten state sample. To address this issue of changing county boundaries I use the Horan and Hargis County Longitudinal Template (1995), which “groups 1990 categories into larger units on the basis of earlier historical county boundary configurations” (Horan and Hargis 1995). In other words, the template starts in 1990, moving back in time, decade-by-decade, creating county clusters based on historical boundary configurations for each decade until the desired decade is reached. This process identifies the smallest unchanging geographic unit between 1880 and 1990. Also, to maintain as much geographic detail as possible, I adhere to Messner et al. (2005) by not replacing individual counties with county clusters in two situations: when there was no lynching within a county

⁵ This discussion will draw heavily from Messner et al.’s data and methods section due to the scope of my research questions.

cluster and when lynching activity happened after the boundary changes were completed⁶. In these instances I know if a county had a lynching incident between 1882 and 1930, hence there is no reason to create county clusters. Those counties and county clusters that did not have a black population at risk were deleted from my analysis. Each variable included in my analysis is configured using the Horan and Hargis template to ensure proper comparability, which leaves me with a sample size of 660⁷ county-based units.

My focal dependent variable of white-on-black argument homicide is adopted from Messner et al. (2005), who created it from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) (Fox 2001). The SHR data are based on reports from local police agencies to measure offending. SHR argument homicides include: homicides under the influence of alcohol or drugs, in addition to homicides about money or lovers' triangles and other instances. These homicides cover a span of years from 1986 to 1995, but Florida from 1988 to 1991 and Kentucky in 1988 did not provide SHR data. White-on-black homicide is operationalized as the sum of the 10-year homicide count (see Messner et al. 2005; Osgood 2000).

SHR has problems of missing data. It underestimates the actual amount of homicide offenders because the reports do not provide total coverage for every state; as well, offender characteristics are at times missing. For instance, Florida "is frequently absent from the SHR database due to compatibility problems with state-run programs and the federal initiative" (Fox 2004). Choosing to ignore these issues would understate homicide rates and bias any time-series analysis. Fox (2001) solves these challenges by instituting a technique that gives a stronger

⁶ These counties, as identified by their Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) codes, were not formed into clusters as determined by the variable "id1880" within the Horan and Hargis County Longitudinal Template (1995): 5023, 5063, 5141, and 5145; 12087; 21007 and 21039; 37063, 37135 and 37183; 37051, 37093, and 37155; and 45019; 47049, 47133, and 47137.

⁷ Upon adding decade-specific migration data to the original Messner et al. dataset, Chattahoochee County, GA had to be dropped because it did not exist in the county migration data, thus decreasing my dataset from 661 to 660. Analysis reveals only an extremely small change in model results using the 660 sample compared to the 661 sample, thus not challenging the validity of my results.

weight to cases with complete information that are analogous to cases that have missing information. I employ this method through the weight “WTIMPST2” (Fox 2001, 2004).

The focal independent variable in my models is the county-level lynching⁸ count between 1882-1930 for the ten southern states supplied by the Tolnay and Beck Lynching database. The Tolnay and Beck lynching database is regarded as the most accurate count of lynching victims available. Tolnay and Beck merged lynching records from three public sources: the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper from 1882 to 1918; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for 1889 to 1918, and yearly additions through 1930; and the Tuskegee University archives spanning the years 1882 to 1930. They conducted further verification through local and regional newspapers in the South, leaving only confirmed lynchings in their inventory (see Tolnay and Beck 1995).

Mechanisms

There are four different county-level variables that I include in my analysis to attempt to explain the relationship between lynching between 1882 and 1930 and white-on-black argument homicide between 1986 and 1995. These variables are: white-flight segregationist academies, the percent that voted for U.S. Presidential candidate Strom Thurmond, the percent that voted for U.S. Presidential candidate George Wallace, and decade-specific migration measures.

The first institutional-based intervening mechanism I have constructed is from data on white-flight segregationist academies⁹ (WFSAs) that measures the persistence of racial educational segregation in the South into the 1990s. To be considered a WFSAs four rules were used: 1) a school could not be religiously affiliated, 2) a school must be at least 95% white 3) a

⁸ To stay consistent with Messner et al., the lynching variable is operationalized as lynchings of both blacks and whites. In their analysis, limiting the lynching measure to only black or white victims is inconsequential to their results.

⁹ I adopt Jeremy Porter and Frank Howell’s definition of a WFSAs.

school must be in a county with at least one school district that is 30% minority and 4) a school must have started between 1954-1975, which is during the height of the schooling desegregation, and functioning as of the 1993-1994 school year. I use the total count of white-flight segregationist academies within a county or county cluster as my measure.

Two political institutional-based intervening mechanisms are derived from data on levels of support for segregationist presidential candidates, Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George Wallace in 1968. Each variable is operationalized by taking the percentage of those who voted for each candidate in their respective elections at the level of the county or county cluster. Since political candidates are representatives of their constituents, testing for the strength of the vote for Thurmond and Wallace will allow me to speak to the persistence of a culture of racial domination and hostility among southern whites. These variables are created from data available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) (Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale 2006).

Lastly, I include variables that represent decade-specific county or county cluster level white population churning from 1950 to 1980¹⁰ (Bowles et al. 1990; White, Mueser, and Tierney 1987). The inclusion of migration variables is appropriate because counties with either high in-migration or out-migration rates could have had difficulty maintaining a traditional culture of racial domination over time. That being so, I use the absolute value of the net-migration rates for 1950-1960, 1960-1970, and 1970-1980, meaning that either high negative or high positive net-migration rates would be interpreted as a dilution of a locale's traditional culture. By breaking the absolute value of net-migration rate into three decade-specific measures, rather than using one variable to measure migration across the thirty-year period, reduces the likelihood of having

¹⁰ The migration data from 1950 to 1970 is produced by Bowles et al. (1975) and the 1970 to 1980 migration data is created by White et al. (1987), with both being distributed by ICPSR.

a decade of heavy out-migration be counter-balanced by a later decade of heavy in-migration, or vice versa, resulting in a net-migration rate of close to zero – obscuring extreme population churning of two different kinds and suggesting population and cultural stability.

Control Variables

For control variables, I incorporate well-known contemporary predictors of homicide that are measured for 1990, which is the midpoint of the timeframe for the white-on-black argument homicide data (Land, McCall, and Cohen 1990). The control variables include the following: percent of white families below poverty, Gini index of white household income inequality, the natural log of median white household income (reverse coded), percent of whites unemployed, percent of single-headed white households, and percent of single-headed white family households with own children present, and the natural log of the 1990 population size is multiplied by 10, with its effects constrained to one¹¹. The data for these variables comes from the Summary Tape File 3 for 1990 by the Bureau of the Census (Census of Population and Housing 1992).

Consistent with the approach used by Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen I reduce the number of control variables within the models by performing a maximum likelihood factor analysis¹² with an oblique rotation. The results of the factor analysis¹³ show that two underlying factors are identified. First, the factor *white resource deprivation* is most strongly correlated with the percent of white families below poverty, Gini index of white household income inequality, the natural log of median white household income (reverse coded), and percent of unemployed

¹¹ SHR only received homicide data from Florida for six years and Kentucky for nine years of the study duration. Hence, population figures for Florida and Kentucky counties are multiplied by six and nine, respectively.

¹² The factor analysis is done in Stata 12.

¹³ Percent urban and percent whites aged 15 through 29 are not loaded on these factors, and thus they are not included in the factor variables, but they are included as separate control variables in the analysis. Refer to Appendix Table A for detailed results of the factor analysis.

whites. The second factor, *white family structure*, is correlated most strongly with the percent of white family households that are single-headed and percent of single-headed white family households with own children present.

Analytic Strategy

I estimate a series of five negative binomial models to analyze the stability or change in the coefficient for the focal independent variable of lynching across models. Using negative binomial estimation is appropriate because the dependent variable of white-on-black argument homicides is a positively skewed count variable, making OLS regression a poor approach (see Osgood 2000). Following this methodology allows me to stay consistent with the analytical strategy of Messner et al. (2005). To adjust for the violation of the independence of observations assumption caused by the multilevel structure of counties nested within states, I utilize the “cluster” option in Stata 12 (StataCorp 2011). Model fit is determined using the Bayesian Inference Criterion (BIC) (Raftery 1995).

Model 1 establishes the baseline association between lynching and white-on-black argument homicide already demonstrated by Messner et al., and includes the control variables of white resource deprivation, white family structure, log of white population size, percent of whites aged 15-29, and percent urban. Models 2 through 5 add sequentially the proposed mechanisms to the right-hand side of Model 1: Model 2 adds WFSA; Model 3 includes the percent that voted for Thurmond in 1948; Model 4 inserts the percent that voted for Wallace in 1968 to the covariates already included; Model 5 adds the final mechanism of the absolute value of net-migration rates for 1950-1960, 1960-1970, and 1970-1980. The full model is specified as:

$$\begin{aligned}
& \text{white – on – black argument homicide rate} = \\
& b_0 + b_1 \text{white resource deprivation} + b_2 \text{white family structure} + \\
& b_3 \% \text{ whites aged 15 – 29} + b_4 \text{log of white population size} + b_5 \% \text{ urban} \\
& + b_6 \text{lynching} + b_7 \text{WFSA} + b_8 \% \text{ Thurmond} + \\
& b_9 \% \text{ Wallace} + b_{10} \text{migration 1950 – 60} + b_{11} \text{migration 1960 – 70} + \\
& b_{12} \text{migration 1970 – 80} + e
\end{aligned}$$

To test whether the difference between lynching coefficients is statistically significant across nested models I use the approach suggested by Clogg et al. (see Clogg, Petkova and Haritou 1995). This method compares the observed difference between coefficients with the standard error of the difference to determine whether two coefficients are statistically significantly different from each other. since my primary objective is to compare the lynching coefficient from the foundation model given by Messner et al. to the corresponding coefficient in subsequent models with my proposed mechanisms, I conduct the procedure developed by Clogg et al. four times.

Results

Upon adding decade-specific migration data to the original Messner et al. dataset, Chattahoochee County, GA had to be dropped because it did not exist in the county migration data. This reduces the sample size from Messner et al.’s 661 observations to 660. Accordingly, it is of primary importance to verify that dropping a single county does not effectively change the results found in Messner et al.’s article, which finds that lynching is associated with white-on-black homicide. Turning first to Table 1, which contains two sets of descriptive statistics, one for Messner et al.’s analysis and another for my investigation, reveals that the means and standard deviations for both samples are nearly identical across all six variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for White-on-Black Homicide, Lynching, and Mechanisms

	Messner et al. Baseline 1880-1995 (N = 661)				Adjusted Sample 1880-1995 (N = 660)			
	<i>Min</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Focal Variables</i>								
SHR White Offenders, Black Victims	0	.709	52	2.754	0	.709	52	2.756
Lynching, 1882-1930	0	4.151	64	6.098	0	4.157	64	6.101
<i>Control Variables</i>								
White Resource Deprivation	-2.552	0	4.336	.958	-2.552	.001	4.336	.958
White Family Structure	-3.308	0	3.797	.999	-3.308	.004	3.797	.993
Log of White Population Size	8.898	12.363	17.197	1.183	8.898	12.364	17.197	1.183
% of Whites Aged 15-29	10.385	21.578	50.163	3.773	10.385	21.535	45.791	3.607
% Urban	0	34.261	99.95	26.554	0	34.182	99.95	26.497
<i>Mechanisms</i>								
White-Flight Seg. Academies					0	.273	10	.829
% Thurmond					.078	29.488	97.088	28.629
% Wallace					1.103	39.867	87.802	19.627
<i>Absolute Value Net-Migration Rates</i>								
1950-1960					0	227.362	13367	626.693
1960-1970					0	132.951	5593	345.985
1970-1980					.189	163.404	1814.525	189.641

Note: SHR = Supplementary Homicide Reports; SD = Standard Deviation

Further verification of the similarity of the two samples is shown in Table 2. Table 2 contains comparison results between the Messner et al. baseline model that has a sample of 661, my replication of Messner et al.'s baseline model with 661 observations, and my adjusted sample model with 660 observations. It is apparent that the results from my replication of Messner et al.'s baseline model are exactly the same. When I drop from 661 to 660 observations my results remain virtually identical to those that Messner et al. obtained in their original analysis. Most importantly, the coefficients for the lynching variables are identical at $b = .023$ with the same standard error ($SE = .004$), indicating that areas in the South that experienced more lynchings tend to have higher rates of present day white-on-black homicide.

Table 2. Comparison of Negative Binomial Results between Messner et al. Baseline Model, the Replicated Sample, and the Adjusted Sample

Independent Variables	Messner et al. Baseline 1880-1995 (N = 661)		Replicated Sample 1880-1995 (N = 661)		Adjusted Sample 1880-1995 (N = 660)	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
White Resource Deprivation	-.193	(.202)	-.193	(.202)	-.204	(.204)
White Family Structure	.195	(.109)	.195	(.109)	.227 *	(.106)
Percent of Whites Aged 15-29	.016	(.024)	.016	(.024)	.003	(.031)
Percent Urban	.008	(.006)	.008	(.006)	.008	(.006)
Lynching, 1882-1930	.023 ***	(.004)	.023 ***	(.004)	.023 ***	(.004)

Note: These results are negative binomial coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. These models include the natural log of the 1990 population size multiplied by 10, with its effects constrained to one.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The only effective difference between the Messner et al. baseline model and the adjusted sample model is in the control variables. The measures of white resource deprivation, white family structure and percent of whites aged 15-29 all have slight differences in their coefficients values but are all in the same direction. White family structure is now significant at ($p < .05$) in

the adjusted sample when it is not in the Messner et al. baseline model. The control variable of percent urban is exactly the same in both models.

Table 3 provides negative binomial results from my analysis of the effect of my proposed mechanisms on the association between lynching and white-on-black homicide for the adjusted sample of 660 observations. Model 2 adds white flight segregationist academies to the adjusted sample in Model 1. WFSA is positive but it does not have a significant association with white-on-black homicide. The addition of this possible intervening mechanism has little effect on the positive relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide. The coefficient for lynching is reduced only from .023 to .022 and remains statistically significant at $p < .001$. Predictably, then, Table 4 shows that the difference between the coefficients for lynching in Models 1 and 2 is not significant, with a p -value of .728.

Model 3 introduces the first political institutional-based mechanism, the percent that voted for the U.S. Presidential candidate Strom Thurmond in 1948, to the model, along with all predictors used in Model 2. The coefficient for the percent that voted for Thurmond is positive ($b = .010$) and statistically significant at $p < .05$, meaning that those counties that tended to vote for Thurmond have higher white-on-black homicide. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that counties with stronger support for Thurmond were also more likely to foster a culture of racial domination that led to present day violence. Of particular interest is the finding that the addition of this potential mechanism is accompanied by a 26.75% decrease in the coefficient for lynching from Model 1. Furthermore, the statistical significance of the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicides is moderately reduced from $p < .001$ to $p < .01$. However, as shown in Table 4, the change in the coefficient for lynching between Models 1 and 3 is not statistically significant ($p < .241$). Thus, even though the coefficient for lynching is

Table 3. Counts of 1986-1995 SHR Argument Homicides that Involve White Offenders and Black Victims, Including Mechanisms: 1880-1995 County Clusters

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
White Resource Deprivation	-.204	(.204)	-.200	(.200)	-.250	(.184)	-.231	(.167)	-.339	(.174)
White Family Structure	.227	*(.106)	.228	*(.107)	.306	***(.086)	.312	***(.084)	.243	**(.078)
Percent of Whites Aged 15-29	.003	(.031)	.003	(.032)	.006	(.029)	.006	(.028)	.0004	(.026)
Percent Urban	.008	(.006)	.008	(.005)	.006	(.005)	.008	(.004)	.007	(.004)
Lynching, 1882-1930	.023	***(.004)	.022	***(.006)	.016	**(.006)	.011	(.007)	.008	(.004)
<i>Intervening Mechanisms</i>										
White-Flight Seg. Academies			.015	(.042)	-.038	(.052)	.002	(.050)	-.029	(.049)
% Thurmond					.010	*(.004)	.007	(.004)	.007	(.004)
% Wallace							.011	(.007)	.012	(.007)
<i>Absolute Value Net-Migration Rates</i>										
1950-1960									.0002	(.0002)
1960-1970									-.0001	(.0004)
1970-1980									-.002	***(.0005)
Constant	-14.469	***(.673)	-14.464	***(.678)	-14.754	***(.669)	-15.177	***(.764)	-14.691	***(.736)
BIC	1016.253		1022.712		1020.750		1017.076		996.410	

Note: N of observations = 660. These results are negative binomial coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. These models include the natural log of the 1990 population size multiplied by 10, with its effect constrained to one.
 p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

reduced from .023 in Model 1 to .016 in Model 3, the inclusion of both WFSAs and the percent that voted for Thurmond has yet to result in a statistically significant change in the lynching coefficient.

Table 4. Testing the Difference in the Lynching Coefficient Across Models Presented in Table 3

Difference in Lynching Coefficient	Difference	SE	p-value
Model 1 - Model 2	.0012	(.0034)	.728
Model 1 - Model 3	.0072	(.0061)	.241
Model 1 - Model 4	.0126	(.0073)	.088
Model 1 - Model 5	.0160	(.0073)	.028

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Model 4 adds the percent that voted for Wallace in the 1968 U.S. Presidential election to the predictor variables contained in Model 3. The coefficient for Wallace is positive but not significant in its relationship with white-on-black homicide. With the addition of this possible intervening mechanism, the coefficient for the lynching variable is reduced by 52% from Model 1 ($b = .023$ to $b = .011$) and becomes statistically non-significant. And, as reported in Table 4 the difference between the lynching coefficients in Models 1 and 4 approaches conventional levels of statistical significance with a p -value of .08. The coefficients for the count of WFSAs and the percent that voted for Thurmond are both positive but neither are statistically significant.

Model 5 incorporates all of the mechanisms, with the addition of the absolute value of net-migration rates for 1950-1960, 1960-1970, and 1970-1980. The only significant mechanism is the population-based variable of the absolute value net-migration rate for 1970 to 1980, which is negative ($b = -.002$). This indicates that an increase in migration within counties and county clusters is associated with a decrease in white-on-black homicide¹⁴. The focal independent variable of lynching is attenuated further to $b = .008$ and is statistically non-significant, this is a

¹⁴ I test for the interaction between lynching and the migration variables to see if there is any evidence that population churning moderates the effect of lynching on homicide. But, none of the interactions terms are statistically significant.

65% reduction in the lynching coefficient between Model 1 and Model 5. Furthermore, and most important theoretically, when all of the institutional- and population-based mechanisms are added in Model 5 the difference between the lynching coefficient in Model 1 and Model 5 becomes statistically significant at $p < .028$. Also, the coefficient for the percent that voted for Thurmond is positive ($b = .007$) and close to conventional levels of statistical significance at $p < .080$. Similarly, the coefficient for the percent that voted for Wallace is positive ($b = .012$), with a p-value of .087. These results suggest that as the percent of those who voted for either candidate increased respectively, so too did white-on-black homicide.

Finally, Model 5 has the lowest BIC score out of all of the models considered in Table 3, confirming that Model 5's ability to fit the data is superior to the other models. I also estimated other alternative model specifications in an attempt to refine my proposed mechanisms, such as non-linear effects of each institutional- and population-based measure, and none of these specifications produced statistically significant attenuations in the lynching coefficient¹⁵.

Summary and Conclusions

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide found by Messner and colleagues in their article, "The Legacy of Lynching and Southern Homicide" (2005) can be explained by institutional- and population-based mechanisms that facilitate a collective memory formed by racially-motivated events from an earlier era. When the combination of institutional- and population-based mechanisms is controlled the relationship between lynchings between 1882 and 1930 and white-on-black

¹⁵ In supplemental analysis I conduct the same sequential testing procedure demonstrated in Table 3 with a covariate that represents the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in counties and county clusters. This variable is measured as the count of KKK groups in the area from 1964 to 1966 (U.S. House of Representatives 1967). Data for this variable is available for all of the southern states used in my main analysis except Kentucky, which reduces the observation size to 571. In the final, fully specified model of this estimation process the lynching coefficient reduces to .009 from .020 in Model 1, but the difference between these two coefficients is barely outside conventional levels significance at ($p < .07$).

homicides between 1986 and 1995 is substantially reduced and becomes statistically non-significant. In particular, the intervening variables of the percent that voted for Thurmond and Wallace respectively, along with the absolute value net-migration rate for 1970 to 1980 have the greatest effect on the focal association of lynching and white-on-black homicide.

This research offers important insights into the repeated finding that lynching has an enduring relationship with contemporary outcomes. Where others have explored lynching's link to present events, this research investigates possible explanations for the pathways connecting them. These findings reveal how the values that undergird the violent act of lynching were sustained over generations by a collective memory which, in turn, affects current relations between whites and blacks. Therefore, Griffin's (2004) assertion that the "past is not the past at all—that it, instead, persists into the present" accurately describes the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide. Also, collective memory theory has provided a successful outline for exploring how political, educational, and population dynamics served as substitutes for the discriminatory structure of lynching as it started to diminish in the 1930s, allowing them to influence modern interracial violence in the South. These findings give additional credence to the importance of collective memory as a theoretical paradigm in explaining social phenomena.

One of the weaknesses of this research is that it offers only a minimal set of mechanisms to explain a racist collective memory throughout the South. Racism was not limited to education, politics, and the population processes. It also thrived in housing segregation (Massey and Denton 1993), church burnings (Soule and Van Dyke 1999) and general discrimination and segregation in everyday life such as public transportation, churches, and cemeteries (Litwack 1998). Thus, I am not claiming that I have identified the only possible mechanisms that might be consistent

with the collective memory paradigm, but those I have considered completely account for the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide observed by Messner et al.

Future research should explore other potential mechanisms that can be utilized to further explain how a racist culture associated with lynching influences current society. Additionally, researchers should investigate whether the same results in this paper transfer to other complementary studies that find an association between lynching and present day negative outcomes, such as capital punishment or increased imprisonments. This current research suggests that the collective memory paradigm would be appropriate for conceptually framing these future investigations as well. Exploring other modern outcomes through the framework of collective memory will aid us in understanding the complex historical puzzle that has allowed the legacy of lynching to permeate the contemporary southern culture and this paper provides an effective framework toward that end.

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APPENDIX

**Appendix Table A. Maximum Likelihood, Oblique Rotated Factor Loadings
for 1990 Predictors: 1880-1995 Standardized County Clusters**

	Messner et al. Baseline 1880-1995 (N = 661)		Adjusted Sample 1880-1995 (N = 660)	
	<i>RD</i>	<i>RFS</i>	<i>RD</i>	<i>RFS</i>
<i>Whites</i>				
Percent of Families Below Poverty	.923	.043	.919	.045
Gini Index of WHI Inequality	.790	.000	.802	-.014
Natural Log of Median WHI (reverse coded)	.806	-.077	.809	-.078
Percent in Civilian Labor Force that are Unemployed	.706	.060	.709	.076
Percent of Family Households that are Single Headed	.028	.992	.027	.993
Percent of Households with Children as Single Parent	-.022	.814	-.023	.881

Note: Percent divorced or separated, percent aged 15-29, and percent urban do not load on these factors so they are not used to score them. HI = household income; WHI = white household income; BHI = black household income; SCC = standardized county clusters; RD = resource deprivation; RFS = race and family structure.