

Ways of Measuring Agency

An Application of Quantitative Narrative Analysis to Lynchings in Jim Crow South

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Abstract: This paper advocates an actor-centered, relational view of agency and proposes Quantitative Narrative Analysis as a promising method to measure agency. Quantitative Narrative Analysis exploits the invariant linguistic structural properties of narrative to organize the information contained in narrative texts – texts, basically, that tell stories about actors and their actions. The relational data made available by QNA are ideally suited for analysis with cutting-edge techniques, such as GIS models, sequence analysis, or network analysis. These tools preserve the centrality of agency (actors and their actions) in social scientific explanation of social reality. An application of QNA to newspaper stories of lynching events in Georgia (1875-1930) will illustrate the power of this approach. The paper complements the illustration of this quantitative way of measuring agency with a popular qualitative approach to texts: discourse analysis. We will rely on this approach to illustrate how linguistic and rhetorical strategies can be used to hide agency in texts.

The Study of Events as Event Counts. Where Are the Actors?

The *Springfield Daily Republican* of April 24, 1899, reports:

NEWNAN, Ga., Apr. 23 - Sam Holt [also known as Sam Hose, after assuming that name upon moving to Coweta County, Georgia], the murderer of Alfred Cranford and the ravisher of the latter's wife, was burned at the stake, near Newnan, Ga., this afternoon, in the presence of 2000 people. The black man was first tortured before being covered with oil and burned. An ex-governor of Georgia made a personal appeal to his townspeople to let the law take its course, but without the slightest avail. Before the torch was applied to the pyre, the Negro was deprived of his ears, fingers and genital parts of his body. He pleaded pitifully for his life while the mutilation was going on, but stood the ordeal of fire with surprising fortitude. Before the body was cool, it was cut to pieces. The bones were crushed into small bits, and even the tree upon which the wretch met his fate was torn up and disposed of as "souvenirs." The Negro's heart was cut into several pieces, as was also his liver. Those unable to obtain the ghastly relics directly paid their more fortunate possessors extravagant sums for them. Small pieces of bones went for 25 cents, and a bit of the liver crisply cooked sold for 10 cents. As soon as the Negro was seen to be dead there was a tremendous struggle among the crowd, which had witnessed his tragic end, to secure the souvenirs. A rush was made for the stake, and those near the body were forced against it and had to fight for their freedom. Knives were quickly produced and soon the body was dismembered.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Louis P. Le Vin, a private detective hired by a group of prominent Chicago citizens spurred on by journalist and activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett to investigate Sam Hose's lynching, would conclude his report with the words: "I made my way home thoroughly convinced that a Negro's life is a very cheap thing in Georgia".¹

Social scientists have studied events such as lynchings, strikes, riots as "event counts" (i.e., number of events) and have employed multivariate statistical techniques to handle these counts – typically, econometric models in which a "dependent" variable Y_i measuring the

number of events (e.g., lynchings, episodes of political violence, or strikes) is regressed on a set of “independent” variables X_{1i} , X_{2i} ... X_{ki} , each measuring different effects. For instance, Beck and Tolnay, in one of the best quantitative analyses of lynching, related the number of lynchings that occurred in Jim Crow South between 1882 and 1930 to a set of independent variables: size of black population in a county, black crime rate, deflated price of cotton, etc. Interpreting the signs and statistical significance of the parameters in their model, Beck and Tolnay (1990:526) concluded:

Net of other factors, lynchings were more frequent in years when the “constant dollar” price of cotton was declining and inflationary pressure was increasing. Relative size of the black population was also positively related to lynching. We conclude that mob violence against southern blacks responded to economic conditions affecting the financial fortunes of southern whites – especially marginal white farmers. These effects were significantly more important in the decades before 1900, possibly because of the declining importance of agriculture, the “Jim Crow” disenfranchisement of blacks, and the increasing out-migration of blacks and whites from the Deep South.

For all the considerable knowledge generated by multivariate statistical models of the structural determinants of the temporal and/or spatial dynamic of lynching, where are the actors? Where are the inter-actions among those actors? Where is the mob capturing, torturing, emasculating and burning the Negro? Where is the odd individual who would at times meet head-on the lynching mob and try to prevent the brutal exhibition of summary justice? Where is the macabre ritual of men, women, and children dancing at gala parties to celebrate the ghastly happening? Where are the relic hunters who would scout for and sell body parts as souvenirs?²

The Question of Agency: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

The search for answers to the questions about actors and their actions (and their capacity to act) has generated a lively theoretical debate in the human sciences, often referred to as the structure versus agency question: to which extent do “human beings make their own decisions or make their own history” (Burke 2005: 127) vis-à-vis social structures? The debate has cut across several disciplines, from history (e.g., Callinicos 2004), to sociology (e.g., Emirbayer and Mische 1998), economics and development studies (e.g., Sen 1985; Kabeer 1999), and, to a lesser extent, political science (e.g., Sibeon 1999) and international relations (e.g., O’Neill, Balsiger and VanDeveer 2004).

On one side of this classic debate, structuralists conceive of human behavior as largely under structural constraints, of history as a process where subjects or goals and social change are the outcome of structural contradictions. Marx famously championed this view in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: “Men make their own history, but [...] not [...] as they please [...] under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (Marx 1970:96). French historian Fernand Braudel was no less fond of structures and leery of events. History can only be understood (and should only be studied) in terms of structures, these temporal “expanses of slow-moving history” “these depths, this semistillness” (Braudel 1980:33). On the opposite side of the debate, rational choice scholars have adopted “methodological individualism” – the idea that “the elementary unit of social life is the individual human action” (Elster 1989:13) – to explain social actions and outcomes, emphasizing the autonomy and rationality of the individual (Coleman 1990). Against these starkly conflicting positions, scholars such as Giddens (1976), Sewell (1992), Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) have elaborated more nuanced views of the relationship between structure

and agency. “Human agency and structure, far from being opposed, presuppose each other” (Sewell 1992:4). Structures “must not be conceptualized as simply placing constraints on human agency, but as enabling” (Giddens 1976:161). More recent theoretical discussions of agency (e.g., Archer 2003; Dépelteau 2008) aim to further specify *how* structures affect actors’ interactions, as well as how social actions reshape social structures.

Rich as theoretical work on agency has been, methodological development has lagged behind. To be sure, researchers in different disciplines have, implicitly or explicitly, proposed ways of measuring agency. For instance, rational choice scholars have used game theory (e.g., Ordeshook 1986), simulation models of action (e.g., Macy and Willer 2002; Gilbert 2008) and experimental designs (e.g., Fehr and Gintis 2007) to analyze individuals’ strategies and decisions, as well as to investigate meso and macro inter-actions among groups, organizations, states, and aggregate social outcomes (e.g., Gambetta 1993; Hechter 1987; March and Olsen 1998). Development and empowerment scholars, relying on psychological notions of agency as self-efficacy and self-determination (e.g., Ozer and Bandura 1990; Deci and Ryan 2000), have proposed choice-making as a way to capture women’s agency (Kabeer 1999) and have used measurement scales in surveys to study actual instances of decision-making activities (Alkire 2005). Relational sociology has suggested a network methodological approach to measure agency (e.g., Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994:1442-1446), although only a few studies have taken up the suggestion (e.g., Passy 2001; Stevenson and Greenberg 2000; see also Diani and McAdam 2003).

The goal of this paper is to make a methodological contribution to the measurement of agency. By exploiting the link between agency, as “what the person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important” (Sen 1985:203) and narrative

(as sequence of actors doing/saying something, i.e., acting) we propose Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA) and a set of complementary tools (from network analysis to sequence analysis and GIS – Geographic Information System – tools) as a way of measuring agency. We also explore qualitative alternatives, such as Discourse Analysis. The relational nature of QNA (with actors related to other actors via their actions) finds our methodological proposal in unison with the theoretical notion of agency proposed by relational sociology (Emirbayer 1997). For relational sociology, agency is “agency toward something”, it is “interactions”, “a dialogic process” where “actors enter into relationship with surrounding persons, places, meanings and events” becoming “inseparable from the transactional contexts within which they are embedded” (Emirbayer 1997:287, 294; Emirbayer and Mische 1998:973, emphasis in original).

Measuring Agency: An Alternative

Agency fundamentally involves two components: action and capacity to give meaning to this action (Sewell, 1992:18, 19; Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994:1443; Kabeer, 1999:438). The close link between agency and action suggests another link, between agency and narrative. After all, narrative is about action. It is the recounting of actors acting, of someone doing something. For over two thousand years, rhetoricians have translated narrative into what is known to us as the five W’s of journalism: Who, What, When, Where, Why (and How) (in the Latin rendering of *quis, quid, cur, quomodo, quando, quibus auxiliis*) (Franzosi 2012).

It is by exploring that link (between agency and narrative) that we ultimately propose an alternative way to measure agency, to operationalize it: Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA). QNA is a *quantitative* tool for the collection and analysis of large volumes of narrative texts based on computer-assisted narrative grammars (indeed, Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How). As an actor-centered, action-centered methodological approach, QNA represents an ideal

tool for measuring agency. Furthermore, by focusing systematically on actors, their actions and, critically, their spatio-temporally situated *interactions*, QNA tackles different questions from variable-centered socio-historical research based on events counts (Gurr 1974; see also: Abbott 1988; Tilly 2008; Franzosi 2010). The limits of QNA lead us to discuss a *qualitative* approach to measuring agency: Discourse Analysis. We have chosen Discourse Analysis over other approaches to texts developed in the social sciences (e.g., conversational analysis), since Discourse Analysis, especially in its variant of Critical Discourse Analysis, privileges the exploration of the power and ideological relations expressed through linguistic mechanisms. Notable are such mechanisms as passivization and nominalization that obscure agency in the narration of events. Discourse analysis is thus a precious qualitative tool to explore issues of agency in textual data, but also to highlight the complexity surrounding its measurement with quantitative tools like QNA.

Narrative and Narrative Grammars: Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA)

The lynching of Same Hose reported by *The Springfield Daily Republican* of April 24, 1899, is an archetypal narrative text, i.e., a sequence of actions and events arranged in chronological order. Linguists and literary critics have identified action (by an actor) and the sequence of actions as the main features of narrative texts and define narrative as “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which [it is inferred] actually occurred” (Labov 1972:369-370), or, more simply, as “a succession of events” (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:2-3). Furthermore, in the unfolding of a story, some actions and events play a greater role than others in altering a narrative situation; they are *consequential* rather than simply sequential. Finally, not all sequences of events produce a narrative; the sequence has to make sense (be characterized by semantic coherence) and produce

a coherent story. Put it differently, without a story linking the different sequential parts of a text, there is no narrative (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:15).

The newspaper's account of Sam Hose's lynching is, undoubtedly, a meaningful succession of actions and events, some of which consequential. Thus, the alleged slaying of Mr. Alfred Cranford and raping of his wife Mattie Cranford by Sam Hose are consequential actions. The ensuing arrest of Sam Hose, his snatching from the authorities by a threatening mob (consequential action), the burning of the victim, and the relic hunters' taking of body parts as souvenirs provide a mix of sequential and consequential actions within the larger story of Sam Hose's lynching.

In the narration of an event – a story – not only are some actions sequential and consequential, but, at a deep-structural level, they also correspond to a limited number of “types of actions.” It was Propp who first drew attention to this characteristic of narrative, back in 1928. In his influential *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), Propp reduced all Russian folktales to an invariant set of thirty-one distinct functions, where a function is “an act of a character,” or an action (Propp 1968:21). Greimas reduced Propp's 31 narrative linear functions to a set of six fundamental dichotomous invariant roles (“actants”): subject-object, sender-receiver, helper-opponent (Greimas 1971:798-799, 805). Greimas further argued that, at the surface level, stories are nothing but organized sequences of narrative units minimally constituted by actants and functions (basically verbs or processes of either “doing” or “being”) (Greimas 1971:799, 800, 802). This combination of invariant deep-structural and surface-level properties of narrative results, for Greimas, in a narrative grammar or story grammar, at the border between linguistics and general semiotics.

A story, then, can be conceived of as a set of distinct narrative units that, for simplicity, we can equate to the basic canonical form Subject-Verb-Object (SVO). In historical narratives, both Subject and Object of an event are typically *social actors*, be they individual, collective or organizational/institutional actors; the Verb refers to *social actions* characteristically indicating acts of doing something or saying something (Greimas 1971: 800). Each of the three SVO elements can have a number of modifiers (i.e., the characteristics of actors and the circumstances of actions; for the history of this terminology, see Franzosi 2012). Thus, Subject and Object may have the following modifiers: the name and last name of an actor, its job, race, gender, religious or political affiliation, etc. The modifiers of a Verb include time and space – when and where an action occurred – but also the reason, outcome, or instrument of that action.

The SVO structure with its modifiers (a “semantic triplet”) functions as a “story grammar,” the “set of rules that provides the categories into which the various invariant elements of a story fall (e.g., actor, action, time, space), the nature of each category (e.g., a text, a number, a date; allowed to occur one or multiple times), and their reciprocal relationships” (Franzosi 2010:23).³ Essentially, a story grammar is the key parsing tool employed to extract information on Who, What, When, Why, and Where – the 5 Ws of journalism + H, How – from narrative texts (Franzosi 2012).

Contrary to traditional content analysis coding schemes, the categories of a story grammar “are formally and explicitly related to one another throughout the coding scheme via a set of rewrite rules (e.g., subjects are linked to actions, actions to objects, and subjects, actions, and objects are linked to their modifiers)” (Franzosi 2010:35). A rewrite rule is symbolized by a right-pointing arrow (\rightarrow) which indicates how an element to the left of the symbol can be

rewritten in terms of the elements on its right (Franzosi 2010:23-24). A semantic triplet can thus be rewritten in terms of its constitutive components:⁴

<semantic triplet> → {<subject>} {<verb>} [{<object>}]

The elements of the semantic triplet can in turn be rewritten, down to their “terminal” symbols (those found in the language itself). For instance, <subject> could be rewritten as follows:

<subject> → <actor> [{ <actor characteristics> }]

<actor> → mob | negro | sheriff | ...

<actor characteristics> → [{ <gender> }] [{ <race> }] [{ <organization> }]...

<gender> → male | female |

<race> → black | white | ...

<organization> → police | federal authorities | ...

A verb and its modifiers (or, more precisely, its circumstances) would instead look like this:

<verb> → <verbal phrase> [{<circumstances>}]

<verbal phrase> → bring | burn | shoot | kill | hang |...

<circumstances> → [{<time>}] [{<space>}] [{<reason>}] [{<instrument>}]
[<outcome>] ...

...

The relational nature of a story grammar makes it possible to implement a story grammar in a Relational Database Management System (RDBMS). Franzosi developed a specialized software – PC-ACE (Program for Computer-Assisted Coding of Events) – which utilizes computer-assisted story grammars as the main tool to collect, organize, and store large bodies of narrative data.⁵

Within PC-ACE, the *Springfield Daily Republican* story of Sam Hose, looks like this (where in black are the categories of the grammar and in grey the information taken from the newspaper):

<1> (Semantic Triplet: (Subject: (Actor: ?)) (Verb: (Verbal phrase: tortured) (Time: (Time expression: today) (Article date: 04/23/1899) (Time of day: afternoon)) (Space: (City: (Spatial direction: near) (City name: Newnan))) (Object: (Actor: negro) (Personal characteristics: (Name: Sam Hose)))

<2> (Semantic Triplet: (Subject: (Actor: ?)) (Verb: (Verbal phrase: deprived) (Time: (Time expression: today) (Article date: 04/23/1899) (Time of day: afternoon)) (Space: (City: (Spatial direction: near) (City name: Newnan))) (Object: (Actor: negro) (Personal characteristics: (Name: Sam Hose))) (Object: (Case: of) (Physical object: ears)) (Object: (Case: of) (Physical object: fingers)) (Object: (Case: of) (Physical object: genital parts)) (Triplet relation: while))

<3> (Semantic Triplet: (Subject: (Actor: negro) (Personal characteristics: (Name: Sam Hose)) (Verb: (Verbal phrase: pleaded for life) (Action type (Adverb): pitifully) (Time: (Date: (Time expression: today)(Article date: 04/23/1899) (Time of day: afternoon)) (Space: (City: (Spatial direction: near)(City name: Newnan))))))

<4> (Semantic Triplet: (Subject: (Actor: ?)) (Verb: (Verbal phrase: covered) (Time: (Time expression: today)(Article date: 04/23/1899) (Time of day: afternoon)) (Space: (City: (Spatial direction: near) (City name: Newnan))) (Instrument: oil))(Object: (Actor: negro) (Personal characteristics: (Name: Sam Hose))))

<5> (Semantic Triplet: (Subject: (Actor: ?)) (Verb: (Verbal phrase: burned) (Time: (Time expression: today)) (Article date: 04/23/1899))) (Time of day: afternoon)) (Space: (City: (Spatial direction: near) (City name: Newnan))) (Object: (Actor: negro) (Personal characteristics: (Name: Sam Hose))) (Object: (Case: at) (Physical object: stake))

An application of QNA: Lynchings in Georgia (1875-1930)

Sam Hose's lynching is one of 375 lynching events⁶ that occurred in Georgia between 1875 and 1930. We relied on 1332 newspaper articles and PC-ACE to build a large database of these Georgia lynchings yielding over 6,137 semantic triplets. The analyses presented here are based upon 314 events coded thus far.

Newspapers as Sources of Historical Data

With such widely known titles as *Bad News*, *More Bad News*, *Really Bad News*,⁷ it may seem preposterous to rely on newspapers as sources for a historical study of lynchings. Would we be studying historical lynchings or newspaper representations of lynchings (on newspapers as sources of socio-historical data, see Franzosi 1987)?

Certainly, with only a handful of black newspapers available, the representations we have reflect whites' perspective. Yet, for all the biases of newspapers, at least in the case of lynchings, for the most part, we have no alternative sources. As very few cases were ever brought to trial, all the information we have is from newspapers, and white newspapers, Southern newspapers at that. As historian Brundage (1993:296) writes, in one of the most authoritative studies on lynching in Georgia (and Virginia): "newspapers are the essential source for my study". Brundage acknowledges: "Despite the serious limitations of white accounts, there simply is no other foundation upon which to base a comprehensive study of lynching" (Brundage 1993:294; see also the historians Matthews 1970:iv and Ellis 1992:6). Indeed, all available lynching counts upon which the quantitative scholarship on lynchings is based, by NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Tuskegee Institute, all come from the same source: newspapers (Ellis 1992:15).

To keep bias in check, Brundage recommends “collecting accounts from as many different newspapers as possible” (Brundage 1993:294; see also Ellis 1992:15). Indeed, that is what we did. Our data come from 212 different newspapers (at the current state of data collection). The Atlanta Constitution, however, with a frequency of 473 articles, provides the bulk of the narratives (the next most frequent entry, The Macon News, has 46 articles). If the lynching of Sam Hose resulted in hundreds of articles in newspaper across the United States and even Europe, for most lynching events we do not have this kind of “thick descriptions”; 22 of our events are narrated in only one brief article, 87 in two articles, 112 in three, 63 in four, and declining after that (but even multiple-newspaper lynchings are often copies of the same brief story).

Questions about Agency for the Database: Some Caveats

In keeping with the kind of questions one typically asks of stories, let’s query this large dataset to find answers to questions about actors and actions in lynchings, questions about agency. Some words of caution about the answers you are about to hear. First, do not confuse the limits of QNA with the limits of the sources used for QNA (e.g., newspaper articles). QNA works independently of the validity of the narratives. Work on questionable data requires researchers to pay close attention to issues of data validation and data interpretation, regardless of the power of the method adopted.

Second, with data collection,⁸ data cleaning, and data aggregation still ongoing, our answers are not so much intended as substantive answers about lynchings as answers to the question at the heart of this paper: can QNA provide operational measures of agency? Nor are the analyses meant to exhaust the range of statistical techniques one can apply to QNA data, which can vary from simple EDA, to traditional regression, and, notably, to tools based on the

narrative underpinnings of the data: namely, sequence analysis (for an example applied to lynching, see Stovel 2001), GIS tools, and network analysis (on the range of tools of analysis for QNA, see Franzosi 2010:107-141).

Finally, not all numbers (basically frequency distributions of words for specific categories) carry the same weight. After all, available newspaper articles on lynching vary in the amount of information they provide. Nearly all newspaper articles on Georgia lynchings, however brief, provide basic information on the place, time, and manner of lynching (e.g., riddled with bullets or simply shot dead, hanged), on the lynched individual (race, name and last name, although at times with as many different spelling versions as newspapers – only 4 cases are about “unnamed Negroes”), the actions this individual had committed (e.g., outrage, murder, arson), and most often the name and last name of the individual allegedly offended by the lynched. Longer articles will provide more detail on the basic actors and action (the age, occupation, and residence of the lynched or of the offended) and on other actors (the mob, law enforcement officials) and their actions. But that detail is patchy. Even in the tens of newspaper articles on the Sam Hose’s lynching you will be hard-pressed to find that he was about 21 years of age. The point is: a count of individual verbal expressions of violence would yield smaller or larger numbers depending upon the richness of detail provided by the different newspaper articles. We know from the description of Sam Hose’s lynching, with which we opened, that he had his ears, fingers, and genitals cut off, that his body, heart, and liver were cut to pieces, his bones crushed, and that he was burned at the stake. This “thick description” would yield a larger count of violent actions than one where all we may know is that the lynched victim was hanged or shot. To avoid bias in numbers introduced by descriptions of different “thickness” we can count lynching macro-events instead of semantic triplets or individual violent actions. The

numbers we present here are based on counts of both macro-events and individual violent actions. For illustrative purposes, we analyze these numbers with simple EDA and network models (the ones most closely linked to agency).

Answers from the Database

TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 shows a list of the most frequent individual and collective actors found in the database.⁹ African-American males are protagonists of the stories told by the newspaper articles, together with (black and white) females and mobs.

TABLE 2 HERE

The list of the most frequent actions (Table 2), certainly not surprisingly, shows that lynchings involve a great deal of violence (primarily against people) and coercion, of movement (going, searching, coming), and control. Acts of communication and facilitation/help are also frequent.

FIGURE 1 HERE

By intersecting actors and actions in a network graph we can provide a visual map of the social relations of lynching. Figure 1 shows one such graph, centered on the sphere of action of “violence against people”, encompassing such disaggregated actions as “kick”, “punch”, “wound”, “torture”, “kill”. Lynched African Americans stand at the center of this network, the objects of violence by mobs (399 individual actions of violence in the database), generic groups¹⁰ (over 190 actions), individuals (over 30 actions), and the police (27 actions). Conversely, the most likely victims of violence performed by African-American males are white women (over 70 actions), white men (over 60 actions), and the police (over 60 actions). The graph also shows that mobs did not target exclusively African Americans, but also attacked the

police (40 actions) and other unidentified subjects (25 actions; these are actors for whom the newspapers provided no information, or the information could not be inferred from the story).

Querying our database, we gather that lynch victims were typically young African Americans, on average 27 years old (median age 20). In some cases victims were described as “young” (8 cases), two were considered “aged”, two others “elderly” and 12 as “old”. The youngest victim was Warren Powell, a 14 years old African American boy accused of assaulting a white girl in East Point, in the outskirts of Atlanta, in September 1889, and then hung by a band of 15 to 20 masked white men. The oldest victim was 74 years old J. R. Dorsey, lynched together with the 46 years old African American Jane Wade, by three masked men in Chattooga in 1884. What did lynch victims do for a living? We have job information from the newspapers on only 44 individuals; half of them were farm hands or cotton pickers (21 of them) and in a few instances (3) chaingang workers, reflecting the rural nature of “King Cotton” economy.

What kind of crimes, or alleged crimes, led to lynching rituals and violence? According to Brundage’s classification of alleged crimes (1995:263), in Georgia between 1880 and 1930 46% of lynched blacks were accused of murder, 28% of sexual assault and 25% of a minor offense. According to our database, in 240 lynching events, victims had been accused of a single ‘crime’, while in the remaining 74 events, victims have multiple (two or more) accusations. Out of the sum of all accusations (394), 184 accusations (46.7%) were of violent crimes (e.g., murders, shootings, attacks), 122 (31%) of sexual violence, 54 (13.7%) of minor offenses (e.g., theft, disputes with whites). In 12 (3%) cases, victims were accused of some kind of “improper conduct” towards white women (e.g., frightening them, writing them love letters, miscegenation), while for the remaining 22 (5.6%) the accusations resulted to be unknown or unclear.

If we focus on the 122 alleged assaults on women, 93% of the victims of these assaults were white women and girls and 7% African American. Some victims were as young as Dolly Woods, a 6 years old white girl¹¹ “ravished and horribly maltreated” by Jake Bradwell, who was then hung and riddled with bullets near Savannah in 1886 (the average age of the victims of sexual violence in our data is 20, with a median age of 12).¹² Again, 15 victims were described as “young” and 5 as “little”. By late 19th century, the raping of white women by black men had become the paramount (and paranoid) obsession of Southern whites, lynching justified as the only “bulwark between the women of the South and [...] a carnival of crime” by black men, as John Temple Graves, Southern editor, orator, and author, put it (*The New York Times*, August 12, 1903; *The New York Times*, August 28, 1904; see Cutler 1905:207; Matthews 1970: 155, 167, 175; Ellis 1992:26-27). Rebecca Ann Latimer Felton, a Georgia lecturer and writer who went on to become the first woman to serve in the United States Senate, best expressed Southern attitudes toward lynching: “to protect women’s dearest possession from drunken, ravening human beasts [...] I say lynch a thousand a week if it becomes necessary” (cited in Grem 2006:41). Quite a different story from the ante-bellum period, when, according to Genovese, “rape and attempted rape of white women by black men did not occur frequently. [...] Slaves accused of rape occasionally suffered lynching, but the overwhelming majority [...] received trials [...] fair and careful. [...] Public opinion usually remained calm enough to leave the matter in the hands of the courts” (Genovese 1976:33-34).

Yet, this fear “that black men could think of little else but ‘ravishing’ white women” – a fear “of its [the South] own conjuring” – was not only new but also not justified by the data, even those available at the time (Ellis 1992:26). In one of the first systematic studies of lynching history and data, Cutler concluded (1905:224): “The fact that not more than thirty four per cent

of the negroes lynched in the last twenty two years [since 1892] have been lynched for that crime [rape] likewise vitiates such a plea of justification” (see also Raper 2003:37; Ellis 1992:28). Our data confirm that only 38.9% [122 out of 314 coded lynching events] were accused of violence against women. But that violence was characterized variously as “assault” (55 cases, 45.1%), “outrage” (14, 11.5%), “attack” (9, 7.4%), “rape” (9, 7.4%), “ravish” (2, 1.8%). In 29 cases (23.8% of the 122 cases of sexual violence), negroes were accused of having *attempted* to commit the “unspeakable crime”. At any rate, the term “assault” used by newspapers of the time could mean anything. As Crowe (1968:250) notes:

The statute of 1896 defined assault as “the *attempt* to commit violent injury” and the law on rape explained the crime as “the *attempt* to know a female forcibly against her will.” Moreover, the higher courts allowed assault and even rape convictions to stand when no physical contact had taken place, and Atlanta editors followed established custom by describing all incidents which involved black men and white women as “assaults.”

Crowe (1968:251) concludes: “A misinterpreted step, an unexpected presence, an unexplained word, a stare, a hysterical girl, a vengeful female, a woman with something to hide-all could lead to death”. As an enraged Alabama congressman George Hudleston, “a liberal friend of labor,” told Hollace Ransdall, the Chicago and Columbia young graduate who had come down to Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1931 to investigate the trial for alleged rape of nine African American boys: “[I don’t] care whether the boys were innocent or guilty. They were found riding on the same freight car with two white women, and that’s enough for me. [...] I am in favor of the boys being executed just as quickly as possible! You can’t understand how we Southern gentlemen feel about this question of relationships between negro men and white women” (Goodman 1994:45-46).

In any case, at least some of these alleged outrages and assaults may have been illicit¹³ but consensual liaisons between black men and white women. What had been true of sexual relations between races in pre-bellum South did no longer hold true in Jim Crow South.¹⁴ Genovese (1976:422) tells us that, during slavery, “white women of all classes had black lovers and sometimes husbands in all parts of the South.” And it was not uncommon for these women to refuse to leave their black lovers/husbands. In such cases of inter-racial consensual relations, “the black men did not suffer lynching; the whites apparently took these matters [...] in stride” (Genovese 1976:422). By late 19th century, this type of sexual agency on the part of white women had become unthinkable. On November 8, 1887, the Columbus *Daily Enquirer-Sun* reported the news of a “vile and slanderous article” written by “Jesse Duke, the Negro editor of the Herald, a republican sheet” published in Montgomery, Alabama, “in which he mentioned the fact that negro men were frequently lynched for outraging white women and girls [...] because ‘the colored Romeo was becoming more and more attractive to the white Juliet.’” Indignation among the white men of Montgomery had led to the immediate formation of a search party for the negro editor “who saved his neck by leaving the city as quickly as possible”. In 1890, Alabama senator John T. Morgan put it in these words: “The snows will fall from heaven in sooty blackness, sooner than the white women of the United States will consent to the maternity of Negro families” (cited in Apel 2004:27). Mary Phagan, the 13-year old girl found dead in Atlanta in 1915, is a good case in point. Leo Frank, her young, Jewish, Yankee employer would be (unjustly) lynched for these crimes on August 16, 1915, while standing trial. Despite evidence that Mary may have been sexually active, public opinion could hardly conceive that this lily-white girl would be anything but pure and clung to the story that Mary preferred to die rather than consent to sexual intercourse (MacLean 1997:170-174, 159; Apel 2004:26-29).

Sooty-black snow may well have been seen over Southern skies, because, for all the indignation of Southern white gentlemen, miscegenation (as it was known) did happen throughout the South and throughout our period (e.g., Wells 1997; Brundage 1993:58-72; Hodes 1997:176-208; Odem 1999:355-356; Apel 2004:25). Even a quick search through the newspapers of the time will reveal year on year, case upon case of white women with black men appearing in court – yet, not leading to a lynching (but to a jail sentence, for sure) (e.g., Columbus *Daily Enquirer-Sun* March 1, 1876; June 13, 1880). John Duncan (October 1889) and Jake Davis (July 1922) were not that lucky, both lynched for living with a white woman, as found in our database. Jake Davis, “a well-known negro [...] about sixty-two years old” fathered a child with the 26-year old Ethel Skittel. The *Miller County Liberal* in giving the news (July 19, 1922) concludes: “Hundreds of the citizens throughout the county regret this lynching. Many have said the woman responsible for the black crime was guiltier than was Jake”.¹⁵

White women’s agency may have been limited (but this also depended on class – working-class women, particularly factory workers in larger towns, had perhaps greater sexual agency, but upper-class women had an active role in a variety of charitable institutions that, bordering with the political, gave them some political clout; e.g., Brundage 2000). African Americans, however, did not fare much better. Lynch victims, of course, committed serious, but alleged, crimes of arson, murder, rape, along with many minor crimes (e.g., theft). We could perhaps, with Genovese, view these crimes as prepolitical, individual forms of rebellion and resistance against white oppression (Genovese 1976:598, 597; on “weapons of the weak” forms of resistance, see Kelly 1994, particularly chapters 1 and 2, Brundage 1997). Under the political, legal, military conditions of the South, collective mobilization under slavery was out of the question.

But after the Civil War, freedom brought new forms of agency for African-Americans, social, legal, political, economic. For one thing, blacks could now marry. And marriage brought with it rights that could be defended in court (e.g., claims over children against the apprenticeship system of former slave owners; see Edwards 2000:15-18). Blacks could vote. And be elected; and many were, to the whites' dismay (e.g., Gilmore 1996:97-99). Churches became the organizing locals for democracy, meeting places for all sorts of collective efforts (e.g., Brown 2000:31). When local white elites were deaf to their pleas, they would take their demands to the courts and even all the way to the President of the United States (Brown 2000:31-33). On election days, they would find clever ways to resist whites' intimidation and electoral frauds. They became property owners. In their petition in 1865 to President Andrew Johnson, blacks from Richmond, Virginia, stated proudly that "among us there are at least 2,000 men who are worth \$200 to \$500; 200 who have property valued at from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and a number who are worth from \$5,000 to \$20,000" (in Brown 2000:31). There was more to blacks' agency than both individual crime or "futile, pathetic, or even insane [collective] efforts doomed to defeat" (Genovese 1976:594-595).

What the *Columbus Sunday Enquirer* wrote on August 19, 1877 was unusual in two ways (the agency of black women, the comment by a white newspaper): "A negro woman in Troup county had a white man taken up for vagrancy the other day. This is the most hopeful sign of the new era". These hopeful signs would not be long lasting, whites trying "to restore as much as possible of the world they had lost" (Kantrowitz 2000:67) By the late 19th century, initial political gains by blacks had been extensively scaled back through political and legal means, leading to blacks' disenfranchisement. To blacks' political and economic agency whites also reacted with lynchings (see the time plot of Fig. 2).

FIGURE 2 HERE

We find in our database that still in 1930, “S.S. Mincey, a prominent negro of Montgomery County”, Georgia, “was brutally flogged” to death by about 10 masked men for being “entirely too active in Republican affairs in this county and must resign his position as Chairman of the County Republican Committee” (*Montgomery Monitor*, 7/31/1930; see Kantrowitz 2000:70-73). Blacks’ economic agency was no less fraught with potential problems. As late as 1949, Hollis Riles was lynched for prohibiting whites to fish in his pond. “John Moody, a negro, was hung and his body riddled with bullets in Bryan county” in 1901 for leaving a farmer to go work with another (*The Atlanta Constitution*, 3/1/1901).

How did black communities react to the lynching of their people? By and large, blacks kept quiet after a lynching. In those cases when Georgia whites went on a rampage against the community, “the negroes in the vicinity locked themselves in their houses” (Charles Powell’s lynching, *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2/5/1912) or fled to the swamps and woods, or even packed up and left never to return. Sometimes, like in the case of Owen Ogletree, 200 blacks who viewed the lynching alongside 200 whites “expressed gratification at his punishment” (*The Atlanta Constitution*, 6/19/1894), or even “willingly assisted in the burning of the black fiend” (lynching of an unknown negro on April 13, 1893 near Fort Gaines, *American Times-Recorder*, 4/15/1893). At other times, they would kill a fellow African American for “squealing” to the whites (e.g., Alfred Thurman’s lynching). Rarely, did they organize to seek revenge (e.g., after the lynchings of Warren Powell and John Coleman) or simply to defend themselves (e.g., Will Atwater’s lynching). Rare it may have been, but they also mobilized successfully to avert a lynching. In Darien, Georgia, on August 24, 1899, some four hundred negroes “armed in every conceivable manner, surrounded the prison” where “Henry Delegal, a negro criminal,” was kept

to prevent his removal to Savannah in fear he may be lynched on the way (Tuskegee, reel 221, page 13). “The wives and female friends of the rioters were encouraging them in every possible manner, calling them heroes.” Until the militia arrived and some forty heroes were arrested and jailed.

Lynching victims could have been “punished” in different ways, at times with more than one form of violent reprisal. In our data, shooting is the most common type of punishment (victims were shot in 99 lynching events, or 31%), followed by hanging (53 events; 17%) and burning (13 events; 4%). In 88 events (27%), the lynched victim was subjected to more than one type of violent punishment (e.g., hanging *and* shooting), while in 49 events (15%) the type of lynching is unknown (in the remaining 16 events – 6% – other types of lynching like being tortured, beaten to death, strangled or drowned, occurred). Lynchings seem to become more brutal with time (see Figure 2 above), with two spikes in the percentage of lynched victims burned in the early 1900s. In the period between 1889 and 1904 there were 6 cases of lynching involving extreme cruelty (e.g., scalping, skinning alive, cutting), cruelty seemingly linked to accusations of sexual violence (5 out of these 6 cases).

Lynching mobs operated outside and against the law, at times clashing with local and state authorities. Law enforcement actors (sheriffs, marshals, etc.) did not always collude with the mob and were often the target of attacks by white mobs (see also Griffin et al. 1997:26, 34). The most frequent type of mob actions against law enforcement were indeed actions of “coercion” (e.g., forcing the handover of prisoners or the opening of the jail) (66/43%) and violence (40/25%). Local law enforcement officials also tried to move the prisoners in their custody from one jail to another for “safe keeping”, often being ambushed by the mob along the

way (Griffin et al. 1997:34-35). In 21 cases in our database, law enforcement officials resorted to this preventive measure and with that faithful result.

We hope to have shown, with analyses however exploratory and illustrative, that QNA, as an approach to text, narrative text in particular, involving computer-assisted story grammars and a variety of tools of analysis (e.g., network models), provides a way to measure agency. Not only has QNA produced numbers dealing with actors, actions, and interactions. Since, in QNA, numbers are never too far from the words that have produced them, we have used these words to flesh out the numbers, the text to understand the context and the meaning of the numbers.

But Where Are the Agents? Turning to Discourse Analysis for Answers

It may seem paradoxical that we should propose Quantitative Narrative Analysis as a method to measure agency. Because, after all, if the narratives QNA parses are anything like Sam Hose's opening story, agency is only partially there. We do have Sam Hose. We also have an ex-Governor of Georgia. But where are the actors who tortured Sam Hose, who "deprived him of his ears, fingers, and genital parts of his body," who covered his body with oil and applied the torch to the pyre, who dismembered his body, cut it to pieces, heart and liver, who crushed his bones into small bits? Nearly all the sentences in the newspaper article that reports Sam Hose's lynching are in passive forms that end up hiding agency. This is not an innocent stylistic preference by the writer. It reveals deep-seated (albeit, perhaps, unconscious) ideological motives, which were not captured by QNA. It takes a much more fine-grained approach to texts to tease these out.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative approach to the analysis of text (Brown and Yule 1984; Johnstone 2007). In its applications to news discourse, the approach has focused on the linguistic mechanisms that contribute to the process of ideological production of news, i.e., to the role of news in maintaining unequal relations of power and preserving the legitimization of the social order (Fowler et al. 1979; Trew 1979a, 1979b). Media news is a prominent *locus* of political and ideological conflict. Newspapers, like any other media outlet, “have a major ideological role” (Trew 1979b:156).¹⁶ Passivization, nominalization, classification of processes and participants, modality, are some of the many linguistic devices utilized in discourse to reproduce ideologies (Trew 1979a:97). Here, we focus on passivization and nominalization since these linguistic processes refer directly to issues of agency.¹⁷

There are several reasons why a writer/speaker might choose a passive, rather than active, construction of a sentence; “one is that it allows for the omission of the agent, though this may itself be variously motivated by the fact that the agent is self-evident, irrelevant or unknown. Another, political or ideological, reason for the use of a passive voice may be to *obfuscate agency*, and hence *causality and responsibility* (compare “police shot 100 demonstrators” with “100 demonstrators were killed”)” (Fairclough 1992:182; emphasis added; see also Trew, 1979a).

The foregrounding (or backgrounding) of agency, causality and responsibility is crucial in the reconstruction of violent events like lynchings. It is no accident that “one category of events where this issue constantly arises [is] violence and violent death” (Fairclough 1992:181). Indeed, passivization occurs throughout the article on Sam Hose. The agents responsible for his lynching are simply not there. Discourse analysis would thus suggest that the writer of the article, consciously or unconsciously, failed to attribute responsibility to a specific agent,

concealing the context of violent oppression and virtual impunity suffusing racial domination in the US Deep South at the turn of the 19th century. The word “white” never appears in the article. But “the absence of a sign can be significant too” (Barthes, 1970:149). It is dominant groups – the bourgeoisie, in Barthes’ analysis; “whites” in ours – who have the power to make “their very name [...] unnecessary”, a process Barthes calls “ex-nomination” (Barthes 1972:138).

Nominalization – the transformation of verbs into nouns – is another major linguistic tool used to deny agency in discourse (Fairclough 1992:179-182).¹⁸ Thus, sentences like “Sam Hose was lynched by the mob,” “the mob stormed the jail” or “the mob attacked the negro” are nominalized as “the lynching of Sam Hose,” “the storming of the jail” and “the attack on a negro,” where the agent “mob” disappears. Nominalization is commonly used in newspapers headlines to remove the perpetrators of despicable acts (Fowler et al. 1979:14; see also Billig 2008:785). Besides passivization, the article on Sam Hose’s lynching (our nominalization!) also makes use of nominalization: “He pleaded pitifully for his life while the *mutilation* was going on,” where the verb “mutilated” is transformed into the noun “mutilation”; as a result, agency is once again eliminated: the reader is unaware of *who* was mutilating *whom*. Like passivization, nominalization is not an inconsequential linguistic choice; it reveals underlying ideological practices aimed at maintaining unequal power relations (Billig 2008:786). These linguistic practices are not necessarily conscious. They may well be based on “taken-for-granted assumptions” (Tuchman 1973:127), the result of professional training and “years of craft apprenticeship” (Tuchman 1978:105), aimed at creating an aura of objectivity and at spinning a “web of facticity” (Tuchman 1972, 1978:82-103). But conscious or unconscious, linguistic practices end up having ideological consequences.¹⁹

Newspapers and Agency

Discourse analysis puts the issue of newspaper bias in a completely different light. Because newspapers, or better, the journalists writing for the white, Southern newspapers, now become agents in their own right in the social relations of Jim Crow South, rather than simple conduits of news. They expressed their agency in a variety of ways (Ellis 1992:21-22). Newspapers used different language, different representations for whites and blacks. The most typical ways of describing a lynched African-American as found in our newspaper database are: bad character, bad nigger, diabolic, without the fear of god, without the fear of the law, fiend, brute (Sam Hose is “a brute in human shape” for the *Quitman Free Press*). In contrast, whites are almost always represented positively: prominent, well-known, highly respected, popular in the city. Even mobs are described as controlled and silent, efficient in their business, and only occasionally as “frenzied” and “howling”.²⁰ “A more orderly set of men was never seen, for no one seemed excited or boisterous,” the *Quitman Free Press* described the crowd who met Sam Hose’s arrival in Newnan by train. “White southerners wanted to believe that mobs demonstrated tremendous self-control and restraint” (Brundage 1993: 65), thus “embodying the supposed moral superiority of whiteness through their purposeful and controlled actions” (Wood 2005:374).

Yet, newspapers’ use of rhetoric extended well beyond the stylistic manipulation of language. Newspapers also used epideictic rhetoric, the rhetoric of blame and praise, very effectively. The *Miller County Liberal* thus closes a story on August 14, 1918 on the lynching of Ike Radney for raping a white woman: “So ends the story of a black brute, who has gone the route of all his class. A violent death at the hands of an angry mob. A warning to others”. Yet, not all Southern white newspapers endorsed a lynching. In leads and subleads, the *Oglethorpe Echo* of February 2, 1894 does not mince words in condemning the lynching of “Bob Collins ... an inoffensive old negro” “BEATEN TO DEATH”, “A HORRIBLY ATROCIOUS ACT”, “It

Brings Disgrace upon our County and One That Will not be Permitted to go Unpunished.” It opens: “It is with a feeling of great shame for honored old Oglethorpe county ...”

Newspapers also took side, giving voice to some and silencing others, carrying certain news but not others (e.g., Ellis 1992:81, 166; Brown 2000:32; Godshalk 2000:144, 152). Newspapers put up rewards for information leading to the apprehension of “negro fiends” (\$500 by *The Atlanta Constitution* in the case of Sam Hose; Ellis 1992:81). They would run several daily special editions with updates on “expected” lynchings (Arnold 2009:145). Newspapers would play a crucial role in spreading wild rumors of negroes “taking the town and killing every white man, woman, and child” (*Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, August 20, 1875) and, worse yet, of “negroes [...] murdering the white men and makeing [*sic*] slaves of the white women” (*Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, September 22, 1888). Daily news of a “rape epidemic” drummed up over months led to the 1906 Atlanta riot, when bands of white men went on a rampage leaving on the ground twenty-five black men dead, about one hundred and fifty seriously wounded, and hundreds less critically injured; more than a thousand fled the city (Crowe 1969:168).

Agency without Meaning? For an Effective Research Strategy

In his 1922 *Economy and Society* Max Weber wrote: “We shall speak of ‘action’ insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning [sinn] to his behavior [...] Action is ‘social’ insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.” And “sociology [...] is a science concerning itself with the interpretative understanding of social action” (Weber 1978:4; emphasis added). But where is that meaning in the thousands of actions stored in our database? QNA, with its analysis of thousands of narratives, gives us the behavior of the actors, their *actions*, but, by and large, is silent about

motivations and meaning. Silent, because silent, by and large, are the narratives we rely upon to reconstruct through QNA the social relations of lynching: newspaper articles (or official documents, court or police). Of course, these narratives do provide contingent and *surface* reasons for action: the brutish nature of the negroes as the reason why they murder and rape; these murders and rapes as the reason why white mobs lynch them. But the *deep* reasons, the *meaning* of action is unlikely to be found in simple newspaper narratives of lynching (e.g., Southern gentlemen's attitudes toward "relationships between negro men and white women"). Even discourse analysis would have no solution to the problem – a solution that after all would require working on different types of documents (e.g., letters, diaries, even newspapers, but newspaper editorials rather event stories).

The problem of meaning extends to the tools best suited to analyze QNA data: network models. The snapshot of Figure 1 is very clear about the social relations of violence in lynching, very clear about the actors involved, yet silent about meaning, silent about why actors resort to violence. As Gould (2003:267) notes:

Extant network methods are not very good at either incorporating or modeling subjective experience, meaning, or symbolic structures [...] Different methods are good at different things - and for the moment, at least, until someone figures out how to make structural analysis good at modeling meaning, we had better be content with the thought that network methods are meaningful for modeling social networks.

The problems, however, only partially rests with QNA. And the fact that QNA does have "technical" solutions²¹ for the problems of agency highlighted by discourse analysis may be beside the point. If the value of QNA is to find patterns in large bodies of narrative data dealing with actors, their actions, and their interactions (agency, indeed, albeit perhaps with no meaning), such an in-depth investigation may be prohibitively costly at the current state of computer-aided,

but still manual, QNA, although feasible for smaller research projects (e.g., less than 10,000 triplets). Similarly, could you carry out the in-depth, painstaking analysis on thousands of documents using discourse analysis? No. Again, the costs of such an approach would be prohibitive (and perhaps even unnecessary). Furthermore, they would require skills beyond the average college student typically used in content analysis projects (QNA or not).

Which then perhaps suggests a strategy for researchers wishing to use QNA to measure agency: perform QNA on thousands of documents, then sample a handful of these documents for a more in-depth investigation (marking perhaps any document that strikes the coder for its descriptive, evaluative content). In any case, pursue the connotative route, looking at the texts that go with the text (indeed, the context). Events do not happen in a vacuum. And focusing on the event alone (albeit, perhaps thousands of events) may leave you in the end with a great deal of description and no explanation. QNA, with its close connection between text and numbers, does not allow the investigator to forget where numbers come from and to use the text to shed light on the context. And that is the strategy that we have pursued here.

Conclusions

The main concern of this paper has been with ways of measuring agency. After all, methodological issues of operationalization of the concept of agency have not kept pace with the lively theoretical debate across various disciplines. In contrast to the hundreds of pages on the theory of agency, we only have fleeting remarks on how exactly to measure agency. By exploiting the links between agency and action, action and narrative, we have proposed a way to measure agency in socio-historical research based on Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA). Over ten years ago Griffin et al. (1997:28) argued that events, as we know them through narrative accounts, are not “inexplicable random happenings” about which “all we can do is tell

stories”. “To discern and understand that logic [of events...] storytelling must be transcended even as narrative, as the medium through which we know events, must be retained and analytically exploited. [...] To realize the analytical promise inherent in events, however, they must be systematically ‘unpacked’ and theoretically reconstituted as explicit interpretive and explanatory devices” (Griffin et al. 1997:28, 30).

And that is precisely what QNA does: “unpack” the events. QNA offers an approach to narrative that turns words into numbers by exploiting the invariant linguistic properties of narrative (namely a sequential organizational structure of elementary narrative units based on actors, their actions and the characteristics of both, a structure also known as narrative or story grammar). But while delivering numbers, QNA preserves much of the narrative richness of the original text. Hopefully, the analyses of our lynching database will have provided evidence of the power of the technique in its ability to measure agency.²²

Yet, discourse analysis has alerted us to the linguistic mechanisms that, consciously or unconsciously, may lead to the *suppression* of agency in a text (through passivization, nominalization, ex-nomination). QNA does offer technical solutions to these problems in the design of broader story grammars; yet, the extraction of additional information beyond the basic elements of a “semantic triplet” comes at a steep cost, at least for large volumes of narrative texts. As for discourse analysis, it too has its limits in its ability to deliver depth of interpretation: it can be reasonably applied to a handful of cases only. At the current state of the art, no methodology is capable to deliver both quantity and quality, breadth and depth, to be both telescope and microscope (Franzosi 2010:146).

To the extent that QNA delivers fundamentally relational data, QNA is in line with various research programs, especially relational sociology. It is a methodological perspective that

rebuffs explanations of “social behavior as the result of individuals’ common possession of attributes and norms rather than as the result of their involvement in structured social relations” (Wellman 1983:165; see also Burt 1986:206); a perspective that “questions the explanatory potential of all those conceptual strategies that emphasize the nonrelational attributes and/or purposive actions of individual or collectivities” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994:1416). It is a perspective that, by looking at historical events as we know them narratively (e.g., through newspapers), considers “an event as a particular happening that is constituted by a particular sequence of temporally ordered actions and occurs in a particular historical context. [...] Events are complex relational wholes ... [to] be analyzed partly in terms of their particular contextual and temporal makeup rather than, as many sociologists do, simply aggregate isolated facts from narratives of lynchings and then explain the occurrence or frequency of the aggregate” (Griffin et al. 1997:29).

A metaphor by Dailey, Gilmore, and Simon, in their “Introduction” to an excellent collection of historians’ papers on forms of agency in the South “from Civil War to Civil Rights” (2000:4) aptly summarizes our approach: “Jim Crow was at bottom a *social relationship*, a dance in which the wary partners marched their steps, bent, and whirled in an unending series of deadly serious improvisations” (emphasis added). The step we have focused on – lynching – is certainly one such *deadly* serious improvisation in this dance. But to view *all* Southern social relations from the vantage point of this deadly step may lead to a gross misunderstanding of race and gender relations in Jim Crow South. Only a fraction of love affairs between black men and white women did lead to lynchings; most couples involved in miscegenation just paid the price of this form of illegality with jail sentences. Only a fraction of murders of whites by blacks did end in

lynchings. What Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1978:26) had written about strikes holds for lynchings as well: “If we want to understand strikes, we have also to understand non-strikes”.²³

QNA ultimately embraces what Charles Tilly called relational realism or “the doctrine that transactions, interactions, social ties and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life” (Tilly 2004:72; on this relational program, dating back to Simmel and von Wiese, see Franzosi 2004:255-264). Touraine was no doubt one such relational realist when he wrote about “a sociology that is concerned with agency” (1988: 16), that “All approaches that reject the analysis of the relations between social actors are alien to sociology or even opposed to it. [...] The sociology of action lies at the center of sociological analysis” (1988: 47). Analytical sociology, as well, shares with QNA a preoccupation with actors and relations. Although not explicitly concerned with issues of agency, “Analytical sociology explains by detailing mechanisms through which social facts are brought about, and these mechanisms invariably refer to *individuals’ actions and the relations that link actors to one another*” (Hedström and Berman 2009:4; emphasis added). Indeed, it is the relational properties of story grammars and, more generally, of the set of tools of QNA, that makes this methodological program eminently compatible with a broad range of theoretical programs. “Relations! Relations! Relations!,” no doubt (Franzosi 2010:51).

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Tables and Figures

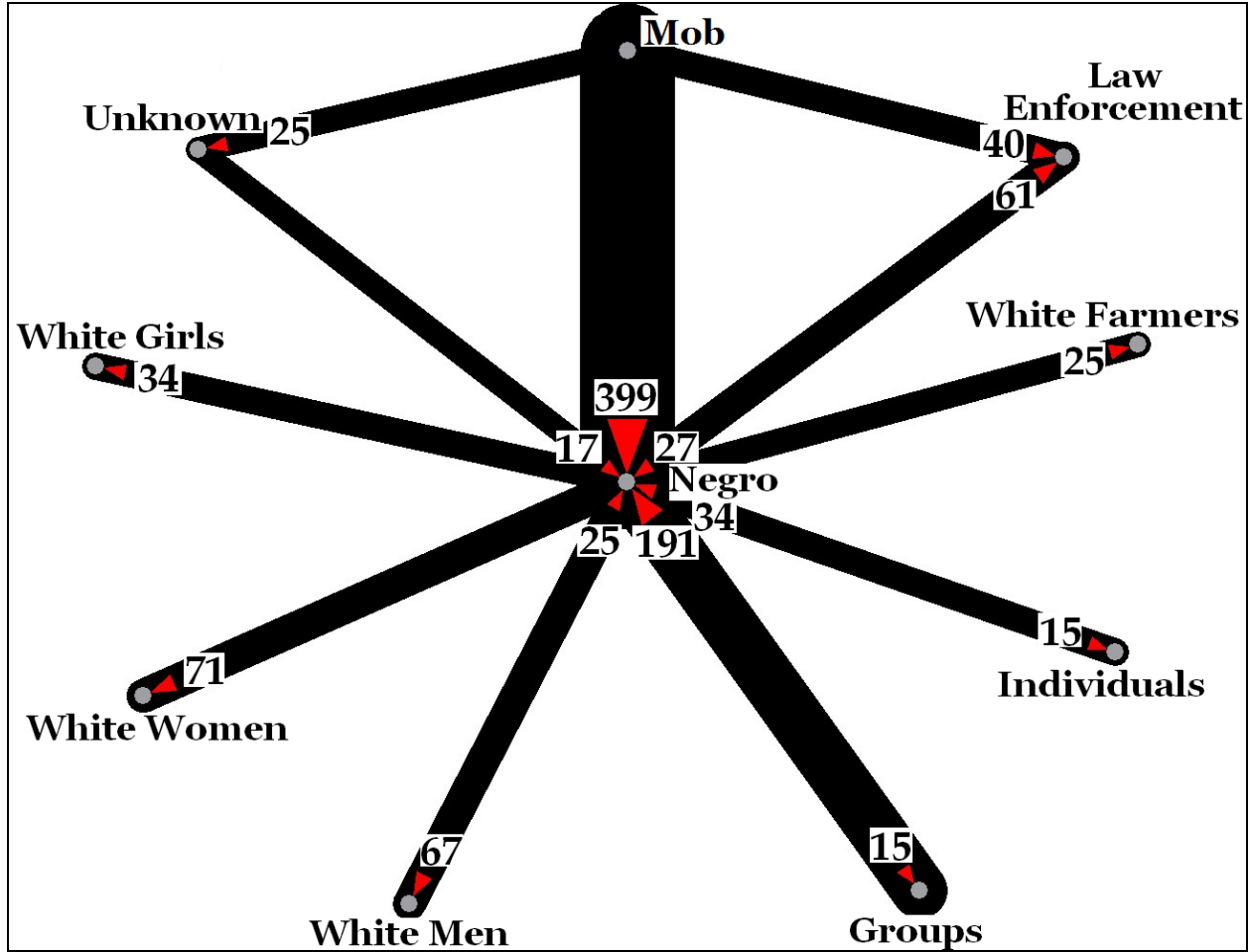


Figure 1: Network of Lynching Violence against People (Georgia, 1875-1930).

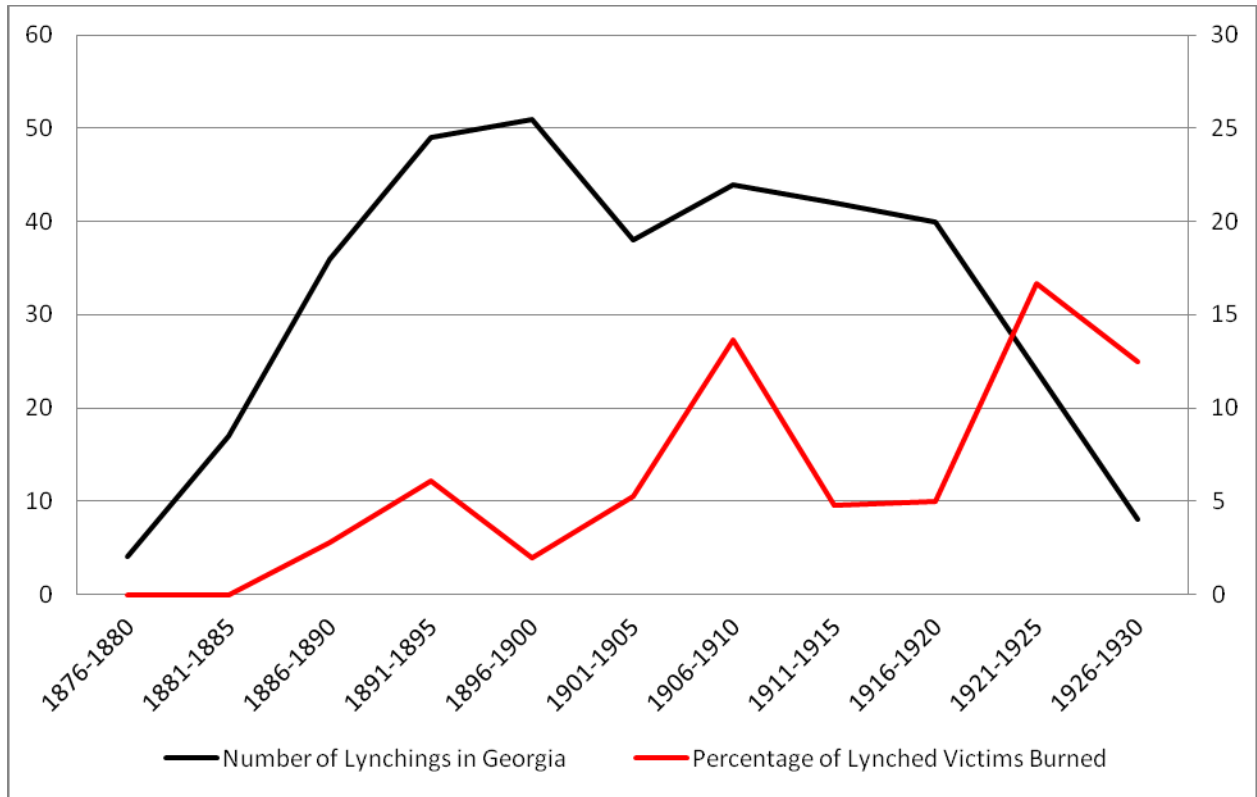


Figure 2: Lynched Victims and Lynched Victims Burned (Georgia, 1876-1930).

Aggregate Individual Actor	FREQUENCY	Aggregate Collective Actor	FREQUENCY
Negro	3514	Mob	1126
Police	973	Crowd	603
Unknown	315	Police	219
White Men	105	Unknown	92
Authority	101	Law Officials	65
White Woman	80	Authority	36
White Girl	67	Negroes	21
White Man	59	White Women	20
Negro Woman	48		
Law Official	37		
Negro Boy	26		
Worker	25		

Table 1: Aggregated Actors in the Lynching Database (Frequency>20)

Aggregate Actions	FREQUENCY
Violence Against People	1249
Going	988
Coercion	620
Communication	369
Search	329
Control	286
Doing	271
Law	254
Apprehension	150
Sexual Violence	137
Request	126
Other	121
Assembling	116
Senses	116
Coming	99
Violence Against Things	98
Facilitation/Help	95
Authority	92
Conflict	91

Table 2: Aggregated Actions in the Lynching Database (Frequency>90)

Endnotes

¹ The lynching of Sam Hose was extensively analyzed by Ellis (1992), Grem (2006), and Arnold (2009). The name is also often reported as Sam Holt, although his real name may have been Tom Wilkes (Ellis 1992:69-70; Arnold 2009:89-91). We will use the more common name Hose throughout.

² On the black body as souvenir, see Young 2005.

³ On story grammars in linguistics, see Propp (1968), Greimas (1966, 1971), van Dijk (1972), Halliday (1994). On the use of story grammars to conduct socio-historical research, see Franzosi (1989, 1994, 1998a, 2004:43-51, 2010:23-33).

⁴ The angular brackets $\langle \rangle$ denote elements that can be further rewritten; while “terminal elements,” i.e., the words or linguistic expressions found in the text, have no $\langle \rangle$. Curly brackets $\{ \}$ denote elements that can occur more than one time; while square brackets $[]$ denote optional elements. Thus, in the clause “victim screams” there is only one participant (the agent), while the clause “mob kills negro” has two participants (the agent, mob, and the recipient or patient, negro). As a result, the grammar requires only the first participant; the second is optional.

⁵ The latest release of PC-ACE is available in the public domain for free download at www.pc-ace.com.

⁶ These events could result in multiple lynchings, thus leading to a discrepancy between lynching events, used here, and lynching victims, used, for instance, by Brundage (1993:262-263, 270-283).

⁷ Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980); Philo et al. (1986).

⁸ Ongoing data collection has two aims: complete coding of available articles and expand the number of available articles per lynching case. We have 8 articles on the Sam Hose’s lynching, but hundreds were published across the United States and even in Europe.

⁹ Both actors and actions have been aggregated into larger categories. In fact, most actors and actions in the database have a frequency of 1 or, in any case, less than 5, a typical result in this type of research (Franzosi 2004:293). Typical as the results may be, they pose serious problems when it comes to data analysis. Such large number of distinct values needs to be reduced to a more manageable set of *aggregated* categories (Franzosi 2010:103-104). The values presented here are the result of this aggregation (where, for instance, the aggregated action “violence against people” include such verbal phrases as “kill,” “wound,” “hang,” “rape,” “riddle with bullets,” “torture”).

¹⁰ The difference between a “mob” and a nonspecific “group” relates to how these actors were referred to in the newspapers articles, either as ‘mob’ ‘posse’ ‘lynchers’, or with more neutral terms like ‘party’ ‘neighbors’, ‘people’.

While this distinction is hardly perfect, we decided to preserve it, as these actors *may* play different roles during a lynching. While “mobs” are actors unequivocally committed to violence, more generic groups may *at times* be active participants to lynching, while *at other times* be simple by-standers or even opposers of those events.

¹¹ But newspapers would lower the age of the victim of an alleged rape from 18 to 8 to make the alleged assailant look more brutish (e.g., Hodes 1997:192). On the young age of female victims of alleged rapists, see Brundage (1993:60).

¹² In our database we know the exact age of only 20 female victims of assaults.

¹³ Miscegenation, i.e., inter-racial unions, especially marriages, were illegal in most Southern states until the 1967 Loving v. Virginia Supreme Court case. Yet, see the case that shocked America in 1924 of the long love story and short-lived marriage between the white New York Social Register Leonard Rhinelander and the African-American, former domestic, Alice Jones (Lewis and Ardizzone 2001).

¹⁴ On the relationship between sex and lynching in Georgia, see Ellis (1992:25-38).

¹⁵ Relations between white men and black women, of course, were a different story, one that, in any case, did not result in lynchings. After all, in the *Eastman Times* of 3/18/1875 we read: “Mulatto babies are so plentiful in Columbus, that they strangle them and place them in a ditch, to be food for the coroner.”

¹⁶ The detection of ideological patterns in the news popularized DA as a discipline and spurred the development of Critical Discourse Analysis, “an academic movement of scholars specifically interested in the analysis of fundamental social problems, such as the discursive reproduction of illegitimate domination.” (van Dijk 2008:821-822). Critical discourse analysis examines also texts that are not obviously associated with the goal of reproducing ideology; for instance, it effectively analyzes discourse in scientific and technical writing, unveiling how scientists “who create and use this specialized language act as the gatekeepers for the scientific community, ensuring that young researchers write in the appropriate way. As such, formal discourse belongs to, and helps reproduce, a social context of inequality” (Billig 2008:786; see also Halliday and Martin 1993; Lemke 1995).

¹⁷ We concentrate on nominalization and passivization because they are the key tools typically used to conceal agency; however, discourse analysis identifies several other techniques through which the production of texts can be manufactured to reproduce ideology. For instance, Trew (1979a,b) detailed how the description of the same event (police killing protesters in South Africa) in a conservative newspaper modified over time to fit into its ideological worldview; this occurred first through the *deletion* of the syntactic agent (police) and eventually of the affected

participants (protesters) (Trew 1979a:109-110); through *rewording* ('protesters' become 'Africans') and *classification of participants and process* (protesters and their actions are categorized negatively) (Trew 1979a). Fairclough instead adds the manipulation of *word meaning* and *metaphors* (Fairclough 1992:185-198) as other possible techniques to craft texts ideologically.

¹⁸ "Nominalization [...] has the effect of backgrounding the process itself – its tense and modality are not indicated – and usually not specifying its participants, so that who is doing what to whom is left implicit" (Fairclough 1992:179).

¹⁹ Notwithstanding the ideological implications of language, some discourse analysts have warned scholars about the risk of "ideological over-interpretation of texts" (van Dijk 2006:129). "People do many other things with words at the same time", besides ideological production (van Dijk 2006:129). Thus, in Sam Hose's story, because of the mainly passive construction of the story, we do not know exactly who covered in oil, burned and tortured Sam Hose. And yet, any competent user of the language would immediately identify in a white mob (or more precisely, at least some of the 2,000 townspeople of Newnan that the ex-Governor of Georgia pleaded "to let the law take its course") as the agent responsible for Sam Hose's lynching. Similarly, even though nominalization denies the identification of "who mutilates whom," there are very few doubts that the crowd responsible for Hose's lynching (or at least some members of the crowd) is the same agent who is mutilating him. Moreover, it is clear that the focus of the article is on the victim of violence (Sam Hose) and the appalling fate of his tortured body.

²⁰ James Cameron, who nearly escaped lynching in Indiana in the night of terror of August 7, 1930, left a terrifying description of his experience of his own avoided lynching ("the noose around my neck and death in by brains, I waited for the end", end that, luckily, never came, 1970:110), the crowd seen from his perspective (1970:6-7, 96, 103).

²¹ For instance, you can turn passive sentences into active forms (perhaps, coding a boolean field "passive sentence" and another boolean "subject inferred from context" when the subject of a passive form is absent). You can specify in the grammar a Subject's or Object's "semantic role" (e.g., agent, patient, beneficiary) (Franzosi 2004:123-124), nominalization, and boolean fields set to true every time evaluation and commentary is openly displayed in a document.

²² For other applications, see Franzosi (1998b, 1999).

²³ This is the worthy project E.M. Beck has been involved in for some time: the study of averted lynchings.