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# **Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology<sup>1</sup>**

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Recent developments in historical sociology emphasize the centrality of temporality to analysis and explanation. Narrative uses temporal order to organize information about events and to foster their understanding but is insufficiently systematic to substitute for sociological explanation. This article illustrates a new interpretative heuristic for the computer-assisted analysis of qualitative narrative sequences, "event-structure analysis," that infuses narrative with greater rigor and explicitness. Through the analysis of a lynching that took place in Mississippi in 1930, this article shows how event-structure analysis can be used to build replicable and generalizable causal interpretations of events.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Narrative

On April 23, 1930, an African-American named David Harris was lynched by a group of whites in Bolivar County, Mississippi. Hours before the lynching, Harris had killed a white tenant farmer, Clayton Funderberg, in an argument. Accounts of the actions that preceded Funderberg's death diverge. According to the lynching's chronicler, soci-

<sup>1</sup> This paper was written while I was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) in 1990–91. Earlier versions were presented to States, Culture, and Social Movements, a seminar at the center, to the New Compass of the Comparativist, a conference at Duke University, and to the Social Science History Association meetings. I benefited from support from Vanderbilt University and NSF grant BSN-8700864 to the CASBS. For detailing a much-needed reorganization and trimming of the original version of this article, Andrew Abbott deserves special thanks. A number of other scholars also gave generously of their time to comment on this article or on earlier drafts. They are Peter Bearman, Jack Gibbs, Wendy Griswold, Howard Kimeldorf, David Heise, Russ Hanson, Holly McCammon, James Oakes, John Padgett, Richard Peterson, Jill Quadagno, William H. Sewell, Jr., and Peggy Thoits. Address correspondence to Larry Griffin, Department of Sociology, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee 37235.

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ologist and social reformer Arthur Raper (1933, pp. 94–106), the African-American version is that Funderberg and two white friends went to Harris's home, from which he sold moonshine, and “demanded” liquor. Funderberg allegedly had not paid off previous liquor debts to Harris, so Harris “refused” Funderberg’s demand. Funderberg then “threatened” Harris, and Harris “retaliated” by shooting and killing Funderberg (Raper 1933, p. 94; quoted words or phrases, both above and in the next paragraph, are taken directly from Raper). The “white” version of Funderberg’s death holds that the three whites went to the home of Harris to confront him with the theft of Funderberg’s groceries; the African-American “denied the theft” and killed Funderberg in an ensuing argument.

There is no discrepancy about what subsequently happened. After the incident was reported by Funderberg’s friends, a “search party” was organized among the area’s white tenant farmers, and two law enforcement officials were notified of the killing. One of the police officers, a deputy sheriff located in Rosedale (one of Bolivar County’s two county seats), went to the site of the killing and, according to Raper (1933, p. 94), was “assured” by whites there that a search party was already trailing Harris. The deputy “expressed satisfaction” with how the event was being handled and returned to his office. Thereafter, he did nothing that overtly facilitated or hindered what subsequently happened. The other officer, the sheriff of Bolivar County, was “engaged in court” in Cleveland (the other county seat) and “did not respond” to the call. He, too, did nothing. The mob, however, did act. Using bloodhounds, several hundred members of the “search party” tracked the African-American, Harris, throughout the night and finally captured him the next morning when his hiding place was “revealed” by another African-American. Harris was then taken a few miles to the Mississippi River levee, tied to a tree, and shot to death. The African-American who disclosed where Harris was hiding was reported to have been “associated” with other bootlegging interests and was allegedly later killed by “the Harris crowd” in a vengeance killing (Raper 1933, p. 95).

### The Historical Context

Bolivar County is located in the Mississippi Delta, an extremely fertile section of land long devoted to the growing of cotton, first by slaves and then, by the time of the lynching, by impoverished black and white tenant farmers increasingly in competition for work. More than 93% of African-American farmers and three-fourths of white farmers in the county were tenants or sharecroppers. Sixty years ago the county was overwhelmingly rural, African-American (75% of the population was

black) and, for the vast bulk of the population, both black and white, poor (Raper 1933, pp. 98–103). White supremacy and King Cotton reigned effectively unchallenged, and lethal violence against African-Americans was an accepted way of life: from Reconstruction to 1945, Bolivar County witnessed a total of 13 lynchings of blacks (McMillen 1989, p. 231).

In 1930, then, Bolivar County typified widely held images of the “savage South.” It was a South accustomed to the lynching of African-Americans: 534 black men, women, and children were lynched between the years 1882 and 1951 in Mississippi *alone* (Whitfield 1989, p. 5). In just five Deep South states (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina), almost 3,000 African-Americans were lynched during the period from Reconstruction to World War II (Beck and Tolnay 1990). Most of these lynchings shared common features and a general, stagelike patterning: an allegation of an African-American crime or some other form of deviance from white supremacist norms, the formation of a lynch mob, a search or a jail break-in, capture, and then sadistic rituals, either before or after the actual lynching (Williamson 1986, pp. 120–26; Shapiro 1988, pp. 30–31; see also Raper 1933, pp. 26–39). David Harris’s death at the hands of a white lynch mob thus was one among literally thousands of hideously frequent and broadly similar incidents characterizing the Jim Crow South. But it also contains some features—the racial betrayal and vengeance killing, for example—that appear to be quite rare and several other contingencies that powerfully govern what actually happened.

Attempts to understand the lynching of David Harris as both a historically singular event and as an instance of a class of historically repeated events evokes fundamental methodological issues in analysis and explanation.<sup>2</sup>

1. How, for example, can the processual quality of the lynching—that is, its narrative order and temporal sequences of actions—be analytically harnessed for explanatory purposes? How can inferences grounded in the event’s sequentiality be rendered replicable?
2. How can comparative knowledge about other lynchings be employed in the analysis of this particular lynching?
3. How can the historical and structural *contexts* of the lynching be used to help account for the *actions in* the lynching? How can these actions inform understanding of change or continuity in these contexts?

<sup>2</sup> An event may be defined as “a distinguishable happening, one with some pattern or theme that sets it off from others, and one that involves changes taking place within a delimited amount of time” (Conkin and Stromberg 1989, p. 173). Sociological discussions of events are contained in Abrams (1982), Abbott (1990), Griffin (1992), and Sewell (in press).

4. How can this particular lynching be generalized without sacrificing its historical specificity and context?

I will address these issues by discussing, in the first section of this article, what narrative is and how it uses temporal sequence to advance understanding. I argue that narrative is both essential to the sociological analysis of historical events and successful in providing certain kinds of explanations, but unsatisfying as an explicit and replicable causal framework. In the second section, I discuss how narrative may be merged with other forms of causal reasoning so that its strengths are analytically exploited and its weaknesses moderated. Here I lean especially hard on Weber's ([1905] 1949) formulation of "causal interpretation" and his brief for the use of historical counterfactuals and E. P. Thompson's (1978) insistence on "historical interrogation" as the basis of sound historical thinking. In the third section, I briefly identify several methods of formal analysis of narrative sequences, paying particular attention to the strategy known as "event-structure analysis" (Heise 1988, 1989). The power of any methodology to clarify thinking and sharpen analytic logic is most profoundly observed when that methodology must grapple with pressing substantive questions. Therefore, I next put the entire framework to the test through a detailed and substantively grounded analysis of the lynching of David Harris. Finally, the article concludes with an assessment of event-structure analysis and a discussion of several of its implications.

### NARRATIVE, TEMPORALITY, AND EVENTS

Lawrence Stone (1979, p. 3) offers a succinct definition of narrative: "[It is] the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with subplots." Narratives are analytic constructs (or "colligations") that unify a number of past or contemporaneous actions and happenings, which might otherwise have been viewed as discrete or disparate, into a coherent relational whole that gives meaning to and explains each of its elements and is, at the same time, constituted by them (McCullagh 1978; Abbott 1990; Griffin 1992). Narratives are made up of the raw materials of sequences of social action but are, from beginning to end, defined and orchestrated by the narrator to include a particular series of actions in a particular temporal order for a particular purpose.

*The intelligibility of narrative explanation.*—Narrative explanations have a characteristic, "inherent" logic (Abbott 1992, p. 445) based on the sequential connectedness and unfolding of action. Narratives have a beginning, then a series of intervening actions, and then an end arrived at nonarbitrarily, as a result of preceding actions that emanated, ult-

mately, from the beginning of the story or from various contingencies logically integrated into the story. To locate an action in the sequence of a narrative and to link that action to the narrative's previous actions, for example, is one way to understand what "caused" the action and thus to "explain" its occurrence (Danto 1965; Dray 1985; Abell 1987). Furthermore, when an action is linked to prior and subsequent actions in the narrative, one can comprehend its character and function in the entire temporal sequence; that is, how the action displays and furthers the unfolding of the event. Narrative, in sum, captures and reflects the methodological and historical significance of an action's temporal order: "Any historical moment is both a result of prior process and an index towards the direction of its future flow" (Thompson 1978, p. 47).

When all such actions constituting the event are so linked, the event itself is "explained" or "understood" because the event—or more precisely the narrative construction of the event—is but a configuration of "elements in a single and concrete complex of relationships" (Mink 1970, p. 551). Through the cumulative succession, connectedness, and holistic configuration of the event's actions, moreover, the narrative's coherence and unity are achieved and its central theme defined, refined, and exhibited. This allows the reader to follow the reasoning and story emplotted in the narrative (Gallie 1964) and, more generally, imbues narrative with a unique form of intelligibility (Mink 1970).<sup>3</sup>

*Narrative and sociological explanation.*—Andrew Abbott (1991, 1992; Abbott and Hrycak 1990) persuasively argues that the processual nature of narrative is essential to much of sociological inquiry. In particular, narrative, in focusing on temporality and social action, promises deep theoretical knowledge about the mutually constitutive interplay of agency and social structure, a dynamic continuously occurring *in* time and *through* time (Giddens 1979; Abrams 1982; Sewell 1992). This reciprocal process, labeled "structuring" by Philip Abrams (1982), is seen through the prism of unfolding historical events. Events, then, are our points of access to structuring (Abrams 1982, p. 191), and narratives are how we describe, reconstitute, and comprehend events.

Sociological explanation of how and why an event unfolds as it does requires a type of causal logic that is grounded in "time" and in distinc-

<sup>3</sup> The merits of narrative are hotly debated among historians and philosophers of history, and the literature is vast and contradictory (see, in addition to those cited, e.g., Ricoeur 1979; Elton 1983; White 1984; McCullagh 1987). Three issues seem to be at stake. The first is the degree to which narrative is an acceptable form of explanation. The second pertains to the truth content of ostensibly factual historical narratives. The third has to do with narrative as a form of rhetoric (e.g., Reed 1989; Richardson 1990). These are important issues for sociologists as well (see, e.g., Abrams 1982, pp. 300–35), and I address some of them in the text and in the Appendix.

tively temporal processes (Abrams 1982, p. 302; Aminzade 1992). Most sociological explanations are comparative and generalizing, not temporal, in their logic (Lieberson 1985; Abell 1987). They rely on logical comparisons of a few cases, analysis of statistical regularities of many cases, or logical subsumption of particular cases under broader historical generalizations and theoretically general laws (Abbott 1991; Griffin 1992). Narratives, on the other hand, are intrinsically temporal in both construction and explanatory logic.

Narrative explanations take the form of an unfolding, open-ended story fraught with conjunctures and contingency, where what happens, an action, in fact happens because of its order and position in the story. Narrative therefore permits a form of sequential causation that allows for twisting, varied, and heterogeneous time paths to a particular outcome. In narratives, we can see how the cumulative consequences of past actions increasingly constrain and limit future action. This notion of “path dependency” (Aminzade 1992) can be used to examine the determinants of key actions at any given historical moment, counterfactually explore actions and choices not taken, and help explain why sequential paths are sustained through time. We also see the “emergence of novelty” in narrative (Porter 1981, p. 34), those contingent, unpredictable acts, often with big consequences (Gould 1989, p. 284), that are nonetheless explicable in light of temporal ordering and connectedness. Thus through the way it organizes information and fosters understanding of sequentially unfolding action, narrative encourages, even coerces, far more explicit deployment of the sort of temporal causation envisioned by Abrams, Aminzade, and others.

*The limits of narrative explanation.*—Narrative accounts of historical events are not satisfactory sociological explanations of them. Narratives as stories often appear “merely” descriptive while really presenting, as noted above, an artful blend of explanation and interpretation. Even when narratives are avowedly causal in purpose (e.g., Fredrickson 1981), the criteria used to determine selection, causality, and significance remain tacit. Narratives too often lull readers into accepting the narrator’s account as simply a “happening” (Abrams 1982, p. 307). Following, not verifying, the story is essential to successful narrative.

Despite the undoubtedly intelligibility of what the philosopher William Dray (1985, p. 185) calls “running” narrative explanations, they are, moreover, poor causal explanations of social process. By permitting temporal flow and sequence to carry the explanatory burden, narrative implicitly portrays all actions occurring before time  $t$  as direct or indirect causal antecedents of an action at time  $t$ . But, as has often been noted (Leff 1971, p. xiii; Marini and Singer 1988), chronological order does not necessarily suggest historical or causal significance. Some early incidents

are surely of no significant consequence in any given event, while others may have no causal impact on some subsequent actions and yet be required for the later occurrence of still other actions. Simply put, the distinction between a temporal antecedent and a causal one is too often obscured in narrative. Narrative sequence, therefore, is but the “primitive” raw material of explanation and interpretation and must “itself undergo radical transformation” in the course of analysis (Thompson 1978, p. 29). Sociological explanation requires that events and their contexts be openly theorized, factual material abstracted and generalized, and the causal connections among narrative sequences established in a way that can be explicitly replicated and criticized.<sup>4</sup> This requires information and insight not given solely by narrative.

#### HISTORICAL INTERROGATION AND CAUSAL INTERPRETATION

Narratives must be “unpacked” (Abrams 1982, p. 200) and analytically reconstituted to build a replicable causal interpretation of a historical event. Knowledge of an event’s temporality, although too often inadequate for causal purposes, is invaluable because it allows the analyst to pose the basic historical question asked of any set of narrative sequences constituting an event: What is the causal influence of a temporal antecedent on what happened later in an event?

I suggest, as have others, that answers to this question are best adduced through a synthesis of different kinds of reasoning and knowledge. These range from the theoretically deductive and historically general to the historically contextual and particular, from the temporal to the culturally interpretative (Weber 1949; Thompson 1978, pp. 25–50; Porter 1981). The most powerful synthesis of forms of knowledge comes through posing and responding to historically counterfactual questions and situations. I will discuss counterfactuals below and indicate how wrestling with them merges general and particular ways of thinking about historical events.

<sup>4</sup> This assertion hinges on two premises. First, more systematic thinking about a problem typically yields better inferences. By “systematic” I do not mean quantification, statistical analysis, theoretical deduction, or many of the other characteristics often associated with the science side of social science. I mean those aspects of analysis listed in or implied by the sentence in the text. Second, most sociologists wish to understand how others explain the real world, however one defines “explanation,” and are dissatisfied when theories are covert, crucial assumptions are not made explicit, and inferences are based predominantly on the idiosyncratic insight or intuition of individual scholars. This is not a plea for formalism as an end in itself; there may be very good reasons to avoid presenting the more formal dimension of sociological inquiry to readers.

*Facts and counterfactuals.*—Weber (1949) argues that counterfactuals are an essential tool in the analysis of events because the “concrete event” (p. 165) is too complex to subsume under causal generalizations or theoretical laws. When counterfactual “what if” questions are posed, the researcher conceptually isolates and abstracts facts from their historical concatenations and asks whether their absence or modification would have altered the course of the event as it was recorded (i.e., narrated). If the answer is yes, the fact is judged both essential to the historical configuration as it “actually” happened and a significant historical cause of what followed (Weber 1949, pp. 166, 171, 180).

The attribution of historical significance is a vital step toward explaining what happened because explanations of the factual connote explanations of what did not happen (Moore 1978, pp. 376–97). What did not happen in the case of David Harris was that the lynching was prevented. It was not prevented because of the way particular actors acted and refrained from acting. To understand the actions that kept the lynching from being averted is to explain the lynching itself. By aiding analysts to understand what could have happened and why it did not happen, counterfactuals help them understand what factually happened and why it happened as it did (see Moore [1978] and Zeitlin [1984] for examples of excellent research premised on historical counterfactuals).

Counterfactual questions and their answers are sometimes thought to be mere historical “figments” that reduce history proper to “quasi-history” (Redlich 1965, pp. 485–87).<sup>5</sup> This objection undeniably exerts restraining force. For example, if, in my attempts to understand why Harris killed Funderberg, I had counterfactually assumed that the Mississippi of 1930 was not white supremacist to its core, I would have had to envision a Mississippi that did not exist and had never existed up until that point in history. That Mississippi is a fantastic implausibility, and any answers adduced from this counterfactual world would indeed have been historical figments.

But some critics of counterfactual reasoning, such as Jon Elster (1978, pp. 175–223), concede that counterfactual questions are logically “assertable” and “legitimate” (p. 191) under certain limiting circumstances. The most crucial condition is that a contrary-to-fact historical alternative,

<sup>5</sup> A general philosophical defense of counterfactuals rests on the premise that all explanations inevitably imply, and thus must inferentially support, their own counterfactuals. The utility of a particular explanation, therefore, depends on the plausibility of its implied counterfactual (Moore 1978, p. 377; Lieberson 1985, pp. 45–48; Hawthorn 1991, p. 14). If the counterfactual world necessarily posited by an explanation is not plausible, the explanation should not have been advanced.

a “possible world,” is conceptually and empirically quite close to the “real past” (see Appendix). Geoffrey Hawthorn (1991, p. 158) imposes similar conditions on the plausibility of counterfactual reasoning: possible worlds should (*a*) start from the real world as it otherwise was known before asserting a counterfactual, (*b*) not require us to “unwind the past,” and (*c*) not unduly “disturb” what we otherwise understand about the actors or their contexts. To return to the counterfactual Mississippi envisioned above: a racially tolerant Mississippi in 1930 disturbs virtually everything we know about Mississippi’s past, and it would require us to unwind two centuries of racial apartheid and national economic history. It is therefore not an analytically assertable counterfactual condition. Counterfactuals are plausible, in short, only if the posited historical alternatives are “objective possibilities” (Weber 1949, p. 164) in the particular historical context—the real past—housing the action or event subject to counterfactual interrogation.

*Objective possibility.*—How can objective possibility be determined? Within wide limits, it is based on general theoretical and historical knowledge (Hawthorn 1991, p. 78). In the Deep South of the 1930s, for example, African-Americans generally could not organize and act collectively to stop a threatened lynching. They were denied sufficient social space and political opportunity for antiracist mobilization, and they were denied adequate resources to resist costly attacks against such mobilization, even if it were otherwise possible. Moreover, without the right to vote, they generally had no electoral clout with which to sanction politically those public officials who, overtly or otherwise, permitted lynching. These descriptions are historical generalizations suggesting some of the limits of objective political possibilities available to blacks in that region at that time.

Counterfactual possibilities, however, must be “concrete alternatives and specific to concrete situations” (Moore 1978, p. 377). To establish more precisely the possibility for and limits to action in a specific event, generalizations must be challenged by and augmented with information on the event’s particularities. These, in turn, are apprehended through knowledge of the event’s actors, its immediate context, and how both unforeseen contingencies and unfolding path dependencies facilitate and hinder the possibilities for future action. Once David Harris killed Funderberg, for example, certain future actions (such as Harris’s acting routinely) were permanently precluded. Given what had happened previously to these particular actors in this particular historical setting, these actions were not objective possibilities. Finally, empathetic insight into particular actors’ understandings and the “imaginative re-enactment” (Beer 1963) of their action helps the analyst determine how actors viewed

the happening and its context and the possibilities for their own agency, given those understandings (Weber 1949, p. 164–88; see also Elster 1978; Leff 1971; Thompson 1978; Hawthorn 1991). Thus what we know of the real past and hence of objective possibility is comprehended through integrating what we know of the general and the particular.

*Answering counterfactual questions.*—Answers to counterfactual questions also merge particular and general knowledge and reasoning. When a plausible counterfactual question is posed, a series of other questions is also implied or asked. Some of these provide possible answers to the counterfactual question. For example, What is *theoretically* expected to follow from this (counterfactual) action or condition? What has *generally* been the consequence of this action at the time and place it occurred? How can *comparable* and *analogous* events aid our understanding of this particular counterfactual condition? How do these kinds of actors *typically* respond to these actions? What has been the consistent *pattern* of action of this actor? and How does that help one judge what her or his reaction to the counterfactual situation might have been? Other questions spurred by the counterfactual challenge the answers adduced from the first set of questions. How well, for instance, do the theoretical, historical, and interpretative generalizations elicited above mesh with what is known of the particular event and its context, sequencing, and actors? In answering counterfactual questions, then, general theoretical explanations (Kiser and Hechter 1991), explanations in principle (Watkins 1952), and empirical generalizations are often evoked. But they are culturally and historically contextualized and tested against the particularities and sequences of the event (Thompson 1978, p. 46).

A crucial example from the analysis that will follow shows this kind of self-interrogation in practice. As the lynching of David Harris unfolded, neither Bolivar County law enforcement officer acted to prevent what was happening. Their nonaction in this regard can be a historically significant and morally responsible cause of the lynching only if their (contrary to fact) intervention was an objective possibility that was allowed, deliberately or otherwise, to lapse unrealized. Was intervention possible?

In response to this question, I would first turn to what is known generally of the actions of other southern police officers confronted with comparable events. A large percentage of these officers, including many in Mississippi, did in fact stop lynchings (see below). Thus the *general pattern* of their interventions leads me to conclude tentatively that active intercession by the Bolivar County officers was a distinct possibility. Although clearly grounded in a valid historical generalization, my initial judgment may nonetheless be incorrect. I must also ask myself if there were circumstances *peculiar* to this particular lynching, such as the offi-

cers' ignorance of what was happening, that precluded the possibility of their action. There is no evidence that such was the case in this lynching; most important, we know from prior actions in the event and the connectedness of those actions to subsequent actions that both officers had requisite knowledge of an interracial killing. Thus the generalization that provided a provisional positive assessment of objective possibility is not only not contravened by the particulars of the event, it is strongly supported by the lynching's precise unfolding and sequencing.

Posing the counterfactual, therefore, first forced me to synthesize general and particular kinds of reasoning and then allowed me to infer that a contrary-to-fact action, legal intervention, was an objective possibility in the lynching of David Harris. This is a plausible counterfactual because the possible world it posits—a world in which the Bolivar County officers acted to stop the lynching—was quite close indeed to Mississippi's real past and neither disturbs nor requires us to unwind much of that past.

Now to the second important counterfactual question. Would the intervention of the law have significantly altered what subsequently happened? Probably, though, as I will discuss in greater detail below, inferences about this are difficult because the requisite generalization is murky. We do know, however, that actions of police officers prevented 13 lynchings in Mississippi during the years 1930–32 (Raper 1933, p. 473–79) and literally hundreds more throughout the Jim Crow South. Here I use comparable events as "historical counterexamples" (Martin 1979) to answer, again tentatively, the counterfactual question. Does this particular event exhibit any evidence, such as the use of subtle chicanery or massive force by the mob, suggesting that the lesson learned from the counterexamples is misapplied here? No, there is no evidence of any such particularity of the event or its context. Again, then, the positive answer provided by historical counterexamples was tested against the event's specificity before being finally accepted.

Through positing possible actions and consequences of varying likelihood, counterfactuals therefore transmute one aspect of what is known, observed temporal sequence, into historical questions and then synthesize general and particular knowledge into answers to those questions. Causal interpretations, I suggest, are built, brick by brick, by answering factual and counterfactual questions about historical sequences. What is required, then, is some procedure that facilitates the "interrogation" (Thompson 1978, pp. 25–50) and "cross-examination" (Bloch 1953, p. 64) of narrative sequences and thereby aids the analyst in the extraction and marshaling of evidence of causal significance from them. This is precisely what event-structure analysis promises.

## MODELING NARRATIVE SEQUENCES WITH EVENT-STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

Several approaches to the formal qualitative analysis of narrative sequences and actions have been developed (see Abbott's [1992] review). Peter Abell's (1987) "comparative narrative analysis" traces the sequences in individual narratives with an algebra of intentional action and intended and unintended consequence. The structure of the logic in the narrative is then generalized and systematically compared with the logical structures of other narratives. Andrew Abbott's (1992) procedures categorize narratives through the use of unidimensional and multidimensional scaling. Abbott's concern in analyzing repeated events is also with the "generic" or typical narrative (1991, 1992).

These two approaches have much to commend them, and the utility of Abbott's has already been demonstrated (Abbott and Hrycak 1990). Both, however, are directed toward objectives that differ from mine. Neither Abell nor Abbott appears much interested in constructing Weberian-type causal interpretations. Abell (1987), for example, places great, perhaps even undiscriminating, weight on sequence per se, while Abbott (1991, p. 228) finds "abstracting 'causes' out of their narrative environments" seemingly impossible in principle. Given narrative's configurational, conjunctural character, Abbott's demurral has force. But not analyzing narrative from a causal perspective sanctions by default the defects, discussed above, of accepting temporal flow as the basis of explanation and the narrator's construction of the event as *the* happening. This is unacceptable if the purpose of the analysis is to construct a causal interpretation.

A third possibility, which is used here, is event-structure analysis (ESA), recently developed by David Heise (1988, 1989). Heise explicitly advances ESA and its associated computer program, ETHNO, for both causal and interpretative purposes (Heise 1988; Corsaro and Heise 1990). It was developed to study cultural routines and the subjective representations of reality (Heise 1989, p. 139) and was influenced by developments in cognitive anthropology as well as by rational choice theory. Event-structure analysis and ETHNO have features that render them especially appropriate for developing causal interpretations of historical events.

First, ESA forces the analyst to replace temporal order with her or his "expert judgment or knowledge" about causal connections. It does this by quite literally transforming a chronology of actions into a series of "yes/no" questions where the analyst/expert is asked if a temporal antecedent ("or a similar event") is required for the occurrence of a subsequent action. Questions of this sort are essential to circumvent one of the main weaknesses of "running" narrative explanation. To again take

the example of the Bolivar County lynching, I was asked by ETHNO if Funderberg's threat to Harris required Harris's prior refusal of Funderberg's demand for liquor. My response, "no," rested on my understanding of the practice and context of white supremacy in the Deep South and generalizations about class differences in the expression of racism by whites there. The answer clearly reflected a causal judgment, not a temporal relationship. With this response, therefore, I have begun to unpack the event and causally reconstitute it, and understanding the event has begun to surpass the cognitive act of simply following the flow of the narrative.

Second, ESA's elicitations maintain fidelity with the interrogatory spirit undergirding much historical reasoning. This in turn naturally leads the analyst to "question" the sequences about their connectedness and causal significance and to posit counterfactual questions and their answers.

Third, its logical foundations in the theory of production systems (Fararo and Skvoretz 1984) parallel the understanding of historical events as configurational, contingent happenings characterized by "the emergence of novelty" (Porter 1981, p. 34). This is most clearly seen in the view in ESA of how action is governed in a production system: "*If* a certain configuration of conditions arises, *then* a certain production occurs. . . . Productions have natural consequences—they cause changes in conditions, and these results also can be phrased as if-then rules: *if* a given production occurs, *then* condition A changes from state x to y. . . . In general, the production system approach permits representation of knowledge about verbally-defined events in models that can generate new and meaningful sequences of events" (Heise 1989, p. 141; emphases in original).

Fourth, the inferences reached through ESA, though often interpretative, are strictly replicable. Critics have precise knowledge of the causal imputations and the reasons for them and can directly challenge any aspect of the analysis, from the selection of actions to be analyzed to their imputed significance and causal connectedness.

*How ETHNO works.*—The analyst first prepares a chronology of actions which, in the analyst's mind, define the event. While ETHNO offers no direct assistance at this point, preliminary event-structure analysis often helps the analyst to detect weaknesses in the chronology and to refine it in various ways. The chronology is then entered as input into ETHNO, where it is then reformulated as a series of questions about the causal connections among actions constituting the chronology. The responses to ETHNO's questions are displayed as a "directed" or causal diagram of the logical structure of action underlying the event's narrative or chronol-

ogy.<sup>6</sup> The diagram, finally, is the event structure and represents the analyst's interpretation of the causal connections among sequences constituting the chronology.<sup>7</sup>

The causal logic reflected by the diagram is then tested for consistency with a set of logical constraints or rules about how action can proceed that is built into ETHNO. The most telling constraints (*a*) limit when an action is allowed to occur (i.e., it must be "primed" by the occurrence of a temporal prerequisite); (*b*) limit when an action can reoccur (i.e., its antecedents must be repeated, and its causal efficacy must be used up or "depleted" by a consequence); and (*c*) limit the causal efficacy of an action to a single consequence. These logical rules can be deliberately relaxed by the analyst.

If the analyst opts to circumvent the constraints (as I repeatedly did in the analyses that follow) rather than exercise some other solution to logical inconsistencies (e.g., reconfigure the diagram, and thereby alter one's understanding of logic of action), the theoretical constraints embedded in ETHNO are effectively mooted. One need not, therefore, accept the theories of production systems or rational action to structure narrative sequences with ESA. Indeed, event-structure analysis could be used to illustrate or test virtually any processual theory.

Event-structure analysis and ETHNO also allow explicit generalization of the initial (or "concrete") configuration. Here the analyst abstracts from the concrete event structure in two ways. First, actions which, in the expert's judgment, are embellishments on or otherwise incidental to the main paths of action or without imputed cultural or historical significance can be dropped from the "abstracted" chronology. Second, actions that are retained for further analysis are conceptualized as instances of theoretically general sequential actions. The computer program, ETHNO, then interrogates the expert about the causal relations between these

<sup>6</sup> The software views the second word in each sequence as the verb connoting action and assigns it a three-letter abbreviation that appears in the diagram of the event structure. Should the same action verb appear more than once, ETHNO abbreviates the second appearance by using a number, beginning with "1" and moving to "2," etc., in lieu of the original second letter (see "Sho" for "shot" in action 5 and "S1o" for "shot" in action 22 in table 1). The abbreviations can be changed at any point during or after the analysis to those more to the analyst's liking.

<sup>7</sup> The ETHNO program elicits only direct causal connection. If action A is judged to be a prerequisite of action B, and action B is judged to be a prerequisite of action C, ETHNO will not ask about (and thus will not automatically diagram) the relationship between A and C. The program knows, by logical implication, that A, through its causal influence on B, is required for C. The analyst, however, can directly relate A and C, so that C is portrayed as having two causal prerequisites, A and B. The program permits many other modifications of the event structure as well.

generalized actions just as it did about the concrete actions. As the analyst answers these questions, ETHNO, again as before, constructs a diagram of action, this time structuring the theoretically abstracted actions at a higher level of generality and parallel to the concrete event structure. The general event structure is subsequently assessed for logical inconsistencies, both in relation to ETHNO's internal logic *and* to the causal imputations embedded in concrete event structure. Logical contradictions between the general and the concrete event structures may necessitate altering either structure or both of them or relaxing ETHNO's rules about action.

What ETHNO does not do is answer its own elicitations. Causality is not "discovered" through its use. The analyst, not the software, possesses the knowledge needed to structure and interpret the event. What ETHNO does—and, at root, all that it really does—is relentlessly probe the analyst's construction and comprehension of the event. By forcing the user to be precise and meticulous about the construction of historical narratives, to reason causally about their sequences, and to be clear about the bases of causal judgments, ESA and ETHNO lay bare the investigator's understanding so lucidly—indeed starkly, as a diagram of the logic of action—that insights into causal significance are intensely sharpened, and problems of causal interpretation are prominently displayed.

### THE LYNCHING OF DAVID HARRIS

The exact chronology of the lynching used in the concrete event-structure analysis is presented in table 1. (I use the African-American account initially.) This is the input for ETHNO. While I adhere very closely to Raper's (1933) original narrative, including the use of proper names, I refrain from using some of his linking words and phrases, such as "because" and "due to," in order to avoid prejudging assessments of causality. Two actions (15 and 19) actually occurred prior to their position in Raper's account, and their order in the chronology is changed to reflect this. I have added one action (6) to the chronology because it is an implicit action that is instrumentally necessary for the occurrence of later actions. The last incident in the chronology (23) is an unverified allegation and is labeled as such. (The program does not care if the actions were implied or alleged but the analyst should.)

*Concrete event structure and interpretation.*—I was asked a total of 112 questions in this particular analysis.<sup>8</sup> The diagram of the concrete

<sup>8</sup> The number of questions ETHNO asks is a function of both the number of sequences in the chronology and the imputed connections among them. More time-linear causal sequences generate fewer questions. The entire set of questions, answers, and reasons for the answers are available on request.

## Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis

TABLE 1  
CHRONOLOGY OF BOLIVAR COUNTY LYNCHING, APRIL 23, 1930

ETHNO Abbreviation	Order of for Action	Action in Chronology*	Description of Action
Eng .....	15†	Sheriff (W) engaged in court.	
Wen .....	1	Funderberg/others (W) went to home of Harris (B).	
Dem .....	2	Funderberg/others demanded liquor.	
Ref .....	3	Harris refused demand.	
Thr .....	4	Funderberg threatened Harris.	
Sho .....	5	Harris shot Funderberg.	
Fle .....	6‡	Harris fled the scene.	
Rep .....	7	Others reported the killing.	
For .....	8	Search party formed.	
Rec .....	9	Deputy (W) received news of killing.	
Vis .....	10	Deputy visited site of the death.	
Rea .....	11	Townspeople assured deputy that search party was already trailing Harris.	
Sat .....	12	Deputy was satisfied with handling of affair.	
Ret .....	13	Deputy returned to his office.	
Cal .....	14	Sheriff called about incident.	
Not .....	16	Sheriff did not respond to call.	
TRA .....	17	Search party tracked Harris.	
REV .....	19†	Black revealed hiding place of Harris.	
CAP .....	18	Search party captured Harris.	
Too .....	20	Mob took Harris to levee.	
Tie .....	21	Mob tied Harris to tree.	
Slo .....	22	Mob shot Harris to death.	
Kil .....	23§	Harris's friends (B) killed black who revealed Harris's hiding place.	

NOTE.—Derivation of ETHNO abbreviations given in text at n. 6; (W) = white; (B) = African-American.

\* Chronology constructed from account in Raper (1933, pp. 94–95)

† Action occurred here in event, but elsewhere in Raper narrative.

‡ Implicit action.

§ Alleged action.

event structure of the lynching is presented in figure 1. Using numbers from the chronological account in table 1, I begin the discussion of the interpretation at the point of mob formation (For 8). After the Rosedale deputy learned of Funderberg's death (Rec 9), he went to the site of the killing (Vis 10) and was told by white townspeople there that the search party was trailing Harris (Rea 11). The ETHNO program asked of this sequence: "Does 'deputy satisfied with handling of affair' require 'townspeople assured deputy search party already trailing Harris'?" I answered yes, and ETHNO drew a causal link between "Rea" and "Sat" (see fig. 1). If Raper is correct in his description of these actions (there is no

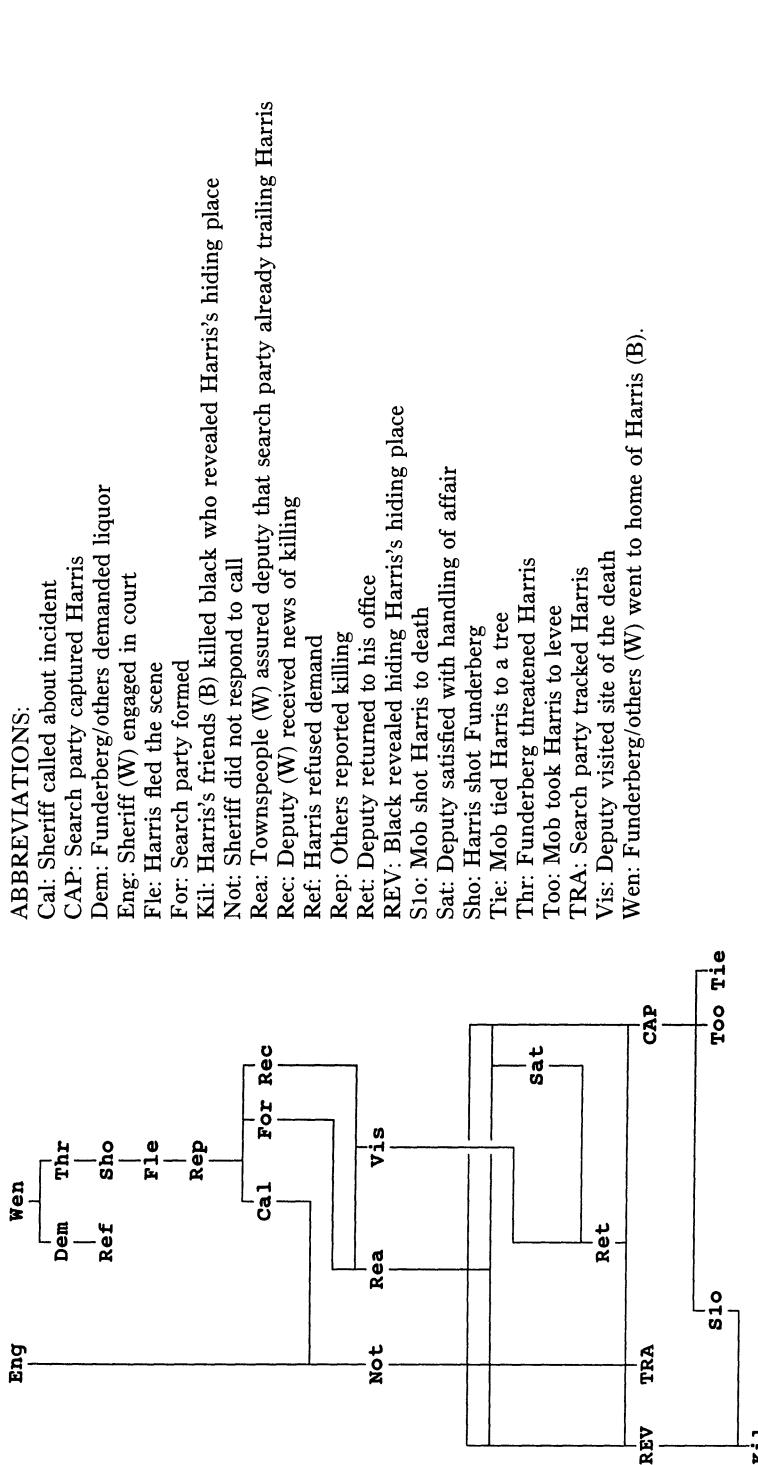


FIG. 1.—Bolivar County, Mississippi, lynching concrete event structure

independent evidence one way or the other), the deputy's "satisfaction" resulted directly from the "assurance" he received from whites at the scene of the killing. Both "assurance" and "satisfaction" symbolize the racist aspirations of the deputy and those whites who told him of the mob's activity, and both disclose the ideological affinity between the officer and the nonmob whites, on the one hand, and members of the lynch mob, on the other.

The next action is "deputy returned to his office" (Ret 13). The program asked if this action required his prior "satisfaction" with what he had heard from the white townspeople (Sat 12). I again answered yes, and again ETHNO causally connected the actions. Had the deputy not been satisfied with the fact that the mob was trailing Harris, he likely would not have returned to his office and done nothing. Instead, he would have acted differently, possibly by attempting to stop the mob, or by calling for assistance, or by searching for Harris himself. So given what the Rosedale deputy learned from the other whites about the mob's existence and activities, his inaction signifies that he consciously chose not to try to prevent a probable lynching.

If, contrary to what actually happened, the deputy had attempted to stop the mob, might the lynching have been averted? Historical generalizations are shaky on this crucial point. On the one hand, lynch mobs often prevailed against even determined antilynching actions by authorities (including the use of armed force; see Raper [1933], McGovern [1982], McMillen [1989], Wright [1990]). On the other, a large number of lynchings were in fact averted by the actions of the city, county, and state police. While no firm count is ever likely to surface, estimates of the number of averted lynchings suggest that they were at least as frequent as completed lynchings, possibly even double the number.<sup>9</sup> During the years 1930–32, for example, there were 34 lynchings in the South. In this same time period, 127 attempted lynchings were prevented, 92 (or 72%) of them in the South and involving African-Americans as intended victims (raw data are from Raper [1933, pp. 473–79]). In each of these 92 instances the lynching of an African-American was prevented by white law enforcement officials acting to obstruct the mob or otherwise avert the lynching. Thirteen of these averted lynchings occurred in Mississippi, several in Delta counties virtually indistinguishable from Bolivar. Seven lynchings were completed in the state during the same time period. Given

<sup>9</sup> Using data gathered by the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), Jesse Daniel Ames (1942, p. 11) reported that from 1915 to 1942, 762 lynchings were completed while 1,476 were prevented. Raper's (1933, p. 484) count, which is based on the same information, indicates there were 648 completed lynchings and 688 prevented lynchings from 1915 to 1933.

what happened in comparable cases and the Bolivar County deputy's clear knowledge of the existence of the mob and of its early activities, his forceful intervention to prevent the lynching thus appears an objective possibility.

It is likely that the whites in the mob knew of the noninterventions by both the deputy and the sheriff, and they probably understood the deputy's absence, at least, to mean what he apparently intended, a deliberate "hands-off" stance in a potential racial lynching. The deputy's "return to his office," then, is interpreted as a direct encouragement of the lynch mob as it tracked and subsequently captured Harris. (See the causal tie between "Ret" and both "TRA" and "CAP" in fig. 1; ETHNO capitalizes the abbreviations of all actions, such as "tracked" and "captured," that are caused by *either* one *or* another logical prerequisite; see n. 11). The sheriff was apparently "engaged" in other business (Eng 15) and, because of this, did not respond (Not 16) to the call he received about the lynching (Cal 14; see the connection between "Eng" and "Not"). No direct evidence exists about the sheriff's intention in not responding. Whatever his motivation, or the mob's understanding of his nonintervention, the sheriff's absence nonetheless permitted the political opportunity needed for the lynchers to proceed with their actions (see Tilly 1978). I therefore judged that his "inattention" to the search party's actions (Not 16) was also causally (if unintentionally) responsible for subsequent mob activities up to and including Harris's capture (see the connection between "Not" and both "TRA" and "CAP").<sup>10</sup>

White civilians, largely tenant farmers, are also implicated in the mob's activities. By giving assurance to the deputy (Rea), they, along with him, are causally implicated in his actions and their consequences. Pervasive and avowedly violent antiblack sentiment from the white community, however, was not entirely channeled, in my judgment, through its consequences for the actions of legal authorities. If the white population had more extensively defied the mob *and* "indifferent" or racist law enforcement officers, as sometimes happened in Southern lynchings and near-lynchings (Raper 1933; Ames 1942), the mob's activities would have been much more difficult, if not impossible altogether.

Because the assurance (Rea 11) of white racists was logically implied in the deputy's satisfaction (Sat 12) and subsequent return to his office

<sup>10</sup> Raper (1933, pp. 443–67) presents narrative accounts of five averted lynchings in the South. I used ESA to analyze these narratives, each of which is a "historical counterexample" (Martin 1979) to the Bolivar County lynching. In every case, the causal interpretation pointed to some form of legal intervention (e.g., removing the prisoner to a safer jail, calling in the National Guard to protect the prisoner, the showing of armed force against the mob) as the crucial contingency determining the prevention of the lynching.

(Ret 13), and the “return” was judged essential to the mob’s activities, ETHNO did not inquire about a causal connection between the white community’s assurance and the subsequent actions of the mob. I therefore modified the diagram to allow for a direct causal link between assurance (Rea) and the mob’s subsequent activities of tracking (TRA 17) and capturing (CAP 18) Harris. Moreover, any one of the three causal prerequisites of tracking and capturing (that is, assurance from the whites and the nonintervention of the two officials) is, in my judgment, a sufficient cause for their occurrence. *Either* systematically racist legal practices *or* systematically racist civil practices, therefore, adequately licensed racist mob violence in this lynching.<sup>11</sup>

Racist assurance of white townspeople (Rea) and legal inaction (Ret, Not) are also imputed to be direct causal prerequisites of the act of the African-American who revealed Harris’s hiding place (REV 19; see fig. 1). This is neither obvious nor incontestable. Disclosing the hiding place of a suspect accused of a killing might be sensible in another culture as an indicator of “good citizenship.” That does not seem likely here, where African-Americans were in no real sense citizens of this community and where, on the whole, they felt great apprehension about white supremacist law (Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941; Williamson 1986; Shapiro 1988; McMillen 1989). Another possible motivation for this action is pecuniary. While there is no evidence that a reward was ever offered for information leading to Harris’s capture, the economics of the illicit liquor industry may have played a role. Harris’s betrayer allegedly was linked to other bootleggers; by informing on Harris, the informer removed a competitor. Venality, then, may be all that lies behind the racial betrayal.

Although this interpretation cannot be dismissed, it is woefully incomplete because it ignores the reality of black life and white law in Jim Crow Mississippi. That the law generally was not color-blind and was in fact “white law” in both its personnel and its “functioning” is incontrovertible (Zangrando 1980; McMillen 1989; Wright 1990). Law was seldom oriented or implemented to ensure in practice the U.S. constitutional rights of southern African-Americans as citizens of this country. The statistics on averted lynchings notwithstanding, the law all too infrequently even perfunctorily performed its duties in the strictly legalistic

<sup>11</sup> The ETHNO program calls this type of causal relationship, where an action is induced by either one or another antecedent, “disjunctive” causation. Its query as to whether action A is “required” for the occurrence of action C suggests that event-structure analysis elicits assessment of necessary cause (Heise 1989, p. 162). But there is an escape clause: what ETHNO actually asks is if action A “*or a similar event*” is required (emphasis added). This invites the imputation of causal sufficiency. *Either* action A *or* its functional alternative, action B, in other words, may be *sufficient* for the occurrence for action C, but the presence of one or the other actions is *necessary*.

manner dictated by white supremacy. African-Americans did not often enough "enjoy" the perverse "opportunity" of a legal lynching as opposed to a mob lynching (Carter 1979; McMillen 1989; Wright 1990).

Many southern blacks fiercely and subtly resisted segregation and its attendant degradations (Rosengarten 1974; McMillen 1989; Kelley 1990) and even, during imposition of Jim Crow laws at the turn of the century, formed armed groups to protect potential lynching victims (Brundage 1990). But other blacks, adopting a survival mechanism that extended beyond acceptance of Jim Crow, aided white vigilantes. Blacks even infrequently joined white mobs in the search for other fleeing African-Americans (McMillen 1989, p. 383). Those actions, like the one here, where one black, doubtlessly with accurate foreknowledge of the narrow range of the almost certainly devastating consequences for Harris, betrayed another African-American hounded by a lynch mob, are fully intelligible only if we understand the structural relationship between African-Americans and white legal institutions.

Whatever the material incentive for the betrayal, and whether or not the particular black who told whites where Harris was hiding knew that the deputy and sheriff had washed their hands of the affair, all African-Americans knew the racist nature of the Jim Crow legal system. Racial betrayal required, daily and cumulatively, racist actions and non-actions, such as that dramatized by the deputy, by agents of the white legal establishment.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the more complex relationship between the white mob and white law, which really allows no firm historical generalization, that between African-Americans and southern "justice" was generalized in daily practice and institutionally anchored in the very fabric of social life. Racial betrayal, then, signified one of the cardinal social relationships, that between law and race, which both defined the South's white supremacist structure and was recreated every time the law failed to treat all of its citizens, black and white, equally.

There can be little doubt that the disclosure of Harris's hiding place facilitated his capture and subsequent lynching. Would this have happened in the absence of the betrayal? There were other racial betrayals that culminated in lynchings (Raper 1933), but such incidents appear rare

<sup>12</sup> This is true whether or not the African-American was forced into his betrayal or was promised some private reward for his knowledge. The absence of an effective legal check on racist action is, in this context, the root condition of both racial coercion and racial paternalism. Finally, I also judged that either popular racism or legal indifference was causally sufficient inducement to racial betrayal (REV) and modified the diagram to allow the betrayal to be disjunctively caused by the occurrence of its three prerequisites (Rea, Ret, Not). My reasons for imputing a direct causal relationship between the racist reassurance of the white townspeople and the racial betrayal is essentially the same as that given for the connection between legal indifference/racism and the betrayal.

indeed. Generally African-Americans were not apprehended by either the law or the mob through action of this sort. Using what happened in comparable cases as the historical standard here, I therefore do not impute a causal connection between the “revealing” (REV) and Harris’s capture (CAP), the lynching rituals (“Too 20” and “Tie 21”), or the lynching proper (S1o 22). Rather, I interpret the actual lynching of Harris to be a direct consequence of the mob’s possession of him coupled with their prior motivation and, through the chain of historical regress, their opportunity to kill him.

The racial betrayal (REV 19), however, does exert a consequence of mortal significance in my interpretation, the “vengeance” killing of the informer by the friends of the victim (REV 23; see the causal link between “REV” and “Kil” in fig. 1). I interpret this murder to mean that the capacity for African-American resistance to white dominance, though necessarily muted and only sporadic by the 1930s, was never entirely extinguished. Even in the place with what was likely the most racially oppressive conditions known to “free” African-Americans in this country, the Mississippi Delta, blacks contingently continued to implement, in one of the few ways available to them, solidaristic understandings of social control against members of their own race thought to have gone too far—here, by abetting the interests of a white lynch mob—in their subservience to Jim Crow. Such offenders were punished, sometimes lethally.

Just as the racial betrayal is grounded in the historical context of white supremacy, the solidaristic vengeance killing, too, has deep cultural and structural roots. Again, I point especially to the racist underpinnings of southern law. Because African-Americans were not deemed fully human, their being killed by other blacks was seldom punished to the full extent of the law: white authorities often turned their backs on the murder of blacks by blacks (Davis et al. 1941; McMillen 1989). Raper (1933, p. 105), for example, reports that he heard that it was not until a month after this lynching that Bolivar County courts sentenced an African-American to death for the murder of another black. White supremacist law-enforcement practices thus unintentionally facilitated this expression of black racial solidarity.

### Comments on the Interpretation

Although this causal interpretation of white racist vigilante violence and African-American subservience and resistance is admittedly constrained by Raper’s (1933) original narrative, the constraints are quite loose. Neither my interpretations nor my causal claims are his. Raper’s account, as is generally true, “permitted” but did not determine my understanding of

the lynching. Many quite different concrete event structures, several of which are discussed below, can in fact be teased from Raper's narrative. (On the general indeterminacy of interpretation of texts, see Taylor [1979].) When the analysis is compared with the original narrative, we see that the former generated something new. My interpretation is best understood as a selectively emphatic causal and interpretative "unpacking" and reconstitution of the original. It is a precise and explicit consequence of the way I merged the particularities of the lynching with historical generalizations, theoretical knowledge, and information from comparable cases to understand the event's sequences and their connectedness. Three aspects of the event structure presented in figure 1 ground the interpretation.

First, the event's logic of action indicates how causality is formed by and embedded in the event's temporality even as the "inner connections" of actions transcend sequence per se. Some sequences were imputed to have no consequence for ensuing action (e.g., Funderberg's initial demand for liquor, and Harris's subsequent refusal), or to be embellishments on, rather than prerequisites for, a more fundamental action (e.g., carrying Harris to the levee and tying him was not judged to be necessary to the lynching). Main story lines are accentuated, and "subplots" (such as the theme of racial dominance and resistance played out by Funderberg and Harris in their initial interaction) defined and clearly understood as such. Additionally, different patterns of causal relations among actions—simple causal chains (e.g., the actions from "Funderberg/others went to home of Harris" [Wen] through "others reported killing" [Rep]) and conjunctive and disjunctive configurations of prerequisites for actions (e.g., the townspeople's assurance to the deputy [Rea] and the racial betrayal [REV], respectively)—are revealed in a way that is masked in narrative sequence.

Second, the diagram reveals those actions which, in a very precise sense, are most significant to the entire sequence. In figure 1, all important early actions are funneled through a single action, Funderberg's friends' dissemination of the information of his death (Rep). I do not know what Funderberg's friends actually reported, but it is all too plausible to imagine the general racist construction of the incident.<sup>13</sup> That

<sup>13</sup> This interpretation is supported by two things. The first is what actually happened to Harris: he was tracked by a mob of more than 200 men with dogs and then shot more than 200 times while the law did nothing (Raper 1933, p. 95). There is only minimal evidence that anyone ever attempted to moderate the mob, or to stop the lynching, or even expressed doubt or qualms about what was happening. The second is that whites constructed an alternative version of the altercation between Harris and Funderberg. Their version, which casts Funderberg as the innocent victim merely trying to undo a wrong done him, most likely emanated from his friends.

action—the “telling” of the first killing—thereafter created three different branching points or paths of action (the formation of the mob [For] and the knowledge of two police officers [Cal, Rec]), each of which established the limits of possible actions still to occur. The final actions, including Harris’s capture and the two deaths, stem mainly from the racist assurances of community whites (Rea) and the racist actions/nonactions and indifference of the police officers (Ret and Not).

Third, the event structure displays the crucial role played by human agency, contingency, and path dependency. If the actions I have identified as significant had been very different in content and meaning (intended and understood) from what they in fact were, the event likely would have been transformed into a nonlynching. Through their action in informing authorities of the first killing, for example, whites introduced two contingencies—the possible involvement of the two law officers—which they could not control and which might have altered the course of the event. But the event’s structure also shows how these possible “lynching-averting” contingencies were circumvented by the actions of both white civilians and the two law officers. The path-dependent consequences of nonintervention increasingly cumulated as the event unfolded, reducing the possibility for alternative choices and actions. By the time the mob had physical control of Harris, the likelihood that the African-American would be lynched was high.<sup>14</sup>

Neither knowledge of the event’s initial conditions (including its context) or of its early actions, however, would have enabled accurate prediction of what ultimately happened. David Harris was not destined to be lynched, even after he killed Funderberg, even after the lynch mob was formed. His murder was the contingent outcome of a number of unfolding temporal sequences that, finally, were brought together through conscious choice, purposive action, and unintended consequence (i.e., the sheriff’s nonaction) to create a dense, interdependent pattern resulting in two criminal deaths.

*Generalized event structure.*—Of the 23 concrete sequences in the Bolivar County lynching, 12 were retained and used in the general event-structure analysis. Table 2 presents those actions and the general concepts constructed from them. The posited epistemic links between concept and indicator are also reproduced at the bottom of the diagram

<sup>14</sup> This claim rests on generalizations reached after reading hundreds of accounts currently held by Tuskegee University of completed and averted lynchings. When new information was introduced into the event or extant information finally accepted as valid, mobs sometimes adjudicated an African-American to be innocent and voluntarily released him or her. But I have yet to encounter an event in which a mob holding an African-American with the evident intent to lynch disbanded “spontaneously” before completing the murder.

TABLE 2  
CONCRETE ACTIONS AND THEIR GENERAL MEANING IN THE BOLIVAR COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, LYNCHING

Concrete Action	General Meaning
Funderberg threatened Harris (Thr)	White intimidation of black (Int)
Harris shot Funderberg (Sho)	Black violence against white (Vio)
Others reported the killing (Rep)	White construction of racial conflict (Con)
Search party formed (For)	Racist organization (Org)
Townspeople assured deputy that search party was already trailing Harris (Rea)	White popular support of racist organization/action (Pop)
Deputy returned to his office (Ret)	White law support of racist organization/action (Law)
Sheriff did not respond to call (Not)	White law support of racist organization/action (Law)
Black revealed hiding place of Harris (Rev)	Racial betrayal (Bet)
Mob took Harris to levee (Too)	Lynching ritual (Rit)
Mob tied Harris to a tree (Tie)	Lynching ritual (Rit)
Mob shot Harris to death (S1o)	Lynching of black (Lyn)
Harris's friends killed black who revealed Harris's hiding place (Kill)	Black solidaristic action/social control (Sol)

NOTE.—Abbreviations in parentheses are ETHNO designations.

in figures 2 and 3 (see “Instantiations,” ETHNO’s way of saying that the concrete actions are “instances” of the generality). The concepts should be understood as generalized sequences, not as static concepts devoid of temporal referent. Criteria for deciding which actions to retain for this stage of the analysis included my assessment of their causal significance in the concrete structure and their general theoretical and empirical relevance to lynchings as a class of events.

Two aspects of these generalizations deserve brief mention. First, two different sets of two concrete actions were each conceptualized as a single general action: the actions of the two enforcement officials (Ret, Not) constituted “white law support of racist organization/action” (Law), and the actions of taking Harris to the levee (Too) and tying him to a tree (Tie) constituted “racist ritual before lynching” (Rit).<sup>15</sup> Second, what appears to be no more than instrumental action in the original narrative, the “telling” of Funderberg’s killing by his friends (Rep), becomes in the abstracted sequence an action of central conceptual import, “white construction of racial conflict” (Con). My altered understanding of the *general* relevance of this act stems from its historical significance in the *concrete* event structure, a significance I did not suspect until after the initial analysis.

The general event structure was configured by answering 18 queries about the causal relations among these generalized sequences. In responding to these questions, I strictly followed the causal logic used in concrete analysis. That is, I structured the causal relationships among the generalized sequences according to how I had previously imputed causal connections among the concrete actions serving as “instances” of the generalized actions. The parallel concrete and general event structures are presented in figure 2.

The ETHNO program’s assessment of the logical consistency between the two event structures revealed one serious contradiction. The generalized sequential structure in figure 2 indicates that “white popular support for racist organization/action” (Pop) is a causal prerequisite of “white law support . . .” (Law). This is a straightforward generalization of the concrete causal sequence beginning with “townspeople assured” (Rea),

<sup>15</sup> “Local” knowledge and historical generalization are both necessary to impute the general meaning of taking Harris to the levee and tying him to a tree. In 1930, Bolivar County was sparsely populated, overwhelmingly rural, and dotted with frequent large patches of woodlands and vast areas of open fields. The mob could have killed Harris in any number of desolate spots without real fear of being seen even if secrecy were thought necessary, which, from what we know of the event, seems doubtful. So I judge that something other than instrumental reasoning motivated the trip to the levee. Many lynching accounts, moreover, contain actions by whites that are plausibly interpreted as cultural ritual. Given the general pattern of lynching, then, I was looking for ritual and, on the basis of local knowledge of Bolivar County, I found it.

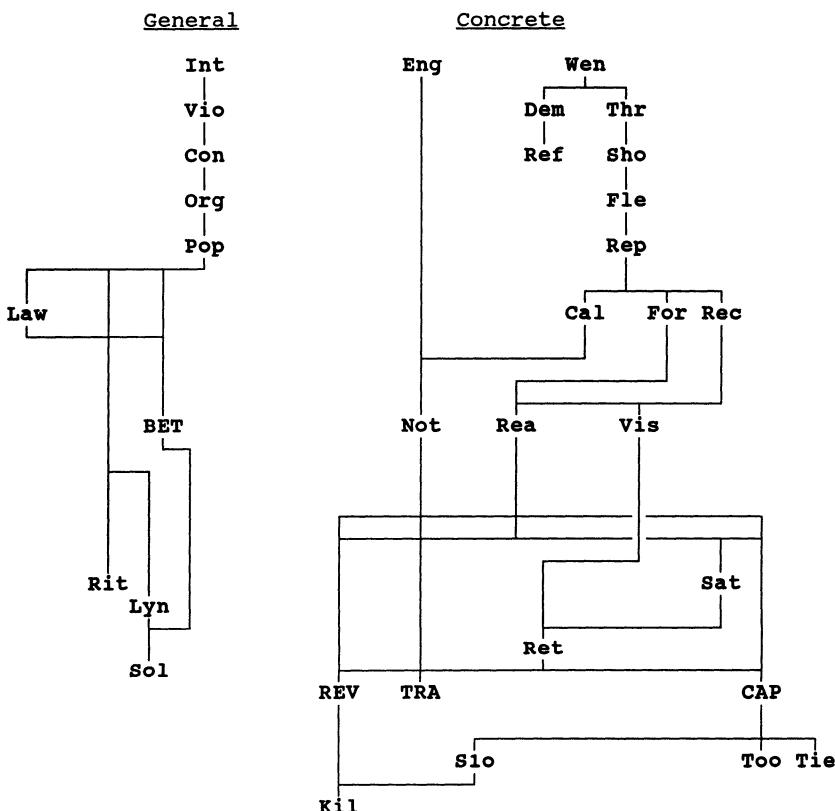


FIG. 2.—Bolivar County, Mississippi, lynching concrete and general event structures.

**ABBREVIATIONS:**

- BET: Racial betrayal (general)
- Cal: Sheriff called about incident
- CAP: Search party captured Harris
- Con: White construction of racial conflict (general)
- Dem: Funderberg/others demanded liquor
- Eng: Sheriff (W) engaged in court
- Fle: Harris fled the scene
- For: Search party formed
- Int: White intimidation of black (general)
- Kil: Harris's friends (B) killed black who revealed Harris's hiding place
- Law: White law support of racist org./action (general)
- Lyn: lynching of black (general)
- Not: Sheriff did not respond to call
- Org: Racist organization (general)
- Pop: White popular support of racist org./action (general)
- Rev: Townspeople (W) assured deputy that search party was already trailing Harris
- Rec: Deputy (W) received news of killing
- Ref: Harris refused demand
- Rep: Others reported killing
- Ret: Deputy returned to his office
- REV: Black revealed Harris's hiding place
- Rit: Lynching ritual (general)
- S1o: Mob shot Harris to death
- Sat: Deputy satisfied with handling of affair

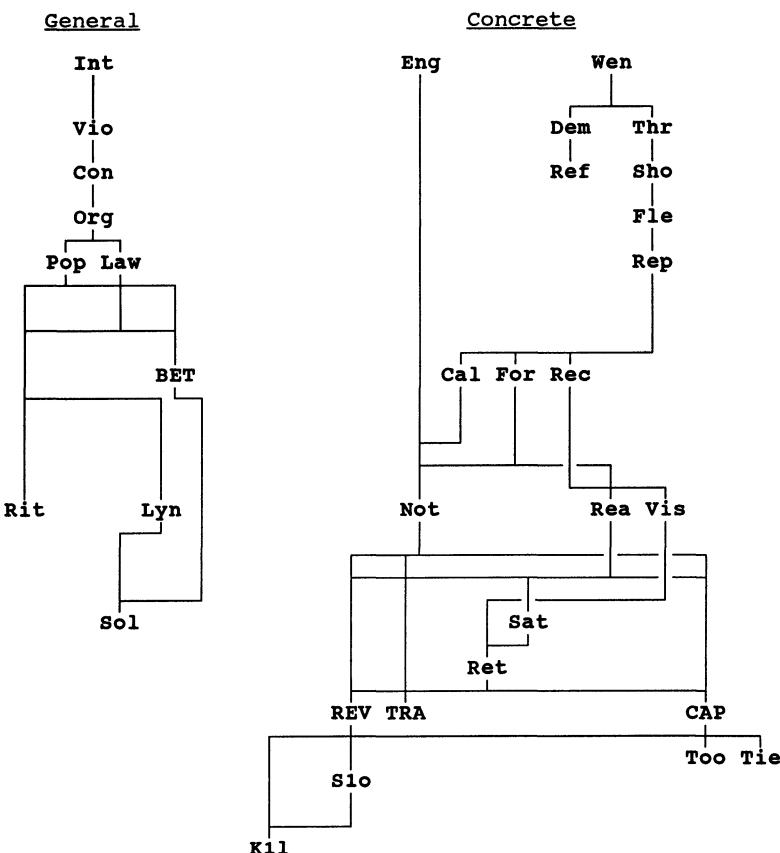


FIG. 3.—Bolivar County, Mississippi, lynching revised concrete and general event structures.

#### ABBREVIATIONS, con't.

Sho: Harris shot Funderberg

Sol: Black solidarity action/social control (general)

Tie: Mob tied Harris to a tree

Thr: Funderberg threatened Harris

Too: Mob took Harris to levee

TRA: Search party tracked Harris

Vio: Black violence against white (general)

Vis: Deputy visited site of the death

Wen: Funderberg/others (W) went to home of Harris (B)

#### INSTANTIATIONS:

Fom Thr to Int

Fom Sho to Vio

From Rep to Con

From For to Org

From Rea to Pop

From Ret to Law

From Note to Law

From REV to BET

From Too to Rit

From Tie to Rit

From Sho to Lyn

From Kil to Sol

which is the indicator of “white popular support,” and ending with “deputy returned” (Ret), *one* of the two indicators of “white law support.” The implication of the general structure in figure 2 is that this sequence is *general* within the event; that is, holds for every concrete sequence. Yet this generalization violates the imputed causal independence between another concrete sequence, that between “Sheriff not responding” (Not), the *other* indicator of “white law support,” and “townspeople assured” (Rea). The general and concrete structures logically and inferentially diverge.

Varied solutions to this logical problem are quite complex, requiring close attention to the diagrams in figures 2 and 3. But the possible solutions, and the consequences of these solutions, are worth serious examination because they fortuitously demonstrate several methodological and procedural points: (1) how ETHNO views sequence and causality, (2) the importance of factual detail in constructing theoretical explanations (Stinchcombe 1978, p. 124), (3) how the tension between the general and particular can be exploited to inform each, and (4) how answers to historical questions are really hypotheses to be tested against the entire framework of evidence. Now to the solutions.

The ETHNO program gives the analyst the option of allowing the diagrams to contradict in the manner described above. But this “solution” assumes, as noted above, a generality that does not exist in the concrete structure. Another possible solution would be to assume “sheriff not responding” to have no general meaning, thereby dropping it as an indicator of the general “legal support of racist organization/action” action. Because it would not figure in the general analysis at all, the contradiction would naturally disappear. This, however, belies the causal importance I placed on that action in the unfolding of the concrete event. Or, because the problem at the concrete level is the absence of a causal tie between “townspeople assured” (Rea) and “sheriff not responding” (Not), I could also simply link the two concrete actions, assuming that “Rea” is a causal prerequisite of “Not.” This, too, would induce logical consistency. But this solution assumes a connection between actions for which there is absolutely no evidence. It, too, is unsatisfactory.

One alternative that distorts reality less is to sever the general causal connection in figure 2 between the mob’s “white popular support” (Pop) and “white legal support” (Law) and simply view them as different forms of mob facilitation rather than as cause and effect. What actually happened (the chronological) need not be generally translated as what must have happened (the logical; Abrams 1982). The absence of a *required* relation, moreover, is consistent with the internal causal heterogeneity of the concrete structure because, with two distinct concrete paths

to legal indifference in figure 2 ("Rec → Rea → Sat → Ret," for the deputy; "Eng → Not," for the sheriff), no generality is found there. I opted for this solution (see fig. 3).

By relaxing the causal assumption between the two general sequences ("Pop" and "Law") in the abstract diagram, however, I produced two other, serially dependent logical problems requiring attention. Popular racism is the only prerequisite for legal support in the abstract diagram (see the "Pop → Law" link in fig. 2). If the causal connection between the two is relaxed, legal support (Law) has no causal prerequisite and cannot occur when it in fact happened. In ETHNO's terminology, it is not "primed" to occur. I could ignore its order in the generalized chronology and assume the law *generally* exogenous to the actions that preceded it (as I did concretely for the sheriff in fig. 2). That option, however, violates the pretty clear influence that the "assurance" from whites exerts on the deputy's nonintervention in the concrete analysis (fig. 2) and generally portrays the law as outside the framework of social relations and contingencies that, quite literally, elicits a response from legal agents. This is unacceptable given what we know generally of the links of southern law to the white community.

One way around both the problem of priming and the naive view of the structural independence of the law and the white community is to make racist organization (Org) the causal prerequisite of legal support (Law) in the general event structure. I did this, assuming, in effect, that all that was required to kick in (or prime) racist actions (or nonactions) on the part of Bolivar County's white police officers was the existence of the lynch mob (see fig. 3). But this causal imputation, though maintaining temporal fidelity with the original narrative, nonetheless introduced yet another inconsistency with causal claims about concrete actions made in the event structure in figure 2. No causal tie between mob formation (For) and the sheriff's lack of response to the situation (Not) was imputed in the concrete event structure there because available evidence indicates the sheriff was told only that Harris had killed Funderberg and not also told that a search party had been organized. This causal independence is a direct challenge to the altered generalization of the lynching shown in figure 3.

Is there plausible reason to reconsider that imputation? Perhaps. In the three decades preceding the lynching of David Harris, an African-American was lynched, on the average, once every four years in Bolivar County (Raper 1933, p. 105). Even if one or more of these was not known to the sheriff, which seems unlikely, he at least knew the area's general racial norms and dynamics. So it is probable that the sheriff, knowing also that a black killed a white, would have suspected that a lynch

mob probably would be organized. I therefore modified the *concrete* configuration by causally linking the formation of the mob (For) to the sheriff's nonaction (Not; see fig. 3). Logical consistency between the concrete and general structures was then achieved.

This analysis offers unusually rich insight into how the general and the particular are interwoven in causal interpretations of historical events (see Abrams 1982, p. 199). Even as the general is constrained by concrete historical sequences, it challenges understandings of the causal relations among those sequences. In a manner similar to Thompson's (1978, p. 43) "disciplined dialogue" between theory and evidence, ESA requires almost constant movement from the concrete to the general and back again in order to solve logical contradictions between the two and grasp each more fully.

Unraveling the logical inconsistencies between concrete and general understandings proved more than an expository exercise. It also altered the moral dimension of the concrete event and of the sheriff's ostensibly "excusable" nonintervention. In my initial interpretation based on the logic of action diagrammed in figure 1, the sheriff failed to act on important information because he was legitimately engaged elsewhere. The criminal consequences of his nonengagement therefore rested solely with how the white lynch mob used his absence: the sheriff neither anticipated nor intended the lynching. In the current interpretation (fig. 3), however, the sheriff's inactivity is cast in a new light. Given his probable knowledge of the mob and its likely intent, his unwillingness to act *morally*, as well as causally, implicates him in the lynching and in the ensuing murder that logically followed his nonintervention.

Stripped of what I have judged to be nonessential detail, and with actor identities, actions, and causal connections conceptually generalized, the generalized event structure represents a skeletal view of the event, a bare anatomy of the lynching and its aftermath. It nevertheless remains contextually and narratively anchored: temporality is preserved, as are pertinent contingencies and particularities. Little of historical or theoretical significance appears lost.<sup>16</sup> While an analyst need not necessarily take

<sup>16</sup> Earlier, I noted that there were contradictory black and white versions of the actions that preceded Funderberg's death. All of the analyses discussed above relied on the African-American version. To see whether my *general* inferences would be sustained by the white version of what happened, I used it to construct a new concrete event structure. I then assessed its logical consistency with the general event structure in fig. 3. I found that the general event structure easily accommodates either the African-American or the white account of the event's early sequences (analysis not presented). The abstract event structure in fig. 3 needs only the fact of racial intimidation, not its source or precise manifestation (i.e., Funderberg's threat to Harris in the black version; Funderberg's confrontation with Harris over stolen groceries in the white version). That this is so *in this case* and *at this level of generality* does not suggest

event-structure analysis to this level of generality, it is here that the event's significance for comparative analysis, empirical generalization, and theoretical development is perhaps most visible.<sup>17</sup> I turn now to several implications of the framework and analysis advanced above.

#### EVENT-STRUCTURE ANALYSIS, HISTORICAL SCOPE, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Lynchings are microlevel events that generally unfold in a sharply delimited spatial and temporal frame and that involve relatively few actors or actions. So, too, are the other published examples of ESA (e.g., children's play activities [Corsaro and Heise 1990], interactions among adolescents [Eder and Enke 1991], and an exchange in an office [Heise 1989]). Is the utility of ESA limited to such events? Where is social structure in these analyses?

*Historical scope and macrosociology.*—Labor historian Robert Korstad and I (Korstad and Griffin 1992) have already applied event-structure analysis to an event that is neither micro nor macro, the life and death of a tobacco workers' union local. The time span of the analysis was eight years, the geographic scope encompassed several North Carolina communities and Washington, D.C., and the actors were collective (strikers and African-American women) and corporate (the National Labor Relations Board and the R.J. Reynolds Company) in nature as well as being specific individuals. Clearly, ESA is not limited to microevents. Moreover, I see no logical reason why it could not be fruitfully employed in the interpretation of comparative macrosociological happenings taking place over decades or centuries and in a much wider geographic arena. The analytic core of ESA is the temporal ordering and sequencing of action, not historical scope. In terms of the function that sequence serves in the narrative, it does not logically matter if the statement pertains to a concrete individual or a corporate or collective actor (such as the "mob" in the Bolivar County lynching) or if the action is historically unique or historically general in the sense of referring to many actors,

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that discrepancies in other accounts are not causally significant or are not important for other purposes. These are empirical points to be decided case by case.

<sup>17</sup> I performed a large number of such analyses by formally comparing, for seven lynchings, highly abstract event structures containing six general sequences. Event-structure analysis indicated that the generalized event structures were logically identical across all events. This "processual robustness" (Goldstone 1988) can be explained in several contradictory ways, some substantive and some methodological, even definitional. Because my own estimation of their importance is unclear, I do not present them here.

repeated actions, wide geographic scope, or even whole chunks of historical time. What is relevant is that its temporal order and position in the narrative pushes the story forward.

With sufficient knowledge and care, actions constituting “great happenings” or slowly unfolding macrolevel events could be properly colligated and chronologized in precise narrative form (cf., Abrams 1982; McMichael 1990; Sewell, *in press*). George Fredrickson (1981, pp. 283–87) has done exactly that with the 300-year history of the establishment and partial disestablishment of white supremacy in the United States. He did not attempt a formal narrative analysis, and his powerful argument rests on much more than mere chronology, but his research and that of others as well (e.g., Moore 1978; Zeitlin 1984) suggests a potentially important role for ESA and other formalized narrative approaches in macrosociological historical inquiry.

*Social structure and social action.*—Event structures are not social structures, and ESA does not directly model social structure. But neither does ESA ignore social structure as it is (contestedly) understood (cf., e.g., Smelser [1988] and Sewell [1992]). It can be useful in deciphering how individual action, such as the racial betrayal, reproduces social structural understandings and constraints. One way objective possibility is determined, moreover, is through the very things implicitly or explicitly meant by “social structure”: generalizations about social and institutional relations, resources, and constraints. Social structure is also used to help answer historical questions. My interpretation of the Bolivar County lynching contained many causal judgments, such as that about the relationship between the functioning of law and racial betrayal and solidarity, that were deeply structural in this sense.

Social structure, then, is best understood in analyses such as this as part of the “glue” cementing one action to another. But evocations of it are not substitutes for hard historical thinking. Social structure is not the cause of action (DiTomaso 1982), and it is not even the only cause of the conditions of action. Action, in my view, is “caused” by the conjuncture of reasons—emotive, symbolic, and utilitarian—for action and the consciousness of objective possibilities for action. Objective possibilities, in turn, are partly social structural in origin, but they are also partly the contingent consequences of past action and partly a question of an agent’s understanding of the possibility of future action. An analysis of southern lynchings that ignored the South’s social structure—its domination by the economics of cotton, its impoverishing sharecropping system, and its corrupt Jim Crow laws, for example—would surely be an exercise in futility. Nor would southern whites have lynched African-Americans so frequently or even done so at all had their history of military defeat and occupation, decapitalization by Emancipation, and subsequent resent-

ment been different or had their culture of racism, patriarchy, male chivalry, and the "honor of Southern white womanhood" (Hall 1979; Whitfield 1988) been other than it was. But because some whites did not lynch, and even actively tried to stop lynchings, other white southerners, despite their structural situation and cultural conditioning, did not "have" to lynch, either. They acted purposively to lynch.

## CONCLUSIONS

Historical sociology is currently in a state of methodological flux. Ideas about how to proceed vary tremendously and in somewhat opposite directions. They range from the advancement of strong research programs grounded in rational choice theory (Kousser 1990; Kiser and Hechter 1991) to a return to holistic historical interpretation (McMichael 1990); from the development of ever refined causal generalizations through innovative formal procedures (Heckathorn 1983; Ragin 1987) to the cultivation of a nonformal "evenemental sociology" (Sewell, *in press*) and even a highly formal "narrative positivism" (Abbott 1992). Event-structure analysis borrows something from each of these methodological strategies, though more from the latter two than from the others. Event-structure analysis, evenemental sociology, and narrative positivism, while diverging significantly, are all intrinsically historical in that temporal sequence and unfolding are central to how they approach and explain social process.

It is understandable, then, that some of the methodological concerns animating this article are often associated with narrative history, while others have been more heavily tied to analytically formal sociology. These questions are inextricably interdependent, suggesting, once again (e.g., Tilly 1981, Abbott 1991; Quadagno and Knapp 1992), that the analytic chasm separating historians and sociologists may be increasingly unreal and counterproductive. The latter is true also of recent theoretical developments centering on the centrality of time and temporal process in sociology (Giddens 1979; Abrams 1982; Maines 1987; Aminzade 1992). The moment seems right, then, for a methodology that exploits narrative temporality without simply returning to narrative (see Stone 1979) or drawing such a distinction between interpretation and causal explanation that much of what can be gained from formal analysis is jettisoned (see McMichael 1990).

Event-structure analysis may not be that methodology, and causal interpretation certainly need not be the only objective of narrative analysis. There are other formal narrative strategies that should be explored and fruitful ways to exploit the sociological potential of narrative that transcend the purposes and limits of event-structure analysis (e.g., Abell

1987; Abbott 1992). But through the questions *ETHNO* poses about the connections between actions, *ESA*, more than most methodological or heuristic tools, demands ever deeper probes into events and their historical and structural contexts, separation of causal significance from temporal sequence, the interweaving of the general and the particular, and confrontation with the silences imposed by the paucity of hard evidence. In so doing it forces substantive and methodological questions otherwise easily not noticed or avoided. Event-structure analysis is time consuming, highlights ignorance, and is humbling. It offers no ready answers to the questions it poses or to the difficulties induced by the tension between the general and particular. What it does do is make users extraordinarily self-conscious about what we know in general and in particular and about how to use that knowledge to structure historical events and to discern their meaning. Event-structure analysis thereby facilitates causal interpretations more grounded historically and temporally than is typical of most formal research and more nuanced and explicit than those usually contained in narrative.

## APPENDIX

All sources used to construct a narrative—oral histories, ethnographies, newspaper accounts, official and personal documents, and secondary accounts—are abstractions from a myriad of facts. They are necessarily selective and possibly erroneous owing to the limited information contained even in the primary sources, to faulty recall, and even to deliberate prevarication. Accounts, in brief, are constructions of events rather than necessarily truthful accounts of what really happened. Moreover, narratives formulated explicitly by the investigator from any source, for the purpose of further analysis, as in my case, are doubly constructed. The Raper narratives are a case in point.

Arthur Raper was a staff member of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), a southern reformist organization active from the 1920s to the 1940s and dedicated to reducing the brutality of racial segregation in the South. Alarmed by the increase in the number of lynchings early in 1930 and wanting to understand their causes so as to eliminate this form of racial barbarism, the CIC formed the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, with Raper as research director. Either Raper or his assistant, Walter Chivers, a sociologist at Atlanta University, personally visited the sites of each of the 21 lynchings described in Raper's 1933 book. They interviewed participants and their family members, bystanders, "leading citizens," and others, pored over court records and local and regional newspaper accounts, and gathered extensive information on the histories and political/economic conditions of the communities

that had witnessed lynchings (Raper, p. vi). From this information, Raper then constructed and published his narratives. I, in turn, chronologized some of his narratives and subjected these chronologies to event-structure analysis.

Raper obviously was not a disinterested party to the phenomenon he studied, and his narratives are more than mere descriptions of what happened. He often made causal statements (something happened “because” something else happened) and, occasionally, more or less overt moral judgments in the guise of facts. The assurance given by whites and the deputy’s satisfaction with what he heard in the Bolivar County lynching are examples of this practice. I do not know either that assurance was given, or satisfaction expressed; the evidential bases of the claims are equally unknown. I know only what Raper said happened. Moreover, there is little chance that any more information will ever be obtained from any source about the Bolivar County lynching for reasons described by Raper (pp. 96–97). I am thus a partial captive of Raper’s understandings and narratives of the lynchings he reported. How my explanation of the Bolivar County lynching might be changed were more information available is simply not known. Analysts of secondary data, quantitative or otherwise, know the problem well. There is no reason, however, to believe that Raper’s narratives are any more distorted than are most accounts one might uncover of such a morally charged event as a lynching. In fact, Raper’s and Chivers’s strategy of using a variety of sources to obtain information likely resulted in superior, not inferior, narratives (see, e.g., Franzosi 1987). Some of the problems in the narratives, moreover, can be mitigated, as I have done here, by rephrasing sentences to avoid prejudging causality and avoiding using, as much as possible, moral assessments.

Nevertheless, the basic problem is real and cannot be wished away. “Real history” is neither known nor knowable. The historical record—what we know of real history—is subject to factual disputes and widely varying interpretations. As an often highly contested construction of the real past, it is unavoidably fraught with epistemological and practical problems. “Correspondence” between a narrative of an event and historical truth cannot be assumed. But all too frequently in historical research imperfect information is all that is available. The options are to use it cautiously or not at all. The historical record is the only body of knowledge both deliberately created to account for the real past and inadvertently displaying the tracks of that past (Isaac and Griffin 1989). What is known of the real past through narrative or any other medium, despite obvious limitations, therefore must serve as the criterion against which both the plausibility of historical counterfactuals and the truth content of our explanations are assessed, even as our knowledge of the past is

## American Journal of Sociology

itself being extended, corrected, and deepened by the very research on which it sits in judgment.

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