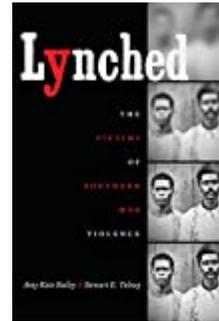




Amy Kate Bailey, Stewart E. Tolnay. *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Illustrations, tables. 296 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4696-2087-9.



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The Victims of Southern Lynching

In the two decades since the publication of Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beckâs *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* in 1995, numerous studies of lynching have appeared. Few are as important and significant as *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence*, another study coauthored by Tolnay, this time with Amy Kate Bailey.

As with the earlier study, *Lynched* is historical sociology whose foundation and value lies in the creation of a rich data set. The value of the data set in *A Festival of Violence* was that it was the most accurate inventory of lynching victims yet produced, superseding through rigorous fact checking those previously published by Tuskegee, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the *Chicago Tribune*. The data compiled for *Lynched* is not such a refinement but a completely new set of data. Bailey and Tolnay have created, for the first time, a set of data on the victims of mob violence. We now know much more about this largely unknown and forgotten group of individuals, including their ages, their families, their occupations, their

ability to read and write, their states of birth, and much more.

How did they create this inventory? In briefest terms, for *Lynched*, they searched through US census records for individuals confirmed to have been lynched, eventually linking data on over nine hundred lynching victims. Bailey and Tolnay do provide some analysis of white male and female victims in one chapter, but they focus overwhelmingly on African American male victims for the simple and justifiable reason that their numbers eclipsed those of all other groups in the ten southern states of their study. Their research took many, many years of painstaking hard work and was carried out by a large team of individuals, including over a dozen undergraduate research assistants, all properly credited in the preface. The authors detail the process by which the data set was created in chapter 2, but it is worth noting that it was the advent of online resources that was critical. In an age of federal spending cuts, I also want to note that the authors single out the support of the National Science Foundation.

Many of the statistical details that populate the study are not surprising, but there is still great value to having a more precise portrait of the typical African American lynching victim in the American South. Bailey and Tolnay found that more than half of black male victims were married. They also note that the median age at time of lynching for black male victims was twenty-nine years. The youngest individual in their data set was eleven and the oldest was seventy-six. More than two-thirds were between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five when they were executed. The authors also note that most black male victims were lynched near where they grew up and were raised.

The authors consider three different hypotheses in their analysis of their data: the possibility that black male lynching victims were from a lower social status than the average black male in the South; the possibility that black male lynching victims were from a higher social status; and the possibility that black male lynching victims were not statistically different in relation to social status. They find support for both of the first two hypotheses in their analysis but they find a way to reconcile their findings by comparing lynching victims not to the general black male population of the South but to the black male population in the counties that hosted their lynchings. This allows the authors to conclude that "the evidence suggests that

standing out as an exception within the general African American population had an important influence on the targeting of lynch victims by southern mobs" (p. 147).

Some of the key findings underlying this conclusion are the following. First, successful black men were MORE likely to be lynched IF they lived in areas with few successful black men. They were otherwise LESS likely to be lynched. Second, being identified in the US census as a "mulatto" reduced one's risk of lynching but ONLY if one lived in an area with a high number of mixed-race peoples. Third, Being born out of state increased chances of one being lynched if that locality had few individuals born out of the state. Finally, Agricultural workers were more likely to be victimized by lynch mobs than nonagricultural workers but only if they lived in localities with low concentrations of black male agricultural workers.

Historians will not find in *Lynched* new answers to some of their deepest questions about extralegal violence, namely, the underlying reasons that mobs executed their victims, but that is not grounds for criticism. There is much for historians to learn from these sociologists. In fact, there is much more in this volume than this review can cover, and I strongly recommend anyone with an interest in the history of racial violence and race relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to read *Lynched*.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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