



Database Developments

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Personalizing Lynch Victims

A New Database to Support the Study of Mob Violence

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ABSTRACT. The authors describe the development of a data source that facilitates the inclusion of individual victims and their characteristics in the study of lynching in the southern United States. Using an inventory of 2,800 lynch victims from 10 states between 1882 and 1930, they develop a methodological approach that allows them to locate victims in the census immediately preceding the lynching. The database will include census information on the victim and all household members. The final product will include census manuscripts, research notes, and supporting documentation used to identify each victim. The authors outline (1) steps taken to identify victims, (2) challenges encountered and solutions developed, (3) plans for publicly disseminating the database, and (4) discussion of investigations that the new database will support.

Keywords: census manuscripts, lynching, new data source, record linkage, southern states

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thousands of individuals, primarily African American males, were lynched in the southern region of the United States. Recent research has demonstrated the role of lynching in maintaining the dominance of the southern white population over their African American neighbors following the demise of slavery (e.g., Brundage 1993; Carrigan 2004; Tolnay and Beck 1995). The violence of southern lynch mobs played an important role in the maintenance of the racial caste system, in the enforcement of minor infractions of the southern racial code, in the control of the large and poorly compensated black labor force, and in

the intimidation of threatening political ideologies. The practice of lynching eventually contributed to the Great Migration of blacks out of the South (Tolnay and Beck 1992, 1995), and it fueled the passions that created the civil rights movement. It is fitting, then, that southern lynchings have been the subject of extensive research by social scientists, much of it recent. Thus, we have a better understanding of the nature of the “lynching era,” as well as of its social, economic, demographic and cultural antecedents and consequences. But there is great potential to learn even more.

Previous research on southern lynchings has been based heavily on existing inventories of the victims of this form of extralegal punishment.¹ Those inventories have been extremely valuable in furthering our understanding of the underlying motivations for mob violence, as well as its ultimate consequences. However, the inventories are limited as to how much they can tell us about the victims themselves, or about the combinations of personal characteristics and local conditions that affected the risk of specific types of individuals becoming the victims of a lynch mob. Our goal is to create a new source of data for studying southern lynchings that will bring the *individual victim* into the cross-sectional and temporal investigation of southern lynchings for the first time. Specifically, we are linking information about lynch victims that is available in existing inventories with information about those same individuals from the manuscript records of the U.S. censuses. Beginning with an inventory of

individuals confirmed to have been lynched between 1882 and 1930 (Beck and Tolnay 2004), we are searching online versions of the original enumerators' manuscripts for the census immediately preceding the lynching incident (e.g., the 1880 census for an 1885 lynching). For successfully linked cases, the census information is combined with data from the lynching inventory to create a new, richer database of victims and their individual and household characteristics. Geographic identifiers, including state and county federal information processing standard (FIPS) codes, are included in the database to allow researchers to link the data for individuals and households to characteristics of the local context within which the victim resided or was lynched.

Background on the Scientific Study of Lynching

A variety of approaches have been used to document the tragedy of lynching and to gain a better understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and demographic factors that promoted it. Social activists and anti-lynching advocates made important contributions during the lynching era itself, by documenting the phenomenon and by attempting to link lynch mob activity to underlying social and economic forces (Ames 1942; Raper 1933; Wells-Barnett [1892] 1969, White [1929] 1969). Case studies have also made important contributions, marshaling extensive evidence to provide rich detail on single lynching incidents and the circumstances surrounding them (Dinnerstein 1968; Downey and Hyser 1991; Griffin 1993; Smead 1986; Wexler 2003). However, whereas case studies are able to tell thorough and nuanced stories about specific episodes of lynching, the extent to which the facts of a single event can be generalized to a larger set of lynchings is questionable.

The most common sociological strategy for studying lynching has been comparative. This approach uses inventories that include limited information about a large number of lynchings both to examine the distribution of incidents or victims over time and across space and to estimate the covariation between temporal or spatial rates of lynching and theoretically relevant social, economic, political, or demographic factors. The geographic scope of studies taking a primarily cross-sectional or comparative approach to the study of lynching has varied from subregions within a single southern state (e.g., Carrigan 2004) to an entire southern state (e.g., Soule 1992; Wright 1990), to more than one southern state (e.g., Brundage 1993; Corzine, Creech, and Corzine 1983; Olzak 1990; Tolnay and Beck 1995), to a combination of southern and non-southern states (Pfeifer 2004). Most comparative analyses of lynching have been specifically designed to test theories about the antecedents of lynching, for example, regarding the influence of economic conditions, political climate, or racial composition (e.g., Beck, Massey, and Tolnay 1989; Beck and Tolnay 1990; Brundage 1993; Corzine, Creech, and Corzine 1983; Corzine, Huff-Corzine, and Creech

1988; Olzak 1990; Soule 1992; Tolnay and Beck 1992, 1995; Tolnay, Beck, and Massey 1989; Tolnay, Deane, and Beck 1996). Although complete consensus regarding the most important antecedents of lynching may not yet exist, previous comparative studies have indicated that southern lynchings (primarily of African Americans) were more likely to occur where or when (1) the black population was proportionately larger, (2) the white population suffered economic hardship, (3) the Democratic Party was stronger, (4) the white population was threatened economically or socially by the black population, (5) the level of black outmigration was lower, and (6) alternative legal sanctions for serious crimes were lacking.

One distinct limitation of previous comparative analyses of lynching is their heavy reliance on cross-sectional variation (usually over counties) or on temporal fluctuations (usually across years) to draw conclusions about the conditions that created a climate favorable to mob violence. The dependent variables in these studies have been either the number of lynchings (or the rate of lynching) that occurred within a given county over a specified period of time, or the number of lynchings that occurred within a given period of time for a relatively large geographic area (e.g., the entire South, the Deep South, the Border South, or a specific state). Because of this focus on contextual patterns—even more important, because of a lack of consistent information about individuals—the characteristics of lynch victims have remained obscure. Further, the nature of existing inventories of lynch victims has precluded analyses in which individuals are the units of analysis and the dependent variable describes whether or not the individual was lynched within a given area, during a specific time period.

A second limitation to previous comparative analyses is the restricted amount of information about the lynching victims included in existing inventories. For the most part, those analyses have been confined to information describing the race and gender of the victim, the date and location of the incident, and the purported reason for the lynching. This may be a particularly important limitation, given what we know about the context of lynchings, because the kinds of individuals targeted for lynching may have varied with community characteristics. With the arsenal of data currently at our disposal, we cannot investigate the question of why—given that contextual circumstances were ripe for a hate crime of this sort to have been committed—particular types of individuals were targeted as victims, or whether any existing patterning was conditioned on local circumstances. For example, in some contexts drifters with few ties to the local community may have been chosen as lynch targets, while in others, prosperous blacks may have been made an example of through lynching (see Beck and Clark 2002). The unavailability of additional detailed information about the characteristics of large numbers of individual lynch victims has restricted the ability of social scientists interested in studying lynchings to move beyond the use of

large geographic units, or lengthy time periods, to describe and test theories about lynching. Although most investigators have been very careful to avoid it, such methodological approaches do run the risk of committing the ecological fallacy of drawing inferences about the motives or behavior of individuals from evidence based on aggregate data.

Objective of the Lynching–Census Record Linkage Project

The data source we are creating will link lynch victims to their census information, as recorded on the original enumerators' manuscripts for the census immediately preceding their death. For example, for lynchings that occurred between 1882 and 1889, we search for victims in the manuscripts of the 1880 census. The completed database will incorporate all information reported for the individual lynch victims, as well as for all persons—including family members—who were residing in the same household. Although the specific information available from the census records varies across decades, in most years it is possible to determine the age, marital status, occupation, literacy status, farm/nonfarm residence, and exact location of residence.² Additional information available for a more limited number of decades includes disability status, whether the dwelling was owned or being rented, and duration of current marriages. None of this information is available in any existing inventory of lynch victims.

As a record linkage project, our effort draws from the methodological approaches used by previous investigations that also attempted to link historic documents about specific individuals across time—often, but not necessarily, across two census years (Ferrie 1996; Guest 1987; Herscovici 1998; Steckel 1990). The majority of prior efforts have focused on linking individuals identified in one archival source with their *subsequent* records in another source, what has been termed a *forward* match. Forward matches face a variety of significant challenges, including (1) the mortality of individuals before they could be included in the second source, (2) migration away from the place of original inclusion, (3) errors in the recording of information, and (4) absence from the second archival source (Ferrie 1996; Guest 1987; Herscovici 1998). In contrast, *backward* linkage efforts attempt to locate an individual from one archival source in a second archival source that occurred *earlier* in time. Whereas they still face the problems of migration, recording errors, and noninclusion, backward linkages do not have to deal with the problem of mortality (Martikainen 1995; Rosenwaike and Logue 1983; Steckel 1988, 1990; Whelan 1972). In general, backward linkage projects have enjoyed a higher success rate in locating appropriate matches than have forward linkage projects, but the percentages of successful matches depend on the specific records involved and the type of linkage attempted. Our efforts to identify lynch victims by matching archival

records will face many of the challenges identified by previous research. We will subsequently discuss our efforts to address these issues.

Procedures Used to Link Lynching and Census Records

E. M. Beck and Stewart E. Tolnay's (2004) confirmed inventory of individuals who were lynched in 10 southern states³ between 1882 and 1930 is the point of departure for the new database. Beginning with previous inventories by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP [1919] 1969) and Tuskegee University (Williams 1968), as well as annual lists of lynch victims published by the *Chicago Tribune*, Beck and Tolnay used newspapers from the southern United States to confirm the occurrence of each lynching, to correct erroneous details contained in previous inventories, and to add lynching incidents that had been missed.⁴ The Beck-Tolnay inventory includes the following information for each lynch victim: name, race, and gender; state and county in which the lynching occurred; date of the lynching; purported reason for the lynching; and predominant race of members of the lynch mob. The inventory includes relatively few individual-level criteria to aid in the effort to link the records of lynch victims with their records from the census preceding their death. Essentially, only the name, gender, and race of the victim—as well as the location of the lynching—are useful. The paucity of information included in the original inventory of lynch victims presented us with a significant challenge. An excerpt from the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory of Arkansas lynch victims is reproduced here (see fig.1).

For the majority of lynch victims (roughly 62 percent), we have only one name reported. However, because of discrepancies in the original source documents used to construct the inventory—the lists compiled by anti-lynching activists at the NAACP, the Tuskegee University, and the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as the newspaper accounts used to document lynching—we have as many as four names reported for some victims. For fully 28 percent of all victims, we have more than one name reported, including variants in spelling or different “versions” of the same name (for example, Jim vs. James). For an additional 10 percent of the individuals, no name is available in the original inventory.

The spatial and temporal distributions of victims, as well as the individual characteristics, included in the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory are presented in tables 1 and 2. For each victim in the inventory, two researchers search for each reported name in the census before the date of lynching. For individuals lynched in years that the census was taken, but *near* the date of census enumeration, we cannot be sure whether they would have been included in the household roster. We therefore conduct additional searches in the census prior to the year of their lynching.

State	State	Year	Mo	Day	Victim	County	FIPS	Race	Sex	Mob	Offense	Alt Name	Alt Name
AR	42	1900	5	*	John Brodie	Lee	77	Blk	Male	Wht	Murderous assault		
AR	42	1900	6	18	Wm. Woodward	Searcy	129	Wht	Male	Wht	Murder		
AR	42	1901	6	17	Nat Mullens	Crittenden	35	Blk	Male	Wht	Murder		
AR	42	1901	2	20	Peter Berryman	Polk	113	Blk	Male	Wht	Assault		
AR	42	1901	3	23	George Shiverer	Randolph	121	Wht	Male	Wht	Murder	Geo. Stunly	Geo. Shurley
AR	42	1901	4	6	May Hearn	Mississippi	93	Wht	Male	Wht	Murder		
AR	42	1901	5	12	Lee Key	Johnson	71	Blk	Male	Blk	Terrorism		
AR	42	1901	7	29	—Siegler	Nevada	99	Blk	Male	Wht	Murder	— Siegler	
AR	42	1902	3	9	Hosey McCoy	Little River	81	Blk	Male	Wht	Rape	Horace McCoy	
AR	42	1902	7	27	Lee Newton	Columbia	27	Blk	Male	Wht	Attempted rape		
AR	42	1902	9	3	Hog Wilson	Ouachita	103	Blk	Male	Wht	Attempted rape		
AR	42	1902	10	20	Charles Young	St. Francis	123	Blk	Male	Wht	Rape & murder		

FIGURE 1. Lynch victims for the State of Arkansas, 1900–1902. FIPS = federal information processing code. Blk = Black. Wht = White. Note that for some victims, we have only a partial name reported. For Siegler, we have only a last name, variously reported as “Siegler,” or “Seigler.” The alternate name columns identify alternative names reported for each victim. For most victims, only one name is reported; thus, the cells are blank. For a minority of victims, discrepancies in name reporting exist between or within sources; thus, alternative names are reported. *No data available. *Source.* Beck-Iolnay (2004) inventory (the figure is re-created from information extracted from an Excel file).

TABLE 1. Spatial and Temporal Distributions of Individual Lynch Victims (N = 2,483)

State	No. of victims
<i>Spatial distribution</i>	
Alabama	258
Arkansas	213
Florida	231
Georgia	407
Kentucky	168
Louisiana	307
Mississippi	482
North Carolina	92
South Carolina	131
Tennessee	194
<i>Temporal distribution</i>	
Date	
1882–1889	501
1890–1895	636
1900–1909	637
1910–1919	468
1920–1929	228
1930	13

Source. Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory.

For example, we would search in both 1900 and 1910 for an individual lynched in 1910 just after April 15—the date census enumeration began.

In addition to the inventory itself, we also use the original notes on each case that were recorded in the prior phase of this work, as the Beck-Tolnay inventory was being constructed. These notes sometimes include additional personal information about the victims that was originally reported in the newspaper articles in which the lynching events were recorded. E. M. Beck, one of the principal investigators on the original study, has also conducted a subsequent review of newspaper reports for all cases of individuals

lynched in Georgia and has supplied supplementary information regarding many of these cases.⁵ In some instances, additional materials are available online, including World War I draft registration cards, accounts of the lynching published in major newspapers, and death certificates. We are sometimes able to ascertain details such as age, occupation, marital status, the names of family members, or community of residence from (1) original research notes, (2) data uncovered during Beck’s subsequent research, or (3) supplementary materials available online. Our use of historical newspapers available online has also enabled us to identify by name some victims who were unnamed in the original inventory.

We use this additional information to more explicitly focus our searching, or to help estimate a level of confidence in a particular match. For example, the additional information for Georgia lynchings gathered by Beck proved valuable in processing the case of Sandy Price, a black male accused of attempted rape in Oconee County, Georgia, lynched 29 June 1905. After our initial search, we found an exact name match in the county of lynching. The listed age in the census was 15 at the time of enumeration, which would make the potential victim 20 years of age at the time of lynching. Using the additional information available from Beck’s recent work, we were able to learn that the victim was 20 at the time of the lynching, and that he lived in a household headed by Jane Price, aged 49. These factors helped to confirm that the individual we located in the enumerators’ manuscripts was, indeed, the lynch victim.

We use Ancestry.com’s scanned, searchable census records to conduct our initial searches. This data source is an online subscription service designed for use by individuals conducting genealogical research. Researchers may search for individuals by name, geographic location (state, county, and township or city), and race for all decades from 1790 through 1930.⁶ We use Soundex (a phonetic algorithm for indexing names) codes to identify individuals with names similar to those reported for the lynch victim and

TABLE 2. Demographic Characteristics of Individual Lynch Victims (N = 2,483)

Race	Male	Female	Sex unknown	Total
Black	2,092 (84%)	67 (3%)	22 (1%)	2,181 (88%)
White	249 (10%)	5 (<1%)	0	254 (10%)
Other	5 (<1%)	0	0	5 (<1%)
Unknown	42 (2%)	0	1 (<1%)	43 (2%)
Total	2,388 (96%)	72 (3%)	23 (1%)	2,483

Source. Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory.

with common nicknames or other variants of the victim's reported name(s). We also restrict our search to individuals with the same race as the victim's. For the vast majority of the lynch victims who were African American, this sometimes requires conducting multiple searches for each name, as individuals may have been listed as belonging to any of various racial categories used by the Census Bureau in a given decade (e.g., "Black," "Mulatto," "Negro," or "Colored").

Additional search criteria within Ancestry.com's user interface vary over census decades but include such factors as sex, marital status, age range, and relationship to the head of household. The searchable user interface then links to electronic versions of the original census enumerators' manuscripts. Our researchers document all possible matches identified during this initial search procedure, including the victim's age, race, name as identified in the census, the state and county in which the victim was located, and the relative distance—measured in number of counties—from this location to the site of the lynching. We also save electronic images, in JPEG format, of each page of the census enumer-

ator's manuscripts for these potential matches. An example of a census record and a search documentation form for Gus Knight are reproduced here (see figs. 2 and 3).

Geography is a key element of the search. We look for each victim in the county of lynching and in all contiguous counties. For counties bordering a state line, the spatial criterion includes counties from both states. We use historical county boundaries, newly available from the *Historical United States County Boundary Files, 1790–1999* (see Earle et al. 1999) to identify adjacent and proximate counties. This sequential strategy for defining the geographic scope of our search is based on the reasonable (though certainly not indisputable) assumption that most migrants moved short or modest distances during this historical period; it uses this logic to restrict the number of potential matches without excluding nearby areas because of the arbitrary nature of political boundaries. Counterbalancing these strengths are a variety of weaknesses, including the fact that (1) these restrictions may selectively eliminate more transient victims from being linked with their census records, (2) more transient victims who share a name with a

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 Enumeration Dist. No. 67

Note A.—The Census Year begins June 1, 1870, and ends May 31, 1880.
 Note B.—All persons will be included in the Enumeration who were living on the 1st day of June, 1880. No others will. Children BORN SINCE June 1, 1880, will be OMITTED. Members of Families who have DIED SINCE June 1, 1880, will be INCLUDED.
 Note C.—Questions Nos. 13, 14, 22 and 23 are not to be asked in respect to persons under 10 years of age.

Received August, 18 1880

SCHEDULE I.—Inhabitants in 85 District, in the County of Jefferson, State of Georgia, enumerated by me on the 9th day of June, 1880.

B. S. Caswell

In 1880	Name of Person	Maiden Name	The Name of each Person whose place of abode, on 1st day of June, 1880, was in this family.	Personal Description	Civil Condition	Occupation	Health	Education	Nativity		
									Place of Birth of this person, naming State or Territory of United States, or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Place of Birth of the father of this person, naming the State or Territory of United States, or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Place of Birth of the mother, naming the State or Territory of United States, or the Country, if of foreign birth.
82 332	Allen, Bunk					Slaves			Ga	Ga	Ga
	Knights, Gus					Servants		1 1	Ga	Ga	Ga
	Nicherson, Gus					Servants		1 1	Ga	Ga	Ga
	Joins, Albert					No Relation		X	Ga	Ga	Ga

FIGURE 2. 1880 Census Record for Gus Knight, lynched September 20, 1882, in Johnson County, Georgia.

Search Documentation Form	
Date of Lynching: <u>9/20/1882</u>	State & County: <u>GA Johnson</u>
Victim's Reported Gender: <u>M</u>	Victim's Reported Race: <u>Blk</u>
Stage 1: Number of potential matches with same race & gender	
Victim, Reported Name 1: <u>Knight Augustus</u>	
In County of Lynching: <u>0</u>	
Date & Initials: <u>NW 11/7/05</u>	Copies Attached: _____
In 1 st -Order Adjacent Counties: <u>1</u>	
Date & Initials: <u>NW 11/7/05</u>	Copies Attached: _____
NOTES: <u>1 in Jefferson - Gus Knight</u>	

FIGURE 3. Search documentation form for Gus Knight, lynched September 20, 1882.

resident member of the community will be inappropriately matched, and (3) some “true links” will be missed by the restricted geographic scope.

Additionally, because county-level political boundaries may have changed throughout the half century under investigation (i.e., a small minority of lynchings occurred in counties that either did not exist in the year of census enumeration or for which the counties encompassed by the adjacency criterion may have changed between the time of census enumeration and the date of the lynching), we use separate adjacency criteria that reflect county boundaries at the time of the census *and* at the time of lynching for all searches (Horan and Hargis 1995). The spatial search area for this small minority of cases, then, may encompass a somewhat larger geographic area than that for other cases.

Potential matches who are the same gender and race as the victim, in a range of ages most likely to have been lynched, are recorded for each name reported in the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory. In most cases, we have identified the age range most likely to encompass lynch victims as 10–80 years. However, for lynch victims who were accused of rape or murder, we increase the minimum age to 14, unless additional information from the original case file, newspaper article, or E. M. Beck’s subsequent work indicates that the victim was unusually young. Individuals located in the census manuscripts who have identical or similar names to the lynch victim, but who differ substantially on important identifying characteristics such as the victim’s age, are noted on the search documentation form

but are eliminated from consideration as potential matches at this point. Lynch victims for whom we identify a total of nine or more matches for *all possible reported names*, or for whom we identify no possible matches, are considered unmatchable at this point and do not receive further consideration.

Case Selection

Once both initial researchers have completed the tasks of searching for potential matches for a victim and documenting steps taken in that process, we begin to adjudicate the likelihood that each individual identified is in fact the lynch victim. A randomly assigned member of our research team reviews the case, revisiting evidence from all relevant supporting documents identified by the two-member search team, including original research notes from the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory, newspaper accounts, World War I draft records, evidence from Beck’s subsequent research, and death records. For each case, the reviewer writes a case summary that identifies all sources containing information used to identify which potential matches were most likely to be the individual who was lynched or, in cases in which a single individual was identified as having a name that closely matched that of the lynch victim, providing confirmatory evidence that the individual is, indeed, the lynch victim. Cases for which the two original searchers produced results including more than one “discrepancy” are forwarded to the project coordinator for further review.

For each individual identified as a possible match in the census before the lynching, the case reviewer then searches in the records of the *subsequent* census to determine whether the individual in question can be located. Conducting these forward linkages cannot confirm that any individual is in fact the lynch victim; however, it may allow us to eliminate potential matches. If we successfully locate an individual in the census *following* a lynching event, then that individual was certainly not the lynch victim. For example, in the case of Lee Green, lynched on 17 August 1923 in Houston County, Georgia, the original search team identified three possible matches in the 1920 enumerators' manuscripts. When the case was reviewed, however, one of the possible matches was located in the forward search into the 1930 census, reducing the possible number of matches from three to two. Because these attempts at forward linkage use a variety of information available from the earlier census record—including age, literacy, marital status, coresident family members, state of birth for the individual and both parents, and occupation—we generally are able to have a high level of confidence in successful between-census matches. Unfortunately, young children who are coresident with their parents in the earlier census have few distinguishing characteristics on which to base the likelihood of a between-census match. Therefore, in most cases, this forward record linking strategy is used only for individuals who were 16 and older when enumerated in the earlier census. If the child has some distinguishing characteristic that might facilitate a match, a forward match is attempted. Such characteristics might include having been born out-of-state, having a parent who was born out-of-state, or having a disability.

Information on family members—particularly spouses—of potential lynch victims is also used in forward matches and frequently yields information that increases our level of confidence in a particular match. In attempting to forward-match victims, we can use not only their characteristics but also those of their family members, including name, age, birthplace, parents' birthplace, and literacy. For example, in the case of Sam Williams, lynched 6 January 1921 in Talbot County, Georgia, the original search yielded nine possible name matches—one in Talbot County itself and eight in contiguous counties. The case reviewer located a short newspaper article in the 8 January 1921 edition of the *Atlanta Constitution* explaining that the Sam Williams who was lynched had recently moved from Talbot County to contiguous Meriwether County. No black men named Sam Williams were enumerated in Meriwether County in 1920, indicating that the Sam Williams from Talbot County is most likely our lynch victim. We had particular confidence in this conclusion because scarcely a year had passed between the census enumeration date (1 January 1920) and the date of the lynching (6 January 1921). The Sam Williams enumerated in Talbot County was listed as being 46 years old with a wife, Mandy, aged 42, and six children. The case reviewer

also located the death record for the lynch victim, which confirms the name "Sam Williams" in contrast to the more formal "Samuel Williams," the name under which some potential matches were enumerated. Through a forward match, the case reviewer identified possible matches for Sam Williams's widow, Mandy, in 1930. Only three black women named Mandy Williams in the age range of Sam Williams's wife were enumerated in the United States in 1930. The "Mandy Williams" located in the 1930 census within the closest geographic proximity to Talbot County, Georgia, and with the closest age match to Sam Williams's wife, was found in prison in Baldwin County (four counties away from Talbot County) in the following census. Her marital status was listed as "Widowed."

Once a member of our research team has reviewed the material relevant to selection of each match, she or he completes a case summary indicating the number of plausible matches remaining for each victim, the sources used in eliminating potential matches or increasing the level of confidence in others, and a recommended level of confidence—high, medium, or low—in each match. The case summary also indicates which personal characteristics (e.g., an exact name match, supplementary information about the victim's family members, or geographic location of his or her residence) were used in the case-selection process. That team member then meets with the project manager and the principal investigator to discuss each case and assign probabilities on the basis of the likelihood that each individual identified in the census is, indeed, the lynch victim. For cases in which a single individual has been identified, we assign a high or medium probability. A *medium* probability reflects our belief that there is a 50–75 percent likelihood the individual we have identified is the lynch victim. A *high* probability indicates a level of confidence in excess of 75 percent.

When we identify a single match but have only a low level of confidence that the individual identified in the census records is in fact the lynch victim, we do not forward the case for data entry and inclusion in the final data set. For example, in the case of Andrew Cassels, a black man accused of robbery and arson and lynched in Franklin County, Mississippi, on 20 September 1884, our search identified only one individual in the country with a similar name. However, the name was not an exact match—the person was enumerated in the census as Anderson Cassels—and was located in distant Chester County, North Carolina. Whereas it is possible that he is the same person who was lynched four years later in Mississippi, our level of confidence in this match was not sufficiently high to warrant his inclusion in the database.

For cases with more than one possible match remaining, we retain only those cases in which (1) there are no more than three possible matches *overall*, from *all combinations of reported names*, and (2) we have at least a medium level of confidence—which, again, reflects at least a 50 percent confidence that the individual identified is the lynch victim

—in one of those matches. For these multiple-match cases, each linked individual is assigned a proportionate likelihood, all of which sum to one. All three members (the principal investigator, the project manager, and the undergraduate research assistant) must reach consensus on each potential match for the case to be forwarded along for entry into the database. Factors taken into account include the degree of similarity between the victim's reported name and the name of the individual enumerated in the census and the spatial distance between the places where the lynching took place and the place where the individual was enumerated. For cases in which we have additional supplementary information about the victim from the original research notes, newspaper accounts, or E. M. Beck's subsequent research, we also consider age, information about family members, and the individual's occupation.

In the case of James King, who was accused of grave robbing for the purpose of witchcraft and then lynched in Hinds County, Mississippi, on 4 September 1883, we were able to narrow the possible matches to three men: James King, enumerated in Hinds County at age 60; J. King, enumerated in contiguous Yazoo County at age 40; and Jimmie King, enumerated in contiguous Madison County at age 17. We determined that the James King enumerated in Hinds County was most likely the person who was lynched. We made this determination on the basis of a number of important factors: (1) he is the only one of the three whose name is recorded in the census exactly as reported in the newspapers, (2) he is also the only one of the three who was enumerated in the same county in which the lynching occurred, and (3) it seemed more likely that an older person would have been accused of a crime with a spiritual dimension as compared with a man barely out of his teens (Jimmie King would have been just 20 at the time of the lynching). However, we could not eliminate the other two men identified: Jimmie King and J. King. After lengthy discussion, we assigned a probability of 0.80 to James King and 0.10 each to Jimmie King and J. King.

In other cases with multiple possible matches, however, we are unable to identify information that would allow us to have greater confidence in one match over the others. For example, in the case of William Buckley, lynched 21 April 1925 in Walthall County, Mississippi, our search procedures yielded four potential matches, two of whom were eliminated through forward searching in the 1930 enumerators' manuscripts. The two remaining matches were a Will Bucklay located in Marion County, immediately contiguous to Walthall County, and a Willie Buckley in Jefferson Davis County, not immediately contiguous but quite close—indeed, their county seats are less than 50 miles apart. The case selection form for William Buckley is reproduced here (see fig. 4). We located no additional information that could be used to more precisely identify the actual lynch victim. Therefore, we assigned equal probability (0.50) to each of the possible linked individuals.

These estimated probabilities will allow future researchers to weight observations when conducting statistical analyses or to restrict the cases included in an analysis to certain minimum likelihood thresholds of confidence. Our work to identify individuals lynched in the state of Georgia yielded results in which we were able to successfully link 49.7 percent of black male victims. Because the complete database to be made publicly available will also include the raw materials the research team uses as a basis for its assignment of probabilities, researchers working with these data will also be able to examine the bases for such judgments and to revise them if new information becomes available. Table 3 presents a summary of our success rate, by state and decade, in identifying matches for black male lynch victims for the first four states that we have completed.

Constructing the Database

The database we are constructing will be available in EpiData, a freeware package (available online at www.epidata.dk) that is compatible with a variety of statistical software packages. A separate record is entered into the database for each possible match; up to three different records may be entered for any given lynch victim. These records include information on the lynching event itself—the date and county of lynching, the race and sex of the victim, the racial composition of the lynch mob, and the crime or offense with which the lynch victim was charged. Additionally, the complete household census record for all identified matches will be entered; it includes a variety of information that applies to all household members, including census administrative information, the geographic location of the dwelling, and in many decades, whether it was owned or rented. The record also includes information on each individual in the household.⁷ Also included are an indication of the specific personal characteristics used to identify the most likely match or matches and a flag to indicate whether supplementary information was used.

Information on each case file is entered separately by two randomly assigned members of our research team. The input records are then reconciled, using a function of the EpiData program that compares double-entered data. Inconsistencies between the records are identified, and the coders work together to resolve them. Records are saved to the final database only when the two entries are identical. Researchers will be able to use these files to conduct statistical analyses that incorporate characteristics of individual lynch victims and the members of their households. The sample may be restricted to only those cases in which our research team has a high level of confidence in the likelihood that the individual identified in the census is, indeed, the lynch victim. Or samples may be constructed on the basis of any of the victim's characteristics. Additionally, geographic identifiers allow individuals and their households to be linked to existing electronic data sources (e.g.,

county-level census data) for multilevel analyses. Once the EpiData files have been exported to another statistical package, researchers may also expand the data source by adding new fields of information, such as that found in the agricultural census or other historical records.

Challenges and Solutions

As with previous record linkage projects, ours faced a number of difficult challenges—some of which were shared with those of earlier record matching efforts and some of which were unique to the types of records we were attempting to match.

Census Underenumeration

If any of the lynch victims were not enumerated in the census immediately before the victim's death, it is impossible to locate them in the enumerators' manuscripts. The decennial censuses varied in the thoroughness with which they enumerated the U.S. population. In general, African American males were more likely than other groups to be missed by the enumerators (e.g., Rosenwaike et al. 1998), which may have been especially true in the South during the period of the lynching era. Ansley J. Coale and Norfleet W. Rives Jr. (1973, 21) constructed estimates of the extent to which black males were undercounted by the census for the ages and decades (though not the geographic locations) that are of special interest to us. Their estimates indicate that the probability that black men were missed by census enumerators varied substantially across the decades between 1880 and 1930, as well as by age group. In some cases, the undercount was quite large: nearly 1-in-5 of all black males between the ages of 30 and 34 were unaccounted for in the census in all five decades. For any given lynch victim omitted from the census manuscripts, such an undercount reduces to zero the likelihood of a successful match with his census records, thus increasing the likelihood of an incorrect match, especially for victims with common names.

In a number of instances, we were unable to locate individual lynch victims in the census enumerators' manuscripts, possibly because they were never enumerated. In some cases, we were able to find supplementary materials regarding the victim. Perhaps most helpful among them are registration cards from the World War I draft, completed in 1917 and 1918, which provided information including name, age, race, occupation, home address, employer, marital status, physical disability, and in many cases next-of-kin. Clearly, this source only provides information for males and only for those who were lynched in the latter years covered by our research. For earlier lynchings, we have been aided in locating unenumerated victims by information available from local and state death records, as well as newspaper accounts of the particular lynching and its aftermath.

In the case of John Lee "Eberhardt," accused of murder and lynched 16 February 1921 in Oconee County, Georgia, both the World War I registration cards and newspaper stories proved to be very useful. In our original search, we identified two men with that name, both in their 40s, enumerated in the county of lynching. However, in reviewing the case, our research team identified numerous relevant newspaper articles, as well as an article by a University of Georgia law professor, Donald E. Wilkes Jr. (1997), all of them describing John Lee Eberhart (spelled without the *d*) as a "young man." In addition to the age discrepancy, the spelling is somewhat different from that reported in the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory. A search of the World War I registration card database on Ancestry.com identified John Lee Eberhart, 21 years old, living and working in the county of lynching. The Wilkes article also mentioned that Eberhart's father helped the police to find his son. John Lee Eberhart's father—listed as his next of kin in the draft registration records—was found enumerated in the Oconee County census records in 1920. Although we were unable to locate John Lee Eberhart in the 1920 enumerators' manuscripts, we had sufficient information from those supplementary sources to locate him—as a child, living in his father's home—in 1910 and 1900 in contiguous Clarke County, where police reported he was "well-known as a criminal character" (Wilkes 1997, 8). Conducting a forward search into the 1930 census, we were unable to locate John Lee Eberhart, although we found his father and family living in Detroit. Thus, although John Lee Eberhart was apparently not enumerated in the 1920 U.S. census, we were able to identify him as the lynch victim and to obtain useful information about him from other sources and from other census years.

Destruction of 1890 Census Records

Most of the original enumerators' manuscripts for the 1890 census were destroyed in a fire, thus limiting our ability to successfully match individuals lynched in the 1890s—the bloodiest decade in the lynching era—to their 1890 census records. However, most lynchings in the 1890s were committed in the early years of the decade, and lynching rates declined over time. By using the 1880 census records and restricting our searches to the period between 1890 and 1895, we substantially increase the number of potential matches with only a small decrease in our confidence in each individual match. Given the extended time frame between the census enumeration and the date of lynching for all those victims—between 10 and 15 years—we also relax somewhat the geographic restrictions associated with their cases.

An example of a victim lynched in the 1890s is Newton Jones, a black male who was accused of murdering a prominent white farmer and was subsequently lynched in Floyd County, Georgia, on 29 November 1893. An initial

search of the 1880 enumerators' manuscripts generated two possible matches: (1) "Newton Jones," 22 years of age, enumerated in Floyd County, Georgia, and (2) "Newton Jones," 31 years of age, found in Muscogee County, Georgia, and married to a woman named Sophie. Using the information on both men from the 1880 census, we conducted a forward search into the 1900 census and were able to find the elder "Newton Jones" and his wife Sophie once again enumerated in Muscogee County, Georgia. Additionally, the 1880 census reports both the husband and wife's age as 31, and in the 1900 census, the age correctly increases to 51. Although none of the children living in the Jones household of the 1880 census are found living with Newton and Sophie in the 1900 census, by 1900 these "children" would have been considered old enough to move out and establish independent households. By triangulating the 1880 and 1900 census records, and using information on the victims and their families, we were able to identify the younger Newton Jones, from Floyd County, as the likely lynch victim—even without the benefit of enumerators' manuscripts for the 1890 census.

Name Irregularities and Common Names

The historical records we rely on—both the census enumerators' manuscripts and the newspaper accounts used to construct the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory of lynch victims—were created in an era when a large proportion of adult blacks in the South were illiterate. The names of county residents and individual lynch victims were recorded not by the individuals themselves but by a census worker or a reporter. Census workers often obtained names for all household residents from one member—who may or may not have been the eventual lynch victim, a relative, or even a permanent member of the household. Reporters may have received the name of the victim from members of the lynch mob, the local black community, or local authorities. There is no guarantee that any of these sources knew the victim's true name or its correct spelling. The incorrect recording of a name in the inventory, the census, or both, makes a successful match more difficult. Additionally, in many lynchings, different newspaper reports provided more than one name—particularly variations on the first name—for each victim. One example is that of a black man lynched in Campbell County, Tennessee, on 26 October 1926; three different newspaper accounts agreed on his last name (Bell) but variously reported his first name as "Nip," "Rip," and "Herbert."

Common names and nicknames pose a similar problem. For example, a search for Wilbur Smith, lynched in Montgomery County, Alabama, in 1920, did not yield any Wilbur Smiths but rather 23 black men named "Will," "Willie," or "William" Smith. In some cases, because of the individual's common name, or the reporting of multiple names, we faced an inordinately large number of potential matches for the lynch victim, complicating considerably our effort

to identify the correct match in the census. Because of the large number of possible matches for Wilbur Smith, we were forced to consider his to be an unresolved case.

Neither inconsistent name reporting, nor multiple possible matches, necessarily doomed our search effort to failure, however. In the case of James Johnson, lynched 28 September 1922 in Johnson County, Georgia, we determined, on the basis of information gleaned from Beck's recent work, that the victim was taken from Sandersville, in Washington County, into neighboring Johnson County, where he was lynched. We therefore focused our search on Sandersville, where two men named James Johnson were enumerated in the 1920 census records. We were able to successfully eliminate one possible match by locating him in the 1930 census manuscripts. Additionally, by using death records available online, we were able to confirm that on the same date as the lynching, the death of a man named "Jim Johnson" was recorded in Johnson County. Although it is not an exact match—*Jim* is a common nickname for *James*—a subsequent search of the 1920 census records identified no black men named Jim Johnson enumerated in Sandersville, strengthening our confidence in this link. Clearly, cases in which more than two possible matches were found presented greater challenges than did the case with only two James Johnsons.

Geographic Mobility

There is no guarantee that lynchings occurred in the county in which the victim resided when enumerated in the previous census. Individuals who migrated across county lines are more difficult to link to their census records than those who are residentially stable. However, whereas geographic mobility was common during the period under investigation, most moves involved exchanging residences within the same county rather than migrating between counties (Tolnay 1999).⁸ Still, the length of time between the census enumeration and the lynching—which, in some cases, was fully 15 years (for lynchings that occurred in 1895)—introduces the possibility that victims had relocated and will not be found in the census records for the county in which they were lynched.

One strategy for dealing with geographic mobility is to expand the geographic parameters for the search incrementally. For example, Garfield Burley was a black man who was accused of murder and then lynched, together with Curtis Brown, on 8 October 1902 in Dyer County, Tennessee. We were unable to locate "Garfield Burley" in the 1900 census enumerators' manuscripts in the county of lynching or its contiguous counties. Because the name is unusual, we conducted a statewide search, which yielded only one black man in all of Tennessee named Garfield Burley, who was enumerated living *two* counties away from Dyer County in a railroad construction labor camp in Tipton County. The only other black "Garfield Burley" in the country was five

years old and living in Texas in 1900. Those circumstances led us to believe with a high level of confidence that the Garfield Burley we identified in Tipton County was very likely to have been the Garfield Burley who was subsequently lynched in nearby Dyer County.

Temporal Distance between the Census Enumeration and the Lynching

Clearly, the risk that individuals enumerated in the census have moved across a county boundary increases with time. Additionally, the longer the time between census enumeration and lynching, the more likely the characteristics of each individual lynch victim and his or her household are to change. This difficulty is inherent in backward matching and, for our project, raises the additional concern that the event we are counting backward from (i.e., the lynching) has a different temporal relationship to the census for each victim. This limitation presents the greatest potential difficulty in successfully identifying individuals who were lynched in the 1890s, because at least 10 years will have elapsed between the date of census enumeration and the date of lynching. Researchers who use this data source in the future may choose to restrict the sample to individuals lynched within a specified subset of years. Restricting the sample to those individuals lynched within three years of a census enumeration would yield a total of 769 potential cases: 100 lynched in 1882 and 1883; 305 lynched between 1900 and 1903; 202 lynched between 1910 and 1913; 149 lynched between 1920 and 1923; and 13 lynched in 1930. The length of time between the census enumeration and the lynching may also be incorporated as a covariate in quantitative analyses.

To address this issue more explicitly when constructing the database, we relax our geographic criterion for identifying likely matches as more time elapses between the date of the census enumeration and the date of the lynching. Additionally, we reduce somewhat our level of confidence in those matches in the absence of supplemental information from auxiliary sources. For example, in the case of Lucius Holt, a farm worker lynched 1 December 1893 in Pike County, Georgia, we expand the geographic criteria slightly, given that 13 years have elapsed between the census enumeration and the date of Mr. Holt's lynching. We do not identify any black men with that name in Pike County, but we do identify two likely matches named Lucius Holt in nearby counties. When the 1880 census was taken, the first was 14 years old, living at home and working as a farmhand in Clarke County, roughly 110 miles from Pike County. The second was a 30-year-old farm worker enumerated with his wife in Putnam County, roughly 70 miles away. Because these men would have had 13 years within which to move, and because they were the only two black men with that name in all of Georgia, we assigned each of them a 50 percent probability score. Similarly, in the case

of Burt Martin, a black man lynched on 28 February 1890 in Leflore County, Mississippi, the only individual identified in the 1880 census was a 15-year-old boy—recorded as Burr Martin—in Lowndes County, 110 miles away. Again, given that (1) a decade had passed between the census enumeration and the lynching of Burt (or Burr) Martin, (2) migration is concentrated in young adulthood, and (3) the distance between the locations of lynching and of census enumeration is not particularly far, we felt it was quite likely that the Burr Martin located in Lowndes County was in fact the man lynched a decade later in Leflore County. However, because the first names as recorded in newspaper accounts of the lynching differ somewhat from the name in the enumerators' manuscripts, and in light of both the temporal and spatial distance between the recording of those two individuals, we assigned a medium level of probability to this match.

Public Availability of the Data

Data produced in conjunction with this project will be distributed on request via a compact disk containing the EpiData files, a codebook, and a variety of supplementary material on each victim. We anticipate that the data set will be publicly available by June 2009. In addition to the database of census information, we will also make publicly available electronic copies of all supporting documentation used to identify matches: the original case notes used to construct the Beck-Tolnay (2004) inventory of lynch victims, the Beck-Tolnay inventory itself, and supplemental information on each case, including case summaries and notes made in conjunction with searching for and selecting possible matches, newspaper articles, World War I draft registration cards, death certificates, maps, and so on. Additionally, we will include all census records for individuals identified in our initial search procedures, regardless of whether they were retained for entry into the final database.

Potential Uses for Database

By means of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the new database will provide researchers with a powerful and versatile resource capable of raising social scientific research on southern lynchings to a new level. Researchers interested in descriptive, qualitative evidence related to specific lynchings or sets of lynchings will have access to a much richer variety of information. All the information that was gathered by the censuses for the victim of lynching, his or her family, and their larger household context will be available to researchers. In addition, investigators will be able to link the individual-level and household-level information in the database to the characteristics of the larger geographic context (e.g., county) within which the household was embedded, or

in which the lynching occurred. The database will, quite literally, allow researchers to bring the individual and his or her family back into the study of lynching—much in the same way that a case-study approach does, but for a larger number of victims.

For researchers who prefer more quantitative approaches to the study of southern lynchings, the new database will allow them to conduct analyses that have not been possible with existing inventories. The same census-based information we are collecting on lynch victims is included in the public use samples of the U.S. decennial censuses from 1880 through 1930, available through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) project at the Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. Thus, African Americans who were victims of lynchings in Georgia during the 1880s can be matched with a sample of African Americans enumerated in the 1880 census in Georgia counties where lynchings took place. The combination of this census data and the new database we are constructing will support a wide variety of statistical analyses. Researchers will be able to estimate binary logistic regression models in which the dependent variable distinguishes victims from nonvictims. Such models will support analyses designed to identify the key risk factors for lynching. Furthermore, when merged with county-level characteristics, the combined file of victims and nonvictims will allow researchers to consider the contextual conditions that increased the likelihood of individuals being lynched.

Conclusion

There has been great interest among social scientists in the history of racial violence in the American South. During recent decades, a large interdisciplinary literature that describes this history has grown while it also tries to explain such a disturbing chapter in the nation's past. By using existing inventories of the victims of southern lynch mobs, social scientists have made considerable progress on both fronts. It has been nearly two decades since a new data source for the study of southern lynchings has been made available to researchers. The creation of the database described in this article is both novel and unique. By linking lynch victims to information contained in their individual and household records in the original enumerators' manuscripts of the U.S. census, the new database will allow social scientists to conduct investigations and explore theoretically driven research questions that were simply not possible with existing inventories. The publicly available data source will also include an extensive array of information that was gathered during the process of searching for victims in the census records. This information will not only support innovative studies of mob violence in the South but will also provide a basis for future increments and improvements to our documented records as new data sources are discovered and/or made available to the scientific community.

NOTES

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1. Most frequently, these have been the inventories for most of the American South available through the archives of Tuskegee University, the records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the annual compilations prepared by the *Chicago Tribune*, or the synthetic inventory prepared by E. M. Beck and Stewart E. Tolnay (2004) from those sources. In addition, a few individual investigators have created their own inventories for smaller geographic areas (e.g., Carrigan 2004; Pfeifer 2004; Wright 1990).

2. A complete list of household record variables and person record variables in all the publicly available decennial U.S. censuses can be found on the Web site of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) project that is housed within the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota: <http://www.ipums.umn.edu/usa/index.html>.

3. The 10 southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

4. See Tolnay and Beck (1995, App. A) for a more detailed description of the procedures used to create the inventory.

5. Professor Beck has compiled additional information on Georgia lynchings as part of an independent, ongoing research project. As a collaborator on our current data collection efforts, he made his augmented case files available to our team.

6. Because the 1890 census was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1921, only fragmentary segments are available to the researcher.

7. For individuals enumerated in institutions where it is likely that inmates were compelled to reside (e.g., prisons, mental hospitals, and poorhouses) only the individual's record is included. However, for those living in other, more voluntary, nonfamily residential situations (e.g., boardinghouses), information for all household members is entered into the database.

8. However, see Joseph P. Ferrie (2004) for contradictory evidence with surprisingly high rates of mobility.

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References

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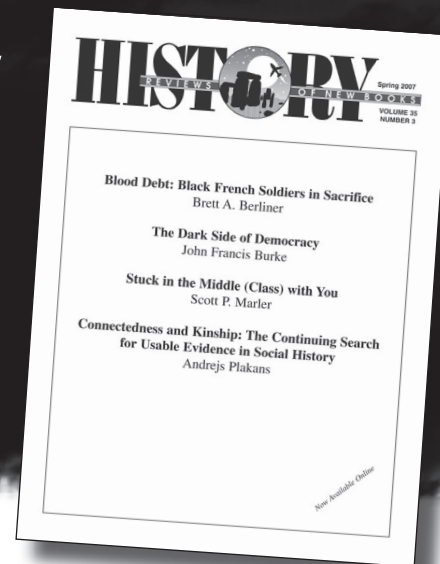
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