Old Times There Are Not Forgotten: Southern Populism's Legacy of Public Goods and Redistribution[*]

Abstract:
Why did Southern US states vary in their levels of redistribution and public goods provision in the early 20th century? Any variation is surprising given that these states shared similar political economies, racialized barriers to political participation, repression of social movements, and single-party politics. I argue that the divergence between states with higher and lower levels of public goods provision is rooted in two decades of multi-party competition and social movement mobilization that preceded the imposition of subnational authoritarian regimes. By organizing white farmers and farmworkers into a movement to improve their material conditions in the 1880s and 1890s, the Farmers' Alliance and People's Party altered the terms on which these poor farmers and workers were incorporated into the new single party regimes that state Democratic Parties imposed across the South after 1900. In states with more robust Populist mobilizations, whose peak intensity coincided with their respective states' authoritarian founding, the Populists successfully altered the terms of factional competition within the Democratic Party. This pattern of incorporation materially benefitted poor white farmers and farmworkers – and produced a legacy that persisted under Jim Crow. I test this argument via a qualitative, empirical study based on archival research in four Deep South states: Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina. I track patterns of Populist mobilization before Jim Crow, and then observe divergent patterns of party factionalism and redistribution, with a focus on public infrastructure and education, between 1900 and 1948.

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Introduction

What are the roots of the variation in downward redistribution and public goods provision among states in the American South between 1900 and 1948? During this period these states—to take just a few examples—varied markedly in the generosity of their funding for public schools, their per capita outlays for welfare programs, their funding for pension programs for confederate veterans, and their construction of public infrastructure (Eli and Salisbury 2015; Jennings 1977). This variability is surprising given the economic pressures that subnational polities face generally, as well as the common barriers of political demobilization, racialized disenfranchisement and single party rule that characterized state level politics specifically in the South (Key 1949; Mickey 2015; Peterson 1981). Recent scholarship has conceptualized Southern states during this era as subnational authoritarian regimes, a claim which has important stakes for this investigation (Caughey 2018; Mickey 2015). By classifying the Jim Crow South as authoritarian, I can link this inquiry to the broader literature analyzing why authoritarian states sometimes engage in more generous redistribution and public goods provision than widely used models tend to predict (Meltzer and Richard 1981). These studies have taken seriously the variation in distributional outcomes among authoritarian regimes and shown that many such regimes redistribute more to the lower classes and non-elites than is commonly imagined. (Albertus, Fenner, and Slater 2018; Pan 2020; Teo 2021).

In this introductory section, I will describe the variation that I seek to explain, introduce my proposed explanation, and sketch out the stakes of these questions for our understanding of core concepts in political science. Next, I will briefly comment on the literature to suggest that the explanations of this inter-state variation advanced by existing scholarship are not fully satisfactory. In light of this gap, I will describe and defend the potential contributions of this

project to our understanding of core concepts in political science. Lastly, I will present preliminary analysis of two novel, county-level datasets I compiled: one of state highway construction between 1916 and 1932 and the other of public school funding between 1923 and 1938. I will show that, contrary to expectations, overall amounts and the geographic distribution of road construction and school funding varied between states in ways that both demonstrate the divergent political trajectories of some southern states and suggest higher levels of political responsiveness to the white public than the literature generally assumes. I will conclude with a section evaluating my theory. In this concluding section, I will assess my initial hypotheses and propose amendments to my theory in light of the data I have collected thus far.

Southern States as Authoritarian Enclaves

Scholarly interest in southern states as authoritarian enclaves within a federal democracy, and the concept of zones of subnational authoritarianism, is relatively new. Thus far, scholars have focused on elucidating and defending the concept of subnational authoritarianism, articulating the limits of the concept (Gibson 2013), applying this concept to the American South (Caughey 2018) and exploring the substance and legacies of variation in Southern states' democratization (Mickey 2015). Scholars have defended their claim that the American South was authoritarian during the Jim Crow era by pointing to the lack of multi-party competition, sweeping and discriminatory limitations on the right to vote and pervasive, and legally entrenched restrictions on civil society and private life (Caughey 2018; Mickey 2015). Moreover, these regimes represented a significant regression in the degree of inter-party competition, the practical scope of the right to vote, and extent of mass engagement with politics as compared to the 1870s through the mid 1890s (Kousser 1974).

However, scholars have thus far neither seriously explored variation in distributional policy outcomes among Southern states under Jim Crow nor examined the potential sources of that variation. We still live in the shadow of V.O. Key, who argued that southern politics was, when it came to questions of distribution, a low stakes affair (Key 1949). Indeed, numerous other scholars have argued that there was little variation in policy outcomes among southern states under Jim Crow and the variation that did exist had only the most attenuated connections to material interests (Bateman, Katznelson, and Lapinski 2018; Mickey 2015; Olson and Snyder 2020).

Unexplored Variation in Downward Distribution and Public Goods Provision

A closer look reveals more variation in redistribution and public goods provision among these states and in the policy agendas of Democratic party factions within these states than scholars generally acknowledge. Louisiana substantially outpaced the rest of the south in overall per capita expenditures; in particular, Louisiana substantially exceeded other southern states in welfare and highway expenditures.[1] In fact, in 1937, it slightly exceeded the national average for per capita state expenditures on key public goods. Louisiana's high level of spending on roads, public education, and other public goods complicates the expectation that the state's one-party rule would prevent Louisiana from matching the distributional outcomes achieved by Northern and Western states, which lacked the South's barriers to popular mobilization. Prior research has argued that this divergence can be traced back to the durable "Long Faction" in the Louisiana Democratic Party, and it was not simply a secular trend in the state's policy making (Hansen, Hirano, and Snyder 2017; Jennings 1977).

[1] I plan to develop a standard as to what should be understood as substantial or significant variation in the outcomes of interest, keeping in mind that variation among subnational politics will likely be far smaller than what we would expect to observe between fully sovereign states (Peterson 1981).

However, Louisiana is not the only deep South state where public goods provision and redistribution under Jim Crow were higher than prevailing theories of Southern politics might suggest. While Alabama spent, on a per capita level, less than Louisiana did, the difference in public spending between different factional actors in the Democratic party was quite noticeable. For instance, the gubernatorial administration of Bibb Graves presided over a near 50% increase in per capita spending in the 1920s that was not replicated either before or after his term of office, this increase also exceeded the increases in per capita spending of other states in the region during this period. One of the many results of this increased spending was that in 1930, a significantly larger percentage of Alabama's state highway system was surfaced with either asphalt or concrete than neighboring Mississippi's system, where roads were more likely to be made of gravel.

Southern states did not just vary in their overall levels of spending; they also varied in how they distributed that spending within their states. For instance, as I will demonstrate below, South Carolina counties with a high percentage of white farmers and white farm tenants received a smaller portion of their state's new highway construction as compared to Louisiana Parishes with a high percentage of white farmers and farm tenants in Louisiana in the years before 1930. Likewise, Louisiana parishes with a larger white, rural constituency and a history of populist mobilization benefitted from both absolute and relative increases in funding for public education during the 1930s, a dynamic absent in South Carolina during the same period.

Political Mobilization as a Potential Source of this Variation

The observed variation in downward distribution and public goods provision among otherwise similar southern states presents an unsolved puzzle: Why might comparable subnational authoritarian regimes produce different distributional outcomes? Where might we

turn to find the roots of this surprising variation? I suggest that we focus our attention on the Populists, and the legacies of the era of multi-party competition and social movement mobilization in the years 1888-1900 which preceded the founding of these subnational authoritarian regimes. Scholars have already noted that periods of contentious politics perceived by a wide range of elites as unmanageable, and a threat to status and property, can lead to higher levels of elite collective action and, consequently, stronger and more durable authoritarian states. (Slater 2005). There is also a vibrant literature on how social movements in the United States have reshaped political parties, and how interactions with the party system have transformed movements. As Tarrow put it in his recent work on movements and parties, "people who enter public life through movements veer into parties, and parties shift their ground to embrace new issues and attack the cleavages exposed by the conflict" (S. Tarrow 2021: 24). As I propose in more detail below, these cleavages can exist within a single party as well as between multiple, competing parties.

I will use a legacy account as the theoretical structure for my historical claims. My proposed study unfolds over the course of several decades, making attention to historical change over time highly important. The affirmation of "the ultimate importance of identifying the mechanisms or channels that lead from an antecedent cause to the phenomenon being explained" is a good fit for the structure of my proposed argument. Legacy research also generally involves the presence of "systemic political transformation", a label which is applicable to the founding of subnational authoritarian enclaves throughout the South (Simpser, Slater, and Wittenberg 2018). Collier and Collier's distinction between historical (legacy) causes and "constant causes" also helps to sharpen my proposed theoretical claim. A constant cause operates year after year, as the original cause continues to operate and produce the observed outcomes over a period of time. A

historical cause "shapes a particular outcome or legacy at one point or period, and subsequently the pattern that is established reproduces itself *without* the recurrence of the original cause" (R. B. Collier and Collier 1991). As I will show, the original cause (populist mobilization) produced political configurations that sustained themselves in the absence of a repetition of the original inciting phenomenon.

A central feature of the era that preceded the authoritarian founding moments were the efforts of yeoman white farmers and agricultural workers to organize against economic deprivation. Scholars have explored the varied ways in which states and parties have integrated social groups into political systems structured by mass politics (Luebbert 1991). Collier and Collier, in their landmark study of labor incorporation in Latin America, defined incorporation as "the first sustained and at least partially successful attempt by the state to legitimate and shape an institutionalized labor movement" (R. B. Collier and Collier 1991). While white farmers lacked an overarching institutional vehicle to coordinate their political activity and negotiate with the state during the Jim Crow Era, I still think the concept of incorporation has traction on the questions I aim to explore. These voters maintained a common identity and outlook born of their regional isolation and shared economic interests (Key 1949, Williams 1969, Cresswell 2006, Sims 1985). Both politicians who sought their votes and elite operatives seeking to diminish their political influence recognized this cleavage (Minutes of Alabama Democratic State Executive Committee March, 1899). The battles over how these voters entered and related to the Democratic Party poses a question: What were the material stakes of variation in patterns of incorporation of white yeoman farmers and agricultural workers? A key question I will need to answer is the exact mechanism by which white yeoman farmers and farmworkers were incorporated into the Democratic Party. I will then explore the material stakes of variation in

patterns of incorporation of white yeoman farmers and farmworkers in terms of public goods provision and downward redistribution.

The period before the authoritarian founding moments of the mid to late 1890s was a period of transition and contingency. Both older and newer scholarship, recently united under the label of the "New Political History" argues that the Republican party continued to mount effective, if diminished, campaigns to protect black voting rights into the 1890s at both the state and federal level (Brandwein 2011b; Valelly 2004; Dailey 200; De Santis 1969). These studies refute Woodward's characterization of 1877 as a bright line between multi-racial democracy and Jim Crow subjugation (Woodward 1991). However, another important feature of this era is the unsettled nature of political institutions and coalitions. The lack of comprehensive institutional coagulation that rendered the gains of Reconstruction vulnerable to rollback also preserved space for new movements to organize collectively and independently in the political sphere, build new political vehicles, and experiment with different coalitional strategies (Kousser 1974; Valelly 2004).[2]

Beginning in the late 1880s small farmers and agricultural laborers in the south and west began to organize against the punishing effects of industrial consolidation and unfavorable monetary and trade policy. Organizers united these efforts under one group, the Farmers Alliance, which became a multi-state vehicle for political education, economic cooperation and collective action (Goodwyn 1978; McMath 1975; Mitchell 1989; Schwartz 1976). In parallel and at times in cooperation with their white counterparts, black yeoman and farmworkers also organized to oppose these trends, lending Populism its inconsistent, but substantial, biracial

[2] Valelly points to incomplete institutionalization of state parties and jurisprudence as two particularly important contributors to the lack of institutional durability that rendered black voting and mass politics in the south generally vulnerable to rollback.

character (Barnes 2011; Sipress 2012; Ali 2010). Eventually the Farmers Alliance established a political vehicle, the People's Party, which nominated its own presidential ticket in 1892, winning five states. The People's Party contested and won a vast array of local and congressional races, along with elections to state legislative bodies, in both the South and West. The party then declined rapidly in the late 1890s in large part thanks to the chilling effects of disenfranchisement efforts in the South that devastated the party's poorer white voter base, precluded the possibility of appeals to black voters, and significantly raised the cost of pursuing political objectives outside of the Democratic Party. (Goodwyn 1978; Kousser 1974; Woodward 1951).

This Populist mobilization played out in different ways among the states comprising this study. Alabama and Louisiana experienced far higher levels of populist mobilization, albeit via somewhat different mechanisms, than South Carolina and Mississippi did. In Alabama and Louisiana, the Farmers Alliance and People's Party mounted more successful independent political challenges to the Democratic Party, with these efforts in both states cresting at between 43% and 47% of the vote in elections that generated about 70% turnout (Kousser 1974). Louisiana populists achieved this high water mark via the mechanism of fusion with Republicans while Alabama populists mobilized exclusively under their own banner. In both states, the Farmers Alliance and People's Party opposed specific efforts to disenfranchise black voters and general efforts to call a constitutional convention, viewing the latter as a stalking horse for broad based disenfranchisement of poor whites (Kousser 1974; Perman 2001). By contrast, in Mississippi and South Carolina populist mobilization was far more muted. The disenfranchising conventions came earlier, in 1890 and 1895 respectively, and were called with the support of key leaders within the Farmers Alliance (Cresswell 2006) (Kirwan 1951). Mississippi populists in

particular were early advocates for a constitutional convention while independent populist institutions in South Carolina were successfully co-opted by Ben Tillman, a future governor and senator, and folded back into the Democratic Party. Tillman sought to organize white farmers and farmworkers primarily towards the goal of expanding and further entrenching white supremacy via segregation, disenfranchisement, and both legal and extra-legal violence (Kantrowitz 2000). Both states saw much less robust third party activity, and more muted populist mobilizations overall (Kousser 1974; Perman 2001).

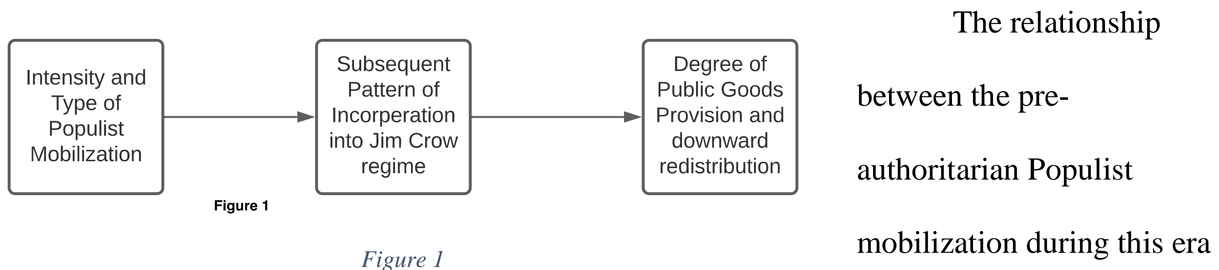


Figure 1

The relationship between the pre-authoritarian Populist mobilization during this era and the incorporation of white farmers into the new authoritarian regimes is complex and at the heart of this project. Incorporation, which is to say the consistent (and divergent) political influence of these groups in these regimes is not necessarily synonymous with a claim about the legacy effects of the previous mobilization. That being said, my current supposition is that the differences in populist mobilization across Southern states impacted the ways in which white farmers (and farmworkers) were incorporated into Jim Crow politics. These distinctive incorporation patterns continued to shape the differences in downward distribution and public goods provision in these states, without any recurrence of the sort of mass mobilization that shaped southern politics in the 1890s. The image above represents a simplified version of my proposed model. Two potential channels by which the legacy of mobilization shaped political development are alterations in the balance of power and changes in preferences. Did white small farmers and farmworkers in states with strong legacies of populist mobilization wield more

power in the democratic party and other state institutions, or did altered preferences for more redistribution cause them to use their existing power differently then their peers in states without that legacy? I'll examine one aspect of this question in greater detail below, when I comment on some of the literature on racialization and its potential relevance for my project.

The Importance of State Constitutions

This process of mobilization and incorporation proceeded simultaneously with an extensive project of constitutional framing. Scholars, in the past, have overlooked state constitutions because "recognizably constitutional features are surrounded, even engulfed, by hundreds of mundane administrative details". (Zackin 2013). Most scholarship of American constitutional development is united in its near silence of the role of state constitutions in our constitutional system (Ackerman 1991; Finn 2014; Kramer 2004; Whittington 1999). However, scholars of state constitutions have made a compelling case that we ought not miss the substantive forest for the procedural, administrative and parochial trees.

State constitutions serve as the primary repository of the Americans' positive rights tradition, and the constitutional conventions that founded many western states were moments of creative and substantive higher lawmaking with important legacies for the subsequent political development of these states (Bridges 2015a; Zackin 2013). State constitutions also often define the fiscal capacity of states and their constituent localities via limits on both the rate of taxation and the types of taxes that may be imposed. Constitutional limits on bonded debt, at both the state and local level, can further circumscribe fiscal capacity (Teaford 2002).

The South has been a particularly active site of constitutional foundation and reform. Contrary to older scholarship that viewed disenfranchisement as merely the legal ratification of an already existing reality (Key 1949), aspiring southern autocrats, at the cost of quite a bit of

effort and risk, turned to constitution making to eviscerate the political power of black Americans and quell the populist revolt (Herron 2017; Kousser 1974; Perman 2001). The racist and anti-democratic restrictions on voting embedded in these constitutions, and their devastating effects, are well studied (Keele, Cubbison, and White 2021; Key 1949). To these restrictions, black belt elites added pervasive gerrymandering that ensured their continued dominance of powerful, malapportioned legislatures and the white primary (Mickey 2015). These restrictions on political freedom and democratic choice created an insurmountable barrier to the construction of opposition parties. These documents limited democratic responsiveness in other ways. Across the South, state constitutions placed harsh limits on taxation and bonded debt. Alabama's 1901 constitution set the maximum tax rate at the county level at a stingy five mills (Perman 2001; 1901 Alabama Constitution).[3] Black belt elites sought to ensure that, even if opposing factions gained control of the state party and state government, they would be hard pressed to deviate significantly from elite policy preferences. These constitutions inaugurated a new political order in the south and constituted the founding of subnational authoritarian regimes (Mickey 2015).

There are many questions about the role state constitutions played in shaping the incorporation of former populists into the new Jim Crow polity. For the purposes of this paper, I will restrict my investigation to several relatively narrow questions. These are: the role of state constitutions in empowering or restricting counties and municipalities to issue debt for internal improvements, the role of these constitutions in setting limits on the imposition of taxes to fund public education at the state or local level, how these constitutions shaped the representativeness of the legislative branch, and the power and capacity of state regulatory agencies. In the future, as part of the broader project of which this paper is a part, I will investigate additional, broader

[3] The "mill levy" is the tax rate that is applied to the assessed value of a property. One mill is one dollar per $1,000 of assessed value.

questions. One example is: what did constitutional law offer to the founders of these autocratic enclaves that ordinary legislation could not? I hope to explore at a later date is whether the "autocratic constitutionalism" described by Scheppele as a modern innovation of authoritarian entrepreneurs operating amidst democratic norms has purchase and offers analytical insight for this earlier period despite substantial differences in institutionalization (Scheppele 2018).

The Stakes

What are the stakes of this project? Scholars have examined how farmers' political mobilization and engagement impacted the national administrative and regulatory state of the late 19th and early 20th century (Sanders 1999). However, we lack corresponding studies for policymaking at the state level. Prior to the New Deal, the vast majority of welfare and public goods provision was handled by state and local governments and even federal programs often worked through the states (Skocpol 1993; Skocpol et al. 1993). Much as state constitutions have been overlooked as sources of both autocratic entrenchment and positive rights guarantees, so to have state governments been underestimated as centers of governance, administration and public goods provision in the decades prior to the New Deal.

Scholarship on American states has moved from viewing them as unimportant backwaters, to seeing them as reborn centers of importance in the late 20th century, and finally evolving still further with Jon Teaford's study about the continuing importance and consistent growth of state governments throughout the 20th century. Teaford's study, however, probes the commonalities among states during the early 20th century rather than the variation among them. Moreover, the United States is also not the only country with a sizable fiscal and regulatory role for subnational political units. My project could add to an existing literature (Teaford 2002) and point towards a need to explore even more thoroughly how subnational units are related to

variation in governance outcomes in Latin America, Europe and India, building on excellent work such as Singh (2015). More generally, we have a formidable literature on the legacies of authoritarian systems for the democratic regimes that succeed them (Riedl 2014; Ziblatt 2017). This project could point towards a need for more study of how legacies of democratic participation and contestation influenced subsequent patters of authoritarian policymaking.

A Brief Note on the Literature

Due to the length of this paper, I do not provide a comprehensive literature review of southern political development between Reconstruction and the New Deal. That being said, in my view, the literature, including Mickey's (2015) excellent study of variation in southern democratization, understates the role of state-level politics in shaping the variable policy outcomes produced by southern states. Scholarship on the legacies of slavery, for example, is mostly silent about how we should understand the aggregation, up to the state level, of regional conflict within states (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2016; Mazumder 2021; Suryanarayan and White 2020). These studies largely do not include analysis of the role of parties, movements or constitutions. While the authors are attentive to the differences in how blackbelt and upcountry whites perceived and reacted to African-Americans, there isn't much in the way of a theory of how intra-white conflict at the state level may have shaped divergent public policy outcomes.

Other scholars have explained the trajectory of Southern states' public goods provision and redistribution as a consequence of the region's economic "modernization", arguing that industrialization leads to more generous and universal provision of these key public programs. This school of thought posits several different mechanisms for the growth of public goods provision, ranging from the proliferation of newly dependent urban workers (who need these services more than small, yeoman farmers), to a general increase in economic growth, to the

creation of a reforming middle class, and lastly to the diminishment of the power of landed elites reliant on labor-repressive agriculture (Moore 1966; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Alston and Ferrie 1999; Samuels and Thomson 2020).

However, the data on political coalitions within these states call these theories into question. Industrial workers and urban residents were an unsteady base for southern political coalitions seeking expanded public provision of important goods. The mill workers of the South Carolina upcountry offered their votes up to Cole Blease, an anti-statist demagogue, for almost twenty years (Simon 1998). In his rise to power, Huey Long counted the farmers of Northern Louisiana as his most stalwart supporters, not the workers or middle class, commercial interests of New Orleans and similar cities (Sindler 1956). In addition, per capita GDP does not neatly map onto the generosity of public goods provision in the states comprising this study (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2006)

More generally, there is a greater degree of contingency in southern political development than is generally accounted for by the literature. As I described above, newer scholarship has destabilized the claim that 1877 marked the definitive end of both national level support and indigenous campaigns for multi-racial democracy in the South (Daley 2000, Redding 2003, Wang 2012). The Supreme Court, often accused of precipitating the end of Reconstruction by gutting federal enforcement of voting and civil rights, in fact continued to endorse a jurisprudence that left plenty of room for willing federal actors to protect black voting rights and physical safety (Brandwein 2011). Republican administrations in the 1880s and early 1890s utilized this political and jurisprudential space to continue to enforce federal voting rights laws. In addition, when confronted with viable, local coalitions poised to win power from the Democratic Party, the national Republican Party continued to offer support in the 1880s and

early 1890s (De Santis 1969; Hirshorn 1962; Mickey, Waldman, Blinderman 2023). New social movements also arose in the late 1880s and early 1890s to make significant demands on the state and reoriented electoral competition and political coalitions in ways that were not anticipated during and immediately after Reconstruction, calling into question how "fixed" political patterns were in the aftermath of the critical juncture.

The contingent nature of alignments during this the period between 1877 and 1900 also serves to illustrate the dynamic role of race in American Political Development. The pervasiveness of racist attitudes during this era can obscure the heterogeneity of racial ideologies—heterogeneity that had significant consequences for how attitudes translated into political preferences and actions. Black belt elites in South Carolina were initially skeptical about the need for complete disenfranchisement. They saw black voters, whom they believed they could control, as a useful bulwark against the vituperative demagoguery of self-appointed champions of the white yeomanry like future Governor Ben Tillman. Tillman's opponent in the 1890 Democratic primary for governor, a Charleston conservative, actually made an appeal for black votes with the promise of "fair play" (Key 1949: 143). In Alabama, the reverse transpired: upcountry populists made halting, inconsistent appeals for black votes while black belt elites led the charge towards disenfranchisement and a constitutional convention. When the new constitution was submitted for a ratification vote in 1901, formerly populist counties voted convincingly against the new document (Perman 2001).

In addition, as C. Vann Woodward argued, the Jim Crow south's turn towards pervasive segregation was not inevitable. For decades after the Civil War, political parties, social movements and other organized constituencies of blacks and whites contested the boundaries of integration and segregation (Woodward 1955, Beckel 2010, Daley 2000, Barnes 2011). There

were also significant variations within the South, with Democratic leaders in North Carolina banning Tillman from the state in the early 1890s, fearful that his rhetoric would backfire in their campaigns against the Populist-Republican fusion alliance. By late 1898, North Carolina Democratic Party leaders welcomed him with open arms (Redding 2003). By that point North Carolina elites had worked for more than three decades, with numerous failures and false starts, to find a formula that could durably unify whites in the state and drive a final wedge into any biracial coalitions (Redding 2003; Waldman, Mickey, Blinderman 2023.). As Barbara Fields wrote, "historical analysis cannot distinguish these positions as "more" or "less" racist…to think of them as different quantities of the same ideological substance is fundamentally mistaken" (Fields 1982). This variation across time and space in the substance and deployment of racialized ideologies invites questions about how state-level politics, and the contingent effects of political competition, influenced political coalitions and policy outcomes both before and after the imposition of Jim Crow.

State level politics, conducted through and mediated by, parties, movements, state constitutions and other political institutions, continued to have material consequences even though politics was conducted within a one-party, authoritarian system. Newer scholarly interventions have built a bridge between southern political development and topics such as democratic backsliding and authoritarian politics, which are of interest to scholars of comparative politics (Caughey 2018; Mickey 2015). Understanding the South as a collection of authoritarian enclaves raises the question of what the region might tell us about the propensity of authoritarian regimes to redistribute resources from wealthy elites to some categories of everyday people. Theories of authoritarian distribution, such as those advanced by Albertus, Fenner and Slater (2018) and Teo (2021) do much to explain why redistribution and public

goods provision exceeds our expectations, but fall short on explaining variation in public goods provision among the southern states. For that, I argue we must return to state-level politics and the legacies of populist mobilization.

Both models that analyze multi-party competition in authoritarian regimes and those that examine factions within a single party argue that distribution is determined by the political logics of the existing authoritarian regime. The antecedent political order, the one necessarily terminated by the present authoritarian regime, is not usually viewed as a significant cause of the subsequent level and composition of redistribution.[4] However, in the case of the Jim Crow South that mobilization, plausibly, shaped factional dynamics in the Democratic party in ways that effected distribution levels long after the inciting moment of Populist mobilization had passed. In the case studies that follow, I explore the provision and distribution of two key public goods under Jim Crow: public highways and public schools.

Case Studies: Highway Construction and Public School Funding in the Deep South

Below, I offer condensed case studies, with preliminary data, of the developmental trajectory of two of the most politically salient and resource intensive public goods provided by deep south states in the early 20th century: highway systems and public schools. In each section, I begin by briefly sketching out the historical trajectory of the provision of both public goods, and then the politics of the campaigns that led to the expansions in provision that I evaluate. I outline the southern campaign for "good roads" and how highway construction progressed in the South between 1900 and 1935. I also offer a brief overview of the battles that led to the expansion of public education in the South during Reconstruction, the subsequent racialized and elite-driven

[4] Patterns of political contestation in a pluralist political order do have bearing on the durability and longevity of authoritarian regimes, but that is separate from the question of public goods provision and redistribution. (Slater 2005)

attacks on public schools, and the circumstances that led to the carefully constrained expansion of state support for public education in the 1920s.

I then progress to the empirical case studies: one of highway construction in Louisiana and South Carolina from roughly 1916 to the early 1930s, and the other of public education funding in Louisiana, South Carolina and Alabama from the mid 1920s to 1938. These case studies are very preliminary, and do not narrate every important moment in these states during this period. I spend very little time, beyond what is included above, on the specific historical circumstances of populist "incorporation" into the Jim Crow regimes—which preceded by several decades the differences in education funding and road construction that I describe below. I also do not fully develop my argument about how differences in each state's Jim Crow constitutions, due in part to the presence or absence of strong populist agitation, structured the institutional landscape in which early 20th century political conflict would take place. I expect to flesh out this constitutional argument at a later date. In these case studies I focus mainly on presenting a descriptive narrative of the data I have collected. I hope this narrative convinces the reader that substantial variation exists in redistribution and public goods provisions between deep south states, and that political competition is a plausible contributor to this variation.

My overall theoretical contention is that by organizing white farmers and farmworkers into a movement to improve their material conditions in the 1880s and 1890s, the Farmers' Alliance and People's Party altered the terms on which these poor farmers and workers were incorporated into the new single party regimes that state Democratic Parties imposed across the South after 1900. In states with more robust Populist mobilization, the Populists successfully altered the terms of factional competition within the Democratic Party, in part through influence on the drafting of the new state constitutions, in ways that materially benefitted poor white

farmers and farmworkers years after the defeat of Populism. From this theory, I derived two hypotheses in the context of this study. First, I hypothesized that southern states with stronger populist movements (Alabama and Louisiana in this study), relative to their peer states without that legacy of mobilization (Mississippi and South Carolina), would build more miles of highway, overall and more quickly, convert a higher percentage of their roads to high quality, paved highways, and would have higher levels of per pupil funding for white students. Second, I hypothesized political coalitions supported by small farmers and farmworkers are able to reward their supporters with more extensive and higher quality public roadways and schools in specific geographic areas. I hypothesized that these regional effects would be stronger in states with a strong populist legacy.

In order to preliminarily test these hypotheses, I look to the timing, quantity, quality and geographic distribution of highway construction and school funding in the 1920s and 1930s. I have collected and analyzed two novel datasets—based on the annual reports of highway commissions and state superintendents—of overall and county-level highway construction in South Carolina and Louisiana, and public school spending in South Carolina, Louisiana and Alabama. My initial analysis of these datasets follows below.

Case Study #1: Political Development and the Campaign for Good Roads in the South

Beginning in the early 20th century, southern states took steps to replace their patchwork, badly maintained local roads with comprehensive state highway systems. Poor roads had been a feature of southern life in the 19th and early 20th century, so much so that they formed a central theme in travelers' accounts and southern literature (Olliff and Whitten 2017). The cause of good roads transcended, without necessarily uniting, the different political tendencies that defined southern politics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Farmers and farmworkers, mobilized by

populists and subsequently represented by rural advocates, supported good roads as a way to ease the process of bringing their goods to market. Their deep suspicion of railroads, emanating from the cultural memory of Reconstruction-era corruption, both real and exaggerated, and more recent fights with gilded age monopolies, also sparked interest in public roads as a suitable transportation alternative (Olliff and Whitten 2017: 27; Pennybacker, 1910; Preston 1991: 16). Southern businessmen and entrepreneurs, along with self-styled "progressives" and other advocates of the so-called "New South" saw good roads as a way to modernize their region and spur economic growth. Political and economic leaders of all factions spoke of the "mud tax" that farmers and businesspeople faced when trying to engage in economic activity over any distance (Ingram 2016: 16-17; Olliff and Whitten 2017: 35).

Advocates for good roads had to contend with both the South's long tradition of local control over road building and the efforts, during the consolidation of Jim Crow, to reduce fiscal capacity at both the state and local level, while limiting local autonomy. Historically, responsibility for road construction and maintenance in the South resided with counties and parishes (Ingram 2016). State governments played almost no role. In many southern states, the laws governing road construction smacked of feudalism—Mississippi had a law, dating to 1822, requiring men aged eighteen to fifty to contribute ten hours of road labor each year (Cresswell 2006: 169). These and other laws in the region had more in common with the hated corvée of *Ancien Régime* France than a modern system of public infrastructure management. Furthermore, the Jim Crow constitutions imposed barriers to increased internal improvements, including road construction, by severely limiting the fiscal capacity of both counties and the state governments. Alabama's 1901 constitution, for example, put severe limitations on county home rule. Before counties could float bonds to pay for public infrastructure, the state legislature had to vote to

allow them to proceed (Olliff and Whitten 2017: 27). Even then, they were limited. County indebtedness could not exceed the value of 3.5% of all taxable property in the county.

The desire for good roads united the disparate factions that competed for resources and power under the constraints of the Jim Crow system. These factions were divided, however, by their preferences for how these new roads would be distributed and how (and who) would pay. Farmers desired rural roads that would allow them to move their goods to markets, while middle-class urbanites and aspiring business owners wanted road systems that would encourage tourism and connect centers of economic activity to each other (Ingram 2016; Preston 1991). As in the past, small farmers were skeptical of increases in their property taxes that still constituted a core component of taxation in the region. For example, in 1926, the *Wiregrass Farmer* published an editorial voicing support for road bonds because, unlike in the past, they wouldn't be paid for by a broad based land tax (What the McDowell Plan Means To Henry County 1926). Large planters and business owners were keen to avoid progressive taxation. These contrasting material interests, along with divergent visions for southern road systems, interacted with a newly constrained state to sow the seeds of subsequent political conflict.

These conflicts played out as states began to take steps, beginning almost immediately after the ratification of their Jim Crow constitutions, to rationalize planning, streamline oversight, and increase county fiscal capacity. State governments did so under pressure from, among others, good roads advocates, who wanted the state states to take on a greater role directing highway construction. In 1903, the Alabama legislature, in an apparent corrective to a constitutional directive ratified just two years before, voted to allow counties to issue bonds conditional on winning a local referendum, rather than a vote of the entire legislature (Olliff and Whitten 2017). Alabama also outpaced many of its southern peers by establishing a state

highway department in 1911. Governor Joseph Johnson, elected in 1896 in the midst of the populist upsurge, had originally proposed the idea of a state highway department only to run into opposition from the legislature, which refused to enact it (Olliff and Whitten 2017: 41).

A decade and a half later, it became a reality. This was the first state aid Alabama provided for internal improvements since Reconstruction, a significant milestone given how hard the Democratic Party worked in during the constitutional conventions of 1875 and 1901 to constitutionally entrench the prohibition on state aid (Perman 1985). Louisiana, like Alabama, established a highway commission unusually early—in 1910 (Scott 2003). However, it remained an underfunded, administratively threadbare agency until 1921. That year, newly elected governor, John Parker—a good roads enthusiast—worked with the legislature to raise taxes and direct the resulting revenue to the highway commission so that it could become an effective builder and steward of Louisiana's state highway system.

South Carolina, in contrast, followed a somewhat different path. As compared to Alabama during the first two decades of the twentieth century, South Carolina gave greater power and flexibility to counties to build roads. A law passed in 1894 centralized and rationalized county governance, granting greater powers to county officials to enter into contracts to build roads and other public infrastructure. South Carolina also took a less restrictive approach to local debt in their 1895 constitution, limiting county indebtedness to 8% of all taxable property in the counties, and only required a local referendum rather than a vote of the legislature to issue the debt (South Carolina Constitution 1895). In just one example of how counties responded to this more permissive approach, Greenville County passed a million dollar road bond several years before the outbreak of World War I even as the state, like Mississippi, delayed establishing a state highway commission until federal legislation prompted the switch (J.

H. Moore 1987: 38). It is worth noting that Louisiana's 1898 constitution limited parish indebtedness to 10% of all taxable property, a higher limit. However, even scholars intent on recovering the magnitude of pre-Huey Long highway construction argue that localities made little use of this provision (Scott 2003).

It is important to note that much of the labor states and counties employed following these reforms was not free. As counties in South Carolina built more roads and states increased their involvement in highway construction, they increased the usage of "chain-gangs" of predominantly black prisoners on county road projects (J. H. Moore 1987). Convict labor would be a prominent feature of road construction in other southern states as well, particularly in Alabama where employing convicts on roads was seen as a "progressive" improvement from charging private corporations to employ prisoners in their mines and factories (Finnell 1928).

Federal Legislation and the Rise of State Highway Departments

A watershed moment for southern highway construction was the passage of the Federal Aid Road Act in 1916. This law stipulated that, conditional on the establishment of a state highway commission to manage the funds, states would be eligible for federal matching funds for "farm-to-market road construction". Notably, the same farmer-labor coalition that Sanders identifies as a legacy of farmer mobilization in the late 19th century shepherded the bill through Congress. South Carolina and Mississippi, which did not have state highway commissions prior to the passage of the act, swiftly established them (Sanders 1999).

This development is important for two reasons. First, while the Federal Aid Road Act increased the overall levels of road construction in the South, it did not preclude states from appropriating additional money beyond what the Act would match. States were free to spend as much on their road systems as they desired, and could derive their funding from whichever

combination of taxes and debt they chose. Secondly, state agencies in the South during this period were generally required by the legislature to issue annual or biennial reports detailing their activities. Federal law created a point of convergence that allows us to see how, starting around 1916, political competition and institutional constraints influenced state highway programs. The federal law also incentivized better data collection and record keeping, allowing for more precise analysis of the political and material choices that influenced the construction of these highway systems.

Both before and after 1916, conflicts around highway funding and construction occupied a prominent place in southern politics. All political actors recognized state highway systems as a core public good. State highway commissions grew to become some of the best funded and administratively capacious state bureaucracies in the south. They came to oversee budgets of tens of millions of dollars, large workforces, and construction projects located in nearly every county of their states (J. H. Moore 1987; Tugwell 1930). Despite all of this, no systematic, empirical, comparative study of southern highway development exists. Most histories of southern highway systems are impressionistic, focusing on the cultural and economic currents driving the good roads movements and the personalities involved (Leisseig 2001; J. H. Moore 1987; Olliff and Whitten 2017; Preston 1991). These studies largely forgo empirical examinations of the data in these states' highway reports. Even Moore, in his excellent history of the South Carolina Highway Department, references these reports but does not compliment his historical excavation with an empirical analysis of this data. The following studies of Louisiana and South Carolina are a preliminary efforts to fill this gap.

Louisiana: A Highway Construction Program for Small-Time Farmers

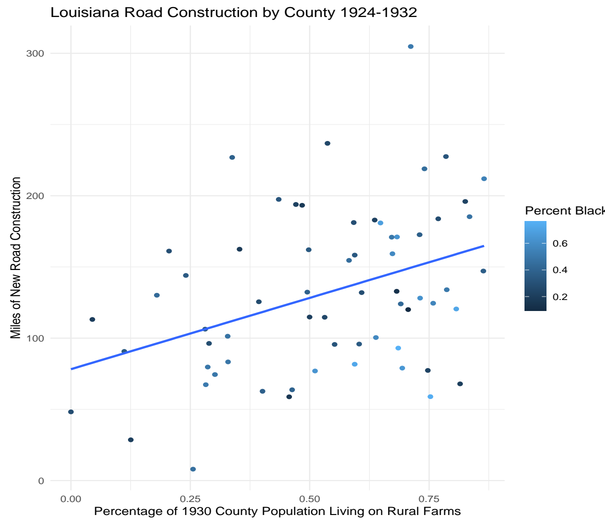
Huey Long swept into the Louisiana's governor's office in 1928 with the support of a coalition that had many similarities with the Populist-Republican coalition that nearly dislodged Democrats from power in 1896 (Key 1949; Sindler 1956). Notably, Long's core base of support was in rural, northern Louisiana: his home region and the heart of the old populist movement in the state. In his gubernatorial campaign, Long promised, among other things, a vastly improved state highway system. There is disagreement on the extent to which Long made good on his long list of promises to his supporters (Glen Jeansonne 1989; Jennings 1977; Sindler 1956; Williams 1969). Scholars generally agree, however, that Long delivered on his promise of good roads. That being said, his predecessors left the state with a more extensive road network than Long and his supporters claimed (Scott 2003). Between 1922 and 1928, about 2,980 miles of improved road were placed under construction in Louisiana. In total, when Long assumed office, Louisiana had 5,728 miles of gravel road, and 330 miles of concrete and asphalt road. (Sindler, 1956).

Long considerably accelerated the pace of construction. During the first two years of his term, April 1928 to April 1930, Long's administration placed an additional 1,810 miles of improved road under construction, of which about 700 miles were either concrete or asphalt (Allen 1930; 15). At a moment when many state construction programs slowed due to the Great Depression, Louisiana's accelerated. Between 1930 and 1932, Louisiana placed under construction 5,030 miles of additional improved roads, 1,260 of them paved. This new construction was paid for, in large part, by highway bonds. Long's administration constructed roughly as many miles of road as had existed in total in Louisiana in 1928, and of much higher overall quality between 1930 and 1932. As I elaborate more below, this was roughly twice as many miles as South Carolina constructed during an analogous two year period.

The biennial reports of the Louisiana Highway Commission, as in other states, breaks this new construction down by parish, allowing us to examine how many miles of road, and of what quality, each county obtained from the statewide program. These reports also allow us to compare the topline numbers and geographic composition of Long's construction program with the one overseen by his immediate predecessors, Governors Simpson and Fuqua. I have excluded the roughly nine hundred miles of road construction overseen by Governor Parker from 1922-1924 because I do not have that construction data broken down by parish. After totaling up the number of miles of road constructed in each parish during each administration, I matched this parish level data with data from the 1930 census. Doing so allowed me to analyze what relevant demographic and, by extension, political characteristics were correlated with increased provision of public highways in certain parishes.

To measure the extent to which rural farmers and farmworkers benefited from Long's construction program, I calculated the percentage of each parish's 1930 population that was classified in the census as living on farms in a rural area. I also included the percentage of each parish's population that was black, to differentiate between parishes mostly populated by white yeoman and tenants and those populated by black sharecroppers but politically dominated by large white landowners. Below is a graph visualizing those results. The percentage of a parish that is classified as living on farms in rural areas in on the x-axis, while the number of miles of road completed or placed under construction in that parish during this eight year period is on the y-axis. The shade of the data points on the graph is determined by the percentage of the parish residents who were black according to the 1930 census.

Figure 2: The relationship between miles of new highway construction per parish and the percentage of a parish's population that lived on rural farms.



As we can see, counties with a greater percentage of rural farm populations (particularly predominantly white counties) appear to have disproportionately benefitted from Long's construction program. I also ran a simple, OLS regression in order to more fully analyze these results and understand how multiple important variables correlated with my outcome of interest. The summary of this OLS regression are below:

Regression Table for Road Construction in Louisiana

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Louisiana Highway Construction	
	(1924-1928)	(1928-1932)
Total Population	0.00004	-0.00005
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Parish Area	0.012	0.009
	(0.007)	(0.012)
Black Percentage	5.487	-62.434*
	(20.079)	(32.094)
Rurality	36.782**	80.216***
	(15.518)	(24.803)
Constant	-1.761	77.283***
	(14.569)	(23.286)

Observations	64	64
R2	0.114	0.214
Adjusted R2	0.054	0.161
Residual Std. Error (df = 59)	24.188	38.661
F Statistic (df = 4; 59)	1.903	4.016***
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

As this regression table demonstrates, the correlation between the percentage of a parish's rural farm population and the amount of new road construction it received is positive and statistically significant. The magnitude and significance of the positive correlation increased after Long's ascension to the governorship. Moreover, under Long, the share of a county's population that was black became inversely correlated with new construction, suggesting that Long succeeded in directing resources not just to rural areas, but the sorts of white, upcountry counties that had been hotbeds of populism and now supported him. More narrowly, for the years 1928-1930—the first half of Long's term as governor—I was able to create a county-level dataset of concrete and asphalt road construction.[5] This subset of the data—encompassing the most modern, expensive and sought after construction projects—offers some additional information as to where Long's administration directed the most valuable variety of this type of public infrastructure. The regression table, which can be found in the appendix, paints a somewhat surprising picture: none of the major variables (rural farm population, the size of the black population, or vote choice) are statistically significant. However, this null result appears more significant in comparison to a similar dataset I constructed for South Carolina, outlined below, showing that through 1929 a county's rural, farm population was inversely correlated with the number of miles of concrete road constructed. This regression analysis offers more

[5] It is my intention to extend this dataset to the full four years (1928-1932) of Long's term as governor.

evidence that small farmers and farmworkers in Louisiana fared better than their peers in South Carolina.

This data offers some preliminary evidence for the theory that I articulated above—that a legacy of populist mobilization positioned these constituencies to win a stronger factional position within the Louisiana Democratic Party. They then used this strong position to increase the overall provision of roads across the state and to ensure that their counties were particularly well served by the state's highway commission. The result was an increase in the provision of an important public good. This correlation may also help to explain the strong loyalty that Long voters, particularly in the state's rural, agricultural areas, demonstrated for him and successive leaders of his faction. These results suggest that state politics in the South was capable of responding to (white) agitation for material benefits. The Long-led faction of the Democratic Party proved, in this respect, an effective representative of these constituencies.

South Carolina: Farmers Left Out of the Quest for Good Roads

The data tells a different, more complicated, story in South Carolina, a state whose populist mobilization was first quashed, and then coopted, by future governor and senator Ben Tillman (Kantrowitz 2000; Kousser 1974; Krause 2008). As in most Southern states, Farmers in South Carolina -- both large landowners and modest yeoman -- agitated for good roads beginning in the late 19th century. In 1889, the Beech Island Farmers Club, located in Aiken County, appealed for better roads with the argument that it cost 72 cents to move a ton of goods across their roads, as opposed to 22 cents in New York City (J. H. Moore 1987: 33). As noted above, South Carolina empowered county governance to a greater degree than some of its peer states, particularly Alabama. Even though small farmers wanted more extensive and higher quality roads, they did not have the resources to fund significant road-building at the county level. The

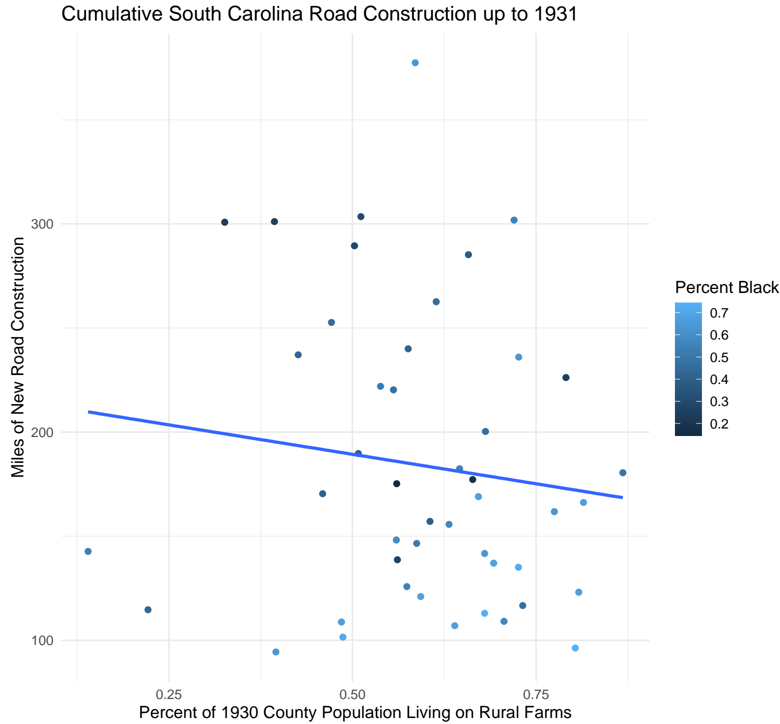
intense resistance of farmers to property taxes, the main source of local revenue, likely further constricted counties' ability to construct public infrastructure.

In contrast, South Carolina's textile industry, which grew by leaps and bounds in the early 20th century, altered the political economy and politics of the counties where the industry was most prominent. Counties such as Spartanburg and Greenville, which hosted a high concentration of textile mills and mill workers, built comparatively more roads in the early decades of the 20th century (J. H. Moore 1987). These counties' relatively successful efforts to construct public roads, paradoxically, eroded their residents' and leaders' support for statewide efforts to finance the construction of highways. Counties that had already issued debt, often backed by new taxes on property, feared that state debt would mean even more taxation for roads that many of their residents would never benefit from. In addition, Moore, the author of a history of the South Carolina highway system, suggests that counties that outpaced the rest of the state were loath to give up their regional advantage by supporting a state system.

The result was that in South Carolina, as of 1931, the state's highway construction program, relatively speaking, left the most rural, farm dominated populations behind. Counties with a high proportion of black residents fared worst of all. However, white-dominated rural counties such as Horry, Cherokee and Oconee, which had substantial populations of modest yeoman farmers, fared worse than their more urban, less agriculturally dependent peers. As the graph below demonstrates, the internal, geographic composition of cumulative highway construction in South Carolina at the end of 1931 is quite different than what is observed in Louisiana under Huey Long and, to a lesser but still significant extent, his predecessors.[6] While

[6] My South Carolina data runs until October 1st, 1931, while the data for Louisiana ends in April of 1932. Given the different reporting periods of both highway agencies, this was the best approximation of an apples-to-apples comparison I could construct.

counties with large numbers of small white farmers benefited disproportionately from highway construction in Louisiana, especially under Huey Long, those same constituencies did not get these same benefits, and may have been penalized, in South Carolina.



The story in South Carolina is complicated by two OLS regressions I ran on this data. I've included those summary tables below:

Regression Table for All Road Construction in South Carolina

	Dependent variable:	
	Total South Carolina Highway Construction	
	Up to 1929	1/1930-10/1931
	(1)	(2)
Total Population	0.001**	-0.00003
	(0.0004)	(0.0003)
County Area	0.061*	0.029
	(0.030)	(0.020)
Black Percentage	-117.754**	-43.094
	(46.652)	(30.895)

Rurality	81.886	76.481*
	(59.660)	(39.509)
Constant	56.761	13.436
	(55.848)	(36.985)
Observations	46	46
R2	0.497	0.165
Adjusted R2	0.448	0.084
Residual Std. Error (df = 41)	43.829	29.026
F Statistic (df = 4; 41)	10.113***	2.031
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Regression Table for Concrete and Asphalt Highway Construction in South Carolina through 1929

	Dependent variable:
	Modern, Hard Surfaced Highway Construction through 1929
Total Population	0.0004*
	(0.0002)
County Area	0.010
	(0.016)
Black Percentage	-5.520
	(24.689)
Rurality	-55.353*
	(31.573)
Constant	41.489
	(29.556)
Observations	46
R2	0.427
Adjusted R2	0.371
Residual Std. Error	23.195 (df = 41)
F Statistic	7.632*** (df = 4; 41)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

This preliminary analysis shows that, for all road construction through 1929, the correlation between rurality and road construction is positive, but not statistically significant. The relationship between road construction and the share of a county's population that was African-American, on the other hand, is negative and highly significant. This suggests that the negative relationship observed in the scatter plot above is potentially driven by the size of a county's black population, and the degree to which that county was organized around a labor-repressive agricultural economy hostile to the provision of public goods (Mickey 2015). Interestingly, when I isolate only high-quality road construction through 1929 (roads made of asphalt and concrete) in a separate summary table, the relationship between rurality and that segment of road construction is negative and of some significance. This may indicate that the state was, specifically, slow to provide rural areas with the best and most modern types of highways. The relationship between a county's black population and high quality road construction is negligibly negative, and not statistically significant.

For all road construction done after 1929, following the South Carolina's legislature's approval of sixty-five million dollars of highway bonds, the relationship between rurality and road construction stays positive and becomes weakly significant.[7] However, the negative relationship between a county's black population and road construction also shifts, and in the same direction. The magnitude of the negative correlation is greatly reduced, and is no longer statistically significant. As with road construction before 1929, this suggests that changes in the relationship between a county's rural farm population and new road construction is partially a proxy for the share of a county's population that was African-American. Going forward, I will

[7] The highway report for 1931 includes construction data that lists highway projects that traverse two adjoining counties. These summaries do not fully specify how many miles of the project are in each county. I have coded this information to the best of my ability, but these results may shift mildly if new information comes to light allowing for more precise coding of this section of the data.

need to undertake more data collection, both statistical and archival, to adjudicate between these explanations. The historical episode I examine below, however, provides some additional evidence for the ways in white farmers of modest means played a different role, with material consequences, in the South Carolina political system then they did in Louisiana.

Farmer-Worker Cleavage during the "Big Bond Fight" of 1929

The correlation between rural farm population and new road construction in South Carolina on display in the graph above is important context for understanding the so-called "Big Bond Fight" of 1929. In that year the incumbent highway commissioners, led by chairman Cyril "Cip" Jones, formulated a proposal to float tens of millions of dollars in highway bonds to provide more financing for statewide highway construction in South Carolina. The proposal was supported and vouched for by a constituency of "bankers, editors and community leaders" who had worked with the highway commission to import best practices from other southern states, including North Carolina (J. H. Moore 1987: 82). While statewide road bonds generally were a consensus item in Alabama, and among the least controversial aspects of Huey Long's agenda, they became a flashpoint in South Carolina.

The state legislature split on the issue. The state senate, gerrymandered to favor the small rural counties in line to benefit from the bond issue, passed the legislation easily, by a margin of 30-9. In the state house of representatives, a body less favorable to rural, black-majority counties, a major split emerged and the factions fought an intense parliamentary battle. Representatives from more rural counties, with both black and white majorities, supported the initiative. However, representatives from less rural, more textile-dependent counties generally opposed the plan. One of the leaders of the legislative faction that looked to mill workers for votes and support was Olin Johnston, a young, ambitious state legislator from mill-dominated Spartanburg.

He used every parliamentary maneuver available to stall the legislation (J. H. Moore 1987) (Moore, 86). His reputation as an opponent of highway commission helped him win the votes of mill workers in his successful 1934 campaign for governor (Simon 1998).

South Carolina had a substantial population of industrial workers who labored in the state's textile mills. These mills were concentrated in a handful of counties, mostly in the "upcountry" region of the state. The millworker's politics and relationship to public programs and government intervention in the economy was complicated, and evolved considerably over the early decades of the 20th century (Simon 1998). A relative constant, however, was a suspicion of black belt elites and an aversion to supporting initiatives they felt would benefit other constituencies in the state. They did not want to assume responsibility for debt that they believed would pay for roads in more agriculturally dependent, rural counties. My analysis of the highway construction data, coupled with the emergence of this split in the legislature, suggests that these upcountry legislators from textile-dependent counties were in fact responding to and representing the concerns of their constituents. The final legislation passed the state House of Representatives, the more fairly apportioned of the two chambers, 60-41 (J. H. Moore 1987: 86).

This data also suggests that Governor Johnston's, battle with the highway commission in the 1930s, long portrayed as a somewhat vapid contest of patronage and competing regional identities, may in fact have had a basis in resource allocation and public goods provision. All factions behaved as if the bond issue and the highway commission did indeed disproportionately benefit rural, majority black counties dominated by white elites. My data analysis of this period of road building is, as I stated above, incomplete, but roughly comports with the actions of the various factions in this fight. It is possible that the bond issue benefitted black majority counties (and specifically their powerful white elites) at the expense of the rest of the state.

For example, as governor, Johnston did everything in his power to diminish the power of the commission and bring it under his control. He has asked the commissioners to resign, then tried forcibly replacing them, only to be blocked by the South Carolina Supreme Court (Simon, 167). Hostile legislators from rural, black majority districts halted Johnston's attempts to change the laws under which the commission operated. All of this culminated in Johnston's deployment of the South Carolina national guard in October of 1935 in an attempt to use brute force to expel the leadership of the highway commission (J. H. Moore 1987: 112-115; Simon 1998).

While popular in his upcountry, textile-worker base, Johnston eventually lost the battle and the planter-dominated legislature subsequently stripped his power to name highway commissioners (Moore 1988; Simon 1998). In Louisiana, Long and his faction built a durable support base that brought together poor farmers with some of the state's non-agricultural workers. Importantly, poor white farmers were the leading edge of the coalition that brought Long and his allies to power. It was only later that a significant section of the state's non-agricultural working class began offering their support and votes to Long's faction (Sindler 1956: 75). Tellingly, while Louisiana's debt-financed state highway expansion benefitted rural areas of the state, black-majority counties (and the white elites that dominated them), relatively speaking, lost out. The correlation between the percentage of a parish's population that was African-American and new road construction turned negative right as the most intensive period of debt-financed highway construction commenced.

By contrast, in South Carolina, poor white farmers were demobilized and institutionally constrained. Unable to achieve primacy in a winning coalition, they instead cooperated with black-belt planters to, belatedly, try and secure a modern road network for themselves. This effort ran into practical and political problems due to South Carolina's unusual degree of

localism: both in the location of its fiscal capacity and its provision of key public goods. Fights to preserve regional advantages in road quality delayed the creation of a true statewide highway construction agency, and then created political headwinds for the agency once it came into being.

Mill workers, rather than small farmers, became the leading edge of a (comparatively weak) insurgent "progressive" movement in the state. For a variety of reasons, this was not a sustainable electoral base given the size of South Carolina's agricultural sector and authoritarian political institutions. Johnson, unlike Long, was defeated in his subsequent run for the U.S. Senate. His 1938 opponent, "Cotton Ed" Smith, was able to appeal to small farmers, as well as large landowners, isolating Johnston and his upcountry, mill-worker base (Simon 1998). My hope is that further historical research will help me more precisely identify the causes and describe the historical process by which this divergent pattern of coalition formation and resource distribution took place.

Case Study #2: Public Education and Southern Political Development

Since the Civil War, public education in the South has been at the center of recurrent conflicts over the role of the state in mediating, leveling or reifying inequalities of race and class. During Reconstruction, a universal public school system was a core component of the Republican Party's vision for a more active state and egalitarian society. The Reconstruction state governments, for the first time in the South, guaranteed all children, black or white, the opportunity to attend a free, public school. The constitutional conventions that met throughout 1867 and 1868 wrote these programs into the new state constitutions of the Reconstructed governments of the southern states (Herron 2017; Foner 1988). Republican state builders encountered many challenges, including political violence and a paucity of resources, in building out such a large public program amidst the difficult environment in the years after the Civil War.

However, they made progress in spite of these hurdles. Revenues and expenditures rose, as did school attendance for both black and white children (Foner 1988; Escott 1985). There were even some local, successful attempts to integrate public schools, most notably in New Orleans (Vaugn 1974; Fischer 1974).

After the Democratic Party recovered from its post Civil-War nadir in the South and overthrew Reconstruction, it began a systematic attack on public education in the South. Black southerners bore the brunt of this campaign of racialized austerity, but funding cutbacks hurt poor whites as well. Redeemer governments slashed taxes, lowered expenditures and denuded the capacity of state educational agencies (Perman 2001: 201-203, 209-210; Suryanarayan and White 2020). However, prior to the final imposition of Jim Crow constitutional systems across the region both blacks and poor whites, at times in uneasy coalition with each other, contested these attacks with periodic, if temporary, success (Dailey 2000; Escott 1985; Redding 2003).

Ultimately, however, the authoritarian founders of the Jim Crow one-party system successfully entrenched segregation, previously largely maintained by custom and preference, into both state constitutions and statutory law (Escott 1985; 1901 Alabama State Constitution; Perman 1984; Perman 2001; Edgar 1998). The result was a public education system defined by grievous racial inequality, achieved via a variety of formal and informal methods (Bond 1939; Boykin 1949; Margo 1982; Gerber 1991). Critically, the assault by elite democrats and large landowners on state fiscal capacity had negative consequences for poor whites as well. Morgan Kousser adroitly chronicles how, after disenfranchisement, rapidly widening gaps in education spending between blacks and whites in North Carolina coincided with increasing intra-white inequality in both spending and rates of taxation—poor whites paid higher proportional taxes and got less in return as compared to their wealthier peers (Kousser 1980: 181-191). North Carolina

was not unique in this regard. In 1927, Louisiana's Lincoln Parish, an old Populist stronghold, spent $35.93 per white student. East Carroll, a wealthy, majority black parish spent $134.88 per white student. Elite Democrats also succeeded, to varying degrees that I will outline below, in limiting state and local fiscal capacity such that southern education spending consistently, for decades, lagged the rest of the country (Ayres 1920; Studbacker 1940).

However, beginning in the early 20th century, economic and political conditions began to push the autocratic leaders of states throughout the deep south to halt their campaigns of retrenchment and—slowly, haltingly and unequally—improve their public education systems. White schools benefitted disproportionately from these improvements, but black schools improved as well. White illiteracy, embarrassing to the ruling Democratic Party, also threatened to block an unacceptable number of whites from exercising their right to vote (Perman 2001: 168). So called "New South" boosters, who also supported the "good roads" campaigns across the south, believed a better educated workforce would draw in capital and investment while also curing the ills inflicted by incipient industrialization (Carlton1982; Hudson 2009; Rodgers 2018). In some times and places the campaigns were explicitly linked—reformers saw better roads as a prerequisite for larger, better-run, consolidated schools that counties and states would transport students to each day (Simon 1998; Preston 1991). As more and more African-Americans left the South as part of the great migration, some black belt elites grudgingly supported improving black schools in order to retain their agricultural labor force (Margo 1982). Lastly, and critically, poor whites—who had never meaningfully consented to this system of low and unequal funding—began to re-organize more effectively into farmer associations and labor unions to demand a more equal (among whites) distribution of school funding (Alabama Decatur Dailey 1926). In the states where this cleavage appeared—and it was not a feature of factional competition in all

deep south states—politicians tried to respond to it in their campaign rhetoric and governance. A major feature of Bibb Grave's two successful campaigns for governor of Alabama in 1926 and 1934 was a promise to boost school funding in poorer, upcountry white counties and, more generally, equalize funding among all white students in the state.

Education Reform in the Deep South

Between 1923 and 1930, Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina and Mississippi enacted substantial reforms of their public education systems that sought to equalize funding among whites, increase available revenue for the school system, and put public schools on a more stable financial basis. These reforms were a major milestone for public education in the deep south, as they signaled the arrival of more robust and centralized fiscal and administrative apparatuses charged with disbursing millions of dollars each year and monitoring statewide education standards. These reforms, unlike the roughly concurrent efforts to expand state highway systems, were not catalyzed by new federal legislation. However, the roughly simultaneous expansion of state support for public education creates a similar point of convergence allowing us to see how, starting in the 1920s, variations in political competition and institutional constraints influenced state support for public education. The following case study excludes Mississippi due to the lower quality of the data provided by its state agencies.[8]

To briefly outline the specific timing and components of these reforms, South Carolina enacted a significant expansion of state support for its public schools in 1923. In 1927, Alabama followed suit and in 1930, Louisiana passed its own plan. Reformers designed these plans in broadly similar ways, though they would in practice function differently. Each package included

[8] Mississippi, alone among the four states in my study, does not track separate expenditures for black and white students, making it very challenging to compare spending on white students in Mississippi with their peers in the rest of the Deep South.

a minimum education standard. For the first time, the state would guarantee the necessary funding to close any gap between what the county or parish could appropriate for its white students and what was needed to implement the new state standard. Alabama and Louisiana legislated a minimum school term of seven months, while Louisiana chose to tie the standard to a minimum dollar amount that would be appropriated for each student (Rodgers 2018: 423). In addition, reforms in Alabama and Louisiana included an “equalization fund”, designed to direct money to (predominantly white, rural) counties and parishes that lacked local sources of revenue (Williams 1969). To fund this minimum standard, reformers enacted new taxes that would serve as a dedicated funding stream for the public schools. Alabama implemented new taxes on corporations and tobacco products, Louisiana taxed malt liquor, property and natural resource extraction, while South Carolina implemented a new state property tax (Hudson 2009; Rodgers 2018; Permaloff and Grafton 1985: 50-51; Williams 1969: 522).

Consequently, the public school systems, alongside state highway commissions, came to be one of the best funded and administratively capacious state bureaucracies in the south. These bureaucracies came to oversee budgets of tens of millions of dollars, large workforces, and a system that was interwoven with every county, town and city in the state. Due to the fiscal and administrative contributions of local governments, the school system was also a vital nexus between state and local political authority. Unlike highway departments, which came to be financed primarily with bonded debt, southern states funded their school systems largely via taxation. This made the provision of public education inextricably bound up with the questions of what would be taxed, at what rate, and who would pay (Hudson 2009, Rogers 2018, Sindler 1956, Williams 1960, Teaford 2002).

Despite all of this, there are gaps in the literature on the comparative development of the public school systems of the Deep South. Much of the literature deals with the chasm in funding between black and white students, and the various mechanisms utilized to implement this inequality (Bond 1939; Boykin 1949; Margo 1982; Kousser 1980; Johnson 2010). Other studies explore the reasons why overall funding for education was so low across the south, and particularly the deep south (Gerber 1991). Due to my focus on how populism influenced the incorporation of yeoman farmers and farm workers into the democratic party, I have mostly chosen to focus on intra-white funding inequality, rather than the well-document gap in resource allocation between blacks and whites. African-Americans were, beginning with the authoritarian founding of the Jim Crow system, totally excluded from the political system. They were denied any opportunity to influence public policy through the electoral arena. In making this choice, I hope to fill a gap in the literature concerning whether, and how, political competition drove variation in revenue extraction and resource allocation among whites in the deep south. My goal is to trace these education reform initiatives from the politics of their enactment to their success, or lack thereof, in realizing their goals.

I have collected and reviewed the annual reports of state education departments from Alabama, South Carolina, and Louisiana. From these documents, I have compiled county level data on spending for each white student in the public schools between the years 1923-1938. In addition, these reports contain information about the amount and source of the tax revenues used to finance the public school systems. Using this data I compare these states on five different outcomes between the years 1923-1938. They are: the strength of any electoral linkage between funding increases and vote choice, total growth in aggregate per-student funding, inter-county inequality in education funding among white students, the rapidity of recovery from the Great

Depression and the overall durability of the reforms, and funding centralization: what percentage of overall funding came from the state as opposed to counties and municipalities. After presenting the results, I will explain how the data for each state conforms or diverges from my prior theoretical expectations.

Friends and Neighbors or Dollars and Cents: Electoral Linkages to School Funding

Despite their superficial similarities, the politics of the enactment of reforms in Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina varied in important ways. In Alabama, Bibb Graves sought to rally popular support for education reform during his successful 1926 campaign for governor. The Centreville Press, based in Bibb county, noted on June 17, 1926 that Graves was making inroads in northern Alabama. He was doing so, the newspaper noted, by highlighting the inequality in school funding between predominantly white counties in the north of the state, and black belt counties. The paper offered a grudging compliment that Graves "knows how to reach a certain class of people" (Centerville Press, 1926). A month later a newspaper based in Jackson county profiled Graves' speech there. He delivered remarks once again hammering the inequality in school funding between the counties and promising to remedy it if elected. He portrayed it as a matter of fairness among whites, and attacked his opponents in the primary for opposing the measure (The Progressive Age, 1926).

His positions won him crucial endorsements from the institutional representatives of the state's workers and small farmers—both of which stood to benefit from his plan to equalize white school funding and pay for it via taxes on corporations and resource extraction. A consortium of six labor unions and the Alabama Farmers Union endorsed Graves on May 24th, 1926 (Alabama Decatur Dailey 1926). A month late, a reporter traveled through several counties in the north and northwest of the state and reported that many farmers, influenced by this set of

endorsements, were coming out in support of Graves (Alabama Decatur Dailey 1926). Graves slightly overperformed his statewide average in Jefferson County (which contained Birmingham) but overperformed by far more in many of the more rural, upcountry counties dominated by small farmers.

Graves won the election thanks to support from poorer whites—his support was weakest in the black belt (Rodgers 2018; Heard and Strong 1950). A similar dynamic unfolded in Louisiana, where Huey Long campaigned against illiteracy (particularly white illiteracy) and touted his proposal for free school textbooks as a way of decreasing inequality among students in the public school system (Williams 1969; Sindler 1956). Long's strongest base of support was in the old populist counties in the north of the state (Key 1949; Sindler 1956).

In South Carolina, by contrast, reform did not arise out of political campaigns that challenged the status quo. Rather, it was an elite-drive effort, one that was very much inspired by progressive era impulses towards centralization and rationalization (Hudson 2009). Despite efforts by reformers, during the 1923 legislative session, to create an appearance of unified and widespread white support for education reform via rallies and mass meetings, "few South Carolinians were involved in these well-orchestrated but largely ceremonial Saturday afternoon gatherings" (Hudson 2009).

This may be in part because reformers understood this project as something they were doing *to* the state's poorer white citizens, rather than *for* them at their urging. The state's mill workers had long opposed compulsory education, seeing it as another attack on the traditional, independent white family that was already under pressure from industrialization. Their political champion, Cole Blease, was a staunch opponent of both increased regulations and the higher taxes needed to fund public services (Simon 1998; Carlton 1982). Blease polarized South

Carolina state politics in the 1910s and 1920s. Mill workers supported Blease by large margins, while his staunchest opponents, appalled by his rhetoric and antipathy to reform, were the burgeoning middle-class of the state's towns and cities. However, the political energy generated by this factional competition did not reach into the countryside. The state's small farmers, far from being enthusiastically for or against Blease, remained evenly divided between him and his opponents. Their voting behavior differed from their counterparts in Alabama and Louisiana, who were more cleanly incorporated into the Democratic Party's factional structure (Carlton 1982: 218).

Conventional wisdom holds that southern politics during Jim Crow was disconnected from material distribution—that there was little linkage between voting patterns and policy outcomes. An examination of the politics surrounding the expansion of public education in these Deep South states destabilizes this claim. To probe whether a linkage between electoral preferences and material distribution might exist, I calculated the percentage that per capita education funding at the county/parish level increased in the aftermath of the implementation of these reform programs. I then plotted that against the vote share of the gubernatorial candidates who oversaw the implementation of these programs.[9] I also included the percentage of each county/parish's population that was black, to differentiate between counties/parishes mostly populated by white yeoman and tenants and those populated by black sharecroppers but politically dominated by large white landowners. Below are graphs visualizing these results.

[9] For Louisiana, I use Long's vote share from his unsuccessful 1924 run for governor. He retained nearly all of this support four years later when he won, adding additional constituencies through various elite-level negotiations (Williams 1969). I want to examine whether Long's "base", the voters most loyal to him and his faction, and the first-movers in his campaigns, benefitted from his reforms.

The results are intriguing. In Alabama and Louisiana, counties and parishes that gave a higher percentage of their vote to Huey Long and Bibb Graves tended to benefit more from the subsequent funding reforms. These correlations are further confirmed by a set of OLS regressions I ran, which can be viewed in the appendix here for Alabama and here for Louisiana.

Figure 3: Relationship between vote share for Gov. Bibb Graves in 1926 and growth in per capita funding for white students 1925-1929

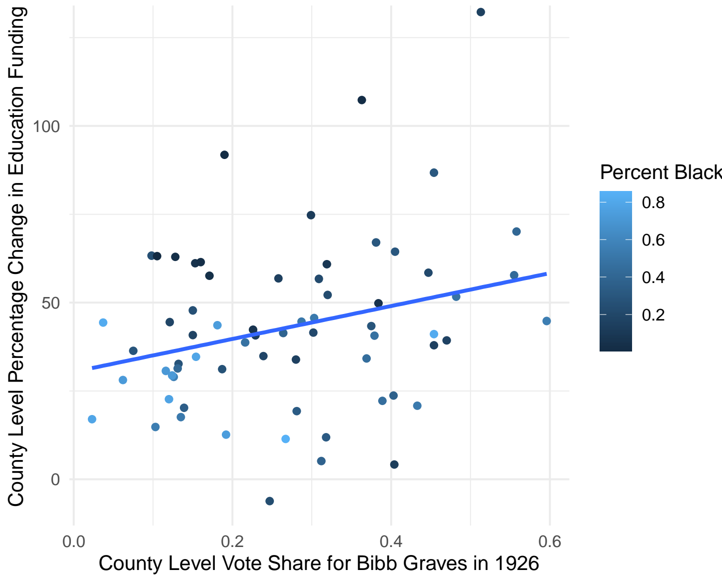
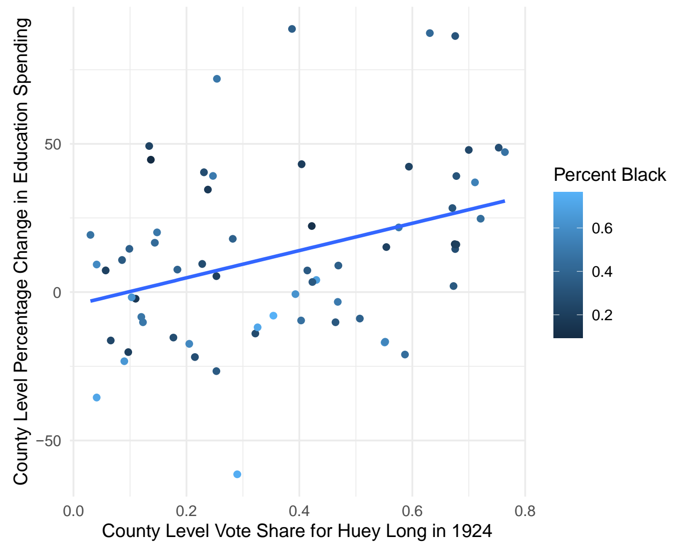


Figure 4: Relationship between vote share for Gov. Huey Long in 1924 and growth in per capita funding for white students 1927-1938



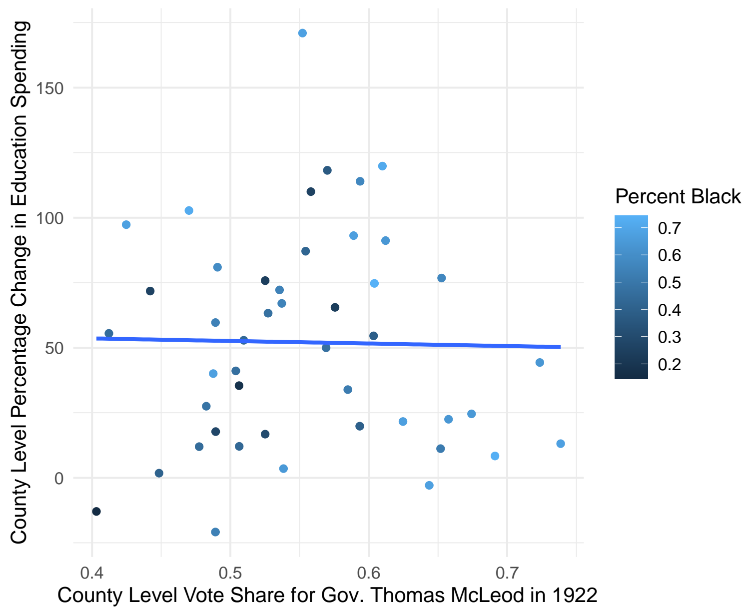


Figure 5: Relationship between vote share for Gov. Thomas McLeod in 1922 and growth in per capita funding for white students 1923-1929

In South Carolina, by contrast, there was basically no relationship between how a county voted and the subsequent benefits it received from the increased funding doled out by the reform legislation. This data conforms to my prior hypothesis. These results offer some preliminary evidence that how voters were organized into the various factions of the Democratic Party may have had material stakes in terms of the generosity and geographic distribution of key public goods.

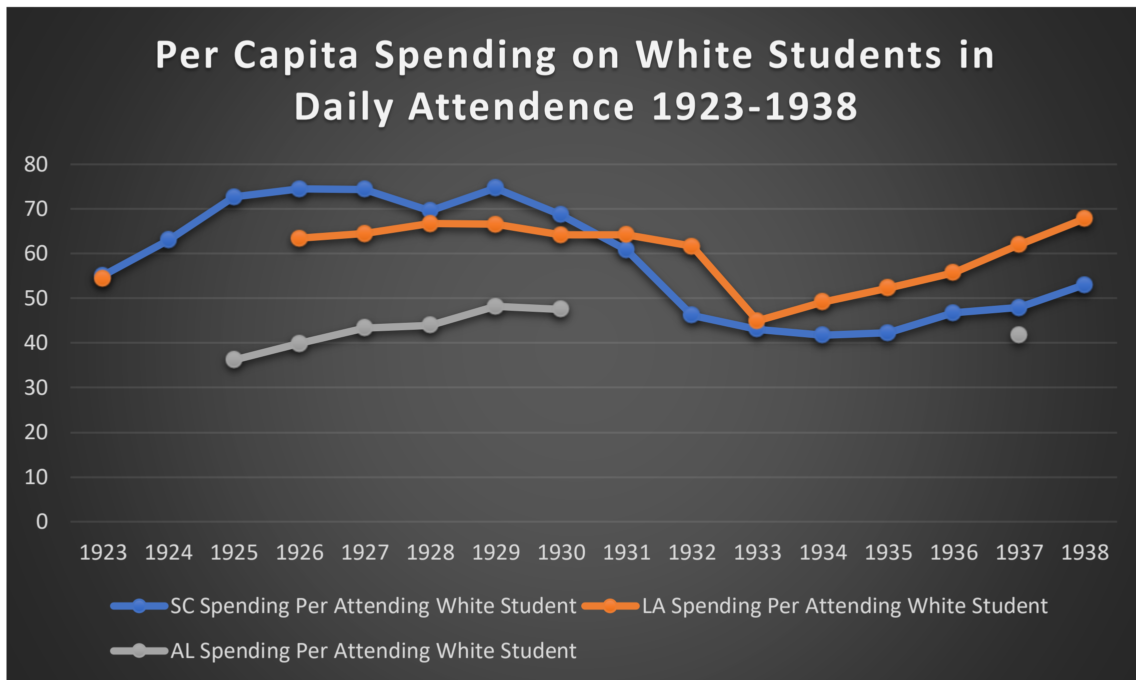
Aggregate Funding Increases

All three states succeeded in substantially boosting total and per capita funding for white students. Between 1925 and 1929, funding per white pupil in Alabama increased 31% for enrolled students and 33% for those listed as in regular attendance. Between 1925 and 1930, the growth for enrolled white students was 37%. In South Carolina, between 1923 and 1929, those figures are 42% for enrolled students and 35% for students in average daily attendance. While Alabama engineered impressive absolute funding increases, it made little initial progress catching up or surpassing its peer states in the deep south. In the year before both reformed their school systems, Alabama spent 32.5% less per white enrolled student than South Carolina. After

full implementation and before the Depression, Alabama spent 38.5% less than South Carolina per enrolled white student.

The aggregate figures for Louisiana are more complicated, as education reform in this state coincided with the Great Depression which, as I describe below, devastated funding for schools across the south. The figures on shifts in inter-white inequality and recovery from the Depression paint a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of Louisiana's reforms. While Louisiana's aggregate per capita funding did not exceed its 1929 peak until late in the decade, Louisiana increased its lead in funding generosity over its peer states throughout the 1930s. In 1929, South Carolina spent 11% more per white student in average, daily attendance than Louisiana. By 1934, Louisiana spent 16% more than South Carolina, and in 1938 the gap had grown to 22%. This data partially confirms, and partially disconfirms, my prior hypothesis. Louisiana's increased spending on public education, and specifically the widening gap between its expenditures and its peers, is what I would have predicted. My theory would not have predicted that South Carolina's reforms would have resulted in such a high level of pre capita spending, or that the state would be so much more generous than Alabama.[10]

[10] I have fewer data points of Alabama's per capita spending because their annual reports compile the data in a much less user friendly way. It is much more labor intensive to assemble the Alabama datasets, and I have not yet completed the work.



Funding Inequality

These reform efforts sought to equalize funding for white students across each state. I measure progress, or lack thereof, towards this goal using the Gini co-efficient.[11] The annual reports of each state education department contain county level data on per-capita education spending, for both white and black students, in each county. By examining inequality in per-capita spending per enrolled student before and after reform, I can empirically measure how effective reformers were at realizing their stated goals. For South Carolina and Alabama, the comparison is between spending inequality in the last year before any part of the reform legislation became operative, and 1929 so as to isolate the effect of the reform separate from the Depression. This is not possible in Louisiana, which passed its reform during the Depression. I therefore selected 1933 as the comparison point, after the end of Huey Long's first term as governor. The results are below:

[11] In doing so, I follow Kousser (1980) who utilized this metric in measuring intra-white inequality in school funding in North Carolina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Year	Gini Co-Efficient For Spending on Alabama White Students by County
1925	.251015
1929	.200631

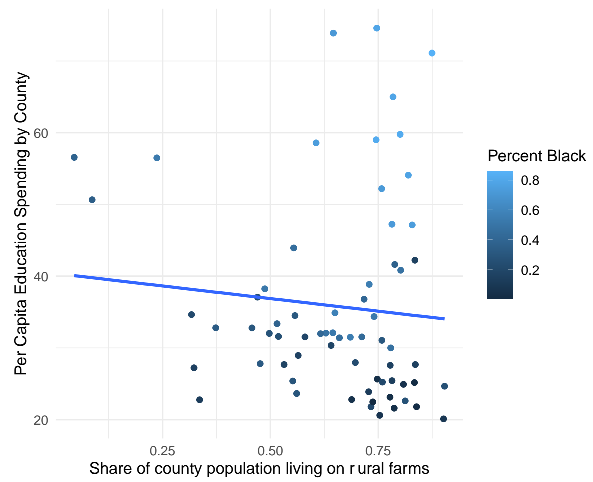
Year	Gini Co-Efficient For Spending on Louisiana White Students by County
1927	.1775649
1933	.1089822

Year	Gini Co-Efficient For Spending on South Carolina White Students by County
1923	.200836
1929	.1495088

All three states experienced declines in funding inequality among whites, but the magnitude and nature of the declines differed in marked ways among the states. Alabama began with the highest inter-white inequality, and the Graves Administration was only able to bring inequality down by one fifth. Notably, post-reform funding inequality among whites in Alabama was roughly equal to *pre-reform* inequality among whites in South Carolina. In addition, while Alabama's education reforms compressed the gaps in funding, they were not able to reshape the basic hierarchy between counties. As the following graphs show, before reform black belt counties spent the greatest amount per capita on their white students, and the general regional

Figure 6: 1925 Per Capita Spending in Alabama on Enrolled White Students by County

Figure 7: 1929 Per Capita Spending in Alabama on Enrolled White Students by County



hierarchy of funding generosity remained in place after the reforms. When I remove black belt counties from my dataset, and only examine counties that were majority white, it becomes clear that post-reform, the percentage of a county that was white and lived on a rural farm still negatively correlated with funding generosity.

Figure 8: 1929 Per Capita Spending in Alabama on Enrolled White Students in Counties less than 50% Black.

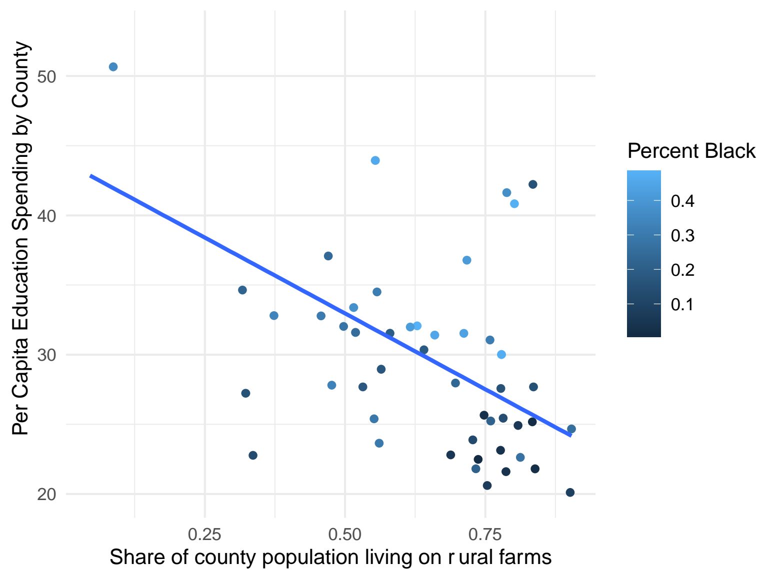


Figure 9: 1923 Per Capita Spending on Enrolled White Students in South Carolina by County

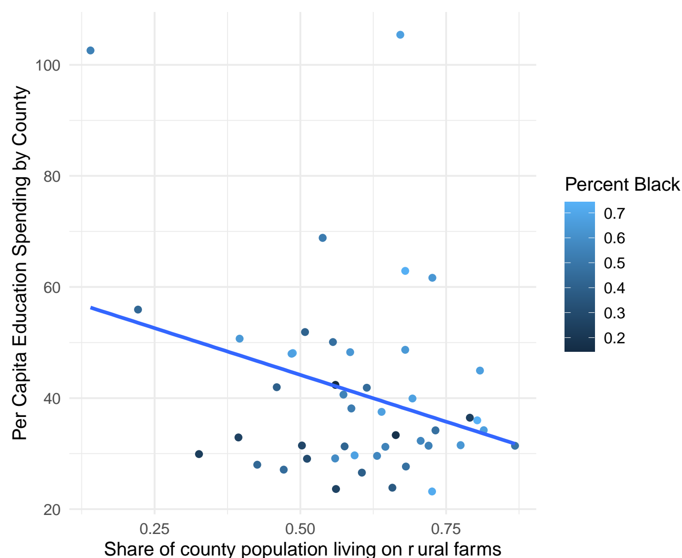
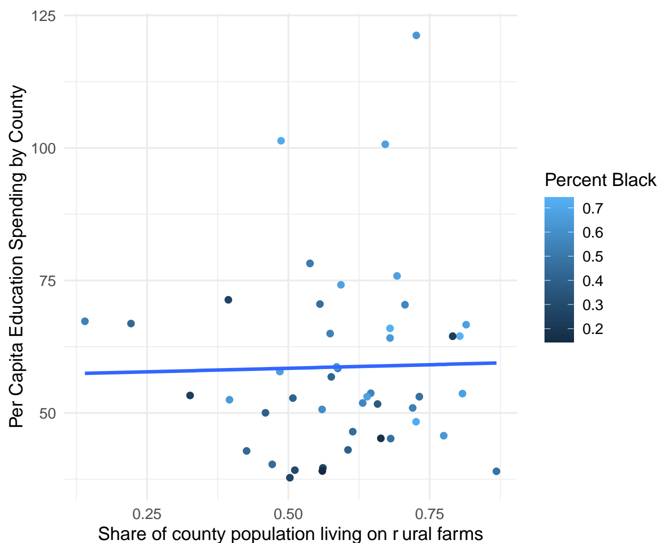


Figure 10: 1929 Per Capita Spending on Enrolled White Students in South Carolina by County



South Carolina, despite lacking electoral mobilization in support of reform, made significant progress on inter-white inequality in education funding. Between 1923 and 1929, education reform in South Carolina extinguished the longstanding correlation between lower per capita white funding and how rural, agriculturally dependent and white the county was. I further confirmed the correlation between funding increases for white, rural counties and the reform law via this OLS regression, located in the appendix. By 1929, on average there was little if any funding discrepancy between rural, majority white counties and more urban, economically diversified counties.

The shifts in Louisiana were perhaps the most far reaching of the three states. In 1927, on the eve of Long's ascension to the governorship, large landowners in black belt counties appropriated and spent far more per white student than other regions of the state. In particular, the geographic heart of the old populist movement suffered from some of the lowest education funding levels in the state. With less taxable property per educatable child, these parishes faced

an unappetizing choice between very high property taxes and poor education provision. The school board in Winn Parish (a poor, formerly populist upcountry Parish) passed a resolution in support of Long's education reform package laying out this choice, and arguing for reform because "the poor parishes of the state are getting poorer and the rich centers [are] getting richer each year" (Petition of Winn Parish School Board 1930). With the reforms of the Long Administration, Winn Parish, and other similar parishes, did not merely see their funding increase, they actually leapfrogged over dozens of other parishes to acquire some of the better funded school systems in the state. Long's reforms succeeded in decoupling the relative amount of school funding parishes received from the value of the taxable property in that parish, greatly diminishing the reliance on local property taxes to fund schools. The result was the elimination of discrepancy between rural, majority white parishes and black belt parishes, along with more urban, economically diversified parishes. The equalization fund included in the reform package played a critical role in both eliminating this discrepancy and rewarding Long's voters with increased funding, as demonstrated by this OLS regression.

Prior scholarship on the policy outcomes of Long and his successors sometimes attributes increases in social spending and public goods provision to the unique ability to tax newly exploited oil resources, with some scholars characterizing Louisiana as a type of subnational petrostate (Goldberg, Wibbels and Mvukiyehe 2008). This data challenges that characterization. The decision to direct resources to poorer, more rural areas instead of wealthy parishes is evidence that political choices, rather than just socio-economic endowments, played a role in shaping the increased generosity and altered geographic distribution of public goods provision.

More broadly, the Louisiana data conforms to my prior hypothesis. The data from Alabama and South Carolina does not. I would not have expected Alabama to have the highest,

pre-reform inequality nor that it would have (proportionally) made the least progress of the three states. South Carolina's significant gains at equalizing funding among whites were also surprising to me.

Table 1: Shifts in Relative Per-Capita Funding in Five Formerly Populist Counties in Louisiana

	1925 Ranking of Value of Taxable Property for School Purposes	1927 Ranking of Per Capita Funding for White Students—Out of 64 Parishes	1938 Ranking of Per Capita Funding for White Students—Out of 64 Parishes	Vote share of 1896 Populist Ticket	Vote Share for Huey Long in 1924 Gubernatorial Primary
Lincoln[12] Parish	**46th**	**60th**	**14th**	**59%**	**63%**
Union Parish	**59th**	**59th**	**8th**	**50%**	**67%**
Jackson Parish	**60th**	**51st**	**24th**	**67%**	**75%**
Winn Parish	**28th**	**50th**	**23rd**	**71%**	**70%**
Grant Parish	**39th**	**39th**	**16th**	**76%**	**68%**

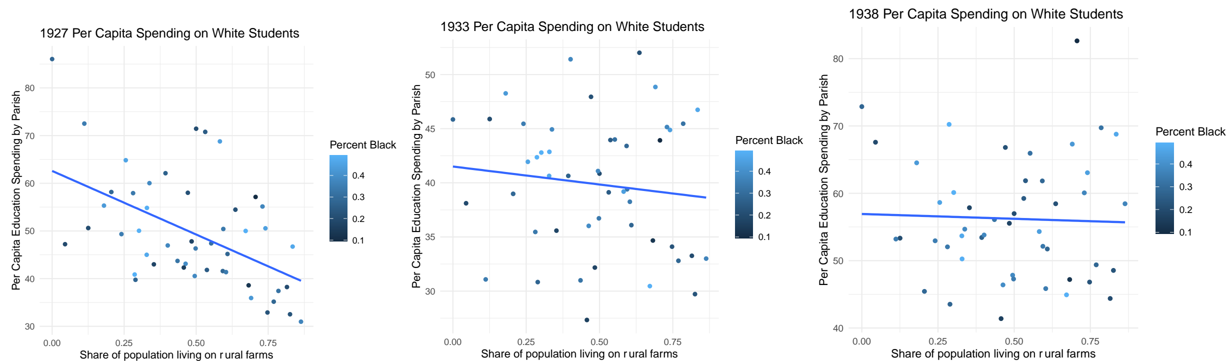


Figure 6: Graphs of the Relationship between school funding per capita and the percentage of a parish's population living on a rural farm in 1927, 1933, and 1938. To better show change over time, these graphs only include parishes that are majority white.

[12] I selected these five parishes because they were archetypal populist counties—poorer, upcountry and majority white. Grant Parish had also been a site of interracial Populist organizing (Sirpress 2012)

Recovery from the Depression and Overall Durability of Gains

The Great Depression was a calamitous shock to the southern economy. Falling prices and shrinking demand for agricultural goods intensified poverty, generated mass unemployment, and threatened huge swaths of small farmers with foreclosure and the loss of their land (Edgar 1998: 499, Simon 1998: 61-62; Rogers 2018). The economic crisis was particularly harmful to the region's public schools. State highway departments, largely funded by bonded debt, were able to continue to build and maintain state road systems, in some cases even accelerating construction (Sindler 1956; Moore 1987; Tugwell 1930). By contrast, collection of local property taxes, revenue that played a huge role in sustaining public schools, cratered as land values fell and farmers, short on cash, failed to pay their taxes. In 1929, South Carolina collected roughly $8.5 million in county and local district taxes. In 1934, it collected only $6.4 million—a 25% drop. State appropriations for education in South Carolina only fell by around 7.5% percent during the same time period (Report of South Carolina State Superintendent of Education 1934). These declines in revenue led to sharp cuts in spending. In 1934, per capita funding per enrolled student fell 39.6% from 1929. For students categorized as in daily attendance, the decline was 44%. Not only did funding decline between 1929 and 1934, but it remained depressed through the end of the decade. By 1938, per capita funding per attending student was still 29% below its 1929 peak. In 1940, it was still 25% below 1929 levels.

The funding declines in Alabama and Louisiana, while sharp, were less severe than those in South Carolina. In Louisiana, spending fell 32.5% for attending students and 27.3% for enrolled students from pre-depression peaks. In Alabama, spending per enrolled students declined 30%. Their recoveries were also more rapid. In 1938, Alabama's per capita funding had

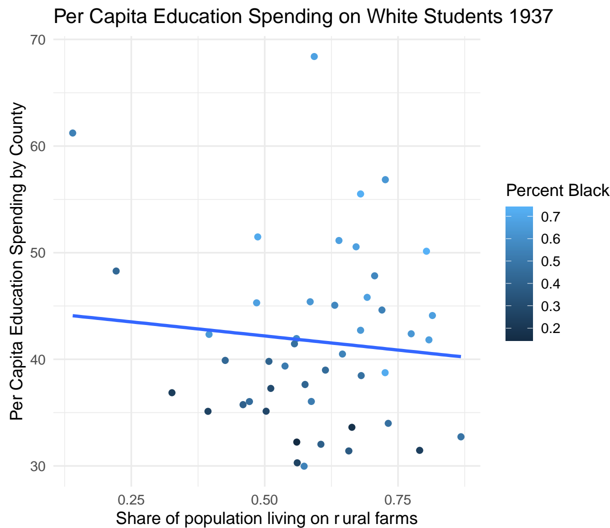
recovered to roughly pre-depression levels. Louisiana exceeded its previous peak of per capita education funding in 1938.

The trajectory of each state's recovery from the Great Depression implicates a broader question: how entrenched were the gains in funding generosity and inter-county equality for white students? Business owners and wealthy landowners had fought the higher taxes that made the reforms possible, as well as the redistribution of their tax dollars into poorer, majority white regions of the state. They still exercised powerful influence over state politics, and the Depression presented an opportunity to roll back reforms they never fully supported.

Despite the dislocation of the Depression, Louisiana's reforms appear very entrenched. Funding generosity only grew as the decade wore on, and the gains in overall funding equality endured—the Gini coefficient of spending on white students by parish was slightly lower in 1938 than it was in 1933. In Alabama, Bibb Graves won a second, non-consecutive term partially on a promise to repair the school system and bring back the gains of the late 1920s (The Progressive Age 1934; Franklin County Times 1934). His voters were not disappointed. Like Louisiana, Alabama school funding recovered rapidly from the Great Depression and inter-county inequality, after rising during the early 1930s, fell 25% below the levels attained in 1929. Graves's political coalition and the state's increased reliance on state as opposed to local revenue helped cement the gains in funding levels and equality for the long run.

In South Carolina, by contrast, the impressive gains of the late 1920s proved hard to maintain; and the interregional gains in equality proved somewhat ephemeral. I outlined above the deep funding cuts and grindingly slow recovering from the Depression. In addition, as this chart shows, by the late 1930s, black belt counties firmly reestablished themselves as the leaders in per capita funding allocated to white students. The gains in inter-county equality, while

Figure 7: Figure 11: County-Level Breakdown of Per Capita Education Spending in South Carolina for 1937. Note the clustering of black majority counties above the line of best fit, indicating overall higher levels of per capita funding. This is regression from 1929



maintained at the topline level, eroded beneath the surface in ways that they did not in Alabama or Louisiana. I will need much more process tracing and data analysis to determine the exact cause of this backsliding, but it seems possible that continuing reliance on local property taxes and the lack of a durable statewide political coalition favoring the preservation of the gains of reform played a role.

This data largely conforms to my hypothesis. I would expect the more fulsome incorporation of small farmers into one of the main factions of the state Democratic Party to lead to more urgency among political leaders to preserve the gains of reform and restore them after the shock of the depression. Bibb Graves' reelection campaign in 1934, where he promised to restore the schools to what they had been during his last term, is an example of this dynamic.

Centralization

Why did South Carolina school funding recover more slowly from the Great Depression? One of the major reasons is significant variation in the degree of centralization of funding between each state. Louisiana and Alabama came to rely on state funding, rather than county or local funding, for a far larger percentage of education expenditure than South Carolina. In 1929, 38.3% of Alabama's education funding came from state sources. In South Carolina, it was roughly 25%. The difference was stark enough that, just counting state funds, Alabama spent more per capita on education than South Carolina did in 1929: $11.60 per capita on enrolled

students of both races, as opposed to $8.60 in South Carolina. By 1938, state revenue was 50% of total school spending in both Louisiana and Alabama. In South Carolina, it was only 38%.

State revenues never atrophied to the degree that local tax revenue did during the Great Depression, and recovered to their pre-crisis levels more quickly. This occurred for a number of reasons. First, state revenue was diversified away from exclusive reliance on property taxes. States taxed incomes, natural resource extraction, industrial activity, inheritances, gasoline, liquor and a host of other types of economic activity (Rogers 423, Legislative record in LA, Williams 1969, Permalloff and Grafton 1985.). Secondly, state tax collectors were far less subject to capture by powerful local elites than local property tax assessors. Reformers all across the South sought to shift funding and tax collection responsibilities from localities to the state for this reason. (Hudson 2009; Permaloff and Grafton 1995: 106-107; Rogers 2018). Long's administration, after the enactment of their initial reform package, passed additional legislation to shift the responsibility for collecting school taxes from localities to the state (Williams 1969: 522). Alabama made a belated, and questionably successful, effort to do the same in 1939 and 1940 (Permaloff and Groff 1995). In addition, even when states relied on property taxes to generate revenues, collecting those taxes at the state level was inherently more redistributive—money taxed from wealthy regions with valuable property could be spent on key public goods in poorer areas without a similarly valuable tax base. This is one reason large plantation owners fought centralization tooth and nail—to cut off avenues for redistribution.

Thus, South Carolina found itself in something of a paradox. Higher local taxation capacity, which had helped the state raise and spend larger amounts per capita subsequently trapped the state in a slow recovery from the Great Depression. A greater reliance on local property taxes ultimately constrained the state's ability to provide this critical public good.

Much, but not all, of this data is also in broad conformity with my theory. I would have expected an empowered faction of small farmers in Louisiana and Alabama to campaign for and win a shift of the tax burden away from local property taxes and towards taxes on income, luxury consumption and resource extraction. What I would not have necessarily expected are the stringent limits on local taxation that impeded Alabama's ability to adequately fund its schools.

Analysis and Conclusion: What were the Different Roads Through Dixie?

This comparative case study of public school funding in Alabama, South Carolina and Louisiana, along with an examination of highway construction in Louisiana and South Carolina, remains tentative and incomplete. Nevertheless, using the data I have collected, I offer a preliminary evaluation of my hypothesis and broader theory. Louisiana conformed to my predictions. Huey Long won power in the state with a coalition that included many of the same constituencies that powered the populist movement. Subsequently, in the context of a general increase in the provision of key public goods, these constituencies benefitted disproportionately from his administration's reforms. I need to do more work to process trace whether and how the legacy of the populist movement was conveyed through time and contributed to this outcome. However, the outcome variables of interest in Louisiana corresponds to my expectations.

Alabama and South Carolina deviate from my original theory. However, their trajectories into and through the Jim Crow era is suggestive of other mechanisms by which the legacies of populism may have exerted influence on the provision of public goods. I did not predict South Carolina's surprisingly generous provision of school funds and public highways. The state easily exceeded Alabama's provision of both, complicating the strong/weak populist mobilization dichotomy that I laid out. However, other aspects of South Carolina's trajectory are in keeping with my theory. None of the factions in the South Carolina Democratic Party cleanly

incorporated small farmers, and the elite-driven nature of the state's education reform movement ensured that there was little linkage between votes for gubernatorial candidates and their stance on education funding. This result is in keeping with recent scholarship that has found that South Carolina's institutions and political parties were, even in the south, uniquely unresponsive to voter preferences (Olson and Synder 2021). Interestingly, this did not hamper the implementation of impressive reforms but may have made it more difficult to preserve them when elite interests or economic conditions shifted. The lack of a popular base for these reforms may help explain why the absolute gains in education funding and the relative gains made by poorer, whiter counties were more fragile. South Carolina's deep reliance on local property taxes also impeded the state's ability to recover from the depression. The benefits of South Carolina's program of highway construction also seems to have shifted towards black belt counties as time went on, a potential commonality in the state's two major programs of public goods provision. Localism also may have contributed to the narrower and more shallow base of political support the highway department could draw on, since counties that built their own highways felt less inclined to support the new state commission. The lack of a broad electoral base for the program led to Olin Johnson's attempt to rein in the highway department, supported by the state's millworkers and regarded indifferently by the state's small farmers.

Alabama, like South Carolina, offers both confirming and disconfirming data. The delineated factionalism of the Democratic Party, rooted in some of the same cleavages that defined the battle between Populists and conservative Democrats, created a link between the education funding increases and accelerated highway construction program overseen by Bibb

Graves and the votes that put him in office.[13] However, the severe limits, many of them constitutionally entrenched, on the ability of Alabama counties and localities to raise taxes hampered efforts to increase and equalize educational funding. Alabama has the factional politics predicted by my theory, but not the provision of public goods.

One aspect of the Alabama case study that comes into focus is that the state's level of public goods provision looks more anomalous, not less, in light of this data. With a larger industrial base, stronger urban constituency and smaller black population; Alabama's socio-economic base was potentially more amenable to the provision of public goods than its deep south peers. In my previous theory I largely agreed with prior scholarship that Alabama's early industrialization was a potential confounding variable I needed to explain (Mickey 2015). In light of this data, it has become a complimentary puzzle to be solved: why did the state with a high degree of industrialization, the smallest black population and a history of a strong populist movement, and thus a concomitantly weaker constituency for suppressing the provision of public goods, nevertheless perform significantly worse than South Carolina and Louisiana.

Given this data, my theory is in need of modification. A strong populist mobilization, as occurred in Alabama, is likely not sufficient to create the conditions for an enduring legacy. I now hypothesize that the three routes into the Jim Crow era taken by these three states were influenced by an interplay between the strength of the populist mobilization and the timing of the final imposition of authoritarianism. In Alabama, elite conservative Democrats made a concerted effort to wait until after Populism declined as a political force before taking the calculated risk of drafting a new state constitution. In 1899, during deliberations of the state executive committee

[13] Even more intense factional cleavages would appear when Jim Folsom ran for, and won, the governors office in 1946. Folsom's constituency was an even closer match to the old populist base than Graves (Key 1949; Permaloff and Grafton 1985).

of the Democratic Party, numerous delegates raised the specter of the populist party as a reason to proceed more cautiously, or not at all, towards a constitutional convention. One committee member said explicitly that "the people of North Alabama…a majority of them would vote against it [the constitutional convention" (Minutes of Democratic State Executive Committee March, 1899). Two years later, with conservative forces in the Democratic Party ascendent, those same elites pushed through the call for a convention, confident that it would reflect their preferences. They got their wish. The disenfranchisement clauses passed over the objection of the handful of populist delegates in attendance, and the constitution failed to include an elective railroad commission, lowered the constitutionally permissible tax rate, and made meager provisions for public school funding (Perman 2001: 192).

The strong, constitutional limits the elite framers of the Alabama constitution placed on local, property taxation created a long term drag on education funding in the state. Robust, factional competition in the Alabama Democratic Party occurred within an institutional straightjacket. In Louisiana, by contrast, the Democratic Party convened a constitutional convention in 1898, in the immediate aftermath of a strong challenge to their rule and near the peak of populist electoral strength. Delegates from rural, white counties were coherent enough as a faction to work in coalition with the New Orleans delegation at the convention to ensure the new constitution reflected some of their preferences. Their collaboration resulted in the inclusion of several of their priorities in the new document. These included constitutional permission to float bonds for internal improvements, the defeat of a particularly onerous version of the poll tax, and the creation of an elected railroad commission (Perman 2001). That railroad commission was where Huey Long first rose to prominence in Louisiana politics (Williams 1969).

South Carolina's path is less clear. Many scholars have noted that Ben Tillman was able, to a degree not achieved in any other southern state, to coopt the Populist movement and harness it for his own ends. Populism's "right turn" in South Carolina seems to have led to a greater degree of political demobilization of white yeoman than in the other states in my study. Opposition to the black belt political establishment in South Carolina during the Jim Crow era came from workers not farmers—specifically millworkers. They generally opposed the extension of public goods and the taxes needed to finance them, preferring first the preservation of a racialized independent family structure and then greater freedom to organize and bargain collectively with their employers (Simon 1998.). For a variety of reasons they often found themselves isolated politically, and reform in South Carolina came to be a largely elite project. This project yielded surprisingly impressive results, but it was also fragile.

Overall, this analysis complicates the claim that factional competition within the Southern Democratic Party had little or no material stakes. There was variation in public goods provision and redistribution among states in the deep south during the Jim Crow era. It also raises broader questions about how democratic competition prior to the consolidation of an authoritarian regime influences resource allocation and political competition within it. My goals going forward are to collect additional data, and engage in more extensive process tracing so as to more fully define the mechanism by which the various types of populist mobilization conveyed a legacy through the Jim Crow era.

Appendix:

	Dependent variable:
	Percent Increase in Per Capita White Alabama School Funding By County Between 1925 and 1929
Kolb Percent of County Vote in 1894	-7.946
	(22.009)
Populist Party Vote Share in 1892	0.437
	(17.285)
Graves Percent of County Vote in 1926	53.190***
	(17.865)
Total Population	0.0001
	(0.0001)
Black Percentage of County	-39.720***
	(12.128)
Rurality	75.152***
	(16.274)
Constant	-10.012
	(16.780)
Observations	67
R2	0.459
Adjusted R2	0.405
Residual Std. Error	18.524 (df = 60)
F Statistic	8.474*** (df = 6; 60)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

	Dependent variable:
	Percent Change in Per Capita Funding for Louisiana White Public Schools By Parish 1927-1938
Long Vote Share By Parish in 1924	32.956**
	(16.341)
Long Vote Share By Parish in 1928	-2.021
	(36.333)
Black Share of Parish Population	-57.976*
	(30.806)
Populist Party Vote Share by Parish 1896	14.367
	(19.522)
Rurality	27.342
	(18.337)
Constant	3.440
	(25.340)
Observations	64
R^2	0.265
Adjusted R^2	0.201
Residual Std. Error	26.641 (df = 58)
F Statistic	4.178*** (df = 5; 58)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

	Dependent variable:
	Funding For Louisiana State Equalization Program 1931
Long Vote Share By Parish in 1924	7,590.651**
	(3,448.937)
Long Vote Share By Parish in 1928	-11,873.580
	(7,668.527)
Black Share of Parish Population	-28,760.440***
	(6,501.974)
Populist Party Vote Share by Parish 1896	2,122.616
	(4,120.357)
Rurality	15,847.080***
	(3,870.263)
Constant	11,020.120**
	(5,348.319)
Observations	64
R2	0.467
Adjusted R2	0.421
Residual Std. Error	5,622.851 (df = 58)
F Statistic	10.149*** (df = 5; 58)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

	Dependent variable:
	Per Capita Funding From South Carolina Reform Law in 1929
Rurality	4.085***
	(1.073)
Black Share of County Population	-4.636***
	(0.911)
Total Population of County	-0.00000
	(0.00001)
McLeod Vote Share by County in 1922	0.502
	(1.638)
Constant	1.887
	(1.159)
Observations	46
R2	0.539
Adjusted R2	0.494
Residual Std. Error	0.784 (df = 41)
F Statistic	11.975*** (df = 4; 41)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

	Dependent variable:
	Concrete and Asphalt Highway Construction 1928-1930
Total Parish Population	0.00004*
	(0.00002)
Parish Rurality	2.353
	(6.847)
Parish Land Area	-0.001
	(0.003)

Parish Black Population	-4.453
	(10.382)
Vote Share for Populist Party in 1896	2.163
	(7.239)
Vote Share for Huey Long in 1924	4.275
	(6.135)
Constant	5.958
	(8.444)
Observations	64
R2	0.078
Adjusted R2	-0.019
Residual Std. Error	10.191 (df = 57)
F Statistic	0.799 (df = 6; 57)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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