Segregation and Lynching

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Segregation and Lynching

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ntroduction

Motivation

Lynching Data

Measuring Segregation

Introduction

- A growing literature has examined the motivations behind and consequences of racially motivated violence
- Theories of lynching have evolved viewing them as a product of political, economic and social conflict
- Empirical tests of these theories have been limited by available data
- We use a new measure of segregation that allows us to examine residential sorting in rural areas and assess its impact on racial violence
- We find that increasing segregation is associated with increasing levels of racial violence even after controlling for a county's racial composition

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Empirical literature on lynchings

- The empirical study of lynchings goes back to the early 20th century
- Blalock's work in 1960s stimulated interest in testing how racial composition relates to discrimination and violence
- Beck, Tolnay and others generated another wave of empirical investigations in the 1990s, adding notions of economic competition
- More recent work has focused on victim characteristics, role of black migration

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Empirical literature on lynchings

From Bailey et al. (2008, 2011), southern blacks were most at risk when:

 (1) the black population was proportionately larger, (2) the white population suffered economic hardship, (3) the Democratic party was stronger,
(4) the white population was threatened economically or socially by the black population,
(5) the level of black out-migration was lower, and
(6) alternative legal sanctions for serious crimes were lacking.

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Theories of Lynchings

- Status competition models: lynchings are the product of the competition for class status between whites and African Americans
- Power threat hypothesis: dominant group engages in lynchings to retain control of political/power resources
- Theory of labor control: lynchings are a form of control over African American labor force competing for jobs with whites

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Theories of Lynchings

- Status competition models: segregation may maintain class status, reducing need for violence
- Power threat hypothesis: segregation could cut off minority group from resources, reducing need for violence
 - Segregation could make it easier to disenfranchise minority group and cut them off from resources, reducing need for violence
 - Segregation could increase/reduce majority's view of the threat posed by the minority by reducing interaction, increasing/reducing need for violence
- Theory of labor control: it is the size of the black labor force that matters, not how integrated that population is residentially
- Other reasons to think lynching may be dependent on segregation (e.g., whitecapping)

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Data on Lynchings

- There are many issues when trying to get a complete dataset of lynchings (see Cook (2012))
- There are questions of what constitutes a lynching, what goes unreported, what gets sensationalized, etc.
- We are using data from the Historical American Lynching data project (Project HAL)
- Project HAL utilizes the NAACP definition of lynching:
 - There must be evidence that someone was killed;
 - The killings must have occurred illegally;
 - Three or more persons must have taken part in the killing; and
 - The killers must have claimed to be serving justice or tradition.

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Data on Lynchings

- We have data on 2,805 lynchings from the HAL database
- Information for each lynching (potentially) includes name, race and gender of the victim, race of the mob, date of the lynching, reason for the lynching, and the county of the lynching
- 88 percent of the victims were black, 10 percent were white
- 6 percent of the lynch mobs were black (of these 155 black mobs, only 4 targeted white victims)
- Nearly all victims were males (97 percent)

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Lynching Characteristics

Number of Tynenings by state, 1882-1990				
	Black	White		
	lynchings	lynchings		
Alabama	273	24	Stated offer	nse leading to
Arkansas	184	48	lynching, 1882-1930	
Florida	224	19	Assault	15.5%
Georgia	435	21	Rape	28.1%
Kentucky	128	43	Murder	45.5%
Louisiana	304	53	Arson	4.4%
Mississippi	509	22	Theft	6.3%
North Carolina	82	16	Insolence	1.3%
South Carolina	148	6		
Tennessee	175	37		

Number of lynchings by state, 1882-1930

All lynching data are taken from the Project HAL database.

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Lynchings by year, 1882-1930



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Lynchings by county, 1882-1930



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• The lynching data reveal that lynchings often took place in rural areas, from Cash (1941):

It is part of the general law of the town everywhere that its inhabitants rarely lynch; that the tradition of direct action by mobs natural to the frontier and the open, little-policed countryside tends more and more to die out.

- Lynchings were often rural, related to rural issues, and taking place during a time period when the majority of African Americans lived in rural areas
- Traditional segregation measures such as dissimilarity and isolation are not well suited to these areas
- They depend on geographic subunits that are hard to apply to rural counties

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Measuring segregation

- We need a measure that works for less densely populated areas and does not depend on boundaries of geographic subunits
- To this end, we use a new measure that relies on the location of individual households (Logan and Parman (2015))
- The measure exploits the availability of the full 1880 federal census and the manner in which households were enumerated
- The basic idea is to see how many black households have white neighbors conditional on overall racial composition of the county

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Household enumeration in the 1880 Federal Census



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Constructing the Measure

The measure is based on how the number of black households living next to white neighbors compares to the expected number under random assignment and under perfect segregation:

$$\alpha = \frac{E(\overline{x_b}) - x_b}{E(\overline{x_b}) - E(\underline{x_b})}$$

- x_b: number of black household heads living next to white neighbors
- $E(\overline{x_b})$: expected number under random assignment of households
- $E(\underline{x_b})$: expected number under complete segregation

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Constructing the Measure

$$\alpha = \frac{E(\overline{x_b}) - x_b}{E(\overline{x_b}) - E(\underline{x_b})}$$

- Note that the measure goes to zero under random assignment (no segregation)
- As counties become more segregated, *x_b* decreases leading to a larger value for the statistic
- The measure goes to one under complete segregation
- We can also distinguish between the overall composition of the county and the tendency to segregate by including both the percent black and α in regressions

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Percent black by county, 1880



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Neighbor-based segregation by county, 1880



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Neighbor-based segregation by percent black, 1880



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Lynching regressions

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Results

The correlation of segregation and lynchings per county					
	Black lynchings		White lynchings		
Model:	Probit	OLS	Probit	OLS	
	Lynching in	Lynchings	Lynching in	Lynchings	
Dependent variable:	the county	(lynchings>0)	the county	(lynchings>0)	
Segregation Index	0.736***	3.334*	0.0729	1.426	
	(0.185)	(1.822)	(0.156)	(1.032)	
Percent black	0.452***	5.070***	-0.138	0.232	
	(0.117)	(0.899)	(0.0956)	(0.594)	
Isolation	-0.354	0.061	-0.140	0.984	
	(0.312)	(4.351)	(0.265)	(2.018)	
Dissimilarity	-0.515**	-2.525	0.0903	0.124	
	(0.212)	(2.436)	(0.185)	(1.245)	
Observations	783	540	783	197	

Standard errors in parentheses. All regressions include state fixed effects. * significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%.

Lynching regressions

Probit estimates	of lynching	in a county
	5 0	2

Percent Black	1.448***	0.936***	0.883***
	[0.235]	[0.288]	[0.314]
Percent Black^2	-1.347***	-0.875***	-0.823**
	[0.296]	[0.332]	[0.355]
Segregation Index		1.370***	1.307***
0 0		[0.423]	[0.431]
Segregation Index [^] 2		-1.725***	-1.560**
0 0		[0.612]	[0.637]
Isolation Index			-0.178
			[0.249]
Dissimilarity Index			-0.0207
-			[0.186]
Observations	786	783	783

Observations786783783Standard errors in parentheses.All regressions includestate fixed effects and controls for black tenancy rate,population density, and total black population.*significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significantat 1%

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Results and future plans

- Our preliminary results suggest that segregation is strongly related to lynching
- Rather than insulate black communities from violence, increased segregation is associated with greater likelihood of lynchings
- Including segregation also affects the estimated relationship between racial composition and lynchings
- The coefficients on percent black are substantially reduced when segregation is included
- These preliminary results suggest that segregation needs to be incorporated into existing theories of lynching
- We can incorporate a broad range of county-level data to further explore the relationship between segregation and racial violence

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