

Making a National Crime: The Transformation of US Lynching Politics 1883-1930

Charles Franklin Seguin

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Sociology.

Chapel Hill
2016

Approved by:

Kenneth Andrews

Christopher Bail

Frank Baumgartner

Fitzhugh Brundage

Neal Caren

Charles Kurzman

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ABSTRACT

Charles Franklin Seguin: Making a National Crime: The Transformation of
US Lynching Politics 1883-1930
Under the direction of Kenneth Andrews

Between the Post-Civil War Reconstruction era and stretching into the beginning of the Civil Rights era, a dramatic shift occurred in the public representations of lynching. Lynching was originally framed as a form of rough justice and popular sovereignty—a necessary response to the heinous crimes of blacks and slow courts. But, over this period, roughly 1883-1930, lynching came to be understood as a form of brutality, anarchy, and “barbarism”. This dissertation addresses the causes and consequences of the changing meanings of lynching. I argue that lynching was increasingly criticized as lynch mobs victimized people from outside of the usual black Southern victims, and thus expanded the scope of anti-lynching politics.

For Barbara Seguin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are owed first and foremost to my adviser Kenneth Andrews who has been the best adviser and mentor that anyone could hope for. Many thanks also to my committee members, Chris Bail, Frank Baumgartner, Fitzhugh Brundage, Neal Caren, and Charles Kurzman: they made this dissertation possible, and they made it better, it would be better still if I had heeded all their advice. Conversations with many colleagues have helped to clarify and improve this dissertation, with apologies to those who've I've forgotten, I thank: Howard Aldrich, Kenneth Bollen, Sarah Gaby, Sally Morris, Didem Turkuglo, Robb Willer and audiences at talks at the University of Arizona, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, University of North Carolina, University of Pittsburgh, Stanford University, and Washington University at St Louis. David Rigby contributed immensely in our joint work putting together the dataset on which my dissertation is based, in our joint work on lynching, and in numerous conversations on the topic. Kaneesha Johnson, Emily Powell, and Jailen Wallis provided truly excellent research assistance. Friends who helped me endure the last years of the project, too many to list in full, but: Autumn McClellan, Brandon Gorman, David Rigby, Luke Sherry, and Tiantian Yang. Lastly my family who got me here, too many to list, but especially my parents Catherine Collison, Paul Seguin, and my grandparents Jean Collison, Herb Collison, Dennis Murphy, Barbara Seguin, and Charles Seguin.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: THE STRANGE CAREER OF JUDGE LYNCH

“Tradition sometimes plays strange pranks with dead men’s reputations,” according to a 1901 article in *The Atlantic*. The author was discussing how Charles Lynch’s name came to be synonymous with “organized savagery.” Charles Lynch was an American judge that had meted out summary justice to Tories in Virginia during the Revolutionary War, and in so doing had overstepped the boundaries of the law. The author argued that Lynch was a righteous and good man who had seen the necessity of rough, extralegal justice as a result of his frontier origins in a “primeval wilderness, where the savage and the beast of prey shared the supremacy.” If it was necessary to step outside of the law in these uncivilized conditions, however, the author argued, lynching itself had now become the savagery—and stained the reputation of Judge Lynch (Page 1901).

Not long before 1901, something strange indeed had happened to the reputation of lynching. Lynching had long been understood in the US as a form of frontier “rough justice,” unmediated by the slow and ineffectual machinations of the legal process (Pfeifer 2011). Political discourse through the 1870s and into the early 1890s reflected this. Presidents and many other political elites largely ignored lynching, and the newspapers reported on “mob justice” meted out to nameless criminal victims. The *New York Times*, for instance, recycled the headline “Brutal Negro Lynched” eleven times from 1880 through the early 1890s (see e.g. Anon 1886). Yet around the beginning of the new century, and even before, lynching was increasingly represented as “organized savagery.” In 1897, McKinley argued in his inaugural address, that “Lynchings must not be tolerated in a great and civilized country like the United States

(McKinley 1897a).” Theodore Roosevelt denounced lynching strongly in 1903 (Roosevelt 1903b), and in 1906, argued in his State of the Union Address that “every lynching represents but so much a loosening of the bands of civilization (Roosevelt 1906).” In 1903, even stalwart white supremacist papers like the *Atlanta Constitution* were frequently and vehemently, if not consistently, denouncing lynching with arguments like “Lynching is Anarchy!” and that “the whole fabric of our civilization totters on an insecure base when every arm and sovereignty is broken through by irrational, irresponsible, and bloody-minded mobs (Atlanta Constitution 1903).” The public meaning of lynching had changed from a celebrated practice of “rough justice,” to one of “uncivilized savagery.” How did this happen?

Some have placed lynching in the context of a centuries, even millennia, long “civilizing process” wherein interpersonal violence has increasingly become seen as illegitimate (Mennell 2007; Pinker 2011). The decline in the legitimacy of lynching might then be seen as simply one part of a universal process (Elias 1978). While the evidence suggests such a global process did indeed occur, the process and the explanations for it, tend to occur over centuries and millennia, while lynching lost its legitimacy over years and decades. Pinker (2011), for example, proposes that increasing literacy may have led to increased generalized empathy and thus a decline in the legitimacy of violence. Singer discusses an expanding circle of moral concern and locates the cause in the human capacity for reason (1981). Empathy, reason, and the civilizing process were, no doubt, necessary conditions for the decline in the legitimacy of lynching, but they are far from complete explanations of why lynching was considered legitimate in the first place, and why it lost its legitimacy at the historical moment that it did. In the conclusion, I discuss how the case of lynching can inform the global decline in the legitimacy of violence, but for now suffice to say

that these studies cannot explain much about of the specific historical trajectory of lynching politics.

Sociologists and historians have documented the shift in the way lynching was understood and represented (e.g. Pfeifer 2011; Waldrep 2002; Wasserman 1998). However, few have attempted an explanation for why this shift occurred in the first place. Those explanations that have been offered often focus on social movements that emerged a good deal after the shift had largely occurred. Some have argued that the early NAACP's anti-lynching campaign was an important cause of this shift (Bernstein 2005; Brundage 1993; Francis 2014; Wood 2009), but the NAACP did not exist until 1909, and as I show, there was a great deal of change in the understanding well before then. Others have argued that the Southern White Women Against Lynching was effective (Hall 1993), but it was not founded until 1930, perhaps thirty or forty years too late. Ida B Wells, and other black protest journalists of the 1880s and 1890s, were perhaps the most effective actors that resembled a social movement (see e.g. Silkey 2015), but have been marginal to lynching historiography. Moreover, these journalists lacked the kind of large organized mass social movement that is often argued to be necessary for political and cultural impacts (Amenta et al. 2010). Moreover, even Wells and her contemporaries, I argue, were not the main drivers of the increasing criticism of lynching. Put simply, there is no simple social movement explanation for the decline of lynching legitimacy.

Rather, I will argue that it was the way that lynch mobs created grievances, and therefore presented new opportunities for existing anti-lynching actors and mobilized new anti-lynching constituencies, that was most important. Groups who saw themselves, their co-ethnics, their co-religionists, or other salient identity group as potential victims of lynch mobs, were natural anti-

lynching constituencies. When lynching victimized a member of one identity group, it had the potential to mobilize political mobilization for that same group.

If lynching automatically created grievances however, it did not automatically draw significant public criticism. In the initial period from 1880 to 1891, lynching claimed the lives of blacks and other marginal groups, and it was framed largely as a response to crime. Southern blacks opposed lynching, of course, but their voices were largely silenced by the same mobs that murdered their contemporaries. Had lynching continued to claim only marginal black Southern victims, it likely would not have become the issue it did at the time it did—indeed it may never have attracted significant criticism. But lynching did not remain a problem only for Southern blacks.

Lynch mobs over this period continually transgressed the boundaries, drawn mostly around Southern rural blacks, which had previously contained lynching, and it was mostly these transgressions that provoked a strong anti-lynching reaction. Lynch mobs made lynching in the US an international issue when they lynched foreign nationals, which also made lynching an issue for presidents and other political elites who had to deal with the consequences for international relations. Northern lynch mobs made lynching a Northern issue, and therefore also made it possible for Southerners to criticize lynching. Lynch mobs made it a federal issue when they lynched a federal prisoner, or a man who had been reprieved by the Supreme Court. Lynch mobs made lynching an issue sometimes by their sheer brutality, as when they burned victims alive, transgressing what were thought of as the boundaries of civilization. Lynch mobs made lynching a Jewish issue when they lynched a nationally-prominent Jewish man. It was largely this process of transgressing boundaries that drove the transformation in the public meaning of lynching, and lynching events themselves that drove the political critique.

The Puzzle of Lynching Politics

The puzzle of lynching politics is that over time, more and more groups began to see lynching as a problem and began to act on it—despite lynching primarily targeting Southern blacks, which the nation had little interest in helping otherwise. There were two factors, which on their face would seem to make anti-lynching politics unlikely. The first was the collective action problem, which is that political action is rarely in an individual's self-interest (narrowly conceived). The collective action was particularly acute in this case, since anti-lynching activism was heavily repressed by lynch mobs. The second issue was that the most powerful groups were the least likely to be targeted by lynch mobs, and thus lynching could be, and was originally, seen as a problem only for blacks. What motivated more people and groups to take action and argue against lynching?

The collective action problem suggests that political action is generally not in the best individual interest of the political actors engaged in it, since other group members can “free ride” on the contributions of other group members (Olson 1971). While it would be impossible to generate the population, or even a random sample, of individuals in the real world who would be better off cooperating from which we could judge the relative frequency with which the free-rider problem is overcome, the set is undoubtedly quite large (Tilly 1978:74). Even when groups do mobilize, it is generally a small percentage of the people with political interests—the following quote from Schattschneider is instructive:

Only a chemical trace of the fifteen million Negroes in the United States belong to the National Association of Colored People. Only one five hundredths of 1 percent of American women belong to the League of Women Voters, only one sixteen hundredths of 1 percent of the consumers belong to the National Consumers League (1975:35).

Thus political action is rare, but happens more than often than we might think from a rational choice perspective.

If rational choice theory cannot fully explain politics, it must be that (at least some) people are not rational. This is obvious enough, but many theories of politics based on the irrationality of political action have not been very successful (e.g. Le Bon 1960). The problem is that activists often engage in politics with a level of strategic planning and execution that is not compatible with a theory of political action as “expressive” or not orientated to political goals (e.g. Ganz 2010). Rather, it seems that political actor’s actions, while not individually rational, could be seen as acting rationally at the group level: for various reasons, political actors often act as if their group’s interests were their own (Klandermans 2002).

In small groups, where individuals are generally known to each other, a number of solutions to the collective action problem arise. Those with sufficient resources may invest in a collective good in the interest of establishing a critical mass of others to contribute (Marwell and Oliver 1993). The esteem of other group members, social status, may explain individual members contributions to collective goods in small groups (Willer 2009). Repeated interactions between people may establish norms of cooperation (Axelrod 1984). These models explain many instances of small-scale and shorter term politics, but such dynamics are unlikely to explain why previously disinterested people choose to join a long-term struggle over the meaning of a practice like lynching.

Social identity theory suggests that people largely perceive their group identity interests as an extension of their own. Social identity theory therefore suggests that individuals will engage in political action in the interest of their group when group boundaries are relatively impermeable, and status differences between groups are perceived as unstable (Tajfel 1982). That is, people will be more apt to act as if their self-perceived group’s interests were their own when there is little possibility that they can improve their situation by redefining the group they

belong to, and when they perceive that there is some possibility that their group's relative position may be improved. Thus, the puzzle of lynching politics becomes a question of how the problem of lynching became grievances for identity groups, and when those grievances were translated into action.

Lynching as Grievance

Objective levels of suffering or grievances do not necessarily explain political action (e.g. Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tarrow 1998). For example, economic inequalities between individuals may be of little political importance per se; only when those inequalities align with identity groups will they become the focus of politics. Persistent macro level inequalities may go largely unnoticed, as when Americans consistently underestimate the true levels of US income inequality (Norton and Ariely 2011); even when they are noticed, such inequalities may be considered mostly legitimate. Thus political scientists and sociologists have generally found that economic inequality in and of itself does not predict political action (Fearon and Laitin 2003), but that when inequality aligns with ethnic group boundaries, it can form the basis for political actions like civil war (Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch 2011).

Grievances are probably most effective at mobilizing political action when they take the form of proximate and acute threats (Maher 2010), linked to strongly held identities. More immediate threats, such as those to already achieved group status (Gusfield 1986), those that disrupt patterns of everyday life (Snow et al. 1998), featuring public events that can be rallied around (Gamson and Modigliani 1989), moral shocks (Jasper and Poulsen 1995), or those coming from local demographic changes (Blalock 1967), are those most likely to spur a contentious response when linked to already existing identity, and especially to an identity group with prior political organization.

It would be hard to imagine a faster and more efficient production of political grievances than intergroup violence. While the mere existence of different identity groups does not explain or predict intergroup violence (Fearon and Laitin 2000), attitudes toward out-groups quickly harden when they are perceived to have attacked in-group members. Some of our best evidence about the effect of intergroup violence on political grievances comes from the study of terrorism, where in the immediate aftermath of terrorist attacks, attitudes towards the group perceived responsible become more xenophobic and exclusionary. In Israel, for instance, those most exposed to terrorist attacks express less tolerance toward Arabs, and endorse hardline politics (Canetti et al. 2013; Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Shayo and Zussman 2011). In the US, Canada, and Europe, terrorist attacks have reduced tolerance for immigrants and Muslims (Bail 2012; Esses, Dovidio, and Hodson 2002; Gautier, Siegmann, and Van Vuuren 2009; Legewie 2013). These and other grievances can then lead to anti-immigrant movements and violence.

Lynching is in many ways similar to terrorism, and many have considered it a form of terrorism (e.g. Tolnay and Beck 1995). At the heart of the similarity is the use of very public violence for the purpose of instilling fear. Since many lynchings were occasioned by public rituals, or included the public display of the victim's body, sometimes including notes with more or less explicit warnings to other potential victims, lynchings could easily be, and often were, interpreted as an attack on the entire identity group of the victim. In the case of lynching it was exactly how lynching created identity-based grievances that led to its eventually losing widespread legitimacy. Blacks required few movement entrepreneurs to understand lynching as a grievance when it threatened their very lives. When lynching victimized a Jewish man, it was immediately understood as a Jewish grievance. When lynching victimized Italians, lynching was

understood as an Italian grievance. Lynchings thus created grievances which were tied to specific group identities, which might then spur political resistance.

Lynching as Repression

When lynching has been studied through a political lens, it has typically been seen as a form repression or social control (Senechal de la Roche 1996). Repression is generally seen as deterring political resistance by raising the costs to those who would resist, and lynching effectively destroyed much of the political power of southern black populations. Case studies show that in the aftermath of lynchings of black victims, the black population would often stay out of public if possible, or be maximally deferential towards whites if such interaction was necessary (e.g. Bernstein 2005; Fedo 2000; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Quantitative analyses tend to show that lynching helped white supremacists consolidate political power (Smångs 2016) and otherwise intimidate black populations (Tolnay, Deane, and Beck 1996). To the extent that Southern blacks exercised much effective political resistance to lynching, it was through exit rather than voice, as many Southern blacks migrated from rural areas with higher rates of lynching to the relatively safer cities in the South and to the North generally (Tolnay and Beck 1992). It was only when the eventual decline of lynching “encouraged organizing efforts in the black community” in part by “diminishing the risks of such activities” that the Civil Rights movement emerged in force (McAdam 1999:97).

Although the lynching of black people in the South would appear to have been effective as a form of repression, repressions often backfires, as it can sometimes motivate more protest than it deters (Lichbach 1987), and in many ways lynching repression backfired as well. Repression appears particularly likely to provoke backlash if it creates more grievances than costs; that is, when repression increases motivations for political change more than it raises the

fear of acting. For, example, repression may become so severe that opponents may feel that they have nothing left to lose (Maher 2010). When protest is widespread and repression is not highly targeted, violence towards protesters may bring more people into the struggle as those with whom they share ties are victimized by the state (Brockett 1991). When repression is more violent and visible, as opposed to institutional and less immediate, it may increase contention (Koopmans 1997). Rasler argues that repression raises the costs of activism, while simultaneously drawing more people into the conflict. Consistent with this theory, she shows that during the Iranian revolution repression had a short term negative effect, but a positive longer term effect (Rasler 1996). Others have argued that the effect of repression on political resistance takes various complex functions, such as a U shape (Lichbach and Gurr 1981), a \cap shape (WEEDE 1990), and an N shape (Ortiz 2007). Lynching as repression backfired in many ways and drew additional political resistance, but as I will show, a new theory of repression is necessary to understand why it backfired in this case.

Symbolic Repression, Real Repression

When is repression more likely to infuriate than to intimidate? One answer is that when a member of a group with members that are not easily victimized by continuing repression is killed or injured by repression, group members may feel aggrieved, but have less reason to fear ongoing repression. Thus, when repression spreads to victimize less marginal groups, it can provoke backlash if the victims from these groups are widely publicized. That is, if the grievances induced by political repression are broadcast further than the reach of repression, it is likely to produce backlash.

A major channel, although not the only, through which grievances are broadcasted further than the reach of repression is through the mass media. Many, usually most, do not experience

violence first-hand, or even second-hand, but rather through reporting in the mass media (Koopmans 2004; Marshall et al. 2007). Those experiencing violence only through media channels may have not simply diminished, but qualitatively different emotional reactions than those experiencing it directly. Following the September 11th attacks in the US, those who were closest experienced increased fear, while those further from the violence experienced more anger than fear. Those experiencing anger, rather than fear, were more favorable to subsequent overseas military actions (Huddy and Feldman 2011). This mirrors general emotional reactions to violence, when for instance, front line soldiers express more fear and less anger towards enemies than those less exposed to combat (Collins 2009).

Thus violence can have different effects locally, and extra-locally, and this insight forms the basis of most of the theory guiding this dissertation. A brutal lynching in the deep South might send a powerful message of intimidation to local blacks, serving to silence their political voice. But, if that same lynching made the national news, it would become mostly a source of grievances to those blacks in the North, or otherwise beyond the reach of Southern lynch mobs. The lynching of Italian and Mexican citizens on US soil had similar effects, making lynching a grievance for many of their co-ethnics and co-nationals beyond the reach of US lynch mobs. Lynching might also occur in other “spaces” beyond the usual reach of lynch mobs, such as when federal prisoners were lynched. By all accounts, lynching was an effective form of local repression, but connection to the wider world through the mass media, as well things like diplomatic ties, could also make it a source of extra-local grievances. Thus, as lynching spread to create grievances among populations that lynch mobs could not effectively silence, it drew political opposition.

Lynching Events as Exogenous Drivers and Turning Points of Politics

Events occurring at social and political boundaries are those most likely to both drive political changes: boundaries can be thought of as political “fault lines.” Events at boundaries will tend to attract more political attention, and may also reorganize group relationships in some way. The theoretical approach I take here emphasizes that events can drive discourse in two different ways. First, events can drive discourse as exogenous sources of media stories which are “filtered” through media biases. Second, events can reorganize discourse by setting into motion endogenous processes in the public sphere. For example, a particularly brutal lynching might suggest a new way for journalists to cover lynchings—from a focus on the alleged crimes of the lynching victim to the crimes and brutality of the lynch mob.

Lynching might work as exogenous drivers of media attention when they resonate with journalist norms surrounding what kinds of events are most worthy of attention—so called “news values.” Social scientists have identified a number of news values: violence, conflict, continuity, social status, cultural proximity, and geographic proximity (Davenport 2010; Galtung and Ruge 1965; Gans 1979; Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010; Myers and Caniglia 2004; Oliver and Myers 1999). *Violence* may seem like a moot point, since all lynchings were violent, but the degree of violence varied considerably, from hangings with little ceremony to prolonged torture followed by burning the victim alive and taking souvenirs from pieces of the victim’s body (Harris 1984; Patterson 1998; Smångs 2016; Young 2005). Those lynchings in which violence was the most severe may have received more attention than other lynchings. Some lynchings became points of *conflict* between North and South, or between the US and foreign governments, and these might be expected to receive more attention. *Continuity* refers to how journalists prefer to cover people and events which are part of an ongoing story that has already received attention

in the news (see e.g. Fishman 1978); thus when lynching victims are already part of a news story, we should expect them to receive more coverage. Journalists cover people with higher *social status* more heavily than others (Gans 1979; van de Rijt et al. 2013; Shor et al. 2015), thus higher status victims of lynching might receive more attention. Media outlets report more on people and events that are more *culturally* and *geographically* proximate to the news outlet (e.g. Myers and Caniglia 2004), thus we might expect that Northern papers would be more likely to report Northern lynchings, black papers more likely to report on black lynchings, Jewish papers more likely to report on a lynching of a Jewish man, and so on. While news biases suggest that some kinds of lynchings should receive comparatively more attention than others, they also suggest that changes in the practice of lynching itself might attract more attention to the phenomenon as such.

Conceptualizing events as exogenous drivers of media attention is probably the dominant understanding of media attention. However, the media can also react to crystallizing events in ways that change how they cover and understand events later on (Koopmans and Olzak 2004). This is the approach I take here. I explore how some lynchings reorganized lynching discourse more generally. Some of these lynchings, I will argue, were turning points which caused some enduring change in lynching politics. For instance, the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish man, brought the Jewish community and press much more seriously into the fight against lynching generally. The 1891 lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans made lynching in the US an enduring international issue. The expansion of grievances was not the only mechanism that expanded the political opposition to lynching when lynching crossed boundaries. The spread of lynching to other groups could also act as political or discursive opportunities for opponents of lynching. When lynchings occurred in the North, for instance, Southern lynching critics felt safer

in critiquing those lynchings. At times, even Southern lynching apologists would attack the practice of lynching when a prominent lynching occurred in the North.

Identifying turning points is difficult, however. While the media and politics generally appears to contain such turning points (see e.g. Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Koopmans 2004; Pierson 2004; Seguin 2015; Sewell 1996; Stinchcombe 1968), it is one thing to identify a turning point in discourse or politics and another to attempt to systematically understand how such points contribute to the transformation of politics. One problem has to do with casing, that is, deciding where to begin, end, and otherwise delimit one's case. Failure to do this properly can result in identifying turning points when expanding the scope of inquiry might have shown other events leading to the same outcome (Bearman, Faris, and Moody 1999). Historians have, in conducting rich state and regional lynching histories, sometimes fallen into this trap when identifying lynchings as national turning points, when they were in fact of comparatively little importance. My approach here is to collect the universe of lynching victims, focus on those which were considered important in their own time (that is those that were widely discussed in the press), and consider these events in some detail and with specific reference to the preceding and following events. In so doing, I have classified the most covered into four broad categories of events which occurred at various "fault lines" or social and political boundaries of the period: national boundaries, the boundaries of "civilization" itself, sectional legal and identity boundaries, and race/class boundaries.

Methodological Approach

This dissertation is both history and social science, my goal is to draw general theoretical lessons from the case, while writing a history of lynching politics. To write this history, I have primarily drawn on digital records of various kinds. Relying on digital archives of newspapers

and other digitized historical documents has allowed me to expand the scope of this project to include a wider range of cases and evidence than would otherwise have been feasible. I began, with the help of many others, and by drawing on many other published works, by creating a national-level inventory of lynching victims from 1883-1930. I then searched for all these victims in three national papers: the *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*. This gave me a sense of which victims, if any, were the focus of national attention during the period. Then, drawing on digital historical archives, I identified when the US presidents paid attention to lynching over this period.

When complemented with the existing literature on lynching, these data gave me a more or less complete picture of which lynchings were of the most contemporaneous political significance. Having a systematic and complete picture of lynching events, rather than a random or purposive sample, was necessary for two reasons. The first is that lynching events were far from independent events; one lynching might have a powerful effect on the politics of subsequent lynchings. The second reason is that lynchings had widely different political impacts. Thousands of lynchings had little to no effect on national politics, while a handful of lynchings became the center of national, and even international, politics. As I discuss below, the existing historical literature is a somewhat unreliable guide to which lynchings were of the most political importance. Thus, it was important to construct my own dataset, and not to miss any key lynchings.

Analyses and searches of these digital datasets gave me a good idea of which events and actors might have been important, but very little idea of how they connected to lynching's broader political history. To do so, I needed to dig deeper into the details of these specific cases. To analyze specific cases and actors I have used such digital archival records as were available,

occasionally supplemented with physical archive material, but have especially relied on the published work of historians. I have found that the published work of historians has rarely been in error on the details of the cases that they analyze. However, I have found that historical work is often in error when it comes to assessing the relative importance, or impact of specific cases or actors. More often, the work is siloed into various regions or topics, with little sense of how these combine to form the whole of lynching history. Those interested in politics might focus on the NAACP or other movement organizations. Biographers of William McKinley or Teddy Roosevelt are well aware of the role they played in specific aspects of lynching history, but few lynching histories have discussed their roles. Legal scholars have uncovered the importance of the 1906 lynching of Ed Johnson in Tennessee (Curriden and Phillips 1999), but there is very little other historical work on this case. Much has been written about the lynching of Leo Frank and its role in the reshaping of black and Jewish relations, but there is little attempt to place it into the broader lynching histories. Sometimes there is just very little historical work on very central events, such as the 1903 lynching of George White (although see: Barrow 2005:254–58; Downey 2013; Williams 2001). These are small issues with an otherwise very impressive outpouring of lynching historiography in the past decades, but they do point to a need to expand the empirical scope of lynching scholarship (Pfeifer 2013).

Organization

The dissertation is organized in three major chapters, followed by a conclusion. In the first chapter I outline the history of lynching discourse, and how my quantitative data and analyses change our understanding of that history. Simple automated text analyses illustrate the timing and extent of the changes in lynching discourse. I use a dataset of lynching victims nationally from 1883 to 1930 to do an automated search of leading national newspapers of the

period to show which victims received the most contemporaneous media attention. Systematic searches of presidents' State of the Union addresses, as well as other pronouncements gives a broad overview of how and when presidents responded to lynching.

The second chapter seeks to answer a puzzle coming from the data presented in the first chapter: why did Southern black male lynching victims generally not receive much attention in the national news media, despite being the most common victims? Drawing on published histories and datasets of newspapers in the South, I show how lynching and other violence was effective as political repression of black Southerners and other political dissenters—destroying the capacity of blacks and white Republicans to publicize and criticize lynchings in the South. I then show how a robust black press emerged in the Northern states, and went on to bring a critique of lynching back to Southern states.

In the third chapter, I focus on the victims that did receive a lot of attention in the national news media. I use the quantitative data to identify victims that were the focus of national politics and analyze these cases with conventional qualitative historical methods. Using the quantitative data to select focal cases allows me to trace the evolution of lynching politics through the most central events. Doing so suggests that lynching politics evolved mainly in response to lynch mobs transgressing the previous boundaries of lynching to create new grievances, opponents, and new opportunities for old opponents of lynching.

In the concluding chapter I discuss how the dissertation should change our understanding of the history of lynching, political sociology, and the study of violence. I argue that the historiography of lynching politics has revolved around a set of cases and actors which were not, in fact, central to lynching politics at the time. I discuss how the case of lynching politics can inform the study of social problems nationally and globally.

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF LYNCHING DISCOURSE

Lynching, as a form of extralegal punishment, has existed in the US since European settlement (Pfeifer 2011). Most scholars of lynching, however, focus on the Lynching Era when the practice of lynching accelerated, particularly in the South, as a result of the changes wrought by the Civil War and Reconstruction (e.g. Brundage 1993; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Between 1882 and 1930, over three-thousand African Americans and roughly one-thousand whites and Hispanics lost their lives to mob violence. African Americans in particular were often subjected to tortures, such as being burned alive, in events that were witnessed by as many as several thousand onlookers (Garland 2005; Wood 2009). While lynching victims over this period were overwhelmingly black, Southern, and male, lynchings of whites, women, and in other parts of the country were not uncommon. These cases were central to lynching discourse, since they often attracted disproportionate attention, and because lynching apologists used white and Northern lynchings to argue that lynching was not about race, but an understandable reaction to crime (Carrigan and Webb 2013; Pfeifer 2013).

Focusing on lynching in the South, sociologists have been studying the structural causes of lynching for over a century (Du Bois 1935; Cutler 1969 [1915]; Raper 1933). These causes include racial threat (Tolnay et al. 1996), economic and political competition between blacks and whites (Beck and Tolnay 1990; Olzak 1990; Soule 1992), black outmigration to safer areas (Tolnay and Beck 1992), the social marginality of victims to their communities (Bailey et al. 2011), the consolidation of democratic party political control in the South (Hagen, Makovi, and Bearman 2013), and the effect of religious traditions in generating racial solidarity (Bailey and

Snedker 2011). Historians have amassed considerable evidence that cultural and discursive elements were important in the creation and maintenance of the practice of lynching alongside these structural causes (Carrigan 2004; Wood 2009). These histories show that within their immediate localities, lynching was a means of intimidating blacks while reaffirming white supremacy (see also Tolnay et al. 1996). Lynchings were sometimes celebrated and commemorated by the sale of souvenirs (often pieces of the victim's body), postcards featuring photos of the murder, and commendations in local papers (Jean 2005; Wood 2009). In one infamous instance, while on his way to deliver a letter to the *Atlanta Constitution* concerning the paper's role in encouraging a lynching, W.E.B. Dubois saw the victim's knuckles on sale in an Atlanta butcher's shop (Du Bois 2007:141). Kept within the confines of white supremacist communities supportive of lynching, these communicative practices served as powerful supports of the culture of white supremacy, and powerful messages of intimidation to blacks (e.g. Tolnay et al. 1996).

At the national level, the meaning of specific lynchings, and lynching in general terms, varied significantly both between different lynchings and over time. Scholars of lynching generally agree that during the 1870s and 1880s, lynching was overwhelmingly framed in the national news media as a form of rough justice and popular sovereignty against a slow and lenient legal system, a frame they had inherited from justifications of "wild-west" frontier lynchings from before the Civil War (see especially: Berg 2011; Pfeifer 2011; Waldrep 2002). During the 1870s and 1880s, "quiet" or "determined" mobs of "citizens" lynched "fiends" or "brutal negroes."

Lynching scholars also generally agree that, by 1930, the framing of lynching in national political discourse had shifted to one of lawlessness and barbarity (e.g. Brundage 1993). There is

little consensus, however, on the timing of this shift between the 1880s and 1930s. Some argue that the shift occurred and was largely completed by the 1890s. Those who argue for a strong role for the NAACP, and its anti-lynching campaign, necessarily locate the shift at some point after the founding of the NAACP in 1909. Many NAACP-centered analyses argue that the lynching of Jesse Washington in 1916, and the publicity resulting from the NAACP investigation, marked the beginning of such the transformation. Also important as a sign of NAACP influence was an anti-lynching statement, made by then president Wilson in 1918 at the NAACP's behest. Many also argue that the Dyer anti-lynching bill, advocated by the NAACP beginning in 1919, and passing the House in 1922 before being filibustered in the Senate, was central to this transformation.

Thus, there is little agreement on exactly when national lynching discourse shifted, which lynchings were important, and who the relevant actors were. In this chapter, I focus on when the shift occurred. I first examine how lynching discourse shifted in three national newspapers. Based on a new national dataset of lynching victims, I then systematically searched these national newspapers for attention to every American lynching that occurred over the period. Finally, I systematically searched presidential archives for the lynchings that presidents acted upon, the statements they made, and actions they took regarding lynching. Together, these data and analyses present a picture describing how lynching was represented in national political discourse over this period.

The Evolution of National Lynching Discourse

Here I present automated text analyses of two framing transformations in three national newspapers. These papers are the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*. These papers were chosen partially as a result of data availability; all were digitally

archived and searchable over the entire period of study. They also provide, however, a broad geographic reach among non-Southern major national papers, as well some differences in political ideology.

I focus here on two broad transformations in lynching discourse those of “civilization” and “criminality.” In the first, I look to how lynching became linked to a broader discourse of Western Civilization. Ida B Wells, for instance, used notions of civilization to frame lynch mobs as outside of civilization (Bederman 1995). The second transformation that I analyze is the move from the assumed criminality of the lynching victim to the guilt of the lynch mob in denying due process. I describe these transformations in more detail below.

Dictionary Analyses

Dictionary analyses count key words or phrases in text to measure the meaning of the text in some way (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). Here I analyze articles in my three papers for the presence of key words or phrases relating to civilization and criminality discourse. In my simple analyses, either an article contains at least one word or phrase marking the discourse of interest, or it does not. I have chosen the words and phrases used in the dictionaries myself, based on my reading of historical literature, my own extensive initial reading of lynching articles, and post-testing the key-words and phrases to be sure they were identifying the discourse I was interested in.

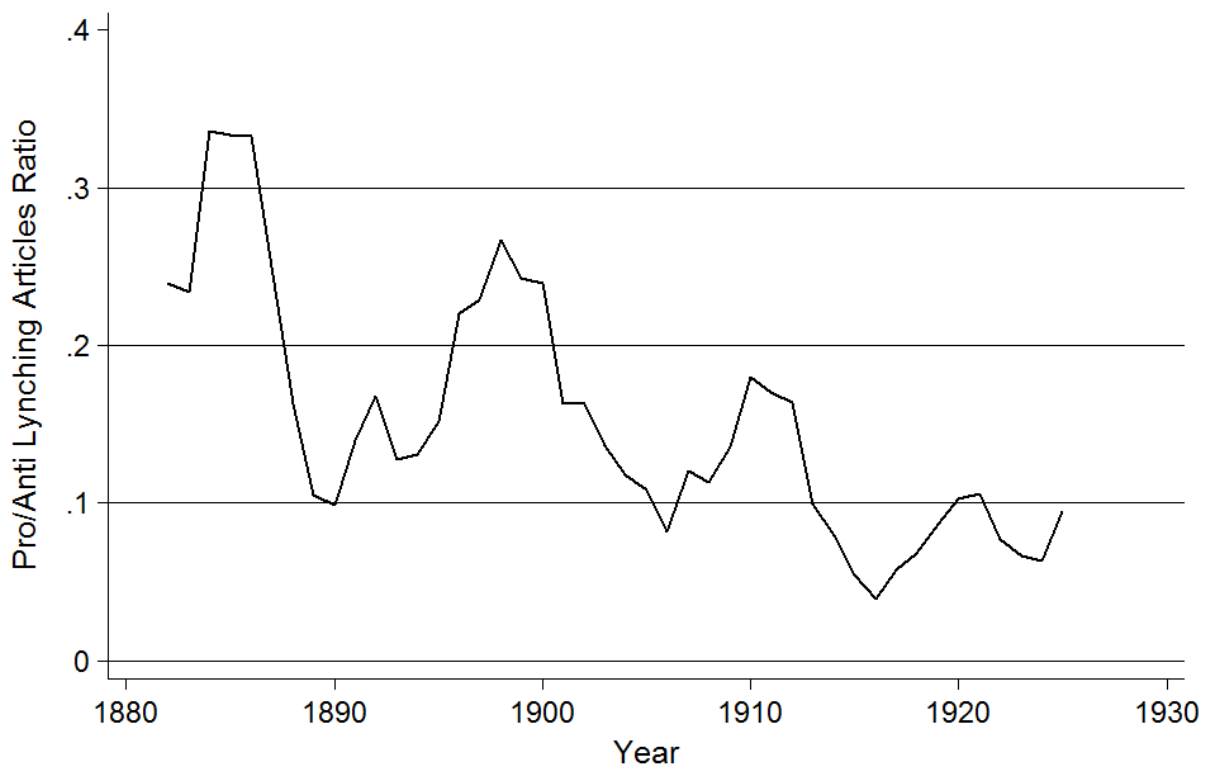
The dictionary methods I have used here are superior for this application to their three obvious automated text analysis alternatives: sentiment analysis, supervised learning classifiers, and topic models. Sentiment analysis is a form of dictionary analysis that employs key words with known positive or negative sentiment, or tone, to measure the sentiment of text (see e.g. Golder and Macy 2011; Pang and Lee 2008). For example, a text with many negative words, and

few positive words would be considered a negative text. As in many other applications, this approach misses far too much of the complexity of lynching discourse to be useful (For an example of this problem in another application see: Loughran and McDonald 2011). The word *brutal* for instance, is no doubt considered a highly negative word in any sentiment analysis. However, in the case of lynching discourse, the difference between saying *brutal negro lynched* and *brutal mob lynches negro*, for instance, could hardly be greater. And this example illustrates a general point, which is that the discourse on lynching was almost always negative in some way, but could be negative towards the victim, towards the mob, or any number of other things. So in this case, standard sentiment analysis would not tell us much.

Supervised machine learning classifiers are also not appropriate for this case, although these seemed appropriate at the outset, my testing of these models showed them to produce predictions which, while reasonably accurate, lacked theoretical grounding. Supervised learning methods rely on samples of texts which have already been classified by the analyst, which they use to “learn” which words and phrases are features of which kinds of texts. I conducted a preliminary analysis on articles about lynching victims from the *New York Times*. I first hand coded 340 articles for pro- and anti-lynching frames. Out of these 340 articles, 55 were dropped because they were not focused on the lynching, 156 were coded as having an anti-lynching frame, and 129 had a pro-lynching frame. I used the pro- and anti-lynching articles to train a naïve Bayes classifier, a classification algorithm similar to logistic regression (Zhang 2004). I trained the classifier on 216 articles, and tested it on the remaining 69 articles. Overall the classifier agreed with the human coded category for 83% of the test articles (57/69). Importantly, the algorithm had not been trained on the test set, so 83% is an out-of-sample prediction accuracy. After training the algorithm, I then used it to classify the remaining 809 unread

lynching articles. The analysis confirms the arguments of historians that anti-lynching frames became more prevalent over time. The ratio of pro- to anti-lynching frames declined throughout the period (see Figure 1 below); this trend is statistically significant ($P < .01$). While the classifier then had a reasonable level of out-of-sample accuracy, and the time trend was in the direction that would be expected from historical literature, looking at the most informative features (words) made it clear that the classifier was picking up on language which did not much substantive sense. Many of the words that were the most predictive I was unable to interpret, others, such as the word *force* seemed to mark rather neutral descriptors of types of events (in this case lynch mobs forcing open jails). Thus, I abandoned supervised learning classifiers, in favor of dictionary techniques that are driven more by theoretical and historical intuition at the outset.

Figure 1: Pro/Anti-Lynching Frames Ration in *New York Times* Lynching Articles



Sociologists have recently begun to show a lot of enthusiasm for topic models (e.g. DiMaggio, Nag, and Blei 2013; Rule, Cointet, and Bearman 2015), a form of machine learning that clusters texts into categories without prior knowledge from human input. These classifiers are inductive in the sense that they let the “meaning” emerge from the text, and therefore may be appropriate in cases where the analyst is more interested in exploring discourse in a relatively unstructured way. In the present case, however, the inductive approach is not appropriate since there is a large amount of historical literature to guide the analysis more deductively. Moreover, it can be difficult to interpret the results of topic models after they have categorized texts, a process some have likened to “reading tea leaves” since the topics identified by models may not always be meaningful (Chang et al. 2009).

In their simplicity, dictionary analyses are more transparent both to readers, but also to the analyst. Unlike unsupervised methods, such as topic models, dictionary analyses can draw on prior work, and knowledge of the analyst. In each dictionary I constructed, I began with both my own knowledge from reading many of these articles, as well as prior historical work. I then returned to that knowledge to interpret the results. The data are drawn from the digital archives of three national newspapers of the period: the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. I describe below how I constructed each of my dictionaries and the results of each. Briefly, I show that lynching articles begin to draw heavily on the language of “civilization” beginning in 1891, and beginning around 1900, they begin to increasingly consider the lynch mob, rather than the supposed crimes of the victim, to have caused lynchings.

Civilization Discourse in Lynching Articles

In the 1880s and through the lynching era, which was also a colonial era, the idea of “civilization” was integral to the construction of white male supremacy (Bederman 1995). Critics

of lynching drew on this civilization discourse to criticize lynching, arguing that lynching represented a regression away from the Western civilized ideal. Ida B Wells, for instance, argued that lynching was uncivilized. In many of his most public denouncements, Teddy Roosevelt constructed lynching as a threat to civilization and to the international civilizing mission of the United States (see e.g. Ziglar 1988:17).

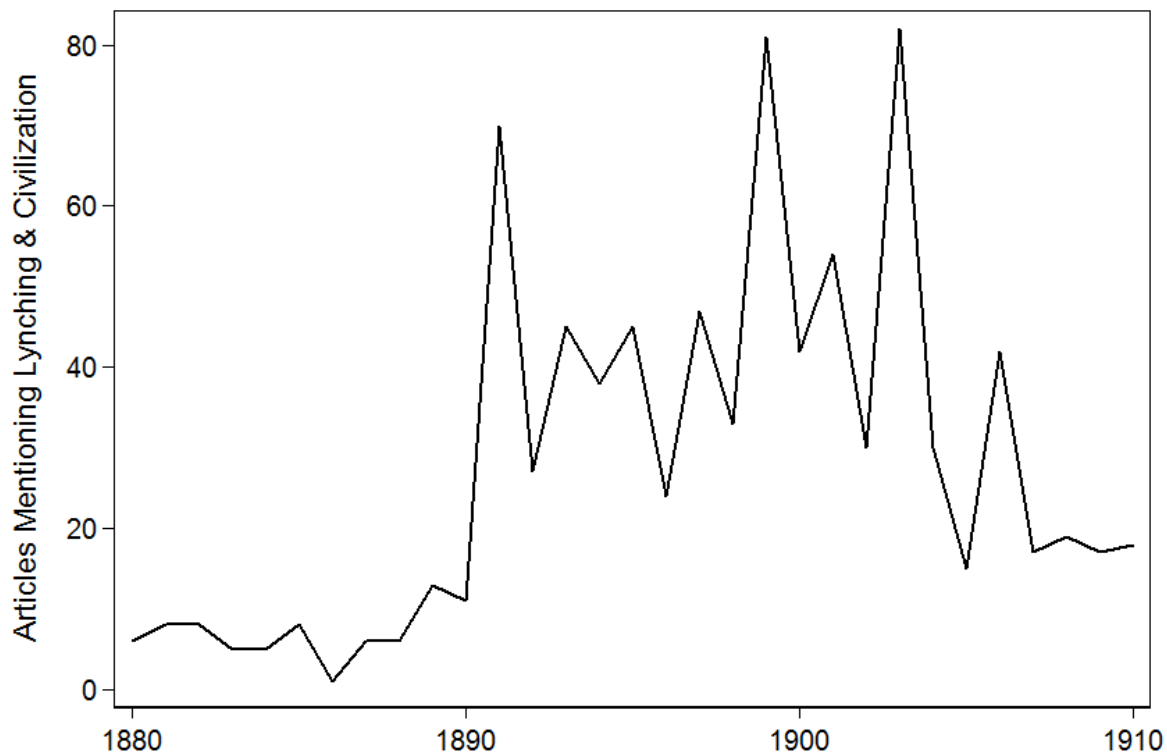
I constructed a dictionary of civilization terms an iterative process. I began with the obvious, using *uncivilized*, *civilized*, *civilization*, and *civilizing*. Drawing from my own reading of these materials, and the literature, I added *savage*, *savages*, *savagery* and *barbaric*, *barbarian*, *barbarians*, and *barbarism* (technically, a wildcard search for *barbari** encompassed these terms). From exploring the resulting articles, I removed the term “savage” since some of the articles discussed the “savage crime” of the lynching victim. Figure 2 (below) displays the results, showing a dramatic break in 1891 towards a greater discussion of civilization in lynching articles.

Criminality Discourse

Much lynching discourse revolved around the relative culpability of the mob and the victim of lynching. Lynching apologists would often acknowledge that lynching was criminal behavior, but argue that the heinous crimes of lynching victims left mobs little choice. Or that courts were too slow, lenient, or unreliable in punishing criminals for justice to be left to the legal system. Lynching opponents often focused on the possibility that the victim was innocent of any crime, but more often argue that whatever the crime of the victim, the crime of the mob was at least as great.

I first constructed a dictionary of terms indicating culpability, and criminality, of the lynching victim. Similar to the civilization discourse dictionary, I constructed the dictionary in

Figure 2: Civilization Discourse in Lynching Articles

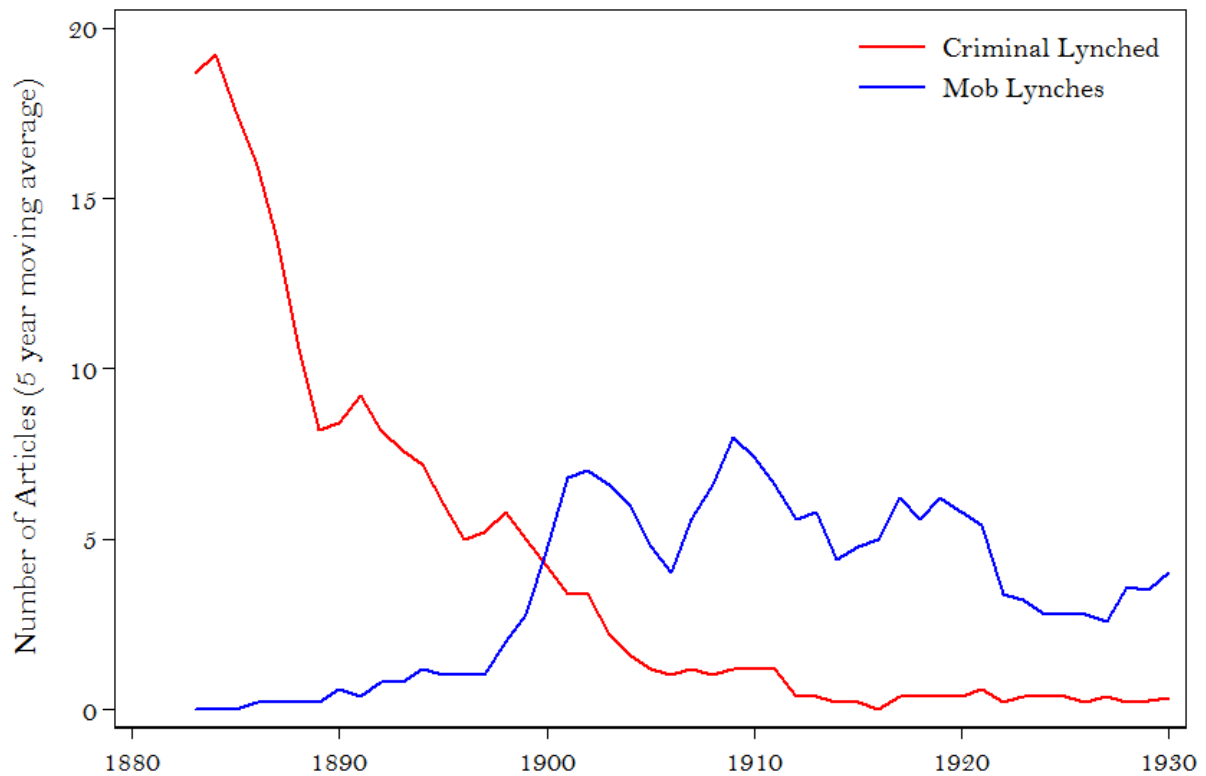


N= 1134 Articles in *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*

an iterative process. Starting with terms that I knew from lynching history, and from my reading of these articles, and then checking that these terms were not capturing something else. These terms were: *murderer*, *fiend*, *brute*, *slayer*, *criminal*, *scoundrel*, *ruffian*, *desperado*, *brutal negro*, *culprit*, *firebug*, *thief*, *bad negro*, *ravisher*, *villain* followed by the term *lynched*. Thus, searches were for two or three word long strings like “ravisher lynched” or “brutal negro lynched.” I compared these with the search string “negro lynched.” I then constructed dictionaries comparing the imputed agency to the mob in causing the lynching; here I looked only for the string “mob lynches”. That is, I looked to language that suggested that lynchings occurred as a result of the supposed crime of the victim or lynchings that occurred as a result of mob action. Since lynchings invariably involved a victim which was accused of some crime or transgression

and a mob which lynched the victim, and lynchings were seen as, at best, a necessary evil, it is instructive to see whether the victim or mob was blamed for the lynching.

Figure 3: Agency of Mob vs Criminality of Victim in Lynching Articles



Note: Articles in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. N= 199 “Criminal” articles, N=172 “Mob” articles.

Periodizing Lynching Discourse

Taken together, these analyses suggest that much of the transformation in lynching discourse took place between the years of 1880-1900. Around 1891, newspapers began to discuss lynchings in terms of “civilization.” Around 1899 or so, newspapers began to attribute lynchings to the actions of mobs. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s and into the 1900s, newspapers relied less and less on tropes of victim criminality. These transformations suggest that we should look to this period, roughly from 1890 to 1900, as a moment when lynching representations transformed and solidified in the major national, non-Southern, newspapers.

Dataset

To investigate the national media discourse on lynching and the response of lynching practice to that discourse, it is necessary to have national data on lynching itself. Tolnay and Beck have compiled a lynching dataset that covers ten Southern states from 1882-1930. This dataset has been foundational for the sociological study of lynching (see e.g. Bailey and Snedker 2011; King, Messner, and Baller 2009; Tolnay and Beck 1995). Although fewer in number, lynchings occurring outside of the South and after 1930 were central to the construction of lynching discourse. Infamous lynchings occurred in areas such as Coatesville, Pennsylvania; Marion, Indiana; and San Jose, California (Downey and Hyser 2011; Madison 2001; Wood 2009).

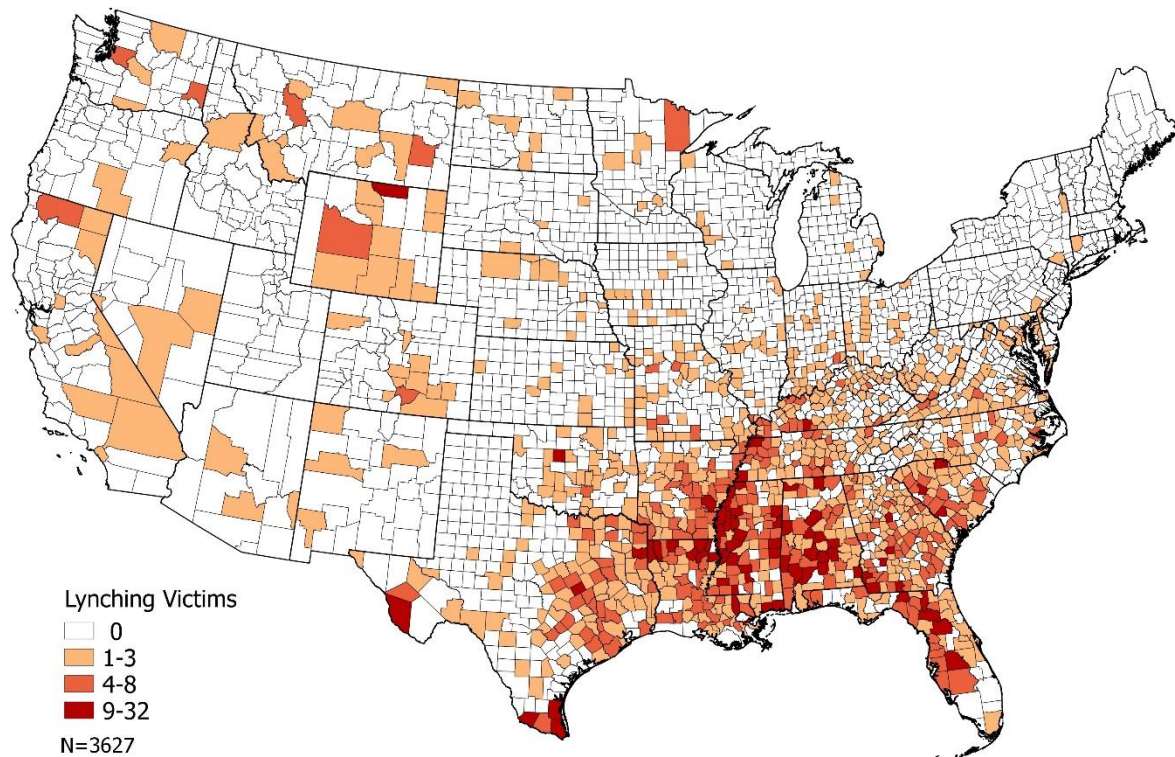
Thus, I extended the original Tolnay-Beck lynching inventory to include the contiguous 48 states. I received a Dissertation Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation to collect these data. To fill the gaps in coverage, as well as to validate the existing lynching datasets, I followed scholars in using contemporaneous lynching inventories such as those of the NAACP and the *Chicago Tribune*. I have also been using rich local and regional histories which contain their own lynching inventories (Brundage 1993; Capeci 1998; Carrigan 2004; Carrigan and Webb 2013; Frazier 2009; Gilbreath 2002; Gonzales-Day 2006; Howard 1995; Leonard 2002; Pfeifer 2013; Segrave 2010; Tórréz 2008; Yost 1933), and confirming lynchings contained in these inventories. The NAACP and *Chicago Tribune* inventories relied on contemporaneous accounts in newspapers and are known to have false positives—that is, they identify lynchings that did not appear to have actually occurred. As with other events, the accuracy of reporting seems to vary with distance to the newspaper, and numerous erroneous newspaper reports seem to have made their way into these lynching inventories. Thus, following other scholars of

lynching, I validated the lynchings in these inventories by searching for local press accounts (Tolnay and Beck 1995). I used a number of electronic, fully searchable, newspaper archives¹. If I could not find a paper within the same state reporting the lynching, I considered it “unconfirmed”. In most cases when I was not able to confirm a lynching, I was able to find a paper trail that suggests how the erroneous lynching event made it into the original lynching inventories. For instance, both the NAACP and the *Chicago Tribune* list a lynching victim “unknown negro” for April 1 1892 in Millersburgh, OH. We found an Ohio paper, the *Marysville County Union Journal*, that reported a lynching occurring on April 1st in Millersburgh of the “hardest looking man” that the county had ever seen. Two weeks later, on April 14th it was explained by the *Mansfield Weekly News* that the original lynching report was an April fool’s joke spurred by the ‘lynching’ of an iron effigy and that a Columbus correspondent had “bit” on the ruse and published a “lynching yarn.” In another case, I found an entry for a “William Black” lynched in Texas, which had turned out to have originated in a racist joke about “Billy Black,” a billy goat that had supposedly been lynched. The map below summarizes these data.

As the map, Figure 4, above below, lynching was a national phenomenon throughout this period, although it was concentrated in the Southern states, almost every region of the country was touched to some degree by lynching.

¹ We used the following websites to find local papers: newspapers.com, newspaperarchives.com, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov, and Proquest’s *Historical Newspapers*: <http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pq-hist-news.html>

Figure 4: Lynching in the US 1883-1930



Which Victims Were Covered?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as is still true today, the news media did not generally cover social problems so much as individual events and people. To take one example, readers will immediately recognize the names Emmett Till, Rodney King, and Trayvon Martin as individuals whose deaths came to represent the entire problem of violence against blacks in later eras (Carlson 2016; Jacobs 2000; Roberts and Klibanoff 2007). These events and people can be more or less representative of the social problems that they represent, although often the media can focus on the least representative kind of events in favor of more spectacular and interesting stories. Lynching was no different. National media attention to victims of lynching was highly unequally distributed, so that while most lynching victims received no

national attention, other victims could capture the media spotlight for months, drawing commentary from people as elite as the US President. We know a lot from historians about a few of these victims, such as Jesse Washington or Leo Frank, but as I will show, we have had little sense of which victims were at the center of lynching politics and little sense of the threads connecting these victims.

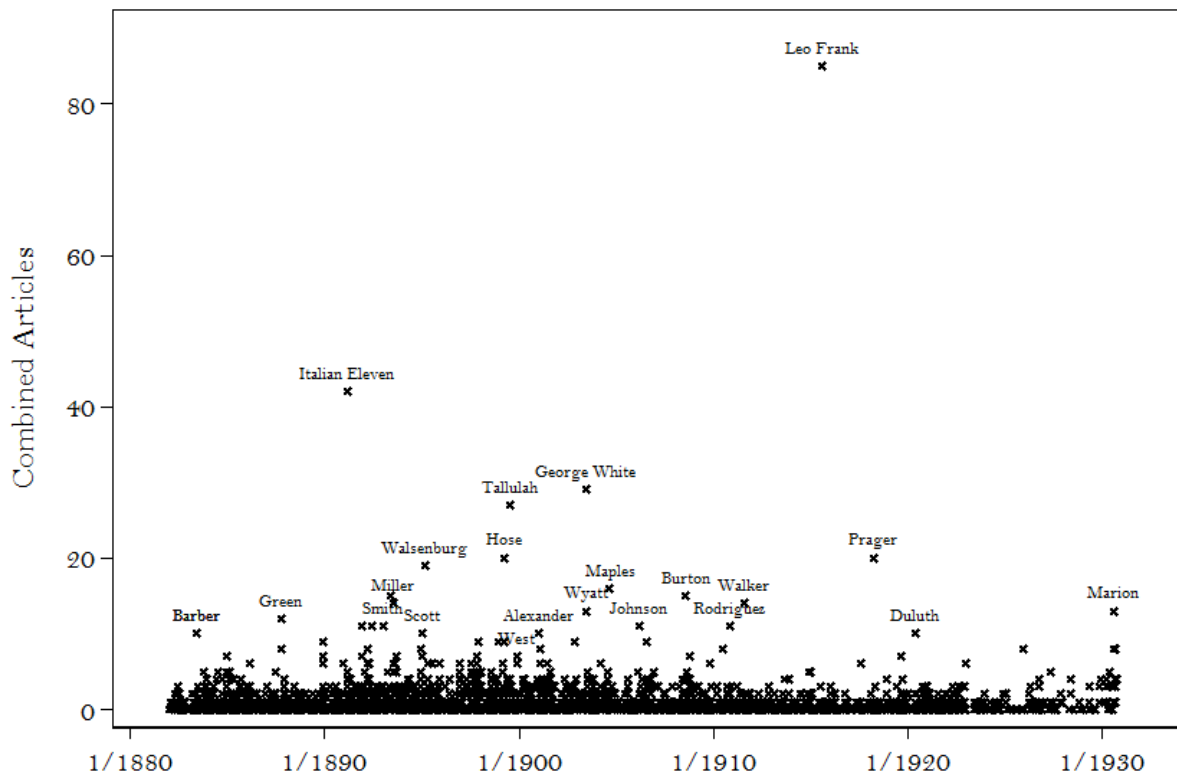
To begin to build a picture of the media attention to victims, beginning with my dataset of lynching victims, I did an automated search through the digital archives of key national papers (the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*) for articles mentioning lynching victims. Specifically, for each victim I conducted a Boolean search of the full text of these papers for the last name(s) of the victim(s), and the name of the state or place-line abbreviation of the state (e.g. Ala. for Alabama), and the terms “lynching”, “lynched”, or “lynches.” I searched for articles for each victim starting the day they were lynched, and going out one month to the day of their death. In most cases, this search strategy worked well, in some cases, however, I had to use custom terms, such as in mass lynchings where individual names are often not reported. These “counts” of articles are not to be understood as a literal measure of media attention, but rather as an indicator which is highly correlated with more sophisticated measures such as story placement, word counts, and so on. For instance, the correlation between counts of front-page and other articles for the 30 most covered social movements in the *New York Times* is .97 (Amenta et al. 2009, for use of article counts see also: 2012; Andrews and Caren 2010; Gorman and Seguin 2015; Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010; Vliegenthart, Oegema, and Klandermans 2005).

Another question arises as to whether these papers are representative of the national (non-Southern) media agenda. Studies of the media have routinely shown that in considering selection

bias between mainstream papers, geography is among the largest factors. While the media generally focus disproportionately on large, novel events featuring violence or conflict (see e.g. Galtung and Ruge 1965; Gorman and Seguin 2015; Oliver and Myers 1999), media also focus on events that are geographically closer (see e.g. Davenport 2010; Earl et al. 2004; Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010; Myers and Caniglia 2004). Thus, it makes the most sense to focus on geographic variation between papers, rather than political or economic variation in ownership, at least among mainstream national papers. If geographic bias leads to the most difference in papers between which events they choose to cover, however, it is also important to keep in mind that analysts rarely find major differences between mainstream news outlets in what events they choose to cover (Amenta et al. 2009; Atkinson, Lovett, and Baumgartner 2014; Jackman and Boyd 1979; Seguin 2015). Within the lynchings reported here, only a few were heavily featured in one paper, but not in the others. These were invariably lynchings which occurred very close to one of the papers, the *Chicago Tribune* for instance focused a lot of attention on a few Illinois lynchings that the other papers did not. Overall, the correlation in article counts between papers was between .54 and .58. In some selected cases where I was unsure whether there was significant attention outside of these three papers, I did supplemental searches in archives such as Chronicling America.

The figure below shows the combined count of articles in these three papers to each victim. Almost all victims with at least 10 articles are named in the figure (in some places names overlapped and one had to be hidden), I discuss each victim briefly below.

Figure 5: Total Articles Covering Lynching Victims



Note: Articles in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. N=3,500 articles, N=3,627 victims.

A few patterns are evident in the most covered lynchings. Every victim that received at least ten articles met at least one of the following four conditions: 1) they were tortured in front of large crowd, often burned alive (spectacle lynchings), 2) they were lynched in a Northern state, 3) they were a foreign national, or 4) they were white (usually of higher class). None of these conditions were typical of lynching victims, the majority of which were marginal Southern black males, lynched without massive crowds and without torture such as being burned alive (Bailey and Tolnay 2015; Smångs 2016).

Reading the figure from left to right, I briefly introduce the named lynchings in the figure. The Barber brothers were infamous white outlaws lynched by a mob of perhaps one-thousand people in Waverly Iowa on June 8th, 1883. The Barber brothers were alleged horse-

thieves and murderers. Amer Green, a black man alleged to have murdered a white woman was lynched in Delphi, Indiana on October 21st, 1887. Media coverage of the Green lynching revolved around his possible innocence and the (unsuccessful) attempts of local authorities to indict and prosecute the mob that killed Green. Eleven Italian men, some citizens of Italy, were lynched in New Orleans on March 14th 1891, and the lynching caused a serious international incident. I will return in detail to the Italian Eleven later in this chapter. The news media reported the lynching of a Robert Lewis in Port Jervis, New York on June 2nd 1892, although the victim's real name was Robert Jackson. Jackson was alleged to have "assaulted", here a euphemism for sexual assault, a white woman and was lynched by a large crowd, numbering perhaps one-thousand. Media coverage focused on the attempts of local authorities to indict and prosecute the mob, and some Southern newspapers argued that the lynching in New York proved that lynching was a natural and inevitable response to black men's criminal sexual behavior towards white women regardless of the region in which it occurred. Samuel Bush, obscured in the figure by C.J. Miller, was lynched in Decatur, Illinois in June of 1893. Bush, a black man, was broken out of a jail by a mob estimated at around one-thousand people, where he was being held on charges of having raped two white women, and was hanged by that mob (S. K. Cha-Jua 2000). The *Chicago Tribune* took considerable interest in the lynching apparently both because of Chicago's proximity of Decatur, but also because the governor of Illinois, Atgeld, strongly denounced the lynching, and offered a reward for the identification of members of the lynch mob. A grand jury investigation took place, but no indictments were returned (S. K. Cha-Jua 2000:607). Henry Smith, also obscured in the figure by C.J. Miller, was lynched in Paris, Texas in February of 1893. Smith, a black man, had been charged with the rape and murder of a young white girl. He was lynched by a mob estimated at between five- and ten-thousand who tortured him with hot

irons and then burned him at the stake. C.J. Miller was hanged by a mob of perhaps five-thousand people in Bardwell, Kentucky in July of 1893. While Miller's dead body was hanging, the mob riddled his body with bullets and cut off his fingers and toes for souvenirs before burning his body to ash. Miller was accused of murder and rape of two white girls, a crime which he was almost certainly innocent of, and media coverage revolved around his innocence (Wright 1996:90–93). Barrett Scott was a white man lynched outside of Omaha, Nebraska. Scott was a county treasurer who had stolen money, had fled to Mexico, was apprehended in Mexico, returned to the county, and lynched shortly after his return (HEWITT 1992). Sam Hose, whose real name was Tom Wilkes, was lynched in Atlanta, Georgia on April 23rd, 1899. Hose was burned alive by a mob of perhaps two-thousand, and many of his body parts were later removed and kept or sold as souvenirs. I will discuss the Hose lynching and its effects in more detail later in this chapter. Fred Alexander, a black man, was burned alive in Leavenworth, Kansas on January 16, 1901, by a mob after they attempted to force Alexander to eat some of his own amputated body parts (Alexander 2007:124–25; Campney 2008:268–69). Alexander's lynching attracted comment from the Chinese foreign minister, who was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "China has been accused of many barbarities, but lynching is not among them. Burning the poor fellow at the stake—ugh! The very idea of it makes me shudder." David Wyatt was taken from the St Clair county jail in Belleville, Illinois and lynched by a mob on June 6, 1903. The mob hanged Wyatt to a telephone pole and then burned and mutilated the remains of his body (S. Cha-Jua 2000:190–93). On June 15, 1903, George White was burned alive by a mob in Wilmington, Delaware, in, as I discuss in Chapter 4, what was to become one of the most historically important lynchings. On September 8, 1904, Horace Maples was lynched by a mob in Huntsville, Alabama. The mob had burned down the county jail in order to get to Maples, and

because there were federal prisoners in the jail at the time, the lynching prompted a federal investigation which drove media attention to the Maples lynching (Aucoin 2007:64–65; Waldrep 2006:218–22). Scott Burton was lynched on August 14, 1908, during the course of the Springfield race riot; media coverage of Burton’s lynching mostly focused on the race riot. Antonio Rodriguez was lynched on November 3, 1910, in the remote town of Rock Springs, Texas. Rodriguez was a Mexican national and his lynching aroused protests in Mexico City and action from the Mexican embassy (Carrigan and Webb 2013). The attention from his co-nationals made Rodriguez the most covered Latino victim of mob violence, and I discuss this lynching in more detail later on. Zachariah Walker was burned alive by a mob in Coatesville Pennsylvania on August 13, 1911 (Downey and Hyser 2011). Leo Frank was lynched in Marietta Georgia on August 17, 1915. Frank’s lynching was probably the most infamous in US history. Robert Prager, a German socialist, was lynched on April 4, 1918, in Illinois, near St Louis, and he was paraded through the streets, forced to kiss an American flag, and wrapped in the flag before he was hanged (Schwartz 2002). Three black circus workers - Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie - were lynched by a large mob in Duluth, Minnesota on June 15, 1920 (Fedo 2000). Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, two black men, were lynched in Marion, Indiana on August 7, 1930.

What about those victims who never received much attention? The most marginal victims, including rural Southern black men and women, but also Native Americans and Latino victims rarely received much notice. Nor did poor white frontier “outlaws” or accused horse-thieves receive much attention. Thus, despite being the most common victims, and the most representative of lynching as a practice of repressive violence, the discussion of lynching did not revolve around these victims. Thus, we might say that media attention to lynching occurred at

the boundaries of lynching as a process, not its core. That is, when lynching crossed some type of boundary (geographic, racial, national, or in the case of spectacle lynchings, what was understood as the boundaries of civilization itself), that is when the nation paid attention.

Presidential

To track presidential actions and discourse on lynching, I, along with research assistants, systematically combed the Presidency Project's digital archive of presidential documents (Woolley and Peters 2011). I have supplemented the documents I have found through the Presidency Project with documents from the Theodore Roosevelt Center's digital archives, and published histories. I began by compiling all of the State of Union Addresses (SOTUs) and inaugural addresses, which mentioned lynching from 1883 to 1930. While SOTUs miss many important presidential documents, such as Roosevelt's Durbin letter in 1903, they do provide a nice rough comparison of presidents over time since they occur with the same frequency throughout the period.

Presidential attention to lynching in the SOTUs begins in 1891 with Benjamin Harrison, who condemns the lynching of the Italian Eleven in New Orleans that year and discusses negotiations with the Italian Government to find a resolution to the resulting tensions (Harrison 1891). Harrison again mentions the Italian Eleven lynching in 1892, in reference to reparation payments made to Italy, and he goes as well to denounce the lynching of black people in the penultimate paragraph:

Lawlessness is not less such, but more, where it usurps the functions of the peace officer and of the courts. The frequent lynching of colored people accused of crime is without the excuse, which has sometimes been urged by mobs for a failure to pursue the appointed methods for the punishment of crime, that the accused have an undue influence over courts and juries. Such acts are a reproach to the community where they occur, and so far as they can be made the subject of Federal jurisdiction the strongest repressive legislation is demanded. A public sentiment that will sustain the officers of the law in resisting mobs and in protecting accused persons in their custody should be promoted by

every possible means. The officer who gives his life in the brave discharge of this duty is worthy of special honor. No lesson needs to be so urgently impressed upon our people as this, that no worthy end or cause can be promoted by lawlessness (Harrison 1892).

In his 1895 SOTU, Grover Cleveland briefly mentioned the lynching of Italians in Walsenburg, Colorado earlier that year, explaining that reparations had been made to Italy. He used the lynching to illustrate problems with immigration policy (Cleveland 1895).

William McKinley briefly denounced lynching in his inaugural address in March of 1897, arguing that: “Lynchings must not be tolerated in a great and civilized country like the United States; courts, not mobs, must execute the penalties of the law (McKinley 1897a).” Later in 1897 and again in 1898, both times prompted by the lynchings of Italian nationals, and then a Mexican national, on US soil, McKinley sent messages to Congress encouraging them to allow the Secretary of State to pay indemnity to the families (McKinley 1897b, 1898). Later in 1899 in his SOTU message, McKinley discussed the lynching of Italians and potential measures to stop these lynchings at length, referring back to President Harrison’s 1891 call for federal power to punish the lynching of foreign citizens on US soil (McKinley 1899). In McKinley’s last SOTU in 1900, he again discussed the lynching of Italian citizens, and repeated his words from his inaugural address:

In my inaugural address I referred to the general subject of lynching in these words:

Lynching must not be tolerated in a great and civilized country like the United States; courts, not mobs, must execute the penalties of the law. The preservation of public order, the right of discussion, the integrity of courts, and the orderly administration of justice must continue forever the rock of safety upon which our Government securely rests.

This I most urgently reiterate and again invite the attention of my countrymen to this reproach upon our civilization (McKinley 1900).

Before being assassinated in September of 1901, McKinley had occasion to beseech Congress twice more in 1901 for indemnities for the lynching of foreign citizens both Italian and Mexican (McKinley 1901a, 1901b).

McKinley's anti-lynching continued with Teddy Roosevelt. Initially, Roosevelt confined his criticism of lynching to personal correspondence. In 1903, however, in a public letter to Winfield Durbin, then governor of Indiana, Roosevelt praised the governor for his swift action in putting down a riot in Indiana, and denounced lynching in strong terms (Roosevelt 1903b). In his 1904 SOTU, Roosevelt again turned to the subject to lynching, arguing that it was the "worst crime" in the US, but thankfully rare, to justify intervention in, or denunciation of other country's human rights violations:

It is inevitable that [the US] should desire eagerly to give expression to its horror on an occasion like that of the massacre of the Jews in Kishenev, or when it witnesses such systematic and long-extended cruelty and oppression as the cruelty and oppression of which the Armenians have been the victims, and which have won for them the indignant pity of the civilized world (Roosevelt 1904).

In 1906 Roosevelt returned to the subject of lynching in his SOTU, denouncing the practice in the strongest terms, spending over 1,800 words on the subject. Roosevelt argued that lynching was uncivilized, and unjustified even if in response to heinous crimes:

The members of the white race on the other hand should understand that every lynching represents by just so much a loosening of the bands of civilization; that the spirit of lynching inevitably throws into prominence in the community all the foul and evil creatures who dwell therein. No man can take part in the torture of a human being without having his own moral nature permanently lowered. Every lynching means just so much moral deterioration in all the children who have any knowledge of it, and therefore just so much additional trouble for the next generation of Americans (Roosevelt 1906).

Taft barely discussed lynching throughout his presidency; his only statement in a SOTU address came in 1909, when he briefly repeated lynching apologists' claims that lynching was a

response to slow courts. Taft wrote that,² “I do not doubt for one moment that much of the lawless violence and cruelty exhibited in lynchings is directly due to the uncertainties and injustice growing out of the delays in trials, judgments, and the executions thereof by our courts (Taft 1909).”

Following Taft’s 1909 brief apologetics, presidents largely fell silent on the subject of lynching. Discussion of lynching does not appear in inaugural addresses or SOTUs until Coolidge’s first SOTU in 1923. Coolidge urged Congress to protect blacks from lynching:

Numbered among our population are some 12,000,000 colored people. Under our Constitution their rights are just as sacred as those of any other citizen. It is both a public and a private duty to protect those rights. The Congress ought to exercise all its powers of prevention and punishment against the hideous crime of lynching, of which the negroes are by no means the sole sufferers, but for which they furnish a majority of the victims (Coolidge 1923).

Coolidge would repeat his request to Congress in his SOTUs in 1924, 1926, 1927, and 1928.

The NAACP

The early NAACP is the central agent in many historical explanations for the transformation in lynching politics. Founded in 1909, the NAACP was the leading black movement organization of its time. Other organizations, such as the Afro-American League and the Niagra movement, were precursors and help serve as blueprints, but were smaller and short-lived. Other organizations, such as Booker T Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, had accommodationist politics and did not strongly critique lynching. Other movement actors, such as Ida B Wells and her contemporaries, were more loosely organized. Thus, if the transformation of lynching politics resulted from the actions of an organized movement, the early NAACP would be the place to look.

² Most SOTUs in this period were written, not given as a speech

There are theoretical reasons that the NAACP may have been an important driver of change in lynching discourse. Movements can sometimes significantly, and rapidly, effect public discourse on an issue through the injection of a novel, and highly resonant frame—such as when activists created an “innocence” frame after DNA testing had absolved many death row inmates (Baumgartner, Boydston, and De Boef 2008) or when activists work to bring publicity to human rights abuses (Keck and Sikkink 1998). While these movements sometimes bring dramatic change in the attention to, and framing of, an issue, movements can also effect long, slow, processes of meaning change which have the potential to alter the basic ground rules and assumptions that underlie political struggles (Burns 2005; D’Anjou 1996).

There are also historical reasons to suspect that the NAACP was influential, particularly since its anti-lynching campaign was the first and largest of its kind. Their anti-lynching campaign worked to create and stoke negative national media attention to lynchings. The NAACP would hire, or send their own staff, to investigate lynchings and bring details to light in the press (Zangrando 1980). After Jesse Washington, a seventeen-year-old African American boy was burned alive in front of an enthusiastic crowd of thousands in Waco, Texas, for instance, the NAACP hired an investigator to gather details on the lynching and worked to publicize the findings in their publication *The Crisis*. W.E.B. Dubois, editor of *The Crisis*, dubbed the lynching “The Waco Horror,” a name which stuck in the national news media. Dubois emphasized the size of the crowd and the details of the public torture that Washington endured in a 6 page spread within *The Crisis* (Bernstein 2005:137–72). The Florida lynching of Claude Neal in 1934, and its attendant NAACP investigation, for instance has been argued to have had a significant impact on national lynching discourse (Youngblood 2007). Brundage and Ming-Francis discuss the 1919 lynching of Berry Washington in Georgia, and how an NAACP

investigation brought media attention to the lynching and spurred local law enforcement efforts (Brundage 1993:231–32; Francis 2014:51–53). The NAACP also had notable impacts on political elites and the policy process. The NAACP was instrumental in getting the Dyer anti-lynching bill passed through the House of Representatives in 1922, although it was later filibustered by Southern Democrats in the Senate (Francis 2014:98–120). The NAACP also had the ear of Presidents Harding and Wilson, and was successful in getting each to make statements in opposition to lynching (Francis 2014:73-78-86). Particularly during Wilson’s racially regressive presidency, this was no small achievement.

Thus we should look to NAACP for impacts in three places: in publicizing lynchings in the mainstream papers, pressuring presidents to make anti-lynching statements, and congressional bills. Although many historians have considered these crucial contributions, taking a longer and more systematic approach, my data reveals however that, as important of these events were, they were of a second-order to other factors. First, looking again to Figure # on victim attention above, none of the focal victims became central as a result of the NAACP’s anti-lynching campaign. Most of the focal victims predate the existence of the NAACP (founded in 1909), and among those focal victims that occurred after the founding of the NAACP, in none of these cases does it appear that the NAACP played a major role in attracting publicity to these lynchings. Second, although the NAACP was successful in helping to get the Dyer anti-lynching bill through the House, the Dyer bill was not the first of its kind, it was predated by the Hoar anti-lynching bill in 1901 (Burns 2010). Third, the NAACP’s impacts on presidents, while impressive, did not make the presidents most vocally in opposition to lynching the ones that NAACP had pressured; as my data show, these were McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, whose administrations predated the existence of the NAACP. This is not to claim that the NAACP had

no impact on lynching discourse, but it does suggest that the NAACP was far from the primary cause of the transformation of lynching politics, and therefore that explanations should look elsewhere.

CHAPTER 3: REPRESSION, RETREAT, AND RETURN

Lynching was a form of political repression that, following Earl (2003), can be understood as observable coercive repression conducted by private actors. This is not to claim that all, or even most, lynch mob was motivated by political concerns; as in all other cases of collective violence, perpetrator motives were mixed (Luft 2015; Mann 2005), and many perpetrators used lynching as cover to settle private disputes or for economic gain for instance (Brundage 1993). Nor do I claim that most lynching victims were politically active; most victims of lynching had limited connections to their communities and posed no political threat (Bailey and Tolnay 2015). However, it is clear that the fundamental causes of lynching were similar to those causing other forms of repression, and many lynch mobs did understand it as such. Lynch mobs often left notes on their victims to “send a message” to the black community, or left victims’ bodies hanging in prominent places. The message of lynching appear to have traveled at least as far as neighboring counties (Tolnay et al. 1996). Lynching in the South occurred most often when a white supremacist government was not entirely consolidated (Hagen et al. 2013). Thus, lynching sought to silence black political voice, even as the practice became one of the main grievances blacks sought to speak out against. Lynching, and other forms of racial violence over the period, encouraged “exit” as well. Southern counties which witnessed many lynchings had the most black outmigration—both to the North and to urban centers in the South (Tolnay and Beck 1992). Some places, such as the northwest corner of Arkansas, were nearly entirely ethnically cleansed as a result of flight from racial violence (Harper 2010).

Over the period of 1900-1910, the South lost 170,000 blacks in net outmigration, mostly to the North; this increased to 450,000 in the 1910s, and 750,000 in the 1920s (Tolnay and Beck 1990:347–48). Some blacks who fled from racial violence in the South became or continued being politically active in the North. They also contributed to the base of support in the North for an expanding and critical black press and the nascent NAACP. The thesis of this chapter is that lynching was effective at repressing the political voice of Southern blacks, but that in response, many migrated and launched a critique from the relative safety of the North. Thus, lynching was effective repression in the places where it was at its worst, but inspired exit to other safer areas beyond the reach of lynching, and thus beyond its power to suppress its critique.

Repression

Southern Horrors

Lynching touched all regions of the US, but no region experienced more violence over this period than the US South. Black citizens were the primary targets and victims, but white political dissenters, generally Republicans, were also heavily targeted. Following the removal of US federal soldiers, and the end of Reconstruction, the political power of dissenters in the South collapsed. Without the protection of US troops, opponents of the Democratic Party and white supremacy were increasingly defenseless against attacks from terrorist organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, White League, and Red Shirts, which acted to drive Republicans from power in the 1870s. Under this, and internal pressures, Republican coalitions of freedmen, scalawags, and carpetbaggers (i.e., blacks, native white Southern republicans, and Northern white republicans) collapsed, sometimes into violent internal contention (Foner 1990).

With the collapse of organized political opposition, and the protection of US soldiers, Republican newspapers became increasingly scarce. Using the United States Newspaper Panel

dataset (see: Gentzkow et al. 2015:33–35), Figure 6 (below) shows that the number of daily Republican papers in the Deep South declines precipitously from a small but real minority voice to near complete dominance by Democratic papers. As Gentzkow and colleagues show, the timing of decline of Republican papers at the state level is closely associated with the beginning of Democratic party dominance in those states (Gentzkow et al. 2015:53–57). The Republican press rose and fell with the Republican party (Abbott 2004:56–69). The press relied on the patronage of the party for financial support (Abbott 2004:45). This was standard for the press at the time, however it was more pronounced because many businesses were often wary or hostile towards advertising in Republican papers. So as the Republican party was rendered irrelevant over the post-reconstruction period, the press lost the patronage resources which supported it.

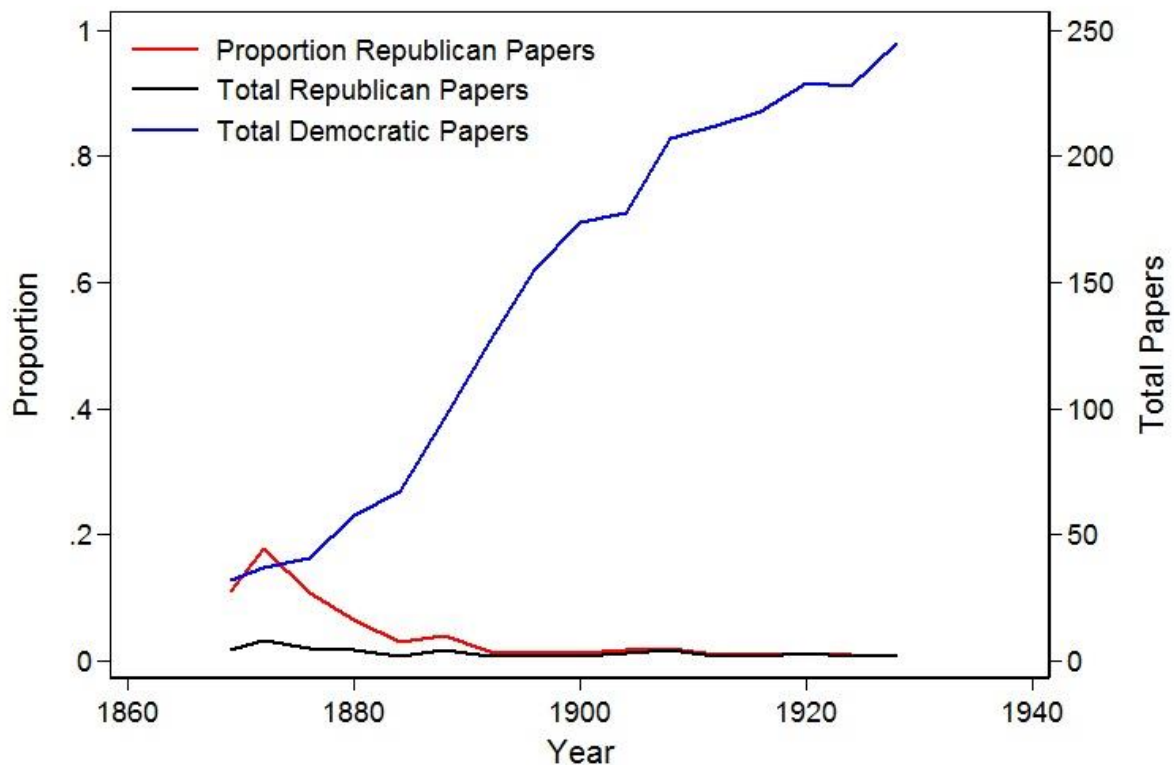
As one of the central institutions of the Republican party, both the editors and physical plant of the Republican press was subjected to white supremacist violence. For example, when white supremacists violently overthrew the Republican government in the 1898 Wilmington insurrection, the black Republican paper the *Daily Record* was among the first targets of the mob. The mob burned the *Record* to the ground. Editors of Republican papers were also often targeted with violence (Abbott 2004:52–53).

The figure below shows the result of the repression of the Southern Republican Press. The data are taken from Gentzkow and colleagues Historical Newspaper Panel data, and show the number of daily newspapers with either a Democratic or Republican affiliation, as well as the proportion of papers which were Republican as a proportion of both Democratic and Republican papers. The figure covers the deep Southern states³ over the years from 1870 to 1930. The figure demonstrates how the Republican press began as a growing minority press in the 1870s, and by

³ The following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas

the 1890s had almost completely collapsed in absolute numbers, and especially in comparison to the robust expansion of the Democratic party press. Thus, although lynching was at its worst in the Deep South, and Republicans were generally strongly opposed to the practice, their capacity to voice criticism was largely destroyed—by the same violence they would have sought to critique.

Figure 6: Number of Republican and Democratic Papers



The Intimidation of the Black Southern Press

Another source of local Southern criticism could have been from Southern black papers. The black press was originally created in response to racism and exclusion from the mainstream white press. Throughout the history of the black press, black newspapers have been commercial ventures, but also political outlets (Simmons 1998). These papers both served basic news functions for blacks, by for example, running obituaries, marriage, and birth announcements that

were excluded from white papers, as well as provided alternative framings of political events and racial violence. Black papers thus served as a sort of black “counter public” (Jacobs 2000).

While black papers throughout the nation had strong motivation to criticize the practice of lynching, the strongest critiques of lynching would ultimately come from Northern black newspapers rather than their Southern peers.

There was no relative shortage of black newspapers in the South. Pride, for instance locates large numbers of black papers in Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, North Carolina and especially Georgia from the 1880s through to 1950 (Pride 1950:480). Constraining Southern black newspaper’s critique of lynching was thus not the resources of the Southern black press. Rather, it was the black press’s economic dependence on Southern white businesses as well as the ever present threat of retributive violence for even the most carefully worded criticism of the prevailing racial order, or calls for black political action, that constrained their criticism of lynching. The economic dependence of black papers in the South to white business came from both the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, black papers were often beholden to white-owned printing shops that could refuse to print papers (Pride 1950:409). On the demand side, black papers were constrained by their reliance on white advertisers (Detweiler 1922:75). Yet, economic dependence was no doubt a second-order concern to the very real threat of violence to those editors who dared to challenge racial violence. Ida B Wells’ paper the *Free Speech* in Memphis, Tennessee provides one famous example of what might happen to critical black editors, as her press was destroyed following her paper’s criticism of lynching, and she herself may have been killed had she not been travelling. Wells never returned to the South, using the North and even Great Britain as places from which to launch criticism. Jesse Max Barber, editor of *Voice of the Negro*, who had clearly understood that criticism was not possible

in the South, was run out of Atlanta with the threat of violence for anonymously submitting a story to a Northern white paper (New York World) that was critical of white mobs in the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906 (Godshalk 2005). Faced with these barriers, it is little surprise that Southern black papers generally did not voice strong criticism to racial violence. Even after the worst of the violence in the South was over in the 1930s and later, Percy Greene's *Jackson Advocate* in Jackson Mississippi, for example, walked "a thin line" to avoid incurring the wrath of local whites and taking political positions (Simmons 1998:67). Indeed many Southern black papers did not even have an editorial page, perhaps choosing to remain silent rather than offer self-censored critiques (Pride 1950:409). As Booker T Washington, who generally did speak on the record on lynching (Meier 1988:108–9; Norrell 2009:91–92), was quoted in the New York Times in 1889:

I would like to speak at length upon these Georgia occurrences [the lynching of Sam Hose and others], and others of a like nature which have taken place in recent years, but in view of my position and hopes with regard to the Tuskegee institute and the education of our people, I feel constrained to keep silent (Anon 1899a).

There was at least one major critical black paper during this time that could be called Southern, but it was located in a border state where lynching was, relatively, uncommon. The Richmond *Planet*, whose editor, John Mitchell, was extremely critical of lynching. Mitchell often received death threats, often from the deep South, but was relatively safe in Virginia. Roscoe Dungee successfully resisted white violence to publish his *Black Dispatch* in Oklahoma City beginning in 1914. The *Dispatch* was highly critical of white supremacist violence, and Dungee went as far as to advocate armed self-defense, telling blacks that their "BALLOT IS A GUN" (Simmons 1998:55). The *Dispatch*, like the *Richmond Planet* was outside of the worst violence in the deep South.

Retreat and Return

Racial violence in the South, combined with the expansion of economic opportunities for Blacks in the North combined to produce the Great Migration starting roughly around 1900, which “produced a dramatic geographic redistribution of the African American population” from the south to the north (Tolnay 2003:210). As McAdam points out, the Great Migration was largely a movement of blacks to places from places where their political action was severely restrained, to places where it was less so (McAdam 1999:79). Crucially, this migration fueled the expansion of the Northern black press by creating a market for black papers in the North. First, some important black journalists were themselves part of this migration, or in the early vanguard of migration. Ida Wells and Max Barber, for instance were both forced north by racial violence. But also, large black populations in places like Chicago provided an expanding local market for black papers (Michaeli 2016). While black editors in the Northern states were by no means free from threats of racial violence, it is difficult to overstate the increased latitude in political expression that they enjoyed relative to their Southern counterparts. Here, I focus on four key black papers: the *Chicago Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *Philadelphia Tribune*.

First among these Northern black paper was the *Chicago Defender*, founded by editor Robert Abbott in Chicago, Illinois in 1905, the *Defender* took a staunch anti-lynching stance throughout the lynching era. The *Defender* gave voice to Southern anti-lynching sentiment—headlines like “Lynching Must Be Stopped By Shotgun” encouraged armed self-defense as the only defense against lynch mobs (Defender 1914b). Yet, Abbott was not optimistic about conditions in the South improving, and encouraged blacks to migrate northward, particularly to Chicago (Grossman 1985).

The Baltimore *Afro American* is the oldest paper in my sample, having been founded in 1892. The paper initially focused mostly on “social announcements and church news (Farrar 1983:73)” not reaching much beyond the local Baltimore area. In the 1910s however, the *Afro* grew to become a national paper. In the 1920s it began to seriously ramp up lynching criticism (Farrar 1983:210).

The *Pittsburgh Courier* was founded in 1907 by Edwin Harleston, a worker in a Pittsburgh food packing plant, primarily as a literary outlet for Harleston’s poetry, but the editorship was soon taken over by Robert L Vann. Vann was an attorney in Pittsburgh, and led the *Pittsburgh Courier* to eventually eclipse even the *Chicago Defender* as the leading national black paper by the 1930s. The *Courier*, however, was largely a local Pittsburgh paper until it began a robust national expansion around 1920 (Bunie 1974).

The *Philadelphia Tribune* was an outspoken paper similar to the *Defender*. In 1916, the *Tribune* lead a successful boycott of Philadelphia businesses which discriminated against black customers (Franklin 1984:267–68). In the lead up to the Philadelphia race riot of 1918, an editorial explained to southern black migrants that:

You are not down in Dixie now and you need not fear the ragged rum crazed hellion crew, prototypes of your old cracker enemies. They are enemies of all decent law-abiding citizens and the time has come to clean out this nest of dirty curs. . . . They may burn some of the property, but you burn their hides with any weapon that comes handy while they are engaged in that illegal pastime (Franklin 1975:338).

The admonition that “You are not down in Dixie now” thus also applied to Northern black editors themselves.

These four papers represent some of the most important black papers of their day. A few are missing however. T. Thomas Fortune’s *New York Age*, the New York based *Amsterdam News*, and the *Richmond Planet* were all important papers that are not within my sample. I do include some excerpts from these papers in discussing specific lynching cases. There is little

reason to believe, however, that these papers differed much in their representation of lynching over the period. Moreover, the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier* were the most widely circulated black papers over this era, so my sample captures the leading black papers.

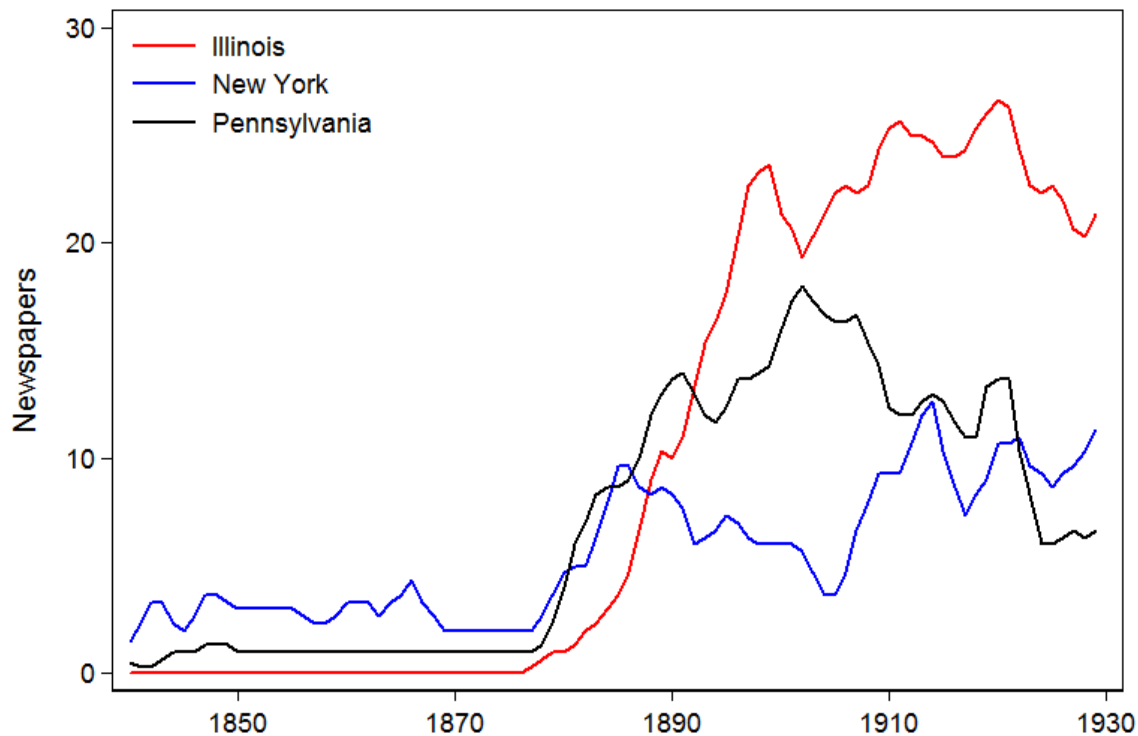
Expansion of Northern Black Papers

The black press in the Northern states dates back to 1829 with *Freedom's Journal* in New York City. New York state had many of the important early black papers, including Frederick Douglass' *North Star* and T. Thomas Fortune's *New York Age*. Using data coded from Pride's (1950) exhaustive inventory of black papers, Figure 6 below illustrates the expansion of the black press in the key Northern states of Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania. These states had the first, second, and third largest concentrations of black papers in the Northern states between 1827 and 1950 (Pride 1950:408). Figure 6 shows New York's (mostly New York City) early lead in black papers, while showing that during the late 1800s Pennsylvania (mostly Philadelphia and Pittsburgh) and Illinois (mostly Chicago) begin to dominate.

Although the number of black papers begins to decline around 1900 in Pennsylvania, and around the Great Depression in Illinois, the declining number of papers masks the expansion in size of the key black papers in these states. Figure 7 below shows the number of articles that these key black papers ran mentioning "lynching," "lynches," or "lynched" over time. Although running an article mentioning lynching in some way is not the same as running an article about lynching, scholars have generally found that counts of mentions are a valid measurement of attention (e.g. Amenta et al. 2012; Andrews and Caren 2010; Gorman and Seguin 2015). Measures of the size of papers, such as article counts and page numbers tend to correlate with higher paper quality, subscription prices, market share, and paper longevity (Berry and

Waldfoegel 2010; Gentzkow et al. 2012). The expansion in lynching attention mirrors the expansion of these papers more generally.

Figure 7: The Expansion of the North Black Press



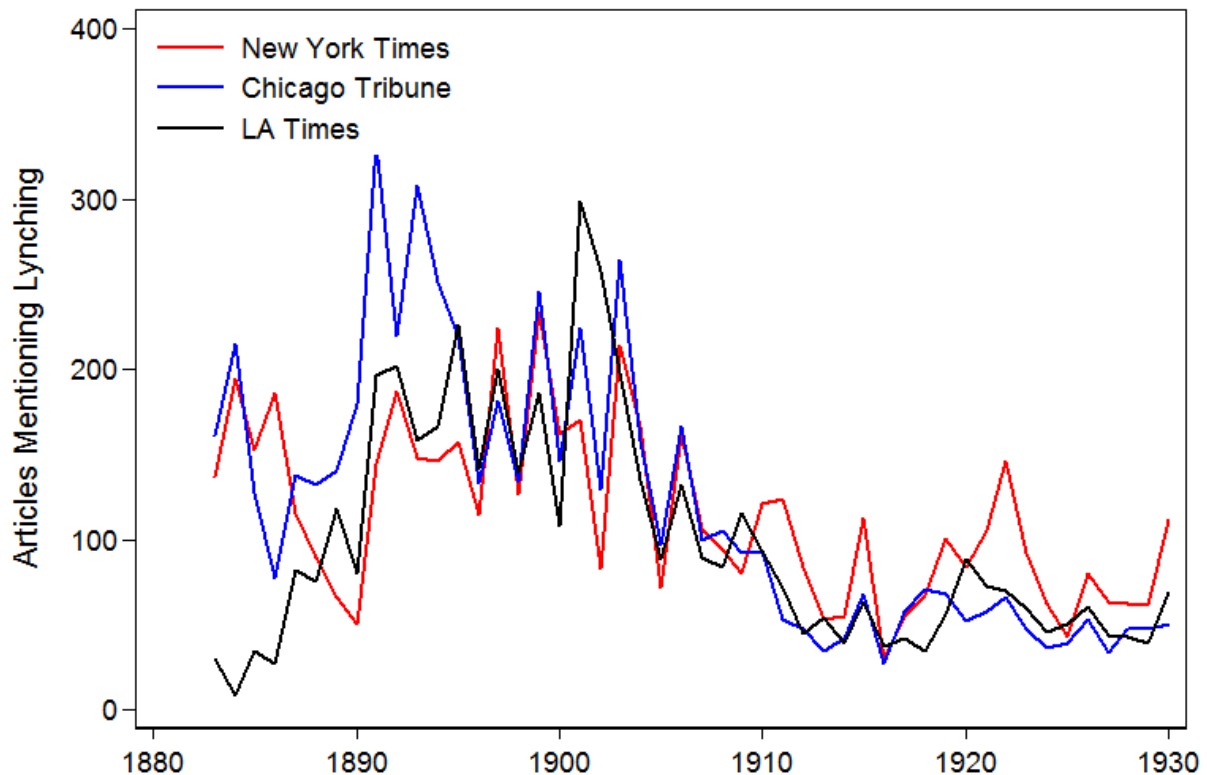
Source: Pride (1950).

The influence of the black press on the mainstream white press was limited. Likewise, the influence of the black press on white publics was limited. Indeed, most contemporary whites were largely unaware of the existence of a black press. Even as late as the 1940s, when the black press was even more developed, Gunnar Myrdal wrote:

Most white people in America are entirely unaware of the bitter and relentless criticism of themselves; of their policies in domestic or international affairs; their legal and political practices; their business enterprises; their churches, schools, and other institutions; their social customs, their opinions and prejudices; and almost everything else in white American civilization. Week in and week out these are presented to the Negro people in their own press (Myrdal 1944).

White presses and publics have continued to ignore the black press (Jacobs 2000).

Figure 8: Lynching Articles in Black Papers



Furthermore, the black press in the South was largely, though not entirely, intimidated out of a strong critique of lynching in precisely the location it was most needed. Rather, perhaps the most important contribution of the black press was Northern black papers bringing their critiques to Southern blacks. Here again, the *Chicago Defender* was the first paper to pioneer this strategy. Roger Abbott pioneered the strategy of having his paper smuggled into the South by Pullman Porters. The Pullman Porters worked on rail cars and had local knowledge and connections in a number of places and thus were central to Abbott's strategy for national circulation (Grossman 1985:86; Michaeli 2016:50–51). Critical also to the expansion of the *Defender* is the trust it enjoyed among Southern blacks, as a result of Abbott's strong critiques of lynching, Jim Crow, and other aspects of white supremacy (Grossman 1985:88). In 1927, the *Pittsburgh Courier* would follow the *Defender's* example and work with the Porters to reach into

the South (Michaeli 2016:169–70). Thus, black papers were able to use the strength of black communities in the Northern states to bring criticism of lynching to black communities in the South. In so doing, these Northern editors exploited the local nature of racial violence, and the mobile nature of news media, to break the cycle of violence silencing its critics.

CHAPTER 4: THE VICTIMS

In this chapter I draw on my quantitative analyses of the relative attention to all lynching victims from 1883-1930 developed in chapter one, to select and analyze case studies of focal victims to guide a writing of the political history of the representation lynching. Using this simple but powerful quantitative evidence to guide the selection of cases for further attention, in the rest of this chapter, I discuss how and why boundary crossing cases attracted so much attention—and how these cases were linked together to produce a narrative of anti-lynching politics.

I primarily use evidence from digital archives and published histories. I rely on published histories of individual lynchings and sometimes biographies of other actors such as presidents or activists to understand the narratives of specific events. I use electronic archives to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from local, national, international, black, and Jewish newspapers. I draw from the digital archives of presidential speeches and papers through the Presidency Project (Woolley and Peters 2011), and other digital presidential archives. I also draw on both the physical and digital archives of the early NAACP. For the most part, I am not uncovering new evidence about any particular lynching or historical actor that would surprise an expert on that case. Rather, I am synthesizing more of the political history of lynching than has hitherto been possible. In developing this bigger picture of lynching's political history, I develop new interpretations about the interpretations of specific lynching events, so that while I do not necessarily challenge details on these cases, I do challenge some of the existing interpretations of the impacts and relative importance of specific lynchings. My central aim here, however, is to

develop a (mostly) new interpretation of how lynching lost its normative support, and challenge some of the existing interpretations.

The chapter is structured around the four types of boundary crossing lynchings that I identified in Chapter One: lynchings of foreign citizens, spectacle (public torture) lynchings, lynchings occurring in the North or in federal jurisdiction, and the lynching of higher status people (primarily Leo Frank). Within each type of lynching, I present the evidence from the prominent lynchings chronologically, that is I work for from the first prominent lynching of that type to the last. The chapter is thus organized in four thematic categories, but is chronological within these themes. To a limited extent, the themes themselves are arranged chronologically based on when the first politically transformative lynching of that type occurred. Thus I begin with the theme of foreign nationals, with the lynching of the Italian Eleven in 1891, and I end the chapter with the theme of lynching of elites, with Leo Frank in 1915.

I consider the effects that these events had on lynching politics in two ways. First, I look at their exogenous, direct, and more-or-less immediate impacts. Second, I look for the possibility that these events were turning points in lynching politics, that these events in some meaningful way transformed the meaning or logic of future lynching politics. In order for me to consider an event as a turning point it had to meet three criteria: 1) be of immediate significance as an exogenous event, 2) had to have been the most recent plausible turning point before an important transformation in lynching politics—that is no similar candidate lynchings happened between this lynching and the transformation it may have set in motion, and 3) there is some specific evidence linking this event to the eventual transformation—e.g. references back to the event years later.

The Nations

The lynching of foreign nationals had the potential to draw both national and international attention. A series of lynchings of Italian nationals in the 1890s and of a Mexican national in Rock Springs Texas in 1910 received considerable national and international attention. These lynchings attracted as much attention as they did as a result of actions from the victim's home country's government or citizens and the reactions that these international affairs elicited from political elites. These lynchings, unlike the lynching of US citizens, also attracted the attention of US Presidents, who were drawn into diplomatic conflict with other nations and generally offered indemnification to families of victims (Karlin 1945).

To better shed light how this process works, I first discuss the lynching of Antonio Rodriguez, and then return to the lynchings of Italians which are connected in a longer and richer historical thread with importance for the larger history of lynching. Antonio Rodriguez was lynched on November 3, 1910, in the remote town of Rock Springs, Texas. Rodriguez had been accused of murdering a white woman, was apprehended by authorities, taken from jail by a white mob which battered down the jails doors, and burned alive by the same mob. The mob may have numbered in thousands, but whatever the exact size of the mob, it was much larger than usual. That coupled with its brutality, made the lynching of Rodriguez one of perhaps two spectacle lynchings of Latinos (Carrigan and Webb 2013:81–82). Rodriguez was a Mexican national and when news of his lynching reached Mexico, it aroused protests and riots in Mexico City and Guadalajara. Prominent Mexican newspapers denounced the lynching and the offices of an American-owned English language newspaper in Mexico City, *The Mexican Herald*, was attacked by a mob (Turner 1967:504–5). The Mexican embassy, and then-President Diaz, denounced the lynching and demanded action from US authorities. The lynching of Rodriguez,

as well as the riots in Mexico that followed, was reported in the *Manchester Guardian* and the *London Times*. Media attention in the US focused on the international reaction. This international reaction, sparked by Rodriguez's co-nationals, thus made Rodriguez the most reported lynching of a Latino victim. The lynching of Rodriguez does not appear to have had much lasting impact on lynching discourse generally. The lynching of people of Mexican descent and origin continued in Texas and the southwest generally, and none of these lynchings attracted nearly as much attention as that of Rodriguez (Carrigan and Webb 2013). It was the lynching of Italian citizens that had the most impact.

The Lynching of Italian Citizens

There was a series of lynchings of Italian citizens in the 1890s which became major national news stories, caused conflict with the Italian government, made lynching in the US an international news story, and embarrassed both local elites and US Presidents alike. In fact, the lynching of Italians appears to have been the primary, almost the only, factor driving presidential attention to lynching during the 1890s. My discussion of the lynching of Italians begins in 1891 with the lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans, LA, continues in 1895 with lynchings of Italians in Colorado, and ends with the lynching of five Italians in 1897 in Tallulah, Mississippi.

Italian Eleven

The Italian Eleven were eleven Italian and American citizens of Italian descent lynched in New Orleans, Louisiana on March 14, 1891, having been accused of the murder of a popular New Orleans police chief, David Hennessy. To understand why this lynching attained the national prominence that it did, we need to go back a few years. David Hennessy had his first brush with national attention as a result of assisting in the apprehension of an infamous Italian bandit, Giuseppe Esposito, in New Orleans in 1881. Esposito was transported to New York for a

short trial before being extradited to Italy. The capture of Esposito made Hennessy famous in New Orleans, and his name was mentioned at least once in a national paper in 1881. Hennessy became a major national story in October of 1890, when he was murdered in New Orleans, perhaps assassinated, allegedly by Italians involved in organized crime: the mafia.

Two years before Hennessy's murder, in October of 1888, the mafia began to be reported with some frequency in the national media following the murder of Antionio Flaccommio in New York City, the first widely reported murder associated with the mafia. The murder of Flaccommio set off national concern regarding the mafia and Sicilians more generally. As the *Chicago Tribune* explained to its readers in a headline about a week after the murder:

HAS CHICAGO A MAFIA?

HOW THE DEADLY SICILIAN SECRET ORGANIZATION WORKS.

It Is Worldwide in Its Operations and
Was Never Stronger Than It Is Today—
Wherever There Are Sicilians There
Also Is the Mafia—Of the Italians in
Chicago the Sicilians Form a Large
Part.

The article went on to explain that “Murder is the foundation-stone of the social fabric in Sicily” and that “Terrorism pervades every function of Sicilian life.” Sicilian immigrants thus, it was argued, brought organized crime with them from their home region (Anon 1888). Similar articles appeared in the *New York Times* and other national dailies. Following this introduction of the mafia to the American public, the national papers were largely, although not entirely, silent about the mafia in the two years before the murder of Hennessy.

Following this construction of Sicilians, it is perhaps not surprising that the murder of a police chief in New Orleans allegedly by Sicilian mafia members would attract significant national attention. In the months of October and November of 1890, the *New York Times* and

Chicago Tribune ran a total of around thirty articles on the Hennessy murder. During the same period, the two papers ran nineteen articles mentioning the mafia in some way.

Following the assassination of Hennessy, the national papers paid considerable attention to the trial of his alleged assassins. New Orleans police charged 19 Italians with the murder. Nine of these men were found innocent, or were declared mistrials. Charges and rumors circulated about jury tampering. Following the trial, a number of prominent native white citizens of New Orleans organized a mob which lynched eleven of these men. Two major factors coalesced to make this the most infamous lynching of its time. First, the murder of Hennessy and the trial of the men charged with his murder was already a national news story, and the lynching fit well with the fears of the Mafia's perversion of the courts and justice. Second, the lynching precipitated an international relations fiasco, and therefore also the attention of domestic political elites.

Northern newspapers tended to be sympathetic towards the lynch mob, arguing that lynching was the only recourse available considering the perversion of justice by the Mafia (Weber 2011:50). Political elites often felt the same way, Henry Cabot Lodge, for instance, argued that:

whatever the proximate causes of the shocking event at New Orleans may have been, the underlying cause, and the one with which alone the people of the United States can deal, is to be found in the utter carelessness with which we treat immigration to this country.

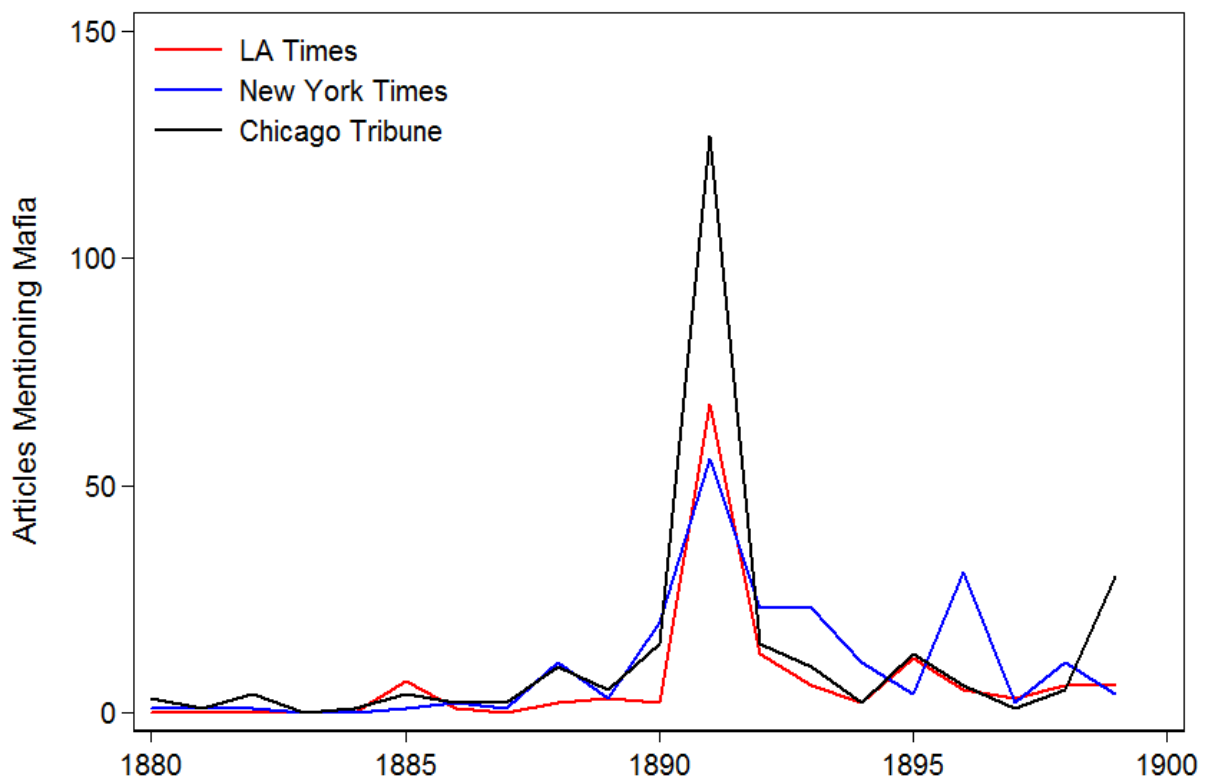
The killing of the prisoners at New Orleans was due chiefly to the fact that they were supposed to be members of the Mafia, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that the Mafia stands alone. Societies or political organizations which regard assassination as legitimate have been the product of repressive government on the continent of Europe. They are the offspring of conditions and of ideas wholly alien to the people of the United States (Lodge 1891:604).

Lodge concluded,

If we do not act, and act intelligently, we must be prepared for just such events as that at New Orleans, not merely bring in their train murder and sudden death, but breeding race antagonisms and national hostilities which never existed before (Lodge 1891:612).

Thus, because the lynching appeared to confirm justifications of lynchings centered on the failure of legal justice, it did not do much to challenge lynching apologist frames, if anything, it reinforced them in the short term. I discuss the enduring effects of the Italian Eleven lynching later on.

Figure 9: Number of Articles Mentioning Mafia



Walsenburg, Tallulah and Other Foreign Lynchings

Two other mass lynchings of Italians followed in the 1890s which attracted national and international attention. These occurred in March of 1895 in Walsenburg Colorado, and in July of 1899 in Tallulah Louisiana. Returning to Figure 1 from the first chapter, it shows that both

lynchings were among the most-covered of the period. The coverage of these lynchings unfolded similarly to that of the Italian Eleven, except that in this case, with the Italian Eleven as a lesson, newspaper coverage revolved immediately around the international implications of the lynchings. This headline from the *Chicago Tribune* in July 23 1899, the day after the lynching in Tallulah is instructive (Anon 1899e):

MAY CAUSE A WRANGLE.

LYNCHING OF ITALIAN'S BROUGHT
TO GOVERNMENT'S NOTICE.

Count Vinchi, Charge d'Affaires, Lays
the Matter Before the State Depart-
ment--Secretary Hay Calls on the
Governor of Louisiana for the Facts
in the Case—Similar to the Mafia
Killing in New Orleans Several
Years Ago.

Other lynchings of Italians attracted some attention nationally, and the federal government paid indemnity to the victims. These lynchings occurred in Hahnville, Louisiana in 1896, Erwin, Mississippi in 1901, and Tampa, Florida in 1910. Indemnity was also paid for the lynching of Mexican nationals: Luis Morena, in Yreka, California during 1895, and Florentino Suaste in Lasalle County, Texas during 1900 (Karlin 1945:245–46).

The Exogenous Effect of the Lynching of Italian Nationals

The lynching of Italians had some direct and exogenous effects on the discussion of lynching. The lynching of Italian citizens more or less reliably pushed lynching onto the agenda of political elites, mostly it did so by precipitating remedial demands from the Italian government which forced the issue onto political elite's agenda. Looking systematically at the

State of the Union and inaugural addresses of presidents shows the leading role that the lynching of Italian citizens played in bringing presidents to the critique of lynching.

Benjamin Harrison, in 1891, is the first US president in this period to discuss lynching in his SOTU address. He mentions the lynching of the Italian Eleven in New Orleans, and the work undertaken to repair relations with Italy as the result of the lynching. Harrison recommends to Congress in this address that the lynching of foreign nationals become a federal offense. The second mention of lynching is again Harrison in 1892, who briefly notes:

The friendly act of this Government in expressing to the Government of Italy its reprobation and abhorrence of the lynching of Italian subjects in New Orleans by the payment of 125,000 francs, or \$24,330.90, was accepted by the King of Italy with every manifestation of gracious appreciation, and the incident has been highly promotive of mutual respect and good will.

Three years later in 1895, lynching appeared again in the State of the Union address, as Grover Cleveland discussed another lynching of Italian citizens:

The deplorable lynching of several Italian laborers in Colorado was naturally followed by international representations, and I am happy to say that the best efforts of the State in which the outrages occurred have been put forth to discover and punish the authors of this atrocious crime. The dependent families of some of the unfortunate victims invite by their deplorable condition gracious provision for their needs.

McKinley mentioned lynching in the abstract in his inaugural address in 1897, but made no mention of specific victims. Four years from Cleveland's SOTU address, in 1899, lynching again appeared in the State of the Union Address as the result of the lynching of Italian nationals on US soil. William McKinley devoted around 700 words to the topic, repeating Harrison's call to make the lynching of foreign nationals a federal offense. And, perhaps exasperatedly, noting:

For the fourth time in the present decade, question has arisen with the Government of Italy in regard to the lynching of Italian subjects. The latest of these deplorable events occurred at Tallulah, Louisiana, whereby five unfortunates of Italian origin were taken from jail and hanged. [...] The recurrence of these distressing manifestations of blind mob fury directed at dependents or natives of a foreign country suggests that the contingency has arisen for action by Congress in the direction of conferring upon the

Federal courts jurisdiction in this class of international cases where the ultimate responsibility of the Federal Government may be involved.

The next year, 1900, McKinley returned to the lynching of Italians in Tallulah. He repeated his call to make the lynching of foreign nationals a federal offense, and closed his discussion, referencing back to his inaugural address. Thus, aside from Italian nationals, no specific lynching events or victims were discussed by US presidents in their inaugural or State of the Union addresses until much later.

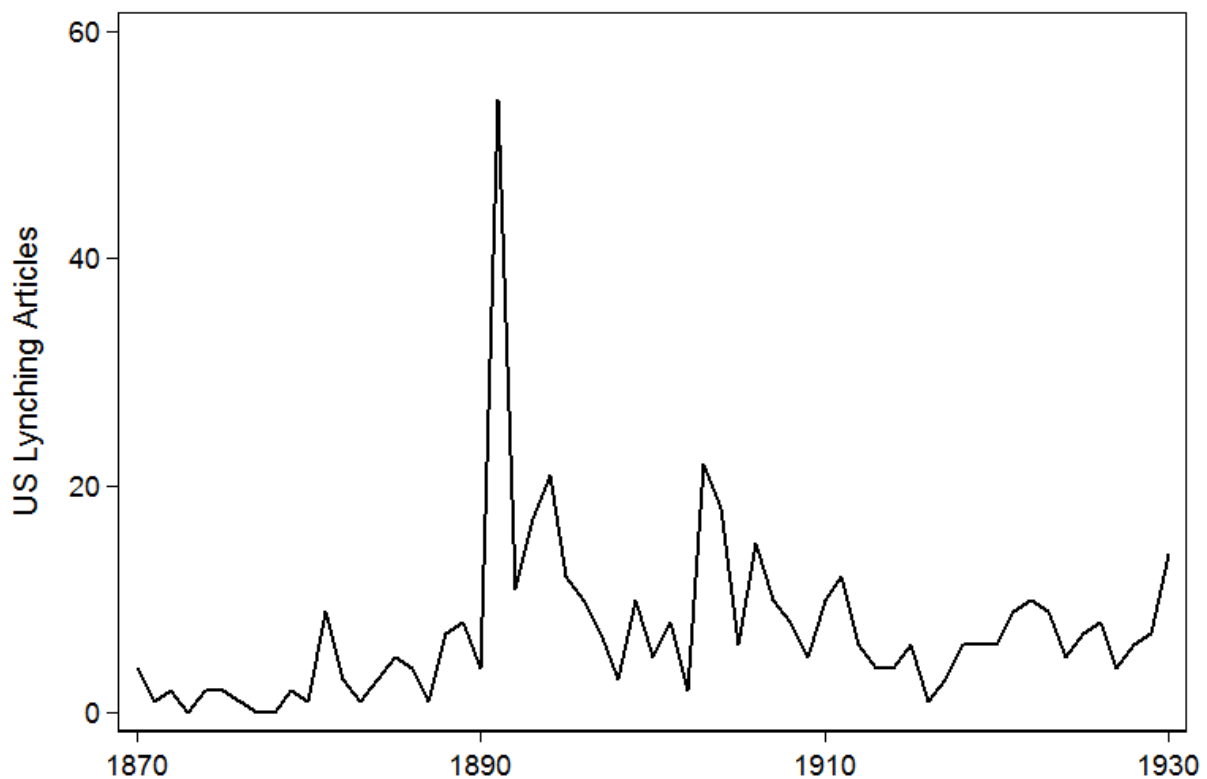
The Italian Eleven as Turning Point

Here I argue that the lynching of the Italian Eleven was a turning point in lynching discourse. At the domestic level, the lynching did little to change lynching discourse, however, the lynching made lynching an enduring international embarrassment for the US in general, and the South in particular. The Italian Eleven meets my first criteria for identifying turning points in that it is the most covered lynching until the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915. The Italian Eleven lynching had two related enduring effects; the first was to make lynching in the US of enduring interest to international audiences, the British most importantly, and the second effect was to introduce the discourse of “civilization” into the discussion of American lynching. In the following discussion I show that the Italian Eleven meet my second and third criteria for a turning point.

Lynching in the US was discussed occasionally in British papers before the Italian Eleven lynching. Race relations in the US South were also an occasional topic of interest to British papers; the *London Times*, for instance, had sent a correspondent to the American South to do a ten-part series on race relations there (Weber 2011:117). However, as Figure 9 below demonstrates, following the lynching of the Italian Eleven, discussion of American lynching in the British papers exploded. This attention to lynching was also enduring. Similar dynamics

occurred in Italian and other European papers (see: Casilli 1992 especially pp. 363). The British empire, being the most powerful of the period, and the closest culturally to the US, was the most important foreign critic of lynching.

Figure 10: Number of US Lynching Articles in *The Guardian* 1870-1930

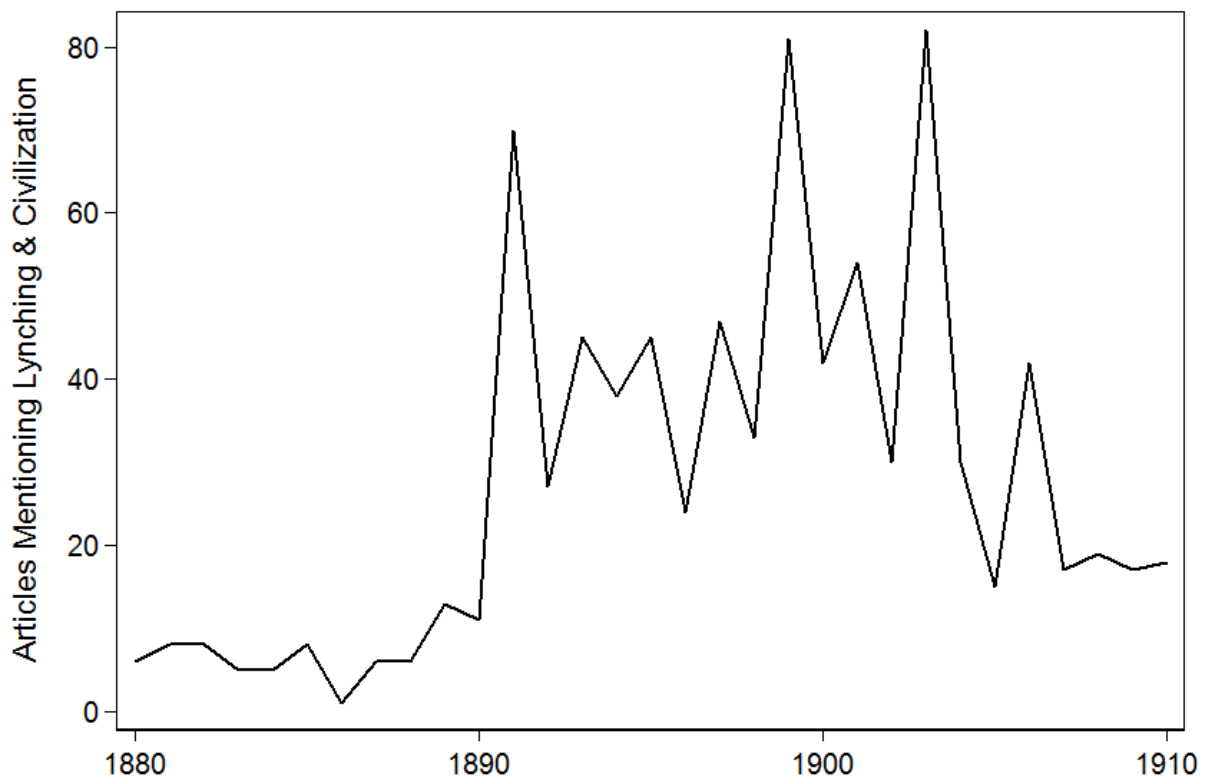


A number of historians have argued that lynching discourse changed in the 1890s to talk increasing of “civilization.” Historians and biographers have argued that this civilization frame was linked to how the US was seen in the eyes of the world, and many have argued or suggested that this frame had its roots in Ida B Well’s activism in Britain during 1893 and 1894. Bederman, for instance, argues that as a result of Well’s 1894 British tour:

After 1894, most Northern periodicals stopped treating lynching as a colorful Southern folkway. They dropped their jocular tones and piously condemned lynching as “barbarous.” It became a truism that lynching hurt America in the eyes of the “civilized world” (Bederman 1995:70)

As the Figure 11 below (reproduced from the first chapter) shows, however, a shift towards discourse of civilization began in earnest in 1891, zooming in down to the monthly and daily level shows that talk of civilization began immediately following the Italian Eleven lynching. The analysis here thus supports Weber’s conclusion that, “When Ida B. Wells went to England, she drew from this dialogue and spoke to British audiences who were already questioning the civilization of the South (2011:63).”

Figure 11: Civilization Discourse in Lynching Articles



N= 1134 Articles in *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*

What Wells did accomplish, however, was critical. Wells seized the international opportunity presented by the Italian Eleven to accomplish two goals. Wells helped build infrastructure in the British anti-lynching movement, and further linked lynching to the discourse of civilization by drawing attention to particularly heinous lynchings in the US, such as the

lynching of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas. In a May 1893 interview for the *Manchester Guardian*, Wells was asked whether “lynchings of negroes are on the increase?” To which she replied:

Yes, they are becoming more frequent in the South. [...] Not only are the lynchings more frequent, but they are increasingly barbarous. The mob are no longer content with shooting and hanging, but now burn negroes alive, and, not satisfied even with that, torture them to death, as in the horrible case at Paris, Texas (Anon 1893).

George White and Teddy Roosevelt

The internationalization of lynching, having its roots in the Italian Eleven and having been accelerated by Ida Wells and the continued lynching of Italian nationals, reached its apotheosis with the lynching of a black American citizen in Delaware in 1903—George White. Probably no single African American victim of lynching received as much attention, both national and international, as George White. There were multiple reasons for this, some of which I explore later, but perhaps the most important was that the lynching of White became an international embarrassment for America’s most internationalist president of the period—Theodore Roosevelt.

Roosevelt believed, in what became known as the “Roosevelt Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine, that the US should project military power in the Western Hemisphere and intervene when human rights violations occurred. Roosevelt had, prior to the lynching of White, been opposed to lynching, and understood as of a piece with human rights violations abroad. In a 1902 address at Arlington cemetery, for instance, Roosevelt excused the brutal suppressing of Philippine insurrection, by noting that:

From time to time there occur in our country... lynchings carried on under circumstances of inhuman cruelty and barbarity—cruelty infinitely worse than any that has ever been committed by our troops in the Philippines (quoted in: Ziglar 1988:17)

While lynchings might be a useful comparison to downplay US brutality in the Philippines, Roosevelt also understood that, if the US was to justify imperialist action in other

countries on the basis of human rights, lynching at home was an obvious source of charges of international hypocrisy. The international publicity brought on by the lynching of George White was the first serious, and most important, such embarrassment for Roosevelt.

To understand the importance of the lynching of George White, it is necessary to go back a few months to another episode of violence—the Kishinev Pogrom in Russia. The pogrom occurred in April of 1903, leaving roughly 50 Jews dead, around 400 injured, and perhaps 10,000 homeless (Schoenberg 1974:262–63). The Jewish diaspora in the US, especially those that had immigrated from Russia, mobilized quickly to bring support to the Jews of Kishinev. A relief fund eventually distributed approximately \$500,000 to the Jews in Kishinev. The US Jewish diaspora also mobilized a number of political elites on their behalf, including former president Grover Cleveland. US national newspapers covered the pogrom in great detail, including in-depth investigative journalism by journalists sent to the region. The Roosevelt White House and state department were largely silent despite being appalled by the violence, because as Secretary of State John Hay admitted privately in a letter on May 20th: “What would we do if the Government of Russia should protest against mob violence in this country, of which we can hardly open a newspaper without meeting examples (quoted in: Schoenberg 1974:276).” Roosevelt himself contemplated making a public donation to the Kishinev relief fund, but decided it would not be politic, in a letter to John Hay on May 25, 1903, he supposed it would, “be much like the Czar expressing his horror of our lynching negroes.”

The lynching of George White occurred during the height of political tensions surrounding the Kishinev pogrom, and partially because of its comparison to the pogrom became the most covered lynching of an African American, perhaps of all time, although almost certainly up to 1930. Despite the centrality of the White lynching to the politics of lynching during this

period, fairly little has been written on White. What we do know is that White was broken out of jail by a mob of perhaps five- to ten-thousand, and burned alive in Wilmington, Delaware on June 22, 1903, following a sermon from Reverend Robert Elwood which encouraged the lynching (Barrow 2005:254–56; Downey 2013; Williams 2001). White had been charged with the rape and murder of a local white woman. The lynching attracted immediate attention both national and international. The news reached London almost immediately. The *London Times* ran an article discussing the “barbarous circumstances” of the lynching three days after. Five days after the lynching the *Manchester Guardian* was covering the lynching and its aftermath, a headline ran: “LYNCHING MANIA: SHOCKING SCENES (Anon 1903e).” A parallel was also almost immediately drawn between the violence in Kishinev and the violence in Delaware. Two days after the lynching, the comparison to Kishinev was so widespread that the *London Times* correspondent in New York felt the need to debunk the comparison, the *Times* began the article:

To establish a just analogy between the Kishineff massacres and the lynching of a negro at Wilmington in barbarous circumstances it is only necessary to contrast the apologies of eulogies of the Russian Press for Kishineff and the stern condemnation of the Wilmington outrage by the American papers. [...] This negro’s crime was unspeakably blacker than anything of which the Kishineff Jews were falsely accused, but these are the terms in which the burning of him are denounced (Anon 1903i).

Thus, following the lynching of White, Roosevelt was in an awkward position. He wished to strongly denounce the Kishinev pogrom, but was open to charges of hypocrisy if he did not also denounce lynching, but in addition to that he did not wish to alienate the white South. Figure 10 below, illustrates Roosevelt’s predicament in cartoon form. In a July 30th letter Thomas Goode Jones, an ex-confederate, ex-governor of Alabama, and Roosevelt-appointed US district court judge in Alabama, Roosevelt writes:

I have felt badly about the feeling, seemingly so prevalent in the South, that my attitude is hostile to the South. I can say with all sincerity that I do not see how such a misunderstanding can exist. It of course arises from my attitude toward the negro. [Roosevelt goes on to discuss his appointment of blacks to positions of government in the

South and North]. So about lynching. When the chance comes I am going to speak as strongly as I know how about lynching, but I certainly shall not say anything of a sectional character. In all probability I shall distinctly state that what I say is based on incidents in the North as well as the South, in the East as well as the West (Roosevelt 1903a).

Roosevelt soon got his chance to speak strongly on lynchings. About a week later he sent a widely-publicized letter congratulating Indiana Governor Winfield Durbin on suppressing a race riot. Roosevelt made good on his promise to speak strongly on lynching, and to avoid saying anything of a “sectional character.” Roosevelt began by “acknowledging” that lynching was motivated by the heinous crimes of black rapists.⁴ “But,” argued Roosevelt:

the fullest recognition of the horror of the crime and the most complete lack of empathy for the criminal cannot in the least diminish our horror at the way in which it has become customary to avenge these crimes and at the consequences that are already preceding therefrom.

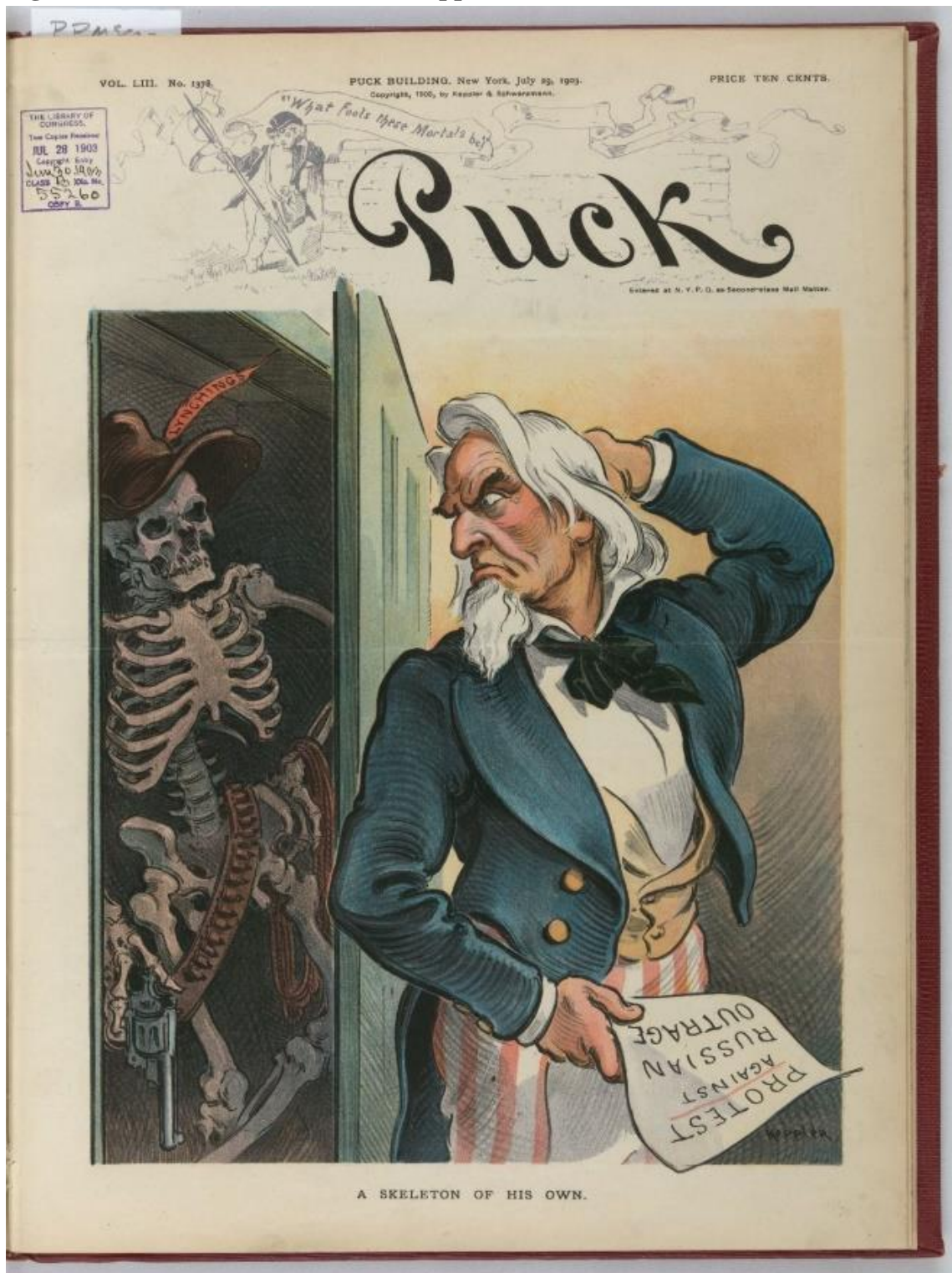
In closing the letter Roosevelt invoked the language of civilization, framing lynching as a moral blot on the nation in the context of Western civilization:

The nation, like the individual can not commit a crime with impunity. If we are guilty of lawlessness and brutal violence [...] we will assuredly suffer later on for what we have done. The cornerstone not merely of this republic but of all free government is respect for and obedience to the law. Where we permit the law to be defied or evaded, whether by rich man or poor man, by black man or white, we are by just so much weakening the bonds of our civilization and increasingly the chance of its overthrow and the substitution in its place of a system in which there shall be violent alternations of anarchy and tyranny (Roosevelt 1903b).

Roosevelt twice returned to the subject of lynching in his State of the Union addresses in 1904 and 1906. In 1904, he argued that intervention in Venezuela, Cuba, Panama, China, and in the Russo-Japanese war was legitimated by the United State’s exemplary human rights record. Roosevelt argued that the US’s “worst crime” was lynching, but it was thankfully “never more

⁴ This statement may have been made to avoid offending white supremacist southerners, but also appears that this was Roosevelt’s private view on the causes of lynching. While Roosevelt opposed lynching, it was from a standpoint of racist paternalism and commitment to law and order.

Figure 12: A Skeleton of His Own (Keppler 1903)



than sporadic” Therefore it was natural that:

[The] nation should desire eagerly to give expression to its horror on an occasion like that of the massacre of the Jews in Kishineff, or when it witnesses such systematic and long-extended cruelty and oppression as the cruelty and oppression of which the Armenians have been the victims (Roosevelt 1904).

Returning to lynching in his 1906 State of the Union address, Roosevelt devoted some 1,845 words to the subject. Perhaps the most comprehensive statement from a president on the issue, Roosevelt returned to the theme of civilization, argued that each lynching represented a “loosening of the bands of civilization (Roosevelt 1906).”

Our National Crime

Sociologist James Cutler’s 1905 book on lynching began with the words of Ida B Wells: “It has been said that our country’s national crime is lynching” (Cutler 1969:1). By 1905, lynching had become framed as a unique blot upon the US, “found in no other country of a high degree of civilization (Cutler 1969:1)” Up until 1891, however, lynching had been largely seen as a domestic issue within the US, was rarely discussed by any country outside of the US, and was not a point of comparison with other “civilized” nations. The Presidents, up until 1891, had largely been able to avoid the subject of lynching, and largely did so out of sympathy with, or concern for alienating, white Southerners. This changed when eleven Italian nationals were lynched in New Orleans, making American lynching a concern of the Italian government, and a topic in newspapers throughout Europe. Additional lynchings of Italian nationals throughout the 1890s fueled international attention. The lynching of Mexican nationals also at times brought protest of the Mexican government. Thus, as the practice of lynching spread to victimize foreign nationals, it created a foreign opposition, and made lynching our national crime.

While the lynching of foreign nationals first brought lynching to the international public sphere, the increased attention to lynching as a result translated to an international critique of

American lynching as such, rather than simply a critique of the lynching of foreign nationals. Ida B Wells and her allies in Britain exploited increasing international interest to critique the lynching of blacks effectively from Britain. Lynching became a natural point of comparison with other countries human rights records, and the lynching of George White became a major international news story when it was juxtaposed with the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. Thus the lynching of foreign nationals eventually helped to make the lynching of black Americans an international story.

This foreign attention in the presses, and the protestation of the foreign governments made lynching an embarrassment for US Presidents. The lynching of Italian nationals brought lynching to the presidential agenda, but the apogee of presidential critiques of lynching occurred in 1903 and 1906 when Roosevelt, the most internationalist president of the era, made strong denouncements of lynching generally and with specific reference to the lynching of black Americans. Thus, the lynching of foreign nationals eventually brought strong presidential critique of the lynching of blacks. This internationalization of lynching also brought changes in the way that lynching was discussed. Lynching came to be discussed domestically in terms of “civilization” following the lynching of the Italian Eleven. This civilization frame, largely introduced as a result of the lynching of foreign nationals, was successfully translated to the lynching of blacks, especially by Ida B Wells during her anti-lynching campaign in Britain.

Thus, as lynching spread beyond the boundaries of US citizens, to victimize foreign nationals, it attracted the attention and protestations of foreign governments and presses, and internationalized lynching framing. The net effect was to increase international condemnation of lynching generally, and therefore to increase condemnation of black victims as well. As John

Mitchell, the editor of the African American paper the *Richmond Planet* argued in 1891, the lynching of Italians at New Orleans was:

a God-send for the Afro-American. It has called the attention of the civilized world to the horrors of American lynch-law, and behind it all lurks the shadows of fifty thousand bleeding negroes who have been its victims (quoted in Weber 2011:52).

The Spectacle

Spectacle lynchings, also referred to as public torture lynchings, can be loosely defined as lynchings in which there is a large mob of spectators, and where the victim is subjected to torture or posthumous mutilation of their body (see e.g. Garland 2005; Wood 2009). In principle the victim could be of any race or gender, but the historical record does not seem to contain a single spectacle lynching of women or white men (Smångs 2016)⁵. Returning to Figure 1 from the first chapter, the lynching of Sam Hose in 1899 in Georgia was the most covered, and I will argue the most important, spectacle lynching in these papers, until George White. Before Hose, however, there were two spectacle lynchings which received considerable attention, that of Henry Smith, and that of C.J. Miller both in 1893. These lynchings attracted both domestic attention, but also international attention. As noted in the previous section, Ida B Wells, then on an anti-lynching campaign to Britain, used these lynchings as instructive examples. After the lynching of the Italian Eleven had brought attention to lynching in the British press, the brutality of these lynchings confirmed in British papers that the US was a lawless, and race-prejudiced, place.

⁵ The lynching of two white men, Thurmond and Holmes, in San Jose California in 1933, is arguably an exception to this rule.

The Lynching of Sam Hose

The lynching of Sam Hose was an archetypical spectacle lynching, and perhaps the most historically consequential of these lynchings. In April of 1899, Sam Hose⁶, a young black man, was employed as a farm hand on a farm owned by Alfred Cranford (For the following narrative of the Hose lynching I rely principally on these accounts: Arnold 2009; Ellis 1992; Grem 2006). Following a dispute with Cranford over wages, Hose killed Cranford, perhaps in self-defense, with an axe. Hose was also accused of raping his employer's wife, Mattie Cranford⁷. Hose immediately fled, and encouraged by inflammatory newspaper coverage, informal search parties formed throughout Georgia. Hose evaded capture for ten days, during which Georgia papers fanned the flames of racist sentiment and published rumors of his location. In the lead up to Hose's capture, newspapers had argued that Hose would, or should, be burned alive. The *Atlanta Constitution* prophesied that Hose would be "burned at the stake." The *Atlanta Journal* wrote:

If Hose is caught, he will be brought back to the scene of his crime, face to face with his victim. Mrs. Cranford will be judge and jury and by her verdict death is to be the negro's penalty. She has expressed a desire to dictate the mode of death and manner of torture. Her decision as to how the death penalty is to be paid has not been announced, but it is said that death by fire is her preference (Ellis 1992:85–86).

Hose was caught near Marshallville, having fled to the farm of a former employer, who had been following the search for Hose in the newspapers. Having been captured, his captors, the Jones brothers, attempted to deliver him to authorities in Atlanta to claim rewards offered by the state of Georgia and the *Atlanta Constitution*. However, even having disguised Hose, they were noticed by rail employees and reporters on the train to Atlanta, who wired ahead to waiting mobs

⁶ His real name was probably Tom Wilkes. Newspaper accounts also refer to him as Sam Holt.

⁷ It is not clear whether Hose committed the rape or not. It is possible that the newspapers added the rape charge, consistent with themes of "folk pornography," but the rape charge was immediate, and given the stigma of the rape, there would have been some incentive for the families of Mattie Cranford to dispute it (Ellis 1992:78–83).

in Griffin and Newnan. These mobs intercepted Hose at Griffin before he could be taken to authorities in Atlanta. From Griffin, a special train was commissioned to bring the mob and Hose to Newnan with the intent of bringing Hose to Mattie Cranford. Newspaper reporters interviewed Hose and the mob along the train ride to Newnan. Once at Newnan, Hose was delivered by the mob to the jail so that the Jones brothers could formally turn Hose over to the state and claim the reward. Following this formality, the mob promptly removed Hose from the jail, and despite the protests of the former governor, and Newnan resident, William Atkinson, took Hose to where Mattie Cranford had been residing. Mattie Cranford did not come out from the house to meet the mob, but her mother, Mrs McElroy, met the mob at the front gate of the house, and allegedly expressed that Mattie's wish was to have Hose burned. Here, Hose implicated another man in the death of Cranford—Lige Strickland. Mrs McElroy implored the mob not to kill Hose in her yard, and the mob headed north towards Palmetto, intent on lynching Hose near the scene of his “crime.” On the way north however, rumors spread to the mob that the militia may be coming on trains (in fact these trains were full of would-be gawkers from Atlanta), and the mob was concerned that if the militia reached them they would not have time to complete their plans of prolonged torture. So the mob stopped a few miles outside of Newnan.

The details of Hose's murder are disturbing to say the least, nevertheless these details are necessary to understand why the lynching of Hose became the event that it did. Hose was lynched before a crowd of perhaps two-thousand people. Hose was burned alive after being subjected to other tortures. Following the murder of Hose, mobs claimed another victim, Strickland, said to be an accomplice of Hose.

The national newspapers, although many had little sympathy for Hose, reported with the lynching with disgust for the actions of the lynch mob. This headline, from the front page of the *Washington Post* on April 24, 1899, is instructive (Anon 1899g):

SAM HOSE IS LYNCHED

Georgia Mob Chain and Burn
The Negro at a Tree.

REMAINS CUT UP AS SOUVENIRS

Capture, Identification, and Confession of
the Fiend Who Murdered Alfred Cran-
ford and Assaulted His Wife—Taken to
Palmetto by a Large Crowd and Put to
Death in a Most Revolting Manner—
His Accomplice Also Arrested.

Immediately following the lynching of Hose, would be members of the mob that lynched Hose, frustrated by not having been able to attend the event, lynched Elijah “Lige” Strickland as a supposed accomplice (Arnold 2009:124–25). Although the lynching of Strickland was not as brutal as that of Hose, Strickland was a more sympathetic victim, since it was clear that he was innocent. As a *New York Times* headline proclaimed (Anon 1899c):

GEORGIA MOB KILLS AN INNOCENT MAN?

Lige Strickland Shares the Fate of
His Accuser, Sam Hose.

EARS AND A FINGER CUT OFF

Finally Put to Death by Hanging
Instead of at the Stake.

His Employer, Major W. W. Thomas,
Said He was Not Guilty, and
Pleaded for His Life.

The Sam Hose Lynching as Turning Point

There is wide agreement among sociologists and historians that the discussion of lynching shifted dramatically between 1880 and 1930 or so, from a conception of lynching as “rough justice” and the culpability of the victim to one emphasizing the lawlessness and brutality of the mob (Brundage 1993; Carrigan 2004; Pfeifer 2011; Tolnay and Beck 1995; Wasserman 1998; Wood 2009). Much of this work is descriptive, and offers no explanations for why such a shift occurred. Others locate a shift in lynching discourse following the publicization of the particularly brutal lynching of Jesse Washington by the early NAACP in 1916 and their continuing anti-lynching campaign (Carrigan 2004; Francis 2014; Wood 2009). I argue here that the lynching of Hose and Strickland was the turning point at which the focus of lynching reporting shifted from the supposed crimes of victims, to the crimes of the mob.

Following the methodological guidelines for assessing turning points discussed above, I show that 1) the Hose lynching was among the most covered lynchings since the Italian Eleven, if not the most covered; 2) the Hose lynching immediately preceded changes in discourse, the markers of which emerge first in the Hose lynching, and there is no other lynching, event, or actor that might be a more plausible cause of this shift in discourse; and 3) the Hose lynching continues to be referenced years after the fact. Thus, I argue that the Sam Hose lynching marked a turning point in lynching discourse. While the continuing occurrence of spectacle lynchings was likely to have changed this discourse regardless, the Sam Hose seems to have been the most likely trigger of this change, and the specifics of the Sam Hose lynching (especially that it occurred near Atlanta, Georgia) have enduring effects on future lynching discourse.

The Contemporaneous and Enduring Significance of Sam Hose

As can be seen in Figure 5 in the second chapter, Sam Hose was probably the most covered lynching victim since the Italian Eleven, and before the lynching of George White. The national press discussed in brutal detail the lynching of Hose, and discussed the likely innocence of his “accomplice” and fellow victim Lige Strickland at length. Thus, the Hose lynching captured the media spotlight and focused national discourse on a particularly brutal lynching, as well as a lynching of a man whose innocence was abundantly clear even to whites of that time. News of the Sam Hose lynching also spread internationally—widely enough that it was used as propaganda for Filipino insurgents, urging black American soldiers to desert (Gatewood 1972:560–61).

The Hose lynching continued to be discussed in the national press throughout the rest of 1899. National coverage of Hose in 1899 concluded on December 31st when the lynching was listed among a year-end summary of “important events” in the *Louisville Courier* (Anon 1899d). The Hose lynching was again discussed a few times following the Wilmington, Delaware lynching of George White in 1903. In an August 1903 article, the *Baltimore Sun* discusses a Chautauqua talk in favor of segregation, which touches on how lynching has crossed sectional boundaries and occurs in the North as well as the South. The article assumes a high level of familiarity with Sam Hose and the connected lynchings in discussing its similarity to lynchings occurring more recently outside of the South:

The mob has broken the barriers of section and lynching is at last a national crime. The spirit of lawlessness is clearly an evil of the times. The touch of the mob has made the republic sin. For every Newnan there is a Wilmington. For Palmetto in Georgia, Kansas has its Leavenworth. Sam Hose is matched by Alex White. The Evansville riots surpass the riots in Carolina. The mob that shoots in Mississippi is answered by the mob that slays in Danville, Ill (Anon 1903j).

Thus, in this article, the lynching of Sam Hose has become a symbol of Southern mob brutality and lawlessness. In an August, 1903 letter to the editor of the *New York Times* entitled “The Futility of Lynching,” the author rebuts the argument of lynching apologists that lynchings are preferable to legal trials since “Negro criminals delight in the notoriety which public trials bring to them and their kind”, by asking if:

Could vain, emotional natures get from an ordinary jury trial or from an execution in a jailyard the intoxicating publicity that has blazed about these lynchings? All America and half Europe heard some years ago the name of the obscure Georgia negro, Sam Hose, his brutal crime, his brutal death (MINTURN 1903).

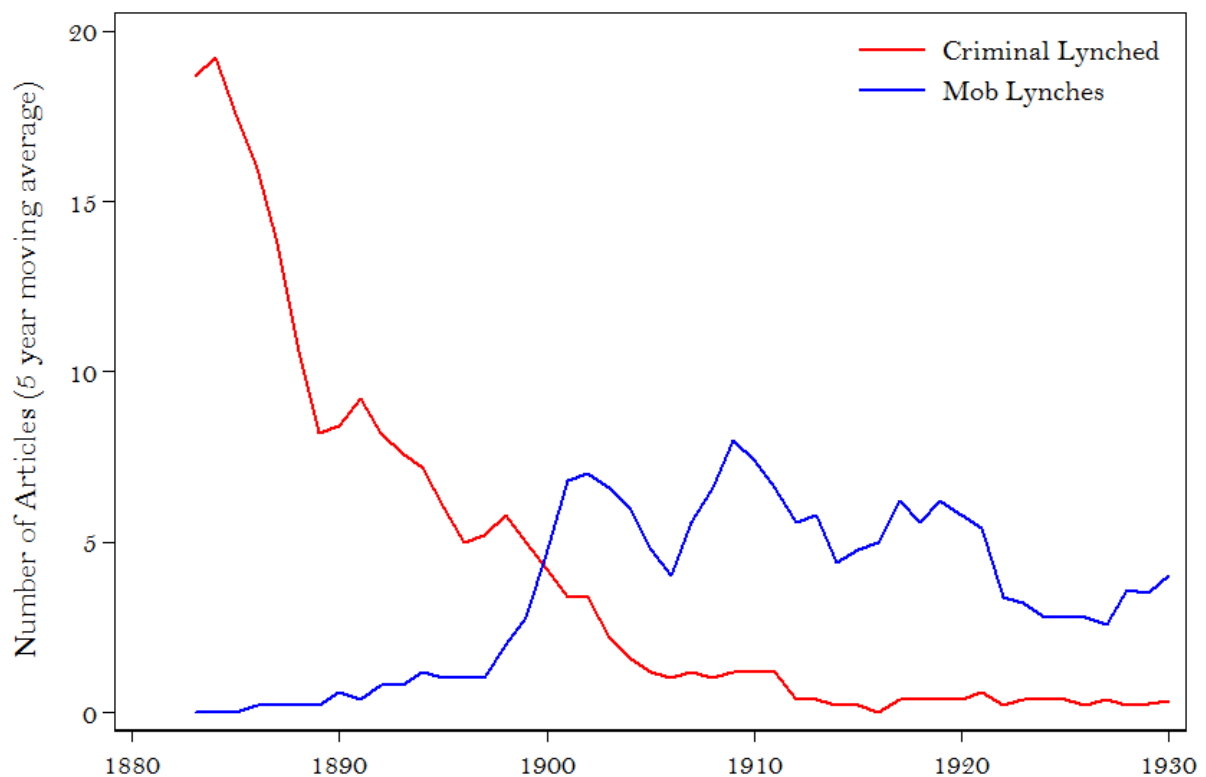
Thus, four years later, as the national media are reporting another brutal spectacle lynching, they are occasionally referring back to the lynching of Hose explicitly. This should not be overstated however, as these are the only two articles explicitly mentioning Hose in my sample of national newspapers. As I discuss later in the context of George White, however, there is evidence that the publicity to the Hose lynching motivates critique coming from Atlanta following the lynching of George White, which I discuss in the next section.

Sam Hose and the Shifting Language of Lynching

The lynching of Sam Hose more or less immediately precedes a shift in focus from the victim to the mob. To roughly capture the rise and fall of this frame I assembled a dictionary of descriptors that were used at the time to describe lynching victims as criminals, or even sub-human. These terms were: *murderer, fiend, brute, slayer, criminal, scoundrel, ruffian, desperado, brutal negro, culprit, firebug, thief, bad negro, ravisher, villain*. Headlines like “Brutal Negro Lynched”, used eleven times by the *New York Times* in the 1880s and early 1890s, constructed lynchings as a causal response to the heinous crimes of black brutes. The figure below shows the total articles that contained any of these descriptors followed by “lynched.” For example, I searched for “brute lynched,” or “thief lynched.” I also searched for “mob lynchings”

and “crowd lynchings” to obtain a measure of how often articles used language in which the mob is seen as causing the lynching, rather than the alleged crime of the victim. The figure below, reproduced from chapter one, shows the relative frequency of each of these searches.

Figure 13: Agency of Mob vs Criminality of Victim in Lynching Articles



Note: Articles in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. N= 199 “Criminal” articles, N=172 “Mob” articles.

Looking at Figure 11 above (reproduced from the second chapter), we see a rather steady decline in the use of “criminal” descriptors of lynching victims beginning in the 1880s, while a rapid expansion in descriptors of mobs lynching increases considerably following the Hose lynching in 1899. It remains possible that this timing is coincidental, however, the Hose lynching does appear to have considerably affected this shift.

Certainly, the Hose lynching is a far better candidate for a turning point than that of Jesse Washington in 1916, which many historians have claimed was a turning point towards

emphasizing the brutality of mobs. Carrigan argues that, “perhaps no lynching in American history received so much attention (2004:185).” Following Carrigan, Wood argues that the Washington lynching represented: “A defining moment in the history of lynching, an instance when the spectacle of lynching began to sow the seeds of its own collapse (2009:179).” Taking a broader quantitative comparative approach here, however, suggests that the Washington lynching was not particularly important in the history of lynching discourse, it simply comes far too late, and attracts relatively little attention compared to many other earlier lynchings. The lynching of Sam Hose, I would argue, is a far better candidate for such a turning point.

Spectacle lynchings would continue to shock the nation. In his letter to Winfield Durbin in 1903, perhaps the single most powerful statement on lynching in this period for instance, Theodore Roosevelt argues:

It is of course inevitable that where vengeance is taken by the mob it should frequently light on innocent people. The wrong done in such a case to the individual is one for which there is no remedy. But even where the real criminal is reached, the wrong done by the mob to the community itself is wellnigh as great. Especially is this true where the lynching is accompanied with torture. There are certain hideous sights which when once seen can never be wholly erased from the mental retina. [...] Whoever in any part of our country has ever taken part in lawlessly putting to death a criminal by the dreadful action of fire must forever after have the awful spectacle of his own handiwork seared into his brain and soul (Roosevelt 1903b).

The Sections: Legal Boundaries

American lynching was never contained to a specific geographical area. Lynching before the Civil War largely occurred on the frontiers, and was relatively rare in the South. Perhaps because lynching had a long and normalized history in the West, these lynchings rarely received much attention.⁸ Lynching in the Northeast and Midwest was relatively rare over this period, but

⁸ The lynching of two white men, Thurmond and Holmes, in San Jose California in 1933 is an exception but falls outside the temporal scope of this study, and is not particularly instructive here since it occurred at a time when lynchings had become extremely rare in the west.

were highly over-represented in the national news media. This, I argue, was for five principal reasons.

The first three reasons Northern lynchings were more covered are well-known properties of media attention. First, media organizations tend to pay more attention to events which are geographically closer (see e.g. Myers and Caniglia 2004), and the major news outlets in the country were largely in the North (Starr 2005:145). So, it is not surprising that lynchings in Illinois receive more attention in the *Chicago Tribune*, and therefore receive more attention, at least in that national paper. The lynching of Zachariah Walker in Coatesville, PA, only 130 miles from New York City by today's roads, for instance, is named on the figure because it received over ten articles in the *New York Times* during the month of the lynching, but was not much covered in either the *Chicago Tribune* or the *Los Angeles Times*. Yet pure geographic distance, is a small factor, and these three papers, which were highly geographically dispersed, for the most part covered the same lynchings, the correlation coefficients between counts of lynching articles by victim is between .54 and .58 for all newspaper pairs. Second, the press was far more developed in the Northern states than the rest of the country, meaning that local lynchings were more likely not to escape the initial attention of a newspaper. Since newspapers in this period subscribed to each other to gather news stories, reporting in one local paper meant a higher likelihood of receiving attention in other papers. This too, should not be overstated since all the lynchings in my data were confirmed by at least one local paper. Third, lynching was rarer in the North, and newspapers tend to be more likely to cover novel or rare events than more typical or routine events (see e.g. Gans 1979). The fourth and fifth reasons are of the most importance; Northern lynchings attracted more attention because they crossed *legal* boundaries, and because

they crossed sectional *identity* boundaries. In this section I discuss both legal and sectional identity boundaries in turn.

Legal Boundaries

Northern lynchings activated a concern for the geographic containment of lynching. The spread of lynching was itself of interest to the news media, but more importantly Northern authorities were more likely to prosecute lynch mobs, and Northern political elites more likely to introduce some legislative remedy, thus creating an ongoing story around the political and legal aftermath of these events. Following a spate of lynchings, the Indiana legislature enacted an anti-lynching bill in 1899, which Governor Durbin used to great effect in suppressing a race riot in 1903 (Gugin and St. Clair 2006:218–19). The 1909 lynching of William James in Cairo, Illinois likewise spurred the enforcement of anti-lynching legislation in Illinois (McDermott 1999). This increased enforcement naturally meant that Northern lynchings received more criticism.

This was also true of legal boundaries between the state and federal levels. When lynchings that somehow fell onto federal jurisdiction, they were often prosecuted by the Justice Department. The 1891 lynching of A. J. Hunt by federal troops in Walla Walla, Washington, for instance prompted President Harrison to demand a court of inquiry into the lynching, and seven soldiers were later indicted (Pfeifer 2004:95–97). The 1898 lynching of a McKinley-appointed black postmaster in Lake City, South Carolina, Frazier Baker, prompted legal action from the McKinley administration (Dray 2007:132–33; Fordham 2008:66–74). The 1904 lynching of Horace Maples in Huntsville, Alabama, allowed federal judges to prosecute mob members, since the lynch mob had endangered federal prisoners in the process of breaking Maples from jail (Aucoin 2007:64–65; Waldrep 2006:218–22).

Ed Johnson

This process is best illustrated by the lynching of a Southern black man in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Ed Johnson was lynched on March 19, 1906. Unlike most lynchings of poor Southern black men, the lynching of Johnson attracted a high degree of attention because Johnson had been given a stay of execution from the US Supreme Court. Because Johnson had already been tied to federal authority, the lynching provided a means for Northern authorities to intervene. This attracted both attention to Johnson, and provided an occasion for vigorous denunciations of lynching by federal authorities. Most prominently, Theodore Roosevelt, whose justice department prosecuted the sheriff, Thomas Shipp, whose custody Johnson was in when he was lynched (Curriden and Phillips 1999). Thomas Shipp became a national figure, and was the first Southern sheriff jailed for failing to protect a black man from a lynch mob.

The Sections: Identity

The final reason that Northern lynchings drew more attention and critique is that they crossed a boundary around which sectional identity conflicts were organized. Because Northern newspapers and politicians had often criticized the South for lynching, lynchings in the North opened up a space for Southern newspapers to criticize the North as hypocrites. In some cases, Southern newspapers used Northern lynchings to legitimize racial violence in the South, arguing that lynching would occur in any region when blacks threatened white women. However, Northern lynchings could also be an occasion for a full-throated critique of lynching in white Southern papers. I trace this dynamic here with a brief discussion of the reaction of both the North and South to two of the most covered lynchings over this period: Sam Hose in Atlanta 1899, and George White in Delaware 1903.

Sam Hose and Northern Criticism

The lynching of Sam Hose brought Northern criticism to the South generally, and Georgia in particular. White Georgian elites, even including many who were on the record as opposing lynching, were incensed at the coverage of the Hose lynching in the Northern press. Former Georgia governor, William Northern, traveled to Boston to take part in a debate and defend Georgia's reputation (Arnold 2009:153–54). Northern denounced the Hose lynching in strong words, but went on to say that, "I condemn the course of the Northern Press upon lynching at the South with all the vehemence of an offended nature. It is incendiary, unfair and cruel in the extreme (quoted in the Baltimore Sun 24 May 1899)."

Atlanta became especially incensed at the investigation of the Hose lynching, commissioned by black anti-lynching activists lead by Reverdy Ransom in Chicago, by Louis Le Vin (Arnold 2009:187). The *Atlanta Constitution* ran an article on June 5th (Anon 1899h):

WOULD MAKE ANANIAS BLUSH⁹.

DETECTIVE LEVIN'S VERSION OF THE SAM HOLT LYNCHING.

Was Sent South by Chicago Negroes
To Make a Report on the Lynch-
ing—And He Did It.

Ida B Wells quickly took Le Vin's report to create a widely circulated pamphlet "Lynch Law in Georgia" which further shamed the South.

Continuing lynchings in the South, and Georgia in particular added fuel to the critique of Georgia in the Northern press. The *Chicago Tribune* for instance, ran an article a few months

⁹ A reference to a biblical figure who lied about his property in order to avoid tithing.

following the Hose lynching, headlined “MORE SOUTHERN SAVAGERY” about a lynching of three black lynching victims in Georgia by a mob of white “savages.” The *Tribune* argued that this latest lynching in Georgia,

recalls the tragedy in the same State at Palmetto last March, as well as the lynching of the negro, Hose, in April. The savages engaged in the latter case, not content with first torturing and then killing their victim, cut pieces from his body, which they brought as trophies to Palmetto (Anon 1899f).

The *Atlanta Constitution* retaliated whenever possible, by critiquing racial violence in the North, and in Chicago in particular. Shortly after the lynching of Hose on May 3, 1899, the *Constitution* pointed out the hypocrisy of the Chicago press in denouncing the Hose lynching when, “the groans of dying negroes seeking honest work may yet be heard in Chicago. (Anon 1899b)” Headlines like the following in August of 1900 “NEGRO IN DANGER IN CHICAGO: Crowds of Would-be Lynchers Held Back by Police” called attention to the plight of blacks at the hands of whites in Chicago (Anon 1900). Editorials in the *Atlanta Constitution* routinely denounced the Northern press for its superior attitude in reporting on lynching—in a January 1902 editorial, the *Constitution* presented an excerpt from an article on Southern lynching in a New York paper to illustrate “the impatience and indignation which seethe perennial in the mind” of the New York press (Anon 1902). By June 1903, the white South had not forgotten the humiliation of the Sam Hose lynching, and the continuing criticism from Northern newspapers.

George White and Southern Criticism

The Wilmington, Delaware lynching of George White in June of 1903 gave the Southern press the Northern lynching that they were waiting for. While the border state of Delaware was not exactly the seat of the Northern press, the particular brutality of the George White lynching made it an ideal demonstration of the lack of civilization in the North. The *Atlanta Constitution* ran roughly forty articles in 1903 discussing the lynching of White. Many of these articles

discussed the hypocrisy of the North in some way, some mentioned Sam Hose in particular, such as an editorial ran four days after the lynching of White, which proclaimed:

We want, and have the right to demand, that the northern press and the people of Delaware give us that long-awaited object lesson of “how to cure the lynching habit!”

They know how to do it, because they have been telling us for twenty years how unnecessary, barbarous and peculiarly southern is the practice of lynching raping and murdering negro brutes.

The editorial went on to discuss the similarities between the Hose and White lynchings:

At the time of the lynching of Sam Hose at Newnan, in this state, it was published that the railway company sent out a special excursion train to carry curious people to see the burning of a human being by a mob! The horror over that alleged incident of years ago has hardly abated in the north and Sam Hose reappears in their editorials to this day. Yet the New York Herald reports that in Wilmington the trolley lines ran “special cars” to carry people to the bonfire in which White was being roasted, that the roadway was lined with the carriages of “respectable citizens: eager to be in at the death and that “one pretty young girl was brought up to the fire while White was giving his last gasp and looked on until she became sickened and turned away! (Anon 1903g)”

The *Constitution* carried numerous other articles on the White lynching. One article quotes Booker T Washington denouncing lynching as a “national” and “not sectional” problem (Anon 1903f). An article quoting Alabama Governor William Jelks was headlined “ALABAMA FREE FROM BURNINGS: Jelks Says Wilmington Affair Couldn’t Have Happened in His State (Anon 1903b).” Another article in August was headlined “LYNCHING HABIT COMMON TO UNION: Only Three States Are Exempt from Stigma (Anon 1903d).” Another article takes issue with a Philadelphia paper, suggesting that the mob at Wilmington resembled a “Southern mob.” Why, the article asks, “cannot our Northern contemporaries be fair to the south once in a while, just to make their record less monotonous (Anon 1903a).” Another article, headlined “The Southern Negroes Vindicated,” corrected a rumor that George White was originally from the South (Anon 1903h). An article on October 4th, headlined “Two Contrastable Cases” compares the failure of the Wilmington grand jury to indict any members of the mob, while a grand jury in

Lynchburg, Tennessee “promptly characterized the recent lynching of the negro, Allen Small, as a ‘murder’ and returned true bills” for fourteen members of the mob. The article concluded:

We only call attention to these cases for the purpose of encouraging our southern people to follow the example of the Tennessee grand jury in all available cases of mob defiance of the laws. It is incumbent upon us, for many reasons, that we should imitate the Delaware and other northern examples as scantily as possible (Anon 1903k).

Lynching South, North, and Federal

Lynching beyond the legal and geographic confines of the South had a number of key effects. These lynchings attracted more attention in part because they were rarer, and because they were closer to the geographic center of the nation’s media in the North. Two dynamics were more important, however. When lynching occurred somehow on federal jurisdiction, this allowed the federal government to prosecute mob members. When lynchings occurred in the North, it allowed anti-lynching Southerners, such as Booker T Washington, to critique lynching publicly. It also gave Southern sectionalist lynching apologists a reason to criticize lynching, as it now presented an opportunity to return prior Northern critiques.

The Elites

A few lynchings of white men attained prominence in the national media. Unlike the highly covered lynchings of black men, these lynchings did not necessarily occur outside of the South, or involve public torture. Some of these lynchings were of foreign nationals, and attracted attention as a result of foreign intervention, however some were native white men. These lynchings seem to have attracted attention in part because of the race of the victims, and their class position. The lynchings of Barrett Scott in 1895, and Leo Frank in 1915 in particular, fit this pattern, while that of the Barber brothers in Iowa appears to have been motivated by their prior infamy as outlaws. Both Barrett Scott and Leo Frank were relatively elite white men, and

so their lynchings seemed to illustrate that few were entirely safe from the mob. Here I discuss the lynching of Leo Frank, the most-covered lynching victim in my data.

Leo Frank

Leo Frank supervised, and part-owned, a pencil factory in Atlanta, Georgia when he was charged in April of 1913 with the murder of one his employees, Mary Phagan. Phagan's body was discovered in the basement of Frank's factory; she had been strangled and may have been raped. Phagan was a young girl, fourteen years old at the time of her death, and a native of nearby Marietta, Georgia. Frank was born in Texas, but was raised and educated in New York, and was Jewish. Frank's background made him an outsider in the eyes of many white Southerners, both geographically and religiously, while Phagan was a native Georgian. Frank's wealth also set him apart from most white Southerners. Frank's murder case thus brought together white Georgian's fears of the mistreatment of young white Southern women at the hands of exploitative wealthy Northern industrialists, and the cultural expectations of white men to both control and protect "their" women (MacLean 1991). Frank was convicted of the murder and sentenced to death on the basis of circumstantial evidence, and was posthumously pardoned in 1986, but the atmosphere in Atlanta at the time suggested that Frank would have been lynched if found innocent.

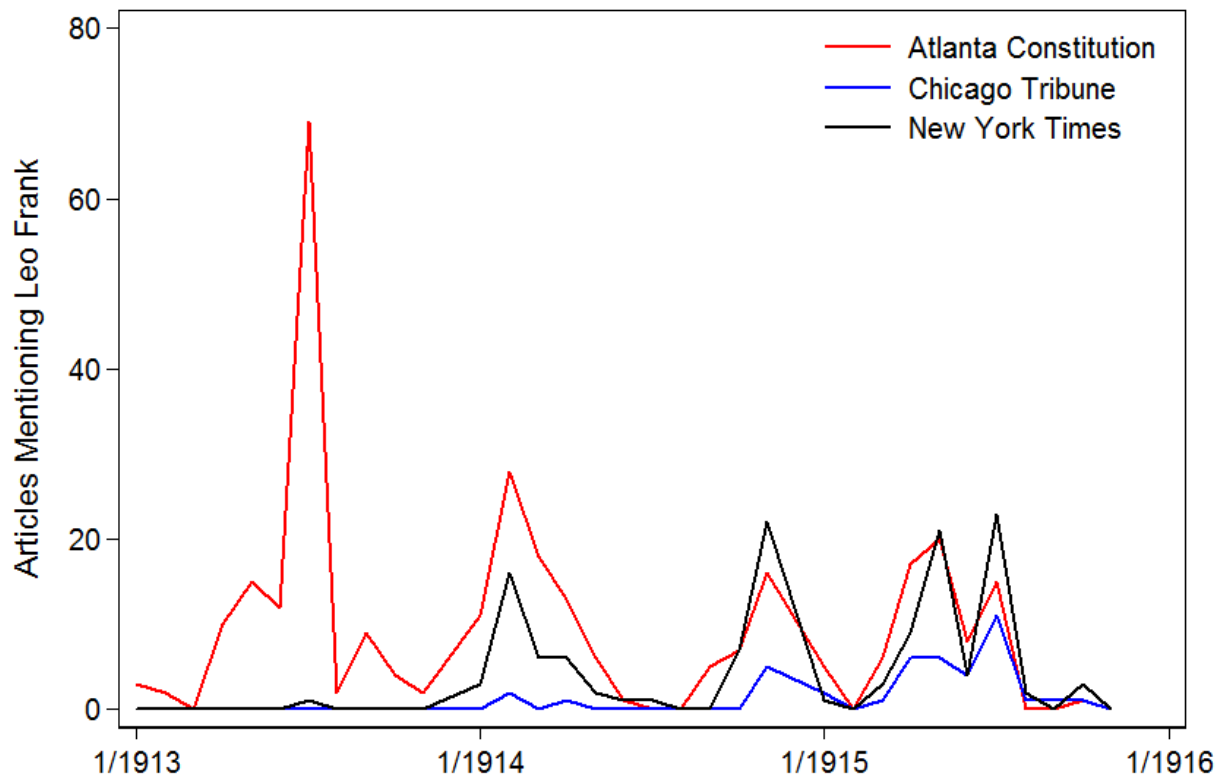
Following the death sentence, Frank's case became a *cause celebre*, and many wealthy, primarily Jewish, Northerners came to his aid. These allies funded many appeal efforts on Frank's behalf going as far as the US Supreme Court, but despite considerable legal resources, and a strong case, these appeals all failed (Dinnerstein 2008). On June 21, 1915, one day before Frank was scheduled to be hanged, Georgia's departing governor, John Slaton, commuted Frank's sentence to life imprisonment. Slaton declared martial law near his home, and called out

the state militia to protect him from mobs which threatened to lynch him, and Slaton left the state soon thereafter.

Lynching and Press Reaction

Roughly two months after his death sentence was commuted on August 16 1915, Frank was kidnapped from prison by a group of prominent Marietta citizens, taken to Marietta overnight, and lynched that morning. The lynching received more media attention than any other lynching, probably ever, but certainly the most of the period. The reasons for this level of attention were many and the lynching would likely have been a major news in any event, but perhaps the most important was that the “Frank affair” was already an ongoing news story. There are a number of reasons that the media tends to cover events and individuals that are already familiar to the public and part of ongoing narratives (Fishman 1978; Galtung and Ruge 1965; Gans 1979). Frank was not only part of a story, but also had personal allies in the Northern papers, such as the *New York Times* owner/editor Adolph Ochs, developed during his legal struggles (Dinnerstein 2008:91). It is a testament to the local (particularly in Marietta, but also in greater Georgia) legitimacy of lynching as a practice that a man with Frank’s connections and wealth could be lynched without legal ramifications of any sort. Thus, the lynching of Frank might be seen as evidence of the strength of the practice. The thesis here is however that the lynching of Frank tied the practice of lynching to the Frank case, already widely viewed as a miscarriage of justice, and thus worked to delegitimize lynching outside of the local context.

Figure 14 Leo Frank in the National Papers



The Jewish Press & George White

The reaction of the Jewish press to the Frank lynching is instructive in showing how the expansion of lynching as a practice to include targets from other identity groups, brought criticism to lynching as a practice per se. Here I analyze four Jewish papers from the period: *The American Hebrew*, *American Israelite*, *Jewish Advocate*, and *Jewish Exponent*. While other papers, such as the *New York Times* had Jewish ownership they did not have an explicitly religious identity as did these papers. While these papers were admittedly chosen because they are electronically searchable, they are among the leading English-language Jewish papers of the period; the *Israelite* in particular was already well established, having been founded in 1854, and had a national circulation (Diner 1995:90). Differences appear to exist between these

English=language papers and the Yiddish press of the period, which appears to have been distinctly more sympathetic to black Americans throughout (Diner 1995:74–81).

The Jewish press did not pay much attention to lynching before the Leo Frank case. The major exception to this is as a result of comments made by President Roosevelt to a Jewish delegation, comparing lynching of blacks in the US to the Kishinev Pogrom in Russia in 1903. Roosevelt argued that the Kishinev pogrom was not reflective of the mass of Russians and their government, but rather analogous to the lynching of blacks in the US, which he argued did not

Figure 15: Jewish Papers Mentioning Lynching

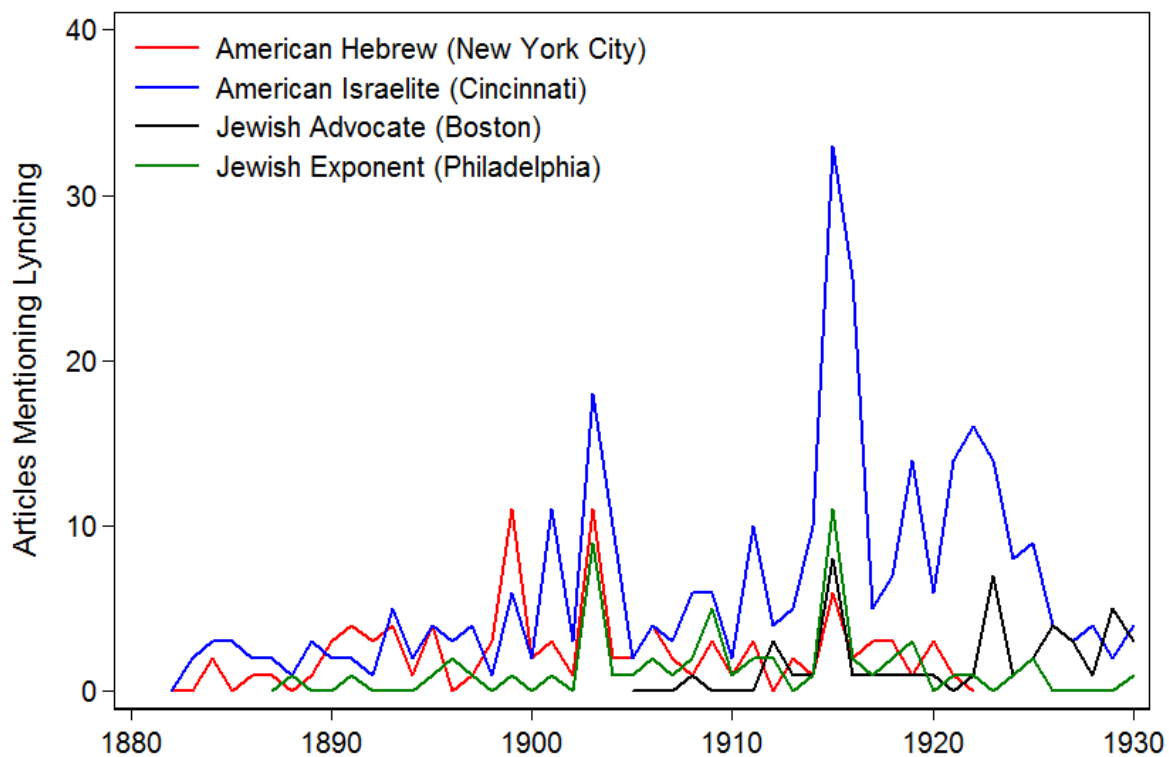
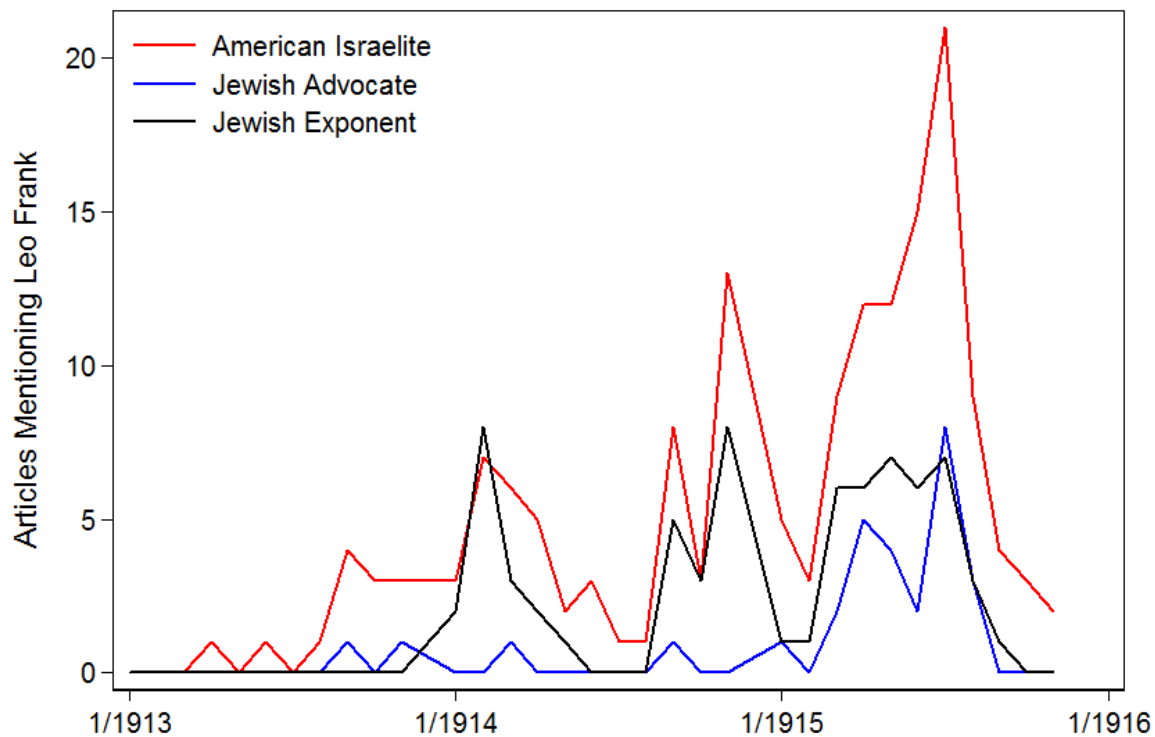


Figure 16: Jewish Papers Mentioning Leo Frank



reflect the people or government. The reaction to this in the Jewish press was varied, some welcomed the comparison and denounced lynching as similar to the pogrom. Others sought to draw a distinction between the two types of racial violence. Tobias Schanfarber, editor of an *American Israelite* affiliate, the *Chicago Israelite*, editorialized on August 27th 1903 that:

Negroes are not lynched anywhere in the United States simply and solely because they are negroes [...]. It is the negro fiend or the one suspected of a fiendish crime whom the frenzied popular indignation simply robs of his lawful trial (Anon 1903c).

While he acknowledged that “racial feeling” played a part in lynchings, and that lynching often inflicted “barbarous penalties,” he argued that the Kishinev Jews were “not lynched, but massacred” and “were guilty in the aggregate of no capital or any other crime.” He went on to argue that anti-Semitism was “purely social” lacking the “foundation of natural instinct” of anti-Black racism (Anon 1903c). Thus, reaction to this earlier event linking lynching to the American Jewish experience met with mixed and ephemeral results.

Leo Frank and Jim Conley

Leo Frank was convicted for the murder of Mary Phagan largely based on the testimony of a black janitor who worked at his factory, Jim Conley. During the trial Frank's allies tried to discredit Conley, often attempting to play on white Southerners' racism as part of their strategy. In August of 1915, for instance, the *New York Times*, edited by Frank supporter Adolph Ochs, ran a large article, later reprinted in the *American Isrealite*, covering two full pages of the paper, giving a detailed account of the evidence in the Frank trial, and arguing that Frank must have been innocent. The *Times* attempted to discredit Conley—and therefore his testimony—largely by playing off of racist stereotypes. Conley was referred to as a “shiftless negro” and it was argued that “The idea of the dictating of the notes by a white man to a negro is a joke” and a “laughable fantasy.” The article closed by noting that Conley “laughed when telling of the most gruesome details (Anon 1915).”

Blacks were incensed over the depiction of Conley. The *Chicago Defender* in 1914, for instance, printed an article about an attempt to charge Conley with accessory to murder, in which they argued: “The charge is ridiculous and is considered a plan to vent spite on Mr. Conley by some of Frank's race hating friends (Defender 1914a).” Later that same year the *Philadelphia Tribune* wrote:

Some of the Georgia newspapers say it is an insult to the South to have Leo M. Frank convicted and executed upon evidence from the lips of a black man. This man Frank has been tried in every court in the State and convicted. It is also alleged that he has made a practice of ruining young girls who were poor but possessed pretty faces and worked in his factory. Now, since he has been convicted after the several trials, let him hang. His death will be by far more honorable than the hundreds of black men Georgia has lynched without giving them a trail.

If it is wrong for a black man to look cross at a white woman in the South, it is certainly wrong for a man of Frank's type to take advantage of them as he has and then kill them to silence their tongue and shame (Anon 1914).

Thus, the Frank trial had driven a wedge between blacks and Jews (Melnick 2000), much as had the comparison between the lynching of George White and the Kishinev Pogrom in the previous decade. This wedge between the two groups should not be overstated; Jews and blacks continued to work together in the early NAACP and in other capacities. Nevertheless, the effect of the Frank trial was to drive blacks and Jews further apart. This would change when Frank was lynched.

The Lynching of Leo Frank and Jewish Anti-Lynching

Many historians of black and Jewish relations argue that, following the lynching of Leo Frank, many Jews began to see lynching as a problem that affected both blacks and Jews alike. Jews began to see their position in American society as more similar to that of blacks, and began to emphasize the similarities rather than differences between the two groups (Diner 1995:3; Melnick 2000:122–23). Thus, even black lynchings began to be seen as a problem for Jewish people. Thus, the Jewish press began to criticize lynching in general—singling out Georgia and Atlanta for particular criticism (Diner 1995:94–97). Even as late as 1925, the *American Israelite* was arguing that Atlanta was “Reaping the whirlwind” of “Religious and Race Hatred” that they had sown through repeated lynchings and race riots (Anon 1925).

Boundary Spillover

No single group did more to transform the meaning of lynching in the US than the lynch mobs themselves, which pushed lynching past the social and geographic boundaries that once contained it. The advent of spectacle lynchings - burning victims alive, taking souvenirs from the body of the victim, other forms of torture and mutilation - brought attention to the brutality of lynching and to the mob itself. The lynching of foreign nationals brought foreign citizens and governments to the critique of lynching, which pressured politicians in a way that no domestic

group ever did. Lynchings in the North attracted more attention, and inspired criticism. A lynching of a black man in Delaware in 1903 inspired one of the most strident critiques of lynching to ever issue from a US President, and drew even Southern white papers, such as the *Atlanta Constitution*, to call for law and order to combat lynchings. The lynching of a prominent Jewish business man in Atlanta in 1915 brought Jewish critique to lynching, and became probably the most infamous lynching in American history. Although movement organizations like the NAACP tried to draw attention to the plight of the usual victim of lynching, a poor black rural Southern man, these lynchings received very little attention. Instead of focusing on the core nature of lynching, the media and nation focused their attention on its boundaries. It was thus the events that showed lynching at its most virulent, that ultimately decided how the practice would be understood.

This is not to say that the lynching of poor black Southern Americans went unnoticed. Rather, the lynching of poor black Southerners was most likely to get discussed in abstract terms following the lynching of someone who did not fit that mold, as when attention to the lynching of Italians aided Ida B Wells in her British campaign to draw attention to lynching.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF LYNCHING

The political historiography of lynching has left us with an incomplete picture of how lynching came to lose its legitimacy. First, it has focused on many lynchings which were not central to the political struggle over lynching. Second, many lynchings which were central to lynching politics have been largely ignored. Third, many of the connections between even well-studied lynchings have not been understood. As a result of this incomplete picture of victims, this historiography has sometimes been misleading in its conclusions.

When lynching scholars have focused on the politics of lynchings which were not central to the greater national struggle over lynching, a number of distortions can occur. For example, a number of lynching historians have focused on the 1916 lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas, considering this a transformative event in the political history of lynching. Carrigan argues that the lynching of Washington may have been the most publicized in history (2004:185), and Wood argues that it was a turning point, after which “lynching began to sow seeds of its own collapse (2009:179).” A fuller picture of lynching history shows this to be mostly false. Washington was certainly not the most publicized lynching in history, nor did his lynching have much direct effect on national political actors. If we accept the story, however, of Washington as a turning point, we periodize the anti-lynching struggle wrongly, seeing its first successes during the WWI years, we overstate the role of the NAACP, and we understate the role of a number of other actors and events.

Many lynchings that were central to the lynching politics of the time, have been largely overlooked. The most important of these was probably the 1903 lynching of George White,

which became a central event in sectional, national, and international politics. Yet, very little has been written on the lynching of George White, and what has been written has largely ignored the larger national and international political response (although see: Downey 2013). The lynching of Ed Johnson in 1906 has also been largely overlooked, despite being a vehicle for Roosevelt to bring federal action to punish local authorities in a lynching of a poor black Southerner.

Many important lynchings have been well studied, but their importance for the larger political history of lynching has been overlooked—perhaps due to the oddity of these lynchings. The lynching of Italians, for instance, was well known, but its connection to the political struggle against the lynching of blacks, has not been well understood. The lynching of Leo Frank, likewise is well known among lynching historians, but its political implications for the lynching of blacks has not been well understood beyond scholars of Black-Jewish relations.

Periodizing Lynching Politics

It has often been assumed that until after World War I lynching was neither a major news story nor a major political concern. Ming Francis, for example, citing Dudziak (2000), declares that “before WWI there was little in the papers about lynching (Francis 2014:93).” Focusing on the NAACP also tends to date the transformation near WWI, since the NAACP was not founded until 1909, and did not have much impact until several years later. Many argue that the publicity to the 1916 Jesse Washington lynching was the NAACP’s first major anti-lynching success, and a turning point in lynching discourse (Bernstein 2005; Carrigan 2004; Hale 2010; Wood 2009), also implicitly argue that anti-lynching politics began to have serious effects in 1916, near the end of WWI.

The evidence in this dissertation suggests that we should consider the period from 1891, beginning with the lynching of the Italian Eleven, until perhaps 1906 with the lynching of Ed

Johnson, or the end of the Roosevelt administration in 1909, as the height of anti-lynching politics.

The Political Actors

Historians have focused on the early NAACP as a key actor in bringing national attention to local lynchings. Brundage, for instance, in the history of the anti-lynching movement in Georgia mentions the 1919 lynching the Berry Washington, and how the NAACP attracted attention to the lynching, and brought to light details pointing to the injustice of the lynching. The Berry Washington lynching, like that of Jesse Washington, did attract some national attention. But, the lynching attracted a small fraction of the criticism as that of Sam Hose, or Leo Frank. The case of Jesse Washington, as well, appears to have been overstated partly as a result of a focus on the NAACP. As Ming Francis, points out, Ida B Wells laid the groundwork for the NAACP's strategy of publicizing lynchings (Francis 2014:31), and many others acknowledge her early role in the anti-lynching movement. However, Wells was not simply a precursor or precondition for the NAACP to later succeed, but rather was, if anything, more effective than the NAACP at attracting national attention to lynchings. Here a systematic analysis shows that Wells influenced the British press, and helped set the stage for the massive amount of attention to George White in 1903.

But Wells was also not the most important actor, and neither was any other social movement. Movements rarely drew much attention or condemnation to lynchings, rather it was mostly the mobs themselves that did so. Mobs sometimes created discursive opportunities for the anti-lynching movement with unprecedented brutality. Northern lynch mobs also created opportunities to critique lynching without critiquing the South. Lynch mobs created political

opportunities for their opponents when they lynched a man whose conviction was overturned by the supreme court.

But, most importantly lynch mobs created new opponents for themselves. The Italian and Mexican governments, the Northern Jewish community all were made opponents of lynching when one of their own was lynched. Northern lynchings embarrassed Northern state governments. Spectacle lynchings embarrassed Southern governments, who then lashed out against the North after a spectacle lynching of their own. These new opponents brought in allies of their own, as when the lynching of the Italian Eleven made American lynching an issue not just in Italy, but also in England. Making lynching an international relations issue, also made it an issue for US Presidents, who then seized opportunities to prosecute lynchings when they fell under federal jurisdiction. Lynching was a process that could not be contained, and continued to draw new opponents as it spread past the social, legal, and geographic boundaries that had previously contained it.

The Bigger Picture

Historians have, of necessity, bound their lynching studies in fairly tight regional, racial, or temporal boundaries, which has obscured many of the connections between these entities. State-level histories tend to miss cross-state interactions. Histories focused on the South miss the important events in the North (Pfeifer 2013). Studies of black victims miss the lynching of Hispanics (Carrigan and Webb 2013). Histories focused on the NAACP miss much of what happened before the NAACP. Histories focused on movements miss a lot of the non-movement politics. This is obvious enough, and unavoidable. However, it is a larger problem than might be immediately apparent.

The first problem is that missing, or downplaying, a handful of cases can distort our interpretation of history considerably, when such events have major impacts. The case of George White is instructive on this point. A second problem is that there is little way of comparing the political impact of lynching events between studies. A thorough reading of the literature would no doubt conclude that both the lynchings of Sam Hose and Jesse Washington received a lot of outside political attention, but would probably be at a loss as to which attracted more outside condemnation, or, if they followed standard interpretations would assume it was Washington. Thus, even if we had covered all of the important events with standard historical narratives, it's not entirely clear that it could be tied together correctly. Here, the approach I've taken can help. Systematically combing digitized archives can help identify the events which received the most attention from newspapers, presidents, and others. This will then need to be supplemented by conventional histories and methods to better understand the meanings and connections between events.

The History of Lynching Politics

When white supremacists turned to lynching in the years following Reconstruction, they opened a Pandora's Box of violence that could not be contained. Up until 1891, only Southern blacks and very marginal whites had been victimized, and there were few political consequences or opposition. When elites empowered mobs to exercise their own form of rough justice, they soon found that they could not control the violence they had unleashed. The lynching of the Italian Eleven in New Orleans in 1891 was the beginning of the end of lynching.

On the face of it, the lynching of the Italian Eleven would have seemed to have rather signaled the legitimacy that lynching had in the US. The lynching of the Italian Eleven was widely supported despite the protests of the Italian government, and the international relations

problems it caused for the president and other political elites. But, this event set the stage in many ways for the delegitimation of lynching in the future. First, it made lynching in the US of enduring international interest. Ida B Wells, among others, quickly exploited the increased international interest in lynching in accepting an invitation for a lecture circuit in England, where she drew attention to other US lynchings. Second, the international attention made lynching a problem for US presidents. This came to a peak with the internationalist presidency of Theodore Roosevelt around the time of the lynching of George White. Third, as a result of the internationalization of lynching, lynching was increasingly understood in terms of “civilization” as against “barbarity” or “savagery,” a framing contest that lynching apologists could not hope to win.

This is not to claim that the Italian Eleven set in motion an inexorable march towards the illegitimacy of lynchings. Lynch mobs continued to transgress boundaries. Spectacle lynchings drew attention to the brutality and “savagery” of mobs, and continued to occur into the 1930s even as lynching became less and less common. The lynching of Italian and Mexican citizens continued to cause international relations problems for US political elites. Lynching continued to occur in the North.

At every moment when lynch mobs crossed boundaries, critics seized the opportunity to critique and suppress it. Lynching in the Northern states, for instance, opened an opportunity for white Southerners and Booker T Washington to critique lynching, while avoiding a critique of the white South. Black newspapers and activists seized the opportunity presented by spectacle lynchings to critique the brutality of lynching. Teddy Roosevelt seized legal opportunities to prosecute lynch mobs when they happened on federal jurisdiction.

The Construction of Social Problems

Sociologists and political scientists have studied political and cultural change extensively, generally however focusing on short-term changes (Pierson 2004). Less well studied are the long processes of meaning change which have the potential to alter the basic ground rules and assumptions that underlie political struggles. The transformation in the representation of lynching from a form of rough justice to an instance of anarchy and brutality and the subsequent diffusion of this frame is one such example. When sociologists have attempted to explain such fundamental changes, they have often considered these changes as a result of successes of the groups that are pushing for change. Groups might succeed when political or discursive opportunities present themselves, and are acted upon. Groups also succeed in change based on novel political or framing strategies.

One issue with applying this perspective to the case of lynching politics, is that it is not clear where the movement begins and ends. One might, for instance, see militant black newspaper editors as part of a movement, allies of a movement, or part of the news media. One might also consider Theodore Roosevelt a member of the anti-lynching movement, an elite ally, or as a target of the anti-lynching movement. Was the Italian government a part of anti-lynching movement? The NAACP was the first wide scale organized movement organization, but emerged long after widespread anti-lynching politics had emerged and major changes in lynching discourse. Here, I have focused not on the effects of movements, but on how grievances emerged as a result of the spread of lynching.

Many social scientists and historians have interpreted the transformation in lynching politics in a similar way, as a (limited) victory of the anti-lynching movement, largely ignoring the role that lynch mobs themselves played. As I have shown however, lynch mobs themselves

played a larger role in expanding the critique of lynching by creating grievances among an ever expanding group of people. Political sociology has largely viewed grievances as constructed by movement entrepreneurs, arguing that grievances cannot explain the timing or extent of mobilization. While this argument is wrong generally (Andrews and Seguin 2015; Cederman et al. 2011), it is probably most wrong in the face of violence. The case of lynching suggests that when a member of a preexisting identity group is targeted with violence, they will be likely to mobilize politically against such violence. If lynching history is any guide, then we should look to when grievances spill over to less-marginalized groups, as a guide to when repression becomes widely recognized as a social problem.

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