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Rape, Lynching, and Mythmaking in Missouri, 1804-1933

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Rape, Lynching, and Mythmaking in Missouri,
1804-1933

By

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ABSTRACT “RAPE, LYNCHING, AND MYTHMAKING IN MISSOURI, 1804-1933”

This thesis examines the creation and the perpetuation of the black rapist myth in Missouri at the turn of the century. It also explains the relationship between this myth, the practice of lynching, the popularized field of eugenics, and the long Civil Rights movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using criminal court cases from 1804 to 1900 and state prison records from 1871 to 1933 available at the Missouri State Archives in St. Louis, Missouri, newspaper articles from throughout the state, and Missouri’s history of lynching published by Harriet Frazier, I explain how the black rapist image was in fact a generated historical myth. I argue that the creation of the black rapist myth was a result of the post-emancipation construction of a sexualized racial caste system. This thesis will also show how the black rapist myth was shaped by racial relations in Missouri throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Additionally, I will demonstrate how the black rapist myth established who had the authority to exercise control in Missouri.

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Introduction: The Birth of a Myth

“When American communities authorize officials to say what shall or shall not be presented in literature or picture, short of the indecent, they surrender the right of free opinion and free speech. They turn over to more or less incompetent public officials the power to suppress truth, distort social conditions and facts of history.”¹

Taken out of context, the above quote seems commonsensical. The guarantee of free speech is one of the most cherished fundamentals of American democracy as well as any modern society. As the anonymous writer points out, the alternative to free speech, namely censorship, can lead to the suppression of truth and the distortion of history. But there is an unintentional irony to the objective of the quoted article featured in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in August of 1915. The writer was responding to an unsuccessful and obviously unwelcome censorship of D.W. Griffith’s film *The Birth of a Nation*. On August 28, 1915, a temporary injunction was granted by St. Louis Circuit Judge Karl Kimmel to restrain the police and a prosecuting attorney by the name of Howard Sidener from interfering with the opening day of the film’s initial nine week run at the city’s Olympic Theater. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sidener objected to the screening of the movie “as he believed it contained scenes which misrepresent the negro race, and which would tend to arouse race antagonism and consequent disturbances.”² Judge Kimmel maintained that the injunction was only temporary and that he would hear arguments “to determine whether the injunction should be made permanent.” But first he allowed himself, Mayor Henry Kiel, members of the police morality squad, prosecuting

¹ “Censorship Folly,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 7, 1915. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

² “Police Enjoined from Stopping Film Production,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 29, 1915. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

attorney Sidener, and almost 3,000 other St. Louisans to view the film on opening night. According to several *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporters, similar ineffective efforts to prevent the showing of the movie were made in Boston, Chicago, and Pittsburg, resulting in nothing more than “a lot of profitable advertising” and “more publicity than an army of press agents could have done.”³ One *Post-Dispatch* author even noted “if I were in the place of the Judge who has to pass on the continuance of this show, I would feel bound to consider the applause which greeted every scene in the second act, as well as the first.”⁴

The referenced “second act” of *The Birth of a Nation* contained the scenes most offensive to the critics of the film in 1915. With the Civil War and Reconstruction as the backdrop, *The Birth of a Nation* depicts the negative consequences of emancipation that followed the end of slavery and the Ku Klux Klan as the South’s eventual savior. Using primarily white actors in blackface, Griffith portrays the postbellum South as lawless, overrun with newly freed, incompetent, animalistic blacks lusting after white Southern belles and attempting to enforce black rule across the South. White characters are also represented in a stereotypical manner. The protagonists of the film, members of the virtuous and valiant Cameron family, are benevolent slave owners, honorable, and refined. Such racial stereotypes provided early twentieth century moviegoers with a view of postbellum race relations in the South that propagated powerful and influential myths about emancipation and the emancipated. In addition to a scene of blacks intimidating

³ “Censorship Folly,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 7, 1915. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library; “Police Enjoined from Stopping Film Production,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 29, 1915. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁴ Carlos F. Hurd, “Birth of a Mob is Shown in ‘Birth of a Nation’ Film.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 30, 1915. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

whites at polling places, an African American jury is shown acquitting a black man who murdered a white person, and black barefoot, chicken-eating legislators are depicted passing a law legalizing interracial marriage. The film purported to show *evidence* of African Americans' innate inability to govern, vote, or properly exercise the responsibilities of a modern citizen. But there was another more specific purpose in portraying black men as dangerous, sexually driven beasts. In one of the most notorious scenes of the movie, a rapacious black soldier named Gus chases one of the daughters of the Cameron family into the woods. Aware of his sexual intentions, the chaste young girl runs desperately toward the edge of a cliff in an attempt to escape. She ultimately leaps to her death in order to avoid being ravished. Several other scenes evoke the theme of a presumed connection between black freedom and rape or miscegenation. For example, early in the film the chosen leader for the revolt against white Southerners, Silas Lynch (a white actor in blackface) declares his love for a white Radical Republican leader's daughter. As she tries to run from his clutches, he exclaims, "I will build a black empire with you as queen by my side." Another scene portrays a protest of former slaves marching and hoisting signs that read, "Equal Rights, Equal Politics, Equal Marriage."⁵

The Birth of a Nation was one of many products of the early twentieth century's convergence of a budding mass entertainment industry, the South's attempt to the revision of its historical past, and the growing field of eugenics.⁶ Together they helped to

⁵ Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006): 407-413; *The Birth of a Nation*. Directed by D. W. Griffith. 1915. David W. Griffith Corporation and Epoch Producing Corporation. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEznh2JZvrI>, Accessed February 25, 2014.

⁶ For more on the South's recreation of its historical past see W. Fitzhugh Brundage's *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. Refer to *Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality*, by Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen, for more on the confluence of mass-marketed leisure and eugenic ideas in American culture.

“popularize a worldview in which people were regularly characterized by a simple, effortlessly digestible cultural shorthand. Stereotype was the lingua franca of modernity,” as explained by the cultural historians Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen.⁷ *The Birth of a Nation* did not invent these specific stereotypes, but endorsed and perpetuated them on a significant scale for the masses. The popularity of minstrel shows and the diffusion of eugenic thought across the nation inculcated Americans to typecasting since the late decades of the nineteenth century. At the time of its initial showing *The Birth of a Nation* was presented as an accurate historical narrative of the South during and after Reconstruction to its white middle-class audiences, most of whom accepted it as such. The irony of the quote at the beginning of this introduction lies in the fact that the St. Louisan who wrote it believed that the suppression of this film was an act of suppressing historical truth, when in hindsight it is clear that it was the film that distorted the true racial conditions of the South and misrepresented the facts of American history.

The Birth of a Nation and other similar media products of the early twentieth century not only misinformed their viewers but also had a direct negative impact on African American society. Entertainment and its mass consumption was a significant part of twentieth century American culture, creating a space in which Americans could observe, interpret, understand, or imitate all aspects of culture, including racial and sexual interactions. More specifically, racial and sexual interactions depicted on screen or on stage represented the taboos and tolerations of the racial and sexual caste system established after African American emancipation. With the adoption of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments during and after the Civil War, black men and

⁷ Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting*, 407.

women became sovereign American citizens, which upset the racial and sexual hierarchy of slavery. In the former slave states, this hierarchy was replaced by a racial and sexual code of conduct. While Jim Crow laws assured political disenfranchisement, economic disparity, and the social segregation of African Americans, these interracial sexual codes of conduct divided society in both racial and sexual terms. Alleged violations of the racial and sexual caste system were aggressively monitored and brutally suppressed in extralegal ways, resulting in mob violence, lynchings, and the perpetuation of the black rapist image. Within this racial and sexual caste system, black males were typified as sexual predators and white males as protectors of white women, who were depicted as both actual and potential victims of black male lust.

This thesis examines the creation and the perpetuation of the black rapist myth in Missouri during the late nineteenth century. It also explains the relationship between this myth, the practice of lynching, the popularized field of eugenics, and the long Civil Rights movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the myth of the aggressive black rapist absolutely existed elsewhere at this time, this thesis focuses on the development of the myth in Missouri as a case study. Missouri, a Border State, was not culturally a part of the North or the South, but, like other Border States, its culture was a combination of both. Slavery existed in Missouri, but the urban areas of St. Louis and Kansas City maintained free black populations of significant sizes. This aspect caused a different racial environment from the South to develop in Missouri. I begin with a discussion of the myth from a national perspective, providing a general historical context for the discussion of the topic in Missouri. I argue that the creation of the black rapist myth was a result of the post-emancipation construction of a sexualized racial caste

system. In Missouri, the racial and sexual caste system, and consequently the myth, served white society in at least three clear capacities throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One, it ensured white men sexual and racial authority over white women and black men and women. Two, the construction of fear around the black male image allowed white Missourians to violently reassert their superior position under the pretense of protecting white women, mainly using the practice of lynching. And three, the myth of the black rapist merged well with eugenic ideas on preserving a “pure, untainted” white race which assuaged white anxieties about becoming the racial minority in the future.

Using criminal court cases from 1804 to 1900 and state prison records from 1871 to 1933 available at the Missouri State Archives in St. Louis, Missouri, newspaper articles from throughout the state, and Missouri’s history of lynching published by Harriet Frazier, I explain how the black rapist image was in fact a generated myth. The most basic definition of a historical myth is a misrepresented view of the past. For a more scholarly purpose, however, there are three more specific aspects of what makes a historical idea a myth. One, the idea has to be believed on a large scale. In other words, for a historical idea to be considered a myth there must be significant evidence to show that it was widely accepted and not just believed by a few. Two, the myth must have been taken as true within its historical context with little or no contestation to its claim to truth. And three, the myth must be unverifiable or definitively falsifiable by modern day historical methods. As I will show, the black rapist idea fulfills all three of the requirements to be a historical myth.

Although it is difficult in many cases to determine whether an alleged rape actually occurred during this period or not, there is no evidence to support the claim that black men raped white women with any measure of frequency during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With this in mind, I do not attempt to catalogue every instance of black-on-white rape nor do I attempt to *prove* that these alleged rapes did not take place. My purpose is to indicate the gradual adoption of the black rapist myth by white Missourians and to demonstrate how this myth altered the way they perceived African Americans, especially African American men. To be clear, for the purpose of this study I am only examining alleged crimes of sexual nature between black males and white females and the resulting lynching or trial. I do not examine the existence of the black rapist myth before the development of the slave system in, or outside of, the United States nor do I assess interracial sex between white males and black females. While research into these topics may yield interesting perspectives on the development of the black rapist myth in America, they require a complete analysis that lies beyond the scope of this thesis. It is also important to note that while a few nineteenth century persons understood the black rapist idea as a myth, they were a part of a small, intellectual minority. Most of the populace accepted the black rapist idea as truth. The functions of the myth that I have proposed can be directly linked to concerns arising during and after Reconstruction. For instance, the changing definition of American citizenship after emancipation is connected to rising notions of African American's innate inability to participate in a democracy. Also becoming associated with African American men's newly found political and economic freedoms were concerns about their sexual autonomy. Furthermore, Victorian era notions of gender roles and expectations of

femininity were related to the expanding concern with the need for female protection in the late nineteenth century.

Recently, historians of American racial and sexual history have published scholarly works, many for the purpose of dispelling myths about rape.⁸ Although the emphasis of this thesis is the black rapist myth, the crime of rape has accumulated an abundance of other mythic ideas over the past two centuries. *Rape only happens in the ghetto; therefore most rapists are sex-starved perverts from destitute areas of the city. Rape most often affects women who have put themselves in direct danger, either inadvertently or deliberately. Many women lie about getting raped for the purpose of retribution.* These contemporary myths did not just materialize abruptly in our time; rather, they are remnants from decades of historically shaped attitudes and anxieties about rape. Furthermore, public adherence to myths about rape “routinely define the boundaries of believable victims and likely suspects.”⁹ In the nineteenth century, the abolition of slavery and racist opinions determined beliefs about black as well as white sexuality. As Dawn Rae Flood argues,

Black men’s sexuality became innately predatory in white minds, at least when it was directed toward white women. White beliefs about black women’s promiscuity mirrored those about black men: theirs was an especially seductive sexual personae, necessary to keep up with their men and to, regrettably in many white minds, entice otherwise controlled and controllable white men.¹⁰

⁸ See Estelle B. Freedman’s *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation*, Dawn Rae Flood’s *Rape in Chicago: Race, Myth, and the Courts*, Hannah Rosen’s *Terror in the Hearts of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South*, Glenda Gilmore’s *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*, Martha Hodes’ *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th Century South*, and Crystal Feimster’s *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*.

⁹ Dawn Rae Flood, *Rape in Chicago: Race, Myth, and the Courts* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012): 1-2.

¹⁰ Flood, *Rape in Chicago*, 4.

Within this mindset, African Americans were branded as sexually aggressive sub-humans, the men incapable of self-control and the women always available for sex and therefore incapable of being raped. So, not only did myths about black sexuality prevent black men and women from receiving adequate protection under the law, it also lent credibility to the black rapist myth. Understanding sexuality in this way allowed white society to disseminate the black rapist myth even further; *Black men are so sexually ravenous that they attack white women in broad daylight and in public spaces. White women aren't safe under any circumstances, so all necessary actions must be taken to prevent black rape, even if it means resorting to lynching or mob violence.* This thesis will show how the black rapist myth was shaped by racial relations in Missouri throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Additionally, I will demonstrate how the black rapist myth established who had the authority to exercise control in Missouri.¹¹

Chapter 1 focuses on alleged rapes and lynchings in antebellum Missouri, mainly from 1804 through the end of the Civil War. In this chapter, I show that Missourians differed from many Southerners in that they demonstrated an earlier anxiety to the possibility of black rape. As other historians have shown, most slave states during this time responded to “sexual liaisons between white women and black men with a measure of toleration,” especially if those relationships occurred within the lower classes.¹² Such interracial relationships were not unknown to antebellum Missourians, but accusations of

¹¹ Flood, *Rape in Chicago*, 11.

¹² Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): 1-2.

black rape were made in courtrooms, newspapers, and lynching posts throughout Missouri at a more frequent rate than in the Deep South at the time.

In Chapter 2 I show that this early anxiety about black rape before African American emancipation intensified into a full panic afterward. An extraordinary increase in lynchings of black men accused of raping white women or girls occurred throughout the former slave states as well as Missouri in the latter half of the nineteenth century. There is also a noticeable spike in legal indictments of black men found guilty of raping a white woman or girl. Concurrent to the dramatic increase in the legal and extralegal methods of punishing black men for alleged white rape was the surge of incendiary language used to describe these supposed black rapists in Missouri newspapers.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the ways in which black rape and lynching were discussed in both rural and urban newspapers in Missouri throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The racial attitudes articulated in such writings were profoundly influenced by the growing popularity of the field of eugenics at this time. Together, the media and eugenic thought promoted the idea and the dread of black rape to the masses.

The final chapter discusses anti-lynching activism by African Americans, as well as some white citizens, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a part of the long Civil Rights movement.¹³ More specifically, I discuss the Dyer Bill, the first anti-lynching bill to be voted on by Congress, its purpose, its criticisms, and its ultimate defeat. As I will show, combatting the threat of lynching was one of the first and last

¹³ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (Mar., 2005): 1235.

battles of a lengthy and turbulent struggle for civil rights. I conclude with the myth's survival and transformation throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter 1: Rape and Lynching in Antebellum Missouri

Before discussing the development of the black rapist myth in Missouri after the Civil War, it is necessary to first explore the nature of institution of slavery as it existed in the state. The notion that slavery was more benign in Border States was an idea that was extant from the early nineteenth century onward. This view portrays a romanticized depiction of human bondage and is another myth that has been explored by contemporary historians. In fact, Diane Mutti Burke, author of *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households*, notes that “many in Missouri sincerely believed that slavery in the state was more humane, and they publically congratulated one another that they had perfected a milder system of bondage.”¹⁴ In 1901, president of the Kansas State Historical Society commented on the institution of slavery in Border States:

Slavery in western Missouri was like slavery in northern Kentucky—much more a domestic than commercial institution. Family servants constituted the bulk of ownership, and few white families owned more than one family of blacks. The social habits were those of the farm and not the plantation. The white owner, with his sons, labored in the same fields with the negro, both old and young. The mistress guided the industries in the house in both colors... These conditions cultivated between the races strong personal and reciprocal attachments. The negroes were members of the family; the blights of ownership were at a minimum.¹⁵

Even many Missouri slaves, while not agreeing that their form of slavery was “mild,” expressed fears of being sold further South where the labor and slave owners were thought to be notoriously harsher.¹⁶ Also, like most historical myths, “benevolent slavery” had a sliver of truth to it. In many cases, including in Missouri, close, familial

¹⁴ Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010): 143.

¹⁵ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 1.

¹⁶ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 142-144.

bonds did form between slave owners and slaves. After the Civil War, many slave owning families stayed in touch with their former slaves, even financially aiding them to move after emancipation. However, the atrocious brutality of enslavement was just as apparent in Border States as in the Deep South. In Missouri alone, countless accounts of abuse, rape, and cruelty have been published.¹⁷

During the great westward migration of the nineteenth century, the high availability of cultivatable land drew many people to Missouri. Mutti Burke explains that “in a place such as Missouri, slavery developed into a region of small slaveholdings precisely because of its geographic location; both climate and proximity to free states discouraged the migration of planters and conversely encouraged the migration of slaveholders of lesser means.”¹⁸ Also, even though tobacco and hemp, Missouri’s top agricultural products, required a considerable amount of hands-on labor, these crops needed much less rigorous maintenance than cotton and sugar that were produced in the plantations of the Deep South.¹⁹ In 1860, just before the first battles of the Civil War took place, 80 percent of slaveholders in the United States owned less than twenty slaves; 88 percent less than ten; and 50 percent owned only one.²⁰ Missouri fit this general pattern with about 90 percent of slaveholding families owning less than ten slaves. Although slaves only made up about 10 percent of Missouri’s total population at this time, many communities along the Mississippi and Missouri river valleys (or Little

¹⁷ For specific stories like these see Diane Mutti Burke’s *On Slavery’s Border*, Melton McLaurin’s *Celia, A Slave*, and The Federal Writers’ Project’s *Missouri Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in Missouri from Interviews with Former Slaves*.

¹⁸ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border*, 5.

¹⁹ R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri’s Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992): 80-151, 215.

²⁰ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border*, 4.

Dixie) and in the southeast (or the boot heel) had black populations of over 25 percent.²¹ Also, at this time there were 3,572 free blacks living in Missouri with 1,865 of them, or 52 percent, living in St. Louis.²² Most slaves lived in rural areas of Missouri and most of the free blacks lived in or near St. Louis and Kansas City, however some slaves resided in the cities with their masters, living and working alongside free blacks. It was extremely uncommon for free blacks to live in rural areas, though many had to travel through them. Because of the small-scale, intimate nature of Missourian slaveholding farms, as well as Missouri's geographic location and the type of crops it produced, a more paternalistic version of slavery was practiced.

Missouri did not really create a milder form of slavery, but there were some differences in the cultural, political, social, and economic practices of the institution from that of the South. Most rural slaveholders shared labor and sometimes lived within the same small farmhouse. Urban slaves did not toil in the fields beside their owners, but it was common for them to participate in their masters' work on some level. Also, the close proximity of everyone in cities meant that slaves lived in adjoining living quarters, often sharing the same bedroom wall as their owners. Close proximity between slaves and slave owners did not however ensure better treatment, and in some cases it actually increased the chance of violence. As Mutti Burke points out, emotional tensions and physical eruptions between masters and slaves were more common when living and working in such intimate conditions day after day. Moreover, because Missouri's small

²¹ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 5-13; According to Dianne Mutti Burke and R. Douglas Hurt, Little Dixie consisted of the following Missouri Counties: Callaway, Boone, Howard, Cooper, Saline, Lafayette, Clay, Platte, Jackson, and Chariton.

²² Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 316. For more on free blacks in Missouri during the antebellum see Cyprian Clamorgan's *The Colored Aristocracy of St. Louis*.

slaveholders were less wealthy and owned fewer slaves, theft or slaves running away had more “immediate and destructive” consequences on owners’ financial security. Smaller farms and fewer slaves also meant that interactions among the slaves were limited. Many Missourian slaves, about 57 percent, had “abroad marriages” with slaves on other farms, much higher than the 30 percent in the South. While abroad marriages strained slave life even more, “many of these relationships proved remarkably stable, surviving for many years during both slavery and freedom. Missouri slaves embraced their abroad families as an important aspect of their lives over which they exercised some control and as a source of personal fulfillment.”²³

Recently, many historians have turned their attention and research to the previously neglected sexual dynamics of slavery and emancipation in the United States. Two historians, Martha Hodes and Diane Miller Somerville, have specifically explored the development of the black rapist myth in the South and both agree on one important aspect: before emancipation, white Southerners and slave owners did not express substantial panic over the possibility of black-on-white rape.²⁴ Hodes argues in her book *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* that prior to emancipation, Southern society could “respond to sexual liaisons between white women and black men with a measure of toleration; only with black freedom did such liaisons begin to provoke a near-inevitable alarm.”²⁵ Diane Miller Somerville makes a similar

²³ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border*, 200-201.

²⁴ Martha Hodes’ research encompasses the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington D.C. Somerville’s article is mostly concentrated on North Carolina and Virginia, although she includes records from all the former Confederate States in addition to the Border States Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky.

²⁵ Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): 1-2.

argument in her article ‘The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered’: “Antebellum white Southerners were not nearly as consumed by fears of black men raping white women as their postbellum descendants were.”²⁶ As slavery gave white males complete ownership and authority over the political, economic, and social domain, black males did not represent much of a threat to the status quo. Although Hodes and Somerville used different research methods and focused on different areas of the topic, both found that during slavery there was a certain level of toleration for interracial relationships, especially if the white counterpart was of lower class. To be clear, this does not mean that whites widely accepted interracial relationships, far from it. This “measure of toleration” was complex and elicited a broad range of responses from other members of the community. Hodes writes, “White neighbors judged harshly, gossiped viciously, and could completely ostracize the transgressing white woman.”²⁷ However, “for the black man, it was the lack of sure violence that is historically significant.”²⁸

It was this type of toleration that allowed for many interracial relationships to occur throughout the country, even in the South, as Hodes illustrates in *White Women, Black Men*. As an instance of this type of toleration, a free black man in Alabama was able to successfully sue his white ex-wife for *not* giving birth to a mulatto baby in 1846. Girard and Maria Hansford had been married for about twenty years when Maria gave birth to a fair skinned, blue-eyed baby. After she admitted to adultery, Girard sought a divorce and was awarded custody of all their children. Maria contended that both the marriage and the custody ruling were void because she was white. Even though the court

²⁶ Somerville, “The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered,” 485.

²⁷ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 3-4.

²⁸ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 3-4.

documents agree that Maria was “not colored,” Girard insisted that she, in fact, was partially black and, therefore, their marriage was legitimate. The Supreme Court of Alabama either agreed with Girard or just preferred his interpretation of this quasi-interracial union, confirming the legality of their marriage and the earlier custody ruling.²⁹

While Hodes explains the state of sexual relations through a series of vignettes, delving into the personal lives of nineteenth-century couples who were either involved in interracial marriages or shared interracial children, Somerville presents a more statistical analysis. Instead of focusing on the existence of antebellum interracial relationships to demonstrate this “measure of toleration,” Somerville looks at nineteenth century court cases which dealt with sexual crimes. Her research shows that in the years between 1800 and 1865, about “250 cases of sexual assault by black males on white women or girls [were] reported in the records of twelve southern states.”³⁰ Of these 250 plus cases, Somerville adds, “nearly half of these condemned black rapists escaped their sentences of execution.”³¹ Most of them took place in Virginia and North Carolina, two of the “most Northern” slave states, but she also assesses cases in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. With the examination of these cases, Somerville confirms Hodes’ evaluation of toleration especially in regard to the role of class in the issue. Under the institution of slavery, “protection was not bestowed unconditionally upon white women simply because of their race,” especially if the female accuser ignored sexual and racial codes of conduct or was

²⁹ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 106-107.

³⁰ Diane Miller Somerville, “The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Southern History* 61, no. 3 (1995): 484.

³¹ Miller Somerville, “The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered,” 485.

from a poor white family, commonly referred to as “white trash.”³² Especially significant is the fact that if the alleged rapist or ravisher was a slave and not a free black, the owner had a financial stake in the outcome of the case. Slave owners were generally skeptical about accusations of rape, especially if it came from an indigent white outside his family, who was perceived to take part in illicit behavior anyway.

According to Somerville, slaves were acquitted of such crimes more often than free blacks. In the case of Missouri, however, I found that slaves and free blacks were found not guilty in about the same numbers; free blacks even had a slightly better chance of receiving not guilty verdicts.³³ The criminal court case records from 1804 to 1865, available at the Missouri State Archives in St. Louis, reveal that no such citizenship distinction existed in the outcomes of the cases.³⁴ There were at least fifteen court cases pertaining to indicted rape, attempted rape, intent to commit rape, or assault with an attempt to rape a white woman in St. Louis, Missouri between the years 1804 and 1865.³⁵ In eight of them, the prosecuted were slaves while the other seven were free blacks.³⁶

³² Miller Somerville, “The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered,” 517.

³³ My research isn’t broad enough to invalidate Somerville’s research and it is not my intent to do so. Since her research encompasses all former Confederate and Border States, our conclusions aren’t comparable. My research reveals different results because my research is limited to Missouri, a former Border State. The only way to determine if Missouri’s position is unique would be to compare it to research of another Border State, which have not been published as of date.

³⁴ For a complete, categorized list of cases SEE FIGURE 1 IN THE APPENDIX.

³⁵ Markedly, Somerville’s research of Virginia and North Carolina yielded far more cases, over 150 in those two states alone, only 15 analogous cases subsist in Missouri during the same time period.

³⁶ It should also be noted that three of these cases involved a person with the same name, John Anderson. One Anderson was indicted with rape as a slave in 1853 and two Andersons were indicted for rape as free blacks in 1861. Because the case documents lack current or past addresses, I am unsure whether they were the same person. The John Anderson that was tried in 1853 was found guilty and sentenced to castration, so if the castration actually took place (there is no evidence to suggest that it didn’t), then it isn’t likely that he committed rape again almost a decade later. Most likely, the two cases in 1861 were two counts of rape charged against the same person. On supposed count one, case number 46, Anderson pled guilty and the charge against him was quashed. Anderson also pled not guilty to supposed count two, case number 87, but was found guilty and sentenced to castration. However, an appeal was made to the Supreme Court and

Out of the eight cases involving slaves, three were found not guilty, three were found guilty, and two verdicts are unknown due to missing pages in the record books.

Slave Thaddeus was the first known indicted slave found guilty of “attempting to commit rape.” Three cases, one not guilty and two of unknown verdicts, took place in 1836, 1827 and 1837 respectively, before Thaddeus’s trial in 1844. His alleged victim’s name is not listed (as in all cases), probably to conceal her identity and preserve her dignity as she was most definitely white. Thaddeus was sentenced to castration on January 27, 1844. On August 26 of the same year, his owner A.W. Kennedy filed for reimbursement for the punishment from the state, so the castration apparently did take place. The second slave to be found guilty of rape was simply called York and was owned by the well-known St. Louis steamboat Captain Henry Shreve. York was not sentenced to castration on the condition that he be removed from the state of Missouri within three months of the sentencing date, January 20, 1847, and remain away for twenty years. This more favorable punishment was given presumably due to Shreve’s wealth, reputation, and ability to quickly relocate York elsewhere without difficulty. A third slave by the name of John Anderson was found guilty in 1853. He was also sentenced to castration.

Article 11, Statute 28 of Missouri law clearly stated that “If any negro or mulatto shall...commit, or attempt to commit, a rape on a white female...he shall on conviction...be sentenced to castration to be performed under the direction of the sheriff by some skillful person.”³⁷ Considering Somerville’s research, one might assume that the

because no case with a defendant named John Anderson is listed in the Missouri Supreme Court historical database, I am assuming the guilty verdict prevailed.

³⁷ Missouri State Statutes 1835, Crime and Punishments.

sentence of castration was most often used to punish free blacks. That was not the case in Missouri. The other seven criminal court cases dealing with the rape of a white woman involved free blacks. Four, or over half, of these black men were found not guilty. What is most interesting is the fact that of the three free black men found guilty of rape between 1804 and 1865, only one was sentenced to castration—a “free negro” by the name of John Anderson in 1861. This person is unlikely to be the same John Anderson who was indicted in 1853 since he was castrated and therefore could not have raped another woman almost a decade later.³⁸ The other two free blacks were found guilty of “attempted rape,” not “rape,” but were still sentenced to substantial prison terms. Mark Champion was prosecuted in 1856 and sentenced to 5 years in prison, while James Arrowson was sentenced to 10 years in the state penitentiary in 1865.³⁹

Considering this evidence, it is apparent that in antebellum St. Louis, Missouri, black men accused of rape or attempted rape were not automatically assumed to be guilty, even if they were free. In fact, free blacks fared marginally better in court than slaves in St. Louis. If there were a significant anxiety over black rape in slaveholding St. Louis, castration would have been the expected punishment, especially if the accused black male was free and no consideration had to be given to his resale value. However, I have shown that wasn't necessarily the case either. It is also apparent that black men accused of rape, both slave and free, received fair trials; not hurried and emotionally charged as rape trials often were in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many cases took place over weeks and sometimes even months. It is also significant that

³⁸ For further explanation, see footnote number 30.

³⁹ Criminal Court Cases, 1804-1875. Missouri State Archives. St. Louis, Missouri.

no alleged black rapists in St. Louis were lynched prior to their trials. Even in cases where the accused was a free Negro, no mob violence, lynchings, or riots ensued.⁴⁰

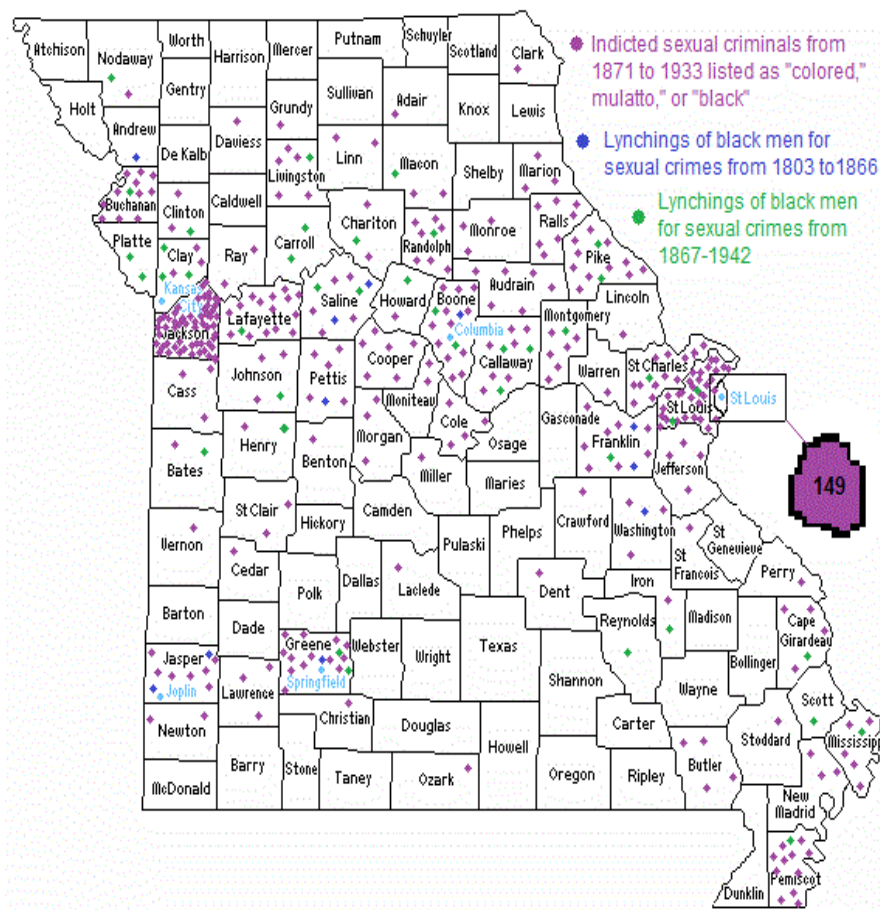
The greatest strength of racial domination remained in its *extralegal* powers. Literacy examinations, restrictive covenants, and anti-miscegenation laws were not as effective at governing docility when compared to the threat of lynching. In the United States lynching has become synonymous with racial violence, although executions of law-breakers by groups of united citizens were not uncommon in Colonial America, throughout Westward expansion, or during and after the Civil War. In cases such as these citizens relied on mob rule as the only immediate governing power, therefore, lynching was a routine tactic of maintaining control and punishing wrongdoers. In general, at these moments in American history lynching had very little racial association; whites, blacks, Native Americans, and many immigrants were lynched for a variety of alleged crimes. After the Civil War and the emancipation of all former slaves, lynching took on a new, racialized meaning.⁴¹ It was now white Southerners' most powerful method of restoring a racial hierarchy similar to the former slave system. As Frazier has shown in her *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, at least twenty trial-less lynchings took place in Missouri during slavery, eight of which were of slaves accused of raping or attempting to rape a white girl or woman, and one of an unnamed free black accused of the same. All the lynchings took place in mostly rural counties with the highest percentage of slave population. (SEE FIGURE 3 ON THE NEXT PAGE) Frazier also

⁴⁰ St. Louis's lack of lynchings at this time could be due to the more secure condition of jails within St. Louis and Kansas City, compared to the feeble, one-room jailhouses in rural Missouri. However, it is also possible that a different urban culture prevailed in the city which condemned the practice of lynching.

⁴¹ Lynching was also racialized as more central and eastern European immigrants came to the United States during Industrialization. However, this study only focuses on lynching as it relates to the African American experience.

points out that lynchings did not take place within the urban centers of Missouri later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her argument is that this was due to the difference in jailhouse stability between the urban and rural areas of Missouri. While St. Louis and Kansas City maintained large, cement jailhouses, those in the rural areas were smaller, more feeble, and easier to break into. However, the lack of lynchings in these cities could also be due to a different racial environment which would have been more likely to condemn the practice of lynching.

Figure 3



A slave named Leonard was hanged in 1818 in Franklin County for the rape and murder of a white female adult.⁴² In 1840, an unknown slave was hanged by his owner and over 300 members of a mob in Washington County for the attempted rape of a white female adult.⁴³ On July 6, 1853, a slave named Sam was burned alive for the murder and assumed rape of a white female adult in Pettis County.⁴⁴ The same year, two slaves, Colley and Bart, were burned alive together in Jasper County for the murder of a white couple and their child. They were also assumed to have raped the white mother.⁴⁵ Just a month later, a slave by the name of Hiram was hanged in front of a mob of more than 1,000 people in Boone County for the attempted rape of a fifteen year old white female.⁴⁶ The next hanging of a slave for the attempted rape of a young white girl, age fourteen, was in 1859 in Saline County with only four or five people participating in the lynching.⁴⁷ Six days later another slave was hanged in the same county for the attempted rape of a white adult woman.⁴⁸ The next lynching took place a month later in Greene County. A slave named Martin was hanged for raping a white woman by a lynch mob of about 400 participants and spectators.⁴⁹ Two unnamed blacks were hanged after the start of the Civil War, one slave and the other free. The slave was hanged in 1862 in Andrew County for the rape and murder of a white female child and the attempted murder of a

⁴² Harriet C. Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, inc. Publishers, 2009): 189.

⁴³ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 189.

⁴⁴ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 190.

⁴⁵ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 190.

⁴⁶ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 190.

⁴⁷ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 191.

⁴⁸ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 191.

⁴⁹ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 191.

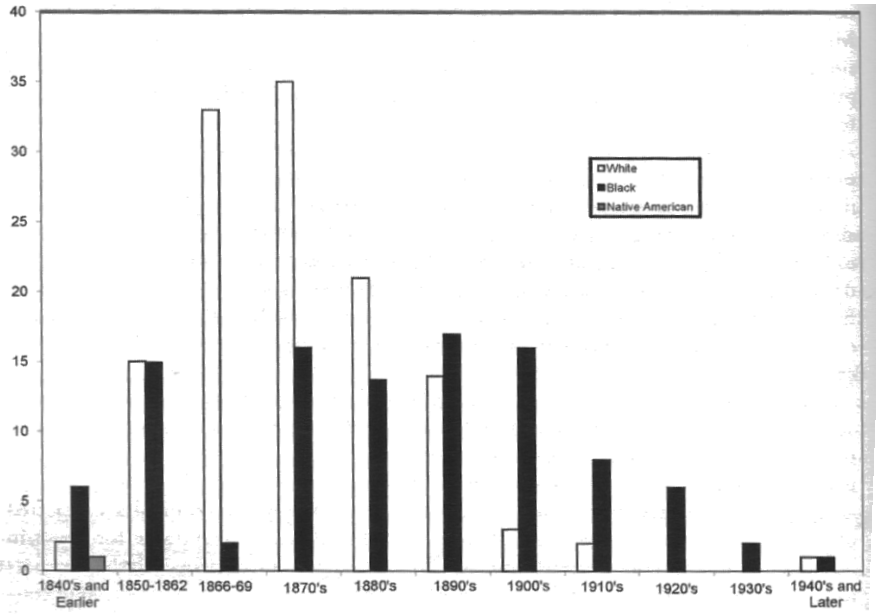
white male child.⁵⁰ The hanging of the unnamed free black happened sometime in 1865 or 1866 for the rape of a white woman in Franklin County.⁵¹

When looking at the Missouri's lynching records before emancipation on a case by case basis, it is easy to inadvertently misread the evidence. Figure 2 on the next page, shows lynchings by race for a hundred year period. The first graph represents the total number of lynchings for all alleged offenses, which shows that white men were lynched far more often than men of any other race before the Civil War. The second graph of Figure 2, however, shows that black men were lynched for sexual crimes at a much higher rate, especially as the twentieth century neared. Even though more whites were lynched in slaveholding Missouri and some free blacks had fared well in the courtrooms of St. Louis City to some extent, black men still constituted 42 percent of all lynching victims before 1866, and 20 percent of all lynchings resulted specifically from a black male allegedly raping or attempting to rape a white woman or girl. Also, between the years 1804 and 1866, free blacks represented 24 percent of all those accused of rape in a city with a much lower percentage of black population.

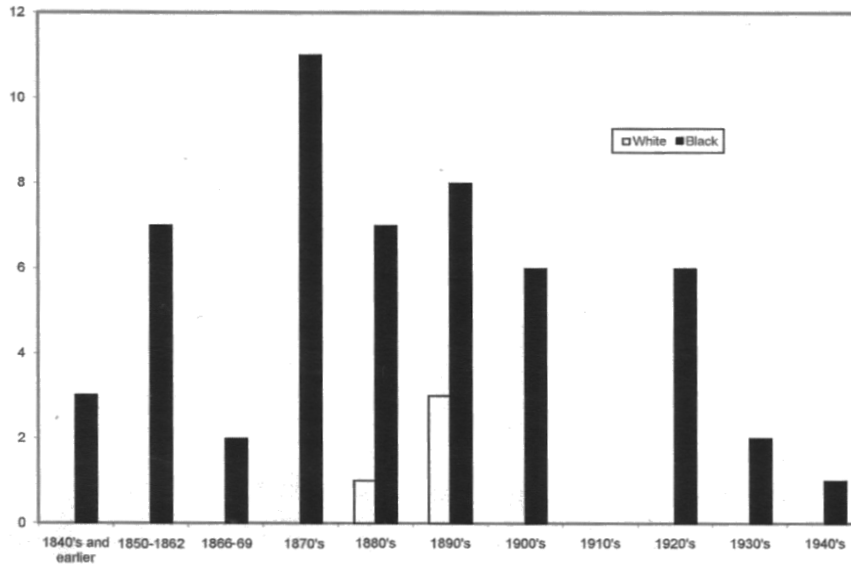
⁵⁰ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 191.

⁵¹ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 191.

Figure 2



Decade-by-decade chart of lynchings in Missouri by race, 1803-1981



Decade-by-decade chart showing lynchings for sex crimes in Missouri, 1818-1942

The records for Missouri shows that the fear of black rape did exist to some degree during the antebellum period. More specifically, the evidence suggests that the fear, and later the myth, varied from rural to urban areas of Missouri. It is evident that early nineteenth century white Missourians, specifically in rural areas, exhibited more angst about black rape than Southerners, but the reasons for this can only be speculated.⁵² It is possible that because of the small-scale nature of slavery in Missouri, white men were more concerned about the unavoidable intimacy developing between their black slaves and their white wives and daughters. The fear could also have been exacerbated by the existence of a significant free black population in St. Louis and Kansas City.

In the next chapter, I will show how the lynching records, when paired with criminal court cases from 1871 to 1900 and with the Missouri State Penitentiary records from 1871 to 1933, further illustrate the development of the black rapist myth in postbellum Missouri. In Chapter 3 I show that the antebellum anxiety over black rape in Missouri was nowhere near the level of panic that erupted after emancipation. Southern states, as well as Missouri, experienced an extraordinary increase in both legal (in court) and extralegal (lynching) methods of disciplining alleged black rapists after African American manumission.

⁵² Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 21.

Chapter 2: Rape and Lynching in Postbellum Missouri

When the Civil War concluded, white southerners used racial violence, specifically the threat of lynching, to maintain control over newly freed blacks. Much of this violence was not only racialized but sexualized as well. Several historians have explored the emergence of this type of aggression, perhaps most successfully by Hannah Rosen in her book *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*. In this study, Rosen links domestic power, gender roles, and claims to citizenship with the racial violence beginning after slave manumission. Using Memphis, Tennessee as an example, Rosen shows that as free African Americans began to make their way into public life and public spaces, white southerners sought to violently reassert their social position. In addition to the expanding freedoms of former slaves, whites also became apprehensive about black troops lingering in the city. Violence ensued almost immediately after the Civil War with the Memphis riots of 1866, when white male vigilantes targeted African Americans' homes and property and raped several black women in the city. White sexual violence was aimed not just at tormenting black people, but also demonstrating that African American men could not protect their wives and daughters. The lack of basic protection for African American women and girls underscored how gender was inextricably linked to citizenship. How could a black man demonstrate the characteristics of manhood (e.g. integrity, morality, and strength) necessary to obtain citizenship status equal to white males, and over women of both races, when they could not even defend their own family or property? Rosen argues that the simultaneous theft of the basic freedom of protection combined with the expansion of stereotypes that portrayed blackness as synonymous with licentiousness, indolence, and general ineptitude.

Rosen furthers her argument of gendered citizenship with her discussion of Arkansas's constitutional convention. Beginning just a few years after the Civil War ended, legislators of several southern states assembled to restructure state laws in *accordance* with the new social and political hierarchy that emancipation initiated. It was at this time that many states composed their "black codes" (what would later be referred to as Jim Crow laws) and adopted them as law. Border States with a significant free black population, like Missouri, already had such laws in place. Rosen points out that during Arkansas's constitutional convention white segregationists believed black rape was "one of those outrages that [had become] too frequent within the past few years."⁵³ White segregationists connected politically empowered black men with desires to marry and rape white women. They asserted this was true despite the fact that they could not provide even a few accounts of this.⁵⁴ One black politician from Little Rock noted, "Miscegenation was a bugbear...All the negroes desired was freedom, citizenship, the right to vote without property qualifications, and under the same restrictions with whites, and an open road to all offices from constable to president."⁵⁵ For white men, public power came from their masculine role as masters of their own homes, women, and slaves, indicating the connection between domestic power and public power.

A comparable panic erupted just a few years after the war in North Carolina with the creation in 1871 of the Ku Klux Klan by the former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest. Organizations like the KKK were created as a part of the attempt by white males to retain social power in the post-slavery era. This attempt is reflected in the

⁵³ Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 174-175.

⁵⁴ Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 174-175.

⁵⁵ Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 142.

Klan's stated purpose in 1871, "Females, friends, widows, and their households shall ever be special objects of our regard and protection." While being questioned by a congressional committee investigating the alleged corruption of local Republican governance, Forrest noted that rape and other insolent behavior was the cause of "the great deal of insecurity felt by the Southern people" adding that "ladies were ravished by some of these negroes, who were tried and put in the penitentiary, but were turned out in a few days afterward." White Republican James Justice responded by stating the Klan's allegations "were greatly exaggerated, if they existed at all."⁵⁶

In addition to targeting black and white Republicans as well as freed people attempting to exercise their newly obtained political power, the Ku Klux Klan most often directed its violence towards black men who allegedly violated the racial and sexual codes of conduct. Castration, merciless beatings, violent rape, and unlawful lynchings were all tactics used by organizations like the KKK in order to preserve the racial and sexual caste system, as well as the purity of the white race. Martha Hodes quotes North Carolina editor Clarence Poe who strongly asserted that "for every negro who is disturbed by fear of the mob, a hundred white women are haunted by the nameless dread." White women expressed these fears as well, one woman noting that "Even in small towns the husband cannot venture to leave his wife alone for an hour at night...At no time, in no place, is the white woman safe from the insults and assaults of these creatures."⁵⁷

It is clear that as African American men moved into the public spaces previously forbidden to them, the compulsion to maintain racial and sexual control intensified

⁵⁶ Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 194-195.

⁵⁷ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 201.

among many whites. During this gradual cultural transition, lynching not only became associated with political and economic advancements, but specifically with alleged violations to the racial and sexual caste system, such as alleged black rape. Interracial relationships between black men and white women were aggressively monitored and brutally suppressed in extralegal ways. In the minds of white Southerners, consensual sex between a black man and a white woman would never take place as white women could never possibly sexually desire an inferior male. Therefore, within this racial and sexual caste system, black males were typified as sexual predators and white males as protectors of white women, who were depicted as both actual and potential victims of black male lust. The alleged rapes of white women by black men resulted in countless instances of lynching.

Within the social and political reorganization of the former slave states, one can see how the myth of the black rapist began to emerge during Reconstruction. It is impossible to show precisely where this myth began, but it is clear that as African American men moved into public spaces previously forbidden to them, this myth intensified among whites. And it wasn't just former slave owning, white democrats who propagated this myth, but also Union supporters with abolitionist leanings. In Missouri, Francis P. Blair Jr., former republican state representative of the state and a Union general of infantries in Illinois, Ohio, and Missouri, expressed similar concerns about newly freed black men.⁵⁸ Blair was chosen as the running mate of Democrat Horatio Seymour, governor of New York, in the 1868 presidential election. During a national speaking campaign, Blair criticized Reconstruction and Republicans for "placing the

⁵⁸ Blair supported emancipation, but only with immediate emigration/deportation.

South under the rule of a semi-barbarous race of blacks who are worshippers of fetishes and polygamists.” Blair added that black men “longed to subject white women to their unbridled lust.”⁵⁹ It is unclear if Blair actually believed these statements or if he was simply reiterating something he thought the Democratic base would want to hear. Either way, Seymour and Blair lost the election and Blair returned to Missouri where he was elected as senator for the Democratic Party.

Despite what most white southerners assumed about black men and their instinctive sexual belligerence toward white women, there were a few whites who challenged the idea. For instance, just five years before Francis Blair’s uttered his disparaging remarks, Union Captain Richard J. Hinton, a white abolitionist and commander of black soldiers, attested to the American Freedman’s Commission of the existence of interracial sex during the war. Hinton stated, “My relations with the colored people have led me to believe that there is a large amount of intercourse between white women and colored men.”⁶⁰ Directly contradicting the myth that black men are the sexual aggressors, Hinton adds, “I have never yet found a bright looking colored man, whose confidence I have won, who has not told me of instances where he has been compelled, either by his mistress, or by white women of the same class, to have connection with them.”⁶¹ During his testimony Hinton also reported a conversation he had with a white doctor from Kansas; “From his experience in Virginia and Missouri, that a very large number of white women, especially the daughters of the smaller

⁵⁹ Eric Foner, *A Short History on Reconstruction* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990): 144-145.

⁶⁰ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 126-127.

⁶¹ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 130-131; Burke, *On Slavery’s Border: Missouri’s Small-Slaveholding Households*, 192.

planters, who were brought into more direct relations with the negro, had compelled some one of the men to have something to do with them.” Specifically referring to Missourian daughters, Hinton added that these women “knew that their brothers were sleeping with the chambermaids, or other servants, and I don’t see how it could be otherwise than that they too should give loose to their passions.”⁶² Hinton’s accounts range from one of a recently widowed mistress who ordered her slave to sleep with her, to a Missouri girl who enticed a slave into the woods and then threatened to cry rape if he would not have sex with her, to another Missouri daughter who, upon giving birth to a mulatto child, refused to give the name of the father until he had runaway to Kansas.

Richard Hinton was not alone in giving such testimony to the American Freedman’s Commission. James Redpath, an abolitionist writer, testified that while traveling across the South during the 1850s, he often heard female slaves “talking and laughing about the numerous cases that have occurred in which white women have had colored children.” In fact, the wartime commission heard so many testimonies concerning sex between white women and formerly enslaved black men, the indexer for the commission felt it necessary to include “Illicit intercourse between white women and black men not uncommon” and “Intercourse between white women and colored men common—Instances of” under the letter “I.”⁶³ Although he reassured the American Freedman’s Commission that his sources were credible, Mutti Burke notes that Hinton’s abolitionist leanings could have influenced his opinion of Missouri women.⁶⁴

⁶² Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 132.

⁶³ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 127.

⁶⁴ Burke, *On Slavery’s Border: Missouri’s Small-Slaveholding Households*, 192-193.

A remarkable paradox persists in the escalation of the black rapist myth; which is the assumption that equality would naturally lead to miscegenation. In reality, it was *inequality* that often encouraged miscegenation. Several historians have pointed to the existence of a significant number of mulatto slaves as evidence of interracial sex during slavery. Missouri's mulatto slave population grew 8 percent in just a decade, constituting 10 percent of Missouri's population in 1850 and 18 percent in 1860.⁶⁵ Throughout the antebellum South, slave masters engaged in sexual intercourse with slave women, in many instances producing interracial children. As citizenship was not only determined by race, but also by the status of the mother, these unions did not represent a threat. Even if the child was partially white, if his or her mother was a slave, than so was he or she. Only in the very rare instance that a mulatto child was produced by a white woman and a black man, were there debates over the status of the child. Consequently, white male masters were much less restrained by their sexual desires than their female counterparts.

Sharon Block effectively argued in her book, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*, that “no rape conviction against a white man, let alone a victim's owner, for raping an enslaved woman has been found between at least 1700 and the Civil War.”⁶⁶ But incidences of coerced sex between male masters and female slaves was an everyday fact of life in the mid-nineteenth century. Regardless of how apparent sexual relationships between white male owners and black female slaves were, many whites were less aware of the types of interracial relationships documented by Hinton and

⁶⁵ Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households*, 188.

⁶⁶ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.): 65.

Redpath. In the 1864 of the American Freedmen's Inquiry, Commissioner Samuel Gridley Howe wrote,

It is certain that the inevitable tendency of American slavery is not only to bring about promiscuous intercourse among the blacks, and between black women and white men, but also to involve white women in the general depravity, and to lower the standard of female purity. The subject is repulsive, but whoever examines critically the evidence of the social condition of the Slave States, sees that the vaunted superior virtue of Southern women is mere boast and sham.⁶⁷

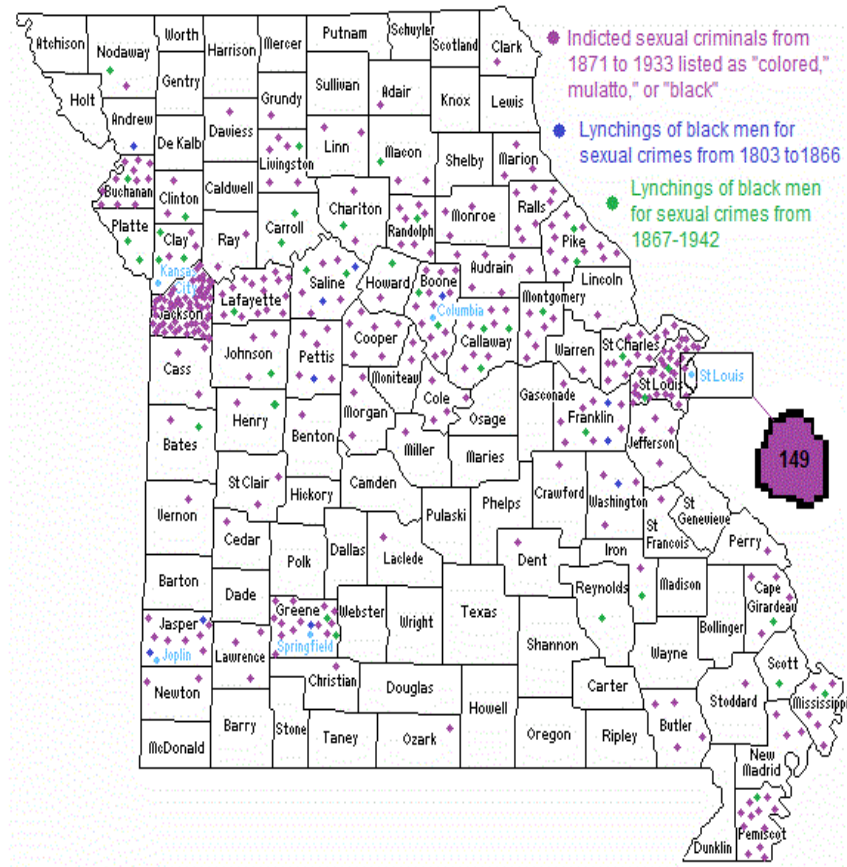
According to Commissioner Howe and many others like him, black hyper-sexuality not only stimulated intercourse between black men and women, but also between slave women and male masters. This theory was unproblematic to white men during this time, mostly because it did not threaten the racial and sexual hierarchy in place. But white women *choosing* to have sex with black men posed a considerable problem. While Commissioner Howe did not discard his assumptions about the indecent nature of black men and women, he was willing to admit the bogus righteousness of white Southern women, even if it was “repulsive” to him.

Although Missouri was a border state, racial and sexual violence drastically increased in the last half of the nineteenth century, as it did throughout the South. Frazier contends that vigilante justice and mob violence resulting in one or more lynchings was a common reaction in Missouri for a variety of alleged crimes including rape, murder, and theft. However, there is considerable difference in the types of crimes that victims of lynchings were accused of. As the graphs in Figure 2 show, in Missouri, while both whites and blacks were lynched for a variety of reasons, but blacks were lynched as the result of alleged sexual crimes at a much higher rate. (SEE FIGURE 2 IN APPENDIX)

⁶⁷ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 132.

Also, beginning in the 1890s, victims of mob violence and lynchings were almost exclusively black males. Frazier observes that at least 70 lynchings of black males took place in postbellum Missouri, 41 of these lynchings, or 59 percent, were in response to a black man allegedly raping or attempting to rape a white woman or girl. What is of greatest significance is the geographical location of these lynchings. As Figure 3 illustrates, most of the lynchings for sexual crimes before the Civil War took place along the Missouri River valley (or Little Dixie), with a few taking place in the Ozark Region. (SEE FIGURE 3 ON THE NEXT PAGE) After the Civil War, however, not only did lynchings continue to take place in Little Dixie, but they spread to other areas of Missouri where mob violence had never before taken place. Just as it was before the war, no lynchings took place within St. Louis or Kansas City. But after the war, lynchings began to take place closer to urban areas; in the counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Platte and Clay. After emancipation, furthermore, several lynchings took place in Southeast Missouri in counties that had never seen such vigilante violence; counties such as Cape Girardeau, Mississippi, and Scott, where the last lynching of a black man took place in 1942. The event occurred in Sikeston at the hands of a mob of at least 500 people, who dragged and burned Cleo Wright for the attempted rape of a white woman.

Figure 3



While many black men who were accused of rape ended up being lynched in unprecedented numbers, most of those who were so accused had their day in court. Examining such legal cases yields interesting and surprising results. Namely, that despite growing numbers of cases that can be explained by population growth, no clear evidence emerges that black men committed rape at a greater rate at this time. By looking at the Criminal Court Cases of St. Louis from 1804 to 1900 and Missouri's State Penitentiary records from 1871-1933, four points are made clear.⁶⁸ One, the number of criminal court

⁶⁸ Both the Criminal Court Case records of St. Louis from 1804 to 1900 and Missouri's State Penitentiary records from 1871-1933 have limitations. For instance, the Criminal Court Case records do not indicate the race of the defendant or victim. However, all cases (indicted, acquitted, and discharged) are recorded, meaning I not only know how many were found guilty of rape, but also how many were found not guilty or dismissed. The opposite is true of the

cases concerning rape, ravishment, or attempted rape or ravishment in St. Louis increased steadily with Missouri's growing population. Two, by examining the outcomes of all rape, ravishment, or attempted rape or ravishment cases, it is clear that alleged criminals maintained an even probability of being acquitted, as they did before the war.⁶⁹ Three, 37 percent of indicted sex criminals from 1871 to 1933 were categorized as "colored," with an additional 4 percent who were categorized alternatively as "black" or "mulatto." (SEE FIGURE 4 ON THE NEXT PAGE) This is a striking number when compared to the percentage of Missouri's black population: 5.6 percent in 1890, 5.2 percent in 1900, and 4.78 percent in 1910. And four, even though African Americans made up just below half of the total indicted sex criminals, sexual crimes only comprised around 3 percent of all crimes committed by those listed as "colored," "black," and/or "mulatto" within the same time period.⁷⁰ (SEE FIGURE 5 ON THE NEXT PAGE) In other words, the majority of all crimes committed by those listed as "colored," "black," and/or "mulatto" were related to larceny and murder, not sexual crimes. Of the 40,688 total crimes committed by whites, only 1,249 were sexual crimes, also 3 percent. Therefore, when comparing white and black indicted criminals, the percentage of their alleged crimes that involved rape or attempted rape were the same within each racial group. This data directly contradicts the

Missouri's State Penitentiary records from 1871-1933. Although, all features of the case and criminal are indicated (including race), these entries are only of the indicted. I do not know of those who were acquitted or cases that were dismissed.

⁶⁹ The crime of rape was catalogued in multiple ways in the state of Missouri between 1867 and 1933. The following terms were used to describe rape or attempted rape: abducting a female, abducting a female under 18 years old, assault to ravish, assault to rape, assault and intent to ravish, assault to commit rape, assault and intent to rape, assault to ravish and carnally know, attempted rape, carnally knowing a female, carnal assault, carnal knowledge, carnal knowledge of a female, carnal knowledge of a female under 18 years old, carnally and unlawfully knowing a female, carnal knowledge of an unmarried female, carnally knowing and abusing a female, rape, rape on a child under 16, ravishing a child, statutory rape, and statutory offence.

⁷⁰ Frazier, *Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981*, 105, 135.

idea that African American men were committing rape more than any other race because of their propensity to sexual violence. Collectively, these four points show that African Americans in Missouri were prosecuted at a significantly higher proportion, constituting 41 percent of all indicted sexual criminals, but were most often indicted for non-sexual crimes. Presumably, if African American men were actually committing most of the rapes, sexual crimes would make up a much larger portion of crimes committed by African Americans.

Figure 4

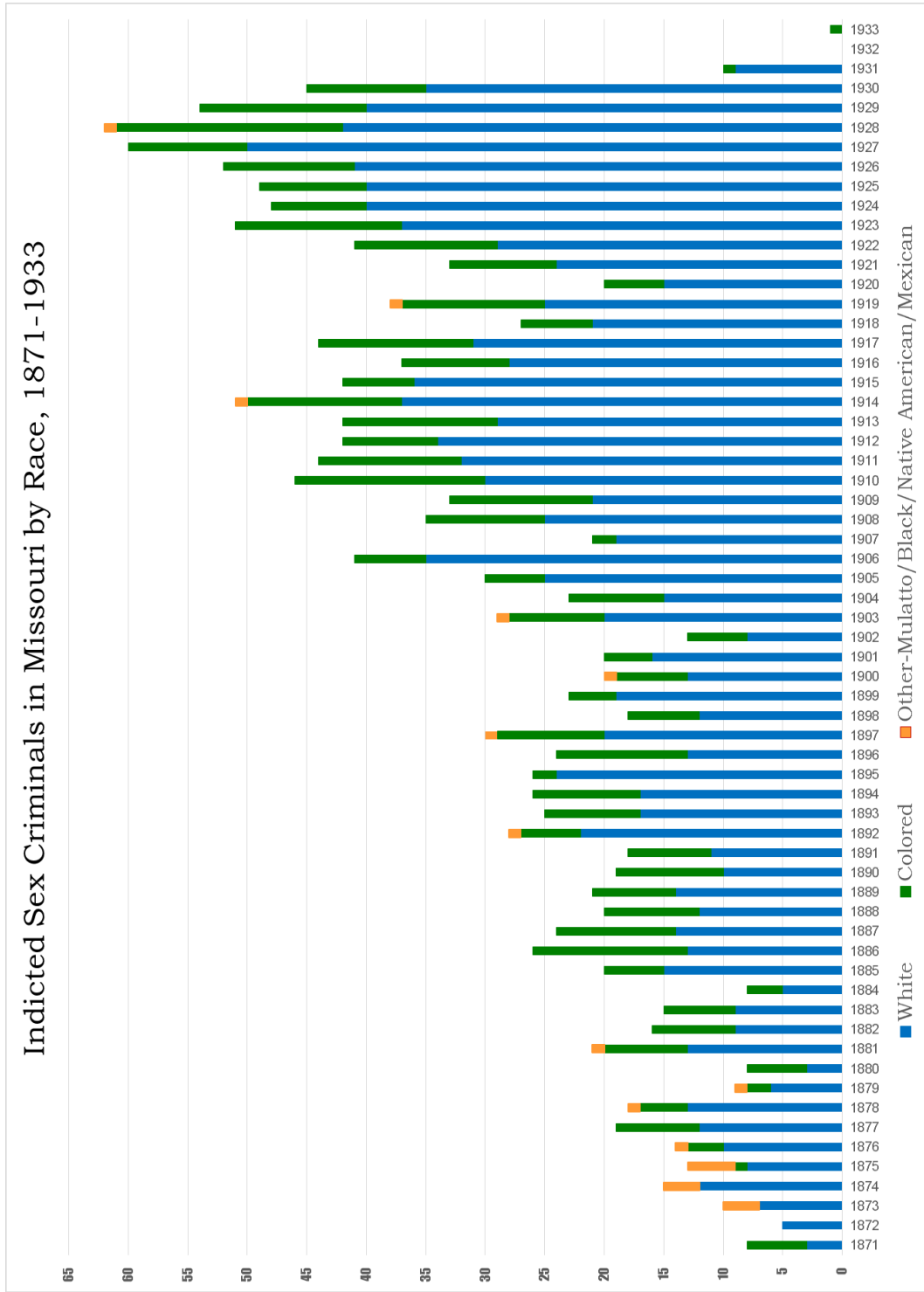
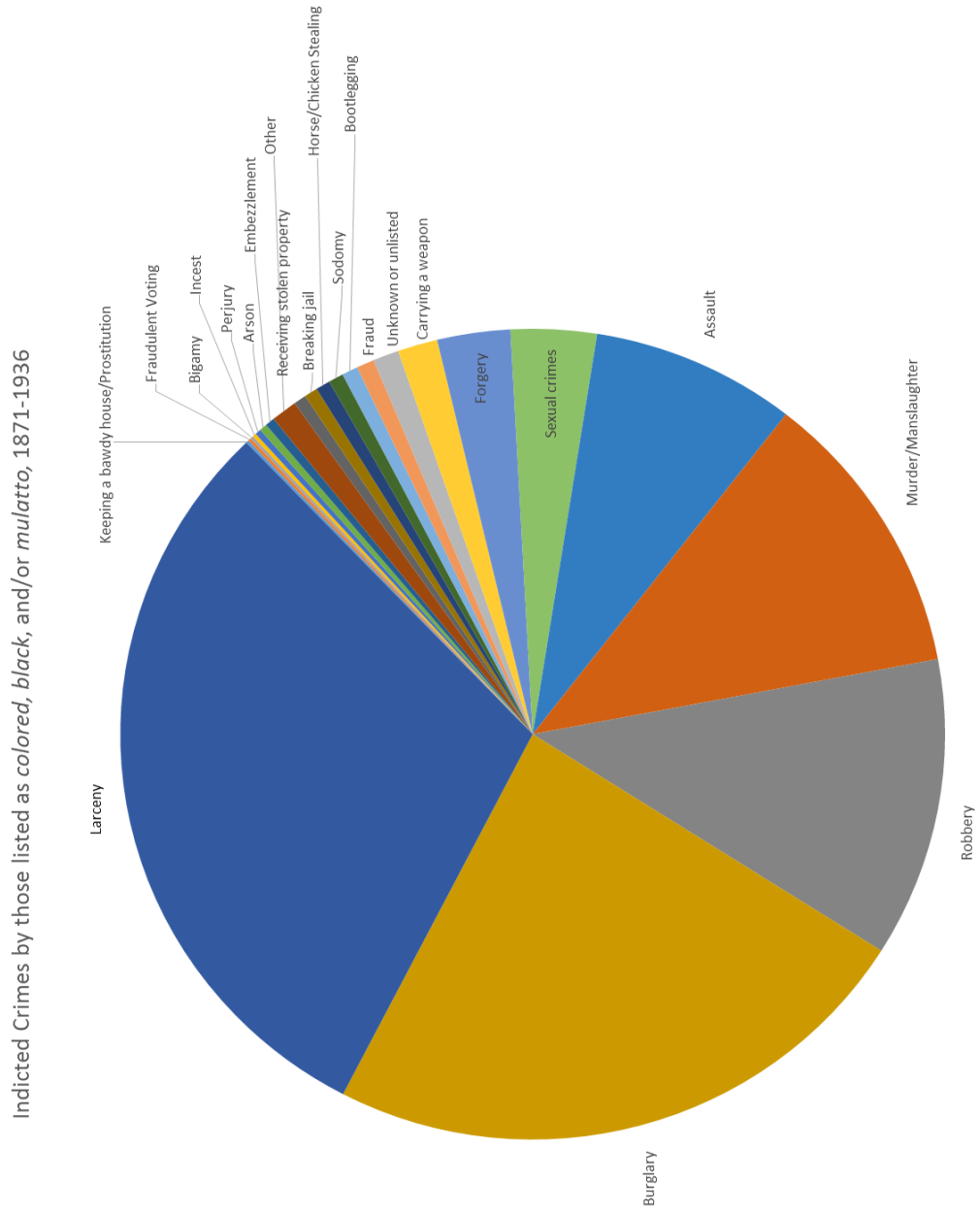


Figure 5



Chapter 3: Eugenics and the Black Rapist Myth in Missouri

Newspapers

In the previous chapter, I indicated how the newly established sexual and racial caste system in the postbellum South ensured white men sexual and racial authority over white women as well as black men and women. Also, the lynching and legal records confirm the violent reassertion of superiority by white Missourians, predominately male, to black Missourians, predominately male. In this chapter I use newspaper articles from the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *Kansas City Sun*, and newspapers from rural areas of Missouri to further demonstrate how the black rapist myth not only developed concurrently with the increase in lynchings with black victims and number of accused black or mulatto rapists, but also with the growing fear of the black male image. The ways in which African Americans, particularly black males accused of rape or attempted rape, were discussed in Missouri newspapers reveal how the local community thought about black society in general. This chapter also explores the role of the black rapist myth in the eugenic notions of superior and inferior races, in which the black male was seen as a highly sexualized, animalistic sexual predator prone to crime and lust for white women. I will show that within the first decades of the twentieth century, eugenics had spread into popular consciousness among many Missourians and Americans in general. Previously, white supremacy seemed intuitive to its adherents and those who required further justification turned to the Bible.⁷¹ The new field of Eugenics, however, purported to provide *scientific evidence* for white supremacy.

⁷¹ For the use of the Bible as justification for slavery, see David M. Goldenberg's *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

Eugenics and the Myth in Missouri

Eugenics was founded in the wake of Charles Darwin's publication of *On the Origins of Species* and had an enormous influence on nineteenth century scientific thought. Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, adopted the notion of natural selection to assert that the human race could be modified through artificial selection. Since scientific evidence had showed that animals have evolved through natural selection, then, according to Galton and other eugenicists, the improvement of the human race could be obtained in much the same way, (i.e. artificial selection). Positive traits (mainly having to do with intelligence) could be enhanced through selective breeding, while negative traits (including idiocy and homosexuality) could be prevented from being passed on to future generations. It is important to note that although modern science has deemed eugenics a pseudoscience and replaced it with genetics, the application of the theory of natural selection to the question of the advancement of the human race seemed natural to the nineteenth-century mind. Eugenics concluded that society's most vexing problems—poverty, drunkenness, feeble-mindedness, disease, licentiousness, proneness to violent crimes—were not only inherited traits that could be weeded out, but those traits were perpetuated by the “unfit,” mainly African Americans and non-white immigrants. Therefore, by eliminating those traits or ensuring that they are passed on less frequently, a higher race of the human species would evolve. American eugenicists such as Charles Davenport and Margaret Sanger, promoted negative eugenics, or the practice of reducing breeding among the racialized minorities. Extreme eugenic practices included state mandated sterilization of the mentally incompetent and criminally inclined (which accounted for well over 200,000 *legal* sterilizations performed in the early twentieth

century), but a more benign practice came in the form of birth control, which Sanger has been recognized and celebrated for.⁷² In a 1939 personal letter to Frederick Osborn, prominent American eugenicist, Sanger wrote,

It is essential that we take an unequivocal and courageous stand and present a clear-cut program. We know, without a doubt, that certain groups should not reproduce themselves...I want to see the eugenics movement pushed ahead in this country and it is for this reason that I am telling you so frankly just what I think and feel about it...Everything that advances the eugenic movement helps birth control as well...We cannot improve the race until we first cut down production of its least desirable members.⁷³

Sanger effectively packaged and sold eugenic repression as sexual liberation to working-class, ethnic women. She argued that preventing motherhood, especially for the lower classes, would suppress “all those things which would multiply racial handicaps.”⁷⁴ By providing poor, minority women with the promise of sexual power without the consequences of impregnation, Sanger was actually promoting eugenic ideas and policies.

With this in mind, it is clear that the eugenic myth served at least two purposes, the preservation of a “pure, untainted” white race and assuaging white Southern anxieties about becoming the racial minority in the future. Nineteenth century writer William B. Smith, wrote that women alone were the carriers of racial identity, their “blood” remained “absolutely pure and...the inflexible resolution of the South was to preserve that purity, no matter how dear the cost.”⁷⁵ By the late nineteenth century, this type of

⁷² Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985): 107-111.

⁷³ Angela Franks, *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy: The Control of Female Fertility* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2005): 11-12.

⁷⁴ Franks, *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy: The Control of Female Fertility*, 14-15; Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Sexuality and the Early Feminists* (New York: The New York Press, 1995), 250-298.

⁷⁵ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 200.

rhetoric echoed throughout the South and provided scientific justification for viewing black males as beastly, dangerous rapists.

Missouri was no exception to the spread of eugenic ideas in the late nineteenth century. The term “eugenics,” coined in 1883 by Galton in *Inquires into Human Faculty and Its Development*, first appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in June of 1904.⁷⁶ An article entitled “Train Girls in Race Motherhood” not only encouraged young women to “prepare their minds” for eugenically suitable marriages, but also “to take truer view of their dominant natural impulse toward service and self-sacrifice.” Even George Bernard Shaw contributed to the article, writing that “in spite of all the romances men and women are amazingly indiscriminate in their attachments: they select their wives and husbands far less carefully than they select their cashiers and cooks.”⁷⁷ Just a year prior to the publication of this article in 1903, the American Breeders Association was founded in St. Louis, Missouri by the leading eugenicist David Starr Jordan. The organization was “devoted to the study of hereditary social problems and to education of the population in eugenics.”⁷⁸ In 1906 it proposed a state inspection test, or “marriage censorship,” that would monitor “ill-fitted pairs” in an attempt to decrease the conception of eugenically inferior children.⁷⁹ Although this type of test was never mandated for Missouri couples, the *Post-Dispatch* reveals that it was debated in many St. Louis churches. Ultimately

⁷⁶ Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting*, 269; “Train Girls in Race Motherhood,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 12, 1904. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁷⁷ “Train Girls in Race Motherhood,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 12, 1904, PAGE 3B. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁷⁸ Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting*, 283.

⁷⁹ “Stock Breeders as Marriage Experts,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 30, 1906, PAGE 6. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

deciding to forgo the implementation of medical exams before a marriage ceremony, one St. Louis clergyman stated, “I doubt whether any minister would perform a marriage ceremony when he knew either party was seriously unfit, but it is very easy, under the prevailing system, for ministers to give the applicants the benefit of the doubt.”⁸⁰

Eugenics was marketed to many Missourians under the guise of marrying the perfect person or breeding the perfect baby. An article from 1913 not only declares Missouri University student from Kansas City, H.L. Shrader, as an eugenically “perfect man,” but also exclaims that he was inundated with marriage proposals from local women after this pronouncement:

He has received offers of vaudeville engagements and boxing and wrestling engagements. But the greater number of letters are from young women, and these come, not only from Missouri and Kansas, but from widely scattered parts of the Southwest...Several of the girl writers advocate marriage in the interest of eugenics. One girl says she is physically perfect herself.⁸¹

A eugenically sound marriage was important, but only to ensure eugenically viable pregnancies. Beginning in the early twentieth century, state and county fairs began to hold breeding competitions, not just among livestock but children and families as well. The American Eugenics Society encouraged this trend and hosted contests “to engage white, rural, native-stock families in the eugenic mission.”⁸² For instance in 1912, two-year-old Harold Hibbert won “the most perfect baby in St. Louis” prize at a local baby show. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur N. Hibbert, commented that they had “never

⁸⁰ “Pastors Discuss an Ante-Nuptial Examination Law,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 26, 1912. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁸¹ “Want to Marry the ‘Perfect Man,’” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 23, 1913. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁸² Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting*, 314.

heard of eugenics before,” yet young Harold scored 99.98 percent out of 100 possible points for his overall health, race, sturdy physique and intelligence.⁸³

Eugenic inspired ideas also appeared in Missouri newspapers in less benign ways. An article entitled “2 Colored Men in World for Every White One—How Long Can Whites Dominate the Earth?” reveals the negative aspects of eugenics as it related to African Americans. Featured on the front page of the October 22, 1922 issue of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, this article argues that in 1922 there were “about 1,700,000,000 human beings, of whom 1,150,000,000 are colored and 550,000,000 are white—a ratio of more than two to one.” Author Paul Anderson notes that 13,000,000 of the 1,150,000,000 Negroes in the world remain in the United States, resulting in the “American Negro Problem.” The article asserts that emancipation resulted in a worse social condition than slavery itself; “The man who wrote the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments assumed that the negro was a white man with black skin. Of course, he isn’t. He is a negro, and just as much so inside as outside. His color is merely one—and an unimportant one—of his racial characteristics, the sum of which makes him a negro.” The author poses two solutions to this “invasion.” First, “mixed marriages must be strictly prohibited. When white breeds with color, the issue is colored.” Second, to only “permit the negroes a voice in government only as it concerned themselves... The present condition of the negro generally proves that he is not equal to our swift, complicated civilization.”⁸⁴

⁸³ “How I Reared the 99.98% Perfect Baby,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 13, 1912. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁸⁴ Paul Y. Anderson, “Two Colored Men in World for Every White One—How Long Can Whites Dominate the Earth?” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 22, 1922. Accessed April 4,

Rapes and Lynchings, both Real and Mythic in Missouri Newspapers

As I suggested earlier, the existence of lynchings for alleged black rape show that Missourians exhibited anxiety over black rape before emancipation. As far back as 1853 rural Missourians were discussing the “cruel, if not barbarous” punishment for a slave named John Rains for the murder and attempted rape of a young, white mother, allegedly in front of her son. The *Glasgow Weekly Times* reported that Rains had been burned at the stake; “The only excuse for which can be offered for the awful retribution of burning this negro is the nature of the offense, and the frequent attempts of late years of negroes to rape white women—several instances which have occurred in this county—and the impression among the community that it required such an example to protect them from the repetition of similar outrages.”⁸⁵ This article conveys two important facts: one, John Rains was burned at the stake *legally*. At this time in Missouri, hanging or burning at the stake were commonly employed punishments for crimes that mandated the death penalty—murder, rape, etc.—regardless of race. The closing argument in the article assures readers, “Had it been a white man, instead of a negro, there is no doubt but what he would have shared a similar fate.”⁸⁶ And two, despite the previous claim assuring Missourians that both black and white sex offenders would be treated equally, the *Glasgow Weekly Times* reporter indicated observable angst over the “frequent attempts of late years of negroes to rape white women.” Even though I could not find any earlier

2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

⁸⁵ “Burning a Negro for Murder,” *Glasgow Weekly Times*, July 21, 1853. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁸⁶ “Burning a Negro for Murder,” *Glasgow Weekly Times*, July 21, 1853. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

references to incidences of black rape in Chariton County (the country in which Glasgow resides), the reporter was transmitting his fear of the presumed increasing instances of black rape to the local community.

After the Civil War, Missouri overhauled many of its former laws and methods of punishment, particularly those dealing with sexual crimes. Before the war, Missouri law explicitly stated that “If any negro or mulatto shall...commit, or attempt to commit, a rape on a white female...he shall on conviction...be sentenced to castration to be performed under the direction of the sheriff by some skillful person.”⁸⁷ After the war, however, all references to race were removed from the statutes having to do with rape. Moreover, castration was eradicated as the mandatory punishment for rape or attempted rape, being replaced by undetermined terms in the Workhouse of St. Louis or in the Missouri State Penitentiary in St. Louis. An interesting side note is that no anti-miscegenation laws were in place in Missouri until 1879, at which point it became illegal for any person “having one eighth part or more of negro blood shall be permitted to marry any white person, nor shall any white person be permitted to marry any negro or person having one eighth part or more of negro blood.”⁸⁸ Examining the changing laws in Missouri, another inconsistency appears. If the panic over black rape was in fact rising in postbellum Missouri, as well as actual instances of black rape, as the *Glasgow Weekly Times* reporter claimed just before the war, then why remove race from rape clauses in the statute books, since at this time many states were *attaching* race to laws in the form of “black codes”? Also, the adoption of an anti-miscegenation law was not atypical for

⁸⁷ Missouri State Statutes 1835, Crime and Punishments.

⁸⁸ *General Statutes of Missouri 1865 Part II*. Chapter 50, Section 3265, Revised Statutes of Missouri 1879; *General Statutes of Missouri 1865 Part II*. Article VIII, Section 3797, Revised Statutes of Missouri 1889.

states at this time, but the adoption of such law with the simultaneous removal of race from rape clauses was unusual. As I will show, many Missourians were displeased by this change and demanded harsher punishment for accused black rapists.

After emancipation, the next reference to black rape in Missouri newspapers occurred in 1875 featuring such discontent in the chosen punishment. *The Troy Herald* of Lincoln County reported on the trial of Luen (also spelled as Lum) Woods, a colored man charged with raping young Mary Hasmann. According to *The Troy Herald*, Woods was sentenced to twenty years in the state penitentiary causing “universal disappointment” adding that it was “particularly unfortunate that an adequate punishment was not meted out to the criminal.”⁸⁹ The reporter even commented on the mandated punishments for similar crimes in other states; “In many of the states the lawmakers had a proper appreciation of the enormity of this crime, and enacted that its penalty be death. If any crime on the calendar merits capital punishment this does.” Adding to the horror and prevalence of black rape, the reporter ends the article stating “If he behaves himself as well as the common run of criminals, he will be met at liberty in fifteen years, in the prime of manhood, and ready for his hellish work.”⁹⁰ According to Missouri’s penitentiary records, Woods was only fifteen years when he entered prison, where he died not even a year later.

A similar evaluation of a penitentiary punishment for rape came in the form of an article entitled “Deserved Hanging” in *The Lexington Intelligencer* in 1879. It stated that, “a black brute named Alfred Smith” attempted to rape the daughter of the white family

⁸⁹ “The Rape Case,” *The Troy Herald*, October 18, 1875. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹⁰ “The Rape Case,” *The Troy Herald*, October 18, 1875. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

for whom he worked. The reporter added, “Everyone fully expected that the next news would be that the wretch had been taken from his captors and hanged to the nearest limb, but the morning train came in, bringing him, a prisoner. If our legislature could have been here that morning, there would have been no further trouble in passing the bill to make rape a hanging offense.”⁹¹ Instead, Smith was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary for attempted rape, for which he pled guilty. The reporter was apparently pleased with the promptness of his trial, but he obviously preferred capital punishment for even the attempted rape of this white girl; “Thus the brute has met speedy punishment, but has escaped the death his crime so richly deserved.”⁹²

The examination of many rural Missouri newspapers reveals that lynching was the preferred method of dealing with alleged black rapists by many Missourians, but legal hangings were a close substitute. By the 1890s lynchings became so popular that Missourians did not often express relief when a lynching failed to take place. For instance, in an article from the *Sedalia Weekly Bazoo* in 1892 a reporter described a failed lynching of a young black man who allegedly attempted rape as a “half-hearted and unorganized...faint attempt.”⁹³ The absence of the lynching wasn’t too much of a disappointment as the crime of rape could result in a legal hanging anyway. The reporter writes: “Let the law take its course...The enormity of the crime itself protests against any

⁹¹ “Deserved Hanging,” *The Lexington Intelligencer*, March 22, 1879. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹² “Deserved Hanging,” *The Lexington Intelligencer*, March 22, 1879. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹³ “A half-hearted and unorganized body of men...” *The Sedalia Weekly Bazoo*, October 18, 1892. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

leniency.”⁹⁴ On the other hand, when a successful lynching did take place, local newspapers almost always reported the event with a certain tone of satisfaction and moral validation. Just the title of an article in an 1895 issue of the *Cape Girardeau Democrat*, “That Was the Fate of Will Henderson,” conveyed not only the inevitability of the lynching, but its justified nature as well. When the sheriff of Jackson, a small town just west of Cape Girardeau, attempted to sneak the alleged rapist out through the back door of the town’s court house, he was met by a “determined mob” of over two hundred “strong men;” “After the hanging, the mob dispersed and the lynchers went their ways, supposedly rejoicing.”⁹⁵ The only method of avoiding a lynching for the crime of rape, according to an editorial from *The Hayti Herald* in 1913, was an immediate trial; “If a negro rapes a white woman he should be tried without delay; this kind of a case should be the first on the docket. Or better, a special term called to dispose of the matter.”⁹⁶ The article continues to state that an immediate trial “is the only thing that will satisfy the duly righteous wrath of the people; the only thing that will keep blood out of the eyes of those who love mother, wife, daughter, sweetheart, and respects of womanhood of America.”⁹⁷ The argument here is twofold. One, the “duly righteous wrath of the people” was warranted and appropriate for the crime. And two, anyone opposed to an

⁹⁴ “A half-hearted and unorganized body of men...” *The Sedalia Weekly Bazoo*, October 18, 1892. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹⁵ “Swung from a Limb.” *Cape Girardeau Democrat*, October 19, 1895. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹⁶ “The rights and wishes of the people...” *The Hayti Herald*, December 4, 1913. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹⁷ “The rights and wishes of the people...” *The Hayti Herald*, December 4, 1913. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

immediate trial, or a lynching, for the alleged rape of a white woman did not respect the sanctity of American womanhood, which only white women were entitled to. Resistance to such ideas was regarded to be as heinous as the rape itself and would be punished as such; “If you don’t believe this is true, then get up and tell a crowd of intelligent men that you believe in leniency and delay for the rapist wretch, and see if you don’t immediately go in search of tall lumber.”⁹⁸

It is clear that lynching was considered the favored method of punishment by many Missourians before and after emancipation. This is particularly true of rural Missourians who preferred to take matters into their own local hands as opposed to putting the black rapist on a train or horse and buggy to the penitentiary in St. Louis or Jefferson City. When Missouri’s pardon attorney, Speed Mosby, suggested abolishing capital punishment in 1906 many believed that the threat of death did not deter rapists anyhow. A reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted that “Illinois, with her large negro population, suffers no more from the crime of rape than does her neighbor, Missouri: and yet Missouri prescribed the death penalty for this crime, while Illinois does not.”⁹⁹ In the same article an unnamed attorney general gave his view on the matter stating, “In my opinion it (capital punishment) does tend to diminish capital offenses, except the rape of white women by negroes.”¹⁰⁰ This opinion not only suggested that

⁹⁸ “The rights and wishes of the people...” *The Hayti Herald*, December 4, 1913. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

⁹⁹ “Folk’s Pardon Clerk Would Destroy Every Gallows in Land and Abolish Capital Punishment as a Failure.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 5, 1906. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

¹⁰⁰ “Folk’s Pardon Clerk Would Destroy Every Gallows in Land and Abolish Capital Punishment as a Failure,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 5, 1906. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

lynching was a more effective method of preventing sexual crimes, but that it was almost impossible to prevent black men from raping white women.

Beginning in the late 1870s and early 1880s, many Missouri newspapers were not only pro-lynching but started to refer to alleged black rapists and their assumed crimes in prejudicial terms. “Black brute,” “black fiend,” “brutal negro,” or “villainous negro” (the word Negro was never capitalized in these references) were constantly used to describe rape by African American men in Missouri newspapers throughout the state.¹⁰¹ In many of these instances, the alleged rapist was described to the reader in distinctively sexual or animal-like terms. For example, Newton Orange, an African American found guilty of attempting to rape a white woman in 1878 was described by the *St. Louis Evening Post* as “a very ill-looking negro” with “brawny arms” and “sensuous lips” who also “crouch[ed] like a hyena” before the court.¹⁰² The *Evening Post* also used Orange’s physical traits to suggest that the Desmonds, the family in which he worked for and allegedly committed the crime against, should have expected the assault; “The little family soon became

¹⁰¹ “A Daring Outrage,” *The Sedalia Weekly Bazaar*, October 18, 1892. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections. “The Advertiser has a special from Keyesville...,” *Andrew County Republican*, October 1, 1873. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections; “Shot Dead: A Negro Ex-Convict Rapes a White Women,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 3, 1877. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library; “Brutal Negroes,” *The Sedalia Weekly Bazaar*, January 19, 1886. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections; “The Black Brute,” *Sedalia Weekly Bazaar*, January 11, 1881. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections; “The California Negro,” *Sedalia Weekly Bazaar*, December 14, 1880. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

¹⁰² “A Terrible Crime,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, September 23, 1878. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

attached to him and treated him as if he were a friend, ignoring his repulsive appearance and the color of his skin.”¹⁰³

The trend of depicting alleged black rapists in a sexualized, animalistic manner only increased in twentieth century Missouri, especially as eugenic thought spread into public consciousness. Take, for example, a story from Hayti, a small town in the boot heel of Missouri just east of Kennett, of “two negro brutes” who allegedly attempted to rape the two daughters of local Judge S. P. Williams in 1922. The reporter begins the front page article in *The Missouri Herald* with the inevitability of black rape; “The long expected has happened at last... That it did not happen sooner is little less than miraculous.”¹⁰⁴ He supports this *inevitability* thusly:

Rape upon white women is just peculiarly a negro crime as cannibalism was their religious feast before specimens of the race were captured wild in the jungles of Africa by the white man and their civilization attempted. The voluptuous passions of rape can no more be civilized out of the negro than can the overpowering love for blood from the slain lamb be trained out of the Bengal tiger.¹⁰⁵

To this reporter, rape was clearly considered to be an intrinsic part of black men’s biological makeup, something they themselves could not help. The supposed innate rapaciousness of black men not only justified racial violence and white superiority, but disenfranchisement and segregation as well.

These are the savages that have been brought among us in droves and herds in recent years: the savages for whom at the white man’s expense churches and school houses have been built, and for which we are taxed to pay. On top of all this, they are the same beasts that go to the polls on Election Day

¹⁰³ “A Terrible Crime,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, September 23, 1878. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

¹⁰⁴ “Two Negro Brutes Attempt Rape on Two White Girls,” *The Missouri Herald*, September 1, 1922. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

¹⁰⁵ “Two Negro Brutes Attempt Rape on Two White Girls,” *The Missouri Herald*, September 1, 1922. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

and with their multitude of ignorant votes rape the ballot box, thereby disenfranchising the white majority, for whom, like vampires, they have drawn their sustenance and freedom.¹⁰⁶

This article reveals much more than the presumed connection between black sexual violence and African American enfranchisement. It is apparent that the citizens of Hayti felt that the black population was invading their quaint and civilized white society.

As if the white citizens of Hayti weren't outraged enough by the attempted rape of two of its daughters, the chosen punishment for the two caused even more fury. Both alleged rapists, John Clayton and Pearl Lashly, were juveniles, aged 16 and 17 respectively, and were sentenced to three year terms at the Reform School in Boonville, Missouri. Judge Williams sent an enraged letter to the editor of *The Missouri Herald* questioning the punishment; "Do we have in Missouri, a law that says to black brutes: 'The female members of the white man's home are the legitimate prey of your lust at any hour of the day or night, and your REWARD shall be board and clothes and education at the expense of the tax-payers of the State—PROVIDED YOU ARE NOT MORE THAN 17 YEARS AND 364 DAYS OLD?'"¹⁰⁷ Lynching was obviously on William's mind as he added,

Just such work is what is causing the organization of the K. K. K. and other so called Radical movements of the present times. When the people lose confidence in the laws of their Government, they have got to seek protection in mutual unions of some sort the same as they did in pioneer days when frontier dangers of savages and wild beasts surrounded them in their remoteness and isolation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ "Two Negro Brutes Attempt Rape on Two White Girls," *The Missouri Herald*, September 1, 1922. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

¹⁰⁷ "Judge Williams Wants to be shown the Law Protecting Black Brutes," *The Missouri Herald*, page 1. September 15, 1922. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

¹⁰⁸ "Judge Williams Wants to be shown the Law Protecting Black Brutes," *The Missouri Herald*, page 3. September 15, 1922. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

Rape, white disenfranchisement, and political ineptitude were all consequences of the type of *savage invasion* Judge Williams and his white neighbors were fearful of and they were not the first Missourians to express this fear. Over forty years prior, as many African Americans migrated from the South towards the North and West, many white Missourians voiced anxiety over the increased travel of black people, especially young males, through the state. The migrants of 1879, or the Exodusters, left the Deep South via the Mississippi River towards St. Louis, most with the ultimate destination of Kansas. Lured by stories of fertile land and better social conditions, many Exodusters only had enough funds to make it to St. Louis where they stayed until they could afford to make the last leg of the journey, but some ended up settling in Missouri permanently.¹⁰⁹ An editorial from Keytesville, Missouri in June of 1879 exclaimed “Free Kansas! Bleeding Kansas!...the land where located the negro exodus! This same Kansas is surely becoming degenerated...Immigration should not be allowed to go into a ‘land of mobs, highway robbers, murderers and thieves,’ where white ladies are raped by negroes, and mob-law rules rampant.”¹¹⁰

Again, after the East St. Louis Riots of 1917, an article provided by the Associated Press featured in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* blamed the eruption of mob violence on the increase of African Americans who had migrated from the South. The article confirmed that “During the year 1917, between 10,000 and 12,000 negroes came

¹⁰⁹ For more on the Exodusters’ migration to St. Louis and Kansas see Bryan M. Jack’s *The St. Louis African American Community and the Exodusters*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

¹¹⁰ “Kansas! Free Kansas!” *Chariton Courier*, June 14, 1879. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

from the Southern States to seek work at promised high wages in the industries of St. Clair County. They swarmed into the railroad stations on every train...until the great number without employment menaced the prosperity and safety of the community.”¹¹¹ According to the article, the influx of the black population resulted in a number of crimes; “More than 80 percent of the murders were committed by negroes. Highway robberies were of nightly occurrence: rape was frequent: White women were afraid to walk the streets at night.”¹¹² Although the article listed several other problems including the rise in corrupt voting practices and the establishment of gambling and prostitution dens, rape was mentioned primarily.

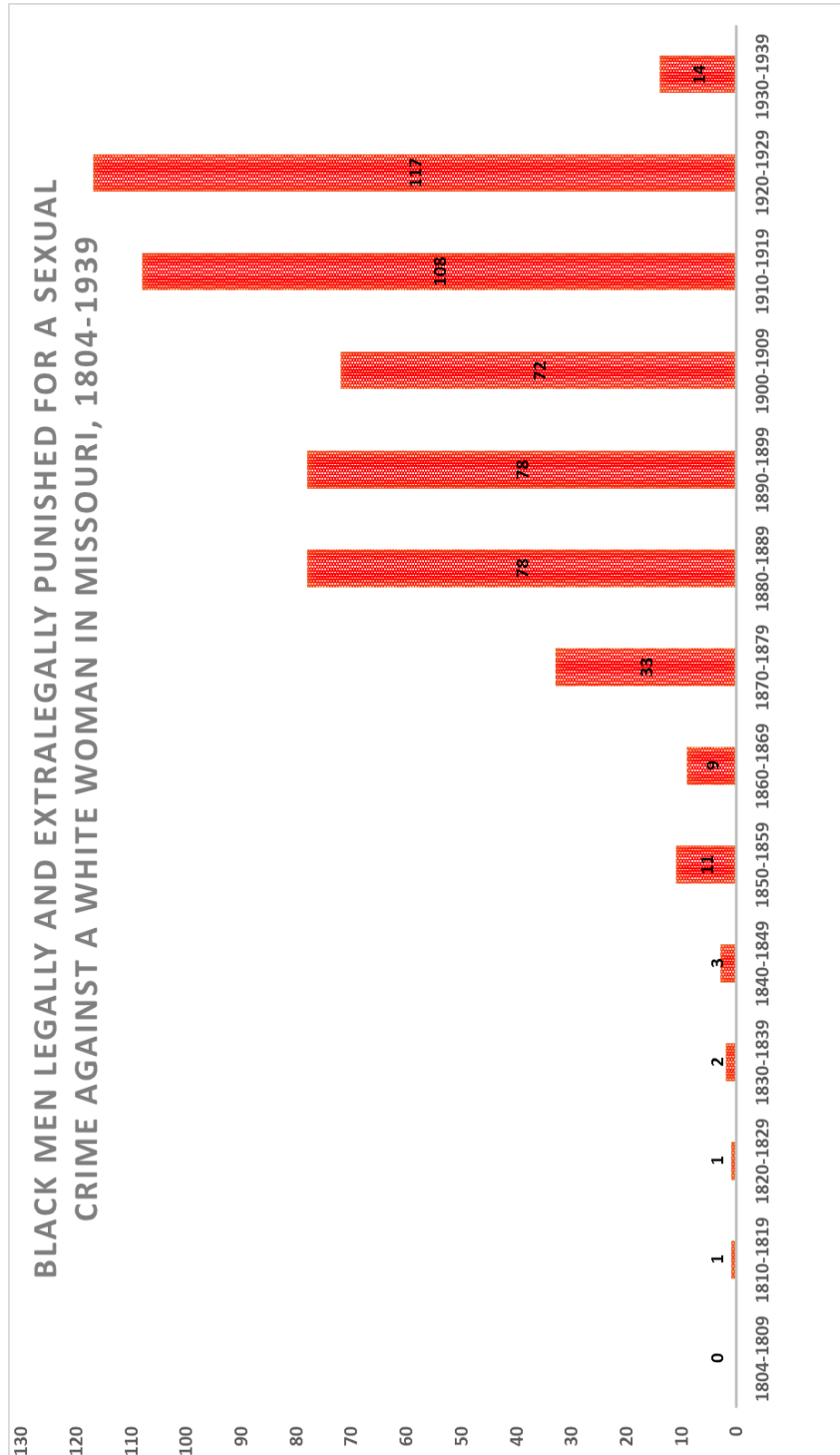
As I suggested earlier, the manner in which African Americans, particularly black males accused of sexual crimes, were depicted in newspapers revealed how the local community perceived black society. Through my discussion of these representations in Missouri newspapers, I have shown that a significant number of rural Missourians believed black men were inherently dangerous and posed a severe, sexual threat to white women. This resulted in an unprecedented number of lynchings of black males accused of rape as well a dramatic increase in the legal prosecution of black males for the same crime during the latter half of the nineteenth century in Missouri. (SEE FIGURE 8 ON THE NEXT PAGE) This chapter has also shown that the black rapist myth emerged in conjunction with the growing fear of the black male image. These fears, as well as the

¹¹¹ Congressional Committee Says City for Many Years Has Been a ‘Plague Spot,’” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 7, 1918. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

¹¹² Congressional Committee Says City for Many Years Has Been a ‘Plague Spot,’” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 7, 1918. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

black rapist myth, were reinforced by eugenic notions of white supremacy and black inferiority.

Figure 8



Conclusion: The Myth and Anti-lynching Campaigns in the Early Fight for Civil Rights

Cultural historians Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen stated that “racial discrimination was not simply about unequal social, economic, and political opportunities, but that the institutions of racism were upheld by a prevailing cultural milieu that portrayed black people as unfit for the responsibilities of citizenship; incapable of staying out of trouble; ignorant and uncultured; servile, scheming, or brutish.”¹¹³ As I have shown throughout this paper, such a cultural milieu existed in Missouri. After emancipation the former master-slave structure was replaced with a racialized and sexualized hierarchy. This social hierarchy and its collaborating cultural environment bolstered the black rapist myth and the justification for lynching. White perceptions of black society were influenced by a number of factors including African American’s living conditions, their perceived moral worth as well as their assumed ignorance, savagery, and delinquency. Both real and mythic instances that supposedly demonstrated such characteristics, especially occurrences of black-on-white rape, further perpetuated these negative stereotypes throughout the culture. Consequently, by the twentieth century the black rapist idea was thought to be a true representation of black society. The early fight for civil rights wasn’t just about equal education, employment, and voting access, but also changing America’s perceptions of African American men as dangerous black rapists.

In order for African Americans to obtain social, economic, and political equality, the negative perceptions placed upon them since emancipation and Reconstruction had to

¹¹³ Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting*, xv.

be deconstructed. Many nineteenth century black activists, including Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Sojourner Truth, W. E. B. Du Bois, and others tried to do exactly that. For anti-lynching activists, the first step in ending lynching in the United States was to dispel the myths that lynch culture had propagated, mainly that the primary cause for lynching was black rape. Black women were among the first to dispel these myths, eventually joined by white women whom organized under the Association of Southern Women to Prevent Lynching (ASWPL) in the 1930s. Although African American women such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell exposed the realities of lynching as well as its myths, neither succeeded in mobilizing the public in a massive social movement against lynching.¹¹⁴ The earliest and most influential action to end lynching on a national scale came in the form of the first and only anti-lynching bill to be voted on by Congress, the Dyer Bill. The next section will discuss these specific anti-lynching campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

With respect to dispelling the black rapist myth and exposing the realities of lynching, none accomplished more than Ida B. Wells. Born into slavery just a few years before the end of the Civil War, Wells was raised with strong activist roots. In her autobiography she writes, “My earliest recollections are of reading the newspaper to my father and an admiring group of his friends. He was interested in politics and I heard the words Ku Klux Klan long before I knew what they meant. I knew dimly that it meant something fearful, by the anxious way my mother walked the floor at night when my

¹¹⁴ Introduction to *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999)
<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

father was out to a political meeting.”¹¹⁵ As a young woman she moved to Memphis, Tennessee where she eagerly entered the public arena of community activism. By 1889, she was the co-owner of and popular journalist for the *Free Speech and Headlight*, a weekly newspaper in Memphis, elected secretary of the National Press Association, and a syndicated editorialist for newspapers throughout the country.¹¹⁶ On March 9, 1892 three of her friends were murdered, not for the *usual* crime of rape, but for owning and operating a successful grocery store whose only competitor was owned by a white man. Wells wrote in her autobiography;

Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Lee Stewart had been lynched in Memphis, one of the leading cities of the South, in which no lynching had taken place before, with just as much brutality as other victims of the mob; they had committed no crime against white women. This is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and to ‘keep the nigger down.’¹¹⁷

Wells was forced by many threats of death to abandon Memphis. Also, her newspaper offices had been raided and destroyed while she was in New York for the annual meeting of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹¹⁸ Despite such setbacks, Wells began the preliminary research that would eventually become the basis for her anti-lynching campaign. In June of 1892, still troubled by the death of her close friend Thomas Moss, she wrote and published the first of three anti-lynching pamphlets, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all Its Phases*. In this piece, she opens with the original

¹¹⁵ Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. Edited by Alfreda M. Duster. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 9.

¹¹⁶ Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 17-18.

¹¹⁷ Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, 64.

¹¹⁸ Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 18.

editorial that resulted in the destruction of her newspaper, several death threats, and her exile to the North; “Nobody in this section of the country believes the old thread bare lie that Negro men rape white women. If Southern white men are not careful, they will overreach themselves and public sentiment will have a reaction; a conclusion will then be reached which will be very damaging to the moral reputation of their women.”¹¹⁹ One of the most important purposes of *Southern Horrors* was to dispel the myth that black men often raped white women and were therefore justifiably lynched for that crime. As Wells points out, suggesting that lynch victims were not raping white women, but partaking in consensual sex was an even more dangerous accusation. In addition to her own experiences of violence and destruction, she described a similar outcome for the white journalist J.C. Duke of *The Herald* from Montgomery, Alabama for making a similar claim. After Duke asked, “Why is it that white women attract negro men now more than in former days?” he was forced to leave Montgomery and his newspaper was dismantled. “There was a time when such a thing was unheard of,” Duke argued, “There is a secret to this thing, and we greatly suspect it is the growing appreciation of white Juliets for colored Romeos,” he was forced to leave Montgomery and his newspaper was dismantled.¹²⁰

Wells continued to challenge the honor and respectability of white women stating that hundreds of cases could be cited (she gives several examples) “to prove the assertion that there are white women in the South who love the Afro-American’s company even as

¹¹⁹ Ida B. Wells, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 52.

¹²⁰ Ida B. Wells, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 53.

there are white men notorious for their preference for Afro-American women.”¹²¹ Based on her evidence, she argued that many of the accusations of rape that resulted in lynchings were in reality consensual relationships. This argument meant that charges of rape were actually attempts to protect the woman’s reputation, and lynchings for such a *crime* was a way to maintain power and control. To Wells, this was the real problem, as she makes clear in *Southern Horrors*;

The miscegenation laws of the South only operate against the legitimate union of the races; they leave white man free to seduce all the colored girls he can, but it is death to the colored man who yields to the force and advances of a similar attraction in white women. White men lynch the offending Afro-American, not because he is a despoiler of virtue, but because he succumbs to the smiles of white women.¹²²

As she argues in both *Southern Horrors* and *A Red Record*, allegations of rape of white women by black men was fairly uncommon during slavery and even throughout the Civil War when white men were away from home, often leaving their families under the protection of male and female slaves; “The world knows that the crime of rape was unknown during four years of civil war, when white women of the South were at the mercy of the race which is all at once charged with being a bestial one.”¹²³ Frederick Douglass agreed, stating that during slavery and wartime, black men were “seldom or never...accused of the atrocious crime of feloniously assaulting white women.”¹²⁴ Later,

¹²¹ Ida B. Wells, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 58.

¹²² Ida B. Wells, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 53-54.

¹²³ Ida B. Wells, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 53.

¹²⁴ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 6. FOR LYNCHING RECORDS COLLECTED BY WELLS SEE FIGURES 6 AND 7 IN THE APPENDIX.

in 1904, black female activist Mary Church Terrell would reiterate this argument in her article in the *North American Review*, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View.” She stated that “while the men of the South were off fighting to keep the negro in bondage, their mothers, wives and daughters were entrusted to the black man’s care. How faithfully and loyally he kept his sacred trust the records of history attest! Not a white woman was violated throughout the entire war.”¹²⁵

A few years after the publication of *Southern Horrors*, Wells wrote another pamphlet which provided the statistical approach for succeeding generations of anti-lynching activism. In *A Red Record* Wells argued that during slavery “the Negro was kept subservient and submissive by the frequency and severity of the scourging.”¹²⁶ Only with freedom did a “new system of intimidation came into vogue; the Negro was not only whipped and scourged; he was killed.”¹²⁷

Wells makes the point that racial violence was deeply rooted in emancipation. She stated that after the newly freed slave obtained access to the ballot, “‘No Negro domination’ became the new legend on the sanguinary banner of the sunny South, and under it rode the Ku Klux Klan, the Regulators, and the lawless mobs, which for any

¹²⁵ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999)
<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

¹²⁶ Ida B. Wells, “A Red Record,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, Reprinted in Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997): 73.

¹²⁷ Ida B. Wells, “A Red Record,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, Reprinted in Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997): 73.

cause chose to murder one man or a dozen as suited their purpose best.”¹²⁸ Fear of “Negro domination” was the second of three false justifications for lynching that Wells outlined in *A Red Record*; the first being “to stamp out alleged ‘race riots.’” The third excuse for lynching was “the old thread bare lie” that she referenced in *Southern Horrors*. She wrote,

Brutality still continued; Negroes were whipped, scourged, exiled, shot and hung whenever and wherever it pleased the white man so to treat them, and as the civilized world with increasing persistency held the white people of the South to account for its outlawry, the murderers invented the third excuse—that Negroes had to be killed to avenge their assaults upon women. There could be framed no possible excuse more harmful to the Negro and more unanswerable if true in its sufficiency for the white man.¹²⁹

The bulk of *A Red Record* is dedicated to lynch statistics from throughout the South and Mid-West which reveal the true cause of lynching. Even though rape and attempted rape were cited as the cause for the many of these lynchings, Wells makes it clear that lynching was the response to a wide range of “crimes,” including those which weren’t really crimes such as “insulting a white” or “self-defense.” According to the evidence that Wells’ had gathered, she verified that less than a third of the victims of lynching were accused of rape or attempted rape. Lynching did not prevent rape or police racial/sexual etiquette in any way. In fact, Wells argued, lynching prevented “the Negro to defend himself against the unsupported accusations of white men and women.” The threat of lynching imitated legal power and if allegations were made against a black

¹²⁸ Ida B. Wells, “A Red Record,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, Reprinted in Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997): 75.

¹²⁹ Ida B. Wells, “A Red Record,” in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, Reprinted in Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997): 78.

person, he or she had very little opportunity to contest. Therefore, lynching wasn't a necessary evil for protection from rape, riot or "Negro domination," but a mechanism of preserving racial authority.

While Wells was praised by her colleagues, most specifically Frederick Douglass, many were obviously outraged by her anti-lynching campaign, especially during her tours in Scotland and England. The president of the Missouri Press Association, John W. Jacks, sent an inflammatory letter to Florence Balgarnie, secretary of the Anti-Lynching Society of England, in which he criticized Wells' character and proclaimed that "African American women in general were without morals."¹³⁰ Governor Allen Candler of Georgia referred to Wells and her peers as "pharisaical fanatics who always stretch the atrocity of the lynching," adding that "instead of denouncing his crime, they have assailed the character of the victim of the brute's lust. This not only encourages bad negroes, but exasperates the friends of Southern womanhood."¹³¹ An article from rural Missouri described Wells's anti-lynching tour in the United Kingdom as accomplishing nothing more than "harrowing up the minds of the Britishers over alleged outrages."¹³²

Even as Wells and other female anti-lynching crusaders struggled to expose the true atrocities of lynching, most members of white society disregarded their conclusions. The dominant white Southern opinion was that the threat of lynching prevented the rape of chaste, Southern women. According to many Southern white men, such as Thomas

¹³⁰ Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (New York: Bedford Books, 1997): 37.

¹³¹ "Cause and Remedy." *The Kansas City Journal*, July 29, 1899. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

¹³² "A negro woman is traveling..." *The Chariton Courier*, June 29, 1894. Accessed February 25, 2014. Historic American Newspapers: Chronicling America, Library of Congress Digital Collections.

Nelson Page a writer for the *North American Review*, lynching would not cease until black society could eradicate the sexual assault of white women by their black men.¹³³ In 1904, when Page made this point in his article “The Lynching of Negroes—Its Cause and Its Prevention,” African American activist Mary Church Terrell responded that this premise was a propagated myth in her article “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View.” In this article Terrell argued that “those who live in the section where nine-tenths of the lynchings occur do not dare to tell the truth, even if they perceive it,” while “those who do not live in the section where most of the lynchings occur borrow their views from their brothers who do, and so the errors are continually repeated and inevitably perpetuated.”¹³⁴ She added that recent figures showed that rape accounted for less than 25 percent of all lynchings despite that the “men who admit the accuracy of these figures gravely tell the country that lynching can never be suppressed, until Negroes cease to commit a crime with which less than one-fourth of those murdered by mobs are charged.”¹³⁵ Related to this myth, argued Terrell, was the belief that black leaders maintained such a low standard of morality that “they [did] not appreciate the enormity and heinousness of

¹³³ Thomas Nelson Page, “The Lynching of Negroes—Its Cause and Its Prevention,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

¹³⁴ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

¹³⁵ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

rape.”¹³⁶ When black leaders spoke against lynching they were often accused of sympathizing with rapists. Terrell insisted instead that this “pity” for lynching victims was “invariably because there is a reasonable doubt of his innocence, rather than because there is a condonation of the alleged crime.”¹³⁷

Considering that rape was a misrepresentation of the cause for lynching, “what, then,” Terrell asked, was “the cause of lynching?”¹³⁸ She concluded that “race hatred, the hatred of a stronger people toward a weaker who were once held as slaves” and the South’s devotion to “lawlessness” were the real causes of lynching. The South had created a post-Civil War culture which facilitated myths about African Americans and in turn used those myths to justify lynching as a way of maintaining social order. Terrell argued that the South had “so industriously, persistently, and eloquently preached the inferiority of the negro, that the North [had] apparently been converted to this view—the thousands of negroes of sterling qualities, moral worth and lofty patriotism to the contrary notwithstanding.”¹³⁹ Since many Southern white men, like Page, asserted that

¹³⁶ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1001118343>.

¹³⁷ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1001118343>.

¹³⁸ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1001118343>.

¹³⁹ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at

lynching served as the chief deterrent of rape and guardian of Southern womanhood, Terrell argued that anti-lynching activism would be most successful with the support of white Southern women; “What a tremendous influence for law and order, and what a mighty foe to mob violence Southern white women might be, if they would arise in the purity and power of their womanhood to implore their fathers, husbands and sons [to] no longer stain their hands with the black man’s blood.”¹⁴⁰ Eventually this would transpire in the 1930s when the anti-lynching campaigns of the ASWPL would contribute to a “fifty percent reduction in the incidence of lynching in the South.”¹⁴¹ Because lynching was justified as a way of protecting white women from black sexual assault, Southern white women had an essential role to play in ending the practice of lynching. Their educational campaign disputed that lynching was an “act of protection” and, instead, stressed that lynching besmirched the reputation of the South, as well as the entire nation, and undermined the value of American law.¹⁴²

The anti-lynching campaigns of Wells and Terrell preceded the most dramatic increase and racialization of lynching to have ever occurred in United States history.

Binghamton, 1999)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

¹⁴⁰ Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,” in *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

¹⁴¹ Introduction to *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

¹⁴² Introduction to *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

By 1915, lynching had spread beyond the South and Mid-West and its victims were almost always black. Although the NAACP had been protesting lynching ever since its formation in 1909, in 1916 the organization decided to make the anti-lynching campaign a top priority.¹⁴³ At this time, well over ten anti-lynching bills had been introduced to the Senate, however none of the sixteen presented from 1901 to 1920 survived beyond the Committee level.¹⁴⁴ Then, “between 1917 and 1918 the rate of lynching doubled.”¹⁴⁵ This reoccurring growth in lynching inspired Leonidas C. Dyer, a Missouri native and Republican member of the House of Representatives for the state, to write and introduce a bill making lynching a federal crime in 1918.¹⁴⁶ This bill would authorize the federal government to punish state, county, and local authorities who failed to prevent a lynching. It also proposed that anyone participating in mob violence could be fined up to \$10,000 and imprisoned for up to 10 years; the person who actually caused the death would be charged with murder in a federal court. More importantly, the Dyer Bill, as it became known as, would allow any person (eventually citizens and non-citizens) charged with a crime to appeal to federal courts for protection if there was a reasonable belief that they would be denied equal protection. This aspect would become the major strength of this legislation.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ William B. Hixson, “Moorfield Storey and the Defense of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The New England Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (Mar. 1969): 65.

¹⁴⁴ Introduction to *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>.

¹⁴⁵ William B. Hixson, “Moorfield Storey and the Defense of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The New England Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (Mar. 1969): 65.

¹⁴⁶ William B. Hixson, “Moorfield Storey and the Defense of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The New England Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (Mar. 1969): 66.

¹⁴⁷ *Lynching in Missouri*, 166-167; Document 1: “Anti-Lynching Bill,” in *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923*. By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton,

At the time Dyer drafted his anti-lynching bill proposal, renowned lawyer Moorfield Storey was the president of the NAACP (the first president). Even though the Association was heavily involved in the anti-lynching campaign, Storey did not initially support the bill. According to Storey, lynching was beyond the control of the Federal Government because in order to enforce the laws of the bill, Congress would have to ignore the criminal codes established by each state.¹⁴⁸ A similar “state’s rights” argument would be used by the Democratic opposition in order to filibuster the passage of the bill just a few years later. In 1919, Storey changed his position on Dyer’s anti-lynching bill and the NAACP publically expressed support of the bill at the National Conference on Lynching held in New York of that year.¹⁴⁹ There are many reasons why Storey could have changed his position. Most likely, it was the combination of both the lack of any other promising anti-lynching proposals and the recent explosion of race riots across the country. Just in the summer of 1919, racial violence had erupted in Chicago, Washington, Tulsa, Knoxville and Omaha. By the end of that year, Storey was in full support of the federal anti-lynching bill. Lynching had become such a national crisis that within a year Storey went from stating that lynching was “beyond the reach of Congress” to writing that he wanted “such a public opinion aroused as will control the action of Congress.”¹⁵⁰

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<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>.

¹⁴⁸ William B. Hixson, “Moorfield Storey and the Defense of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The New England Quarterly* 42, no. 1(Mar. 1969): 69.

¹⁴⁹ Introduction to *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>.

¹⁵⁰ William B. Hixson, “Moorfield Storey and the Defense of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The New England Quarterly* 42, no. 1(Mar. 1969): 70.

After the National Conference on Lynching, the Dyer Bill gained support throughout the country. In Dyer's home district of St. Louis, African Americans rallied behind the cause. The local black newspaper, *The Argus*, urged Congress and the President to make lynching a federal offense as early as January of 1918.¹⁵¹ In this same issue the St. Louis branch of the NAACP referenced the recent East St. Louis Riots in order to bolster support for the local branch and the anti-lynching crusade; "No one thought a year ago that the heinous and dastardly occurrences like the East St. Louis massacre would have happened right at our door. No one can tell what this year will bring even nearer to us in St. Louis."¹⁵² Even before the Dyer Bill was first introduced to the House of Representatives in the fall of 1920, African American women within the NAACP were working diligently organizing fundraisers and raising awareness nationwide for the bill. After Dyer stated in the opening address to the National Conference on Lynching that if a million people supported the anti-lynching bill, it would pass, the NAACP established the sub-committee known as the Anti-lynching Crusaders with the sole purpose of raising one million dollars to support passage of the Dyer Bill. Black women not only arranged bake sells, planned donation drives, and circulated anti-lynching pamphlets throughout the United States for the Anti-lynching Crusaders, but also presented anti-lynching bills before the legislatures of several states with the hope that they would then support the Dyer Bill.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ *The Argus*, "Burning Negroes in the United States Must be Stopped," January 18, 1918, page 4.

¹⁵² *The Argus*, "Local Branch, N.A.A.C.P.," January 18, 1918, page 4.

¹⁵³ Document 4: "Fights Lynching With Fruit Cake," in *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003) <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1000636528>; Document 7: "The Anti-Lynching Crusaders: The Lynching of Women," in *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica

On January 26, 1922 the Dyer Bill passed the House of Representatives with a vote of 230 to 119 and was “given a favorable report by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.”¹⁵⁴ However, once the bill moved to the Senate it was repeatedly filibustered. Senator James A. Reed echoed Storey’s earlier concerns about the unconstitutionality the bill stating that the matter of lynching should be left to the individual states to manage—an implied guideline of the compromise between the North and the South during Reconstruction.¹⁵⁵ Others such as Missouri Congressman, and colleague of Dyer, John Rankin were opposed to the bill on the basis that it would foster rape. Rankin suggested that the bill be renamed as the “bill to encourage rape.”¹⁵⁶ Despite the years of statistics provided by Wells, Terrell, and the NAACP, many, especially white men within the legislature, were convinced that lynching was a necessary threat in order to detour rape. The evidence which conclusively showed that lynching wasn’t a deterrent, but in fact a

Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>; Document 9: “Agreement Between the Anti-Lynching Crusaders and the N.A.A.C.P.,” in *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>; Document 22: “Why the Million Dollars?” in *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>.

¹⁵⁴ Introduction to *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>; William B. Hixson, “Moorfield Storey and the Defense of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” *The New England Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (Mar. 1969): 74

¹⁵⁵ Frazier, *Lynching in Missouri*, 167; Introduction to *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* By Angelica Mungarro and Karen Anderson, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2003)

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000636528>.

¹⁵⁶ Frazier, *Lynching in Missouri*, 167.

mechanism of racial control was irrelevant. The image of the dangerous, lustful black male was so firmly in place within the conscious fear of white society that it could not be separated from the act of lynching. After a year of filibustering and waning Republican support, the bill was supposed to be reintroduced in the next congressional session of 1923, but never was. Not only did the Dyer Bill fail to become federal law, but an anti-lynching law was never passed at the federal level. Even the NAACP's interest in anti-lynching legislation deteriorated until the 1930s when Jessie Daniel Ames organized middle- and upper-class white women in a movement to oppose lynching with the formation of the Association of Southern Women to Prevent Lynching (ASWPL).¹⁵⁷

In spite of the work completed by anti-lynching activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the United States never passed a federal bill against the practice of lynching. Local activism made lynching illegal at the state level in several states like Kentucky and Pennsylvania, however these laws were difficult to enforce without the support of the Federal Government. Racial violence, however, did not die with the Dyer Bill or other anti-lynching legislation. As the Civil Rights Movement transformed throughout the twentieth century, so did racial violence. The legacy of the black rapist stereotype can clearly be seen in the twentieth century's most well-known black-on-white rape cases. Next, I want to briefly examine a few of these cases to highlight the themes that I have discussed throughout this thesis.

¹⁵⁷ Introduction to *How Did Black and White Southern Women Campaign to End Lynching, 1890-1942?* By Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Karen Vill, (Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999)
<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1001118343>.

In 1931, the year Ida B. Wells passed away, nine teenaged boys (one as young as 13) became famous when they were accused of assaulting a group of young white men and then allegedly raping two white women, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, on a train traveling through northern Alabama. Just a few hours after the brief conflict with the young white men, a mob of armed white men stopped the train and dragged them to the Scottsboro jail where they were charged with assault and attempted murder.¹⁵⁸ Within sixteen days, all nine boys, or the Scottsboro boys as they would later be referred to, were charged with raping the two white women and sentenced to death. Despite the fact that the people of Alabama were extremely eager to execute these young men, there were significant problems with the validity of this case. Not only was there no actual contact between the nine young black men and these women, the men did not even know each other until they were all arrested and charged with rape together. Many rumors flew during the course of this trial including the possibility that Ruby Bates and Victoria Price were prostitutes. Due to several appeals and a long, exhausting legal battle, the boys were not executed, but still spent several years, some up to as much as twenty years, in prison for a crime they did not commit. However, the idea that the Scottsboro boys did in fact rape Bates and Price was so indisputable to white Southerners, all nine were found guilty even after the U.S. Supreme Court had struck down the verdict twice.

In his 1944 study on race relations, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Gunnar Myrdal observed that sex was “the principle around which the whole structure of segregation of the Negroes was organized.”¹⁵⁹ Considering

¹⁵⁸ James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 5.

¹⁵⁹ Timothy Tyson B., *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 93.

this, it should not be surprising that during the mid-twentieth century, when African Americans were uniting throughout the United States in order to strengthen their nonviolent struggle for Civil Rights, white violence erupted throughout the South. Historian Timothy Tyson emphasizes this point, in *Radio Free Dixie*, his biography of civil rights leader and author Robert F. Williams. Tyson argues that a massive Ku Klux Klan revival erupted in the wake of increasing Civil Right activity. Throughout the South, African American communities were constantly threatened by white vigilante violence. The brutal murder of Emmitt Till in 1955 is an infamous example of this. Till, age fourteen, was murdered in Mississippi after reportedly whistling at a white woman on a dare. As Till was a native Chicagoan, his unfamiliarity with the harsh realities of the sexual caste system in the South cost him his young life. Just a few years later, in the hometown of black power activist Robert William in Monroe, North Carolina, two black boys under the age of ten were arrested, abused, and sentenced to indefinite terms in juvenile detention for “molesting three white girls.” Apparently, their only crime was allowing two young white girls to sit on their laps and kiss them on their cheeks during play. Even though a peck on the cheek was an innocent gesture of fun and fondness among children, it became an embarrassing symbol of miscegenation; almost a scarlet letter of interracial sex pinned upon the clean white lapels of parents whose children had not yet learned the intricacies of southern social etiquette. In relation to the trial, one white man from North Carolina reportedly stated, “We can talk about it all we want to—justice, equality, all that sort of thing, but when we come right down to it, that’s what it’s all about: a nigger a-marrying your sister or daughter.” James Baldwin, the celebrated black novelist, poetically responded to the hypocrisy, “You’re not worried about me

marrying *your* daughter. You're worried about me marrying *your wife's* daughter. I've been marrying *your* daughter since the days of slavery."¹⁶⁰

The trend of accusing several black men for the rape of one or two white women recurred again in 1989 with the arrest and conviction of five young men of color (four black and one Latino) for the assault and rape of a white woman jogging through Central Park. Trisha Meili, primarily called "the Central Park Jogger," was found in a ditch off a jogging path in New York's Central park bleeding severely and beaten almost to death. Medical examinations also proved that she had been brutally raped. This occurrence coincided with a host of other crimes allegedly committed by roaming groups of teenagers in Central Park on the night of April 19, 1989. Earlier in the evening, several allegations of assault and robbery by teenagers had been reported and a subsequent police investigation would pin these crimes on over thirty teenagers who had entered the park in Harlem.¹⁶¹ Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam, Kharey Wise, and Raymond Santana, all aged between fourteen and sixteen at the time, were among those who entered the park, but they alone were accused of raping and beating Meili. After their initial arrest, each boy was subjected to an intense interrogation that would last for several hours. They were intimidated and coerced into signing confessions; some were promised they could leave if they just confessed, food and water were withheld from them until they signed confession statements, and Salaam was even told that his

¹⁶⁰ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 98.

¹⁶¹ NYPD detectives coined the term "wilding" to describe the group violence targeted at random, innocent bystanders. The NYPD insisted that the term "wilding" was used by the suspects themselves to describe their actions, but no evidence of this exists. On a side note, wilding has similar characteristics to and functions of the more recent "knock-out game," which has been labeled as a "hate crime" or "part of a race war" towards white people by enraged blacks.

fingerprints were found on the victim's clothing.¹⁶² After the coerced confessions were obtained, the NYPD prematurely released all five names of the accused to the media and a panic erupted in an already culturally and racially divided city. By the time of their trials, each young man was recognized across the nation as depraved, violent rapists. The media publicized these depictions by reviving nineteenth century terminology to describe the black defendants. Terms such as "brute" and "beast" made their way back onto the headlines in an effort to highlight the racial aspects of the crime. Despite the fact that Meili was unable to recall the assault and the DNA found on her body did not match any of the defendants, all five were found guilty and sentenced to prison. It wasn't until 2002, thirteen years later, when convicted rapist and murderer Matias Reyes admitted to raping Meili (a DNA test proved this confession) that all members of the indicted Central Park Five were vindicated.¹⁶³

Although the practice of lynching diminished in the late twentieth century, the black rapist myth survived and thrived. On June 13, 2005, eighty senators including Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and George Allen of Virginia, ceremoniously apologized for the Senate's failure to enact the Dyer Bill, or any other anti-lynching bills, in the United States. However, this overdue apology came several decades too late and did little to address the current state of racial affairs as it had evolved over the past century. As African Americans constituted less than twenty percent of America's population throughout the twentieth century, their political power was marginalized, mostly by the

¹⁶² The detectives of the NYPD only videotaped the confessions and not the preceding hours of interrogation.

¹⁶³ For more on this case see the documentary *The Central Park Five*. (Directed by Ken Burns. 2012. Walpole, New Hampshire: Florentine Films, 2013. DVD.)

strength of the large Southern Democratic voting bloc. Even though lynching became less used as the late twentieth century progressed, racists adopted different tactics of coercing guilt from unfairly prosecuted African Americans, especially those accused of raping a white woman. Missourians, as well as many other citizens across the nation, were largely successful at disseminating myths about African Americans in an effort to control and manipulate black society.

I have shown that the black rapist myth allowed white Missourians to ensure sexual and racial authority over white women and black men and women, therefore allowing them to also violently reassert their superior position under the pretense of protecting white women. But, how did black Missourians respond to this and other destructive myths that were widely publicized? To explain, let's briefly return to the summer of 1915 when *The Birth of a Nation* opened in St. Louis theaters.

When local pro-segregationist group, the United Welfare Association, initially booked the film at the Olympic theater, black and white St. Louisans did not respond with picket signs or riots.¹⁶⁴ But, like much of the civil rights activism in the early twentieth century, protested the film using the legal procedures available to them. Prosecuting Attorney Sidener and Mayor Kiel acted with African American community leaders to officially ban the film on the basis of libelous content. After the objection was

¹⁶⁴ Priscilla Dowden-White argues that the UWA booked the film in St. Louis “in an effort to garner support for the [segregation] ordinance.” (Dowden-White, 83) During the extended initial run of the film in St. Louis, the UWA handed out their newsletter, the *Home Defender*, to every person at each showing. The *Home Defender* presented pro-segregation arguments and false claims about the dangers of African Americans. (*The Argus*, “A Valuable Statement of Principles,” September 17, 1915, page 4.

filed to the Board of Police Commissioners of St. Louis, Charlotte Rumbold, the head of Parks and Recreation and the city's movie censor, criticized the film as "dangerous" and "inadvisable to present."¹⁶⁵ *The Argus*, St. Louis's black newspaper, agreed stating that the film was "an agitator of race prejudice, low and degrading, and a breeder of race hatred."¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, these actions were futile. Judge Kimmel of the Circuit Courts was supposed to hear arguments about the film after opening night, however each week was met with another continuance until the injunction was lifted permanently.¹⁶⁷ *The Birth of a Nation* boasted admission prices as high as two dollars per ticket and was still being shown in theaters across the city three years later.¹⁶⁸

Despite the failure to stop *The Birth of a Nation* from showing in St. Louis, African Americans felt that their protest was "justified and dignified. But by no means...through."¹⁶⁹ As a writer from *The Argus*, stated, the long-term goal of this specific protest was to "create a sentiment so strong that the white people can see the injustice of our position."¹⁷⁰ As Rumbold pointed out for the purpose of censoring *The Birth of a Nation*, in St. Louis "the sentiment between the North and the South was

¹⁶⁵ *The Argus*, "Birth of a nation Coming," August 20, 1915, page 1; Priscilla Dowden-White, *Groping toward Democracy: African American Social Welfare Reform in St. Louis, 1910-1949* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011): 83-84.

¹⁶⁶ *The Argus*, "Keep Up the Protest," September 3, 1915, page 4; *The Argus*, "Birth of a nation Coming," August 20, 1915, page 1.

¹⁶⁷ *The Argus*, "Keep Up the Protest," September 3, 1915, page 4.

¹⁶⁸ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "'Birth of a Nation' at Jefferson, Still Draws Strongly," January 15, 1917. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "'Birth of a Nation' at New Grand Central," August 24, 1918. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Birth of A Nation at 'Pop' Prices," August 26, 1918. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "'Birth of a Nation' Scores Big Hit as Movie Production," January 15, 1917. Accessed April 4, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post Dispatch (1874-1922), St. Louis County Library.

¹⁶⁹ *The Argus*, "Keep Up the Protest," September 3, 1915, page 4.

¹⁷⁰ *The Argus*, "Keep Up the Protest," September 3, 1915, page 4.

narrowly divided.” Not being wholly northern or southern, the city as well as the entire state of Missouri was home to a politically diverse population. However, this was a strength to early civil rights activism in St. Louis in many ways. While much of the rural areas of Missouri were securely conservative, St. Louis’s liberal interracial population maintained a vibrant civic culture, which as Priscilla Dowden-White argues in her book *Groping toward Democracy*, was the “most vital tool in dismantling racial segregation.”¹⁷¹

After thanking Mayor Kiel, Prosecuting Attorney Sidener, and Miss Rumbold for their assistance in the suppression of *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Argus* compelled African Americans in St. Louis to be persistent and uncompromising in their pursuits for equal rights and adequate protection under the law; “We must be broad enough and far-sighted enough to work for the uplift and advancement of the entire race—and not only for this day and generation, but for our posterity. So the protest and agitation which we have begun we must continue.”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Priscilla Dowden-White, *Groping toward Democracy: African American Social Welfare Reform in St. Louis, 1910-1949* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011): 5-15.

¹⁷² *The Argus*, “Keep Up the Protest,” September 3, 1915, page 4.

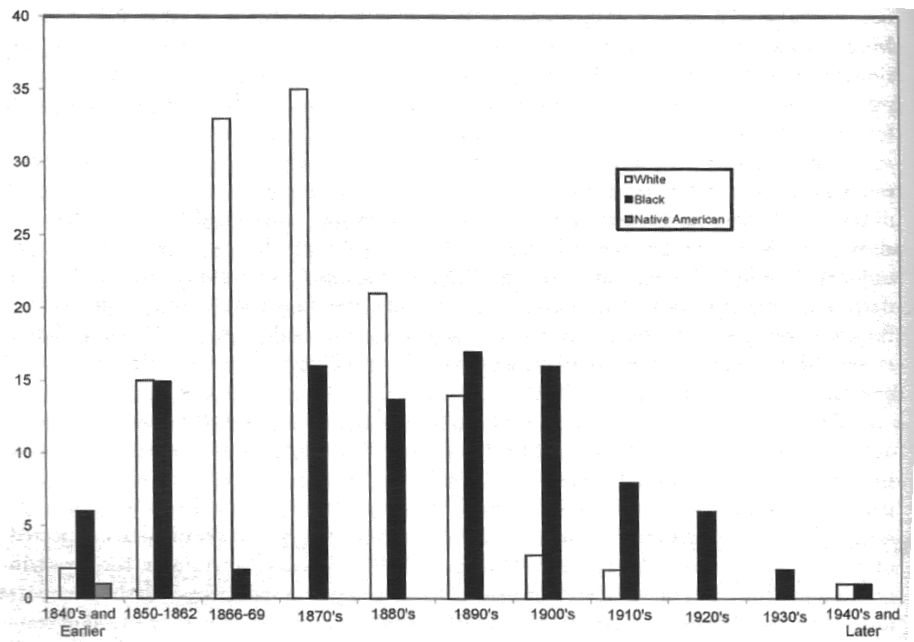
Appendix

Figure 1

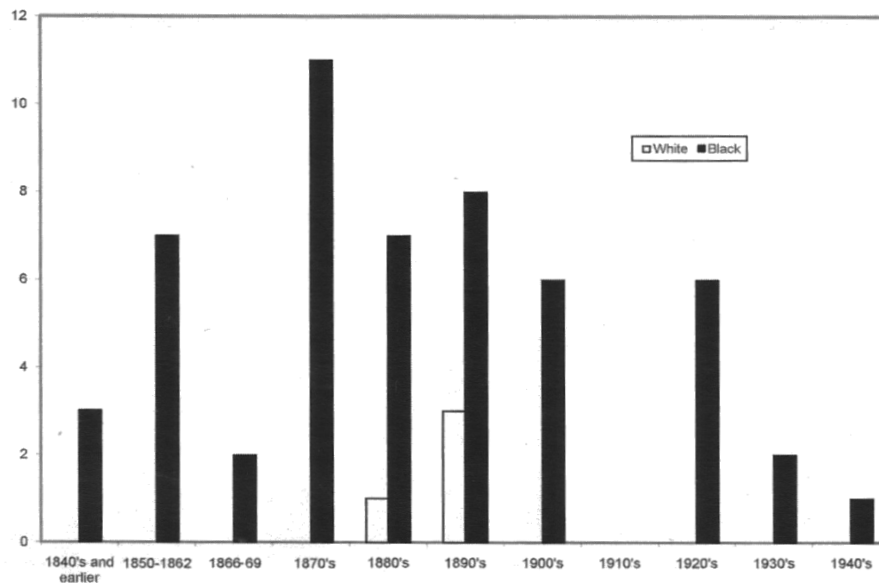
Criminal Court Cases 1804-1871, 1873-1884, 1887-1891

Case Number	Date(s)	Defendant's Name	Plaintiff	Alleged Crime	Volume Number(s)	Page Number(s)	Case Summary	Case Notes
	circa 1827	Allen, a slave	State of Missouri	Rape	Box 112 Folder 26		Allen, slave of Elizabeth McDonald, accused of the attempted rape of Rosanna Hanlon, a white woman. Signatures of jury panel included.	
	7/15/1836, 7/21/1836	Bartlett, a slave	State of Missouri	Intent to commit rape	1	320, 324	Pled not guilty on indictment for an intent to commit rape. On 7/21/1836 found not guilty and acquitted by jury.	
	9/21/1837	Alfred, a slave	State of Missouri	Attempt to commit rape	1	437, 438, 434, 435	Pled not guilty. Verdict unknown due to missing pages in volume 1.	
	1/6/1844, 1/9/1844, 1/19/1844, 1/20/1844, 1/27/1844, 8/26/1844	Thaddeus, a mulatto slave	State of Missouri	Attempt to commit rape	3	212, 214, 224, 225, 229, 300	1/27/1844, sentenced. "It is therefore considered by the court that said defendant for his offense aforesaid be castrated by some skillful person, under direction of the marshal on any day between the 12th and the 15th of february next and it is further ordered that Kennedy, the master of said defendant pay the costs of this prosecution." 8/26/1844, "On motion of A.W. Kennedy by his attorney, it is ordered that the judgement against said Kennedy for the costs in this case be set aside and that the costs be taxed against the state of Missouri."	
	9/10/1846, 9/17/1846, 9/18/1846, 9/22/1846, 11/13/1846, 1/16/1847, 1/20/1847	York, a negro slave	State of Missouri	Rape	4	79, 89, 91, 97, 115, 147, 148, 150	Slave of Captain Henry Shreve. Found guilty in favor of William S. McKnight, marshal of St. Louis county. Recognizance made by Shreve and John O'Fallon for \$1,000 with the condition that York be removed from the state within 3 months and remain for 20 years and prosecutor will not further prosecute, acquitted.	
1	9/16/1852, 9/25/1852, 10/11/1852, 10/11/1852, 10/12/1852	Stephen Brown, a negro	State of Missouri	Attempt to commit rape	7	209, 213, 222, 225, 236	Habeas corpus issued for Stephen Brown, negro, in attempt to commit rape. Brown was brought to court and pled not guilty. Court appointed Uriel Wright and Augustus N. Sinn as counsel. Found not guilty, acquitted.	"negro" listed after name
1	4/6/1853, 5/13/1853, 7/28/1853, 6/9/1853, 8/30/1853	John Anderson, a slave	State of Missouri	Rape	7	390, 412, 432, 443, 444, 445, 447, 451	John Anderson, slave of Mildred Reardon, was charged with rape. On 6/11/1853, jury found Anderson guilty. Punishment was castration. On 6/13/1853, requester new trial after being sentenced to castration. On 6/15/1853, the court granted a new trial. Walker acknowledged themselves to owe the State of Missouri \$2,000 for appeal.	Appealed to Supreme court of Missouri
18	9/8/1856, 9/10/1856, 9/22/1856, 9/23/1856	Mark Champion, a negro	State of Missouri	Attempt to commit rape	9	41, 45, 59, 60	Pled not guilty to an attempt to commit rape on 9/10/1856. On 9/23/1856, found guilty and sentenced to 5 years in prison and costs of prosecution.	
135	1/25/1859, 1/29/1859, 2/14/1859	Big Buck, a slave	State of Missouri	Attempt to commit rape and burglary	10	45, 53, 71	Big Buck, a slave, was indicted with attempt to commit rape and a burglary. He pled not guilty on 1/29/1859. On 2/14/1859, the circuit attorney did not further prosecute for burglary and was found not guilty for attempt to commit rape.	
46	5/17/1861, 5/18/1861, 5/25/1861	John Anderson, colored	State of Missouri	Rape	11	287, 290, 301	John Anderson, a colored man, pled not guilty to a charge of rape. Quashed by operation of law.	
87	5/23/1861, 5/27/1861, 7/5/1861, 7/5/1861	John Anderson, a negro	State of Missouri	Rape	11	298, 299, 304, 320, 372, 281	John Anderson, a negro man, pled not guilty to a charge of rape on 5/23/1861. On 5/27/1861, jury could not agree on a verdict. On 7/5/1861, jury found Anderson guilty and sentenced to castration. Frederick Price and legend F. Rucker acknowledged themselves to owe the state of Missouri \$2,000. John Anderson shall appear before the Supreme Court of Missouri in St. Louis City on the third Monday of October next to receive judgement for his appeal.	Appeal to the Supreme court was filed. Bill of exceptions filed by counsel.
	9/3/1862	Henry, a slave	State of Missouri	Rape	12	53	After being confined to jail, the grand jury ignored the charge against him and the case was discharged.	
	9/3/1862, 11/10/1862, 11/11/1862	Price, a negro	State of Missouri	Rape	12	53, 99	Pled not guilty on indictment for an assault with intent to commit rape. On 11/11/1862 found not guilty and acquitted	
133	3/21/1865, 3/25/1865, 3/31/1865, 5/16/1865, 6/9/1865	James Arrowson, a colored man	State of Missouri	Attempt to commit rape	13	195, 202, 209, 237, 238, 267, 268	On 3/25/1865, pled not guilty to an attempt to commit rape. On 5/16/1865, found guilty and on 6/9/1865 sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and costs of prosecution.	
380	11/11/1865	Dick Henderson, a colored man	State of Missouri	Rape	13	380	A colored man, was charged with rape. The bill was ignored by the jury, discharged.	

Figure 2*



Decade-by-decade chart of lynchings in Missouri by race, 1803-1981



Decade-by-decade chart showing lynchings for sex crimes in Missouri, 1818-1942

*Both graphs provided by Harriet Frazier in Lynchings in Missouri, 1803-1981

Figure 3

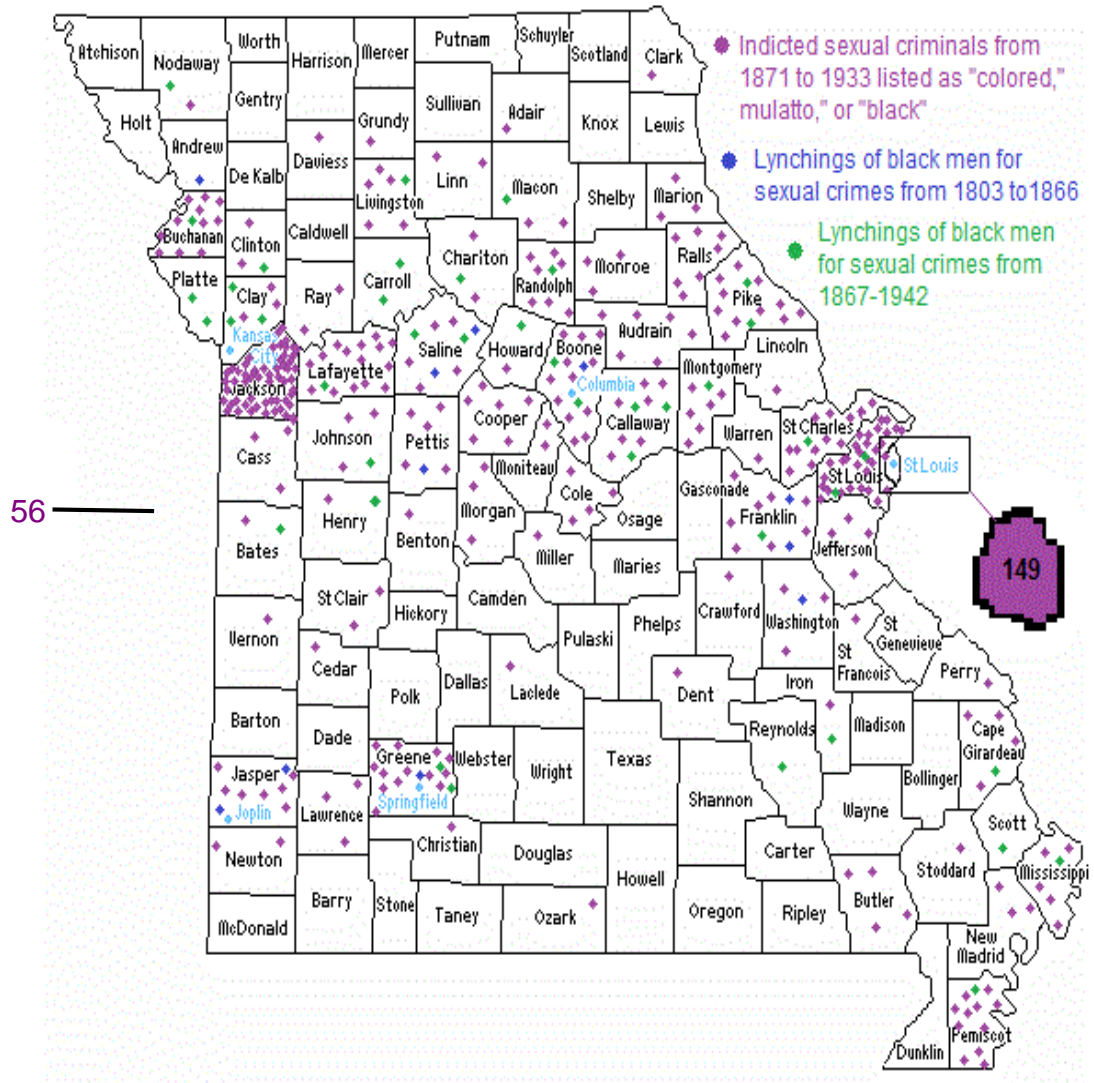


Figure 4

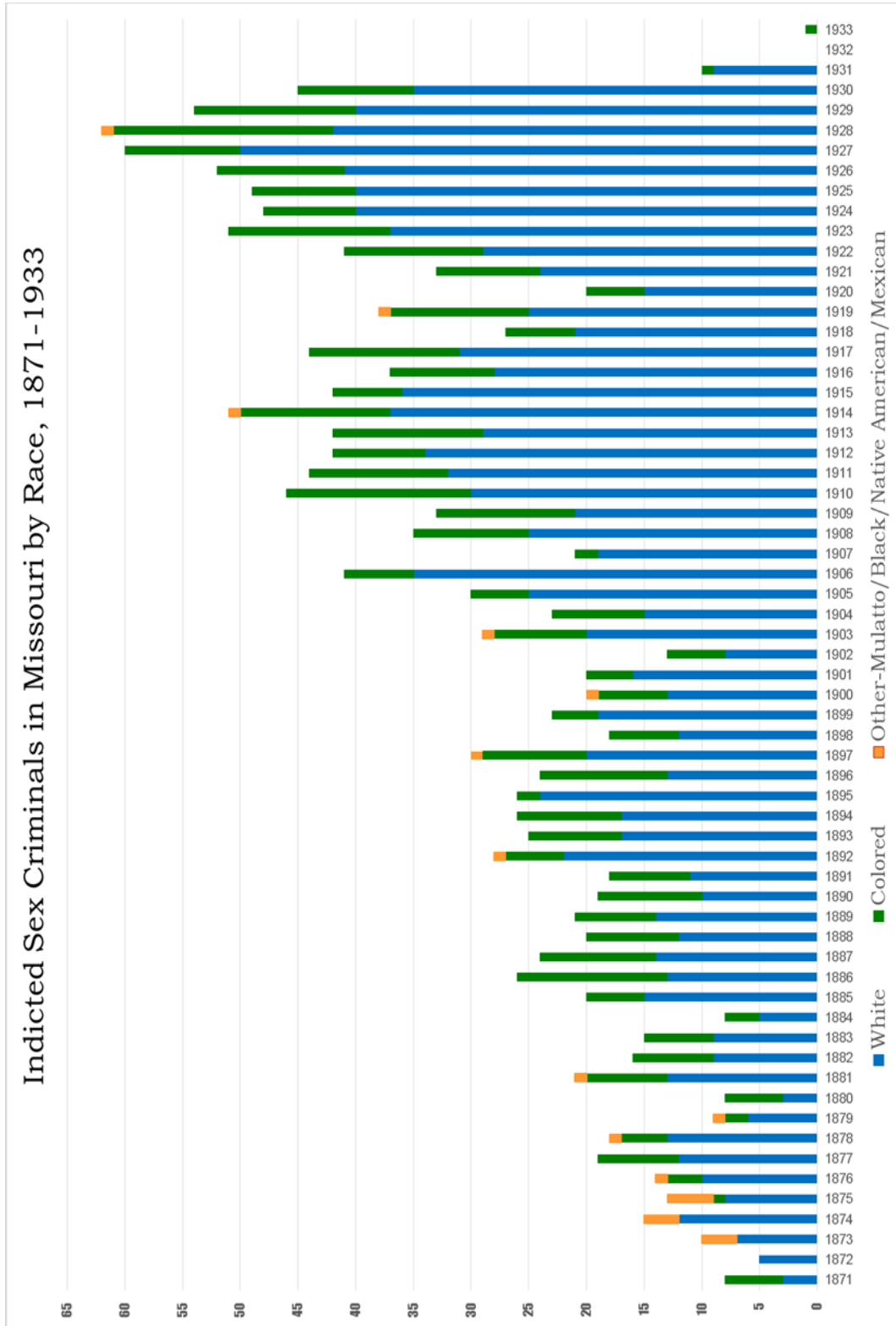


Figure 5

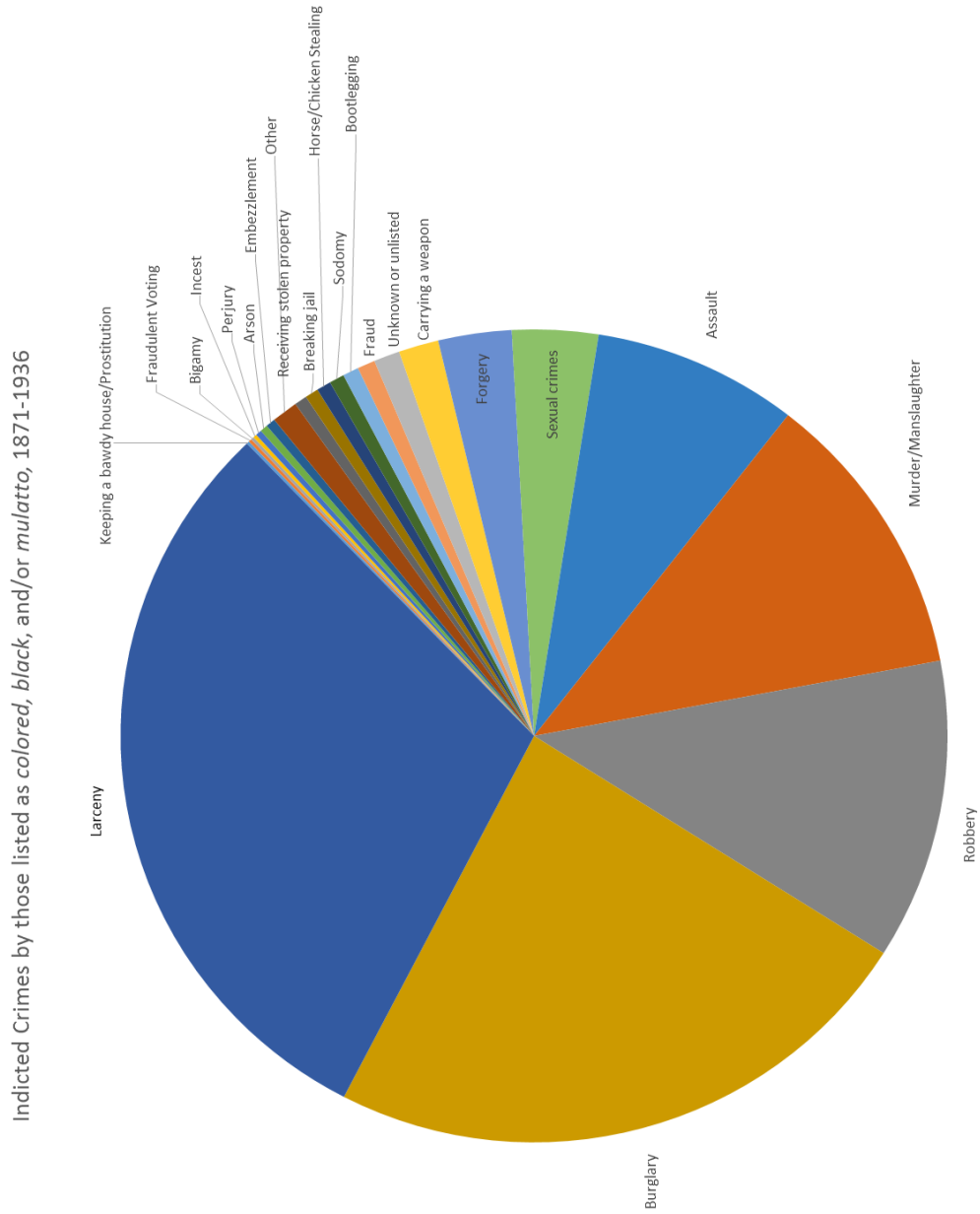


Figure 6*

1882,	52	Negroes	murdered	by	mobs
1883,	39	"	"	"	"
1884,	53	"	"	"	"
1885,	77	"	"	"	"
1886,	73	"	"	"	"
1887,	70	"	"	"	"
1888,	72	"	"	"	"
1889,	95	"	"	"	"
1890,	100	"	"	"	"
1891,	169	"	"	"	"

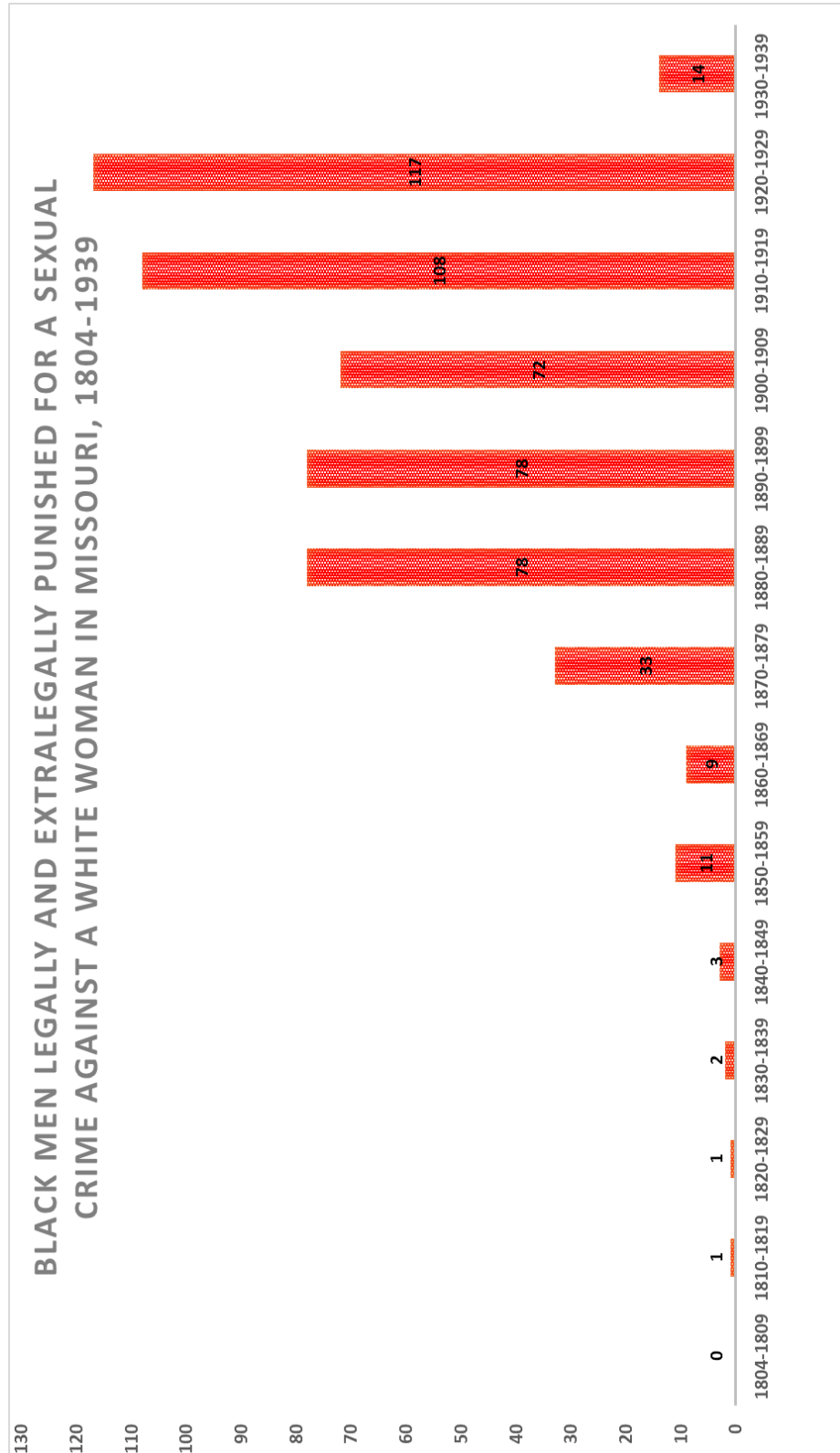
Figure 7*

Of this number

269	were	charged	with	rape.
253	"	"	"	murder.
44	"	"	"	robbery.
37	"	"	"	incendiarism.
4	"	"	"	burglary.
27	"	"	"	race prejudice.
13	"	"	"	quarreling with white men.
10	"	"	"	making threats.
7	"	"	"	rioting.
5	"	"	"	miscegenation.
32	"	"	"	no reasons given.

*Both graphs provided by Ida B. Wells in *The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*

Figure 8



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