

Displacement Mapping: Racial Violence and Movement in the State of Georgia

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Introduction

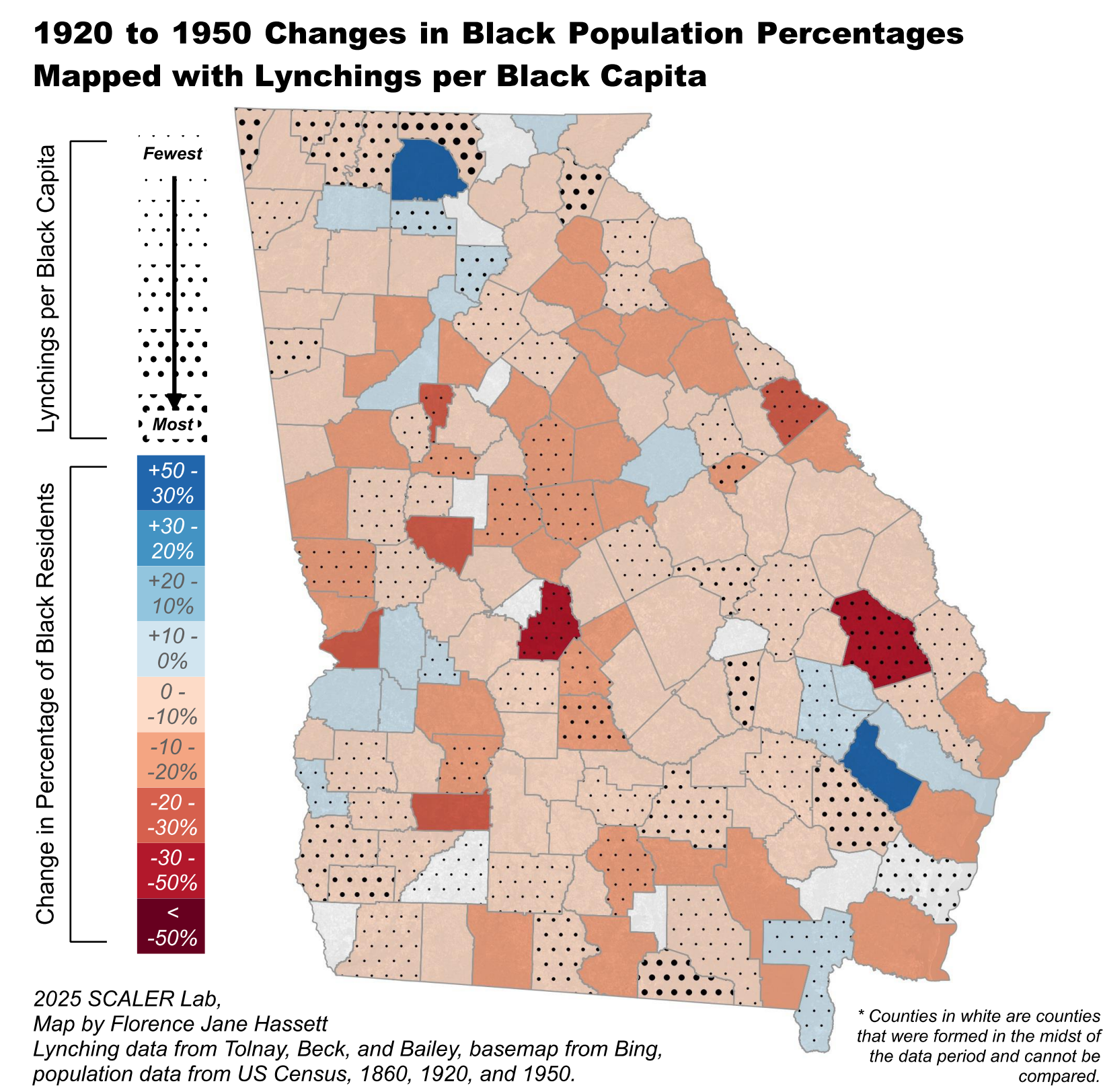
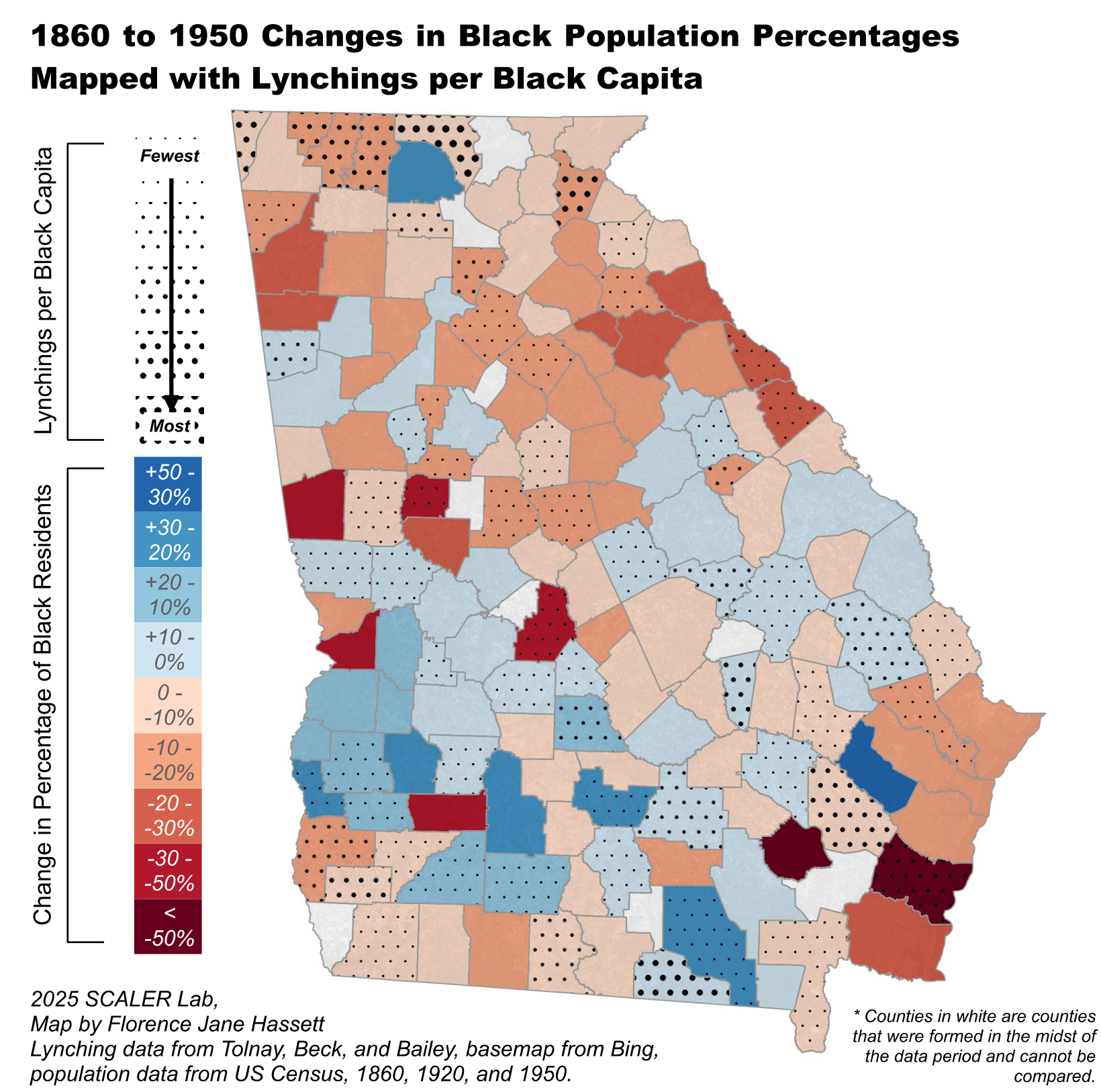
During Reconstruction, Black Georgians moved from the places they had been enslaved to Georgia’s towns and cities. However, as Reconstruction came to an end, falling short on many of its promises, white residents of Georgia use both legal and vigilante means to drive Black residents out of their towns, counties, or even the state. Some African-Americans left the South altogether, moving towards northern cities including Chicago, Detroit, and New York. Within Georgia, however, there were patterns of movement as well; many Black Georgians did not leave the state even if they were forced from where they resided originally, the most famous example being the Forsyth displacement which scattered Black residents across the state.

Methods

Using QGIS, a Geographic Information Sciences mapping tool, these spatial trends of racial violence and population shift can be mapped. Tolnay, Beck, and Bailey have collected a comprehensive list of lynchings within the Southeastern United States, including both qualitative archival documentation and research and quantitative spreadsheets. Taking the data from all 616 lynchings and probable lynchings in Georgia and combining the number of lynchings in each Georgia county with the percent demographics of each county ranging from 1860, the decade in which the first documented lynching occurred in, and 1950, the decade in which the last instance occurred. The total numbers for lynchings by county were then normalized by the average Black population of that county between 1860 and 1950.

Purpose

The demographics of this state are a background on which all of us work, live, and learn. There is much yet to be understood about the long-lasting implications of racial terrorism in the Southeastern United States but understanding how people came to live where they do today creates a framework for further qualitative analysis into the specificities of movement and the ways that movement shapes the current inequalities.



Start Point, End Point

These maps tell some of the same stories. Once again, Gilmer county in North Georgia serves as a convergence point for people leaving nearby counties marred by racial violence. Glynn county also shares the rapid shift out seen on the percent change map. In the Southwest of the state, Steward county is another convergence point, although it isn’t surrounded by violence in the same way Gilmer is.

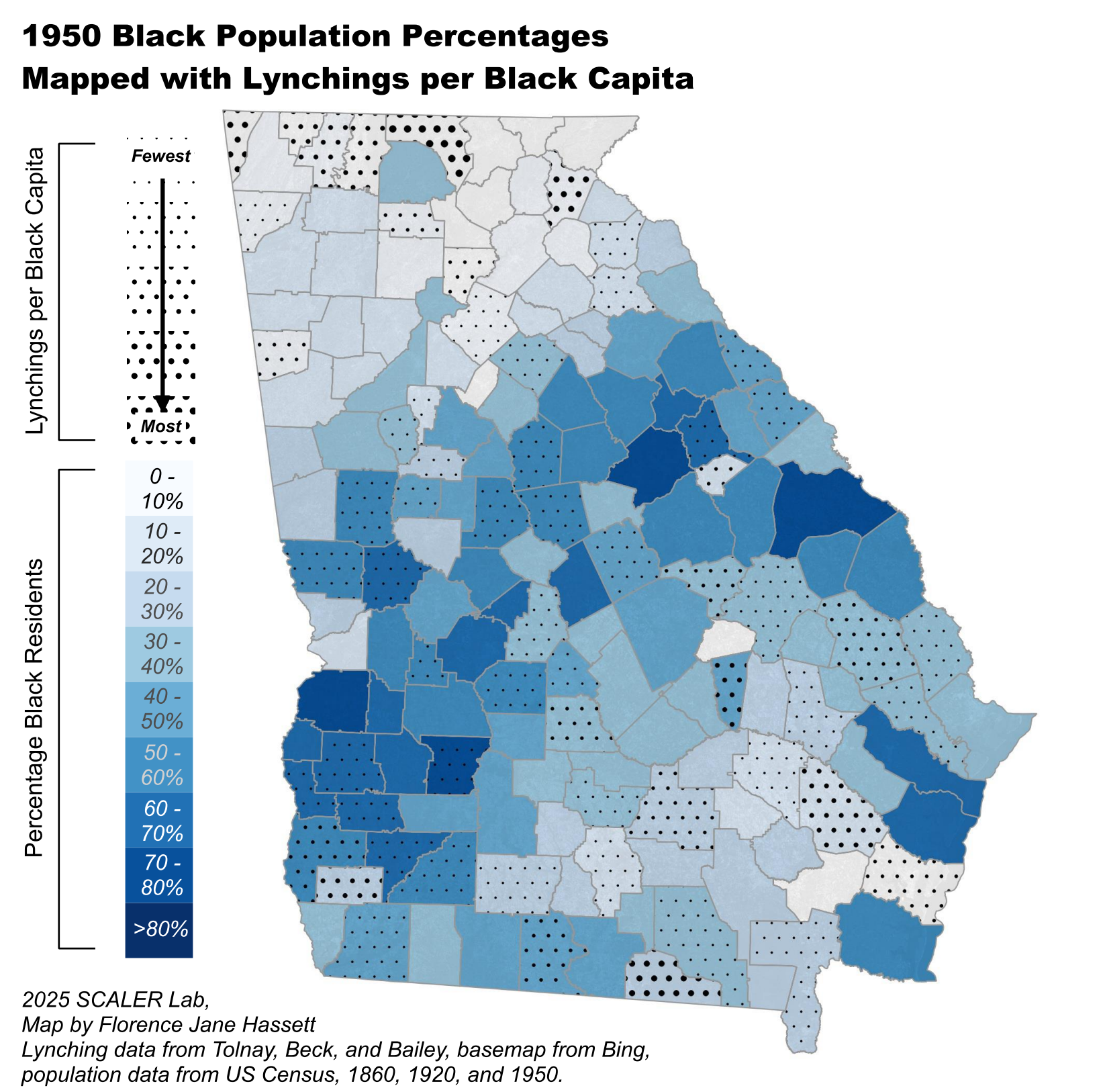
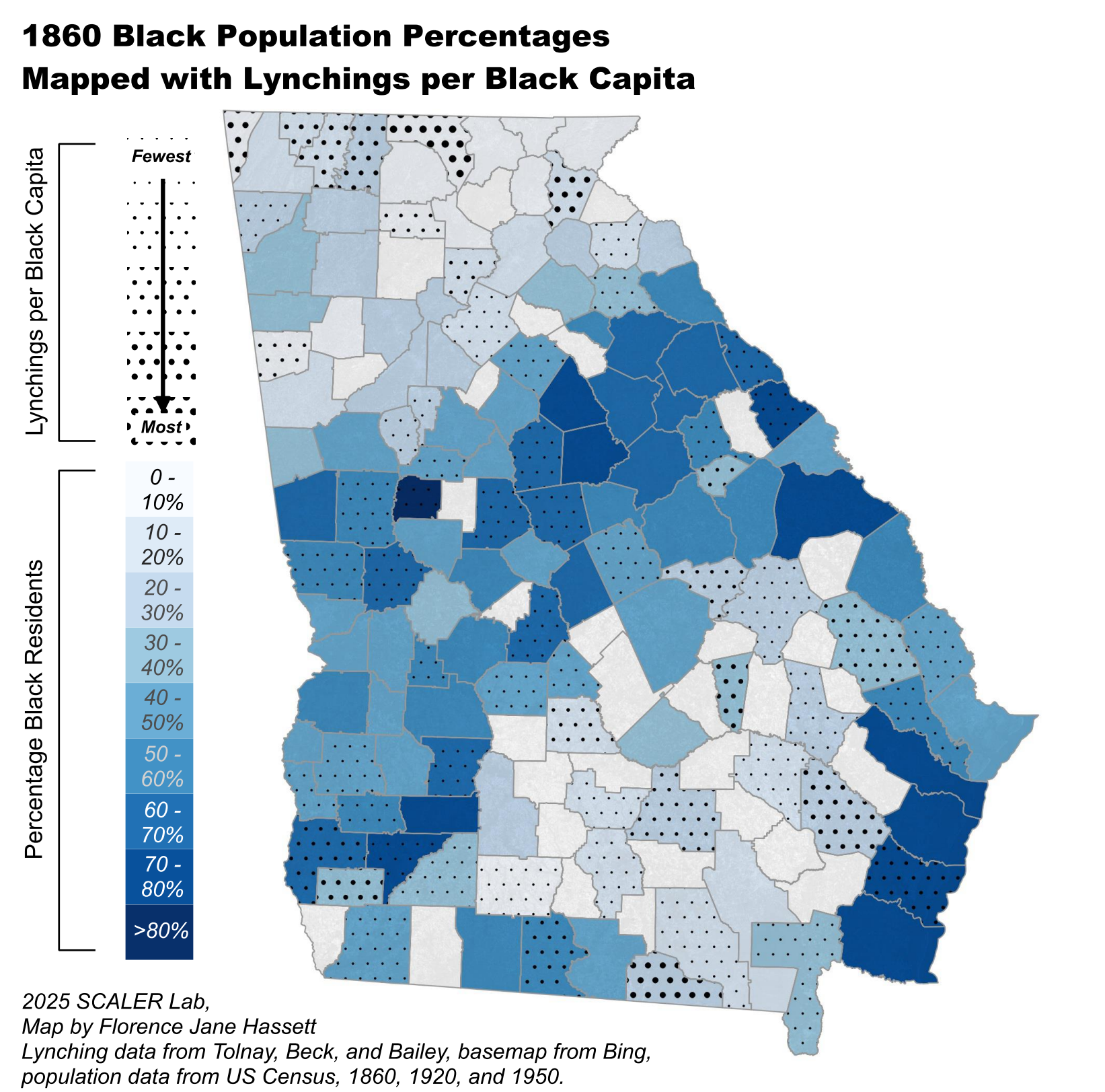
There’s also a general dispersal from the very clear line from Southwest to Northeast outward and mostly moving south towards counties that had previously been predominantly white.

Interestingly, there is not a strong urbanization pattern shown.

In Drove

These visuals represent the change in percentage of Black population. Some drastic shifts happened throughout the period examined, most notably in Glynn and Pierce County, both of which Black residents left in droves, and Gilmer and Long county, which saw an increase in Black population as the surrounding counties had high rates of per capita lynchings.

It should be noted that some of the counties with high per capita lynchings are quite small counties. In small populations, even a few instances of racial violence would set the tone clearly within that county. Conversely, Fulton county had 7 lynchings, but due to its enormous Black population, those instances do less to set the tone on a county level and instead will point towards movement patterns internal to the county.



Future Prospects

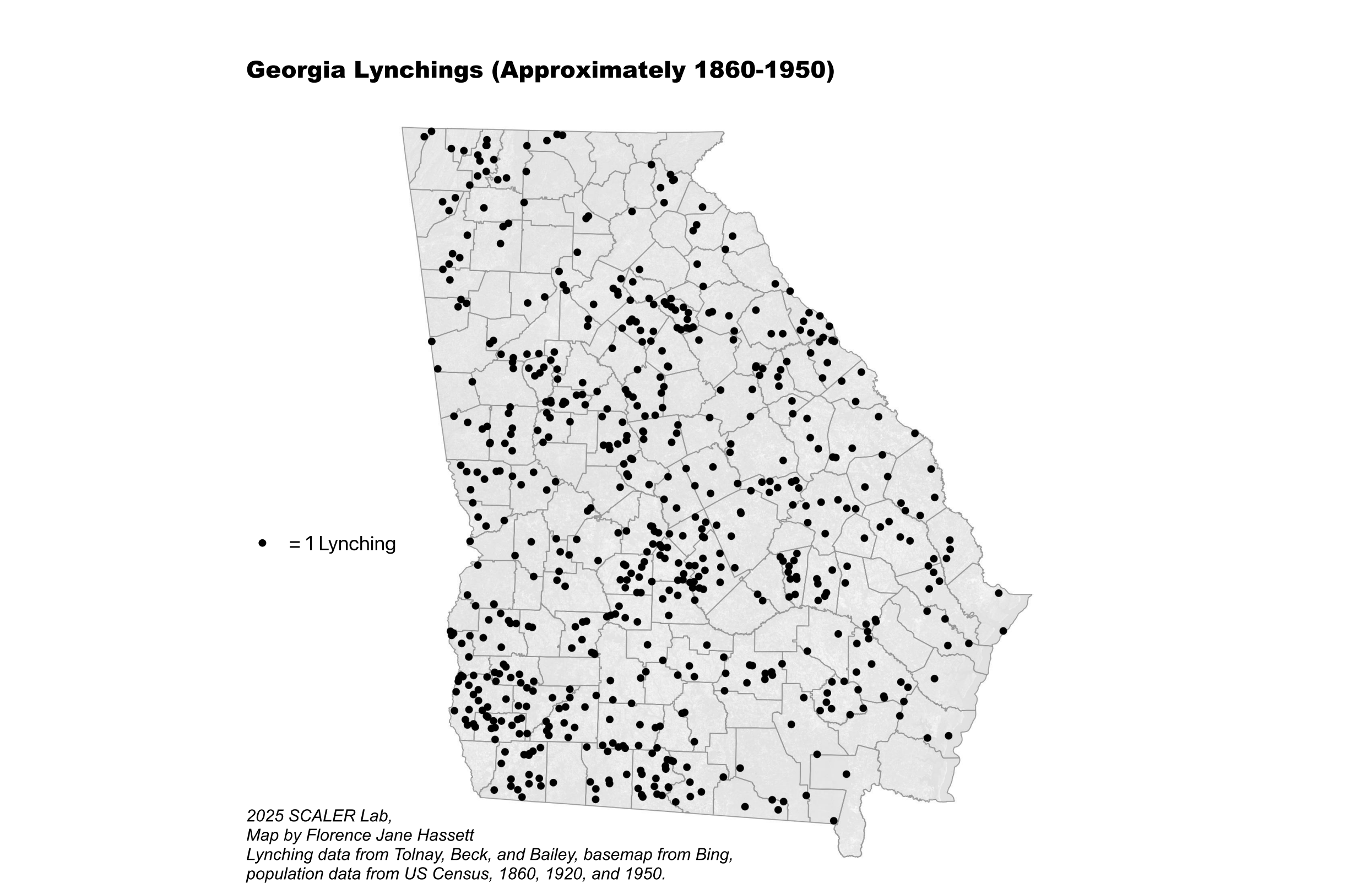
The goal of this initial project was the creation of graphics that would be easy to share with the general public to illustrate the general setting of the SCALER lab’s research.

These visuals are a helpful tool when explaining the effects of racial violence on population movement. They tell many stories within them and can serve as a map not only of the trends, but counties to explore further with qualitative research.

There are some surprising trends and understanding them more fully will take more research and analysis. It’s surprising that there isn’t a larger push towards Fulton County, and that the Forsyth displacement isn’t clearer, but it can be seen on the Start Point, End Point maps.

There are opportunities to dig into both the counties people fled, and the counties that people came to. Researching Glynn and Pierce counties and the displacement they experienced alongside Gilmer and Long counties and why they served as collection points for Black people leaving other counties will give insight on stories told less frequently than the ones of population concentration into cities, or the Forsyth displacement.

It will also be interesting to look at counties with relatively high amounts of racial violence and yet maintain similar Black populations. For these counties, movement internal to the county which is harder to map due to data availability may be more telling and can be understood with qualitative methods and archival research.



Sources and Acknowledgements

Lynching data from Tolnay, Beck, Bailey, CSDE Lynching Database. Bing Maps used for graphic basemaps. U.S. Census data 1870, 1920, 1950.

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