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Strangers, Community Miscreants, or Locals

Who Were the Black Victims of Mob Violence?

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Abstract. Lynch mob violence was common in the American South between 1880 and 1930 and has been extensively studied by social scientists. Some have asserted that the victims of lynchings were more likely to be strangers in their communities because of their weak ties to the local social structure. In this article, the authors examined critically the evidence offered to support that hypothesis and found it wanting. Further, using data from lynchings in Georgia, the authors present evidence demonstrating that the majority of victims of lynchings were neither strangers nor marginalized members of their communities.

Keywords: lynching, mob violence, American South, strangers, victimization

Between 1882 and 1930, there was a wave of mob violence against African Americans in the South. This era of the southern lynch mob has been documented extensively by historians, sociologists, and political scientists.¹ Lynch mobs rationalized their actions by asserting that the victim had broken criminal law or breached the racial canons of Jim Crow etiquette. At the same time that white mobs meted out lethal violence against black offenders, white judges and juries were sentencing African American felons to capital punishment in astounding numbers. But why were some blacks singled out for lethal sanctioning, and sometimes tortured, by extralegal mobs while others were afforded the thin courtesy of the criminal justice system, or their behavior ignored entirely?

Roberta Senechal de la Roche (1996, 1997) has proposed an intriguing theory to explain why certain victims faced the rope and fagot while others were not lethally sanctioned. She constructed her explanation of the selection of the lynching victims on a theoretical foundation laid by Donald Black (1976). Whereas the paradigm is complex, one key element is Black's concept of *relational distance*,

that is, the stickiness and duration of social ties and contacts among people.² Black argued that persons who are more relationally distant from their community are more likely to become victims of violence. Exploiting Black's theoretical system, Senechal de la Roche reasoned that a stranger is quintessentially relationally distant to the community because the stranger has only weak, if any, ties to the community. Thus, there was a greater likelihood of becoming a lynch victim if one was a stranger, rather than a non-stranger, by virtue of the greater relational distance between the stranger and the community. In short, strangers made better targets.³ This assumption is dubbed the *stranger-as lynch-victim* hypothesis.⁴ Ignoring for the moment questions of what exactly is meant by the term *stranger* and how it could be operationalized, let us put this hypothesis into more formal terms. To investigate this hypothesis rigorously, we must translate it into more precise logical terms. In particular, the hypothesis requires that the conditional probability of being a lynch victim given that one was a stranger be greater than the conditional probability of being a lynch victim given that one was a nonstranger.⁵

$$\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) > \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Nonstranger}). \quad (1)$$

In other words, a person had a greater probability of becoming a victim of lynch violence if that person was a stranger in the community than if that person was a non-stranger. Or, alternatively, a nonstranger was less likely to be a lynch victim than was a stranger to the community.

To appraise this stranger-as-lynch-victim proposition, then, it is necessary to evaluate the relative magnitudes of the two conditional probabilities in equation (1). The predicament is that neither probability can be observed because each hinges critically on the proportion of the com-

munity who are strangers, an unknown quantity that can not be realistically estimated.⁶

What can be calculated, however, are the *reversed* conditional probabilities—the probability of being a stranger given that one is a lynch victim and the probability of being a nonstranger given that one is a victim: $\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim})$ and $\Pr(\text{Nonstranger}|\text{Victim})$. Couching that hypothesis in terms of these conditional probabilities, it would be required that the conditional probability for being a stranger be greater than the conditional probability for being a nonstranger:

$$\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) > \Pr(\text{Nonstranger}|\text{Victim}). \quad (2)$$

If we compare the first term in equation (2) with the first term in equation (1), we see the relationship between the *observable* conditional probability to that of the desired but *unobservable* conditional probability (the observed quantities marked with an asterisk) as:

$$\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim})^* = \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) \left[\frac{\Pr(\text{Stranger})}{\Pr(\text{Victim})^*} \right]. \quad (3)$$

Equation (3) shows that the two conditional probabilities will be equal *only* if the two marginal probabilities (the terms in brackets) are equivalent; in other words, the probability of being a stranger must be the same as the marginal probability of being a victim of a lynching.⁷

In other words, we can use the *observable* $\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim})$ as a proxy for the desired but *unobservable* $\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger})$ only if the probability of being a stranger, $\Pr(\text{Stranger})$, is equal to the probability of being a victim of lynch violence $\Pr(\text{victim})$. Because it is the victimization of African Americans that is being discussed, and considering that virtually any black could potentially be a victim of a lynch mob, the marginal probability of being a victim is approximated by the proportion of African Americans in the community's population. Consequently, to use the observable conditional probability to construct a strict test of the stranger-as-lynch-victim hypothesis, as Black's theory demands, requires the untenable assumption that the percentage of strangers in a community exactly matches the percentage of African Americans in the community.⁸ No compelling evidence has been offered to support the stranger-as-lynch-victim hypothesis. Senechal de la Roche (1996, 107) cited as her primary source the scholarship of Fitzhugh Brundage (1993) and second the work of Edward Ayers (1984, 1992). Yet Brundage (1993, 81) suggested that only 20 percent of black lynch victims in Georgia, and possibly 33 percent in Virginia, were "floaters" (migrant workers) and hence likely to be strangers in the community.⁹ Ayers (1984, 244, 253; 1992, 157) presented only conjecture with no factual documentation.¹⁰ This idea is hardly persuasive proof, and even if it were it would not be evidence in favor of the stranger-as-lynch-victim theory but rather evidence supporting a weaker hypothesis.

The Weak Version

If a strict test of the stranger hypothesis is not workable, it is possible to recast it into a weaker form that can be empirically examined. This weak rendition states that given a victim of a lynching, that victim is more likely to be a stranger than a nonstranger. This assumption is tagged the *lynch-victim-as-stranger* hypothesis. Again, in formal probability terms, this hypothesis requires:

$$\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) > \Pr(\text{Nonstranger}|\text{Victim}). \quad (4)$$

That is, the probability of being a stranger given that one was the victim of a lynching is greater than the probability of being a nonstranger given that one was a lynch victim.

Although this specification is not as theoretically robust as the strict version, equation (1), it can be empirically examined because these conditional probabilities are estimable quantities. It is easily demonstrated that the inequality in equation (4) requires that there be a greater proportion of victims who are strangers than are nonstrangers.¹¹ Thus, to test this proposition one computes the percentage of lynch victims who might legitimately be identified as "strangers." A finding of more than 50 percent would be evidence favoring the hypothesis.

Identifying Strangers and Residents

By using Stewart Tolnay and E. M. Beck's (1995) lynching inventory, we identified 435 African American victims of lynch mobs in Georgia between 1882 and 1930.¹² For each victim, we carefully scrutinized local and regional newspaper accounts to determine if the victim was a resident member of the community or a stranger. The victim was labeled a *stranger* if there was any indication that he was a stranger, that is, if he was "unknown," a "tramp" or "vagrant," a migrant worker, an escapee (convict, member of a chain gang, or escaped mental patient), or a newcomer. Similarly, the victim was classified as *nonstranger* (local resident) if the newspaper article indicated local residency or employment, familial ties to the community, some evidence of a history in the community, or evidence of close relationships with other residents.

Evidence on Stranger-Victims

Between 1882 and 1930, 435 African Americans died at the hands of lynch mobs in the state of Georgia. Of the 435 newspaper accounts, there was insufficient information on 186 victims to make any determination of residency status.¹³ Of the remaining cases, 188 were local residents and 61 were strangers (see table 1). Consequently, statewide Georgia lynch victims were 3.1 times (188/61) more likely to be local residents than strangers, contrary to the prediction of the lynch-victim-as-stranger hypothesis. This likelihood is aggregated across the entire state and could reflect

TABLE 1
Resident Status of Black Victims of
Lynch Mobs in Georgia, 1882–1930 (n = 435)

Victim's resident status	n	%
Stranger	61	14.0
Local resident	188	43.2
Unclassifiable	186	42.8
Total	435	100.0

the data from only a few counties with a large number of lynchings. An alternative way to frame the hypothesis is to ask in how many counties was the lynch-victim-as-stranger supported and in how many did it fail.

There were Georgian counties with at least one black victim of lynching in the era of the lynch mob. Of these, 93 counties had black victims who could be classified as either strangers or local residents. In only 20.4 percent (n = 19) of these counties did the number of stranger-victims exceed the number of local resident-victims, as predicted by the lynch-victim-as-stranger hypothesis. In 4.3 percent (n = 4) the number of stranger and nonstranger black victims were equal, and in the remaining 75.3 percent (n = 70) of the counties, the tally of local resident-victims surpassed that of stranger-victims. Thus, in most Georgia counties, the black victims of lynch mobs were not strangers to their communities.

Clearly, regardless of whether one considered victim data aggregated over the whole state, or at the individual-county level, the empirical results do not support the lynch-victim-as-stranger hypothesis. In Georgia, during the lynching era, victims were overwhelmingly local residents, not strangers to the community. But that does not necessarily mean that they were not relationally distant in another sense.

Lynch Victims as Local Miscreants

It could be argued that our definition of stranger is too restrictive and that a better test of the relational-distance hypothesis would involve identifying persons who were socially marginalized in the community. So we can define *local miscreants* as victims who were local residents but who evidenced social marginality such as being labeled as a criminal or “desperado,” disreputable or being of “bad character,” a troublemaker, or having a history of deviant behavior.

All these cases were collapsed into a single category of local miscreants. The relational-distance hypothesis would suggest that among locals (nonstrangers), persons viewed as being miscreants (deviants, troublemakers, etc.) would more likely be victims of lynchings than persons well integrated within the community. In probability terms, this leads to the expectation: $\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Miscreant}) > \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Nonmiscreant})$. The difficulty once again is that neither

conditional probability can be observed because they both depend on the proportion of the community who are miscreants, an unknown quantity. Thus, this hypothesis is empirically intractable as well.

Yet following the same logic as was used with stranger-victims, a weaker version can be formulated that can be empirically examined. This weak rendition states that given a victim of a lynching, that victim is more likely to be a miscreant than a nonmiscreant—hence again in probability terms: $\Pr(\text{Miscreant}|\text{Victim}) > \Pr(\text{Nonmiscreant}|\text{Victim})$. It is easily demonstrated that this inequality requires a greater proportion of victims who are local miscreants than are local nonmiscreants.

As noted in table 1, 188 of the black Georgian victims were identified as local community residents. Of those, 52 victims (27.7 percent) were classified as miscreants (see table 2), whereas the remaining 136 (72.3 percent) cases did not suggest a history of deviance. That finding indicates that local resident-victims were 2.6 times more likely not to have a miscreant past. At the county level, 78 of Georgia's counties had black lynch victims identifiable as local residents. Among these, only 21.8 percent (n = 17) of counties had a greater number of miscreant-victims than local nonmiscreant-victims, 7.7 percent (n = 6) had equal frequencies of miscreant- and nonmiscreant victims, and 70.5 percent (n = 55) had more local nonmiscreant-victims than miscreant. Both the statewide and the county-level data show that contrary to the weak hypothesis, lynch victims were *less* likely to be local miscreants than were nonmiscreants.

Strangers and Miscreants

And finally it could be reasoned that to fully test the relational-distance hypothesis, one should broaden the scope of inquiry even further. Victims who are local miscreants as well as those who are strangers should be combined into a single category of socially marginalized victims, which can then be contrasted with the frequency of nonmarginalized victims (nonstranger-, nonmiscreant-victims).

Statewide, there were 61 stranger-victims (table 1) and 52 miscreant-victims (table 2), for a total of 113 marginalized victims who may be considered relationally distant and socially marginal. There were 136 victims (table 2) for which there was no evidence of marginality, which means

TABLE 2
Community Status of Black Victims of
Lynch Mobs in Georgia, 1882–1930 (n = 188)

Victim's deviant status	n	%
Miscreant	52	27.7
Nonmiscreant	136	72.3
Total nonstranger-victims	188	100.0

that in the aggregate, victims of lynchings in Georgia were 1.2 times (136/113) more likely to be nonmarginalized than marginalized. At the county level, in only 35.8 percent ($n = 34$) of the counties did the combined number of marginal victims (local miscreants and strangers) exceed the number of nonmarginal victims (local nonmiscreants).¹⁴

Thus far, the statewide and county-level data on black lynch victims provide no compelling evidence to support the theory that victims were more likely to be strangers or local deviants. In fact, the evidence supports quite the opposite conclusion: victims were more likely to be local residents than strangers and more likely to be nonmiscreants than miscreants. This conclusion, however, is based on aggregating the victims over the 49-year period from 1882 to 1930. The hypothesis might be historically specific and a different pattern might emerge if the data were disaggregated temporally.

Composition of Lynch Victims across Time

Table 3 presents the relative frequency of types of lynch victims, by time period. The computation permits a comparison of the composition of lynchings across time. These data show that in each of the five time periods, there was a greater likelihood of a victim's being a local resident than a stranger to the community. Within the local-resident category, in four of the five periods, there was a greater likelihood of a victim's being a nonmiscreant than a miscreant: in the period between 1890 and 1899, it was equally proba-

ble. Thus, even when the data are disaggregated by time, there appears to be little evidence in favor of the weak version of the hypothesis.

If, however, one examines the broader marginality hypothesis by blending victims who were strangers with those who were local miscreants into a single category of socially marginalized victims and then makes comparisons with the percentage of nonmiscreant victims, one finds some limited support for the weak relational-distance hypothesis (see table 4). Where in four of the five periods, lynch victims were more likely to be nonmarginal in the community than marginal, the period from 1890 to 1899 was markedly different.¹⁵ In those years, Georgia's black lynch victims were 1.8 times more likely to have been community marginals (strangers or miscreants) than nonmarginals (37.6 percent versus 20.5 percent).¹⁶ This finding is an important exception to the general pattern reported in table 4. But why should the exception be the case in this particular historical epoch?

The 1890s were a tumultuous time in the state of Georgia. They were years of demographic, economic, and political unrest and change. In Georgia's black community, the decade was one of rapid population expansion. The median black population growth rate in Georgian counties peaked in the 1890s at 16.1 percent. Statewide, the black population grew an astonishing 20.5 percent between 1890 and 1900.

King Cotton was in trouble. The wholesale (deflated) price of cotton averaged 10.5¢ per pound in 1890 yet had

TABLE 3
Status of Black Victims of Lynch Mobs in Georgia, by Time Period ($n = 435$)

Period	Local residents		Strangers (%)	Unclassifiable (%)	Total	
	Nonmiscreants (%)	Miscreants (%)			%	n
1882-1889	37.7	7.6	24.5	30.2	100.0	53
1890-1899	20.5	20.5	17.1	41.9	100.0	117
1900-1909	33.7	8.2	10.2	48.0	100.1	98
1910-1919	36.8	8.8	11.2	43.2	100.0	125
1920-1930	31.0	11.9	9.5	47.6	100.0	42

TABLE 4
Marginality Status of Black Victims of Lynch Mobs in Georgia, by Time Period

Period	Nonmarginals ^a /(%)	Marginals ^b /(%)	Unclassifiable (%)	Total	
				%	n
1882-1889	37.7	32.1	30.2	100.0	53
1890-1899	20.5	37.6	41.9	100.0	117
1900-1909	33.7	18.4	48.0	100.1	98
1910-1919	36.8	20.0	43.2	100.0	125
1920-1930	31.0	21.4	47.6	100.0	42

^aLocal nonmiscreant-victims.
^bLocal miscreant-victims and stranger-victims.

crashed to only 6.0¢ per pound by 1898. In spite of increased production, statewide real-dollar cotton revenues in the state fell by over 35 percent between 1890 and 1899, at a time when cotton represented almost 60 percent of the total value of Georgian crops. This cascading value of cotton created an economic crisis, whose effects were limited not only to counties dedicated to cotton production but also to non-cotton-producing areas. Politically, these were contentious times as well. The Populists were challenging the established Democratic order, and the Bourbon South of planters and cotton factors and the New South of the free-market entrepreneurs and petty industrialists battled for control of the state's destiny (Bartley 1983; Shaw 1984).

The wind of change even permeated lower Georgia's Wiregrass and sandy plain counties. The 1880s saw the extension of railroads into sparsely settled lower Georgia and a subsequent proliferation of small towns and villages along the rail lines (DeVine 1983; Harper 1922a, 1922b; Wetherington 1994). Despite a nationwide economic recession and falling commodity prices in the early 1890s, the expansion of the lumber and forest-products industries, along with heightened cotton growing, brought increased migration of whites and especially blacks into the sandy regions of Georgia in search of jobs, farmlands, and business opportunities.

Indeed, it was in lower Georgia that the victims of mob violence tended to be more marginal (strangers and miscreants) than nonmarginals. In the 1890s, the counties where the number of miscreant- and stranger-victims exceeded the nonmarginal victims were concentrated in these southern Wiregrass counties and along the Georgia-Florida border on the sandy coastal plain.¹⁷ Further, the 1890-1900 black population growth rate was significantly greater in counties where marginalized victims predominated, 24.6 percent as compared with 12.0 percent for counties where nonmarginalized lynch victims were in the majority.¹⁸ Hence, there was greater social demographic change in those counties where marginalized (miscreant and strangers) lynch victims were more common.¹⁹

This development is not surprising for two reasons. First, places experiencing population in-migration should have a larger proportion of strangers in their communities, by definition. Thus, even with equal-probable (random) selection, there would be more stranger-victims of mob violence. Second, areas undergoing rapid social and economic change are environments conducive to social disorganization, deviance, and lawlessness than similar areas that were more stable.

Conclusions

On the basis of Black's (1976) elegant theoretical work, Senechal de la Roche (1996, 1997) proposed an engaging interpretation of victim selection in the era of the southern lynch mob. She argued that there was a tendency for persons who were disconnected and disaffiliated—relationally

distant—from their local communities to be disproportionately targets of mob violence. In particular, she reasoned that because strangers were not integrated into the social fabric of the community, they would be particularly vulnerable and likely to be victimized. Evidence for this relational-distance interpretation has, however, lacked a solid empirical foundation. Whereas the theory is elegant in its simplicity and has a ring of intuitive plausibility, we have demonstrated here that it is empirically intractable because it is not possible to know the proportion of a community's population that are strangers, a necessary component. Thus, despite its apparent rigor, the issue of whether strangers were more likely to be lynch victims can not be addressed scientifically. However, it is possible to answer the weaker question of whether lynch victims were more likely to be relationally distant. Two concepts of relational distance were examined: first, the relational distance of the stranger in a community and, second, the relational distance of the community miscreant. Strangers are relative newcomers or transients who are unknown in the community, have few network links to local residents, and, accordingly, are relationally distant from the community and have not been granted the relative safety of social bonds. Miscreants, on the other hand, are known in the community and are possibly long-term residents who have been labeled as troublemakers or rogues. It is their very deviance that creates their relational distance from the members of the community.

By using data on 435 African American victims of lynch mobs in Georgia from 1882 to 1930, we found, in general, that lynch victims were more likely to be resident community members than strangers, both statewide and at the county level. This finding is contrary to prediction. Similarly, it was established that within a community, lynch victims were less likely to be miscreants than nonmiscreants. Again, the finding is antithetical to prediction. The only evidence in support of the weak form of the relational-distance hypothesis was found when the Georgia data were disaggregated over time. If stranger-victims and miscreant-victims were combined into a single category of socially marginalized lynch victims, and then the question posed of whether the victims of lynchings were more likely to be marginals than nonmarginals, the answer was affirmative for the 1890s. During this unique 10-year period, black lynch victims were more inclined to be relationally distant than relationally proximate. In Georgia's history, the 1890s were turbulent years. It was a period of rapid social, economic, and political change, pitting the interests of the Bourbon planters against those of the New South entrepreneurs, and those of Populist and Republican rebels against the Democratic establishment. Social change was particularly notable in the southern regions of the state, with the influx of new black and white migrants seeking their fortunes in the expanding extractive industries—the very regions where the number of marginalized victims exceeded the nonmarginalized. Barring the exceptional 1890s, there were significantly more locals than strangers in Geor-

gia's roll of lynch victims. Georgia's lynch mobs were agents of terroristic social control, and their reign of terror encompassed the *entire* African American population; neither local residents nor strangers were shielded from lynch mob violence. We argue that Georgia lynch mobs were nondiscriminatory, inflicting lethal violence on local residents and strangers alike. In fact, it is the notion that *all* blacks could be targeted for mob violence that made lynching such an effective terrorist tool of white supremacy.

NOTES

1. There is an extremely large literature on lynchings. See bibliographic entries found in Fitzhugh Brundage (1993), Roberta Senechal de la Roche (1997), Stewart Tolnay and E. M. Beck (1995), and George Wright (1990).

2. Other important elements are (a) functional interdependence, (b) vertical direction, and (c) cultural distance. See Senechal de la Roche (1996, 1997) for an elaboration of the complete theoretical framework.

3. Tolnay and Beck (1995) argued that one function of lynching was terroristic control of the black population. Such a hypothesis would suggest that maximum terror or threat would be produced by lynching a member of the community rather than a stranger, an outsider with weak, or no, links to the community. If that interpretation is correct, it would imply that strangers should be less likely than nonstrangers to become victims of lethal mob violence.

4. Without the explicit benefit of Black's theorizing, southern historian Edward Ayers (1984, 244) hypothesized, "It does seem likely, however, that lynch mobs often turned to blacks considered to be outsiders. . . ." The empirical basis of his statement is unknown.

5. A conditional probability is the probability that event A occurs given event B, and it is equal to the joint probability of A and B both happening divided by the probability (marginal) of event B happening, that is,

$$\Pr(A|B) = \Pr(A \text{ and } B) + \Pr(B).$$

6. This dilemma can be seen by noting

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) &= \Pr(\text{Victim and Stranger}) + \Pr(\text{Stranger}), \\ \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Nonstranger}) &= \Pr(\text{Victim and Nonstranger}) \\ &\quad + \Pr(\text{Nonstranger}). \end{aligned}$$

Because a person in the community must be either a stranger or nonstranger, the second equation can be rewritten as

$$\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Nonstranger}) = \Pr(\text{Victim and Nonstranger}) + [1 - \Pr(\text{Stranger})].$$

Thus we see that the conditional probability of being a lynch victim given whether one is a stranger, $\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger})$, or nonstranger, $\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Nonstranger})$, depends on the probability of being a stranger, $\Pr(\text{Stranger})$, in the community.

7. The derivation of equation (3) is straightforward from the definitions of conditional probabilities. Hence,

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) &= \Pr(\text{Victim and Stranger}) + \Pr(\text{Victim}), \\ \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) &= \Pr(\text{Victim and Stranger}) + \Pr(\text{Stranger}). \end{aligned}$$

These equations can be rewritten as

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) \times \Pr(\text{Victim}) &= \Pr(\text{Victim and Stranger}), \\ \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) \times \Pr(\text{Stranger}) &= \Pr(\text{Victim and Stranger}). \end{aligned}$$

Substituting the second equation into the first,

$$\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) \times \Pr(\text{Victim}) = \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) \times \Pr(\text{Stranger}).$$

Then dividing both sides by $\Pr(\text{Victim})$, we have equation (3) in the text:

$$\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) = \Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger}) \times [\Pr(\text{Stranger})/\Pr(\text{Victim})].$$

8. If one were trying to explain variation in $\Pr(\text{Victim}|\text{Stranger})$ across communities, the observed $\Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim})$ could be used as a proxy as long as the ratio of strangers to victims was constant across communities—a tenuous assumption at best.

9. Christopher Waldrep (1992, 179) contended that "... outsiders were most likely to be victims of lynchings" and cited the work of Arthur Raper (1933, 3–4) as documentation, yet Raper made no such grandiose claim. Raper reported that of the 21 persons lynched in the United States in 1930,

"Scarcely half of the victims were identified with any church or lodge organization." Further, he stated that five victims were considered to be "... 'outsiders' by local Negroes." The preceding is fragile testimony at best.

10. Ayers (1984, 253) argued, sans any supporting evidence, that "black communities, in an effort to protect themselves, would readily blame a black stranger when a serious crime has been committed against a local white." In later work, Ayers (1992, 157) asserted, again without documentation, that "lynchings tended to flourish where whites were surrounded by what they called 'strange niggers,' blacks with no white to vouch for them, blacks with no reputation in the neighborhood, blacks without even other blacks to aid them."

11. Noting that the two conditional probabilities can be rewritten as

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Stranger}|\text{Victim}) &= \Pr(\text{Stranger and Victim}) + \Pr(\text{Victim}) \text{ and} \\ \Pr(\text{Nonstranger}|\text{Victim}) &= \Pr(\text{Nonstranger and Victim}) + \Pr(\text{Victim}). \end{aligned}$$

So the weak hypothesis requires

$$\Pr(\text{Stranger and Victim}) > \Pr(\text{Nonstranger and Victim}),$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr(\text{Stranger and Victim}) &= \text{Number of Victims Who Are Strangers} \\ &\quad + \text{Total Number of Victims and} \\ \Pr(\text{Nonstranger and Victim}) &= \text{Number of Victims Who Are} \\ &\quad \text{Nonstrangers} + \text{Total Number of Victims.} \end{aligned}$$

12. Compared with the other southern states, Georgia was second only to Mississippi in the number of African Americans murdered by lynch mobs between 1882 and 1930. Alabama was a distant third. See Tolnay and Beck (1995).

13. Why the newspapers were silent on this point is open to multiple interpretations. One possibility is that the victim was so well known in the community that it would have been obvious to most readers. We suspect, but have no proof, that most of these "no information" cases were indeed "locals." If this suspicion is valid, then the percentage of local (nonstranger) lynch victims would be considerably higher than reported in table 1.

14. In 13.7 percent of the counties ($n = 13$), there were equal numbers of marginal and nonmarginal victims, and in 50.5 percent ($n = 48$) of Georgian counties, the number of nonmarginal victims exceed the number of marginal victims.

15. Across the South as a whole, the 1890s witnessed the crest of the wave of mob violence during the lynching era (Tolnay and Beck 1995). In Georgia, the 1890s were, indeed, ripe with lynch violence, but Georgia's peak occurred in the 1910–1919 period (see last column of table 3).

16. The increase in the percentage of marginal victims noted in table 4 for the 1890s was not due to growth in stranger-victims; in fact, as shown in table 3, the percentage of stranger-victims declined from the 1880–89 period to the 1890–99 decade. The percentage of marginal lynch victims exceeded that of the nonmarginals because of a substantial increase in the number of lynching victims who were miscreants (see table 3). In fact, almost half of all miscreant lynch victims were killed in the 1890–99 period.

17. There was only a sprinkling of miscreant- and stranger-victims in the old plantation belt in central Georgia.

18. Similarly, the median white population growth rate was substantially greater in counties with a predominance of miscreant-and-stranger lynch victims.

19. Counties where nonmarginal lynch victims dominated in the 1890s were concentrated in the mid-Georgia cotton plantation Black Belt. Relative to the lower Georgia counties, these counties were more dependent upon the cotton economy, had less fluid population flows, and had a more established plantation tradition. In short, they were demographically less dynamic.

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