

Data Wells: Race and State Violence in the United States from 1892

Quantitative Histories Workshop

Nathan Alexander Kade Davis Basil Ghali Qyana Stewart
Gabriella La Cour

Table of contents

0.1	<i>Data + Ida Bell Wells-Barnett</i>	1
1	Quantitative Histories Workshop	2
1.1	Quantitative history	2
1.2	Race and State Violence	2
1.3	Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the lynching incident	2
1.4	The Red Record	4
1.4.1	1893	4
1.4.2	1894	4
1.4.3	1895	4

0.1 *Data + Ida Bell Wells-Barnett*

- A *well* is a structure created in the earth by digging, driving, or drilling to access valuable resources; a water well, unlike a cistern, draws from the *foundation* for resources.
- We use “Data Wells” to describe the planning, input, and storage of critical historical data.
- We begin our analysis with Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s development of a lynching database.
- We describe other “Data Wells” on race and U.S. state violence via quantitative history.

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1 Quantitative Histories Workshop

Curriculum & software development collective

and

research lab

1.1 Quantitative history

- Quantitative history considers methods in the quantification of historical information.
- Historians like Pierre Chanu, author of the text to the right, are often centered but highlight more conservative historical narratives¹.
- Despite long-standing critiques, fewer historical narratives focus on the computational and data aspects of critical histories.

1.2 Race and State Violence

1.3 Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the lynching incident

- **Personal experience.** In 1892, a friend of Ida B. Wells-Barnett was lynched. Wells-Barnett, a known activist, community organizer, and journalist, would generate then-complex indicators of lynching.

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- **Intuition and method.** Like many other Black communities at the time and her allies, Wells-Barnett acknowledged both the very personal (micro) social forces of lynching and the systemic (macro) nature of white racial violence.

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- **Research impact.** Her development of a series of databases, and the use of number and quantification would have profound impact on the view of state-sponsored white racial violence for centuries.

¹Vovelle, Michel (1987). *Bourgeoisies de province et Revolution*. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble. p. quoted in Féhér.



Figure 1: *Histoire Quantitative* by Pierre Chanu

1.4 The Red Record

1.4.1 1893

Content for 1893

1.4.2 1894

Content for 1894

1.4.3 1895

Content for 1895