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Populism and Black Lynching in Georgia, 1890-1900*

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Abstract

This research tests general claims of how political and economic competition affected county-level variation of black lynching rates in Georgia in the 1890s. The central argument is that rates of racial violence rose when interracial competition increased. This increase was due primarily to black migration to southern manufacturing areas, black participation in the cotton economy, and the rise of black participation in the Populist movement. To address more fully the political facet of interracial competition, we first analyze the forces leading to the Populist movement. We find that black counties and counties with a higher degree of farm tenancy were more likely to have supported Populist candidates, and that manufacturing counties were less likely to vote Populist. When we analyze the causes of lynching, we find that lynching rates increased when economic competition increased, but that counties that voted Populist did not have significantly higher rates of black lynching.

According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), between the years of 1889 and 1900, 3,224 people in the U.S. fell victim to the hands of lynch mobs.1 Of these victims, 2,522, or 78.2%, were black. Lynching represents an extreme form of racial violence, and the study of the phenomenon allows for comparison with other analyses about different forms of racial or ethnic violence. This project applies general arguments about racial violence as a function of intergroup competition for economic and political resources to black lynching in Georgia in the late nineteenth century. Historical and sociological explanations for lynching and other forms of racial violence are varied, but historians and sociologists agree that forces that increased competition between groups for economic and/or political resources heightens intergroup antagonism (Blalock 1967; Bonacich 1972; Higgs 1977; Olzak 1989b, 1990; Wright 1986). Factors such as increasing immigration and migration into a system and economic contraction decrease the amount of available resources in the environment. As this occurs, competition for these

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limited economic resources increases (Higgs 1977; Olzak 1989b, 1990). Competition between groups for resources occurs in the political arena as well. Factors such as an increase in the size of the minority group in a population and the rise of political power of a minority group threaten the politically dominant group (Blalock 1967).

Late nineteenth-century Georgia is an appropriate setting in which to observe both political and economic competition and the resulting rise of ethnic conflict. In the 1890s, the state fell into the economic depression that was characteristic of the southern U.S. in this period. Coupled with the large group of recently freed black slaves who began seeking manufacturing positions and began purchasing their own land, the economic depression of the 1890s heightened intergroup competition in the economic realm. At the same time, the southern Populist movement was well underway, posing a genuine political threat to the Democrats (Bloom 1987). The Georgia Populists began to recruit African Americans to their ranks as a means by which to build a larger constituency. The Populist threat, coupled with the real or perceived increase in political power of the black Georgians, increased competition in the political sphere. Perhaps not coincidentally, in the period between 1890-1900, Georgia had the second highest number of lynchings in the country (Milton 1932).

This research explores two different ways that economic competition, political competition, and black lynching may be related. First, both economic competition and the Populist threat may have simultaneously increased rates of lynching (Olzak 1990). Here, factors that increased economic competition and factors that increased political competition both may have led to increased rates of lynching from 1890 to 1900.

Alternatively, it is possible that only one type of competition increased racial violence. In this theory, one type of competition may have directly increased lynching rates while the other type may have no, or only spurious, effects on lynching rates. We explore the possibility that changes in the economic sector increased both lynching rates and the strength of the Populist movement, and that the previously reported relationship between Populism and lynching is spurious.

In order to determine the causes of black lynching, it is necessary to disentangle the two forms of competition, economic and political. Therefore, the focus of this project is two-fold. First, we explore the structural causes of the Populist movement in Georgia in order to understand more fully the underlying forces of political competition. Second, we explore the effects of increases in economic and political competition on the black lynching rate in the late nineteenth century.

Theoretical Background and Past Research

COMPETITION THEORIES OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Prior research on lynching in the southern U.S. converges on the central theme of competition between ethnic or racial groups for economic and/or political resources that increases racial conflict and lynching. The central argument driving this research comes from competition theories of racial and ethnic conflict.2
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Competition theorists use the concept of the niche which is the set of essential environmental resources, coupled with strategies for their attainment, which permits a group to survive (Nagel 1986). A fundamental niche is the set of resources that exists in the absence of competitors and a realized niche is the set of resources in the presence of competitors (Nagel 1986). Under the condition of equilibrium, different ethnic groups have either separate niches, similar niches in different geographical locations, or have complementary or symbiotic niches (Barth 1969). Under equilibrium, competition is low and intergroup conflict is nearly or completely nonexistent.

When niches begin to overlap, or when the conditions of equilibrium are disrupted, competition for environmental resources increases, intensifying intergroup conflict. The condition of niche similarity posited by competition theorists implies dependence on the environment for the same resources. Under the inevitable condition of scarcity of these resources, groups will compete for the resources necessary for survival and conflict will ensue (Hannan 1979).

Competition theories of race and ethnicity are particularly useful in the study of interethnic conflict because of their applications in both the political and economic spheres. Empirical tests of competition hypotheses have lent support to the claim that factors such as immigration, migration, and economic downturns increase competition and conflict between ethnic groups in the economic realm (Olzak 1989b, 1990). Empirical tests of factors that increase political competition have also shown that increases in levels of political competition increase rates of ethnic conflict (Inverarity 1976; Olzak 1990).

Blalock’s (1967) power-threat hypothesis is consistent with competition theory. Blalock (1967) explains intergroup conflict by arguing that the presence of a minority group poses both a political and an economic threat to the dominant group. The dominant group may attempt to eliminate, expel, or at least control the minority group. According to Blalock (1967), the economic threat increases with the size of the minority group population until a threshold is reached. At this point, the threat begins to decrease. Empirical tests of Blalock’s (1967) economic power threat hypothesis have supported the contention that the relationship between the size of the minority group and intergroup conflict is nonmonotonic (Tolnay, Beck & Massey 1989).

Alternatively, according to Blalock (1967), the political threat posed by the minority group varies positively with the size of the minority group population; that is, as the size of the minority group increases, political power of the dominant group is threatened (Blalock 1967). Empirical tests of Blalock’s (1967) political power threat hypothesis are less convincing than those of the economic facet of competition. Corzine, Huff-Corzine and Creech (1988) and Reed (1972) both find support for the hypothesis, but more recent attempts to test Blalock’s (1967) hypothesis have found little support for the presence of a minority group causing a political threat to the dominant group (Tolnay, Beck & Massey 1989).

Recently, sociologists have begun to examine the structural factors that led to dramatic increases in the lynching rate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Researchers have looked at the regional, national, and local level causes of lynching, and the results have been strikingly similar; it seems that lynching increased during times of heightened political and/or economic competition between racial or ethnic groups.
THE POPULIST MOVEMENT AND POLITICAL COMPETITION

The Populist movement in America during the late nineteenth century represents one of the best known political challenges to the dominant white elite in the history of this country. Concentrated in the southern and midwestern regions of the U.S., Populist leaders advocated radical changes in the monetary system, regulation of the railroads, and land control as the means by which economic fairness could be assured for all oppressed people (Goodwyn 1976). The movement, at least initially, united farmers and oppressed workers, blacks and whites (Copeland 1975; Gaither 1977; Goodwyn 1976; Kousser 1974; Woodward 1951).

During Reconstruction, African Americans were given new political rights and legislation was passed to eradicate the social and political barriers that existed between racial groups (Kousser 1974). Black Americans began to vote and run for office. In Georgia, for example, the estimated black voter turnout in 1876 was around 55%, a figure that dropped to less than 10% after 1900 (Kousser 1974). Political parties realized that they needed to either recruit black voters or eliminate them from political contests. Although initially both the Democratic and Republican Parties attempted to recruit black voters, neither party was as successful as was the Populist Party (Du Bois 1935; Kousser 1974; Rochester 1943; Wilson 1978).

Much of the rhetoric of the time promised equal rights for all oppressed people and the eradication of the black-white racial boundary (Watson 1892; Woodward 1974). Objectively, it was in the best interest of blacks and poor whites to unite in Populist organizations: separately, each group constituted a small problem for the Democratic elite, but together they posed a real threat to the existing southern political elite (Bloom 1987).3

Scholars argue that members of the southern Democratic elite attempted to preserve the existing class and political structure by controlling the growing ‘third party’ through disenfranchisement and intimidation of both blacks and whites (Bloom 1987; Wilson 1978). Conservatives and racists banded together to remove the rights that were given to African Americans during Reconstruction. To the Democratic elite, “‘black freedom’ signified not only a threat to white supremacy, but also meant the loss of a guaranteed cheap and controlled labor supply for the plantations” (Wilson 1978:52). Lynching and other forms of racial violence were used to reduce the threat posed by Populist political power.4 Historians have argued that blacks were “largely unarmed, economically weak, and dependent after years of slavery,” (Chalmers 1965) thus they were far less likely to offer resistance to violence. Hence, blacks were lynched at far higher rates than whites, despite the fact that whites were overrepresented in Populist organizations.

Olzak (1990) analyzes lynching at the national level between 1882 and 1914 and concludes that lynching rates increased in this period as the well-being of the cotton economy decreased and as the traditional one-party rule by the southern Democratic elite was challenged by the Populist movement in the 1890s. Similarly, Inverarity (1976) finds that during the election years of the 1890s, county-level lynching rates peaked in Louisiana. This lends support to the notion that intergroup political competition increases intergroup tension and conflict.
Historians and sociologists agree that the economic condition of the South in general, and Georgia in particular, was a crucial factor in both the increased rate of lynching and the rise of the Populist movement in the late 1800s (Beck & Tolnay 1990; Goodwyn 1976; Rochester 1943; Olzak 1990). The cotton economy, increasing migration to southern cities, and the discriminatory credit system of the South simultaneously created heightened competition for limited resources and the need for a political party to aid the increasingly impoverished farmers.

The price of cotton decreased persistently between 1881 and 1900, dropping to all time lows in the 1890s (Arnett 1922; Rochester 1943). Simultaneously, cotton production increased due to technological advances in fertilizers (Shaw 1984). While production of cotton drastically increased, there was no accompanying increase in demand and thus the price of cotton plummeted further (Shaw 1984).

Furthermore, the cotton growers, both black and white, were becoming increasingly indebted to merchants under the crop lien system (Arnett 1922). During the late 1890s, between 80 and 90% of all cotton growers were in debt to merchants and landowners (Arnett 1922). Although the legal interest rate in most states was 8%, it was not unusual for yearly interest rates to approach 10% on borrowed goods and cash, and in some parts of the South, yearly interest rates rose as high as 25% (Schwartz 1976).

Beck and Tolnay's (1990) time series analysis at the regional level shows that in the six states of their "Deep South" during 1882-1930, lynching increased when the economic conditions worsened. When cotton production was slow or the price of cotton deflated, lynching rates peaked. Economic downturns were detrimental to all cotton producers, but the small farmers were more negatively affected due to their relative lack of capital resources. Furthermore, freed blacks and unemployed whites were beginning to acquire land and the means to grow cotton, thus they posed an economic threat to the small farmers. Lynching was a means used by small farmers to reduce the competition from blacks and unemployed whites, but blacks were disproportionately lynched because of their relative lack of power to protest (Beck & Tolnay 1990).

Corzine, Huff-Corzine and Creech's (1988) cross sectional analysis at the county level shows that in the cotton-producing counties of the South economic threats posed by blacks to the dominant whites in the farm tenancy system increased lynching rates. According to Corzine, Huff-Corzine and Creech, the farm tenancy of the South represented Bonacich's (1976) "split labor market" where racial antagonism was generated by the exploitation inherent in a situation in which blacks and whites offered the same labor for different prices. In 1900, over 66% of African Americans in the agricultural sector were tenants, while about 64% of white farm operators were owners (Wright 1986).

An often neglected trend in the South during the late 1800s involved the development of the region's manufacturing sector. Olzak (1990) finds that time periods in which real wages of common laborers rose were also those that had higher lynching rates between 1882 and 1914. This increased rate may be explained by the increasing competition generated by growth in the manufacturing sector during this period (Higgs 1977). Between 1869 and 1909, the
manufacturing sector of the South grew at the annual rate of 7% (Wright 1986). Young blacks moved from agricultural areas to manufacturing centers where they found employment in factories, mines, and mills (Wilson 1978). Higgs (1977) discusses the tendency during the late nineteenth century for southern blacks to migrate first to southern cities and then later north and west. In fact, the peak growth rate between 1870 and 1910 of the black urban population was in the South during the 1880s, where the black urban population increased by 71% (Higgs 1977:33). Former slaves in this period were trained in such areas as carpentry, masonry, and mechanical trades and were used in almost all types of manual labor in the manufacturing sector (Marshall 1967; Spero & Harris 1931). For the first time, southern working class whites in manufacturing positions were threatened by a large influx of a cheap labor force (Wilson 1978). Therefore, any investigation of intergroup competition in the South must also examine the manufacturing as well as the agricultural sector in order to examine the full effects of competition on intergroup conflict.

Taken together, the evidence shows that heightened intergroup competition for economic resources and/or political power leads to intergroup conflict. The political threat posed by the Populists when combined with the economic frustrations of the 1890s made the South a “cultural seedbed for aggression against the minority race” (Woodward 1974:81). Competition theory predicts that the dominant group will react against a threat posed by the minority group. Hypotheses of political and economic competition predict different segments of the white South to mobilize against the threat or potential threat posed by African Americans. Fear of economic competition spurs those whites threatened by a cheap, black, labor force, while fear of political competition spurs those whites threatened by the increasing political power of the blacks (James 1988). By focusing on the causes of lynching in Georgia, we hope to understand more fully the connection between the processes of political and economic competition.

**POPULISM AND LYNCHING IN GEORGIA**

We chose to focus our analysis on Georgia for several reasons, although we acknowledge that Georgia may not have been representative of the entire South during this period. Nonetheless, Georgia was a state plagued with a high number of lynchings and a state in which the Populist movement was strong. We argue that county-level analysis is appropriate because Georgia’s counties were quite different from one another in many respects, including Populist support and the black lynching rate. For example, in 1894, the percentage of residents who were black in Georgia’s counties varied enormously, ranging from less than 1% to 85%. Further, Georgia was hit hard by the bleak economic conditions of the 1890s. For example, the percentage of business failures was more than twice as high in Georgia than in the rest of the country (Arnett 1922). Property values fell from $421 million in 1892, to $238 million in 1894 (Arnett 1922).

Georgia farmers were nearly financially annihilated by the depressions of the 1890s. As cotton prices plummeted, farmers grew increasingly in debt. Simultaneously, African Americans began competing in the agricultural sector.
In the 1890s, the total black-owned acreage increased steadily causing African Americans in Georgia to begin competing with small white farmers (Wright 1986).

Research has recognized that Georgia was one of the most Populist of the southern states. Lead by Tom Watson, the great Populist leader who advocated a biracial union and equity for the downtrodden, the state's Populists actively sought the black vote (Woodward 1938). Between 1892 and 1894, Georgia Populists increased their African American Representation at the State convention from less than five delegates to almost 25 (Saunders 1969). In 1894, some districts of Georgia boasted 30% African American representation (Saunders 1969). Some historians (Shaw 1984) argue that Georgia's Populist movement prospered in counties with a high (over 50%) black population, although other historians dispute this claim (Gaither 1977). By examining county-level data in Georgia, we are able to obtain an especially fine-grained analysis of the structural factors of the Populist movement, and the causes of black lynching.9

Finally, the availability of the data also makes Georgia a particularly good state in which to study the possible connection between black lynching and Populism. First, Georgia's Atlanta Constitution is readily available for the period between 1890-1900 and it did an adequate, if not superior, job of reporting lynching events. Given our method of data collection, this is a crucial point. Second, during the years of 1890-1900 the geographical boundaries of the 138 Georgia counties remained the same (Bryant 1983). There is a host of problems in longitudinal data analysis associated with changing geographical boundaries, and the fact that the counties remained the same allows continuity in the measurement of our explanatory variables.10

Research Design: Measurement and Hypotheses

There are two separate pieces of research presented below. First, we explore the causes of the Populist movement by examining some of the existing historical and structural arguments. Second, we examine the structural causes of black lynching in Georgia.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The dependent variable we measure in the first section is the number of Populist votes in a county for the gubernatorial election years (1892, 1894, 1896) which is obtained from ICPSR (dataset 0001).11

The dependent variable for our second question is the lynching rate of the county.12 Since we know the exact date and location of each event, we have arranged the lynching data in an event history format. Event-history analysis not only allows the examination of a longitudinal record of when lynching events occurred, but also permits observations of changes in levels of covariates (Olzak 1989b). The unit of analysis is the black lynching event rather than the number killed or the severity of each lynching. Although lynching events differ qualitatively with respect to the number of victims, type of weapons used, race of the victim(s), and the number of participants, we treat each lynching incident as a separate event.
There are three main sources of data on lynching in the U.S., the NAACP Records, the Tuskegee Records, and a list published by the Chicago Tribune. Unfortunately, these sources are all flawed in similar ways (Massey & Myers 1989). General problems with the sources include incorrectly reporting the content of an event (wrong locale, reason, number of victims, date, name, or race), reporting a lynching that did not occur, or not reporting a lynching that did occur.

We improve this data by cross-checking each lynching reported by the NAACP with the *Atlanta Constitution* for this time period. Specifically, the name, date, race, reason for, and county of each lynching reported by the NAACP were checked to attain a master list of “confirmed lynchings.” The confirmed lynchings include only events that were found in newspaper reports that included the exact county, exact date, correct race, and whether the victim actually died. Our analysis is limited to the confirmed lynchings.

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Social historians and sociologists have criticized the fact that studies of minorities often use aggregated data, thus ignoring the effects of variation of local-level phenomena (Bodnar, Simon & Weber 1982; James 1988). For instance, James (1988) argues that the pre-1960 South was dominated by county and city politics, economics, and class structures that affected race relations at the local level. He argues that studies of southern racial conflict must not ignore local-level activity that may have increased racial tensions far more than national-level phenomena (James 1988).

Just as there are regional differences in the lynching rates, Populism, black concentration, and economic contraction, there are also differences within states. Luckily, county-level historical data is readily accessible, allowing us to examine differences within states regarding structural causes of both the Populist movement and of black lynching. Because county boundaries change with population growth, it is more difficult to examine lynching at the county level (See Markoff & Shapiro 1973 for discussion).

Independent variables for the analysis of the causes of the Populist movement include the percentage of all farms operated by tenants at the county level, the percent black of the county and its second-order effects, and the log of the total wages paid in manufacturing at the county level.

Independent variables for the event-history analysis of black lynching include the percent black and its second order effects, the percentage of all farms operated by tenants, population density, and the log of the wages paid in manufacturing. We also include our measure of Populist support as an additional independent variable. Finally, a covariate for the log of time since the last event in a county is included as a test of time dependence among lynching events at the county level.
HYPOTHESES

The first set of models explores the structural causes of the Populist movement and includes the percentage of all farms operated by tenants (lagged) and the percent black population of each county. The inclusion of these two variables is a test of the hypothesis that Georgia's Populism was primarily a movement comprised of tenant farmers and blacks. Counties that had a high degree of tenancy ought to have had a higher number of Populist votes. Based on the argument that Georgia blacks were recruited to the Populist ranks, as the county's proportion black increased, propensity to vote Populist should have also increased.

Model 2 includes the second order effects of black population to test for the possibility that the relationship between black population size and Populist support is nonmonotonic. We include this measure to obtain a more detailed examination of the pattern of black recruitment to the Populist movement.

Model 3 includes the log of the total wages paid in manufacturing in the county (lagged). It may seem contradictory to include wages paid in manufacturing in the analysis of a region that was primarily agrarian. However, wage labor was not only characteristic of northern, industrial areas in this period, it was an important aspect of the southern economy as well (Higgs 1977; Olzak 1990; Wright 1986). The inclusion of wages in the model tests hypotheses regarding economic contraction. If wages paid in manufacturing is an indicator of economic well-being, counties that were well-off financially should have been less likely to vote Populist.17

The next group of hypotheses examines our second research question regarding the structural causes of lynching. Model 4 tests Blalock's (1967) power threat hypothesis by including terms for the percent black and its second order effects. If African Americans presented a political threat to whites, the parameter estimates for both of these measures should be positive. If blacks posed an economic threat, the first order effects of percent black should increase rates of lynching, while the second order effects should decrease lynching rates.

Model 4 also includes a measure of population density as an indicator of the degree of urbanization of the county. Corzine, Huff-Corzine and Creech (1988) argue that lynching was primarily a rural phenomenon, occurring in the countryside rather than in the towns. If they are correct, as population density increased, the rate of black lynching should have decreased.

Model 5 includes the log of the total wages paid in manufacturing as an indirect measure of the argument that economic competition increases lynching.18 As blacks began migrating to blossoming southern manufacturing areas after the Civil War, competition for economic resources increased. Between 1890 and 1900, the number of Georgia blacks living in urban areas increased from around 124,000 to about 225,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1918). We expect lynching rates to have been highest in manufacturing areas where groups were competing for jobs.

Model 6 adds a measure of the percentage of all farms operated by tenants as another measure of economic competition. In the 1890s, as the cotton economy was failing and freed blacks were beginning to grow their own small cotton crops, we expect tenant farming areas to have experienced intensified
The farm tenancy system was a split labor market in this period, counties with a higher degree of farm tenancy ought to have had higher black lynching rate.

Model 7 controls for the possibility that any observed effects of the explanatory variables are really due to their steady increase over time. We test for this by adding a time trend variable.

Model 8 examines whether adding a measure of Populist support matters, net of the other economic and social factors. Political competition increases when a previously powerless group of people suddenly attains political power and threatens the political supremacy of the dominant, controlling group. Specifically, we test the contention that as lower class whites united with blacks in Populist organizations, the white upper class was threatened by the potential political power of these new Populist organizations.

ESTIMATION

Time-series models assume that the number of Populist votes in a county is a function of a set of covariates that are lagged one year \((x_t - 1)\), and of the changes in these covariates from the subsequent year \((\Delta x_t = x_t - x_{t-1})\). Since, by definition, the number of Populist votes in a county in a year is a nonnegative value, we use log-linear models which constrain the number of votes to be nonnegative. The general form for these models is:

\[
\log y_t = B_1 x_{t-1} + B_2 \Delta x_t + v_t
\]

where \(v_t\) is an error term. Preliminary analyses indicated that log-linear models fit our data on the degree of Populist support better than linear models.

One common problem encountered in log-linear models in time series regression analysis is autocorrelation of the disturbance terms that prevents efficient estimation. To test this, we examined the Durbin-Watson test statistic for each model which indicated that autocorrelation was indeed present, hence the models are estimated using GLS in PROC AUTOREG of SAS to correct for this problem (Hanushek & Jackson 1977).

The dependent variable for the second part of the analysis is the rate of lynching in Georgia counties between 1890-1900. Event history analysis allows the researcher to use information on the timing between events, as well as on the number of events, which allows for the testing of time dependence (Allison 1984; Tuma & Hannan 1984; Olzak 1999a). This research represents an improvement over traditional cross-sectional analyses that cannot consider yearly changes in the independent variables and their effects on the dependent variable.

The models estimated here include the assumption that time dependence affects the lynching rate. An examination of the cumulative hazard function of our lynching data suggests that the rate is indeed characterized by negative time dependence; it drops monotonically with the waiting time since a previous event in the county. Based on this, we chose a Weibull process to describe the effect of time dependence on the lynching rate (Tuma & Hannan 1984). The generic form of the Weibull process (with effects of measured covariates) is:
\[ r(U_n) = \exp [B' x(t_{n-1})] U_n^{p-1} \]

Let \( r(U_n) \) be the lynching rate at waiting time \( U_n \). \( t_{n-1} \) is the historical time since a lynching event in the county, \( x(t_{n-1}) \) is the set of covariates measured at the beginning of each spell (the time period that begins after the previous lynching in the county), and \( p \) is the scale parameter (used to index time dependence). (Olzak 1990).

Because the amount of time that elapses between lynching events in a county can be longer than one year, we employ spell-splitting strategies (Tuma & Hannan 1984). Spells are broken into segments with lengths corresponding to the yearly measures of the covariates. To describe the procedure more thoroughly, let \( r_p \) mark the beginning of the \( p^{th} \) subspell, and \( u_p \) equal the length of the entire spell starting at \( r_p \). Let \( u_p^* \) equal the length of the subspell starting at \( r_p \). By including \( u_p^* \) as a covariate in our model, we adjust for durations between lynching events at the county level that exceed one year. The following regression model is estimated using PROC LIFEREG in SAS:

\[ r(u_p^* | u_{p+1} \leq u_p^* < u_p) = \exp [B' x(r_p) + \Theta \log u_p^*] u_p^{*p-1} \]

To interpret the resulting regression coefficients in terms of lynching rates, it is necessary to report the negative value of the coefficients (-B') (Tuma & Hannan 1984).

**Results**

**Populism in Georgia**

Table 1 reports the results of the maximum likelihood estimates of the auto-regression models of the structural factors influencing Populist support.\(^{19}\)

Comparing the \( R^2 \) statistic across the three models in Table 1 shows us that model 3 is the best fitting.\(^{20}\) Across models 1 through 3, we see that farm tenancy (lagged) increases the log of the Populist vote in 1896. Georgia counties with higher proportions of tenant farms were more likely to vote Populist in the 1890s.

In models 2 and 3, we see an interesting effect of the black population size of the counties. The relationship is nonmonotonic, with an increasing then decreasing effect on the log of the number of Populist votes. This runs counter to some investigators who have noted that support was stronger in the counties with a smaller percentage of blacks in the population (Gaither 1977). This finding supports the historians who argue that in Georgia, black counties were more likely to vote Populist with the important qualification that this effect levels off at extremely high levels of black population.

In model 3, the log of the total wages in manufacturing (lagged) is added to the model. In counties where wages were high, Populism was strongest, although this finding is not significant.
TABLE 1: Maximum Likelihood Estimates from Autoregression Analyses of the Impact of Structural Characteristics on the Number of Populist Votes in Georgia Gubernatorial Election of 1896

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>6.32**</td>
<td>5.27**</td>
<td>4.68**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>(.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant farms/</td>
<td>.65**</td>
<td>1.29**</td>
<td>1.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total farms (lag)</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>-1.06**</td>
<td>4.88**</td>
<td>4.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td>(.65)</td>
<td>(.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black²</td>
<td>-7.66**</td>
<td>-6.87**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Log manufacturing wages (lag)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 138)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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* Standard errors in parentheses. All variables measured at the county level.
** p < .01

LYNCHING IN GEORGIA

Table 2 reports the results of maximum likelihood estimates of Weibull models for the structural causes of black lynching in Georgia between 1890 and 1900. Likelihood ratio tests show that across models, model 6 seems to be the best fitting. The addition of the log of manufacturing wages in model 5 significantly improves the log likelihood of model 4, while the addition of our tenancy variable in model 6 further improves the log likelihood. The addition of our Populist support measure in model 8 does not greatly improve the fit of the model.

Across models, we find support for Blalock’s (1967) hypothesis on the economic threat posed by minority group presence; that is, that the relationship between the size of the minority group population and ethnic conflict is nonmonotonic. The first-order effects of percent black are positive, while the second order effects are negative.

Across models, we find that as the time since the last event in a county increases, the lynching rate decreases. This lends support to the claim that lynching happened in cycles; the likelihood of a black lynching is higher just after one has occurred. The scale parameter is insignificant, as expected, because the inclusion of the term for the log of the time since the last event directly
TABLE 2: Maximum Likelihood Weibull Estimates for the Effects of Structural Covariates on the Rate of Black Lynching in Georgia, 1890-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-4.00**</td>
<td>-6.38**</td>
<td>-7.71**</td>
<td>-7.72**</td>
<td>-7.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.92)</td>
<td>(1.47)</td>
<td>(1.78)</td>
<td>(1.80)</td>
<td>(1.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>8.46*</td>
<td>6.17+</td>
<td>6.08+</td>
<td>6.08*</td>
<td>6.90+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.46)</td>
<td>(3.53)</td>
<td>(3.55)</td>
<td>(3.55)</td>
<td>(3.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black²</td>
<td>-8.21*</td>
<td>-5.25</td>
<td>-5.88</td>
<td>-5.89+</td>
<td>-7.57+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.70)</td>
<td>(3.76)</td>
<td>(3.86)</td>
<td>(3.87)</td>
<td>(3.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages (log)</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist support</td>
<td>-001+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.7*10^4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time since</td>
<td>-.44**</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last event (log)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>-.007+</td>
<td>-.007+</td>
<td>-.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>density</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant farms/</td>
<td>1.44+</td>
<td>1.45+</td>
<td>1.86+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total farms</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
<td>(.97)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time trend</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td></td>
<td>.009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(04)</td>
<td>(04)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(04)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale parameter</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-332.63</td>
<td>-328.87</td>
<td>-323.62</td>
<td>-323.62</td>
<td>-321.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 138)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Standard errors in parentheses. All variables measured at the county level.
+ p < .10  * p < .05  ** p < .01

measures time dependence at the county level. This is important when we consider other research on collective action in general (Olzak 1989b, 1990, 1991; Tarrow 1989). Past research has found that ethnic conflict at the national level occurs in cycles (Olzak 1989b). Our findings lend support to this research by extending the arguments to another unit of analysis.
Model 5 lends further support to the hypothesis that economic competition increases violence between groups. The addition of wages in manufacturing improves model 4, and the coefficient is positive and significant. That is, in counties where competition for wages is high, lynching rates are high. This supports the argument that blacks were indeed present in manufacturing industries (Higgs 1977; Wright 1986). Blacks migrated to southern manufacturing areas seeking employment and competed with whites for positions in the labor force (Marshall 1967; Spero & Harris 1931).22

When the measure of farm tenancy is added in model 6, we see that tenancy increases the lynching rate, yet the effect of wages does not disappear. In this same model, population density decreases the lynching rate. It seems that black lynching occurred in areas where groups were competing in the economic realm, whether it is in the manufacturing sector or in the agrarian sector. In the agricultural sector, the depressions of the 1890s were most strongly felt; economic contraction increased competition or perceived competition, thus intergroup conflict escalated. When freed blacks began to grow their own cotton for profit, whites reacted by attempting to eliminate the potential threat. In the manufacturing sector, whites reacted to the potential threat of black workers in a similar way; racial violence increased. These results suggest that perhaps black lynching was not solely a rural phenomenon; rather, it appears to have been a phenomenon associated with economic competition in both agricultural and industrial counties.23

The addition of the measure for Populist support in model 8 does not significantly improve the model. It appears that the Populist movement did not increase rates of black lynching,24 a finding that runs counter to previous findings which indicated that Populism increased intergroup conflict at the regional level (Olzak 1990). However, this finding is consistent with the results reported in model 4 that the relationship between the size of the black population and the lynching rate is nonmonotonic, thereby indicating economic, but not political, competition.

Conclusions

What may we conclude from the previous analyses about the competitive processes between different racial groups? With the breakdown of the plantation system of the South came two fundamental changes in the southern economic system. First, when African Americans began to purchase their own land and to grow their own cotton, they began to compete with white farmers for a share of the cotton market. Second, blacks migrated to southern manufacturing sectors and competed with white laborers for jobs. These two factors led to heightened competition for resources in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. As discovered in previous research, we find that economic competition increased black lynching rates.

At the same time these changes were taking place in the southern economy, the political system was changing. Spurred by intensified economic depressions of the late nineteenth century, the Populist movement gained force and began recruiting African Americans. As the strength of the movement increased in the
early 1890s, the dominance of the Democratic Party was threatened. Although previous research showed that Populist support increased lynching rates at the regional level, we have shown that this is not so at the county level. Niche overlap, caused by an increase in the number and diversity of political parties and the increase in the political power of African Americans, did not increase interracial conflict at the county level in Georgia.

According to historians, the Populist movement during the early 1890s was a unifying political and social force, possibly because blacks and whites were unified in Populist organizations. Table 1 suggests that the Populist movement in Georgia was a class movement, unifying poor agrarian blacks and whites. Counties with a high degree of farm tenancy and a high percentage of blacks were likely to support Populist candidates, while manufacturing areas were not. Perhaps lynching rates were higher in manufacturing areas because in those areas blacks and whites were not unified in political organizations. In agricultural counties, the Populist movement may have diminished the effects of intergroup economic competition.

This discrepancy may also arise because of the slight difference in the focus of the arguments regarding political competition. This research reports the effects of a county’s Populist vote on its lynching rate, whereas previous research has argued that during periods of high Populist support lynching rates increased (Olzak 1990). The difference between this and previous research stems from the subtle differences between arguments about political competition. Previous research has argued that the historical period affected the lynching rate, while we argue that the characteristics of a specific locality affected the lynching rate.

Even though our findings with respect to political competition differ from conclusions of previous work, it is important to note that our research lends support to claims about economic competition and lynching rates. Further, our research is consistent with the previous finding that there is time dependence among black lynching events. The use of event-history analysis on county-level lynching data represents an addition to the study of racial conflict. By changing the unit of analysis from national to county level, we present a challenge to both competition theory and arguments about time dependence among ethnic conflict events. As a solid theory should, economic competition theory is applicable to another level of analysis, as are the arguments regarding time dependence among interracial conflict events. Our results support claims about increased competition in the economic realm as a cause of increased racial violence.

Notes

1. This number may seem high. This article discusses some of the flaws in the NAACP lynching records. These records, originally published in 1919 by the NAACP, may be found in Thirty Years of Lynching (Negro University Press 1969).

2. Following Barth (1969), ethnicity is a means by which one may belong to a group based on a shared genealogy, shared cultural traits (language, religion, customs) or shared nationality. Here, race becomes an instance of ethnicity.

3. The extent to which blacks were actually included in the Populist movement remains a point of contention between scholars. One reason that the evidence is disputed is that there was considerable variation in black participation in the Populist movement between states. Another
reason for the dispute is the distinct change in character of the Populist movement which began as a racially egalitarian movement and ended as a chief force in the disenfranchisement of African Americans. Regardless of the changing character of the Populist movement from a biracial to a pro-disenfranchisement movement, it was an important force in the political arena of the late nineteenth century South. The Populist movement is worthy of study from a political competition framework because in its initial stages it represented a great threat to the dominant political party.

4. It is important to note here that political competition theory predicts that a threatened racial group will mobilize along racial lines. In this analysis, there are essentially two segments of the dominant, white group: the elite whites and the poor whites. In the analysis of political competition, it is the southern white elite that is threatened by the Populists. Hence, it is the southern white elite that mobilizes against the threat posed by black political competition. This mobilization may take the form of intimidation, disenfranchisement, and degradation of the less powerful blacks (Bloom 1987). The poor whites may become the instrument of the dominant white elite in the execution of racial violence, but it is the elite who are threatened in the political sphere (Cox 1948).

5. The lien system, under the farm tenancy system of the South, was essentially a mortgage system whereby sharecroppers borrowed land, money, tools, fertilizer, and seed from landlords. In return, the landlords took a certain portion of the profits from the tenant (Rochester 1943).

6. During the past several decades, a little known debate surrounding the existence of this alleged relationship has periodically arisen. For a concise summary of this debate, see Reed, Doss & Hurlbert (1987).

7. Tolnay and Beck (1992) also discuss the fact that after Emancipation, many southern blacks migrated from rural to urban areas in search of more favorable economic conditions.

8. Tom Watson’s legacy remains a mystery. By the early 1900s, Watson had become a vehement racist, participating in disenfranchisement campaigns and preaching white supremacy (Crowe 1970). For more information on Tom Watson, see Key 1949, Wilhoit 1967, and Nelson 1988.

9. Between its conception as a political institution in 1777 and its rise to an autonomous political unit in the 1820s, the Georgia county went through many transformations. It began as a political entity completely dependent on the state, and emerged as the dominant unit of governance less than 50 years later (Hughes 1944). Thus, it makes sense to examine political phenomena at the county level in Georgia.

10. For a thorough discussion of the problems associated with changing geographical units, see Markoff and Shapiro (1973).

11. We would like to thank Stewart E. Tolnay for alerting us to the availability of these data and for generously supplying us with them.

12. Lynching is defined as the extralegal execution of an alleged criminal done under the pretext of retribution for supposed crime. Victims of lynching were not given a trial and had no means of defense against the mob (Zangrando 1980). Generally, lynching involved public support and often times drew great numbers of participants and onlookers.

13. The Atlanta Constitution is a particularly good source on lynching because Atlanta was the “administrative, commercial, and financial center” of the South during the time period (Rabinowitz 1980). Further, as Rabinowitz (1980) notes, the Atlanta Constitution revealed in not only reporting crimes (especially rape) committed by blacks against whites, but also subsequent lynching or punishment incurred for the alleged crimes. Hence, we have reason to believe that the Atlanta Constitution provides reliable data on lynching in Georgia.

14. See Tolnay, Beck and Massey (1989). The NAACP lists 119 black Lynchings in Georgia from 1890-1900. Of these, we eliminated 36 Lynchings that did not meet our strict criteria of whether the locale and exact date were known, whether the victim was actually lynched and killed, and whether the reported race of the victim was correct. Some of the lynching events included more than one victim. Hence when we count our number of events we have 67, although this represents 83 victims.

15. Measurement of the explanatory variables for both research questions is obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Historical Demographic, Economic and Social Data (1970), available through ICPSR. Yearly values for our exogenous variables are obtained through linear interpolation.
16. The U.S. census defines manufacturing wages during this time period as the yearly gross earnings paid to all employees in plants, mills, mines, and factories.

17. If we interpret wages paid in manufacturing as an indicator of the degree to which the county has industrialized, the coefficient should also be inversely related to Populist vote. That is, Populism was stronger in agrarian areas.

18. As Olzak (1990) notes, data on the exact wage differences within occupational categories for blacks and whites are not available in this time period, although this would be an ideal measure of economic competition.

19. Customary regression diagnostics were done on our data. We found no evidence of multicollinearity.

20. The reported results are for Populist vote in 1896. Analysis on 1892 and 1894 yielded similar results.

21. The same models without the covariate for the log of time since the last event yielded a significant scale parameter, lending further support for time dependence amongst black lynching events.

22. Several models that included a term for the yearly change in black population were run. Although the parameter estimates for this variable were not significant, overwhelmingly we found that the change in black population increased the black lynching rate in the 1890s.

23. Analysis on black lynching in an extended time period (1882-1900) yielded the same effect of farm tenancy and log of wages in manufacturing on the black lynching rate. Both forms of economic competition increased black lynching rates at the county level.

24. Separate analysis was executed using logistic regression for the occurrence of a black lynching in a county in 1894. The results were strikingly similar; it does not appear that Populism increased lynching in Georgia in this time period.

References


Arnett, Alex Mathews. 1922. The Populist Movement in Georgia. Columbia University Press.


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