Lynching and Economic Outcomes

Adrian Haws[1], Ryan Gabriel[2], Amy Kate Bailey[3], Joseph Price[4]

Substantial anecdotal evidence points to economic loss and dispossession for families and communities in the aftermath of mob violence. In this paper, we examine the economic trajectories of 2,936 family members of 661 Black individuals who were killed by lynch mobs between 1882 and 1929 in a ten-state area of the American South. Using U.S. Census records and machine learning methods, we match the records of surviving, co-resident family members between census enumerations. We then compare measures of economic circumstance for these family members to the fortunes of their same-race neighbors, including how their economic standing may have changed. These measures include home ownership, farm tenancy, and employment status. Through these efforts, we hope to begin to build a record of the direct economic consequences of lynching on particular families.

[1] Cornell University, Applied Economics and Management
[2] Brigham Young University, Sociology
[3] University of Illinois Chicago, Sociology
[4] Brigham Young University, Economics