Racial Violence and Black Southern Migration

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Abstract

Although an extensive literature exists on the causes and consequences of the 20th century Great Migration of Black Americans out of the South, less attention has been given to the intra-regional migration of Black Americans within the South. Our paper examines this intra-regional migration, specifically how racial violence influenced mobility during the early 20th century. We use county-level lynching data to approximate racial violence and linked Census data to track geographic moves. Our results reveal positive selectivity in migration away from counties with recent lynchings. Black Americans who were homeowners, and of higher occupational status were more likely to relocate from areas marked by racial violence. Moreover, migrating individuals with these attributes opted for counties with fewer instances of lynching compared to their migrating counterparts, suggesting the importance of information and resources in moving towards safer environments. Sorting of the Black population caused by selective migration is a plausible mechanism by which lynching could have negatively impacted places in the long-run.

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1 Introduction

There is a long-standing interest in migration in America as a means of economic mobility, as well as in shaping the demographic composition of regions. One of the most extensively studied migrations in the United States is the Great Migration, which saw approximately six million Southern Black Americans migrate to other regions of the country, often to avoid the discrimination and violence of the Jim Crow South. It has long been believed that episodes of racial violence and especially lynchings influenced Black people to leave home and head elsewhere, many to the North in search of greater economic opportunity and relatively greater safety. While the dramatic moves of the Great Migration have been studied extensively by historians and economists, much less attention has been paid to the movement of Black people within the South during the Jim Crow era. We study how racial violence, namely lynching, influenced movement of Black Southerners across county borders.

The end of Reconstruction marked a significant shift in the social and political makeup of the South (Woodward 2002). The multi-year occupation of the South by federal troops was meant to stabilize the transition from pre-war slave society to one where Black Americans had freedoms and protection under the law. During the aftermath of Reconstruction – decades in which there was no military conflict – the South found itself at a crossroads of institutions, particularly concerning the welfare of Black Americans. The uncertainty it left for Black Americans was reflected in Frederick Douglass' 1875 speech, "If war among the whites brought peace and liberty to the blacks, what will peace among the whites bring?" Without the presence of Union authority, the protections of Black Americans from exploitation or violence were uncertain. With the removal of Northern troops, the gains of Blacks in the South were feared to be in peril.

In this post-Reconstruction era, Southerners were left with having to develop new institutions, both political and social (Woodward, 2002; Ayers, 2007). Many White Southerners used this disorder to retake what they lost in power and social order during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Intimidation and violence were means by which Whites could maintain power and social order, with the lynching of Black Americans frequently used as a means of oppression. Often this violence was targeted toward Black Americans who had obtained economic success. If a Black American was a successful professional or homeowner, it was seen as movement outside expectations and a threat

to the social order (Litwack, 1999; Dray, 2002). Those who were seen to have climbed the social or economic ladder beyond the prescribed hierarchy were at risk of violent consequences.

The economic and sociology literature have examined the causes and consequences of lynching, with Tolnay and Beck (1992) providing the seminal quantitative research. Christian (2017) finds evidence that lynching was economically motivated. Fluctuations of cotton prices are associated with increased lynching. Cook, Logan, and Parman (2018) show that more segregated counties were more likely to incur lynchings. Jones et al. (2017) finds no support that lynchings were politically motivated.

More attention has been given to the consequences of lynching – both in the short run and long run. While Jones et al. (2017) do not find a political motivation for lynching, they do find that lynching did decrease voter turnout. Christian (2017) shows lynchings increased average wages, the intended economic effect of suppressing competition of Black labor. There is also a preponderance of evidence that lynching had long run effects. Cook (2014) finds a decrease in innovation. Williams (2022) finds that historical lynching decreases present-day voter registration. Messner et al. (2005) find lynching predicts present-day homicide rates. Ward et al. (2021) finds lynching is associated with corporal punishment in schools. King et al. (2009) finds lynching is correlated with modern-day police compliance as well as reports of federal hate crimes. DeFina and Hannon (2011) find lynching is predictive of modern-day segregation. There is a consensus that lynching had long-run effects on place.

There is not, however, a consensus on precisely how these long-run effects worked. One plausible mechanism is that lynching induced selective Black migration, and that the resulting racial sorting led to divergent long-run outcomes. There are numerous accounts of Black people leaving regions in response to threats of violence (Dray 2002). Naturally, migration has been extensively studied as a primary consequence of lynching, with a consensus that lynching caused Black out-migration but no evidence on sorting. Using county-level census data on migration across two decades, Tolnay and Beck (1992) find that lynching increases Black migration. Christian (2017) reexamines the migration results of Tolnay and Beck (1992) using individual data on 864 Black men for 1920 – 1930. Consistent with Tolnay and Beck (1992), they find that lynching increases out-migration. Both

Jones et al. (2017) and Williams (2022) examine the effect of lynching on political activity, with the former focusing on contemporaneous activity and the latter focusing on present-day activity. However, to further explain the mechanism of their primary results, they look for evidence of geographic movement of Black Americans. Jones et al. (2017) use county-level data to examine the effect of lynching on racial composition. Williams (2022) uses microdata from the 1940 census, which identifies whether an individual is in a different county of residence in 1935. Additionally, she examines sorting for 1910 to 1930 using 2,043 linked Black men from Collins and Wanamaker (2015). Both studies find no evidence that Black men with higher levels of human capital have different migration rates for these time periods.

We contribute to this body of literature on lynching and migration in the following ways. Firstly, we use newly available linked census data that provide far more comprehensive coverage of both individuals and geography. The previous literature, due to data constraints, is limited to county-level analyses, small samples of linked men, and limited time periods. With linked census microdata from 1880 to 1930, we provide a more representative sample of the population and geographic scope. Our broad sample of linked men give us a truer picture of the migration choices of individuals, rather than relying on aggregate county measures of population levels. Secondly, these richer data allow us to examine individual characteristics that approximate levels of affluence while providing better controls for unobserved effects of time and place. Combining these individual-level linked Census data with county-level lynching occurrences from 1880 to 1940 allows us to explore the impact of racial violence on migration.

In addition to contributing to the economic literature on the effects of lynching, our study adds to the literature on Black migration as a human capital investment. Most of this literature focuses on the Great Migration (Collins and Wanamaker, 2014; Collins and Wanamaker, 2015; Black et al., 2015; Logan, Parman, and Hardy, 2021; Derenoncourt, 2022) although there are notable exceptions (Logan, 2009; Hornbeck and Naidu, 2014; Althoff and Reichardt, 2024). We consider not only long-distance, inter-regional moves but also inter-county moves. Because the latter are so much more common than the former, we focus on inter-county migration.

We find that, once controlling for geography, lynching does not affect overall migration; indi-

viduals in counties that experienced recent lynching did not have a higher probability of migrating compared with individuals in counties that did not experience a recent lynching. However, looking closely at the characteristics of those who migrate, and contrary to previous studies, we find that lynching does in fact affect selection into migration. Black men who had higher occupational standing and who were homeowners were more likely to migrate than their Black counterparts and Whites with similar traits. Additionally, we find that migrants with higher human capital are more likely to move to counties with less racial violence than their counterparts.

Our findings contradict previous research because the breadth of data allow for a more complete picture of migration moves while also allowing for methods to mitigate potential unobserved place and time confounders. Our findings suggest that racial violence had a significant effect on the intra-regional sorting of Southern Black Americans in the early 20th century. This sorting is a plausible mechanism by which lynchings could have negatively impacted places over the long run.

2 Data

We draw on two data sources to identify lynchings of Black people in the South from 1880 to 1940: the Historical American Lynching Data Collection Project (HAL) and data from Bailey and Tolnay (2015) made available via the Lynching Project Website at the University of Washington. These data cover 12 Southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. These sources include information on every known lynching, including county and year of the lynching and race of the victim. We use lynchings on Black people only and aggregate to the county/decade level to match our census data. The two data sources differ slightly in their coverage. The HAL data do not include Virginia and West Virginia and include only the years from 1882–1930. For the years and states covered by both data sources, the number of lynchings recorded is identical for 71 percent of the county/decades. Where they differ, we use the higher number of lynchings. In 70 percent of these cases, that higher number comes from the more comprehensive Bailey and Tolnay data.

To track individuals exposed to lynching, we use linked U.S. population census data from the

IPUMS Multigenerational Longitudinal Panel (MLP) project (Helgertz, Ozder et al. 2024, Ruggles, Nelson et al. 2024). We use men from the twelve Southern states listed above, observed in either the 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920 or 1930 census and linked to the subsequent census ten years later. Each individual appears twice in our data. It is not a true sixty-year individual-level panel; rather it is a repeated cross section of linked men from counties across decades. For each Southern county/decade, we observe the number of lynchings of Black people, and we observe the census variables for the linked men. We then observe those same men ten years later, either in their original county or as inter-county migrants, possibly outside the South. In this way we can identify movers and stayers and observe their characteristics both before and after the move/stay decision.

Our analysis faces limitations common to this sort of linked historical census data. In particular, we observe people over decades not years. So other than knowing that individuals lived in counties that did or did not have a lynching in a given decade, we do not have precise information on the timing of lynchings or migration decisions. Some of our sample of migrants will have actually moved before the lynching in their county occurred. Others will have moved years after the lynching. With this sort of imprecise timing information, we should expect a degree of attenuation in our estimated effects. Nevertheless, there is no way to increase the time frequency of the data; decade to decade is the best that is possible.

Table 1 summarizes the data. Summary statistics are shown for the entire sample of linked men, for Black men only, for county movers, and for those who lived in counties in which at least one lynching occurred. As expected, Black men earned less than White men and were less likely to own a home, and Black children were less likely to be in school. Black men were less likely than White to move county, and were more likely to live in a lynching county. Not surprisingly, all men were much more likely to move county than to leave the region. Black men were nearly seven times more likely to move county than region, a wide gap that reinforces the importance of studying shorter-distance moves within the South in addition to the radical but rare moves of the Great Migration.

Table 1: Summary of the Data

	All	Black	County Movers	Lived in County w/ Lynching
Black	0.20	1.00	0.16	0.29
Age	30.14	29.28	28.15	29.52
Married	0.79	0.82	0.79	0.79
HH Head	0.80	0.84	0.78	0.80
Children	2.39	2.67	2.30	2.46
In School	0.78	0.67	0.77	0.71
Literate	0.86	0.66	0.87	0.81
Occscore	19.74	15.98	20.30	19.43
No Occscore	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.06
Agriculture	0.59	0.70	0.53	0.63
Own Home	0.43	0.25	0.28	0.35
County Move	0.24	0.20	1.00	0.25
State Move	0.09	0.06	0.36	0.09
Region Move	0.05	0.03	0.19	0.04
Lynches in County-Decade				
0	77.3%	66.3%	76.6%	
1	13.3%	18.4%	13.4%	
2	9.4%	15.3%	10.0%	
Observations	13,757,789	2,682,960	3,363,015	3,124,432

Notes: Men ages 10+ linked across successive censuses, 1880-1940. Married, HH Head, Own Home, and occupation variables are calculated for men ages 20+. In School is calculated for boys ages 15 or less.

3 Lynching And Black Migration

We begin our analysis by examining how local lynching incidents affect the probably of migration for Black Americans. Our sample of analysis comprises men who are linked across two consecutive decades using microdata from the 1800 and 1900 through 1930 U.S. censuses. For each linked individual, we can observe the county in which they live for the consecutive census decades in which they are linked, allowing us to identify whether the individual migrated across counties

during that decade. Hence, our sample is repeated cross sections of linked men between the ages of 16 and 65 in counties across decades.

Equation (1) represents the relationship between migration and lynching where the migration outcome (y_{ict}) is a binary variable indicating whether individual i in county c in census decade t lives in a different county than they did in the previous census decade $(t-1)$. We use this triple difference specification of repeated county cross-sections to identify the effect of lynching occurrences on Black migration, where the migration outcomes of Black men who lived in counties with recent lynchings are compared with two control groups, Black men who lived in counties without recent lynchings, and White men in both counties with and without lynchings.

$$y_{ict} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Lynching_{ct} \times Black_{ict}) + \beta_2 X_{ict} + \delta_{tr} + \gamma_{cr} + \epsilon_{ict} \tag{1}$$

The binary variable, $Lynching_{ct}$, indicates the occurrence of a lynching in county c during decade $t-1$, and $Black_{ict}$ is an indicator for race. The parameter, β_1, on the interaction $Lynching_{ct} \times Black_{ict}$ represents the effect of lynching on migration outcome after controlling for unobserved differences across decades and across counties. It identifies the difference in migration of Black men in lynching counties relative to men in counties without lynchings and white men, a racial group not targeting by lynching. The vector X_{ict} includes the additional controls of $Lynching_{ct}$, $Black_{ict}$, and age fixed effects. We also include controls for unobserved effects by race (r) for decade ($\delta_t r$) and county ($\gamma_c r$).

We first estimate equation (1) using a linear probability model. Columns (1) through (3) of Table 2 display these results, progressively controlling for unobserved effects with a standard two-way fixed effects approach. Panel A shows results estimating migration for Black men only. Panel B shows results for estimating both Black and White men. We cluster standard errors at the county level.

Table 2: Lynching and Migration

	Dependent Variable: County Move (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A – Black Men				
Lynching	0.011**	-0.005	-0.004	-0.004
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Fixed effects	None	Decade, State	Decade, County	Imputation method
Observations	1,948,928	1,948,928	1,948,928	1,948,928
Mean of dependent variable	0.201	0.201	0.201	0.201
Panel B – Black and White Men				
Lynching × *Black*	-0.003	-0.006	-0.001	-0.006
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Fixed effects	None	Decade, State	Decade-Race, County-Race	Imputation method
Observations	10,426,567	10,426,567	10,426,567	10,426,567
Mean of dependent variable	0.243	0.243	0.243	0.243

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates. Coefficients in columns (1) through (3) are reported with standard errors, clustered by county, in parentheses. Coefficients in column (4) are reported with county-cluster bootstrap standard errors with 1000 iterations, in parentheses. The unit of observation is an individual, living in a Southern county, observed in a census year, linked to the following census year. Statistical significance is denoted by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Conventional wisdom and previous scholarship lead us to expect that lynching was associated with migration – that Black Southerners left violent places in search of relative safety. We see this simple correlation in the data, shown in column (1) of Panel A. However, our large, detailed dataset allows for a much closer examination of this correlation. In fact, when we control for decade and place – whether state or county of residence in columns (2) and (3) respectively – the relationship between lynching and Black migration disappears. We can further control for unobserved state or county effects by including White men in the estimation and focusing on the

interaction between lynchings and an indicator for Black. While all men could be affected by certain local effects, presumably only Black men would be impacted (or at least would be much more impacted) by lynchings. Across all three such specifications in Panel B, the effect of lynching on Black migration is essentially zero. It seems clear that our longstanding belief that lynchings triggered Black migration was based on reasonable conclusions drawn from limited data. With our large dataset covering many men over the entire South across many decades, we can see that the apparent connection between lynching and migration was spurious.

The variation in lynching incidents across county and decade make estimating their effect on migration challenging with conventional methods.[1] Particularly, two-way fixed effects estimators as in columns (1) to (3) have been shown to potentially provide biased estimates of treatment effects when treatment timing is heterogenous (de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille, 2020; Goodman-Bacon 2021). Numerous methods have been introduced to accommodate heterogenous treatment timing using various weighting schemes or explicit imputation methods (de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille, 2023; Roth, SantAnna, Bilinski, and Poe, 2023). Many of these methods assume the treatment, though heterogenous in starting date, is fully absorbed: once the treatment occurs, it remains in effect for the remainder of periods. The environment of our study provides challenges beyond initial timing of lynching for a county. Although our data contain only five periods, those periods span six decades. For most counties that ever experience a lynching, there are long periods of time, often multiple decades, in which no lynching occurred. For example, it is unlikely that the effect of lynching in the 1880s influences migration in 1930 in the same way as a lynching that occurred in the 1920s. A lynching in the current decade is likely to have an effect on migration, whereas a lynching that occurred several decades ago, will not. In this context, it is not suitable to treat the initial lynching occurrence as a fully absorbed state in which effects are permanent.[2]

Fundamentally, the challenge of identifying the treatment effect stems from the inability to observe the potential migration outcome for individuals in lynching counties provide the lynching had not occurred. Imputation of these potential outcomes is a valid method for identifying treatment

[1] See Appendix Figure 1 for the variation of lynching in our data.

[2] Because of the length of time between periods, a full decade, we do not believe anticipation of treatment to be influential in determining our treatment effects.

effects (Imbens and Rubin, 2015). To further examine the effect of lynching on migration while accounting for the differential timing of treatment across units, we employ an explicit imputation approach based on the methods of Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2024), Dep, Norton, Wooldridge, and Zabel (2024), Lie, Wang, and Xu (2024), and Wooldridge (2021). We take an imputation approach because it allows us to use the most county-decade observations in our data while more easily accommodating the timing of lynchings across both counties and decades.[3]

To identify the treatment effect, we first use all untreated observations to predict the unobserved potential outcomes for the treated observations. The treatment effect for each treated observation is the difference between the actual outcome and the predicted potential outcome, plus the addition of the individual-level idiosyncratic shock. These individual treatment effects can be averaged across all treated observations to obtain the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT).

We first estimate the parameters in equation (2) using only untreated observations. These observations include all individuals in a county-decade that did not have a lynching occurrence during that decade, which includes both counties that never experience a lynching in our data as well as the decades in which no lynching occurs for counties that experience a lynching during a different period in our data.

$$y_{ict} = \beta X_{ictr} + \delta_{tr} + \gamma_{cr} + \epsilon_{ict} \tag{2}$$

Equation (2) predicts migration probability ($\hat{y}_{ict}$) using decade-by-race fixed effects (δ_{tr}), county-by-race fixed effects (γ_{cr}), and a vector of individual characteristics (X_{ictr}) whose effects are allowed to vary by race. These characteristics include age, log of occupational earnings, and indicators for literacy, holding a white collar occupation, owning a home, and for being the head of the household.[4]

We use these estimated coefficients to predict the probability of migration for individuals in counties that did experience a lynching during that decade. The difference between the observed migration outcome (y_{ict}) and the predicted migration outcome ($\hat{y}_{ict}$) provides the estimated effect of lynching on migration (τ_i) for individual i, with statistical noise. To determine the average treatment effect on the treated – the average effect for Black Americans in lynching counties – we

[3]We use all counties for which there exists at least one decade of no lynching occurrences.

[4]We define a white collar occupation as *occ*1950 values less than 300. These occupations include, but are not limited to jobs such as manager, technician, and clerk, as well as doctors and lawyers

take the difference in average mobility outcome of Black individuals ($\overline{\tau}_b$) and white individuals ($\overline{\tau}_w$) in lynching counties.

Column (4) of Table 2 displays the ATTs from the imputation method for county moves. We calculate standard errors for these ATTs using a county-level cluster bootstrap. The resulting ATTs for county move are all small in magnitude and statistically insignificant.[5] Consistent with the results from the TWFE method, we find no evidence that Black Americans in counties with a lynching were more likely to migrate than Black Americans in counties without a recent lynching.[6]

4 Lynching And Black Sorting

4.1 Selectivity of Out Migration

Our previous analysis shows the migration rates of Black Americans in counties during decades with lynchings are not statistically different from counties without lynchings. We now turn to investigate if lynching incidents had different effects on mobility for individuals with higher levels of human capital and wealth. While lynching may not have affected migration on average, it may have heterogeneous effects across certain demographic characteristics that may lead to geographic sorting of Black Americans. There could have existed selection in migration based on human capital measures. We approximate selectivity using the following individual characteristics: literacy, log of occupational earnings, having a white-collar occupation, and owning a home.

We first estimate selectivity of migration through a two-way fixed effects specification by augmenting equation (1) with the individual selectivity measures. We estimate equation (3) separately for each of the selectivity measures listed above.

$$y_{ict} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Lynching_{ct} \times Black_{ict} \times Selectivity_{ict}) + \beta_2 X_{ict} + \delta_{tr} + \gamma_{cr} + \epsilon_{ict} \tag{3}$$

We are primarily interested in the coefficient (β_1) on the interaction of $Lynching_{ct} \times Black_{ict} \times Selectivity_{ict}$, where $Selectivity_{ict}$ represents one of the four proxies for human capital and wealth.

[5] Point estimates using a logit specification in the first stage are similar in sign and magnitude.

[6] Appendix Table 1 repeats this analysis examining moves across regions and finds similar results.

The estimated coefficient on this interaction provides an estimate of how the effect of lynching on migration differs for Black Americans with different characteristics. The vector X_{ict} includes the full set of individual variables and interaction terms between $Lynching_{ct}$, $Black_{ict}$, and $Selectivity_{ict}$, as well as fixed effects for each possible age of the individual. Panel A of Table 3 shows the estimates of β_1 from separate estimations of equation (3) for each of the selectivity measures.

Table 3: Selectivity of County Movers

	Dependent Variable: County Move (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Selectivity Measure:	Literate	ln(Occscore)	White Collar	Own Home
Panel A – Decade and County Fixed Effects				
$Black \times Lynching \times Selectivity$	0.008*	0.016***	0.021***	0.011*
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.006)
Panel B – Imputation Method				
Selectivity ATT	0.004	0.018**	0.025**	0.013**
	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.006)
Observations	10,426,567	9,491,134	9,490,943	6,791,526
Mean of dependent variable	0.243	0.243	0.243	0.243

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates. Coefficients in Panel A are reported with standard errors, clustered by county, in parentheses. Coefficients in Panel B are reported with county-cluster bootstrap standard errors with 1000 iterations, in parentheses. The unit of observation is an individual, living in a Southern county, observed in a census year, linked to the following census year. Statistical significance is denoted by * $p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

The estimates reported in Panel A indicate that lynchings increased the selectivity of Black migration across all four measures of human capital and wealth. Among Black Southern men, the literate, those with higher paying occupations, those who worked white-collar jobs, and those who owned homes were all more sensitive to lynchings in their migration decisions. The effects were modest but meaningful. In our estimation sample, 24 percent of all men and 20 percent of Black

men made a county move. Home ownership increased the propensity of Black men to migrate in response to a lynching by 1.1 percentage points, or approximately five percent of the baseline Black migration probability. The effect was twice as large for white-collar workers: 2.1 percentage points (10 percent). Occupational earnings had a small positive effect on migrant. Every one percent increase in occupational earnings was associated with a 0.016 percentage point increase in migrant probability. The mean and standard deviation of log of earnings for Black men in our data is 2.64 and 0.39 respectively. So a one standard deviation increase in earnings would have increased the propensity of Black men to migrate in response to a lynching by 0.6 percentage points. The highest earning Black men (physicians, lawyers, etc.) had log earnings of 4.38. The lowest earners (farm laborers, newsboys, etc.) had log earnings of 1.09. This implies that the highest earners were approximately five percentage points $[(4.38 - 1.09) \times 0.016 = 0.051)]$, or 25 percent, more likely to respond to a lynching by migrating.

These are modest effects; however, the magnitude does scale up with increasing intensity of violence. Appendix Table 2 shows that the magnitude of the selection effect increases significantly for counites with two or more lynchings for each of the four selectivity proxies. For example, the occupational earnings effect increases nearly 40 percent, from 0.016 to 0.023, for counties with two or more lynches.[7] Furthermore, as noted above, we would expect the decadal structure of the data to lead to underestimation of these effects relative to what would be observed in higher frequency data, where the connection between lynchings and migration decisions would be more precisely measured.

The two-way fixed effects estimates of selectivity of migration are prone to the same criticisms as with our estimates examining overall migration. To mitigate this concern, we employ the imputation method used to identify the effect of lynching on migration to estimate the effect of lynching on selectivity of migration. Here, our target parameter is not the overall average treatment effect for Black Americans. Rather, it is the difference in the average treatment effect between individuals with the selectivity measure and those without. For each of our binary selectivity measures of

[7] In fact, the effect size increases to 0.032 for counties with three or more lynches. This result is from an alternative specification of lynchings as a four-category variable (0, 1, 2, or 3+ lynchings). The full results of this specification are not reported here but are available on request.

literacy, white collar, and home ownership, we estimate this treatment effect by averaging the individual treatment effects (τ_i) across individuals with the selectivity characteristic and then taking the difference with the average across individuals without the selectivity characteristics. To account for unobserved effects that may be correlated with the selectivity measure, we calculate the same difference for white Americans in lynching counties.

Our estimate for the average treatment effect on Black Americans with the selectivity measure in lynching counties ($ATT_{selectivity}$) is the difference in the average treatment effect for Black Americans with the selectivity measure ($\overline{\tau}_{b,s}$) and those without ($\overline{\tau}_{b,ns}$), minus the difference in average treatment effect for White Americans with the selectivity measure ($\overline{\tau}_{w,s}$) and those without ($\overline{\tau}_{w,ns}$):

$$ATT_{selectivity} = (\overline{\tau}_{b,s} - \overline{\tau}_{b,ns}) - (\overline{\tau}_{w,s} - \overline{\tau}_{w,ns}) \tag{4}$$

Because log of occupational earnings is continuous and not a categorical variable identifying two groups based on selectivity, we take a different approach to determining the ATT. We regress the individual treatment effects (τ_i) on log of occupational earnings for Black Americans. This estimate represents how the treatment effect varies across the range of occupational earnings. The difference in estimated coefficient for Black Americans versus White Americans represents the treatment effect of lynchings on Black Americans.

Panel B of Table 3 contains the ATT estimates of equation 4 for each of the three binary measures of selectivity and the continuous measure of occupational earnings. We bootstrap standard errors clustered at the county level. The estimates from the imputation method are strikingly similar to those from the more traditional two-way fixed effects estimates. The selectivity estimate using the literacy proxy, the smallest effect and only marginally statistically significant in the TWFE model, decreases in magnitude and statistical significance. The other three measures increase slightly in magnitude. By and large, these models show the same results: Black migration became modestly more positively selected as a result of lynchings.

4.2 Destination of Migrants

Black Southern men with greater wealth and human capital were disproportionally likely to leave lynching counties, suggesting that racial violence could have resulted in a sorting of the Black population within the South along these dimensions. To explore this possibility further, we must consider not only who left places in response to lynching, but also where Black migrants chose to relocate. The final component of our analysis examines the selection of destination choice. We examine whether Black migrants with higher levels of human capital and wealth chose destinations that are systematically different than migrants without those levels of affluence. We restrict our repeated cross-section sample to men who moved counties.

Equation (5) represents the relationship between county choice and migrant selectivity, where we differentiate between the origin county, c_0, of the individual and their destination county, c_1. The outcome of interest, $Lynching_{c_1t}$, is a binary variable indicating if there was a recent lynching in destination county c_1.

$$Lynching_{c_1t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Black_{ic_0t} \times Selectivity_{ic_0t}) + \beta_2 X_{ic_0t} + \delta_{tr} + \gamma_{c_0r} + \epsilon_{ic_0t} \tag{5}$$

Our parameter of interest β_1 on the interaction of race with the selectivity measure represents the difference in the likelihood of a Black man with the selectivity measure choosing a destination county with lynching relative to the comparison group. The vector X_{ic_0t} includes an indicator for race ($Black_{ict}$), the selectivity measure ($Selectivity_{ict}$), an indicator for whether at least one lynching occurred in the origin county, c_0, during the decade ($Lynching_{c_0t}$), and age fixed effects. We control for lynching in the origin county to account for the spatial correlation of lynchings, which matters particularly in the case of shorter county-level moves. Many Black men leaving their county in response to a lynching would find themselves near to other lynching counties. We also include both decade and county fixed effects by race. Because this specification does not rely on heterogenous treatment timing as does our previous analyses, we estimate equation 4 using a linear probability model with two-way fixed effects for decade and origin county.

Table 4 displays the results of estimating equation (5) for each of the four measures of selectiv-

ity. Each of the four specifications shows that positively selected Black migrants tended to avoid lynching counties more than did other Black migrants. Literate Black migrants were 6.0 percentage points less likely to choose to relocate to a lynching county, relative to a baseline likelihood of 71.5 percent. Black white-collar workers and homeowners were 8.2 and 4.5 percentage points less likely to relocate to a lynching county. It is interesting that literacy has a relatively greater effect on destination choice than on the migration decision itself. Perhaps in this case, migrants who could read and write were both possessed of greater human capital and also better able to gather helpful information about possible destinations.

Table 4: Destination Selectivity of County Movers

	Dependent Variable: Lynching in Destination County (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Selectivity Measure:	Literate	ln(Occscore)	White Collar	Own Home
Black × *Selectivity*	-0.060***	-0.052***	-0.082***	-0.045***
	(0.007)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Observations	2,594,449	2,334,401	2,334,458	1,752,472

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates. Coefficients are reported with standard errors, clustered by county, in parentheses. The unit of observation is an individual, living in a Southern county, observed in a census year, linked to the following census year. Statistical significance is denoted by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

5 Conclusion

Contrary to received wisdom and the findings of previous scholarship, racial violence did not itself cause Black men to systematically migrate. While lynchings and county migration were correlated, even the most basic controls for state or county heterogeneity drive that correlation to zero. Black people were more likely to leave racially violent places, but that seems to have been driven by other aspects of those places rather than the lynchings themselves. While lynchings did not induce Black men to leave violent counties, they did change the composition of Black migration. Across

a number of different proxies for affluence and human capital, we find that lynchings increased the positive selection of county out-migration for Black men relative to White men. Among Black men, the literate, homeowners, and higher earners were all more likely to migrate out of lynching counties.

This association between lynchings and positive Black migration selection suggests that racial violence could have induced a kind of sorting among the Black population of the Jim Crow South along the dimensions of affluence and human capital. Our analysis of the destination choices of Black migrants is consistent with just such sorting. Among migrants, Black men who were literate, who owned homes or who worked at higher-earning occupations were more likely to avoid violent counties and move to counties that had not seen a lynching in that decade. It seems that racial violence did not so much push Black people away, out of their home county or out of the South, as it did reallocate Black affluence and skill, primarily within the South.

This sorting process could have had significant implications for long-run economic development in the South, particularly with respect to Black socioeconomic outcomes. Table 5 shows the results of broad, descriptive analysis of the association of lynchings with county-level outcomes for Black and White people in the long run. Even controlling for lynchings in subsequent decades and for unobserved county-level heterogeneity, lynchings are associated with significant and durable negative Black-White gaps in schooling, literacy, and home ownership. To take one particularly striking example, the occurrence of at least one lynching in a county is associated with a 21 percent (4.1 percentage point) increase in the Black-White home ownership gap 40 years later. Counterintuitively, this negative long-run Black-White gap effect does not appear to have been present in occupational earnings. While lynchings were associated with depressed occupational earnings for Black men in the long run, the negative effect was even stronger for White men. This raises the possibility that racial violence, by inducing a kind of Black talent drain at the local level, had negative general economic consequences that impacted both White and Black workers.

Table 5: Long-Run County Effects of Lynching, 1880-1940

	Dependent Variable					
	Schooling			Literacy		
	Black	White	Gap	Black	White	Gap
Lynching in county, lag 10 yrs	-0.012***	0.007***	-0.018***	-0.060***	-0.014***	-0.046***
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.007)
Lynching in county, lag 20 yrs	-0.009***	0.011***	-0.020***	-0.077***	-0.016***	-0.060***
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.007)
Lynching in county, lag 40 yrs	-0.006***	0.012***	-0.018***	-0.064***	-0.015***	-0.049***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Mean of dependent variable	0.177	0.215	-0.038	0.572	0.872	-0.301

	Dependent Variable					
	Own Home			ln(Occscore)		
	Black	White	Gap	Black	White	Gap
Lynching in county, lag 10 yrs	-0.006	0.034***	-0.040***	-0.020**	-0.087***	0.067***
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.010)
Lynching in county, lag 20 yrs	-0.009**	0.030***	-0.039***	-0.020**	-0.093***	0.073***
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Lynching in county, lag 40 yrs	-0.010***	0.031***	-0.041***	-0.023***	-0.095***	0.072***
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Mean of dependent variable	0.328	0.524	-0.196	2.549	2.706	-0.158

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates. Coefficients in top panel are reported with standard errors in parentheses. The unit of observation is a Southern county. All regressions include county fixed effects. Statistical significance is denoted by * p<0.1, **p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

These long-run county level results are simple correlations and certainly do not demonstrate a causal effect. Counties with lynchings could show deteriorating conditions for Black people for any number of reasons other than the lynchings themselves. County-level fixed effects help, but not if relevant heterogeneity itself varies over time. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to think that if lynching

led to Black sorting, then racially violent places subject to Black skill and wealth loss would suffer in the long run and places able to attract Black affluence and human capital would prosper. In this way, racial violence could have impacted the trajectory of local Black, and possibly even White, economic development within the South over the long run. Assessing precisely whether and how this effect bore out and how large it was is beyond the scope of the current project but merits further research.

6 References

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A Appendix

Figure A1: County Lynching Occurrences

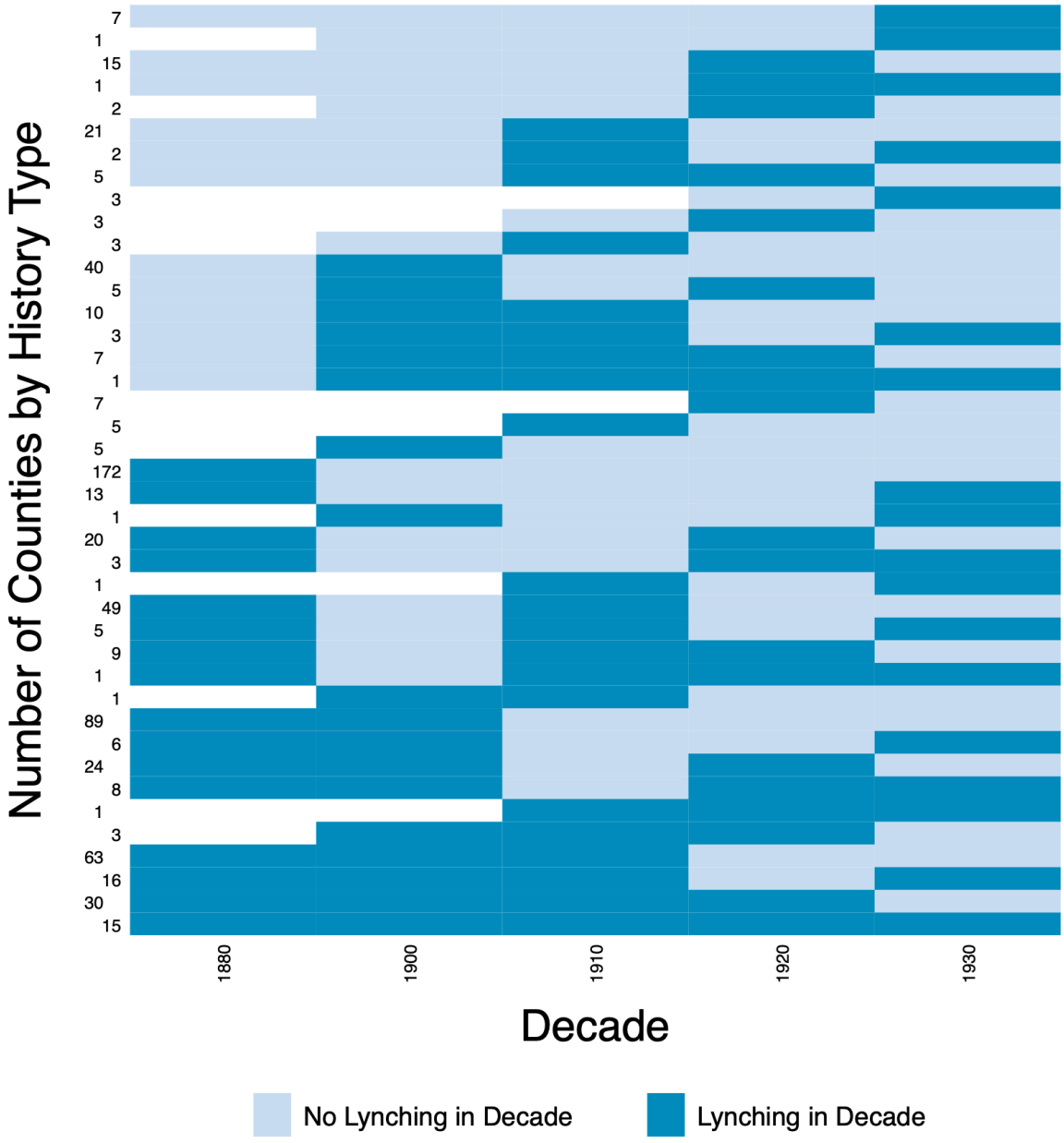


Table A1: Lynching and Regional Migration

	Dependent Variable: Region Move (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A – Black Men				
Lynching	-0.009***	0.000	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Fixed effects	None	Decade, State	Decade, County	Imputation method
Observations	1,948,928	1,948,928	1,948,928	1,948,928
Panel B – Black and White Men				
Lynching × *Black*	0.003	-0.006***	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Fixed effects	None	Decade, State	Decade-Race, County-Race	Imputation method
Observations	10,426,567	10,426,567	10,426,567	10,426,567

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates. Coefficients in columns (1) through (3) are reported with standard errors, clustered by county, in parentheses. Coefficients in column (4) are reported with county-cluster bootstrap standard errors with 1000 iterations, in parentheses. The unit of observation is an individual, living in a Southern county, observed in a census year, linked to the following census year. Statistical significance is denoted by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A2: Selectivity of County Movers with Categorical Lynching Variable

	Dependent Variable: County Move (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Selectivity Measure:	Literate	ln(Occscore)	White Collar	Own Home
Black × *Lynching* × *Selectivity*				
One lynching	0.003	0.013	0.019*	0.011*
	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.006)
Two or more lynchings	0.012**	0.023***	0.022**	0.013*
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Observations	10,426,567	9,491,134	9,490,943	6,791,526

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates. Coefficients are reported with standard errors, clustered by county, in parentheses. The unit of observation is an individual, living in a Southern county, observed in a census year, linked to the following census year. Statistical significance is denoted by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.