

# The Transmission of Historical Racial Violence: Lynching, Civil Rights–Era Terror, and Contemporary Interracial Homicide

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## Abstract

Research finds that historic racial violence helps predict spatial distributions of contemporary outcomes, including homicide. These findings underscore the continued need to historicize modern race relations, yet intervening processes linking past violence with present events remain unclear. This study examines these intermediary mechanisms by reducing the century-long time-lapse common to legacy of racial violence research. We use mid-century measures of violent opposition to the Civil Rights Movement to bridge the historical gap between lynchings and later homicide, thus clarifying the dynamic and contingent nature of the legacy of racial violence. Structural equation models indicate that incidents of anti-civil rights enforcement and contemporary homicides are more likely to occur in areas with pronounced histories of lynching. Civil rights era assaults mediate the relationship between lynchings and contemporary homicide generally, but not White-on-Black homicide, signaling a need for further research documenting events of mid-century racial violence and clarifying these and other sources of historical transmission. Implications for future research and public policy are considered.

## Keywords

subculture of violence, criminological theories, lynching, race and death penalty, hate/bias crimes, victimization, homicides, interracial crime

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Civil rights laws and reforms are often envisioned as ushering in a “post-civil rights” period, removed from an earlier history of violent race relations, if still shaped by subtler forms of racial conflict and inequality (Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Yet a growing body of scholarship finds that lynching, the form of racial violence most characteristic of this seemingly bygone era, continues to influence contemporary patterns of violence, conflict, and inequality (DeFina & Hannon, 2011; Jacobs, Carmichael, & Kent, 2005; Jacobs, Malone, & Iles, 2012; King, Messner, & Baller, 2009; Messner, Baller, & Zevenbergen, 2005; Messner, Baumer, & Rosenfeld, 2006; Porter, Howell, & Hempel, 2014; Zimring, 2003). This evidence encourages us to historicize present-day racial inequality and to clarify the intermediary processes linking this seemingly distant past to contemporary racial stratification and conflict.

This study examines linkages between the three forms of racial violence—historic lynching, mid-century anti-civil rights violence, and contemporary White-on-Black homicide—in two contrasting southern states. Existing research on the legacy of lynching overlooks the violence surrounding the civil rights movement (CRM), yet this mid-century era of racial terror may be an important cultural and institutional conduit in the enduring significance of historic racial violence. This article empirically assesses this potential link.

The spatial congruence and functional equivalence of lynching and anti-civil rights violence suggests likely relationships between these instantiations of racial terror and later racial conflict and violence. Lynchings were most common in the same southeastern region of the United States that later became the primary battleground of the CRM. These two forms of violence served similar functions as “terroristic social control,” where spectacles of violence, intimidation, and reprisal aimed to manipulate political behavior and maintain status quo race relations, albeit in different eras (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 19; Law, 2009, pp. 138–139). In so far as antecedents of historic lynching and its legacy relate to causes and consequences of civil rights-era racial violence (e.g., racial threat, racial socialization, or subcultures of violence), this mid-century race terror may clarify sources of the enduring significance of historic racial violence.

We expect anti-civil rights violence to be more prominent in contexts of not only race-related economic and political contention but also where lynchings created “fertile soil” for its expression, perhaps through extreme racial socialization and the cultural legitimization of racial violence (Tolnay & Beck, 1995). Yet, it is possible that theorized local socialization effects of lynching are dampened or interrupted by the prolonged absence of comparable, sustaining events. The discontinuity of terroristic social control, such as an absence of anti-civil rights violence in locales once scared by lynching, may give way to new “forces of habit” (Durso & Jacobs, 2013, p. 130; Stinchcombe, 1987) which weaken the lasting significance of lynching and limit later violence, even amid contention. In essence, a more inclusive historical analysis of racial terror accounting for CRM-era violence should help to elucidate intermediary processes underlying the legacy of lynching, clarifying the (dis)continuity of historical racial violence.

## A More Inclusive Assessment of Historical Racial Terror

The history of racial terror in the United States is well documented and, in the post-Emancipation period, predominantly represented by the brutal spectacle of lynching. Lynchings claimed the lives of women and men of various racial and ethnic backgrounds throughout history, but African Americans paid the heaviest toll, comprising around 90% of the nearly 5,000 documented victims of lynchings between 1882 and 1951 (Tolnay & Beck, 1995). This history warrants greater attention not only to acknowledge these victims and costs borne by their descendants but also in light of its relevance to contemporary social relations.

One of the more intriguing and troubling discoveries in recent race research is that historic lynching helps to explain contemporary patterns of racial conflict, inequality, and violence (DeFina & Hannon, 2011; Jacobs et al., 2005, 2012; King et al., 2009; Messner et al., 2005; 2006; Porter, 2011; Porter et al., 2014; Zimring, 2003). How is it possible that events a century removed from each other bear this relation? What cultural and institutional factors help to explain its persistence and strength? Although a sizable body of research provides empirical evidence of these enduring relationships, mechanisms of historical transmission remain unclear (see Messner et al., 2005). We hope to elucidate the historical transmission of racial violence by examining whether overlooked patterns of mid-20th-century racial terror clarify the legacy of lynching. Specifically, we suspect that normative and institutional forces associated with historic lynching also relate to patterns of anti-civil rights violence, such that the legacy of lynching might be sustained, intensified, or disrupted by levels of mid-century anti-civil rights violence.

Images of brutalized or murdered activists, vicious police dogs, and other illustrations of violence, intimidation, and reprisal help to define the CRM era. Thousands were beaten and killed, wrongfully imprisoned, and driven from homes and jobs, owing to known or suspected involvement in the movement, or as casualties of more diffuse efforts to cultivate a “climate of terror” (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 19). Like lynchings, these events are spread throughout the United States, but are concentrated in those southeastern states where the CRM and its violent opposition grew particularly entrenched. Although growing effort to acknowledge and redress this injustice has brought increased attention from researchers, advocates, and officials (see U.S. Attorney General [USAG], 2009; Ward, 2014), legacy of racial violence research generally overlooks this mid-20th-century repression. Two important studies of CRM-era developments implicitly bridge these eras and suggest the importance of doing so formally. In their contextual analysis of Klan mobilization in mid-1960s North Carolina, Cunningham and Phillips (2007) use a measure of prior lynchings to assess “historical propensity for racial violence,” finding that counties with prior lynchings were significantly more likely to exhibit Klan activity in mid-1960s North Carolina. A subsequent study found that Ku Klux Klan (KKK) mobilization in the CRM era (ca. 1955–1975) relates to contemporary homicide (McVeigh & Cunningham, 2012), arguing that Klan mobilization undermined community cohesion in ways that contribute to lethal violence today. Although lynching is not considered by McVeigh and

Cunningham (2012), the two studies imply a legacy of lynching that is mediated in some ways by mid-century racial violence.

The legacy literature has generally bypassed the CRM period, notwithstanding its likely relevance to the historical arc of racial violence. Although this oversight partly reflects a false sense that racial terror ended with the decline of lynching, it is also due to the limited availability of comprehensive data on racial violence in the CRM period. Such incidents are often scattered in general chronologies of Black history (e.g., Bergman, 1969; Collier-Thomas & Franklin, 2000) or narrative histories of local struggles (e.g., Jeffries, 2009; King, 2012), and selectively presented as illustrative cases characteristic of more widespread but undocumented incidents (MacLean, 1994), all of which complicates statistical enumeration and analysis.

We address this challenge by drawing on a growing database of over 2,000 events of anti-civil rights violence from several states, compiled from legal and government documents (Civil Rights Congress, 1951; USAG, 2009), published compilations (American Friends Service Committee, National Council of the Churches of Christ, and the Southern Regional Council, 1959; Hewitt, 2005), and scholarly sources (Colby, 1987). With theorized mechanisms of the legacy of historical lynching in mind, we use a sample of these data (events from Mississippi and North Carolina) to examine whether this mid-century rash of racial terror helps to clarify the relationship between lynching and contemporary interracial homicide in these two contrasting southern states.

## **Historical Transmission of Racial Violence: Theorizing Cultural and Institutional Sources**

Tolnay and Beck (1995, p. 50) distinguish between the immediate manifest function of mob violence against Black Americans—eradication of specific persons accused of offending the White community—and several “latent functions.” These latent functions of lynching, that is, dimensions that are present but less immediately evident, include the neutralization of apparent social, economic, and political threats to White dominance, and symbolic expression of both the strength of White supremacism and the depth of Black subordination. These underlying features not only account for the pervasiveness of lynching but also seem particularly salient to the legacy of this racial violence, as they speak to its cultural and institutional remnants.

Scholarship linking racial violence in the distant past to contemporary stratification and conflict similarly emphasizes that historical violence including lynching (a) is most likely in contexts of perceived threat to social, economic, and political dominance and (b) reflects and reinforces cultural/normative orientations toward White supremacism and the legitimacy of violence in maintaining it. Our analysis builds upon these theorized sources of the legacy of lynching in assessing its relation to CRM-era violence and later contemporary homicide.

### *Threat and Competition*

Research on historical racial violence emphasizes the catalytic role of social, political, and economic threat to White racial domination (see Blalock, 1967; Blumer, 1958; Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Tolnay & Beck, 1995; Roth, 2009). In contexts where racial threat and competition fuel contention, other factors condition eventual racial violence, such as power inequality (Blalock, 1967), cultural support for the legitimacy of violence in resolving disputes (Gastil, 1971), and traditions of vigilantism (Zimring, 2003). In the case of lynching and other race-related violence, numerous studies identify maintenance of White racial domination as a fundamental motivation (Brundage, 1997; MacLean, 1994; Tolnay & Beck, 1995).

A key latent function of lynching was the maintenance of White societal domination by discouraging or neutralizing Black social, economic, and political status challenges. Any crime against a White person was construed as a Black status offense, and insulting or offensive behavior that fell short of crime would suffice as cause for mob violence. Allegations of actual or attempted rape, for example, and even consenting sexual relations were defined as criminal or status offenses in order to maintain White “racial purity” and forbid intimate relations across the color line (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 77). Other alleged offenses, such as “insulting a White woman,” “failure to give way on a sidewalk,” or “arguing with a White man,” further illustrate how the policing of status infractions factored into lynching (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 47).

Social scientists have generally focused on demographic, economic, and political dimensions of racial group threat and competition. Demographic threat indicators focus on increasing racial and ethnic overlap within a particular geographic location, which increases the potential for contentious social interactions as well as majority group perceptions of status threats from visible minorities (Bergeson & Herman, 1998; Blalock, 1967; Van Dyke & Soule, 2002). Lynchings and other forms of reactive ethnic mobilization have also been associated with interracial economic competition (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 157), including levels of relative economic well-being (Beck & Tolnay, 1990; Bonacich, 1976; McVeigh, 1999; Olzak, 1992; Van Dyke & Soule, 2002). Political threat indicators focus on mobilization by minority group interests or changes in political institutions that draw political power and resources away from dominant groups (Cunningham and Philips 2007; McVeigh, 1999; Van Dyke & Soule, 2002). There is limited empirical evidence that political threat shaped temporal or spatial patterns of lynching in the South (Olzak, 1990; Soule, 1992; Tolnay & Beck, 1995, pp. 198–199). Yet social movement research generally suggests that rearrangements of political power and resources incentivize reactive countermovement mobilization (Andrews, 2002; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Zald & Useem, 1987). Threats of political rearrangement grew amid 20th-century civil rights protests and reforms, and their relevance to racial terror in that period might have as well.

Ultimately, threat and competition indicators are complexly intertwined. Lynchings on expressed grounds of “succeeding too well” (Harris, 1991, p. 5) illustrate the

likely confluence of demographic, economic, and political threat and competition. As we are interested in the legacy of violent incidents, rather than parsing the relative importance of threat and competition indicators, our analysis employs a blend of “power threat” control variables to capture potentially catalytic demographic, economic, and political conditions in each period.

### *Extreme Racial Socialization*

Extreme racial socialization is another latent function of lynching likely relevant to its legacy. As “a symbolic manifestation of the unity of White supremacy” (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 50), the spectacle of lynching is an important socializing event, reinforcing White supremacist cultural and institutional systems. Photographs, postcards, and memorabilia of lynchings speak to this dimension. The attendance of children at lynching spectacles, and their staged participation in the brutality, illustrates potential cross-generational implications for future assaults on Black Americans, through violence or discrimination (see Ward, 2012; Wood, 2009). For example, in 1917, a 10-year-old was allegedly compelled to castrate a Black lynching victim in Texas, in what must have been regarded as a baptismal induction into the “holy crusade” of White supremacism (Franklin & Moss, 1994, p. 249). Images of proud fathers and wide-eyed sons, indeed, generations of men at scenes of these brutal spectacles, capture these racializing events and their likely cultural and institutional legacy.

Although Tolnay and Beck (1995) stress the importance of this socializing function in sustaining the lynching era itself, legacy of lynching research also suggests that intense racial socialization associated with mob violence contributes to later race-related violence. Durso and Jacobs (2013, p. 130–131) argue that “Where lynchings were common, many Whites were socialized to believe their dominance was unquestionable,” contributing to enduring norms which intensify perceptions of threat or insult, and rationalize racial violence. This argument holds that normative orientations and practices of predecessors—such as violent responses to racial group threat—create a “yoke of habit” which guides similar understandings and actions among contemporaries (Durkheim, 1912/1915, p. 103, cited in Camic, 1986, p. 1, 51; Durso & Jacobs, 2013; Jacobs et al., 2005, 2012).

### *Cultivated Cultures of Violence*

A third and related latent function of the terroristic spectacle of lynching relates to the cultural endorsement of violence as a social control measure. Areas of the U.S. South are apparently distinguished by greater normative support for the use of interpersonal violence to resolve interpersonal disputes, especially to defend honor (Baller, Zevenbergen, & Messner, 2009; Ellison, Burr, & McCall, 2003; Messner et al., 2005; Ousey & Lee, 2010; Parker & Pruitt, 2000). These locally cultivated cultures of violence are not uniformly distributed, but rather, “scattered about in ‘pockets’ across the region” (Doerner, 1975, p. 68). Scholars have used histories of lynching to

distinguish such places, in light of the symbolic and substantive significance of this extreme violence (Doerner, 1975; Messner et al., 2005). Lynching derived its menacing power from onlookers' sense that any particular lynching event—successful or merely rumored—was part of a sequence of similarly terroristic acts (Tolnay & Beck 1995). Thus, meanings attached to individual lynchings came not only from their own narrative arcs but also through relationships to other threatening events (Gerlach, 2010; MacLean, 1994; Stovel, 2001). These not only combined to serve as a sustained warning to potential racial dissenters but also as broad endorsements of violence as a social control measure.

Crucial to the subculture of violence thesis is the idea that legal authorities and institutions are seen as unreliable resources in resolving grievances and honoring victims. This rationalized extralegal violence in defense of honor and other threatened interests, contributing to violence among both underpoliced aggressors and under-protected targets (Anderson, 2000; Black, 1983; Roth, 2009). Although state actors were often directly implicated in lynchings, many attempted and often failed to prevent lynching, which together suggested the state's disinclination or inability to counter this reign of terror (Brundage, 1997; Tolnay & Beck, 1995).

These dimensions of the subculture of violence thesis have been most frequently assessed in the case of violence among Whites. Yet defending one's honor or other interests—amid complicit, neglectful, or ineffective legal authority—may also be relevant to Black perpetrated violence, historically and today (Anderson, 2000; Krivo & Peterson, 2000; Lee, 2011). Messner et al. (2005) argue that lynching serves as a proxy for cultural orientations toward violence in the present, with differing effects for Blacks and Whites. Lynching has a “brutalization” effect for Whites, they claim, serving as a form of “vigilante justice” that can be used to justify violent dispute resolution strategies. In contrast, for Blacks, lynchings symbolize the criminal justice system's failures to protect Black communities, fostering and rationalizing “self-help” violence.

## **The Present Research**

By the mid-20th century, lynching declined dramatically and incidents were seen as “anachronisms from an earlier era” (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 233). Yet, racial terror continued through the 1960s, particularly on the southern battlegrounds of the CRM. Within the very region where lynchings receded, bombings, violent assaults, cross-burnings, and other terroristic acts grew frequent. This study engages lynching and later anti-civil rights violence in a longer range analysis of racial terror to better assess the contemporary significance of historical racial violence and mechanisms of transmission. We consider the possibility that the latent contextual effects of lynching helped to “plant seeds” of civil rights-era racial violence and that this more recent racial terror further cultivated a cultural and institutional environment more conducive to lethal interpersonal violence today. Our analysis builds on prior research by (1) expanding the conceptual and empirical modeling of historical racial terror and (2) considering this legacy in the case of contemporary White-on-Black homicide.



Existing legacy of racial violence research overlooks the terroristic repression of civil rights activism in the mid-20th century. Legacy studies stress the mutation of historic racial violence, emphasizing that new forms of race-related state violence such as imprisonment and execution “substitute” for delegitimized racist vigilante violence (Beck, Massey, & Tolnay, 1989; Clarke, 1998; Olzak & Shanahan, 2014; Tolnay, Beck, & Massey, 1992). Although legacy studies present compelling evidence that lynching relates to more diffuse and legitimized forms of racialized social control in the modern era, they inaccurately treat the decline of lynching as the *end* of an era of terroristic social control. Our more inclusive view of historical racial terror links the era of lynching with the succeeding period of anti-civil rights violence, where police brutality, cross-burnings, bombings, and other assaults were more characteristic (Colby, 1987).

Acts of anti-civil rights violence, intimidation, and reprisal hold much in common with the manifest and latent functions of historic lynching. Both likely reflect and reinforce extreme racial socialization, and culturally supported uses of violence to counter perceived economic, political, and status threats. Lynchings would seem to create “fertile soil” for anti-civil rights violence to take hold in. As terroristic social control, civil rights-era racial terror—bombing, shootings, beatings, cross-burnings, and the like—may sustain and even deepen contextually distinct normative supports for racial violence. In theory, every incident of racial violence distinguishes its milieu further, such that cultivated cultures of racial violence become mechanisms in the persistence of race-related violence over time. If so, we should expect for later forms of racial violence, including contemporary interracial homicide, to be most common in areas of more sustained historical racial terror (i.e., lynching and civil rights violence).

Murder is obviously of great interest in criminology, yet surprisingly little attention has been devoted to the historical antecedents of contemporary lethal violence, especially intergroup homicide (for a notable exception see Roth, 2009). Research focused on the concentration of homicides in the U.S. South demonstrates that killings are more common in areas with characteristics most closely associated with the “old South” and its corresponding culture of violence (Baller et al., 2009; Ellison et al., 2003; Messner et al., 2005; Ousey & Lee, 2010; Parker & Pruitt, 2000). Yet, despite the voluminous literature on the “southern culture of violence,” prior work has largely ignored links between historic lynchings and contemporary southern violence (Messner et al., 2005).

Racial contact and competition/threat perspectives are most common in interracial homicide research (Jacobs & Wood, 1999). Racial contact theory expects interracial homicide rates to reflect opportunities for interaction, such that areas with a small Black population or low levels of intergroup contact are expected to have lower rates of interracial homicide (Blau, 1977). Support for the racial contact perspective is mixed. Some studies indicate that interracial homicides are less common in areas with diminished opportunities for interracial contact (Jacobs & Wood, 1999; McCall & Parker, 2005; Messner & South, 1992), while others find the opposite effect (Parker & McCall, 1999; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2004). These mixed findings may stem from a



lack of attention to local race relations, including histories of racial violence. Interracial homicide, like other forms of racial violence, depends on local race relations (Olzak, 1990; Soule, 1992; Stovel, 2001; Tolnay & Beck, 1995), and interracial contact alone does not necessarily induce conflict. As Jacob and Wood (1999) note, the racial contact perspective ignores structural racial inequalities, including historical cultural and institutional forces that condition opportunities for contact and the likelihood of violence.

Competition and threat perspectives characterize interracial homicide as a response to immediate demographic, economic, and political challenges of White racial domination (Blalock, 1967, 1989; Blumer, 1958; Liska, 1992). Studies have found that areas with greater Black political representation and higher levels of race-related economic inequality have higher rates of White-on-Black and Black-on-White violence (Jacobs & Wood, 1999; but see McCall & Parker, 2005; Parker & McCall, 1999). Consistent with a basic demographic threat assessment, locales with a growing Black population have fewer Black-on-White homicides but more White-on-Black homicides (Jacobs & Wood, 1999; McCall & Parker, 2005).

To date, only one study has empirically evaluated the lynching–homicide nexus. As we have noted, Messner et al. (2005) find that lynchings have a positive effect on Black homicide offenses from 1986 to 1995, suggesting that Black violence may stem from “self-help” adaptations. For Whites, lynching has a “brutalization” effect, increasing rates of White-on-Black argument–related homicide, but not the overall White homicide rate. Although Messner et al.’s (2005) study makes significant contributions to the legacy literature by elucidating the lynching–homicide nexus, additional research is needed to clarify processes linking historic lynchings to modern interracial homicides. Recognizing their “theoretical interpretations are predicated upon intervening processes that cannot be examined directly,” Messner et al. (2005, p. 650) note that “the precise nature of the mechanisms that link lynching with homicide needs to be explicated more fully and assessed more rigorously in future research.” Our study seeks to shed new light on this relationship by narrowing the “historical gap” in the legacy literature, utilizing data on civil rights-era assaults to empirically evaluate connections between historic lynchings, anti-civil rights violence, and contemporary interracial homicide.

## **Data and Methodology**

This study traces the historical trajectory of racial violence in the contrasting states of Mississippi and North Carolina by examining county-level effects of historic lynchings on anti-civil rights enforcement (ACRE) and contemporary rates of White-on-Black homicide. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to establish the mediating processes connecting ACRE events to historic lynchings and contemporary White-on-Black homicides.<sup>1</sup>

Our analysis focuses on Mississippi and North Carolina, contrasting Deep South and Border South contexts of historic lynchings and anti-civil rights violence, which model the diversity of the region as our outcomes and covariates are concerned.

Mississippi is known historically as one of the most racially repressive southern states, leading the Deep South in lynchings with a total of 452 victims between 1882 and 1930, nearly one third of all lynchings in the region (Tolnay & Beck, 1995, p. 270). Mississippi later became notorious for its state-plan of “massive resistance” to civil rights reform efforts, which yielded an array of often violent terroristic social control efforts, frequently implicating county officials and other state actors (Dittmer, 1994; Irons, 2010; McMillen, 1994).

By comparison, North Carolina is seen as relatively racially accommodating (Key, 1949), owing in part to lower levels of historical racial violence in this Border South state. There were generally fewer lynchings in Border South states, and only 10% of these 805 lynchings in the region occurred in North Carolina. The Tar Heel state was later widely viewed as one of the most progressive of the civil rights battleground states, showing greater signs of restraint and accommodation than Mississippi, Alabama, and other states (Walker, 2009). However, the KKK thrived in North Carolina, claiming more formal members here than in the rest of the South combined (Cunningham, 2013), which offered a distinct cultural and institutional resource for violent racial vigilantism in the state.

We use the county as our unit of analysis in each state. County sheriffs’ offices, courts, school boards, and other governmental entities substantively distinguish local political cultures and municipal processes (Andrews, 2002; Falcone & Wells, 1995; Parker, 1987). This is especially true of the U.S. South where relatively few large urban areas heightened the county role in governance (Giles, Gabris, & Krane, 1980, p. 25), historically, and counties remain key to contemporary municipal and regional services here and in other regions (Benton, 2005). The county is also the smallest geographical unit consistently available for key variables in our model across the period we consider, including incidents of racial violence (Cunningham & Phillips, 2007; Tolnay & Beck, 1995).

### *Dependent Variable 1: Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE)*

Our mid-century indicator of racial terror comes from a recently developed Historical Racial Violence Database. The database originates in an ongoing study of ACRE in Mississippi and North Carolina from 1954 to 1974, documenting events of race-related political violence, including murders and assaults, interpersonal violence, bombings, arson, and terroristic threats (e.g., cross-burnings, shootings, etc.). Event information was culled from an array of primary and secondary sources, including civil rights organization field logs, hearing transcripts, affidavits, and published compilations of political violence drawn largely from newspaper accounts (e.g., American Friends Service Committee et al., 1959; Civil Rights Congress, 1951; Hewitt, 2005; Minnis, 2013; USAG, 2009). We use these records to assess whether patterns of civil rights-era racial terror clarify the relationship between historic lynching and contemporary White-on-Black homicide in our two sample states. As we address in the discussion, these event records undoubtedly underestimate the number of such incidents. However, the number of anti-civil rights incidents in Colby’s (1987)

data set, the only comparable collection of incidents in Mississippi between 1960 and 1969, and events in our database for the same period are highly correlated ( $R = .84$ ), suggesting the reliability of our estimates.

The period of 1954–1974 contains key events in each state’s civil rights struggle. While ACRE predates the period, this start date marks the emergence of organized White resistance to *Brown v. Board of Education*, as well as the brutal murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi, an impetus for the CRM (Morris, 1999). Moreover, although the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Bill of 1965 are often regarded as end points of the CRM, we focus on a longer period of time to ensure that the sample includes events related to key shifts in institutional resistance strategies, including state repression of civil rights activists (Irons, 2010), federal efforts to counter state and local opposition (Cunningham, 2004; O’Reilly, 1989), and the emergence of segregationist academy school systems (Andrews, 2002).

### *Dependent Variable 2: White-on-Black Homicides*

The second dependent variable consists of county-level White-on-Black homicide rates (murder and nonnegligent manslaughter) derived from the most recently available multiply imputed Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data set (Fox & Swatt, 2009b).<sup>2</sup> Since the SHR contains incident-level data, we aggregate victim–offender information up to the county level. Our analysis focuses on cases with a White offender and Black victim—because most lynchings and civil rights assaults involved White offenders and Black victims, allowing us to examine the (dis)continuity of this pattern of racial violence over time (Tolnay & Beck, 1995).<sup>3</sup> Homicide rates were calculated over three roughly 10-year periods from 1976 to 2007 (i.e., 1976–1985, 1986–1995, and 1996–2007) to increase statistical power and reduce the influence of annual fluctuations in the number of homicides (see Kovandzic, Vieraitis, & Yeisley, 1998; Krivo & Peterson, 2000; Messner et al., 2005; Parker & McCall, 1997, 1999). These time periods were selected because they fall near the middle of decennial censuses, coincide with time periods used for imputation purposes, and correspond to theoretically relevant junctures in America’s homicide trajectory, that is, 1976–1985 pre-crack era, 1986–1995 crack era, and 1996–2007 post-crack era (Fox & Swatt, 2009a; McVeigh & Cunningham, 2012; Messner et al., 2005).

Nearly one third of the homicides are missing offender information because no suspect was identified (Fox & Swatt, 2009a). To deal with missing offender race, county-level homicide rates were averaged over five multiply imputed SHR data sets and rounded to the nearest whole number.<sup>4</sup> For cases with incomplete information, Fox and Swatt (2009a) estimated a log-linear imputation equation using multiple predictors to adjust for missingness (e.g., year, region, etc.). After applying the imputation equation, the imputed file consists of six stacked sets of records, one with the original data and five complete sets of data with imputed missing values. We sum the number of counts in each of the five imputed data sets and divide that by five to construct an imputed homicide rate.

### *Dependent Variable 3: Overall Population Homicide Rate*

As a supplementary analysis, we examine the overall homicide rate (i.e., violence among victims from all racial groups). Like our measure of White-on-Black violence, this variable was derived from the SHR data set by summing the number of incidents over three roughly 10-year periods from 1976 to 2007 (Fox & Swatt, 2009b). However, we use the nonimputed data to construct these homicide counts since missing suspect information is not an issue. Messner et al.'s (2005) study focuses on homicides more generally, and by analyzing homicide rates among the overall population we are able to test whether ACRE is a relevant mediator in their proposed theoretical model. Furthermore, given the rarity of interracial homicide, this additional outcome offers a more general assessment of the relevance of our more inclusive measure of historical racial violence.

### *Predictors of Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE)*

Historic lynching is measured by the number of Black lynching victims killed by Whites in each county between 1880 and 1930. Like Messner et al. (2005), we analyze data from this period because it contains the bulk of lynchings during the 19th and 20th centuries (Tolnay & Beck, 1995). However, in contrast to Messner et al. (2005), we only include White-on-Black lynchings given our focus on the (dis)continuity of White perpetrated racial violence.

The percentage of Black residents per county and changes in the percentage of Black residents from the preceding decade capture the potential demographic threats posed by an expanding Black constituency (Quillian, 1995, 1996; Tolnay, Beck, & Massey, 1989). We calculated the ratio of White to non-White median income as a measure of racial economic competition (Cunningham & Phillips, 2007; Jacobs & Wood, 1999).<sup>5</sup> As measures of Black political activity, we include the percentage of non-White registered voters in 1960, the number of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapters in 1960, and a binary variable indicating the presence/absence of at least one Black county commissioner in 1970 (Andrews, 2004; Cunningham & Phillips, 2007; King et al., 2009).

Civil rights-era assaults could also stem from cultural orientations toward violence and racial domination. We measure the number of Klan chapters (Klaverns) active in each county between 1964 and 1966 to capture the White supremacist repressive capacity of each county. The southern "code of honor" characteristic of areas with histories of a herding economy may also explain the geographic distribution of ACRE and homicide (Baller et al., 2009; Messner et al., 2005; Ousey & Lee, 2010; Parker & Pruitt, 2000). As such, we include historical livestock and crop production indices because areas with a history of minimal agricultural production and high levels of animal grazing should be most susceptible to the southern code of honor (Baller et al., 2009; Messner et al., 2005, p. 642).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, we control for several demographic variables theoretically related to civil rights assaults. Given purported elevated levels of civil rights violence in Mississippi

(Dittmer, 1994; Key, 1949; McMillen, 1994), we include a dummy variable for the state in which a county resides ( $MS = 1, NC = 0$ ). We also adjust for each county's median household income because, like other forms of violence, ACRE may thrive in environments with extreme economic deprivation (Jacobs & Wood, 1999; McCall & Parker, 2005; Messner & Golden, 1992; Messner & South, 1992). In light of potential regional differences in the propensity for violence, historically and today, we also include a series of regional dummy variables in the logistic portion of the analysis (Cunningham, 2013; Cunningham & Phillips, 2007).<sup>7</sup>

### *Predictors of White-on-Black and Overall Population Homicide Rates*

Given our theoretical framework linking histories of racial violence to contemporary outcomes, pathways predicting homicide rates utilize the aforementioned variables as well as additional contemporary measures.<sup>8</sup> In particular, we include additional race-specific rates of poverty and female-headed households as indicators of economic threat. Increased Black political representation in more recent years permitted the use of refined political threat measures.<sup>9</sup> We also include the percentage of residents who are southern born and of Scottish-Irish ancestry as proxy measures of "individualism and a general distrust of authority and organized social control" (D'Antonio-Del Rio, Doucet, & Chauvin, 2010, p. 487). Finally, to account for variations in the homicide rate over time (Fox & Swatt, 2009a, 2009b), a series of time-period dummy variables were included ( $1976-1985 = 0, 1986-1995 = 1, \text{ and } 1996-2007 = 2$ ).

### *Analysis Strategy*

Our research question lends itself to SEM. Specifically, we estimate an adapted zero-inflated negative binomial regression within an SEM framework, using STATA 13's "gsem" command (STATA, 2014, p. 341).<sup>10</sup> We utilize this method since the dependent variables are counts with an excess of zeroes and over-dispersion (Agresti, 2010; Cameron & Trivedi, 2013). SEM analysis of categorical outcomes allows us to trace the trajectory of racial violence overtime by simultaneously estimating direct/indirect pathways predicting ACRE events and contemporary homicide rates with different covariates and temporal structures (Kline, 2011; STATA, 2014).<sup>11</sup> It is unlikely that observations within the same county are independent across time periods, and thus we adjust the standard errors at the county-cluster level via STATA's "vce(cluster)" command.<sup>12</sup>

We keep the logit portion of our SEM parsimonious because the inclusion of additional covariates does not increase statistical power (Baller et al., 2009; Jacobs et al., 2005). Recognizing that interracial contact may be an important, but insufficient, catalyst of intergroup conflict, we include a "random-interaction" term in the logistic portion of the SEM (Jacobs & Wood, 1999). We calculate the random-interaction term using Hipp, Tita, and Boggess' (2011) formula:  $[(N_B)(N_W - 1)]/[(N)(N - 1)]$ , where  $N_B$  represents the Black population and  $N_W$  refers to the White population. Additionally, in the logit section we control for population density and regional indicators since prior

research suggests that historical racial conflict and modern lethal violence will likely be concentrated in specific locales (Andrews, 2004; Cunningham, 2013; Mississippi Truth Project, 2014; Parker & McCall, 1997, 1999; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2004).

## **Empirical Findings: Sustaining Racial Violence Over Centuries**

### *Summary Statistics*

Historic lynchings dating back to the 19th century, mid-20th-century ACRE, and 21st-century White-on-Black homicides are concentrated in the same counties of Mississippi and North Carolina. Consistent with prior research (Dittmer, 1994; McMillen, 1994; Tolnay & Beck, 1995), Mississippi counties had more lynchings ( $M = 6$ ) and ACRE activity ( $M = 7$ ) than North Carolina counties ( $M = 2$  and  $M = 1$ , respectively). On average, both states combined had 3.4 lynchings and 3.9 ACRE events per county (Table 1). White-on-Black homicides are relatively rare events, that is, the average White-on-Black homicide rate is 1.10 per 100,000 residents. The average overall population homicide is 57.769 per 100,000 residents.

### *Effect of Lynching on Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE)*

Our SEM indicates that prior lynchings have a strong effect on ACRE (Table 2). Each additional lynching is associated with a 12% increase in the rate of ACRE. Similarly, a one-unit increase in the percentage change of Black residents from 1960 to 1970 corresponds to a 5% increase in the rate of ACRE. Contrary to our expectations, each additional NAACP chapter corresponds to 24% reduction in the likelihood of ACRE activity. In the logistic portion, the “random interaction” term has a significant positive effect, supporting the contact theory. The logistic portion also indicates that ACRE events are regionally patterned, with counties in the mountain region of North Carolina being 88% less likely to have one or more ACRE events than the coastal area of North Carolina; this is likely an artifact of the limited Black population presence, and thus diminished perceived threat and competition in that region.

These findings offer mixed support for socialization, subcultural, or threat explanations of ACRE. The influence of lynching on mid-century racial violence points to its theorized latent effect, suggesting that lynchings distinguish area-specific patterns of racial socialization and culture supports for violence, making this later violence more likely (see Tolnay & Beck, 1995). Yet, with the exception of demographic and political threat variables, other measures of these constructs are not predictive of ACRE. More refined and dynamic measures of these constructs, such as fluctuations in NAACP and Klan membership, or proximity effects across county lines, may help to unpack these relationships (see Cunningham and Phillips, 2007). For instance, North Carolina’s unique blend of high Klan mobilization and lower levels of ACRE might account for the diminished importance of Klan activity.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for North Carolina and Mississippi Counties.

	Mean	SD
Contemporary homicides (1976–2007)		
# of White-on-Black homicides	0.788	1.990
White-on-Black homicide rate	1.104	2.360
Overall population homicide rate	57.769	42.003
# of total homicides	38.489	77.393
Historical variables (1880–1930)		
# of White-on-Black lynchings	3.456	4.479
Log livestock per capita	9.490	0.676
Log crops per capita	10.197	0.486
Civil rights–era variables (1954–1974)		
# of total ACRE events	3.923	9.834
# of KKK Klaverns	1.489	1.900
Log % Black	3.201	1.029
Change in % Black	–3.710	5.758
White to non-White income	0.474	0.142
Black official	0.022	0.147
% non-White registered voters	27.701	36.558
Log population density	3.955	0.756
Median household income	2,958.461	973.902
# of NAACP chapters	0.544	0.708
Contemporary variables (1980–2000)		
Change in % Black	–0.165	4.011
Log % Black	3.098	0.964
White to Black % poverty	0.347	0.229
White to Black % female houses	0.219	0.114
One Black official	0.172	0.378
Two or more Black officials	0.201	0.401
Black sheriff (yes/no)	0.049	0.217
Log % born in state	–1.617	1.065
Log % Scottish/Irish ancestry	–3.570	0.731
Log population density	4.166	0.907
Log income	9.854	0.415
State: Mississippi	0.451	0.498
Region: Coastal	0.225	0.418
Region: Delta/Jackson	0.104	0.306
Region: Gulf Coast	0.082	0.275
Region: North	0.088	0.283
Region: Piedmont	0.192	0.394
Region: Pine Belt	0.093	0.291
Region: South Central	0.082	0.275
Region: Mountain	0.132	0.339

Note. *N* = 546. *SD* = standard deviation; NAACP = National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; ACRE = anti-civil rights enforcement; KKK = Ku Klux Klan.



**Table 2.** Structural Equation Model Predicting Contemporary Homicides and Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE).

Outcome Variable	Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE)	Interracial Homicides	Total Homicides
<b>Negative binomial component</b>			
<b>Indirect and total effects</b>			
Indirect effect of lynchings	—	1.001 (0.001)	1.001* (0.001)
Total effect of lynchings	—	1.041 <sup>†</sup> (0.022)	1.024 <sup>†</sup> (0.012)
<b>Historical variables (1880–1930)</b>			
# of White-on-Black lynchings	1.120** (0.042)	1.041 <sup>†</sup> (0.022)	1.023 <sup>†</sup> (0.012)
Log livestock per capita	0.846 (0.150)	0.901 (0.207)	1.019 (0.077)
Log crops per capita	0.774 (0.188)	0.847 (0.157)	0.859 <sup>†</sup> (0.068)
<b>Civil rights–era variables (1954–1974)</b>			
# of total ACRE events	—	1.006 (0.006)	1.010** (0.004)
Log % Black	1.860 <sup>†</sup> (0.676)	1.503 (0.493)	1.306** (0.129)
Change in % Black	1.045* (0.019)	1.018 (0.026)	1.012 (0.013)
White to non-White income	0.0331 <sup>†</sup> (0.058)	0.506 (0.572)	0.451 (0.241)
Black official	1.012 (0.228)	0.739 (0.159)	0.724* (0.093)
% Non-White voters	1.001 (0.004)	1.000 (0.002)	1.001 (0.001)
# of NAACP chapters	0.663* (0.121)	1.009 (0.086)	1.044 (0.048)
# of KKK Klaverns	1.066 (0.054)	1.002 (0.032)	1.003 (0.016)
State: Mississippi	0.762 (0.299)	0.326*** (0.094)	0.417*** (0.053)
Log income	1.005 (0.561)	1.308 (0.608)	1.486* (0.274)
<b>Contemporary variables (1980–2000)</b>			
Change in % Black	—	1.014 (0.025)	1.001 (0.008)
Log % Black	—	0.968 (0.319)	1.039 (0.110)
White to Black % poverty	—	0.614 (0.293)	0.768* (0.083)
White to Black % Female houses	—	2.479 (1.893)	1.054 (0.224)
One Black official	—	1.233 (0.240)	1.007 (0.080)
Two or more Black officials	—	1.276 (0.264)	1.075 (0.101)
Black sheriff	—	0.342*** (0.093)	0.808 (0.167)
Log % born in state	—	0.933 (0.152)	0.899 <sup>†</sup> (0.055)
Log % Scottish/Irish	—	1.262 (0.197)	1.124 (0.080)
Time period: 1986–1995	—	1.649 (0.961)	0.892 (0.239)
Time period: 1996–2007	—	2.468 (1.991)	0.912 (0.338)
Log income	—	0.695 (0.449)	0.689 (0.203)
<b>Logistic component</b>			
Log population density	1.600 (0.785)	1.703 (0.600)	3.778* (2.187)
Log random interaction term	2.030* (0.734)	2.696*** (0.805)	1.530 (0.600)
Region: Delta/Jackson	3.465 <sup>†</sup> (2.241)	1.324 (0.635)	0.118 <sup>†</sup> (0.151)
Region: Gulf Coast	0.467 (0.266)	0.596 (0.203)	0.0777* (0.094)
Region: North	0.770 (0.518)	0.351 <sup>†</sup> (0.210)	0.277 (0.364)
Region: Piedmont	0.482 (0.264)	0.682 (0.242)	0.306 (0.471)
Region: Pine Belt	0.351 <sup>†</sup> (0.218)	0.491 (0.252)	0.200 (0.244)
Region: South Central	2.334 (1.874)	0.283 (0.247)	0.0986* (0.116)

(continued)

**Table 2.** (continued)

Outcome Variable	Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE)	Interracial Homicides	Total Homicides
Region: Mountain	0.119** (0.080)	0.433* (0.168)	0.205 (0.278)

Note.  $N = 546$ . NAACP = National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; KKK = Ku Klux Klan. Exponentiated coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. Interracial homicide outcome includes White-on-Black homicides, while total homicide includes all races. Total effect = indirect effect + direct effect. All pathways include an intercept. Pathways predicting ACRE and White-on-Black homicide include  $\log(\text{White-Black population})$  as an offset, while pathways predicting the overall homicide rate include  $\log(\text{total population})$  as an offset. Referent groups: Black official = none; Black sheriff = none; State = North Carolina; and Region = Coast of North Carolina. Standard errors clustered by 1880 county boundaries using STATA's "vce(cluster)" command (Horan & Hargis, 1995).  
<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### *Effects of Lynching and Anti-Civil Rights Enforcement (ACRE) on White-on-Black Homicide*

Historic lynching has a significant direct effect on contemporary White-on-Black violence at  $\alpha .10$ , while ACRE does not. Each additional lynching is associated with a 4% increase in the White-on-Black homicide rate (Table 2). Lynching directly affects contemporary violence, rather than operating through mid-century anti-civil rights violence, as evidenced by the nonsignificance of the indirect pathway ( $\beta = 1.001, p > .10$ ).

Demographic and threat/competition measures also relate to White-on-Black homicide rates. The presence of a contemporary Black county sheriff suppresses White-on-Black lethal violence, suggesting that county-level increases in Black legal recognition in particular may dampen the legacy of racial violence. Perhaps due to its larger population and higher levels of urbanization, the White-on-Black homicide rate is 69% higher in North Carolina. Moreover, interracial homicides are concentrated in specific locales, with counties in the mountain region of North Carolina and north Mississippi being 56% less likely to experience one or more incidents of White-on-Black violence than the coastal area of North Carolina. The "random interaction" term is positive in the logit portion of the model, indicating that the larger the county's Black and White population the more likely that it had a White-on-Black homicide.

Finally, this analysis offers mixed support for theorized latent effects of racial violence in the form of extreme racial socialization and subcultures of violence. Areas with a history of extreme racial socialization as well as past and present characteristics associated with the "southern code of honor" are no more likely to have White-on-Black homicides than other locales. Given the nonsignificance of these contextual measures, and the significance of prior lynchings, latent effects of past incidents of racial violence appear most relevant to the continuity of racial violence.

### *Racial Violence and Overall Population Homicide Rates*

Lynching has both a direct and an indirect effect on the overall homicide rate. Levels of ACRE activity have a small, but statistically direct significant, positive effect on

homicide rates across all races. Each additional ACRE event corresponds to a 1% increase in the overall population homicide rate. The indirect effect of lynching is small, but statistically significant. Homicide rates are expected to increase by 1% as the number of historic lynchings increases 10-fold via its prior effect on ACRE activity ( $\beta = .001 \times 10, p < .05$ ). Compared to results for White-on-Black homicide, these findings suggest that long-standing histories of racial violence (i.e., lynching and ACRE events) differentially influence contemporary violence and conflict.

### *The Enduring Legacy of Lynching: Theoretical and Social Justice Implications*

Recent research on the legacy of historic racial violence in the post-civil rights era recalls a familiar refrain: “we may be through with the past, but the past is not through with us” (Evans, 1947, p. 5). Utilizing recently collected data on terroristic social control in the CRM era, this study narrows the “historical gap” in the legacy of lynching literature, examining the empirical relationship between historic lynching, mid-century racial terror, and contemporary interracial violence. Although questions regarding the underlying mechanisms of (dis)continuity remain, our analysis illustrates that a more inclusive assessment of historical racial terror helps clarify the relationship between historic lynching and contemporary violence. We find that lynching, civil rights assaults, and modern homicides are spatially concentrated, suggesting that these events themselves leave cultural or institutional impressions relevant to contemporary racial conflict and lethal violence (McVeigh & Cunningham, 2012; Messner et al., 2005).

Our results encourage broader conceptual and empirical engagement with historical racial violence. As spectacles of racial socialization, lynchings seeded White supremacist ideologies further cultivated by later acts of racial terror during the CRM era (Durso & Jacobs, 2013; Tolnay & Beck, 1995). Lynchings also cultivated cultural supports for vigilantism and violent dispute resolution strategies as responses to perceived signs of disrespect or threat by racial dissenters or competitors that persisted in subsequent time periods (Cunningham & Phillips, 2007; Durso & Jacobs, 2013; Messner et al., 2005; Tolnay & Beck, 1995). The terroristic social control of the CRM period appears to have drawn upon the extreme White racial socialization and culturally supported violence associated with earlier lynching, effectively preserving established hot spots of racial conflict and violence (Ward, 2014), at least through the mid-20th century. This finding extends earlier work relating lynching to civil rights-era KKK organization (Cunningham & Phillips, 2007), illustrating the importance of racial contention and violence in the CRM period, yet underlying dimensions of this historical continuity and its relevance to contemporary outcomes remain unclear.

We were particularly interested in assessing whether counties with a history of lynching and ACRE exhibit higher rates of White-on-Black homicide in the contemporary period, viewing contemporary cross-racial lethal violence as a possible corollary of earlier racial conflict and underlying normative impulses. Instead, we found that lynching has an indirect effect on *overall* levels of lethal violence through its prior effects on ACRE, while the legacy of lynching has a more direct effect on

interracial violence. Moreover, ACRE activity positively predicts overall levels of violence, but not interracial conflict in particular. Although unexpected, these patterns are somewhat consistent with Messner et al.'s (2005) results regarding the differing effects of lynching across various categories of modern lethal violence, highlighting the contextual specificity of legacy effects. The direct effect of lynching on interracial homicide underscores the manifest influence of historic racial violence, whereas its indirect effect on overall levels of violence points to the more amorphous role of these institutional and cultural dynamics in the transmission of violence overtime (Tolnay & Beck, 1995). With regard to ACRE effects, our findings corroborate prior research underscoring the relationship between mid-century racial terror and contemporary homicide rates (McVeigh & Cunningham, 2012), but diverge from our theoretical expectations when it comes to interracial homicide. Taken together, these unexpected, but intriguing, results regarding the varying effects of historic racial violence highlight the need for additional research in this area.

Our model offers mixed support for threat explanations of interracial violence. Consistent with threat and competition perspectives, rates of civil rights assaults are higher in areas with a larger Black population as well as those experiencing an influx of Black residents or rising Black income levels relative to Whites (Blalock, 1967; Blumer, 1958; Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Tolnay & Beck, 1995). On the other hand, proxy measures of extreme racial socialization and violent subcultures do not directly account for the distribution of ACRE events or homicides in our models. Moreover, while the representation of Black county commissioners does not predict ACRE or interracial violence, counties with a Black sheriff had *lower* levels of White-on-Black lethal violence. These findings suggest that Black legal incorporation or recognition is especially relevant to interrupting the legacy of racial violence. Whether this is a result of the protection Black law enforcement offers, diminished conflict in the wake of greater legal protection, or other factors, cannot be established here. These contrasting results generally underscore the complexity of racial threat and competition constructs (see Cunningham, 2012), and the need for closer case analysis to clarify legacies of racial violence within and across communities.

A key contribution of this research is its narrowing of the historical gap in the legacy of lynching research literature, by formally modeling the implicit bridge between the eras of lynching, anti-civil rights violence, and contemporary lethal violence (Cunningham & Phillips, 2007; McVeigh & Cunningham, 2012). Further research is needed to establish the underlying cultural or institutional mechanisms spatially and temporally linking the violence of these eras. Our findings suggest that the latent effects of lynching are most likely to influence contemporary patterns of lethal violence overall, where reinforced by civil rights-era racial violence and, presumably, its similar latent effects. Lynchings have long been seen as cross-generational cultural and institutional forces, and our research provides new evidence that this legacy is most pronounced where its influence is reinforced by later events.

Contributions of this research are, of course, bound by its limitations. Our lynching measure was constructed from one of the most reliable data sources (i.e., Tolnay and

Beck), but research by Hagen, Makovi, and Bearman (2013) indicates that a far greater number of lynchings were averted than actually completed. Although averted lynchings are certainly important to consider as factors in the (dis)continuity of racial violence, we analyze completed lynchings to maintain consistency with prior research on the legacy of lynching for homicide.

Records of anti-civil rights violence and interracial homicide are also incomplete. Our analyses employ civil rights–era violence data from an ongoing project that generated the Historical Racial Violence Database. Many, and perhaps the majority, of nonfatal incidents were never documented and will not be found in legal documents, news articles, or other available sources. Complicity and indifference among state actors (e.g., police) and mainstream news media, fears of reprisal, limits of memory, aging populations, and other factors make it unlikely that a complete record will ever be obtained. Such undercounting may be exaggerated in rural areas where the number of such incidents is likely smaller, but diminished Black voter registration and civil rights mobilization might have increased the vulnerability of victims, fears of reprisal, and the underreporting rate (Andrews, 2004). Although efforts are being made to overcome these challenges, the Historical Racial Violence Database is expected to underestimate the number of such incidents while still providing the most complete record available. As with research on lynching, where undercounts have not prevented the development of important, consistent, and influential results in a robust literature, the benefits of refining and analyzing emerging civil rights–era racial violence data will exceed these inevitable limitations.

There is also no accurate record of “race-related” homicide and interracial homicide is itself a limited construct (i.e., racially motivated homicides can occur within race, interracial homicides vary in terms of racial meaning/significance, etc.). Despite the rarity and ambiguity of interracial homicides, Jacobs and Wood (1999, p. 159-184) write, they are “theoretically intriguing events” that “differ so much from homicides [in general] that they should be the subject of separate analyses.” Interracial homicides mirror and reinforce U.S. race relations, playing a central role in political discourses and igniting civil unrest (Tonry, 1995; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2004). In addition, interracial homicide data are more accurate and detailed than other types of data on interracial conflict and crime, offering a unique, if imperfect, window into intergroup conflict more generally (Jacobs & Wood, 1999).

Our measure of interracial homicide is derived from the SHR, which, like any secondary data source, has various shortcomings. Most notably, roughly 30% of the homicides do not have suspect racial information because no suspect/suspects were identified by police (Fox & Swatt, 2009a). Despite these missing data patterns, the SHR is the primary source for the study of interracial lethal violence and has been used by numerous researchers for this purpose, including those interested in the legacy of lynching (Jacobs & Wood, 1999; McCall & Parker, 2005; Messner & South, 1992; Messner et al., 2005; Parker & McCall, 1999; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2004). We calculated homicide rates using five multiply imputed SHR data sets to

address missing offender race associated with killings in which no offender/offenders was identified since multiple imputation is the preferred method for handling missing SHR data.<sup>13</sup>

A full understanding of this historical transmission of racial violence awaits more elaborate research, including additional data on mid-century racial terror, and more refined measures of these underlying institutional and cultural supports. Future research should consider other mechanisms and explore other measures of extreme racial socialization and culturally supported violence, in addition to those we consider (e.g., voting behavior, policy support, school and neighborhood integration, gun ownership, crime trends, etc.). Further, our mixed findings regarding racial threat and competition suggest that these constructs should be operationalized to capture the more dynamic relationships anticipated by the “power-threat” thesis (e.g., immigrant incorporation, labor market conditions, role of elites, etc.), where variation and changes in power disequilibrium are likely to condition the contemporary significance of historical racial violence (see Cunningham, 2012).

Future research should also examine the legacy of racial violence in other social and geographic contexts, using other analytical techniques and markers of contemporary conflict and inequality to tease out these relationships. This study documented the historical trajectory of racial violence in two sharply contrasting southern states, but additional work should assess the consistency of these results in more comparable Deep South and Border South states. Our inclusion of a state (North Carolina) with low levels of lynching and ACRE and generally higher interracial homicide rates (attributable in part to larger population centers) likely weakens this relationship in our models. Nevertheless, interracial homicides are rare events and represent a particular form of racial conflict, and thus the examination of additional contemporary outcomes would broaden our understanding of the relationship between past and present racial violence (Jacobs & Wood, 1999; Tonry, 1995; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2004). Future research should attend more carefully to complex spatial considerations, such as neighboring county (propinquity) influences, the role of diffuse (regional or state-wide) versus focused (local) threats in catalyzing racial violence (see Cunningham & Phillips, 2007; Tolnay, Deane, & Beck, 1996), the scope of racial violence as a socializing influence, and the likely numerous configurations of historical and contemporary factors related to more or less sustained legacies of lynching.

Despite these limitations and remaining questions, this study extends the legacy literature in several respects. Our study narrows the “historical gap” characteristic of this research (see Messner et al., 2005), illustrating that historic lynchings shape CRM-era racial terror and contemporary violence, as others have implied (Cunningham and Phillips, 2007; McVeigh & Cunningham, 2012). Moreover, we provide empirical evidence that anti-civil rights violence is an important intervening factor, at least as the relationship between lynching and general homicide rates are concerned. This study also expands the race and violence literature by theoretically and empirically addressing anti-civil rights violence and its relations to contemporary race relations, moving beyond prior research has focused on specific instances of

ACRE or illustrative patterns in specific counties and states (e.g., Bergman, 1969; Collier-Thomas & Franklin, 2000; Jeffries, 2009; King, 2012). This analysis provides a unique window into the trajectory of violence spanning from the 1880s to the present, indicating that mid-20th-century racial terror is an important link between historic lynching and contemporary violence, and an important subject for continued research and policy discussion.

By expanding the legacy of historical racial violence discussion, and noting the distinct importance of sustained violence as a source of historical transmission, this research may also inform remedial efforts. As others note, the specter of lynching and other racial violence has scarred the nation's collective memory and political culture (Curry, 2007), and until we address these wounds, "the history of lynching in towns throughout the United States will continue to foment racial distrust and disconnection" (Ifill, 2003, p. 272). By helping to identify historical "hotspots of racial conflict" (Ward, 2014, p. 9) and their relevance to contemporary violence, our analysis encourages reconciliation efforts (Glisson, 2013; Robertson, 2013) to focus on those places where centuries of racial violence have gone relatively uninterrupted, and its legacy rages.

In closing, our examination of the legacy of racial violence has both theoretical and social justice implications. This study highlights the concentration of historic lynchings, civil rights-era assaults, and contemporary interracial violence in specific Mississippi and North Carolina counties. We find that anti-civil rights violence acts a conduit for the transmission of violence over time, apparently sustaining or cultivating the latent functions of lynching, which in turn, shape current homicide rates. In these two states, at least, the legacy of lynching casts a long and complex shadow, continuing to shape contemporary race relations, in some places more than others.

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## Notes

1. See the Online Appendix for variable sources and descriptions. To examine these processes data were compiled from several original and secondary sources (e.g., American Friends Service Committee et al., 1959; Civil Rights Congress, 1951; Fox & Swatt, 2009b; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, n.d.; Haines, 2010; Meier & Bracey, 1987; Minnis, 2013; Hewitt, 2005; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.; Tolnay and Beck, 1995; U.S. Census, 1960; U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980-2000; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1961; U.S. House of Representatives, 1967).
2. We use the Supplementary Homicide Report rather than vital stats data because it includes offender information, thereby allowing us to identify interracial homicides (Messner et al., 2005).
3. Homicides with multiple victims/offenders (less than 5% of the cases) can create ambiguities when calculating interracial homicide rates, so we exclude such cases from our analysis (Kovandzic et al., 1998; Messner & Golden, 1992; Parker & McCall, 1997, 1999).
4. We do not use Fox and Swatt's (2009a) case-weighting scheme for unit-missing data since it is inappropriate for county-level analyses (see King et al., 2009, fn. 20).
5. Because the 1960 census only differentiates between Whites and non-Whites, we calculate White to non-White ratios for measures during this period (Cunningham & Phillips, 2007, fn. 10).
6. Indices were constructed using principal components factor analysis. Livestock refers to the number of cattle and pigs per acre in 1880, as these were the animals most characteristic of Scotch-Irish ranchers from the "Old South" (Baller et al., 2009, p. 283). "Major crops" include hops, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, tobacco, rice, hay, cane sugar, cotton, wheat, rye, oats, Indian corn, buckwheat, and barley (Baller et al., 2009; Messner et al., 2005, p. 642).
7. In North Carolina, the regions include: Coastal, Mountain, and Piedmont (Cunningham, 2013). For Mississippi counties, there are five regions, namely, North, Delta/Jackson, Pine Belt, South Central, and Gulf Coast (Mississippi Truth Project, 2014).
8. To maintain temporal ordering, contemporary measures were not modeled as anti-civil rights enforcement predictors.
9. Between 1980 and 2000, several counties had multiple Black elected officials, facilitating the use of dummy variables for the number of Black county commissioners during this period. Similarly, by 1980, several counties had a Black sheriff, permitting the inclusion of this binary measure for contemporary outcomes.
10. In STATA 13, we estimate an adapted zero-inflated negative binomial regression by combining a logistic and negative binomial regression using the "gsem" command (STATA, 2014, p. 341). Although some counties were missing historical census data, gsem uses maximum likelihood with missing values, allowing us to retain the full sample (STATA, 2014).
11. We use nonlinear combinations (nlcom) to estimate indirect effects since the "estat teffects" command cannot be used with gsem models (STATA, 2014, p. 407).

12. To adjust for changes in county boundaries overtime, we use Horan and Hargis' (1995) file to construct a clustering variable based on 1880 county boundaries.
13. This assessment of multiple imputation for SHR data is consistent with the broader statistical literature (Allison, 2002; Little & Rubin, 2002; Rubin, 1996; Schafer, 1999). For example, Allison (2002, p. 4) remarks that "multiple imputation, when used correctly, produces estimates that are consistent, asymptotically efficient, and asymptotically normal."

## Supplemental Material

The online appendices are available at <http://raj.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

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