

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN RACE AND ETHNICITY

Doing Violence, Making Race

Lynching and White Racial Group Formation
in the U.S. South, 1882–1930

Mattias Smångs



Doing Violence, Making Race

In *Doing Violence, Making Race* Professor Smångs uses nuanced theoretical framing, sophisticated statistical analysis, and a thorough knowledge of the history of the American South to take the study of lynching and racial boundary formation to a higher level. As a result, *Doing Violence, Making Race* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the shameful history of southern mob violence and its continuing influence on American society.

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The subject of lynching has spawned a vast body of important research, but this research suffers from important blind spots and disjunctures.

By broadening the scope of research problem formulation, staking out new theoretical-analytical tracks, and drawing upon recent innovations in statistical methodology to analyze newer and more detailed data, *Doing Violence, Making Race* offers an innovative contribution to our understanding of this grim subject matter and its place within the broader history and sociology of US race relations. Indeed, this volume demonstrates how different forms of lynching fed off and into the formation of the racial group boundaries and identities at the foundation of the Jim Crow system. The book also demonstrates that as dominant white racial ideologies and conceptions took an extremist turn, lethal mob violence against African Americans increasingly assumed the form of public lynchings, serving to transform symbolic representations of blacks into social stigma and exclusion. Finally, Smångs also explores how public lynchings were expressive as well as generative of the collective white racial identity mobilized through the southern branch of the Democratic Party, whilst private lynchings were related to whites' interracial status and social identity concerns on the interpersonal level.

The most complete and complex scholarly treatment of this grim subject to date, this enlightening volume will be of interest to undergraduate and graduate students interested in areas such as Sociology, Political Science, History, Criminology/Criminal Justice, Anthropology, American Studies, African-American and Whiteness Studies.

Mattias Smångs is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Fordham University, USA.

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1 Introduction

This book is about the perhaps most disturbing and complex instance of violence in the United States, namely the lynching of African American men, women, and children at the hands of white mobs in the South during the “lynching era,” circa 1880–1930.¹ The decades comprising the lynching era are usually referred to as the post-Reconstruction period. The end of the federal military occupation of former Confederate states during the Reconstruction period that followed the Civil War and return of control of southern state governments into the hands of southern whites marked the beginning of this period, and the onset of the Great Depression marked its end. During the post-Reconstruction period, southern whites reestablished an institutionalized system of racial domination and oppression of remarkable scale, scope, and durability that affected every aspect of southern life for decades to come. Colloquially termed “Jim Crow,” this system, founded upon the economic dispossession, political disempowerment, and social degradation of African Americans, reestablished the relationship between white domination and black subjugation in southern society that slavery had provided in antebellum times but that Confederate defeat in the Civil War and subsequent abolition of slavery had disrupted.

Jim Crow was, however, not a simple outgrowth or holdover from slavery. In the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the future of southern race relations was not an entirely closed question with a predestined solution. While it was clear that the South that had existed before the war was and could be no more, it was much less clear what was going to take its place. One aspect of this uncertainty revolved around the so-called Race Question (also known as the “Race Problem,” the “Negro Question,” or the “Negro Problem”), that is, the issue of the nature of race and the proper arrangement of white-black relations. If the eventual solution to this question seems inevitable from our vantage point, it was anything but from the perspective of contemporaries and resulted from complex struggles between and among white and black southerners trying to find their bearings in the unfamiliar terrain of post-Reconstruction race relations. The implementation and institutionalization of the rigid, exclusionary, and oppressive system of Jim Crow were thus far from automatic or instantaneous. As the historian Jane Dailey (2000: 6) observes: “Although postwar southern society was eventually reranked according to racial hierarchy, the path from emancipation to Jim Crow was rockier

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than is sometimes realized. . . . The white supremacist South was not preordained, and its victory was never certain.”²

As I shall explain and demonstrate in this book, the lynching of African Americans by white mobs did not simply reflect white domination but crucially forged the racial imaginations, experiences, relations, and institutions upon which the Jim Crow system rested. In other words, the co-occurrence of the lynching era with the ascendancy of Jim Crow was no mere coincidence; these developments were fundamentally and symbiotically linked in practices and processes feeding off of as well as into one another. Thus, as the title of this book implies, referring to “making race” by “doing violence,” I shall argue and show that lynchings did not signify an existing racial order as much as they gave rise to one. *Doing Violence, Making Race* thereby not only provides new insights into old problems but offers novel theoretical explanations, conceptual frameworks, and empirical findings surpassing those of previous studies in understanding the causes and consequences of southern lynching in the decades around 1900. This book, though, does not intend to either dismiss or diminish the contributions of previous lynching research—quite the contrary, because knowledge accumulation in the field of lynching research depends, due to the complexity of its subject matter, on juxtaposing different theoretical and methodological approaches and treating them as complementary rather than conflicting perspectives on a multifaceted social reality. Therefore, before launching in more detail into the scholarly approach and contribution of *Doing Violence, Making Race*, a discussion of the contributions and limitations of the existent lynching scholarship is suitable.

The Contributions and Limitations of Contemporary Lynching Scholarship

The contemporary lynching literature is divided between what, on the one hand, can be called studies in a social scientific tradition and, on the other hand, studies in a culturalist humanistic tradition. The former type of lynching scholarship has three characteristics. One, it is comparative in seeking to account for aggregate lynching rates and trends across spatial and temporal scales. Two, it applies theoretical approaches focusing on intergroup political and economic competition in explaining spatial and temporal lynching patterns. Three, it uses statistical methods and lynching inventories containing hundreds or even thousands of events. The groundbreaking *A Festival of Violence* by the sociologists Stewart Tolnay and E. M. Beck (1995) is the most important study in the social scientific tradition of lynching research.³ While not demonstrating a consistent link between lynching and various aspects of competitive southern electoral politics—for example, the strength of the Republican and Populist parties or the disfranchisement of African Americans in the late 1800s and early 1900s—Tolnay and Beck demonstrate that lynchings were more widespread the more whites’ economic interests clashed with those of blacks, particularly within the South’s cotton-dominated agricultural economy. Economic conditions in the southern cotton economy strongly influenced lynching violence against blacks, Tolnay and Beck (1995) argue, because

they promoted a common interest among different classes of whites in controlling and subduing African Americans. The economic power of white planters and landowners depended upon the easy supply of a large, cheap, and docile black rural labor force. Smallholding and landless whites, in turn, competed with rural blacks for farm tenancy and laborer opportunities. Thus, although the specifics of their motivations may have differed, economic conditions aligned the interests of different classes of whites in ways bringing them together in an interclass coalition against blacks that sometimes assumed the form of lynching. In short, then, Tolnay and Beck conceive the intergroup violence of lynching as an instrumental means of racial social control furthering white economic interests.

The scholarly contribution of *A Festival of Violence* can hardly be overstated. Based upon substantial empirical research informed by a coherent theoretical framework, Tolnay and Beck (1995) craft a powerful argument linking economic conditions, racial social control, and racial violence in the post-Reconstruction South. However valuable Tolnay and Beck's study, no single theoretical-conceptual framework can address all facets of the lynching phenomenon, and due to its focus on economic conditions, there are limits to how much we can learn from it. The limitations of *A Festival of Violence* break down into a number of analytically separable elements. First, assuming relatively well-defined and well-bounded groups with enduring categorical and conflicting interests as the rationale for action, *A Festival of Violence* may, crudely put, be criticized for committing what Brubaker (Brubaker 2004: 8; cf. Blee 2005) calls the "groupism" fallacy. This involves treating "race" (and other categories) as an unproblematic theoretical, conceptual, and empirical unit of scholarly analysis, which inadvertently naturalizes and reifies racial (and other) groups and downplays their contingent, contested, and constructed nature. To be fair, it should, for one thing, be noted that Tolnay and Beck (1995) do recognize that the lynchings of African Americans were implicated in certain group-forming processes among whites, but this line of argument is not developed theoretically, conceptually, or empirically as fully as their treatment of economic conditions in understanding the causes and consequences of lynchings. For another thing, Tolnay and Beck are far from the only ones to treat structural economic cleavages as self-explanatory potential sources of interracial conflict and violence; the bulk of the social scientific lynching literature using statistical data and methods also does so.

Thus, rather than integrating matters related to the formation of groups into its key theoretical, conceptual, and empirical concerns, the social scientific lynching literature takes, due to its focus on lynching as an instrumental means promoting whites' economic interests, the existence, nature, and relevance of racial groups for granted as an exogenous and unproblematic analytical *a priori*. This renders non-material conditions and factors, such as the ways whereby race was defined, signified, represented, and enacted, residual in understanding the lynching phenomenon; noted but not considered essential to the phenomenon itself or to understanding its causes and consequences. Such matters of definition, signification, representation, and enactment invoke larger notions of culture, involving the complexes of meaning people use to navigate the social world, interpret the social

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world, and act in and on the social world. In short, then, the way in which the lynching of African Americans can be seen as a social practice enacting culturally encoded racial groups has not been taken up for extended comparative analyses in the social scientific literature. Given that the turn-of-the-twentieth-century South was intensely preoccupied with the above-mentioned "Race Question," this arguably neglects something important about the phenomenon that we are attempting to describe and explain.

One aspect of the phenomenon that the social scientific lynching literature neglects is its heterogeneity. While lynching in the scholarly, as well as in the popular, imagination is perhaps most strongly associated with large public events coupled with extreme violence, not all lynchings featured broad-based participation, support, or overt brutality. Contrast, for instance, the following two examples (the descriptions of the Hose and Welly killings are based upon accounts in *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 24, 1899, page 1f and September 4, 1900, page 3, respectively):

On April 23, 1899, in front of about two thousand people in Coweta County, Georgia, Sam [Hose], a black man alleged to have killed his white employer and raped the employer's wife, was stripped of his clothes and chained to a tree with kerosene-soaked wood stacked high around him. Before Hose was burned at the stake, his ears, fingers, and genitals were cut off, and his face skinned. On the trunk of a nearby tree someone hung a sign reading: "We Must Protect Our Southern Women."

On the night of September 3, 1900, in Thomas County, Georgia, a black man named Grant Welly got into a dispute with a white man who cut Welly badly in the neck. A friend of Welly's, Joe Fleming, took him to a physician and then brought him to his house and put him to bed. Later that same night a group of five or six white men came to and fired into Fleming's house, killing Welly and wounding Fleming. Fleming tried to hide under the house, but was pulled out and told by the white men that if he left the house or told anyone about what had happened, they would kill him.

Drawing upon theories of competitive intergroup conflict to explain variation in the frequency, rather than the form, of lynchings, past social scientific research would treat the lynchings of Sam Hose and Grant Welly, respectively, as instances of a unitary phenomenon. Bringing out the whole range within which lynching violence varied, these two examples demonstrate where received theoretical-conceptual frameworks run up against their limits and must be complemented by other perspectives. Because the apparent violent excesses in the Hose lynching, far beyond necessary for causing the victim's death, suggest that lynchings may in some instances have revolved around concerns other than an instrumental move toward economic ends. "To kill an economic competitor or make an example of a recalcitrant worker was one thing; to mutilate him . . . appears," as Holt (1995: 5) observes, "to be something else altogether." As I shall show in the following chapters, differentiating between different lynching types and linking them to certain

racial group-formation practices and processes connected to the rise of Jim Crow allow us to systematically account for this “something else,” as well as to explain the variation between lynching events displayed in the two examples described above.

Social scientific lynching research discussed so far can be contrasted with a culturalist humanistic strand of lynching research. Reflecting the cultural and linguistic turn in the humanities in recent decades, research in this vein approaches lynching as a culturally meaningful, symbolically and discursively mediated, and ritually regulated phenomenon. Research approaching lynching in such fashion includes the early studies *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynchings and Burning Rituals*, by Trudier Harris (1984), and *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation*, by Joel Williamson (1984) and the more recent ones: *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, by Crystal N. Feimster (2009), and *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*, by Amy Louise Wood (2009). These and other studies in the culturalist humanist tradition of lynching research shed light on the shifting cultural discourses, rhetorics, tropes, and images of race and racial violence in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South.⁴ However, although credibly addressing some of the matters mentioned above that are largely absent from social scientific lynching research, such cultural contextualizations of violence do not, no matter how detailed or vivid, in and of themselves explain it (cf. Brubaker and Laitin 1998). In consequence, culturalist lynching studies have certain important limitations.

The first limitation is theoretical and conceptual: more concerned with uncovering the meaning of the cultural discourses, rhetorics, tropes, and images of race and racial violence than with the actual practices of violence enacted within and through social actions, interactions, and relations in particular situations, times, and places, culturalist lynching studies struggle to convincingly specify the link between word and deed. As Jones (2000: 538) notes, “It is one thing, discursively, to order things: it is another . . . to establish praxis (thoughts put into action)” in the material world. In other words, focusing heavily on the discourses, rhetorics, tropes, and images of race and racial violence in the post-Reconstruction period, culturalist analyses of lynching do not pay sufficient attention to the social circumstances within and through which individual and collective white actors were motivated and enabled to effectively generate and communicate racial meanings through lynchings.

Culturalist studies of lynching are thus from social scientific explanatory standpoint too simplistic to provide analytical purchase on questions about how cultural discourses, rhetorics, tropes, and images of race took hold and played themselves out among whites in the practice of lynching. One way to clarify this limitation is to point out that culturalist analyses overpredict lynchings. Or to put the issue in social scientific terms, the purported independent variable, that is, the cultural discourses, rhetorics, tropes, and images of race, was much more widespread than the dependent variable, that is, the racial violence of lynching. In consequence, culturalist studies of lynching give analytical weight to “agentless abstractions”

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(Cooper 2005), that is, concepts that seemingly provide a neat cultural logic to the phenomenon but do not clearly or convincingly demonstrate the impact of racial discourses, rhetorics, tropes, and images on the formation of racialized actors, actions, interactions, and relations in particular situations, times, or places.

The second limitation of culturalist lynching studies is methodological. They are for the most part based upon case studies of a single or handful of specific lynchings, including their textual and visual representations. While this type of highly contextualized in-depth analysis has garnered detailed evidence on the circumstances surrounding specific lynching events, they cannot, from the standpoint of the social scientific lynching literature, be said to proffer generalizable findings. This is because the essence of the social scientific method for producing generalizations is to identify and compare patterns among a multitude of cases and not merely investigate singular cases. Furthermore, while the social scientific lynching literature collapses all forms of lethal mob violence into the single undifferentiated conceptual heading of “lynching,” culturalist studies exhibit more often than not a one-sided focus on particularly high-profile events such as the lynching of Sam Hose described above. In *Without Sanctuary*, the book accompanying the lynching photography exhibition that visited cities throughout the United States in the early 2000s, the historian Leon Litwack (2000: 14) illustrates this lopsidedness well. Says Litwack: “The story of a lynching . . . is the story of slow, methodical, sadistic, often highly inventive forms of torture and mutilation.” But as the lynching of Grant Welly described above demonstrates, lynchings involving communal and gratuitous violence are only part of the story of lynching. An analysis that makes no sustained reference to the kind of lynchings illustrated by the Welly lynching therefore paints an incomplete picture of the nature and significance of racial mob violence in the post-Reconstruction South.

Here I should immediately point out two historical studies upon which this book in no small measure draws, which are based on exhaustive inventories of lynchings in different U.S. states and earnestly consider the kinds of differences among lynching events manifested in the lynchings of Sam Hose and Grant Welly: W. Fitzhugh Brundage’s (1993) *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* and Michael J. Pfeifer’s (2004) *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874–1947* (see also Carrigan 2004; Wright 1990). These two important studies represent a third strand of sorts in the contemporary lynching literature alongside the social scientific studies and the culturalist humanistic studies surveyed to this point. As empirically rich as these works are, they are, however, unaccompanied by rigorous methods of analysis and adduce information on different kinds of lynching events descriptively to illustrate their arguments rather than submitting it to theoretically informed and methodologically systematic analysis. Their arguments therefore remain more conjectural than conclusive.

In sum, while the theoretically, conceptually, and methodologically robust strand of social scientific lynching research pays no sustained attention to the cultural aspects of lynching or to the variation among lynching events, the culturalist humanistic strand of lynching research that does address such matters rests upon

weak theoretical, conceptual, and methodological foundations. These disjunctures in contemporary lynching scholarship suggest areas in need of further theoretical, conceptual, and empirical elaboration. In an attempt at interdisciplinary dialogue in an otherwise fragmented research field, *Doing Violence, Making Race* accordingly broadens the scope of social scientific lynching research by staking out new theoretical, conceptual, and methodological tracks moving it beyond its hitherto focus on competitive intergroup relations, in particular interracial economic competition, in explaining and analyzing lynchings into what could be called the “cultural territories” (Lamont 1999) of race and racial violence.

The Argument of *Doing Violence, Making Race*

In order to bring the study of lynching into the cultural territories of race and racial violence, I draw on a growing body of research focusing on the centrality of boundary-making practices and processes in social life (for reviews, see Lamont and Molnar [2002] and Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont [2007]). The boundary-focused perspective suggests directions for crafting analyses of the mutual influences and consequences of culture in social life, while at the same time remaining committed to the social scientific enterprise of theoretically, conceptually, and empirically systematic and rigorous comparisons and generalizations. One way it does so is by emphasizing formative practices and processes of group-making. “The notion of boundaries is,” as Lamont and Molnar (2002: 187) point out, “crucial for analyzing how social actors construct groups as similar and different and how it shapes their understanding of their responsibilities toward such groups.” In emphasizing group-making practices and processes as a central cultural arena, the boundary-perspective veers away from naturalizing and reifying groups and, thereby, avoids the pitfall of groupism discussed earlier.

Culturally informed sociological analyses need to be actor oriented because it is only through the practices of concrete actors, whether individual, collective (for example, localized communities), or corporate (for example, formal organizations), that the influence of culturally mediated meaning-making in social life becomes realized and consequential (Alexander 2003). By virtue of its pragmatist attention to social actors and their social practices manifested in actions, interactions, relations, and institutions, the boundary-focused perspective allows in that regard for theoretically, conceptually, and methodologically systematic and rigorous analyses of culture in and of social life. In its attention to social actors and social practices, the boundary perspective thus avoids resorting to agentless abstractions in explaining and exploring social phenomena.

From this perspective, then, culture cannot be understood apart from social life, but it is not seen as deterministically influencing passively affected actors but as simultaneously enabling and constraining actors actively engaged and embedded in meaning-making social practices and processes (Alexander 2003). What this implies is that the cultural significance and implication of social phenomena cannot be explained in isolation from broader social situations, contexts, and structures. As Lamont (1992: 135) points out, in order to explore the link between

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culture and social life, we need to consider “how remote and proximate [social] structural factors shape choices from and access to the [cultural] tool kit—in other words, how these factors affect the cultural resources most likely to be mobilized by different types of individuals and what elements of tool kits people have most access to given their social positions.” What this does not imply is that people dwell under social or cultural conditions of their own choosing or making, or that they construe their actional, interactional, relational, and institutional social practices freely with full or uniform comprehension of their reasons and consequences. But it does suggest, for one thing, that people pursue social practices with purpose and with some notion of what they are doing and why they are doing it, and, for another, that it is possible for us to comprehend what they are doing and the purposes in and consequences of their doing so (cf. Weber 1978).

In the present case, to impart the type of comparative and generalizable explanations and analyses characterizing the social scientific tradition of lynching research with a theoretically, conceptually, and methodologically robust recognition of the cultural dimensions of lynching involves taking the perspective and behavior of lynch mobs such as the ones killing Sam Hose and Grant Welly, respectively, into account and ask what their participants thought they were doing, how that influenced the character of their deeds, and to what effect. This can be achieved to the extent that we cast the explanations and analyses in terms of the intersubjective experiences, understandings, and purposes that we can reasonably assume that lynchers and their communities themselves subjected their circumstances and practices to. At its heart, then, this book is concerned with explicating the cultural and social conditions and processes that impinged upon southern whites’ experiences, understandings, and purposes in ways making different forms of lynchings more or less meaningful and, as such, more or less likely and consequential in some but not other contexts in the post-Reconstruction South.

The argument of this book can be stated in brief point form as follows. First, drawing on research focusing on the role of boundaries in the practices and processes of group-making, I conceptualize culture in terms of symbolic group boundaries and categories embedded in group narratives. Narratives are stories through which group members come to understand “what it means” to be who they as well as others are. As narratives are grounded in symbolic boundaries representing the meanings of relevant group categories, they can be considered group ideologies embodying people’s expectations of and commitments to particular groups. In consequence, narrative-embedded symbolic boundaries promote group-making practices and processes to the extent that they, for one thing, evoke collective identities, that is, notions and feelings of shared commonality and purpose, as well as affine and solidary actions, interactions, and relations among those perceived as similar to one another. To the extent that they, for another thing, evoke social identities, that is, individuals’ sense of belonging to as well as inclusion in particular groups. And to the extent that they, for a third thing, produce social boundaries that systematically influence patterns of actions, interactions, and relations, including the distribution of resources, among and between groups based on purported categorical differences.

Second, intergroup violence can be considered the practical enactment of symbolic group boundaries and categories, making it meaningful to perpetrators as well as to spectators. As such, intergroup violence plays into group-making dynamics by socially realizing the ideals and visions of narratives by activating and constituting categorical social and collective identities, as well as instantiating categorical social boundaries. The character of intergroup violence varies, though, depending on what level of analysis—individual or collective—it unfolds, with the latter exhibiting higher levels of communality, publicity, and brutality than the former. In this view, then, the crystallization, polarization, and stratification of groups across levels of analysis is not seen only as the cause but also the outcome of intergroup violence.

Third, the southern Confederacy's defeat in the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and other measures taken during the Reconstruction period to improve the economic, political, and social position of African Americans relative to whites destroyed the institutionalized antebellum system of symbolic and social race boundaries, categories, and identities. Whereas an institutionalized system of racial oppression eventually reemerged in the South in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the form of Jim Crow, the intervening decades were a period of continual tension, struggle, and uncertainty regarding the nature and proper arrangement of the relationship between southern whites and blacks. An exponent of this struggle, uncertainty, and tension was the articulation and dissemination of new racial symbolic boundaries infusing new meanings into the racial categories "white" and "black." These symbolic racial boundaries and categories were embedded within a new white racial group narrative, a radical (or extremist or militant) ideology of white supremacy, replacing lingering antebellum notions of paternalistic white-black relations with views that not only set African Americans categorically apart from and beneath whites, but also portrayed them as imminently endangering whites and their communities. The radical white supremacist narrative, along with its associated symbolic racial boundaries and categories, fundamentally fueled and justified the multitude of actions, interactions, relations, and institutions leading up to and representing the implementation and stabilization of the Jim Crow system.

Fourth, the different forms of lynchings were culturally rooted social practices through which racial group-making processes stemming from the radical white supremacist narrative of race and race relations—involving the articulation and formation of symbolic racial categories and boundaries, social racial boundaries, and white social and collective identities, fundamental to the implementation and stabilization of Jim Crow—flowed during "the most violent and repressive period in the history of race relations in the United States" (Litwack 1998: xiv).

Methodological Notes

A convincing analysis regarding the link between culture and different types of lynching must, methodologically speaking, proceed through three steps. First, it must provide a working familiarity with the cultural elements and resources that post-Reconstruction southern whites drew on in enacting their violent deeds.

Second, it must furnish data including large enough numbers of lynchings of different types to allow comparative and generalizable analyses. Third, it must demonstrate under what situational and contextual conditions cultural elements and resources were more likely to impact the varied practices of lynching. While I defer discussing the third step until later chapters, I will here briefly address how this study goes about the first two steps.

Given present theoretical and conceptual concerns, the first step involves probing and revealing white racial group narratives, symbolic racial boundaries and categories, and racial social and collective identities as a lens into how whites conceived and understood themselves, African Americans, and the wider southern society around them. This is because those conceptions and understandings powered, in turn, the practical interracial actions, interactions, relations, and institutions upon which the system of Jim Crow rested, including lynching in all its different forms. To that end, I pursue what could be called historical-sociological ethnography, involving taking contemporary worldviews and voices into account, using an equivalent of Geertzian “thick description” (Geertz 1973) to capture and assess the contents and meanings of various cultural elements and resources available to southern whites in this period. I do so by drawing heavily on and citing extensively from primary sources, including newspapers, books, pamphlets, letters, and speeches and other public statements, as well as the rich secondary historical literature. While this may tread much familiar southern historiographical ground and not divulge much novel information as such, we have without such a close analytical reconstruction of the racial narratives, categories, boundaries, and identities dominant in the post-Reconstruction period scant hope of uncovering the conceptions, experiences, and understandings that led southern whites to engage in the violent practices of lynching and the consequences thereof.

Given the heterogeneity of lynching events evident in the lynchings of Sam Hose and Grant Welly, respectively, statistical data including comparable information of a large number of lynching events in terms of alleged reasons and actual perpetrator behavior are essential to this study. In order to create such data I augmented the Georgia and Louisiana parts of the ten-state Tolnay and Beck (1995) lynching event inventory for the period 1882–1930 (the construction of the inventory of lynching events used in the statistical analyses of this study is described in further detail in the Methodological Appendix). This book’s ambition to move beyond a unidimensional lynching concept guided in combination with data availability this choice of states. The online, full-text ProQuest Historical Newspapers™ database offers easy access to contemporary newspaper reports on lynchings in the *Atlanta Constitution*—the most important and widely read newspaper in Georgia at the time. On the basis of the information in newspaper reports, the lynching data used in this book expand the Georgia data in the Beck-Tolnay inventory in a number of ways. They include an additional 39 white-on-black and 6 white-on-white lynching events confirmed or discovered subsequent to the construction of the original Beck-Tolnay inventory, they exclude a few events in the Beck-Tolnay inventory which in light of newly discovered information should not be considered lynchings, and they classify each event according

to a twofold lynching typology depending on the event's degree of communal-ity, publicity, and brutality. As for availability of data on lynchings in Louisiana, Pfeifer's *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society 1874–1947* (2004) not only contains a comprehensive list of lynching events in that state but also classifies them according to the same typology upon which the classification of lynchings in Georgia at root rests. As a result, this study uses a data set of more than 600 lynchings in Georgia and Louisiana containing more complete and more detailed information than previously available.

While no one state can be seen as representative of the South as a whole, the geographical scope of the study is also justified on substantive grounds. Georgia is “an obvious choice for a study of lynching: the character and harshness of white domination . . . became the measure of race relations in the Deep South. . . . The sheer scale of mob violence in Georgia alone commands attention” (Brundage 1993: 15f). Moreover, as Du Bois pointed out in the early 1900s: “Not only is Georgia . . . the geographical focus of our Negro population, but in many other respects, both now and yesterday, the Negro problems [i.e., the “Race Question”] have seemed to be centered in this State” (Du Bois 2003: 112). What is more, Georgia and Louisiana spanned all the major subregions of the South at the time in terms of demographic, economic, historical, and physiographic characteristics, which is methodologically important because a study that does not include them all is liable to misleading results and conclusions.

Outline of the Book

The remainder of the book consists of seven chapters (and one Methodological Appendix). The next three chapters lay out the theoretical-conceptual foundations and the historical background guiding the statistical analyses in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 develops a theoretical and conceptual framework elaborating important cultural aspects of intergroup violence. It highlights, for one thing, the performative and formative qualities of intergroup violence in not only reflecting but also forging social boundaries, as well as social and collective identities, envisioned by group narratives and symbolic boundaries. For another, it clarifies how the character of intergroup violence varies depending on whether it is enacted primarily to uphold social boundaries and identities on the interpersonal or the collective level of analysis. Chapter 3 reviews the economic, political, and social developments taking place from the antebellum period, via the Reconstruction period, to the post-Reconstruction period, paying particular attention to the transformation of dominant racial group narratives, boundaries, categories, and identities, necessary for understanding lynching as a racial group-making practice within the rise of the Jim Crow South. Chapter 4 documents how different forms of lynching can be conceptualized in terms of the ideal-types of interpersonal and collective intergroup violence introduced in Chapter 2. More to the point, in this chapter I develop the distinction between what I call “private” lynchings, which, perpetrated by smaller groups without excessive brutality and outside public purview, are exemplified by the Welly lynching, and “public” lynchings, which

displayed the type of communality, publicity, and brutality illustrated by the Hose lynching.

The following three chapters look into how the practice of lynching in its various forms channeled the white racial group-making processes under way in the South during the decades around 1900 underwriting the emerging system of Jim Crow. Focusing on the role of intergroup violence in drawing social boundaries on the collective level, Chapter 5 reveals how as dominant white conceptions of race and race relations took an extremist turn, lynchings linked to interracial sexuality increasingly assumed the form of public lynchings, serving to transform symbolic boundaries and representations of African Americans as a menace to whites and their communities into a social boundary of black stigma and exclusion. Chapter 6 demonstrates how public but not private lynchings were dispositive of as well as conducive to the collective racial identifications, affinities, and solidarities of extremist white supremacy among southern whites in the decades around 1900. Conversely, Chapter 7, focusing on the role of intergroup violence as a means to claim the group belonging implied by a social identity, shows how private but not public lynchings emanated in whites' social racial identity concerns within interracial status relations on the interpersonal rather than the collective level.

The concluding Chapter 8 summarizes the study's main results and discusses how they complement previous research in understanding the impact of lynching in instituting the Jim Crow system and beyond. In doing so, I follow the lead of E. M. Beck and Stewart Tolnay, upon whose shoulders this study very much stands: "For rather than being the 'final word' on the causes of southern lynching and its decline, our book [*A Festival of Violence*] might prove to be the stimulus for further research that results eventually in an even more complete story of this shameful chapter in our nation's history—a story that is based on empirical evidence rather than conjecture, ideology, or rhetoric" (Beck and Tolnay 1998: 179f). While I hope that this study serves such a purpose, I must leave it to readers to judge.

Notes

1. This study adopts the conventional definition of a lynching as the extralegal killing of one or several persons by at least three people acting under the pretext of justice or tradition. Based on this definition, Tolnay and Beck (1995) estimate that during the "lynching era" between 1882 and 1930 about 2500 blacks were lynched in the ten southern states included in their investigation (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee).
2. Other studies approaching the cultural meanings and social consequences of race and racial hierarchy in the post-slavery South as far from obvious include Ayers (1992), Dailey, Gilmore, and Simon (2000), Hodes (1997), Kantrowitz (2000), Mitchell (2004), Prince (2014), and Rosen (2009).
3. For other studies in this tradition of lynching research, see Beck, Massey, and Tolnay (1989), Beck and Tolnay (1990), Corzine, Creech, and Corzine (1983), Corzine, Huff-Corzine, and Creech (1988), Gullickson (2010), Olzak (1992), Reed (1972), Soule (1992), and Tolnay, Deane, and Beck (1996).
4. The culturalist humanist tradition of lynching research also includes studies by Apel (2004), Goldsby (2006), Gunning (1996), and Hale (1998).

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