

Racial Boundary Formation at the Dawn of Jim Crow: The Determinants and Effects of Black/Mulatto Occupational Differences in the United States, 1880

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ABSTRACT

Much of the literature within sociology regarding mixed-race populations focuses on contemporary issues and dynamics, often overlooking a larger historical literature. This article provides a historical perspective on these issues by exploiting regional variation in the United States in the degree of occupational differentiation between blacks and mulattoes in the 1880 Census, during a transitional period from slavery to freedom. The analysis reveals that the role of the mixed-race category as either a “buffer class” or a status threat depended upon the class composition of the white population. Black/mulatto occupational differentiation was greatest in areas where whites had a high level of occupational prestige and thus little to fear from an elevated mulatto group. Furthermore, the effect of black/mulatto occupational differentiation on lynching varied by the occupational status of whites. In areas where whites were of relatively low status, black/mulatto differentiation increased the risk of lynching, while in areas where whites were of relatively high status, black/mulatto differentiation decreased the risk of lynching.

Introduction

The multiracial population of the United States has received renewed interest on the part of both social scientists and the popular press in recent years, largely as a result of increasing rates of interracial marriage and, more recently, changes to official race reporting. Scholarly work has generally focused on either the identity development of multiracial individuals (Korgen 1998; Brunnsma and Rockquemore 2001; Harris and Sim 2002; Herman 2002b; Renn 2004; Roth 2005; Brunnsma 2005; Campbell 2007) or the life chances of multiracial individuals relative to their monoracial peers (Morning 2000; Corrin and Cook 1999; Harris 2002; Herman 2002a; Farley 2002; Roebeck et al. 2008). With regard to multiracial individuals of part-African ancestry, a prominent question within both of these literatures has been whether this new multiracial formation challenges the long standing and ubiquitous “one-drop rule” whereby anyone with identifiable African ancestry is considered exclusively black. In the case of identity, this question is addressed by observing the

identity development and/or identity choices of part-African ancestry individuals. In the case of outcomes, the same question is addressed by determining whether the life-chances of part-African ancestry individuals more closely mirror those of their African American or white peers or whether they fall into some “middle ground.”

These approaches have sometimes been criticized as ahistorical because of a tendency to ignore the complex history of black/white multiraciality. The “one-drop rule” has not always been so dominant within American discourse on race. While the term “mulatto” never attained the social significance in the United States that it did elsewhere in the Americas (namely Brazil and the Caribbean), it was an acknowledged, if ambiguous, category of racial division for most of American history (Davis 1991; Williamson 1980). Indeed, with its inclusion on the U.S. Census from 1850 to 1920 (with the exception of 1900), the mulatto category received a level of official recognition denied to generations of European immigrants during the same time period. The disappearance of this category by the early Twentieth century signaled an important shift in America’s racial boundaries.

In this article, I use newly available full-count Census data from 1880 to explore this prior multiracial classification. The 1880 Census provides a particularly meaningful time point for this study. In the face of Emancipation and the resulting growth in the free black population, Southern whites faced a decision about how to rebuild a racial hierarchy that had previously been maintained by slavery. The transition to Jim Crow segregation and the one-drop rule that underlay it was neither instantaneous nor universal. Therefore, the late Nineteenth century offers an interesting glimpse of racial boundary formation in process within the American South.

In particular, I am interested in whether the nominal triracial distinction used by the Census corresponded to local triracial status hierarchies, as measured by occupational differences between individuals identified as black and mulatto. In this regard, I employ a tactic similar to researchers examining the life chances of mixed-race individuals today by asking whether nominal categorical distinctions corresponded to meaningful social differences in the lives of individuals. As I will show, in some areas of the American South, mulattoes’ position in the occupational hierarchy was clearly superior to that of blacks, while in other areas, mulattoes and blacks occupied similar positions. I exploit this spatial variation to assess the adequacy of theories regarding both the causes and effects of such differentiation. First, I ask what structural characteristics might have influenced the degree of differentiation between blacks and mulattoes. Second, I ask what effect black/mulatto differentiation might have had on levels of racial violence, as measured by white-on-black lynchings.

I find that the degree of local occupational differentiation between mulattoes and blacks was strongly influenced by local structural characteristics. Furthermore, the degree of local occupational differentiation between blacks and mulattoes contributed in a non-linear manner to the level of local racial violence in the 1880’s. The overall results are consistent with arguments about the interests of whites in either fostering or preventing the recognition of a mixed-race category. These interests were not constant across the American South and varied as a function of demographic realities and

potential class conflict.

This work contributes to our understanding of the formation of racial boundaries and the generation of racial inequality. It is relevant to both historical debates regarding the original victory of the “one-drop rule” within the United States and contemporary debates regarding its resilience. To the extent that the establishment of the “one-drop rule” and the dismantling of a triracial hierarchy reflected the interests of whites, this article establishes the way those interests varied and provides clues as to why the United States ultimately abandoned the middle category. In regards to the identification, recognition, and stratification of contemporary multiracial populations, this study demonstrates that a focus on individuals or small group processes may miss important structural factors that can affect the recognition and treatment of these groups.

The “Problem” of Mixed Race

The concept of “mixed race” is an outgrowth of the historical and socially constructed nature of race definitions. Recent work has established that the division of the world’s population into a discrete set of well-bounded races reflects a fairly modern worldview whose roots lie in the colonial expansion of Europeans across the globe (Lieberman 1968; Snowden 1983; Omi and Winant 1994; Hannaford 1996; Smedley 1999; Hirschman 2004). Because physical differences corresponded to the asymmetric power relations of colonialism, they helped solve organizational problems for the colonial enterprise and gave rise to the creation of artificial racial categories that were superimposed on continuous phenotype variability.

Ironically, the colonial period created a challenge to the very categories it helped to create by bringing people with considerable phenotype differences into sexual contact. Thus, all racialized social systems have had to confront the issue of mixed race. The “problem” of multiraciality was contemporaneous with the development of the race concept itself.

The resolution of this problem, however, has been highly variable across both time and space. What factors affect the recognition and treatment of the mixed-race category? I focus here on work that specifically addresses this question with regard to black/white mixing in countries where African slavery was practiced. Broadly speaking, most explanations can be divided into two general approaches. The first approach focuses on the frequency and character of miscegenation as determinative of the status of the mixed-race category. The second approach focuses on the contemporaneous interests of whites in either recognizing or eliminating the mixed-race category.

According to the first approach, the mixed-race category had a greater likelihood of receiving recognition in areas where miscegenation was both relatively high and less stigmatized. What then determines these patterns? The earliest work on this question often addressed cultural, legal, and religious traditions that facilitated higher levels of miscegenation and greater acceptance for its product in Iberian cultures than in Northern European cultures (Tannenbaum 1947; Freyre 1956; Degler 1971). Other arguments have focused on demographic differences between areas, particularly

the sex ratio (Jordan 1962, Horowitz 1973, Blalock 1967, pp. 172).

Arguments along these lines typically focus on cross-national differences in miscegenation during the colonial period, relying primarily on the institutional momentum built into the early establishment of a mulatto group. Several issues limit the usefulness of this approach in later time periods. First, many of the cross-national differences in these factors (such as the sex ratio) diminished over time, reducing their explanatory power. Second, the direction of causality between a distinct mixed-race group and patterns of miscegenation becomes much more difficult to determine in later periods. One could reasonably argue that the existence of a stable, recognized mixed-race group would increase the social acceptability of miscegenation, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, the expected direction of the relationship itself in later periods is not even clear. For example, Hoetink (1973) argues that in the non-Latin Caribbean a reduction in miscegenation between all three groups actually helped to crystallize group distinctions by creating greater social distance between them. This pattern can be contrasted with Latin America, where continued high levels of miscegenation may have contributed to a much more gradational hierarchy that focuses on skin color rather than sharp categorical divides.

A focus on institutional momentum cannot account for the considerable within-country variability over time in the acceptance of a mixed-race category. Critically for this analysis, it ignores the serious historical disjuncture in all of these societies that came with the end of slavery (Marx 1998, pp. 73-74). During the slavery period, racial distinctions were largely overshadowed by the more important boundary between freedom and slavery. The ambiguity of the term “mulatto” during this time period is a reflection of the fact that it was neither necessary nor threatening, given that the slavery system itself efficiently organized the racial hierarchy.

This organization is evidenced by the frequent conflation of the mixed-race category and the category of free colored during the slavery period. Contemporary observers often used the terms interchangeably, and the numbers supported this usage. In 1860, mulattoes made up 41% of the free colored population in the southern United States, but only 10% of the slave population (Berlin 1974, pp. 178). The ratio was even greater in the lower South, where 76% of the free colored population was classified as mulatto, compared to only 9% of the slave population (Berlin 1974, pp. 178).

It was only when the distinction between freedom and slavery disappeared that the distinction between black and mulatto became particularly salient for whites. The black/mulatto boundary was forced to do the organizational work of both boundaries. Although the mixed-race category ultimately collapsed under this burden in the United States, this outcome was by no means clear by the late Nineteenth century. Rather, what emerged by the end of Reconstruction was a great deal of heterogeneity around the issue of mixed race.

In order to understand this variability, I must move beyond explanations that focus on an inheritance from the colonial period. Because whites were the prime shapers of the racial hierarchies that emerged in the post-bellum South, I turn instead to theories regarding the contemporaneous

interests of whites in either maintaining or eliminating the mixed-race category.

Across a broad literature, two key arguments stand out. The first argument involves the reaction of the white population to potential threats to its power as a result of the relative size of the subordinate group(s). The second argument addresses the potential class cleavages within the white population and the effect of these cleavages on the racial hierarchy.

The hypothesis that minority group size might have an effect on racial stratification has been proposed by many scholars, but most formally by Blalock (1967). In the general case, it is argued that the perceived threat of a minority group will increase with its size, which will in turn trigger greater discrimination by the dominant group, leading to higher levels of racial inequality. Empirical tests of this hypothesis within the United States have generally confirmed that black/white inequality is higher in areas where blacks form a larger proportion of the population (Blalock 1957; Frisbie and Neidert 1977; Tienda and Lii 1987; Burr et al. 1991; Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno 1996; Beggs et al. 1997; Cohen 1998; McCall 2001).

Group size may have also affected the standing of mulattoes vis-a-vis blacks through a similar mechanism of perceived threat. According to what I call the demographic threat argument, the mixed race category served as a buffer class for whites living amongst a relatively large African-ancestry population (Horowitz 1973; Wolfe 2001).¹ Faced with the constant threat of organization and insurrection by the darker masses, whites were more likely to pursue a policy of divide and conquer. By elevating a portion of the African-ancestry population, whites could provide an incentive for this group to maintain the status quo and identify its interests with whites rather than with its darker countrymen. Furthermore, because the darkest individuals themselves had the opportunity for upward intergenerational mobility within the racial hierarchy, they may have been more likely to acquiesce to the existing system.

This argument can be distinguished from another approach that focuses instead on the potential competitive threat of a mixed-race category to the status of white workers. It has long been recognized that white labor played a key role in the establishment of sharp racial divisions within the United States (Weber 1978; Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 1991). The threat of competition from free black labor hindered any coalition of white and black labor and directly contributed to anti-abolitionist activity, racial violence, and the development of the concept of “whiteness” itself. The threat to white workers posed by black labor may have been both a material threat to their economic well-being and a psychological threat to their social honor.

The degree of potential competitive threat whites felt from a mixed-race category may have also affected its standing. In a particular version of occupational queueing (Lieberson 1980), the ability of the mixed-race group to move up in the status hierarchy depended upon the relative absence

¹Since the distinction between black and mulatto ultimately collapsed into the single term “black,” some lexical gymnastics are required to describe the population of both blacks and mulattoes in 1880. I use the term “African-ancestry” to refer to this population.

of a group of whites competing for that same space. In areas with a dearth of white workers, the mixed-race category might have served as a particular kind of “middleman minority” by filling interstitial positions in the economy between that of white elites and black laborers (Harris 1964; Blalock 1967; Wimmer 2008). Where white workers were numerous, however, they may have felt a threat to both their own economic status and their social honor by the elevation of a mixed-race category (Harris 1964, pp. 86-89; Hoetink 1973, 14-31).

Although I have distinguished between demographic and status threat theories for expository purposes, the distinction between these theories in practice is less clear. Areas with a relatively large number of white workers by definition had a relatively small African-ancestry population. Similarly, the ability of mixed-race individuals to fill interstitial positions in plantation economies was largely dependent upon the fact that whites were limited to a small group.

However, demographic and status threat theories need not be seen as competing explanations. Instead, I advance here a theory that synthesizes these two approaches. In every case, the mixed-race category presented whites with two countervailing risks. On the one hand, a lack of recognition risked greater solidarity and mobilization among African-ancestry individuals. On the other hand, recognition risked greater economic and status competition from a mixed-race group. The relative weight of these two risks varied by each white individual’s own placement within the socioeconomic hierarchy. Whites low in the socioeconomic hierarchy had more reason to fear the status threat of an elevated mixed-race category, while whites high in the socioeconomic hierarchy had more reason to fear solidarity among African-ancestry individuals.

The nature of potential threats to white power, then, differ by the economic standing of whites in the given area. This argument is shown schematically in Table 1. The status of the white population is shown along the rows. Areas where whites have a high status are likely to be dominated by a small white elite, while areas with a low white status are likely to incorporate a larger number of white workers. The difference in status between blacks and mulattoes is shown along the columns. In areas with a high black/mulatto difference, mulattoes have a status clearly higher than blacks on average, while in areas with a low black/mulatto difference, mulattoes lack a clear advantage over blacks.

The two cases along the diagonal indicate stable situations in which the status quo is more likely to be maintained. In the case of a high-status white population, areas with a high level of black/mulatto difference will have an effective buffer class to diffuse racial tension and prevent racial solidarity among African-ancestry individuals. The potential threat posed by economic competition will be minimal in this case because the status of whites is relatively high. In the case of a low-status white population, on the other hand, whites will feel more secure in their own social status when it is not threatened by the elevation of a mixed-race category.

The two-off diagonal cases indicate unstable situations in which a significant number of whites will perceive threats to their own position. In the case of a low-status white population and a high level of distinction between blacks and mulattoes, white workers will see such a distinction as a

threat to their own status. In the case of a low level of black/mulatto difference and a high-status white population, whites will feel threatened by the potential for organization and resistance within an undifferentiated group of African-ancestry individuals.

The theories presented above focus exclusively on the interests of whites in either maintaining or eliminating the mixed-race category. This focus is not meant to imply a lack of agency on the part of the African-ancestry population itself. There is ample evidence from the historical record that mulattoes made their own attempts at maintaining distinction in the late Nineteenth century (Williamson 1980; Russell et al. 1992; Jones 2000). The most visible example of such attempts were the so-called “blue vein” societies that sprang up throughout the South in the post-bellum period, whose names were a reference to the admission criterion. However, whatever strategies African-ancestry individuals might have pursued were largely constrained by the actions of whites. When whites united around the one-drop rule by the early Twentieth century, mixed-race distinction was no longer a viable strategy for lighter-skinned African-ancestry individuals, and attempts at maintaining such distinction gave away to efforts by both blacks and mulattoes to create greater solidarity within the new “brown” population (Williamson 1980).

Analytical Approach and Theoretical Expectations

In order to test the theories presented above, I use the full-count 1880 Census data to measure 1880 county differences in the occupational standing of black and mulatto men who entered the labor market after the Civil War. It is important to note that I am using the occupational differences between individuals identified as black and mulatto as a signifier of differentiation, rather than the classification into a mulatto or black category itself. The classification into the mulatto or black category is not simply a function of local customs, but also reflects to some extent the genealogical background and physical appearance of those classified. These characteristics are simply unobservable in the available data. Furthermore, given the fact that the mulatto share of the African-ancestry population increased from 1850 to 1920 even as the one-drop rule became more dominant in common practice, enumerators’ ability and willingness to make a distinction when asked to do so was not necessarily dependent upon local customs. The more relevant question is the degree to which the distinctions enumerators made in terms of classification corresponded to differences in the resources and prestige that accrued to individuals.

I use this measure of differentiation in two ways. First, I treat it as a dependent variable and ask what county-level variables predicted a high level of black/mulatto differentiation. If the elevation of a mixed-race category largely resulted from whites’ desire for a buffer class when faced with a relatively large African-ancestry population, I expect black/mulatto differentiation to be higher in counties with a relatively larger African-ancestry population. If the elevation of a mixed-race category was more likely to occur when the implicit threat of economic competition with white workers was weak, I expect black/mulatto differentiation to be higher in counties with a relatively high-status white population.

Although my primary interest is testing demographic threat and status competition arguments, I can to some extent also examine the effect of miscegenation on black/white differentiation. In areas with a greater frequency of African-ancestry/white intermarriage, I expect black/mulatto differentiation to be greater because of the clear kinship connections between whites and mulattoes. Greater intermarriage between mulattoes and blacks, on the other hand, might decrease differentiation because it weakens the boundaries between these groups.

I can also determine whether a pre-existing group of free coloreds provided any institutional momentum to black/mulatto differentiation. It is generally believed that the dominance of lighter-skinned individuals within the free colored population gave a “head start” to the mulatto population in the post-Emancipation period (Russell et al. 1992; Mullins and Sites 1984). This head-start may have been purely the result of the familial transfer of advantage between free colored parents and their disproportionately mulatto children, but it may also have benefited mulattoes born into slavery because of a desire on the part of free coloreds to maintain status distinctions in the face of a large influx of freed slaves. I expect to observe greater black/mulatto differentiation in areas that had a larger free-colored population during the ante-bellum period.

In the second part of the analysis, I treat black/mulatto occupational differentiation as an independent variable and ask how it affected the frequency of lynching in the South during the 1880’s. Racially-motivated lynchings have commonly been treated as a form of social control that whites employed when the racial hierarchy was threatened (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Few (if any) individuals were lynched for simply being a mulatto, but anxiety over either the elevation of a mixed-race category or the absence of one may have affected whites’ general sense of threat and thus affected the likelihood of lynching for other infractions of the social order, both real and imagined.

I expect that the effect of black/mulatto occupational differentiation on lynching will vary depending on other characteristics of the county in question. If whites’ primary concern was the demographic threat posed by a large African-ancestry population, then I expect that black/mulatto differentiation will have an increasingly negative effect on lynching risk as the relative size of the African-ancestry population grows, because the mulatto group becomes more important as a buffer class. If whites’ attitudes toward the mixed-race category varied by their own placement in the socioeconomic hierarchy, then I expect that the effect of black/mulatto differentiation will vary by the average occupational status of whites, as shown in Table 1. Greater black/mulatto differentiation will increase lynching risk in areas where the occupational status of whites is low and will decrease lynching risk in areas where the occupational status of whites is high.

Data

For this analysis, I primarily use the 1880 Census complete-count microdata, available through the North Atlantic Population Project (2005). These data were originally collected by the Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and were subsequently provided to the Minnesota Population Center for the purposes of data cleaning and distribution. The Minnesota Population Center checked the data for coding errors and constructed several new variables using procedures similar to those for their Census microdata samples (Ruggles and Sobek 1997; Roberts et al. 2003a).

I restrict the data to Southern states using the Census definition of the South, with the inclusion of Missouri and the exclusion of Oklahoma and extremely sparsely populated areas of West Texas.² I use this definition because it incorporates all states where slavery was legal on the eve of the Civil War, although there was considerable variation in the extent of the practice of slavery across these states. Importantly, this definition includes border regions of the South such as Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia that are often excluded from analyses of the slave-holding South. This definition also incorporates frontier areas such as Texas and Missouri. I found that eliminating these states, either piecemeal or in whole, had little effect on the overall results. This definition of the South provides me with a total of 1286 Southern counties.

My primary interest is in occupational differentiation between individuals classified as mulatto and individuals classified as black. Neither income nor education are available on the 1880 census, so occupation provides the only measure of status distinctions. The 1880 Census used an open-ended format to record occupation, leading to a diverse set of responses. See Roberts et al. (2003b) for a thorough discussion of the issues in using such open-ended responses. These responses were recoded by the Minnesota Population Center into 1950 Census occupational codes using methods developed for work on historical microdata samples of the U.S. Census (Ronander 1999). Although there are almost certainly errors in coding this volume of data, most occupational responses to the original census form actually fell within a small set of unproblematic values (Roberts et al. 2003b). Among Southern African-ancestry male workers, around 87 percent of respondents were categorized into three occupations: farmers (26.9%), farm laborers (28.3%), and laborers (30.7%). The distinction between farm laborers and laborers is frequently unclear in the original data, so there may be some discrepancies between these two categories. For my purposes, however, the categories are very similar in that they both indicate an unskilled worker. The large size of this dataset should minimize the effect of any discrepancies in the remainder of the occupational codes at the aggregate level, although such discrepancies may be problematic in extremely small counties.

I use the Duncan socioeconomic index (SEI) to assess the prestige of each respondent's current occupation (Blau and Duncan 1967). The Duncan SEI uses the average education and average income of each occupation in 1950 to produce a measure of overall social prestige. The use of 1950 averages as a basis for 1880 occupations may lead to some distortion for particular occupations. However, my goal is not to produce an accurate measure of occupational income and education in 1880, but rather to produce a rank ordering of occupations that is consistent with 1880 preferences.

²This definition includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia in addition to the District of Columbia.

There is strong evidence that occupational rankings are highly stable across time and space (Hout and Diprete 2006).

Although the abstraction of the Duncan SEI may lose some of the important details for specific occupations or for the specialized economies of local areas, it allows for a broad-ranging comparison across a diverse set of occupations and a variety of different labor markets. The two most important distinctions for the African-ancestry population in the South were the distinction between farm labor and independent farm ownership and the distinction between unskilled labor and skilled labor. As I noted above, about 26.9% of African-ancestry workers were farmers, while 28.3% were farm laborers. The SEI scores for farmers and farm laborers are 8 and 14, respectively.³ About 30.7% of the African-ancestry workers were laborers, or unskilled workers, while about 7.4% of the African-ancestry workers belonged to a heterogeneous group of craftsmen and operatives. The SEI score for the laborer group is 6, while the average SEI score for skilled workers (craftsmen and operatives) was 18.4. Thus, these two dimensions constitute the bulk of differentiation observed between groups.

The key variable in this analysis is the identification of the respondent as either mulatto or black. With the exception of 1900, every Census between 1850 and 1920 made this distinction.⁴ This distinction was added in 1850 not as a result of shifting public sentiment, but rather due to the effective lobbying of race scientists, whose primary interest in the data revolved around the question of the the viability of “racial hybridity” (Nobles 2002). Thus, the existence of the mulatto category should not be taken as an indication of public acceptance for the category itself.

Little information exists on how enumerators made this decision. The instructions for the question on “color” given to enumerators were as follows:

It must not be assumed that, where nothing is written in this column, ”white” is to be understood. The column is always to be filled. Be particularly careful in reporting the class mulatto. The word is here generic, and includes quadroons, octoroons, and all persons having any perceptible trace of African blood. Important scientific results depend upon the correct determination of this class in schedules 1 and 5. (US Bureau of the Census 1989)

Besides being asked to pay it particular attention, enumerators were given no special instructions regarding how to distinguish mulattoes from blacks. Presumably, most enumerators simply “eyeballed it,” basing their responses on the physical characteristics of individuals in the household,

³The SEI of farmers may underrepresent the prestige of this group within the agriculturally dominant South. However, this underrepresentation is mitigated by the fact that farm owners cannot be distinguished from farm tenants in this data. In any case, if the SEI underrepresents the status of independent farmers in this period, it will tend to dampen the observed differentiation between groups, leading to lower-bound estimates in the following analysis.

⁴the 1890 Census went even further with a distinction between black, mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon.

although in some cases they may have used local community information to help inform their decision. It is likely that idiosyncratic enumerator variation is considerable in this regard. However, because there is no objectively correct classification of mulatto, measurement error is not an issue. Rather, what is important is the degree to which different observers would agree on the classification of specific individuals as mulatto. In this Census record, particular enumerators were responsible for the classification of individuals in each household. If different enumerators had been used or if these enumerators had been reassigned, the results might be somewhat different. Thus, this particular Census is one realization of a classification process that is naturally stochastic.

A secondary issue is the potential for reverse causality between mulatto status and occupation. Enumerators may have been more likely to classify an African-ancestry individual as a mulatto in cases where that individual had a more prestigious occupation. For my purposes, this issue is not problematic. Whether black/mulatto occupational differentiation results from real occupational differences or racial “upgrading” by enumerators, variation in both cases measures the same underlying phenomenon: the willingness of individuals to recognize a meaningful distinction between the two groups. Of course, in the latter case, if enumerators are not drawn from the local area, the relationship between county-level characteristics and differentiation will be weakened. However, Census supervisors in 1880 had a clear preference for hiring local enumerators and it is only in sparsely settled frontier areas where enumerators had to be brought in from elsewhere (Magnuson 1995).

I make extensive use of aggregate county-level measures that are obtained by aggregating the full-count data. I also use published data from the 1860 Census to calculate county growth over time and to measure the size of the free colored population. Finally, I use published data from the 1880 Census to measure the rate of farm ownership, manufacturing intensity, and the urbanicity of each county. These published data were obtained from Haines and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (2005).

Because county boundaries changed between 1860 and 1880, it is necessary to map the 1880 counties onto the 1860 county boundaries in order to combine 1860 and 1880 data. In most cases, counties whose boundaries changed were simply divided between 1860 and 1880, so mapping 1880 counties to 1860 boundaries is a straightforward process of aggregation. In some cases, however, boundary changes were more complex. In these cases, I assigned 1880 counties to 1860 counties if 70% or more of their area was contained by the 1860 county and they collectively accounted for at least 80% of the area of the 1860 county. Figure 1 shows the 1860-boundary counties I use as a result of this mapping exercise. In total, I have 1124 Southern 1860-boundary counties. 110 of these counties were dropped because boundary changes between 1860 and 1880 were too complex to create a correspondence. Most of these counties were located in either Alabama or Arkansas and they accounted for about 10% of the Southern 1860 population. An additional 15 counties in West Texas were dropped due to a lack of published Census data in 1860. I obtain similar results from the analysis to follow when the 1860 variables are excluded and the 1880 county boundaries are used instead (not shown).

I also make use of data on the number of white-on-black lynchings between 1882 and 1889 in most of these Southern counties.⁵ The original data come from annual lists of lynching victims compiled separately by the Tuskegee Institute, the NAACP, and the Chicago Tribune. These original data have been verified and cleaned by Tolnay and Beck using contemporary newspaper accounts (Tolnay and Beck 1995, p. 259-263). The lynching data are restricted to the states of Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Since I do not incorporate 1860 data into this portion of the analysis, I work with the original 1880 county boundaries rather than the 1860 boundaries. I exclude twelve counties that had no mulatto men in the workforce in the 1880 Census. After this restriction, I am left with 344 documented white-on-black lynchings in 772 Southern counties between the years of 1882 and 1889.

Black/Mulatto Occupational Differences

Figure 2 provides a first impression of the relationship between demography, competition, and black/mulatto occupational differentiation in the U.S. South. Each panel shows a scatterplot of the average Duncan SEI of male workers in 1880 by the percentage of the county that is African-ancestry for each county in the South. The best-fitting OLS regression line is shown for each cluster of points. The panel on the left compares the average SEI of white and African-ancestry workers. The occupational status of whites is clearly higher on average in counties where the African-ancestry population was larger, while the occupational status of African-ancestry individuals declines slightly in counties where they are more numerous. The pattern is consistent with the organization of the Southern economy during this time period. Areas with a relatively large African-ancestry population were more likely to be dominated by a plantation economy characterized by a small group of white elites and a large group of African-ancestry workers. It is unlikely that whites in such areas would perceive of the African-ancestry population as a threat to their status, except perhaps through violent insurrection. Where the African-ancestry population is relatively small, however, the occupational distinction between the white and African-ancestry population is far less and therefore whites might be more anxious to protect their privileged racial status.

The panel on the right replaces the mean SEI of African-ancestry workers with the mean SEI of its two component populations: black and mulatto workers. While the mean SEI of black workers is still negatively related to the size of the African-ancestry population, the mean SEI of mulatto workers increases with the relative size of the African-ancestry population. As a result of these divergent trends, the gap between mulatto and black workers grows as the relative size of the African-ancestry population increases. Based on the OLS regression lines, when the African-ancestry share of the population increases from 5 percent to 80 percent, the average gap between

⁵The number of white-on-black lynchings includes lynchings of both blacks and mulattoes, but I use the traditional term for this measure.

blacks and mulattoes grows by nearly a factor of four, from 0.57 SEI points to 2.08 SEI points. Although a difference of two SEI points may not seem great in modern perspective, it is important to remember that the average SEI among all African-ancestry men in 1880 was only about 10.6.

This figure demonstrates that black/mulatto occupational differentiation was related to larger structural characteristics. However, it has several important limitations. First, because this figure examines SEI for the entire workforce, it combines the results for older cohorts born before Emancipation and for younger cohorts born after Emancipation. Since I am particularly interested in how whites attempted to reconstruct the racial hierarchy after the collapse of slavery, I want to isolate differentiation among young workers who entered the labor force after Emancipation. Second, this figure does not account for any potential confounding variables that might explain the observed relationships. Of particular interest here are differences in local labor markets and racial composition prior to Emancipation. Third, because the figure treats each county as an unweighted observation, I have no way of discounting the results from counties with small mulatto or black populations where the random variability in SEI is likely to be higher.

Finally, and most importantly, Figure 2 presents evidence that could plausibly be interpreted from either a demographic threat or status competition perspective. On the one hand, black/mulatto occupational differentiation clearly increases as the relative size of the African-ancestry population increases, consistent with a demographic threat argument. On the other hand, black/mulatto occupational differentiation also increases as the status of whites increases, consistent with a status competition argument. The fairly strong association between the relative size of the African-ancestry population and the mean SEI of the white population ($r = 0.49$) indicates that I will need to employ multivariate models in order to disentangle the underlying relationships.

In order to address these shortcomings, I use a multilevel model that can account for social differentiation between individuals as a result of social context. My interest is in the cohort of Southern African-ancestry men whose early careers developed in the period between 1865 and 1880. Therefore, I limit my analysis to Southern African-ancestry men between the ages of 20 and 34. This particular cohort was 5-19 years old by the end of the Civil War and, therefore, most of their work history occurred after Emancipation.

I first specify an individual-level model to generate the necessary county-level measures. The individual-level model predicts the Duncan SEI score (y_{ij}) for individual i in county j ,

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(m_{ij} - \bar{m}_{.j}) + \sum_{k=1}^K \lambda_k(x_{kij} - \bar{x}_{k..}) + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where m_{ij} is an indicator variable for whether the individual is mulatto, the K x_{ij} variables are individual-level control variables, and ϵ_{ij} is a random error assumed to be distributed as $N(0, \sigma)$. The group-mean centering of m_{ij} and the grand-mean centering of the control variables gives a particular interpretation to the β parameters. β_{0j} is the mean SEI score among all African-ancestry men age 20 to 34 in county j conditional on being at the grand mean for the control variables.

β_{1j} is the mean difference in SEI score between blacks and mulattoes in county j controlling for individual-level differences. Thus, within each county, this model distinguishes between the overall level of occupational prestige for the African-ancestry population and the prestige differentiation between blacks and mulattoes within that African-ancestry population. Individual-level control variables are limited in the full-count Census data for 1880. I include both age and marital status as predictors. I also include the square of age to allow for non-linearity in the effect of age on SEI.

The individual level model is used primarily to generate estimates of β_{0j} and β_{1j} . These values are then predicted in a county level model that treats level and differentiation as functions of county-level variables. Specifically,

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \sum_{l=1}^L \gamma_{0l}(w_{lj} - \bar{w}_l) + \delta_j \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \sum_{l=1}^L \gamma_{1l}(w_{lj} - \bar{w}_l) + \eta_j \quad (3)$$

Where the L w_j variables are county-level contextual variables, and δ_j and η_j are each random error terms assumed to be distributed as $N(0, \tau_1)$ and $N(0, \tau_2)$, respectively. The γ_{0l} coefficient describes how the mean level of occupational prestige for the African-ancestry population changes as a function of county-level variable w_l , while the γ_{1l} coefficient describes how the level of occupational differentiation between blacks and mulattoes changes as a function of the same county-level variable. The county-level variables are all mean-centered for interpretive convenience.

The key model in this analysis is the county-level model of black/mulatto differentiation. I use the percent African-ancestry within each county and the relative growth of the African-ancestry population within each county to test the effect of demographic threat on the level of black/mulatto differentiation.⁶ In order to test the effect of status competition, I include three measures of the class structure among whites. First, I include the mean level of SEI among white males as an indicator of status. Second, I include the percentage of white males who are unemployed. Third, I include the percentage of whites who are foreign-born. Although the latter variable does not measure economic competition directly, it does identify a group that may have been particularly susceptible to threats to their social honor.

In order to account for patterns of miscegenation, I include measures of the frequency of both African-ancestry/white intermarriage and black/mulatto intermarriage.⁷ In order to measure the

⁶Relative African-ancestry growth is measured as the ratio of the African-ancestry growth ratio to the overall growth ratio.

⁷African-ancestry/white intermarriage and black/mulatto intermarriage are both measured as outmarriage ratios for the African-ancestry and black population respectively. I used outmarriage ratios instead of odds ratios, because outmarriage ratios more accurately account for individuals' perception of frequency. See Gullickson (2006) for a discussion of these types of measures. Because I log these measures in the analysis and many of the values are zeroes, I impute the lowest non-zero value for these zero values and include an indicator variable for these imputations.

effect of a pre-existing community of free coloreds, I include the percent of the county that was free colored in 1860.

I also attempt to control for labor market differences between counties by including the percentage of the labor force engaged in manufacturing, the overall population size of the county (logged), population growth since 1860, the percentage of farms owned by the operator, and whether the county is identified as urban or not.⁸ Furthermore, In order to rule out any unobserved differences between states that may account for level and differentiation, I include state fixed effects.

Substituting equations (2) and (3) into equation (1) yields a mixed effects model involving fixed effects, a random intercept (δ_j), and a random coefficient for the mulatto variable (η_j). It is estimated in R using the lme4 package (R Development Core Team 2005; Bates and Sarkar 2007).

Table 2 presents the results from the multilevel model. Model 1 serves as a baseline model, including all control variables and state fixed effects. These control variables have sizable effects on both the SEI level of the African-ancestry population overall and occupational differentiation between black and mulatto workers. However, as some of the effects will change in subsequent models, I withhold discussion of these control variables until later.

Model 2 adds as predictors the relative size of the African-ancestry population and the relative growth of the African-ancestry population between 1860 and 1880. The overall SEI of the African-ancestry population is negatively effected by its size, as would be expected by the visibility-discrimination hypothesis (Blalock 1967). However, the effect is quite small. An increase of 10 percent in the relative size of the African-ancestry population is associated with only a 0.2 point reduction in mean SEI. Relative African-ancestry growth on the other hand is associated with an increase in the SEI of the African-ancestry population. The effect of this variable is difficult to interpret because areas with relatively high African-ancestry growth between 1860 and 1880 likely had high growth precisely because they were good labor markets for African-ancestry workers, leading to endogeneity between occupational SEI and relative African-ancestry growth in the cross-sectional analysis. This endogeneity likely overwhelms any effect of discrimination by the white population in response to perceived threat.

The effect of relative African-ancestry population size on black/mulatto occupational differentiation is as expected by demographic threat theory. Counties with a relatively larger African-ancestry population, on average, had greater black/mulatto occupational differentiation. The effect is moderate. An increase of 10 percent in the relative size of the African-ancestry population is associated with a 0.15 point increase in the SEI difference between black and mulatto workers, or a 7 percent increase relative to the mean SEI difference of 2.15. Although this change may seem trivial, the overall effect can actually be quite substantial given the large variation in the size of the relative African-ancestry population across Southern counties. The interquartile range of percent African-ancestry in Southern counties, for example, is about 42%. The effect of relative

⁸population growth is measured as the ratio of the 1880 population size to the 1860 population size.

African-ancestry growth is more uncertain, although in the expected direction.

Model 3 incorporates variables that measure the white class structure. Neither the percentage of white males unemployed nor the percentage of the population that is foreign-born had appreciable effects on level or differentiation. The mean SEI of whites, however, had a substantial effect on both level and differentiation. There is a positive association between the mean SEI of whites and the mean SEI of the African-ancestry population, most likely reflecting the quality of the overall labor market.

More importantly, the mean SEI of whites has a strong positive association with black/mulatto occupational differentiation. Counties with a high-status white population had greater occupational differentiation between black and mulatto workers, on average, than counties with a low-status white population. Furthermore, the effect of the relative size of the African-ancestry population is severely attenuated once the mean SEI of white workers is introduced. Indeed, the estimated effect of relative African-ancestry population size is very close to zero in Model 3.

These results are consistent with a status competition argument of differentiation. In counties where the status of white workers was less secure, whites were more resistant to the elevation of a mixed-race category. In areas where the status of whites was more secure, whites tolerated and perhaps even encouraged a mixed-race category. The role of demography here is indirect. While it is true that areas with a relatively larger African-ancestry population had higher levels of black/mulatto differentiation, this association was simply a reflection of the fact that areas with a relatively large African-ancestry population were more likely to be areas with a small group of high-status whites.

The effects of intermarriage on black/mulatto occupational differentiation are unclear. In the case of African-ancestry/white intermarriage, the sparseness of the data across counties makes estimation difficult. The African-ancestry/white marriage ratio has no appreciable effect on either level or differentiation once the relative size of the African-ancestry population has been controlled. If intermarriage provides a rough proxy for the overall level of miscegenation, then this result indicates that the contemporaneous level of miscegenation bore little relationship to distinctions between blacks and mulattoes. Black/mulatto intermarriage, on the other hand, did have a moderate negative effect on black/mulatto differentiation, although this effect falls below the standard cut-off for statistical significance in Model 3. It may have been more difficult for mulattoes to establish a dominant position in areas where racial boundaries between blacks and mulattoes were more permeable.

The size of the free colored population in 1860 has a very large positive effect on differentiation. Black/mulatto occupational differentiation was greater in 1880 in areas where free coloreds were relatively numerous in 1860, supporting the argument that pre-existing communities of free coloreds provided a mulatto “head-start.” Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine with the given data the extent to which this mulatto advantage reflects the transmission of advantage from lighter-skinned free persons of color to their children or collective efforts by free persons of color to per-

petuate black/mulatto distinctiveness in order to maintain an advantage in the post-Emancipation period.

The results for the control variables provide some interesting findings, as well. In Models 1 and 2, population size has a positive effect on both level and differentiation, but these effects both decline considerably with the introduction of white class structure controls in Model 3. Thus, part of the effect of population size is due to the fact that whites' overall occupational standing was higher in more populous areas, probably through scale effects, and white's occupational standing was associated with both the occupational standing of the African-ancestry population and differentiation within this population. Nonetheless, the effects for differentiation remain positive and statistically distinguishable from zero, suggesting that mulatto/black differentiation may have also increased through population scale effects, consistent with arguments that mulattoes were able to fill interstitial roles in more diversified labor markets.

In the preferred Model 3, manufacturing intensity has a positive effect on level but a strong negative effect on differentiation. Labor markets with a high level of manufacturing intensity benefited the African-ancestry population overall, but reduced the dominance of mulattoes. These results suggest that black/mulatto differentiation may have been particularly tied to the organization of the agrarian labor force. The logic of early industrial capitalism, dependent on a largely homogenized workforce, may have been incompatible with the elevation of a mixed race category. However, I would caution against a strong interpretation because other variables associated with industrial development produced contrary results. First, as I noted above, population size had a substantial positive effect on differentiation. Second, manufacturing intensity also improved the occupational standing of the white population which in turn had positive effects on differentiation. Indeed, if both population size and the mean SEI of the white population are excluded from these models, the effect of manufacturing intensity is strongly positive. Thus, it would appear that industrial development produced a set of somewhat contradictory forces with regard to black/mulatto occupational differentiation. The manufacturing system itself may have been antithetical to a mixed-race category, but the diversified economy resulting from population scale and the elevation of whites in the industrial economy both fostered the development of a mixed-race category.

Lynching

The foregoing analysis provides strong evidence that the economic standing of whites played a key role in black/mulatto differentiation. However, it provides little evidence of the ways in which whites actively encouraged or restricted such differentiation. I now ask how whites responded to black/mulatto occupational differentiation directly. Specifically I examine how black/mulatto occupational differentiation affected the level of white-on-black violence in the decade of the 1880s, as measured by the frequency of lynching.

The dependent variable is measured as a simple count of the number of lynchings in each county

in the period between 1882 and 1889. Because the dependent variable is a count, the appropriate model is a Poisson model,

$$\log(\lambda_i) = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^J \beta_j x_{ij} + \epsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where λ_i is the lynching risk for county i , and ϵ is a random error term, assumed to have a gamma distribution. When this error term is added to the basic Poisson model, it becomes a negative binomial model (Beck and Tolnay 1995; Barron 1992). The advantage of the negative binomial model is that it can account for overdispersion in the basic Poisson model. Preliminary analysis indicated that it was necessary to account for overdispersion in these models.

In order to account for exposure to risk, I control for the log of the African-ancestry population size. Following Tolnay and Beck (1995), I also control for the percent African-ancestry and its square, as well as the number of white lynchings in each county. Finally, as in the prior analysis, I include state fixed effects to control for any unobserved heterogeneity between states.⁹

Table 3 shows the results from these models. Model 1 serves as a baseline model. The results here are similar to those produced by Tolnay and Beck (1995, pg. 110) and show that white-on-black lynching risk increased with the number of white lynchings and with the relative size of the African-ancestry population, although the latter effect is non-linear.

Model 2 includes the mean difference in SEI between all black and mulatto workers in each county. The effect of this variable is negative and substantial, indicating about a 9% decline in lynching risk for a one point increase in the mean SEI difference between black and mulatto workers. Although the coefficient fails to meet the standard criterion for statistical significance (p -value = 0.098), the results for Model 2 suggest that on average greater differentiation between black and mulatto workers led to less racial violence. However, as I show in subsequent models, the relationship between black/mulatto differentiation and lynching risk is considerably more complex.

Model 3 attempts to determine whether demography played a role in whites' attitudes toward mulatto/black differentiation. In this model, I include an interaction between mulatto/black SEI difference and the percent African-ancestry.¹⁰ This interaction term is substantively small and statistically indistinguishable from zero. It appears that the potential threat of a large African-ancestry population had little direct effect on the sense of threat whites felt from a distinct mulatto group.

Model 4 includes an interaction between the mean difference in SEI of white and black workers and the mean difference in SEI of white and African-ancestry workers.¹¹ The interaction term

⁹I experimented with variables for farm ownership and cotton production but neither proved important predictors once state fixed effects were included.

¹⁰Including a squared term does not improve model fit.

¹¹I use the mean difference in SEI between white and African-ancestry workers rather than the mean SEI of white

is both substantively strong and statistically distinguishable from zero. Since interpreting the meaning of an interaction between two continuous variables can be complicated, I employ graphical techniques to describe the overall effect.

Figure 3 shows the overall effect of black/mulatto occupational differentiation on lynching risk conditional on the SEI difference between the white and African-ancestry population. Numbers above one indicate that this difference increased risk implying that mulatto distinction was seen as a threat, while numbers below one indicate that the difference reduced risk, implying that mulatto distinction was seen as a buffer. When the level of SEI difference between the white and African-ancestry workforce is small, black/mulatto occupational differentiation increases the risk of lynching. However, as the SEI difference between white and African-ancestry workers grows, this effect diminishes and eventually becomes negative. Thus, at medium to high levels of SEI difference between the white and African-ancestry workforce, greater black/mulatto occupational differentiation reduces the risk of lynching.

This figure indicates that the role of black/mulatto occupational differentiation in lynching varied by the standing of the white population vis-a-vis the African-ancestry population. In areas where whites had a clear and well-established advantage over the African-ancestry population, the existence of a distinct mulatto group actually reduced the risk of lynching. On the other hand, where the standing of whites was closer to that of the African-ancestry population, the existence of a distinct mulatto group increased the risk of lynching.

Figure 3 presents only a partial picture, because it does not account for changes in SEI risk due to the main effect of white/African-ancestry SEI difference which has a substantively large and statistically significant effect. Figure 4 shows the relative strength of lynching as a function of both mulatto/black SEI differences and white/African-ancestry SEI differences. Darker regions indicate relatively high levels of lynching risk and lighter areas indicate relatively low levels of lynching risk.

Figure 4 clearly shows that two areas in this space are associated with high levels of lynching risk. The results are fully consistent with the expectations outlined in Table 1 and indicate that whites' conceptions of the racial hierarchy varied by their own position in the class structure. First, lynching risk is high in areas with a clear occupational distinction between mulattoes and blacks but relatively little difference between whites and the African-ancestry population. Consistent with the notion of status threat, whites whose own dominance in the racial hierarchy was less established reacted violently to the elevation of a mixed-race category. Second, lynching risk is high in areas with a clear occupational hierarchy between whites and the African-ancestry population, but little occupational differentiation between mulattoes and blacks. In this case, it makes sense to see the mulatto buffer class and lynching as complementary means of social control by a dominant group of whites. In areas with a well-established mulatto group, dominant whites were less likely to reach

workers as in the previous analysis because it provided a somewhat better fit. The two variables are highly correlated ($r = 0.92$). When the variables are substituted for one another in either model, they produce similar results.

for the rope and faggot in order to quell challenges to the racial order. On the other hand, in areas without a well-established mulatto group, dominant whites were forced to rely on lynching in order to maintain racial order within an undifferentiated mass of African-ancestry workers.

Conclusions

By exploiting spatial variation in the degree of occupational distinction between mulattoes and blacks, I have been able to assess the adequacy of theories regarding both the causes and effects of such distinction. Consistent with arguments that stress implicit competition between white workers and mulattoes, the results presented here indicate that black/mulatto occupational differentiation increased with the occupational standing of the white population. As the economic position of whites improved, this implicit competition diminished and the elevation of a mulatto group became more palatable and perhaps even preferable.

The relationship between lynching risk and black/mulatto differentiation further supports this conclusion, but also expands it. Overall, greater occupational distinction between blacks and mulattoes reduced the frequency of lynching, somewhat contrary to expectation. However, the effect of black/mulatto differentiation varied substantially by the relative position of whites in the occupational structure. Where whites had a clear and secure advantage over the African-ancestry population, a distinct mulatto group reduced lynching risk, while where whites' advantage was less secure, a distinct mulatto group increased lynching risk. Once again, these findings support a status competition perspective on the development of a mixed race category. Furthermore, they also suggest reasons why white elites would not simply tolerate a mixed race category, but would in fact encourage it in cases without a competing group of white workers. In those cases, the mulatto group served as a form of social control that reinforced the status quo.

The relative size of the African-ancestry population played a role here, but it was largely an indirect one. In essence, the existing demography of an area constrained the ability of white elites to shape the available labor force. The possibility for race and class hierarchies to mirror one another was likely valuable to white elites, primarily because it solved organizational problems (Tilly 1998). A key component of the ability for these race and class hierarchies to align was the existence of a middle tier that could both play an interstitial role in the economy and reinforce the status quo, by protecting their privilege vis-a-vis their darker peers. Southerners supposedly subscribed to a view of the racial hierarchy that can be summed up as "All whites above all blacks," but perhaps white elites in the South might have preferred "all whites above all mulattoes, all mulattoes above all blacks." Sadly for these elites, however, in many areas of the American South, such an ideal labor system was impossible given the demographic realities. The existence of a large number of white workers meant that concerns over white worker resentment largely outweighed both the organizational and buffer class value of a middle racial tier.

Many scholars have looked to differences in both the level and nature of miscegenation as

a key to understanding the status of mulattoes. In this study, I have found little evidence that contemporaneous levels of interracial marriage affected the status of mulattoes. Inter-marriage between blacks and mulattoes on the other hand, apparently reduced the occupational differentiation between them. One might argue, then, that a prerequisite for a stable mixed-race category is the ability to “shut off” access from below by restricting upward racial mobility.

I find evidence that the establishment of a community of free persons of color during the slavery period contributed to black/mulatto differentiation in the post-Emancipation period. Although this effect is at least partially a result of the transfer of both lighter skin and socioeconomic advantage from parents to children, it is also clear that some free persons of color emphasized the distinction between black and mulatto for their own gain. In essence, the boundary between freedom and slavery was translated into a boundary between black and mulatto. Ultimately, however this translation would falter and fail. As whites increasingly turned to the one-drop rule, these free persons of color-cum-mulattoes had little choice but to abandon this strategy, instead reinventing themselves as the elites of a united black community. Here lies the roots of skin-tone stratification within the black population.

I should remind the reader that I am using cross-sectional data, and thus caution should be taken in using it to interpret historical trends. It does however suggest some answers to the question of what led to the ultimate collapse of the mulatto category. First, the declining status of the white yeomanry during the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century led to a decline in observable status differentials between many whites and the African-ancestry population (Tolnay and Beck 1995, p. 149-157). According to the results shown here, we should expect that the more threatened position of whites in this environment would increasingly lead to resentment and hostility toward the mulatto category. Second, the migration of African Americans both out of the South and within the South led to a more even redistribution of the African-ancestry population throughout the United States. As high concentration areas declined, the ability of white elites in those areas to align the class and race hierarchies similarly declined.

However, it is important to realize that the death of the mulatto category was driven by more than straightforward changes in demography and economy applied to some pre-existing structure. The ultimate decision to drop the mulatto category was the result of political struggle amongst an array of interests. It is in effect part of the larger story of uniting a highly heterogeneous South into the bastion of white supremacy that it became by the early 20th century. The results of this article establish the fault lines of the old South, but further work needs to demonstrate how politically the South (and ultimately the entire U.S.) moved toward its “one-drop rule.”

Although this study has focused on historical patterns, it has relevance for studies of multi-raciality and racial boundary formation in the modern United States, and elsewhere. Significant changes in both the economy and the nature of racial oppression between the late 19th century and the early 21st century hamper any attempt to directly apply the theories presented here to a modern context. Nonetheless, a large body of work has demonstrated that issues of competition

and demographic threat continue to reinforce racial inequality in the post-Civil Rights era. Thus, there is reason to think that structural factors such as the ones demonstrated here might affect both the recognition and treatment of mixed-race individuals today. Future work on multiraciality should consider such issues.

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Table 1: Conceptual model of the nature of threat posed to whites by black/mulatto differentiation

White Status	Black/Mulatto Difference	
	High	Low
High	Buffer Class	Security Threat
Low	Status Threat	Social Honor

Table 2: Multilevel regression model predicting the overall level of and black/mulatto differences in the Duncan occupational prestige score, Southern African-ancestry men 20-34 years of age, 1880 United States Census

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Level	Difference	Level	Difference	Level	Difference
constant	10.127 (.087)*	2.042 (.123)*	10.208 (.085)*	2.015 (.124)*	10.302 (.082)*	2.133 (.120)*
age	0.188 (.003)*		0.188 (.003)*		0.188 (.003)*	
age squared	-0.008 (.001)*		-0.008 (.001)*		-0.008 (.001)*	
married	0.752 (.023)*		0.753 (.023)*		0.756 (.023)*	
urban	0.334 (.349)	-0.289 (.470)	-0.032 (.338)	-0.250 (.472)	-0.737 (.333)#	-1.098 (.461)#
% manufacturing	0.135 (.016)*	-0.006 (.023)	0.113 (.016)*	-0.010 (.024)	0.066 (.016)*	-0.073 (.025)*
population (log)	0.281 (.081)*	0.642 (.125)*	0.228 (.079)*	0.689 (.125)*	0.033 (.079)	0.412 (.127)*
pop. growth (1860-1880)	0.004 (.022)	0.016 (.054)	0.002 (.022)	0.041 (.055)	-0.010 (.022)	0.018 (.054)
% farms owned	-0.005 (.003)	-0.001 (.004)	-0.013 (.003)*	0.006 (.005)	-0.013 (.003)*	0.007 (.005)
A/W marriage ratio (log)	0.228 (.044)*	-0.037 (.068)	0.090 (.047)	0.068 (.075)	0.034 (.046)	-0.007 (.075)
B/M marriage ratio (log)	0.054 (.080)	-0.287 (.133)#	-0.045 (.079)	-0.155 (.137)	-0.059 (.076)	-0.206 (.133)
% free colored (1860)	0.014 (.017)	0.101 (.025)*	0.030 (.017)	0.091 (.025)*	0.016 (.016)	0.072 (.024)*
% African-ancestry			-0.018 (.003)*	0.015 (.005)*	-0.029 (.003)*	0.000 (.005)
African-ancestry growth			0.797 (.124)*	0.072 (.204)	0.698 (.126)*	-0.071 (.207)
mean SEL, white males					0.099 (.014)*	0.129 (.020)*
% white males unemp.					0.000 (.011)	-0.027 (.019)
% whites foreign born					0.016 (.009)	0.020 (.014)
county variance	1.072	1.520	0.978	1.500	0.878	1.295
var. reduction	0.235	0.138	0.302	0.149	0.373	0.265
correlation (τ_1, τ_2)	0.348		0.393		0.316	
number of individuals	557,234		557,234		557,234	
number of counties	993		993		993	

$p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$. Numbers in parentheses are estimated standard errors. All variables have been mean-centered. All models include state fixed effects. The proportionate reduction in variance is measured relative to a model with just individual-level variables and state fixed effects.

Table 3: Negative binomial regression predicting lynching risk, U.S. Southern counties, 1882-1889

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
intercept	-6.193* (0.952)	-6.411* (0.989)	-6.445* (0.989)	-6.719* (1.046)
African-ancestry population size (logged)	0.592* (0.141)	0.635* (0.148)	0.632* (0.148)	0.621* (0.159)
number of white lynchings	0.495* (0.138)	0.484* (0.137)	0.477* (0.137)	0.450* (0.138)
percent African-ancestry	0.034 (0.02)	0.033 (0.020)	0.032 (0.020)	0.031 (0.021)
percent African-ancestry squared	-0.0005* (0.0002)	-0.0005* (0.0002)	-0.0005# (0.0002)	-0.0005* (0.0002)
black/mulatto SEI difference		-0.115 (0.062)	-0.017 (0.124)	0.125 (0.117)
B/M SEI diff * percent colored			-0.002 (0.003)	
white/African-ancestry SEI difference				0.086# (0.043)
B/M SEI diff * W/A SEI diff				-0.031# (0.013)
Overdispersion parameter (α)	1.607* (0.258)	1.570* (0.255)	1.548* (0.252)	1.526* (0.250)
log-likelihood	-609.4	-607.7	-606.1	-604.7
N	772	772	772	772

$p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$. Numbers in parentheses are estimated standard errors. All models include state-level fixed effects.

Fig. 1.— Counties used in the analysis, 1860 county boundaries

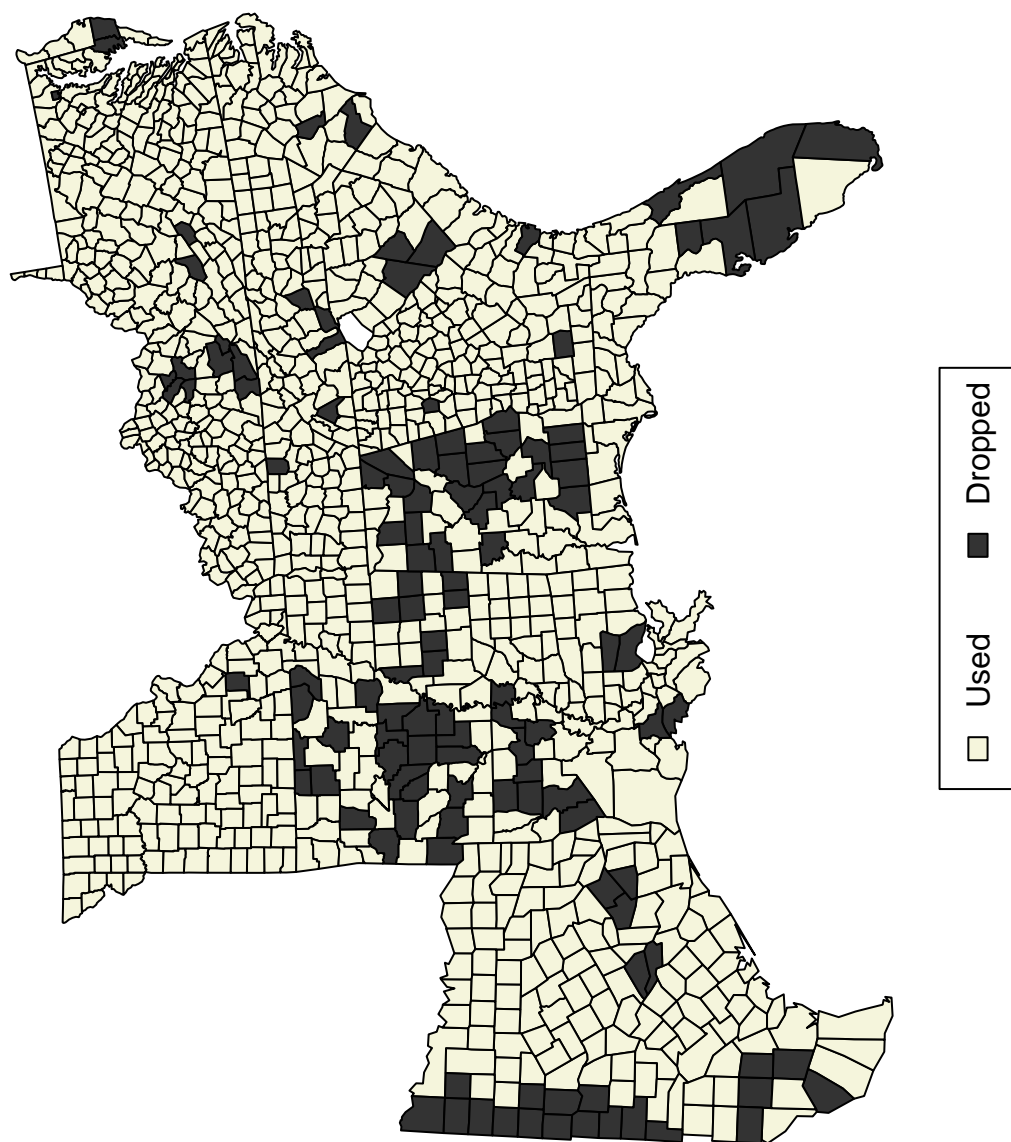


Fig. 2.— SEI differences by color among Southern men, Southern U.S. Counties, 1880

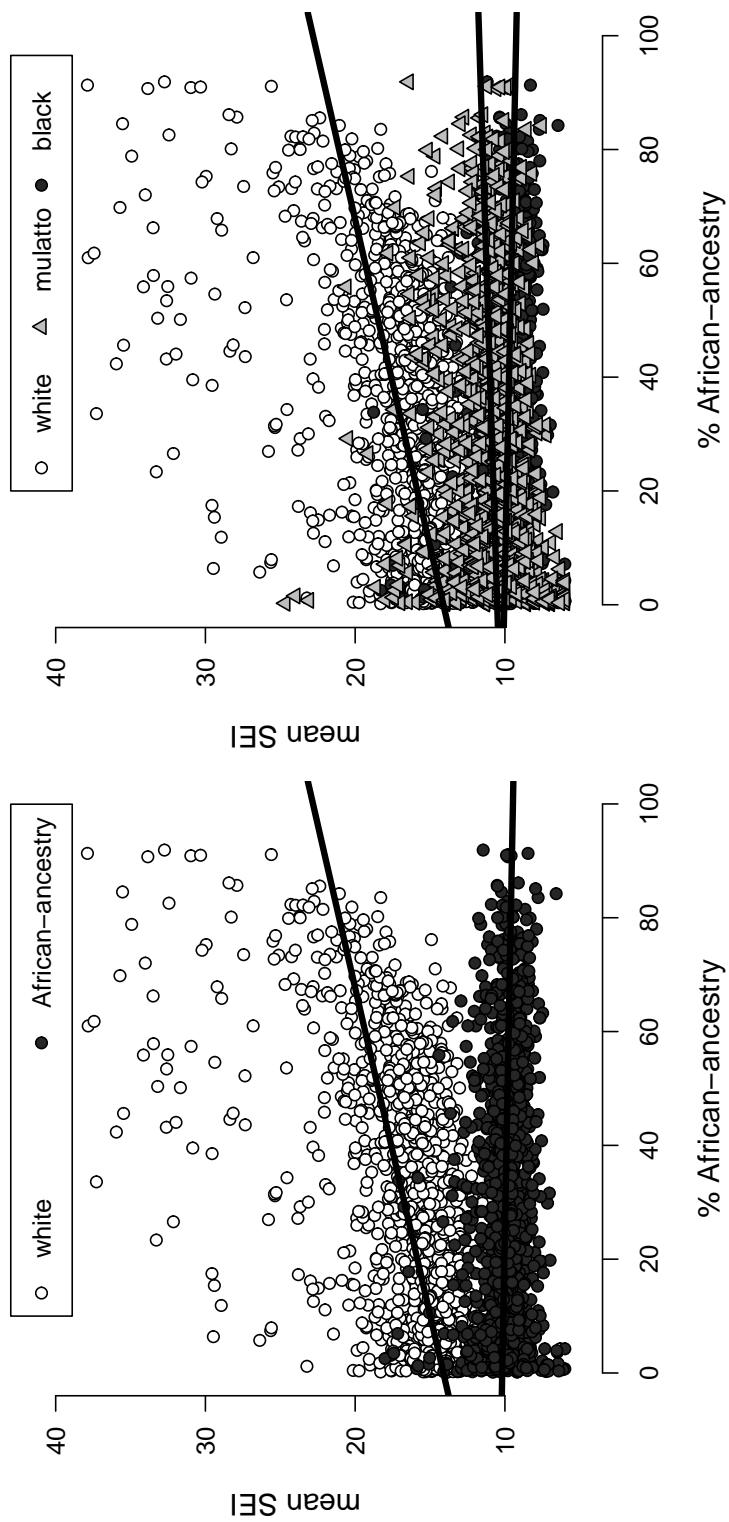


Fig. 3.— The effect of mulatto/black SEI difference on lynching risk as a function of white/African-ancestry SEI difference, fitted values based on Model 3, Table 3

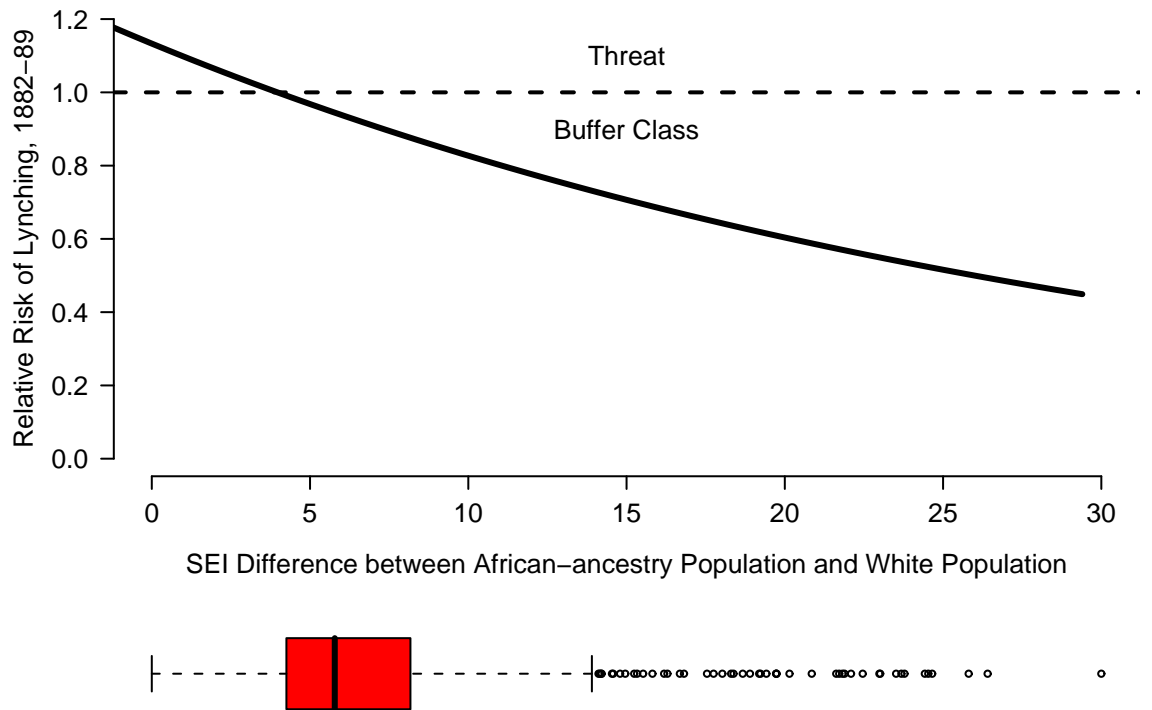


Fig. 4.— Lynching risk as a function of mulatto/black SEI difference and white/African-ancestry SEI difference, fitted values, Model 4, Table 3

