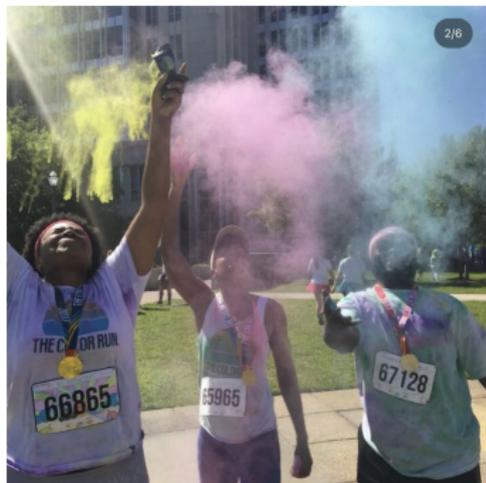# The Legacy of Southern Racism on Current Economic and Political Outcomes of Black Americans

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LSU - Exercising

LSU - Community Building

LSU - Parties

Motivation

- Foundational Model of Voting:

  - Vote if benefit of voting $>$ cost of voting (Downs 1957):

- Recent Empirical Findings:

  - Voting is due to social image (DellaVigna et al. 2017)

  - Voting is habit forming (Gerber 2003; Fujiwara et al. 2016)

  - Intergenerational transmission of voting behavior (Akee et al. 2018)

Motivation

Research Question

- **Claim**: Voting is an area to be studied in cultural economics

- **Question**: Is there a link between historical racial animus and the contemporary voting behavior of blacks?

- **Research Design**: Use historical lynchings to index racial animus

Cultural Beliefs Persist Across Generations

- Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) - find a negative relationship between slave exports and measures of trust over 400 years later

- Voigtlaender and Voth (2012) - find a positive relationship between violent attacks on Jews during the Black Death and anti-Semitic views over 500 years later

- Acharya et al. (2016) - find that political attitudes among southern whites can be traced to the prevalence of slavery

Historical Background

- Reconstruction Act of 1867 changed the voting population in the South (DuBois 1935)

    - 1,000,000 blacks were given the right to vote

    - 300,000 illiterate, poor whites were given the right vote

- Union army commanders sought to protect manhood suffrage

    - Freedmen's Bureau "*advised Negros about registration and voting and disabused their minds of fears of taxation or military service or reenslavement*" (DuBois 1935)

Historical Background

- Voter turnout among black men was between 70% and 90% (Dickerson 2003)

- During Reconstruction, black men voted for white and black Republicans (Redding 2003)

- Black State Delegates

  - 61% in South Carolina

  - 50% in Louisiana

  - 40% in Florida
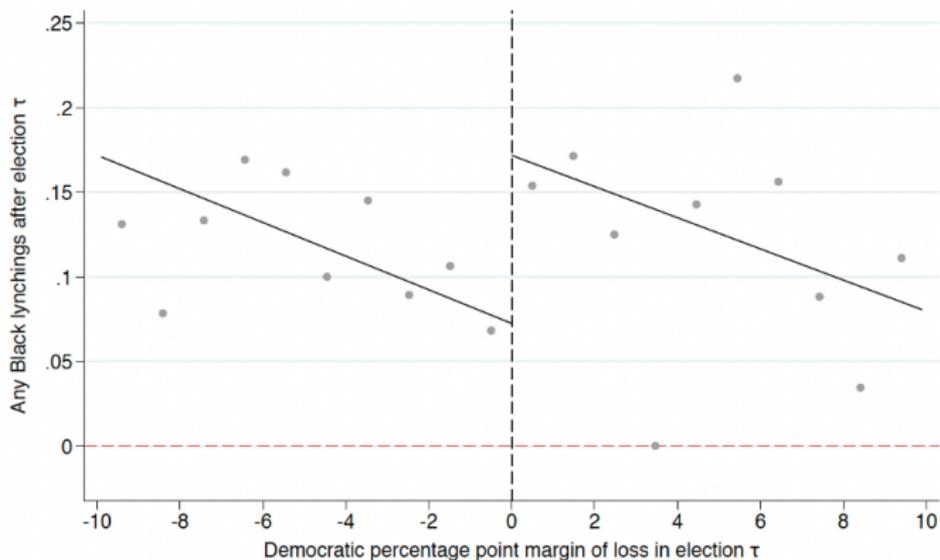
Historical Background

- Blalock's Political Threat Hypothesis (1967)

  - Dominant group believes their political authority is being tested by subordinate group

  - Violence aroused to suppress the black Republican vote (Price et al. 2008)

    - The KKK killed more than 2,000 blacks in Louisiana, two South Carolina legislators, and the President of the Union League

    - Voter turnout among blacks was reduced by 20 percent

Binscatter Plot of Historical Voter Registration in 1867 and Lynchings (County-Level)
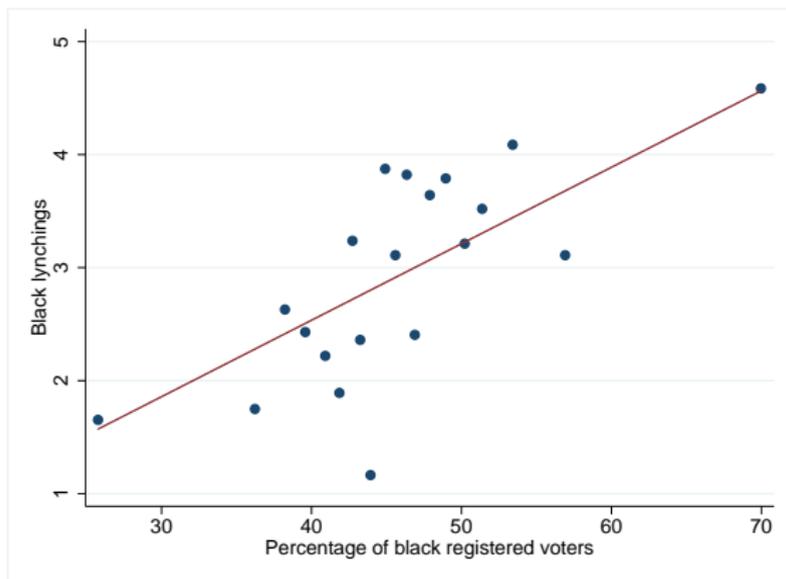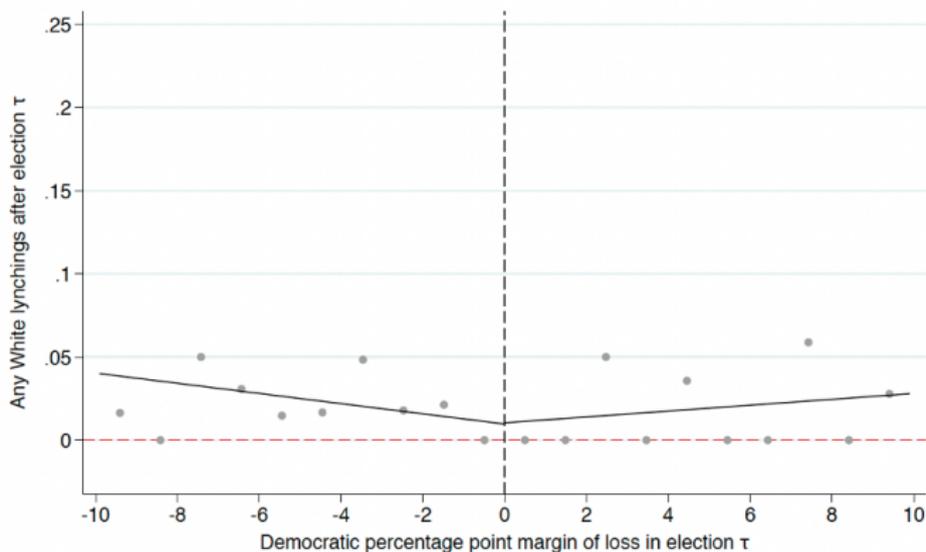

Note: Controls for Percentage of Blacks in 1860
Data source: John Clegg based on tables in Hume and Gough (2008)

Lynchings by Loss Margin in Presidential Elections, 1880–1900 - Black Lynchings

Lynchings by Loss Margin in Presidential Elections, 1880–1900 - White Lynchings

Historical Background

- "But I just decided it was time a few people got put on notice. As long as I live and can do anything about it, niggers are gonna stay in their place. Niggers ain't gonna vote where I live. If they did, they'd control the government." (J. W. Milam)

Conceptual Framework

- Builds on existing voting models and cultural anthropology (Nunn and Wantchekon 2011)

- Vote if benefit of voting $>$ cost voting (Downs 1957)

  - Logistical cost (Ashworth 2011)
  - Information cost (Charles and Stephens 2011)

- Cost of voting is high $\implies$ "rules-of-thumb" develop $\implies$ culture of fear/norms of voter apathy

- Lynchings successfully changed behavioral patterns among blacks

- Cultural norms were transmitted to subsequent generations (Akee et al. 2018)

OLS Empirical Framework

To estimate the relationship between historical racial animus and the contemporary voting behavior of blacks

- Ideal Estimation Strategy:

$$voter\ registration\ rate = \beta_0 + \beta_1 racial\ animus + \epsilon \qquad (1)$$

- Estimation Strategy (Historical and Contemporary controls):

$$voter\ registration\ rate_{cs} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 lynching\ rate_{cs} +$$
$$\boldsymbol{\beta_2 X_{cs}^H} + \delta_s + \epsilon_{cs} \qquad (2)$$

- $voter\ registration\ rate_{cs} = \%\ \frac{black\ registered\ voters}{black\ voting-age\ population}$

- $lynching\ rate_{cs} = \frac{black\ lynchings}{black\ population\ in\ 1900} * 10,000$

Data

Historical Data (county-level)

- Lynchings: The Historical American Lynching Data Collection Project 1882-1930

- Average farm value, Proportion of small farms, Proportion of free blacks: 1860 Census

- Land inequality: Nunn (2008)

- Number of newspapers: 1840 Census

- County formation: Grosjean (2014)

Data

Contemporary Data (county-level)

- Black (white) registered voters: 2000/04/08/12 Secretary of State Office (AL, FL, GA, LA, NC, and SC)

- Black (white) voting-age population: 2000/04/08/12 Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program

Map of Black Lynchings
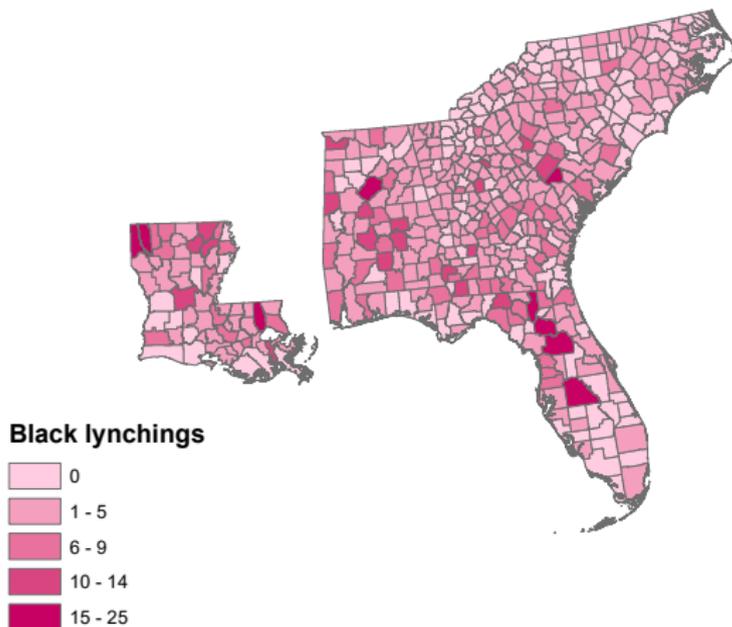
OLS Results (Baseline)

Table 1: Lynching Rates and Black Voter Registration Rates

	Black Voter Registration Rate	
	(1)	(2)
Black lynching rate	-0.666***	-0.507***
	(0.183)	(0.192)
Historical Controls	No	Yes
State Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	256	256
R-Squared	0.498	0.540

Note: Standard errors in parentheses *p<0.10,**p<0.05,***p<0.01.

Falsification Exercises

- Do lynchings predict the contemporary voting behavior of whites?

  - Blacks were disproportionately lynched

  - Lynchings are a proxy for historical racial animus

  - White lynchings and White voter registration rates

Falsification Exercises

Table 2: Lynching Rates and Voter Registration Rates

	Black Registration Rate		White Registration Rate	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black lynching rate	-0.507***		-0.026	
	(0.192)		(0.096)	
White lynching rate		-0.031		-0.017
		(0.104)		(0.056)
Historical Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	256	256	256	256
R-Squared	0.540	0.521	0.596	0.596

Note: Standard errors in parentheses *p<0.10,**p<0.05,***p<0.01.

Potential Confounders - Contemporary Data

Contemporary Data (county-level)

- Proportion of blacks (whites) w/ some college experience: 2000 Census

- Median age of blacks (whites): 2000 Census

- Proportion married: 2000 Census

- Monthly earnings of blacks (whites): 2000/04/08/12 Census Bureau QWI

Potential Confounders - Republican Party Dominance

- Republican party dominance

  - Many of the states in my sample are Republican states

  - Yet many blacks vote Democratic

  - Blacks may refrain from voting since their vote is not pivotal

  - Data Source: David Leip's Atlas

    - Presidential Election Years: 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008

    - Republican Party Dominance = Republican Nominee Votes - Democratic Nominee Votes

Potential Confounders - Incarceration Rates

- Blacks have high incarceration rates

- Individuals cannot vote when they are incarcerated

- Blacks who are incarcerated cannot register to vote

- Data Source: Vera Institute of Justice

  - Number of black individuals in jail per 10,000 county residents in 2010

Potential Confounders - Polling Places

- The number of polling places is a proxy for accessibility to voting

- Individuals can register to vote at polling places in some states

- Data Source: Secretary of State Offices
  - AL, FL, GA, LA, NC, and SC in the 2016 Presidential Election
  - Provides the number of polling places

Potential Confounders - Slavery

- Slavery left behind formal and cultural institutions that made it difficult for blacks to vote today (Acharya et al. 2015)

    - Black codes

    - Jim Crow

- Could this link be due to institutions that remain after slavery?

- Data Source: 1860 Census

    - Proportion of slaves in 1860

OLS Results

Table 3: Lynching Rates and Voter Registration Rates

	Dependent Variable: Black Voter Registration Rate						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Black lynching rate	-0.491**	-0.489**	-0.368*	-0.514***	-0.561***	-0.427**	-0.397**
	(0.194)	(0.196)	(0.194)	(0.196)	(0.166)	(0.184)	(0.170)
Some college experience or more of blacks	6.489						16.827***
	(6.139)						(5.929)
Monthly earnings of blacks		0.003					0.005*
		(0.003)					(0.003)
Republican party dominance (4-year lag)			-0.194***				-0.070
			(0.037)				(0.069)
Incarceration rate of blacks				-0.005			-0.005
				(0.004)			(0.004)
Polling place rate (per 10k pop)					1.481***		1.497***
					(0.230)		(0.248)
Slaves in 1860 (per 10k pop)						0.002***	0.002***
						(0.001)	(0.001)
Historical Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	256	256	256	256	256	256	256
R-Squared	0.542	0.542	0.591	0.543	0.607	0.568	0.657

Note: Standard errors in parentheses *p<0.10,**p<0.05,***p<0.01.

Alternative Explanation - Geographic Sorting

- During the Great Migration, many blacks migrated away from southern counties

- Did blacks with higher voting propensities migrate away from violent southern areas?
  - If so, blacks who were less likely to participate in voting remained

- Examine whether black migrants out of (and into) southern counties with higher lynching rates differ from individuals who did not migrate from these counties

Alternative Explanation - Geographic Sorting

- Data Source: 1940 100% sample obtained from the IPUMS-USA

  - Sample is unique: provides a respondent's current county of residence and county of residence five years prior

  - Allows for individuals who migrated from (to) southern counties to be identified

  - Test whether migrants' individual attributes differ from individuals who remained in southern counties

  - Patterns of mobility out of (and into) southern counties would need to differ as a function of lynchings

Alternative Explanation - Geographic Sorting

Table 4: Lynching Rates and Differences in Attributes between Migrants and Stayers

Out-Migrants vs. Stayers	(1) Log(wage)	(2) Age	(3) Female	(4) Ninth-grade	(5) Full-time	(6) Rent
Outmigrant × Black lynching rate	-0.004	0.002	-0.004**	0.000	0.002	-0.997
	(0.006)	(0.030)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.815)
Outmigrant	0.500***	-0.447	0.075***	0.107***	-0.034**	26.361***
	(0.018)	(0.235)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(2.955)
Black lynching rate	0.004	0.009	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-0.343
	(0.002)	(0.010)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.197)
Historical Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	89,868	218,832	218,832	185,722	218,832	168,215
R-Squared	0.071	0.006	0.003	0.037	0.005	0.005

Note: Standard errors in parentheses *$p<0.10$,**$p<0.05$,***$p<0.01$.

Alternative Explanation - Cultural Voting Norms

- Are lynchings related to cultural voting norms among blacks?

  - Lynchings discouraged political participation $\implies$ behavior passed down

- Data Source: Southern Focus Poll 1992-2001

  - Question: "when you were growing up, how important was it to your parents that you be patriotic"

Cultural Voting Norms

Patriotism Important to Parents
controlling for lynching rates
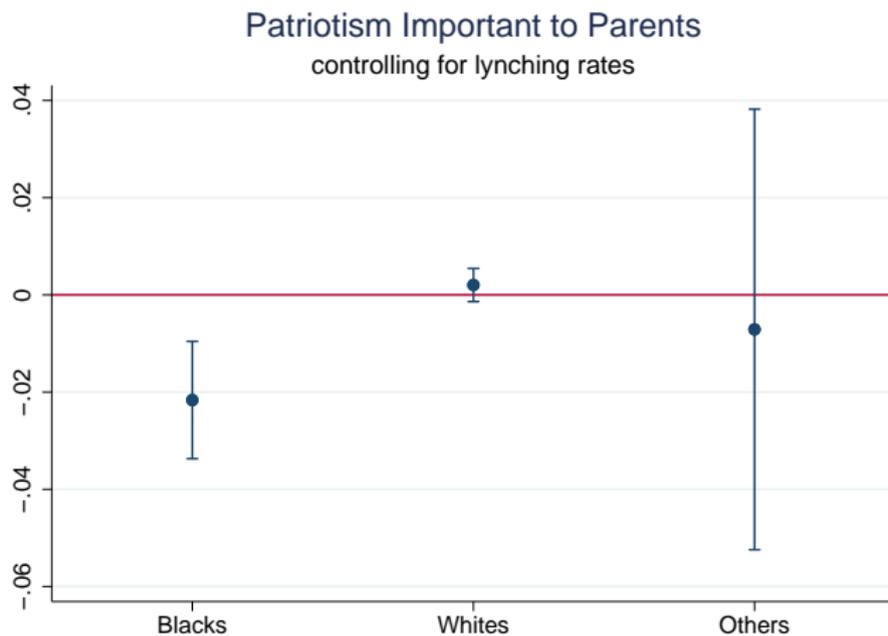
Takeaway

- Low voter registration rates of blacks can be traced back to historical lynchings in counties

  - Unlikely to be driven by
    - Republican party dominance
    - Incarceration rates of blacks
    - Institutions that remained after slavery
    - Geographic sorting
    - Contemporary barriers to voting

- Adds to the new literature in economics that seeks to better understand the role of culture, norms, and beliefs in decision making

LSU - Ending