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Ryan Gabriel & Stewart Tolnay

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# The Legacy of Lynching? An Empirical Replication and Conceptual Extension

Ryan Gabriel<sup>a</sup> and Stewart Tolnay<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA; <sup>b</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

## ABSTRACT

Research shows enduring impacts of lynching on a variety of modern outcomes. For instance, Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen found that lynching is associated with contemporary white-on-black homicide. We propose a model describing how events from the past can have effects on events in the present. Essential to our framework is the notion of social forces of “resistance” that can impede or facilitate the temporal transmission of collective memories. We test “indicators of resistance” that influence the transmission of a collective memory supportive of a “legacy of lynching.” Analyses reveal that the positive and significant association between lynching and white-on-black homicide observed by Messner et al. is attenuated and becomes statistically nonsignificant with the inclusion of these indicators. Our results suggest that the temporal transmission of a racist cultural schema manifested through lynching is more likely where resistance is low. These findings have implications for how researchers can study historical legacies.

## Introduction

More than 2,000 documented lynchings of black men, women, and children occurred in 10 southern states between 1882 and 1930 (Tolnay and Beck 1995).<sup>1</sup> During this era, vigilante behavior, including lynching, accompanied Jim Crow laws to ensure the subjugation of the southern black population (Jacobs, Carmichael, and Kent 2005). A variety of explanations have been offered for the lynchings that occurred during this epoch, including whites’ desire to restore antebellum social structure (Blackmon 2008), to eliminate economic competition (Loewen 2005), to control a large and potentially threatening labor force (Tolnay and Beck 1995), and to ensure moral solidarity throughout southern communities (Bailey and Snedker 2011). The contemporary consequences of mob violence for southern society during the lynching era have been extensively studied and are reasonably well understood.<sup>2</sup> That lynchings which occurred so long ago might have modern-day relevance has been recognized more recently and remains largely a sociological puzzle.

The findings from recent research suggest the possibility of a lasting relationship between historical lynching and a variety of modern-day outcomes. Homicide, increased imprisonments, church burnings, and the use of the death penalty are generally more common in areas where lynching was more prevalent (Jacobs et al. 2005; Jacobs, Malone, and Iles 2012; McAdam, Snellman, and Su 2013; Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen 2005). In addition, the enforcement of federal hate crime laws

**CONTACT** Ryan Gabriel  [ryangabriel@byu.edu](mailto:ryangabriel@byu.edu)  Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University, 2033 JFSB, Provo, UT 84062, USA.

<sup>1</sup>The 10 southern states referred to are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

<sup>2</sup>The lynching era roughly extends from 1880 to 1930.

is weaker in locations with a history of lynching (King, Messner, and Baller 2009). While many have documented an association between lynching and various modern outcomes, few have attempted to account for the social dynamics that allow behaviors that occurred many decades in the past to have such far-reaching consequences in the present (cf. Petersen and Ward 2015).

In this study we propose a conceptual framework that describes the potential for historical events or conditions to have modern-day consequences. Central to our effort is the ease or difficulty with which cultural traditions or dominant social regimes are temporally transmitted. Using the documented association between historical southern lynching and recent homicides (Messner et al. 2005), we hypothesize the existence of a latent condition of “resistance” to the temporal or intergenerational transmission of the dogma of white supremacy and the legitimacy of white-on-black violence that prevailed during the lynching era. We identify general indicators of the strength (or weakness) of resistance and assess their ability to account for the previously observed positive relationship between the intensity of historical lynching and the recent level of white-on-black homicides in southern counties. These indicators, which we consider to represent a sort of “barometer” of resistance, are but a few selected from a possible universe of factors that impede or facilitate the transmission of a culture of racial domination.

While our primary objective in this study is to interrogate the relationship observed by Messner and colleagues (2005) between historical lynching and recent levels of white-on-black homicide in the South, its theoretical and substantive reach is broader. Historically, the levels of both lynching and homicide have been considerably higher in the South than elsewhere (Pfeifer 2004; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Southern states have also imposed the death penalty more frequently than other states (Bowers 1984). This prolonged and multidimensional propensity toward lethality has been dubbed a “southern subculture of violence,” and much research has been devoted to evaluating the legitimacy of such a phenomenon (e.g., Clarke 1998; Dixon and Lizotte 1987; Doerner 1979; Hawley and Messner 1989; Rice and Goldman 1994). And, while white-on-white violence composes a significant part of this purported subculture, there is no denying its racialized nature, particularly for lynching and capital punishment. Although not the specific focus of this study, these latitudinous issues serve as an important backdrop to our investigation.

## Historical lynching and modern outcomes

The observed relationship between historical lynching and recent homicide that represents the empirical centerpiece for our study is not a rare fluke. Rather, it is one of many such relationships that have been documented recently. A brief overview helps to contextualize our own study.

We begin with the research that serves as the springboard for our own. In a 2005 article that appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, Steven Messner and colleagues documented a positive and statistically significant relationship between the intensity of lynching between 1882 and 1930 and homicides for southern counties, including white-on-black homicides, near the end of the twentieth century. Messner and colleagues speculated that it is possible that the specter of lynching provides a psychobehavioral structure for conflict resolution for some southern whites who see it as their right to enact justice when they have a grievance, consistent with historical practice. But the authors acknowledged that their research is limited in that their interpretations are based upon intervening processes that are not examined directly in their study and that should be “explicated more fully and assessed more rigorously in future research” (650).

Subsequently, King et al. (2009) found that contemporary hate crime policing and prosecution are less vigorous where lynching was more prevalent. Expanding on the racial threat hypothesis and social control theories, they affirmed that majority populations recognize a large or growing minority group as threatening (Blalock 1967). King and colleagues found that an increasing black population and past lynching in southern counties are associated with decreases in police reports of hate crimes that target blacks, police compliance with hate crime law, and the probability of prosecuting hate crimes. The authors asserted that “lynching is ultimately an indirect proxy for an intervening

mechanism—*cultural tradition ... and that this general cultural orientation has dissipated but not completely evaporated over time* [emphasis added]” (307).

Jacobs et al. (2005) explored historical lynching’s relationship to current capital punishment. Jacobs and colleagues stated that, historically, white southerners practiced vigilante legal and extralegal violence against blacks to maintain a system of racial dominance (Black 1976) that provided them economic advantage (Blackmon 2008; Mandle 1992; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Thus, lynching during the Jim Crow era is a prime example of vigilantism, used as a tool of racial terrorism (Raper 1933; Tolnay and Beck 1995) by southern whites to keep blacks oppressed in a system that provided them scant opportunity for upward mobility. This leads Jacobs et al. (2005) to have hypothesized that a “*historical residue* of the rancorous and violent conflicts about slavery still influences the ultimate criminal punishment [emphasis added] (657)”—the death penalty. They found that capital punishment counts among blacks in the lower 48 states and in a separate group of 10 southern states are the result of an interaction between the historical lynching of blacks and the current racial threat of a large black population.<sup>3</sup> In other words, states with a larger black population *and* a record of black lynchings more frequently use the death penalty (Jacobs et al. 2005).

Jacobs et al. (2012) investigated the association of lynching and criminal justice sentencing. They found that, net of controls, lynch rates and the threat of increasing black residents explain the rise in penal admission rates in their 49-state sample between the years of 1972 and 2000.<sup>4</sup> They presented statistical evidence that the historical vigilante practice of lynching continues to influence current punitive justice. These findings support both Alexander (2010) and Garland (2010), who argued that contemporary penal discrimination toward blacks is rooted in a historical system of racial control that is now applied in a supposedly “colorblind” fashion.

Each of these studies documents a fascinating and robust relationship between the intensity of historical lynching and a modern-day outcome related to the American criminal justice system. They are unanimous in concluding that, somehow, a history of racial violence creates a legacy that withstands the passage of time. They are, understandably, also unanimous in their inability to inform us about the nature of the temporal transmission of this “legacy” across decades and generations. In the following sections we address this issue by first proposing a conceptual model that helps us to better understand the lasting relevance of lynching in modern American society and second by testing the model by replicating and extending the study by Messner et al. (2005).

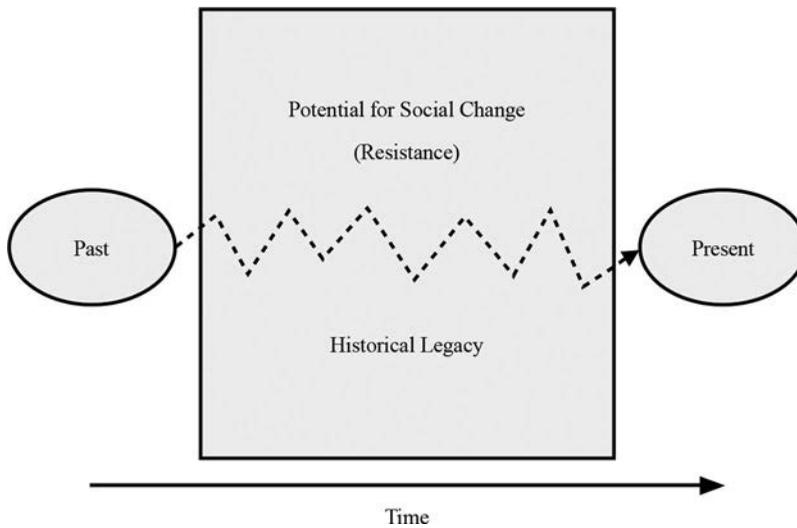
## Conceptual framework

### *A physical science analogy*

Messner et al. (2005) established that the intensity of lynching (events that mostly ended some 80 years ago) is positively related to current white-on-black homicides in the South. This finding begs the question, How can events that occurred in the distant past possibly shape behaviors or conditions in the present? The conceptual model that guides our effort to understand how a racist cultural schema, such as that reflected in the communal act of lynching, could survive across decades to influence contemporary white-on-black homicide borrows logic from a law in the physical sciences. Specifically, Ohm’s Law asserts that the current (measured in amperes) flowing between any two points (e.g.,  $I_1$  and  $I_2$ ) on an electrical circuit is equal to the potential current (measured in volts) adjusted for the amount of resistance (measured in ohms) encountered along the circuit between the two points. The strength of the current is maximized when it encounters no resistance as it travels from point  $I_1$  to point  $I_2$ . Conversely, the strength of the current will be reduced to zero when resistance is complete.

<sup>3</sup>These southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

<sup>4</sup>Jacobs et al. (2012) eliminated Nebraska from their analysis because the nonpartisan legislature in the state makes their variable for Republican strength immeasurable.



**Figure 1.** Heuristic conceptual model depicting the operation of a historical legacy.

In [Figure 1](#) we have adapted loosely the principles articulated by Ohm's Law to fit the problem at hand—the apparent historical legacy of lynching in modern times. The horizontal axis in [Figure 1](#) represents time. Two locations along the continuum of time are depicted by the ovals on the right-hand and left-hand sides of the graphic, labeled *Past* and *Present*. These locations are the equivalent of the two points along an electrical circuit considered by Ohm's Law. The dashed line connecting the two points, labeled *Historical Legacy*, is comparable to the flow of electrical current encountered in Ohm's Law. The shaded rectangle that the dashed line must traverse in order to connect *Past* to *Present* represents the totality of time that elapses between the two. The rectangle, itself, encompasses the diverse and potentially powerful societal transformations—social, political, legal, cultural, demographic—that occur between the *Past* and *Present*. Those changes have the potential to enhance or degrade the efficiency of *Historical Legacy*'s march through time. They correspond to the force of *resistance* in Ohm's Law. We can apply the heuristic model in [Figure 1](#) to the growing literature of the modern-day consequences of lynching, for instance, the study by Messner et al. (2005). The county-level intensity of lynching is located in the left-hand oval. White-on-black homicide is located in the right-hand oval. The positive relationship between the two appears as the dotted line labeled *Historical Legacy*, which flows through decades of time. The strength of that *Historical Legacy* as it exits the right-hand side of the shaded rectangle will be determined by the resistance it encounters on its journey.<sup>5</sup>

### **The role of collective memory**

To probe more deeply into the nature of the concept of *Historical Legacy* featured in [Figure 1](#) we rely on the concept of *collective memory*. Collective memory theory provides a framework for understanding how the past can intrude upon the present. According to collective memory theory, individual and collective behaviors in the present are partly influenced by events of the past (cf. Booth 2006; Griffin and Bollen 2009; Olick and Robbins 1998). This can occur through a communal remembrance of an event that is sustained through storytelling, family and community traditions, monuments, along with other sites where shared histories and values are remembered. These sites support a framework for the

<sup>5</sup>We are not suggesting that the study of social phenomena such as historical legacies lends itself to the application of lawlike propositions and predictions from the physical sciences. We fully recognize the probabilistic nature of the social world. Still, we do believe that it can be beneficial to borrow conceptually from the logic of such laws.

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

It has been theorized that emotionally charged events, such as lynchings, can acquire a powerful notoriety within an area. Local residents are socialized to be aware of the events and often the circumstances that surrounded them. The cumulative result of this notoriety has the potential to create a collective memory that is capable of being passed on from generation to generation (Griffin and Bollen 2009). In his book, *Sundown Towns*, Loewen (2005) provided an excellent example of the operation of collective memory and its connection to specific locations. He wrote of present-day towns that have continued folklore around “hanging trees,” where past lynchings happened. These “hanging trees” are symbolic of white supremacy and keep violent stories related to the past alive, along with the race-based beliefs they represent.

An exemplar of this process is the local lore that evolved regarding the “Hanging Bridge” that spans the Chickasawhay River near Shubuta, Mississippi. In *Hanging Bridge: A Lynching Site and a Civil Rights Century*, historian Jason Ward (2016) recounted the history of the local bridge that was the site of a number of lynching deaths and the larger meaning that it acquired in Shubuta. Ward wrote (2016:5)

With its *bloody history, and the myths and legends it inspired*, the Hanging Bridge served to shore up white control and deter black resistance. The structure was not just a monument but also an “altar” to white supremacy, a place “to offer up as sacrifices” anyone who threatened that power [emphasis added].

Ward traced the cultural influence of the Hanging Bridge all the way through the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s in Clarke County, Mississippi.

Important to note, collective memories are tied to place, in that they possibly render “immobile the people and events associated with them, and in so doing they become locales of the preservation of the past, sustaining frameworks for remembrance” (Booth 2006:29). The historical memory of racist cultures and institutions can be spatially embedded but with the potential for temporal transmission, which could partially account for the spatial covariation between the historical intensity of lynching and modern white-on-black homicide observed by Messner et al. (2005).

Hence, the repetitive act of lynching is a reflection of racial norms, culturally concretized through its ritualistic and ceremonial structure. Accordingly, lynching could be representative of a broader zeitgeist of racial superiority of southern whites that could have had a lasting influence on the shared consciousness and culture of contemporary southerners due to its intense and communal character. Consequently, collective memory theory would propose that the ethos of extreme racial domination reflected by lynchings resulted in a historical legacy that extended beyond the end of the lynching era, possibly reaching all the way to the present.

### ***Defining and measuring “resistance”***

The successful historical legacy (or strong collective memory) connecting the two ovals in Figure 1 must traverse the period represented by the shaded rectangle and overcome any resistance that it encounters along the way. By “resistance” we mean social forces that contradict or dilute the “bloody history, and the myths and legends it inspired” (Ward 2016:5). These social forces could include, for example, changes to legal strictures, institutional structures, popular culture, or demographic composition. At one extreme, such changes have the potential to block entirely the temporal transmission of collective memory. At the other extreme, minimal change could allow nearly unfettered transmission of collective memory across time. It is, of course, impossible to (1) conduct a complete inventory of the social forces that shape resistance to the temporal transmission of a historical legacy, or (2) measure with great confidence the strength of their influence on resistance. It would be foolish to claim these abilities or to undertake an effort at their execution. Nonetheless, with those limitations in mind, we do believe it is possible to identify a subset of relevant intervening social forces and to assess their ability to account for the observed covariation between historical and modern phenomena (e.g., lynching and homicide).

We propose two general types of social forces to represent the resistance (or lack of it) that any historical legacy, or the transmission of a collective memory, must overcome—institutional based

and population based. Institutional-based forces are social structures that allow individuals to express culturally defined roles that are based upon a shared history to achieve the collective goals of a community. Population-based forces, as conceived in this study, occur around the migration behavior of people, both into and out of communities. These social forces might be conceived, simplistically, as “dimmer switches” that determine the strength of the flow of a collective memory from one period to the next. To test their efficacy as “resistors” or “facilitators” for an apparent historical legacy, evidence under two conditions must be compared. The first condition consists of the covariation between the historical and modern phenomena, *while ignoring the implicated social forces*. Evidence for the second condition, a sort of counterfactual, is obtained by *holding constant the social forces* or, metaphorically, closing their switches, which in turn should impede the transmission of the historical legacy.

One important institutional-based resistor/facilitator is situated within the system of educational segregation. While white-on-black lynching began to recede around 1930, prior studies clearly demonstrate that southern white racial subjugation of blacks remained strong in the educational arena long after 1930 (Anderson 1988; Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Margo 1990; Woodward 1955). Educational segregation had been the norm in the South and was solidified by the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which argued that segregation did not infringe upon the Fourteenth Amendment. This court decision allowed black schools to be undervalued, rendering them inferior to white academies, and effectively limiting southern blacks’ accrual of human capital. But in 1954 the separation of black and white educational facilities was deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Yet this was not the end of segregated schools in the South. Many wealthier whites placed their children in white-flight segregationist academies (WFSAs) to keep them separated from blacks (Andrews 2002; Porter, Howell, and Hempel 2014). Due to the tuition and fees required by these private institutions, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for blacks to enroll. Therefore, segregated private academies were cultural sites that allowed white communities to continue imposing racial separation in schooling, despite the Supreme Court’s ruling and continued pressure from civil rights activists. Those communities that initiated these programs not only provided a focal point of racist expression for those who organized them but most likely fostered corresponding discriminatory beliefs in the children who attended those schools. Those communities that embraced WFSAs more completely, in essence, invoked a social force that had the potential to weaken the degree of resistance to an historical legacy dating from the lynching era.

Southern politics represent a second potential institutional-based social force that had the potential to sustain a collective memory of white supremacy and racially motivated violence over time. During the lynching era, established southern politicians publicly endorsed violent practices toward blacks. For instance, Tom Watson, a U.S. Congressman representing Georgia from 1891 to 1893, and later a U.S. Senator between 1921 to 1922 stated

In the South, we have to lynch him [the Negro] occasionally, and flog him, now and then, to keep him from blaspheming the Almighty, by his conduct, on account of his smell and his color ... Lynch law is a good sign: it shows that *a sense of justice yet lives among the people* [emphasis added]. (Woodward 1963:432)

Watson was arguing that the physical dominance of blacks was a necessary aspect of a just, but racist, society.

In 1897, Ben “Pitchfork” Tillman, then serving as a U.S. senator from South Carolina, announced from the floor of the Senate that “[w]e of the South have never recognized the right of the negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be equal to the white men, and will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and daughters without lynching him” (as cited in Logue and Dorgan 1981:49). With this statement, Tillman encapsulated many southerners’ perspective on the issue of blacks in the South: that blacks were inferior to whites and vigilante violence was legitimate and required to control them.

This pattern of political, race-baiting rhetoric was mimicked, albeit with less severity, by two U.S. presidential candidates from the South after the lynching era, Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George

Wallace in 1968. Both men ran on a segregation platform and received strong support from southern voters. Thurmond won in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, while Wallace prevailed in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. In a speech given in 1948, Thurmond revealed his white supremacist convictions when he said, “I wanna tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that there’s not enough troops in the army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigger race into our theatres into our swimming pools into our homes and into our churches” (Philpot 2007:1). This quotation demonstrates Thurmond’s rigidly racist response to the federal government’s effort to expand social integration.

Fifteen years later, in 1963, George Wallace gave his inaugural address after his election as governor of Alabama, where he announced, “In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” (Carter 2000). The segregationist viewpoints expressed by Thurmond and Wallace, and reminiscent of Watson and Tillman, were shared by many of their southern constituents. Hence, those that voted for Thurmond and Wallace demonstrated their allegiance to a system of segregation and social structure that was also present during the lynching era. Yet, support for Thurmond and Wallace varied throughout the South. In terms of our conceptual framework, those communities that evinced greater support for the two segregationist candidates provided less resistance to the temporal transmission of a historical legacy.

The population-based social force draws from the notion of “population churning” and its consequences for resistance to the temporal transmission of collective memory. In short, we contend that it is more difficult to maintain a culture of extreme racial hostility across decades where there is higher turnover in the white population as a result of geographic mobility. Both high levels of out-migration and in-migration could lead to the dilution of a local culture supportive of white supremacy and racially motivated violence through an influx of new ideas, attitudes, and values from individuals who are not directly associated with the past racist events of a particular location, or because those who leave weaken the preexisting racist culture through their exodus. Conversely, those counties that had small amounts of out-migration and in-migration experienced greater population stability and a collective memory of racial oppression associated with lynching would encounter less resistance in such settings as it passed on from one generation of community residents to the next.

In sum, we propose these institutional-based and population-based social forces as possible “barometers” for the level of resistance encountered by collective memory (and a potential historical legacy) as it travels from the past to the present, from generation to generation. We submit that resistance was lower, and the “dimmer switch” more fully open, in southern communities that demonstrated stronger support for educational and social segregation and that had experienced relative population stagnation. In this way, we believe they can help us to understand better the recently observed associations between the intensity of historical lynching and modern-day criminal justice outcomes, including the relationship between lynching and modern white-on-black homicide documented by Messner et al. (2005).

We recognize that using the term “resistance” to refer to the ease with which a racist cultural schema might be transmitted across time creates the potential for confusion with another form of resistance, that by southern blacks against the oppressive conditions of Jim Crow, including racial violence. Indeed, the historical record includes many instances in which southern blacks reacted powerfully against white supremacy and Jim Crow, including some cases of armed resistance (see, e.g., Bailey and Tolnay 2015; Schultz 2005; Shapiro 1988; Sitton and Conrad 2005). Ultimately, of course, it was black insurgency by southern blacks during the civil rights movement that brought legal Jim Crow to an end (McAdam, 1982, Morris 1984). While also important to a story of the historical experience of southern African Americans, these forms of resistance are not the focus of our study.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Indeed, the possible relationship between these two forms of “resistance” is open to question. For example, would higher levels of resistance from the local black population strengthen or weaken the transmission of historical racist schemas? This is an interesting topic for future research but beyond the scope of our current study.

## Research questions and hypotheses

In the statistical analyses that follow, we evaluate the ability of our conceptual framework to illuminate the persistence of a culture of racial supremacy, and accompanying racially motivated violence, across two distant historical eras. Specifically, we introduce the indicators of resistance, just discussed, in a sequential fashion to Messner et al.'s original model that revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between lynching and recent white-on-black homicide in southern counties. The indicators we include in our analysis capture the ease or difficulty with which racially oppressive collective memories in specific locales in the South can be transmitted across time. These indicators fall temporally between the lynching era and white-on-black argument homicide and, therefore, allow the measurement of the cultural resistance facing the survival of a collective memory and the resulting historical legacy.

The first indicator reflects the existence of WFSAs that spread throughout the South between 1954 and 1975, after the verdict on *Brown v. Board of Education*. The second indicator is based on the level of political support for the segregationist U.S. presidential candidates, Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George Wallace in 1968. The last indicator measures county-level decadal net-migration rates between 1950 and 1980 that provide insight into the amount of population churning experienced within a county. Population churning, we contend, increases cultural resistance to the survival of collective memories and the creation of historical legacies. A more detailed discussion of these indicators appears in the upcoming Data and Methods section.

Our primary objective is to assess the extent to which the baseline association between lynching and homicide observed by Messner and colleagues (2005) is affected by the inclusion of these institutional- and population-based characteristics. And, if there is attenuation in the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide, how large is that change? We hypothesize that both institutional-based indicators are negatively related to the latent concept of "resistance." That is, the survival of collective memories associated with the emergence of a legacy of lynching are more likely in settings where WFSAs are more common and support for segregationist political candidates is stronger. Conversely, we contend that the degree of population churning (i.e., either high in-migration or high out-migration) is positively related to the latent concept of resistance. Finally, we hypothesize that the original positive relationship between the intensity of historical lynching and recent white-on-black homicides will be seriously attenuated, or disappear entirely, when the indicators of resistance are controlled.

## Data and methods<sup>7</sup>

### *Lynching, homicide, and county clusters*

The success of our investigation requires that we first replicate as closely as possible the original finding of a positive relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide found by Messner et al. (2005). Without successful replication any changes in that positive relationship as additional variables are included in the model would be open to competing explanations. Therefore, with respect to their data and methods, we adopt uncritically their measurement and modeling decisions, with the exception of the indicators of resistance. To evaluate the consequences of introducing those indicators on the association between southern lynching and modern white-on-black homicide, we confine our analysis to cross-sectional county and county clusters within the same 10 southern states included in the study by Messner et al. (2005): Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Over the 100+ year period that our analysis investigates, counties were created, others disappeared, and some were reconfigured in our 10-state sample. To address this issue of changing county boundaries we use the Horan and Hargis (1995) County Longitudinal Template, which "groups 1990 categories into larger units on the basis of earlier historical county boundary configurations." The

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<sup>7</sup>This discussion draws heavily from Messner et al.'s (2005) Data and Methods section due to the scope of our research questions.

template starts in 1990, moving back in time, decade by decade, creating county clusters based on historical boundary configurations for each decade until the desired decade is reached. Also, to maintain as much geographic detail as possible, we adhere to Messner et al. (2005) by not replacing individual counties with county clusters in two situations: (1) when there was no lynching within a county cluster and (2) when lynching activity happened after the boundary changes were completed.<sup>8</sup> Those counties and county clusters that did not have a black population at risk of homicide were deleted from our analysis. Each variable included in our analysis is configured using the Horan and Hargis template to ensure geographic comparability over time, which leaves us with a sample size of 660 county-based units.<sup>9</sup>

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

SHR has problems of missing data. It underestimates the actual number of homicide offenders because the reports do not provide total coverage for every state; as well, offender characteristics are at times missing. Choosing to ignore these issues would understate homicide levels and bias any time-series analysis. We solve these challenges by instituting a technique that gives a stronger weight to cases with complete information that are analogous to cases that have missing information (Fox 2001, 2004).<sup>11</sup>

The focal independent variable in our models is the county-level lynching count between 1882 and 1930 for the 10 southern states supplied by the Tolnay and Beck Lynching Database.<sup>12</sup> The Tolnay and Beck Lynching Database is regarded as the most accurate count of lynching victims available (see Tolnay and Beck [1995] for more details).

### **Indicators of resistance**

We include six county-level variables in our analysis to represent the sociocultural resistance within a county to the temporal transmission of collective memories and the creation of historical legacies. These variables are as follows: the count of WFSAs, the percentage of people who voted for U.S. presidential candidate Strom Thurmond in 1948, the percentage who voted for U.S. presidential candidate George Wallace in 1968, and three decade-specific migration measures. These indicators were not included in the study by Messner et al. (2005).

The first institutional-based indicator of resistance is constructed from data on WFSAs that measures the persistence of racial educational segregation in the South into the 1990s. To be considered a WFSAs four rules were used: (1) a school could not be religiously affiliated; (2) a school must be at least 95% white; (3) a school must be in a county with at least one school district that is 30% minority; and (4) a school must have started between 1954 and 1975, which is during the height of schooling desegregation, and functioning as of the 1993–1994 school year.<sup>13</sup> We use the total count of WFSAs within a county or county cluster as our measure.

<sup>8</sup>These counties, as identified by their Federal Information Processing Standards codes, are not formed into clusters as determined by the variable "id1880" within the Horan and Hargis (1995) County Longitudinal Template: 5023, 5063, 5141, and 5145; 12087; 21007 and 21039; 37063, 37135, and 37183; 37051, 37093, and 37155; and 45019, 47049, 47133, and 47137.

<sup>9</sup>Upon adding decade-specific migration data to the original Messner et al. data set, Chattahoochee County, GA, was dropped because it did not exist in the county migration data, thus decreasing our data set from 661 to 660. Analysis reveals only an extremely small change in model results using the 660 sample compared to the 661 sample, not challenging the validity of our results.

<sup>10</sup>We thank Steven Messner, Robert Baller, and Steven Zevenbergen for generously sharing these data.

<sup>11</sup>On this point, we replicate the same methodology used by Messner et al. (2005) through application of the weight "WTIMPST2."

<sup>12</sup>To stay consistent with Messner et al., the lynching variable is operationalized as lynchings of both blacks and whites. In their analysis, limiting the lynching measure to only black or white victims is inconsequential to their results.

<sup>13</sup>We adopt Jeremy Porter and Frank Howell's definition of a WFSAs and thank them for generously providing these data.

Two political institutional-based indicators of resistance are derived from data on levels of support for segregationist presidential candidates, Strom Thurmond and George Wallace. Each variable is operationalized by taking the percentage of those who voted for each candidate in their respective elections at the level of the county or county cluster. Since political candidates are representatives of their constituents, testing for the strength of the vote for Thurmond and Wallace will allow us to tap the persistence of a culture of racial domination and hostility among southern whites at a time between the lynching era and the recent white-on-black homicides that compose our dependent variable. These measures are created from data available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale 2006).

Last, we include variables that represent decade-specific county or county cluster-level white population churning from 1950 to 1980 (Bowles et al. 1990; White, Mueser, and Tierney 1987).<sup>14</sup> The inclusion of migration variables is appropriate because counties with either high in-migration or high out-migration rates could have had difficulty maintaining a traditional culture of racial domination over time (i.e., greater resistance). That being so, we use the absolute value of the net-migration rates for 1950–1960, 1960–1970, and 1970–1980, meaning that either high negative or high positive net-migration rates are interpreted as a dilution of a locale’s traditional culture. Breaking the absolute value of net-migration rate into three decade-specific measures, rather than using one variable to measure migration across the 30-year period, reduces the likelihood of having one decade of heavy out-migration that is counterbalanced by a later decade of heavy in-migration, or vice versa, resulting in a net-migration rate close to zero—thereby obscuring extreme population churning of two kinds and thereby suggesting population and cultural stability.

Conceptually, and revisiting the Ohm’s Law electrical analogy, these indicators of resistance are hypothesized to function as “dimmer switches” that affect the ease or difficulty facing the potential temporal transmission of a collective memory and the emergence of a historical legacy. By adding these covariates to the original equation estimated by Messner et al. we are, figuratively, closing the switch and impeding the temporal transmission. As a result, the original relationship between historical lynchings and recent homicides should be attenuated.

### **Control variables**

For control variables, we incorporate well-known contemporary predictors of homicide that are measured for 1990, which is the midpoint of the time frame for the white-on-black argument homicide data (Land, McCall, and Cohen 1990). The control variables include the following: percentage of white families below poverty; Gini index of white household income inequality; the natural log of median white household income (reverse coded); percentage of whites unemployed, percentage of single-headed white households, and percentage of single-headed white family households with own children present; and the natural log of the 1990 population size is multiplied by 10, with its effects constrained to one.<sup>15</sup> Again, we adopt uncritically this set of control variables from the original study by Messner et al. (2005) to ensure successful replication of their findings, which will serve as the baseline model for our analyses. The data for these variables come from the Summary Tape File 3 for 1990 by the Bureau of the Census (Census of Population and Housing 1992).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The migration data from 1950 to 1970 is produced by Bowles et al. (1990), and the 1970 to 1980 migration data is created by White et al. (1987), with both being distributed by Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

<sup>15</sup>SHR received homicide data from Florida only for six years and Kentucky only for nine years of the study duration; hence, population figures for Florida and Kentucky counties are multiplied by six and nine, respectively.

<sup>16</sup>Some of the models estimated by Messner et al. (2005) also included the percentage of churches in the county in 1850 that were Presbyterian and level of agricultural production in 1880 to tap the local strength of a Scots-Irish tradition and cultural code of honor. However, inclusion of those variables in their analysis of white-on-black argument homicides reduced by nearly 50% the number of cases available. Furthermore, neither variable attained statistical significance, and the relationship between lynching and homicide remained statistically significant. We chose to replicate their model (Messner et al. 2005:650) that did not include those two predictors.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for white-on-black homicide, lynching, and indicators of resistance.

	Messner et al. Baseline 1880-1995 (N = 661)				Adjusted Sample 1880-1995 (N = 660)			
	Min	Mean	Max	SD	Min	Mean	Max	SD
<i>Focal Variables</i>								
SHR White Offenders, Black Victims	0	.709	52	2.754	0	.709	52	2.756
Lynching, 1882-1930	0	4.151	64	6.098	0	4.157	64	6.101
<i>Control Variables</i>								
White Resource Deprivation	-2.552	0	4.336	.958	-2.552	.001	4.336	.958
White Family Structure	-3.308	0	3.797	.999	-3.308	.004	3.797	.993
Log of White Population Size	8.898	12.363	17.197	1.183	8.898	12.364	17.197	1.183
% of Whites Aged 15-29	10.385	21.578	50.163	3.773	10.385	21.535	45.791	3.607
% Urban	0	34.261	99.950	26.554	0	34.182	99.950	26.497
<i>Indicators of Resistance</i>								
White-Flight Seg. Academies					0	.273	10	.829
% Thurmond					.078	29.488	97.088	28.629
% Wallace					1.103	39.867	87.802	19.627
<i>Absolute Value Net-Migration Rates</i>								
1950-1960					0	227.362	13367	626.693
1960-1970					0	132.951	5593	345.985
1970-1980					.189	163.404	1814.525	189.641

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

To remain consistent with the approach used by Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen we reduce the number of control variables within the models by performing a maximum likelihood factor analysis with an oblique rotation.<sup>17</sup> The results of the factor analysis show that two underlying factors are identified.<sup>18</sup> First, the factor *white resource deprivation* is most strongly correlated with the percentage of white families below poverty, Gini index of white household income inequality, the natural log of median white household income (reverse coded), and percentage of unemployed whites. The second factor, *white family structure*, is correlated most strongly with the percentage of white family households that are single-headed and the percentage of single-headed white family households with own children present.

Upon adding decade-specific migration data to the original Messner, Baller, and Zevenbergen data set, Chattahoochee County, GA, had to be dropped because it did not exist in the county migration data. This reduces the sample size from Messner et al.'s 661 observations to 660. Accordingly, it is important to verify that dropping this single county does not effectively change the results found in Messner et al.'s article. Turning to Table 1, which contains two sets of descriptive statistics—one for Messner et al.'s analysis and another for our investigation—reveals that the means and standard deviations for both samples are nearly identical across all six variables.

### Analytic strategy

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

<sup>17</sup>The factor analysis is done in Stata 12.

<sup>18</sup>Percentage urban and percentage whites ages 15 through 29 are not loaded on these factors, and thus they are not included in the factor variables, but they are included as separate control variables in the analysis. Refer to Appendix Table A1 for detailed results of the factor analysis.

The first estimated model establishes the baseline association between lynching and white-on-black argument homicide already demonstrated by Messner et al. and includes the control variables of white resource deprivation, white family structure, log of white population size, percentage of whites ages 15 to 29, and percentage urban. Subsequent models add, sequentially, the proposed indicators of resistance to the right-hand side of the baseline model: WFSA; percentage who voted for Thurmond in 1948; percentage who voted for Wallace in 1968; and the absolute value of net-migration rates for 1950 to 1960, 1960 to 1970, and 1970 to 1980.

To test whether the differences between lynching coefficients are statistically significant across the nested models just described, we use the approach suggested by Clogg, Petkova, and Haritou (cf. Clogg et al. 1995). This method compares the observed difference between coefficients with the standard error of the difference to determine whether two coefficients are statistically significantly different from each other. Since our primary objective is to compare the lynching coefficient from the foundation model estimated by Messner et al. to the corresponding coefficient in subsequent models that include the proposed measures of resistance, we conduct the procedure suggested by Clogg et al. four times.

## Results

Table 2 demonstrates that we are successful in replicating the original findings of Messner et al. (2005). It is apparent that the results from our replication of Messner et al.'s baseline model, using all 661 county units, are exactly the same. When we drop from 661 to 660 observations, in order to accommodate the addition of the migration variables, our results remain virtually identical to those of Messner et al. Most important, the coefficients for the lynching variables for all three samples are identical at  $b = .023$  with the same standard error ( $SE = .004$ ), indicating that areas in the South that experienced more lynchings between 1882 and 1930 tended to have more white-on-black argument homicides between 1986 and 1995.

The only notable difference between the Messner et al. baseline model and the adjusted sample model are in the control variables. The measures of white resource deprivation, white family structure, and percentage of whites ages 15 to 29 all have slight differences in their coefficients but are all in the same direction. White family structure is now significant at ( $p < .05$ ) in the adjusted sample while it is not significant in the Messner et al. baseline model.<sup>19</sup> The control variable of percentage urban is identical in the two models.

The results that are of central importance for assessing support for our conceptual framework are presented in Table 3. Model 1 in Table 3 simply repeats the coefficients for the original baseline model used by Messner et al. but using the adjusted sample of 660 observations that remains after dropping Chattahoochee County, GA, which lacks migration data (see Footnote 9). Model 2 adds WFSA to the adjusted sample in Model 1. WFSA is positive but does not have a significant association with white-on-black homicide. The addition of this indicator of resistance has little effect on the positive relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide. The coefficient for lynching is reduced only from .023 to .022 and remains statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . Predictably, then, Table 4 shows that the difference between the coefficients for lynching in Models 1 and 2 is not significant, with a  $p$ -value of .728.<sup>20</sup>

Model 3 introduces the first political institutional-based indicator of resistance, the percentage who voted for the U.S. presidential candidate Strom Thurmond in 1948, to the model, along with all predictors used in Model 2. The coefficient for the percentage who voted for Thurmond is positive

<sup>19</sup>This actually represents a very minor change from the original results reported by Messner et al. Although not attaining statistical significance by conventional thresholds, the  $t$ -value for the coefficient representing white family structure in their analysis is 1.79 (.195/.109).

<sup>20</sup>We experimented with an alternative measurement for the WFSA variable by dividing the number of academies by the total county white population. We found that the alternative measurement strategy had no effect—either on the statistical significance of the coefficient for the variable itself or for the partial relationship between lynching and homicide.

**Table 2.** Comparison of negative binomial results between messner et al. baseline model, the replicated sample, and the adjusted sample.

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

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

\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001 (two-tailed tests).

(*b* = .010) and statistically significant at *p* < .05, meaning that those counties with higher vote counts for Thurmond have higher levels of white-on-black homicide. Of particular interest is the finding that the addition of this indicator is accompanied by a 26.75% decrease in the coefficient for lynching from Model 1. Furthermore, the statistical significance of the relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicides is moderately reduced from *p* < .001 to *p* < .01. However, as shown in Table 4, the absolute change in the coefficient for lynching between Models 1 and 3 is not statistically significant (*p* < .241). Thus, even though the coefficient for lynching is reduced from .023 in Model 1 to .016 in Model 3, the inclusion of both WFSA and the percentage who voted for Thurmond has yet to result in a statistically significant reduction in the lynching coefficient.

**Table 3.** Counts of 1986-1995 supplementary homicide reports argument homicides that involve white offenders and black victims, including indicators of resistance; 1880-1995 county clusters.

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
White Resource Deprivation	-.204 (.204)	-.200 (.200)	-.250 (.184)	-.231 (.167)	-.339 (.174)
White Family Structure	.227* (.106)	.228* (.107)	.306*** (.086)	.312*** (.084)	.243** (.078)
Percent of Whites Aged 15-29	.003 (.031)	.003 (.032)	.006 (.029)	.006 (.028)	.0004 (.026)
Percent Urban	.008 (.006)	.008 (.005)	.006 (.005)	.008 (.004)	.007 (.004)
Lynching, 1882-1930	.023*** (.004)	.022*** (.006)	.016** (.006)	.011 (.007)	.008 (.004)
<i>Indicators of Resistance</i>					
White-Flight Seg. Academies		.015 (.042)	-.038 (.052)	.002 (.050)	-.029 (.049)
% Thurmond			.010* (.004)	.007 (.004)	.007 (.004)
% Wallace				.011 (.007)	.012 (.007)
<i>Absolute Value Net-Migration Rates</i>					
1950-1960					.0002 (.0002)
1960-1970					-.0001 (.0004)
1970-1980					-.002*** (.0005)
Constant	-14.469*** (.673)	-14.464*** (.678)	-14.754*** (.669)	.15 177*** (.764)	-14.691*** (.736)
BIC	1016.253	1022.712	1020.750	1017.076	996.410

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

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**Table 4.** Testing the difference in the lynching coefficient across models presented in Table 3.

Difference in Lynching Coefficient	<i>Difference</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Model 1 - Model 2	.001	(.003)	.728
Model 1 - Model 3	.007	(.006)	.241
Model 1 - Model 4	.012	(.007)	.088
Model 1 - Model 5	.016	(.007)	.028

Model 4 adds the percentage who voted for Wallace in the 1968 U.S. presidential election to the predictor variables contained in Model 3. The coefficient for Wallace is positive but not significant in its relationship with white-on-black homicide. With the addition of this indicator of resistance, the coefficient for the lynching variable is reduced by 52% from Model 1 ( $b = .023$  to  $b = .011$ ) and becomes statistically nonsignificant. As reported in Table 4, the difference between the lynching coefficients in Models 1 and 4 approaches conventional levels of statistical significance with a  $p$  value of .08. The coefficients for the count of WFSA and the percentage who voted for Thurmond are both positive, but neither is statistically significant. It should be noted that the variables for the percentage who voted for Thurmond and the percentage who voted for Wallace are positively correlated ( $r = .373$ ) and therefore share explanatory power. Also, there is a slight reduction in the BIC scores from Model 3 (1020.750) to Model 4 (1017.076).

Model 5 incorporates all of the prior variables, with the addition of the absolute value of net-migration rates for 1950 to 1960, 1960 to 1970, and 1970 to 1980. The only significant indicator of resistance is the population-based variable of the absolute value of the net-migration rate for 1970 to 1980, which is negative ( $b = -.002$ ). This indicates, net of other predictors, that an increase in migration within counties and county clusters is associated with a decrease in white-on-black homicide, net of all other variables in the model. The focal independent variable of lynching is attenuated further in Model 5 to  $b = .008$  and is statistically nonsignificant; this represents a 65% reduction in the lynching coefficient between Model 1 and Model 5. Furthermore, and most important conceptually, when all of the institutional- and population-based indicators are added in Model 5 the *difference between* the lynching coefficient in Model 1 and Model 5 becomes statistically significant at  $p < .028$ . Also, the coefficient for the percentage who voted for Thurmond is positive ( $b = .007$ ) and close to conventional levels of statistical significance at  $p < .080$ . Similarly, the coefficient for the percentage who voted for Wallace is positive ( $b = .012$ ), with a  $p$  value of .087. These results suggest that as the percentage of those who voted for either candidate increased respectively, so too did white-on-black homicide. Finally, Model 5 has the lowest BIC score (996.410) out of all of the models considered in Table 3, confirming that Model 5's ability to fit the data is superior to the other models.

In sum, by controlling for the indicators of resistance we are able to account completely for the originally observed positive and statistically significant relationship between historical lynching and modern homicide. We emphasize that it is the change in that relationship, as we add covariates that tap the strength of resistance to the temporal transmission of collective memories and the establishment of a legacy of lynching, that is most relevant for our research aims. Whether the specific indicators of resistance are statistically significant at conventional levels is less important, especially considering the nontrivial correlations among them.<sup>21</sup> Metaphorically, then, a counterfactual situation in which these switches are closed (i.e., few segregationist academies, low support for Thurmond and Wallace, and extensive population churning) provides less opportunity for a cultural climate of white supremacy and racially motivated violence to pass from the past to the present.

<sup>21</sup>See Appendix Table A2 for bivariate correlations of variables utilized in the analysis. In addition, we investigated VIF and Tolerance values for all predictors in the multivariate equations. Only values for the absolute value net-migration rates for 1950 to 1960 and 1960 to 1970 show relatively high VIF values at 4.25 and 5.08, respectively. The remaining covariates in our analysis have VIF values below 2. When the decade-specific migration measures are combined into a single variable—either through the addition of standardized scores or through a factor created with confirmatory factor analysis—the essential findings reported in Table 3 remain unchanged.

Communities with the opposite profile would offer a much more hospitable environment for such temporal transmission.

### Supplementary analyses

We also conducted a number of additional supplementary analyses to assess the robustness of the findings reported in Table 3. First, we performed the same sequential testing procedure demonstrated in Table 3 with an additional covariate, and possible indicator of resistance, that represents the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in counties and county clusters. This variable is measured as the count of Ku Klux Klan groups in the area from 1964 to 1966 (U.S. House of Representatives 1967).<sup>22</sup> Data for this variable are available for all of the southern states used in our main analysis except Kentucky, which reduces the sample size to 571 counties or county clusters. In the model that includes all of the other covariates, the lynching coefficient reduces to .009 from .020 in Model 1; the difference between these two coefficients falls barely outside conventional levels of significance ( $p < .07$ ).

Second, we consider the consequences for the results reported in Model 5 of Table 3 when percentage black in the population of the county or county cluster is added as a predictor variable. The coefficient for percentage black is positive and statistically significant, as is predicted by traditional threat models of discriminatory behavior by the majority group against a minority group (e.g., Blalock 1967). When percentage black is added to the right-side of Model 5, the coefficient for the lynching variable is further reduced from .008 to .005 and remains nonsignificant. In addition, the difference between it and the lynching coefficient in Model 5 is not significant. Because Messner et al. did not include a measure of racial composition in their analysis, and due to the lack of a significant difference in the lynching coefficient from Model 5, we decided in favor of not including racial composition in the model specifications reported in Table 3.

Third, we considered a variety of nonlinear effects and multiplicative interactions (e.g., between lynching and the migration variables). None of these alternative model specifications improved model fit<sup>23</sup> or significantly altered the conclusions that we draw from the evidence reported in Table 3.<sup>24</sup>

### Summary and conclusions

The primary aim of this study is to interrogate the recently observed positive relationship between the historical intensity of lynching and a variety of modern-day criminal justice outcomes—a so-called legacy of lynching. More specifically, we first proposed a conceptual framework that described the intensity of the transmission of collective memory and the likelihood of the emergence of a historical legacy as the function of (1) the original cultural climate that supported the historical conditions/events and (2) the resistance encountered during the temporal transmission of the collective memory that is based on those conditions/events. We then replicated the study by Messner and colleagues (2005) that found a positive and significant relationship between the intensity of historical lynching and recent white-on-black homicides in southern counties. Third, we extended that study to assess the robustness of the lynching–homicide relationship upon the inclusion of indicators of resistance to the temporal flow of a collective memory regarding white supremacy and the legitimacy of extra-legal violence against blacks. We found that controlling for the institutional- and population-based indicators of resistance reduced the relationship between lynching and homicide to nonsignificance.

This research was partially motivated by an observation made by King et al. (2009) in which they stated that “deeply ingrained traditions ‘die hard,’ and ... that traces of the cultural sentiment that permitted lynching linger into the present and are manifest today” (350). But one of the central

<sup>22</sup>We thank Rory McVeigh for generously sharing these data.

<sup>23</sup>We test for the interaction between lynching and the migration variables to see if there is any evidence that population churning moderates the effect of lynching on homicide. None of the interactions terms are statistically significant. Moreover, we estimate models that use black population churning and none of the decade specific absolute value net-migration rates are significant.

<sup>24</sup>The results of these alternative analyses are available from Ryan Gabriel upon request.

difficulties in understanding the “cultural sentiment” that has endured in the southern ethos since the lynching era is knowing more about the conditions under which those sentiments are more likely to survive across time. As Messner et al. (2005) noted, “At an empirical level, the daunting challenge that had frustrated scholars in this area for decades remains—how to locate theoretically meaningful measures of cultural orientations that are suitable for quantitative research” (651). Despite the difficulty of this challenge, in this study we have taken meaningful steps toward a greater conceptual and empirical understanding of the “legacy of lynching” that undergirds the positive relationship between lynchings that occurred between 1882 and 1930 and white-on-black homicides in the South between 1986 and 1995.

Our conceptual framework and the empirical evidence obtained from a test of that framework are suggestive of how the values that legitimize the violent act of lynching are sustained over generations by a collective memory, which in turn influences white-on-black homicide in the modern era. In particular, our conceptual framework illustrates how selected institutional-based (political, educational) and population-based (migration) dynamics served to either impede or facilitate the transmission of collective memory by shaping the degree of resistance encountered during the temporal transmission of collective memory. Therefore, we fully agree with Griffin’s (2004) assertion that the “past is not the past at all—that it, instead, persists into the present” (544). However, we would argue that it is also important to consider the potential obstacles encountered as ideas, values, beliefs, prejudices, loyalties, and conflicts navigate the temporal distance between the past and present.

This research is not without limitations. We considered a small set of indicators of resistance to the temporal transmission of a collective memory supportive of white supremacy and racially motivated violence. Clearly, the potential elements of a “barometer of resistance” exceed education, politics, and the population processes considered here. It should be possible to expand the indicators of resistance to include housing segregation and racial exclusion (Loewen 2005; Massey and Denton 1993), religious doctrines (Bailey and Snedker 2011), and general discrimination and segregation in everyday life such as public transportation, hospitals, and cemeteries (Litwack 1998). An exploration of the possible role of opposition to, and insurgency against, the oppressive conditions of Jim Crow by southern blacks in shaping the transmission of an historical legacy of lynching should also be considered in future research. Thus, we certainly would not claim that we have identified the only possible indicators of resistance. That those which we have considered are able to completely account for the observed relationship between lynching and white-on-black homicide observed by Messner et al. (2005) is encouraging. Nevertheless, future research should consider additional indicators of resistance that are consistent with our conceptual framework.

It should also be noted that in our study we are unable to directly measure the transmission process of a white supremacist culture over time. Our indicators of resistance represent features of southern society that indirectly tap the ease or difficulty with which a white supremacist culture might be transmitted over time, within a specific locale. Exactly *how* the elements of that culture are carried forward from generation to generation remains beyond our grasp. As a consequence, given data limitations and the nonexperimental design of our study, we cannot claim that we have identified the precise causal mechanisms through which this transmission process operates.

Our study is also limited to a single example of the many cases in which the intensity of historical lynching has been found to be significantly related to recent outcomes such as capital punishment, incarceration, or the enforcement of hate crime laws. Future research should assess the extent to which our conceptual framework can be successfully applied to those other findings that suggest the operation of a “legacy of lynching.” Future studies should also reassess previous research that observes associations between historical lynching and modern negative outcomes using respecified dependent variables and alternative modeling strategies. Given the motivation for our study, which depended heavily on accurate replication, we were required to adhere closely to the original model specification employed by Messner et al. (2005). Moving beyond our replication and extension, researchers should not be so rigidly constrained.

Finally, it is important to recognize that while the lynching era considered in our research witnessed the greatest number of lynchings and the most victims, the practice of lynching continued into the 1940s and beyond (see, e.g., Smead 1986; Wexler 2003). Therefore, lynching's influence on modern-day outcomes is potentially nearer than what many contemporary studies of the topic imply and, thereby, as much a part of the present as of the past.

Despite these limitations, we believe that the conceptual framework we have proposed, and the empirical evidence we obtained by applying that framework to a recent example of the "legacy of lynching," moves us significantly forward in our effort to understand *how* the "past persists into the present" (Griffin 2004). And, to come full circle, it is important to recognize the broader context within which a connection between a "legacy of lynching" and the volume of recent white-on-black homicides operates. That is, the cultural persistence of norms, values, and behaviors conducive to higher levels of violence in the South, more generally (e.g., white-on-white homicide, black-on-white homicide, and executions), is also transmitted through the kinds of institutional and population-based pathways considered in our analyses. Therefore, the reflection of the past in the present is considerably more powerful than the singular empirical replication and extension represented by our study.

## Author notes

**Ryan Gabriel** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Brigham Young University. His research focuses on issues related to race, ethnicity, and stratification in the United States. In addition to the legacy of historical lynching, he has investigated the patterns of residential mobility and locational attainment for mixed-race couples.

**Stewart Tolnay** is S. Frank Miyamoto Professor of Sociology at the University of Washington. His research has focused on the history of racial violence in the American South and the Great Migration of southerners to the North and West. He is the author of *The Bottom Rung: African American Family Life on Southern Farms* (University of Illinois Press, 1999), coauthor with E.M. Beck of *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882 to 1930* (University of Illinois Press, 1995), and coauthor with Amy K. Bailey of *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** Maximum likelihood, oblique rotated factor loadings for 1990 predictors; 1880-1995 standardized county clusters.

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

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

**Table A2.** Bivariate correlation of variables utilized in the analysis.

	White Offenders, Black Victims	White Resource Deprivation	White Family Structure	% of Whites Aged 15-29	% Urban	Lynching	WFSA	% Thurmond	% Wallace	Migration 1950-1960	Migration 1960-1970	Migration 1970-1980
White Offenders, Black Victims	—											
White Resource Deprivation	-.188	—										
White Family Structure	.177	.273	—									
% of Whites Aged 15-29	.079	-.061	.174	—								
% Urban	.367	-.379	.233	.325	—							
Lynching	.209	-.081	-.042	-.050	.017	—						
WFSA	.216	-.178	-.087	-.031	.135	.500	—					
% Thurmond	.006	-.092	-.244	-.084	.050	.335	.315	—				
% Wallace	-.063	-.099	-.172	-.101	-.137	.173	-.005	.373	—			
Migration 1950-1960	.653	.011	.036	-.067	.112	.261	.189	-.012	-.031	—		
Migration 1960-1970	.502	-.010	.005	.004	.201	.194	.166	-.024	-.046	.836	—	
Migration 1970-1980	-.004	-.265	-.147	-.011	.029	-.005	-.085	-.062	.077	.159	.426	—