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Was Freedom Road a Dead End? Political and socio-economic effects of Reconstruction in the American South

Jeffry Frieden
Harvard University

Richard S. Grossman
Wesleyan University

Daniel Lowery
Harvard University

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Abstract

Reconstruction brought a political and social revolution to the former Confederacy. Freedmen were enfranchised and Black political participation soared, despite widespread hostility in the defeated states. Federal troops occupied the region and Freedmen's Bureau offices were established widely. The reforms of Reconstruction were eventually reversed by white supremacists, but by then Black southerners had experienced substantially increased civil and human rights for several decades. We ask how these major institutional changes – Black enfranchisement, federal military occupation, and the Freedmen's Bureau– affected Black political participation and Black socio-economic advancement. We use the location of federal troops and Freedmen's Bureau offices as indicators of more intensive federal protection of the rights of newly freed people. We find that Black men were more likely to be able to register to vote, and the Republican Party received more votes, in counties with more federal protection. Turning to socio-economic outcomes, we find that Black children were more likely to attend school and Black people were more likely to be literate in areas where Reconstruction was more rigorously enforced. Similarly, Black people were better able to achieve higher levels of occupational status and earnings, and Black farmers were more likely to own their own farms, in counties with a more intensive Federal presence. We suggest a mechanism leading from greater Black political power to higher local property taxes, through to higher levels of Black schooling and greater Black socio-economic achievement. These effects persisted at least until the early twentieth century. In all instances, however, the positive impact of Reconstruction was less pronounced in cotton-plantation zones. The results indicate the power of political-institutional change – such as the expansion of the franchise – to provide opportunities for oppressed people to achieve a measure of political power and persistent socio-economic advancement.

Reconstruction in the American South was an extraordinary social revolution. Federal troops occupied the territory of the defeated Confederacy, accompanied by a civilian army of Northerners intent on remaking the South. Once Congress overcame the resistance of a more conservative president, constitutional amendments and federal legislation extended civil and political rights to all, pointedly including former slaves. These four million freed people soon moved to take advantage of this entirely new social and political reality. With hundreds of thousands of freedmen enfranchised and many former Confederates disenfranchised, a combination of freedmen, Southern loyalists, and Northern sympathizers ruled the South. Southern politics were turned upside down, with the defeated planter elite largely in disarray. Reconstruction state and local governments oversaw massive investments in education and a range of public goods ignored or underfunded by the antebellum slaveocracy.

Within a few decades, white supremacists reversed the political gains made by Black people and their white allies with a combination of extra-legal terror, legal manipulation, and fraud. Nonetheless, Reconstruction lasted more than ten years, and it was not until the 1890s and early 1900s that the white supremacists were able to fully retake control of the South. This raises the question of the extent to which Black people in the South were able to take advantage of Reconstruction and its aftermath to improve their political, social, and economic positions. What, in short, was the political and

socio-economic impact of Reconstruction on the South? And did this impact persist even after Reconstruction ended?

In this paper we focus on how Reconstruction affected the socio-economic fortunes of freed people in the South. There is an ample and growing literature on the impact of Reconstruction on Black political power – both as it grew and as it was repressed by white supremacists. We are particularly interested in the *socio-economic*, rather than purely political, impact of Reconstruction. This includes the extent to which Black Southerners were able to use enfranchisement, and the ensuing—if temporary--enhanced political power, to advance their economic prospects. It also includes the extent to which other aspects of Reconstruction – such as Federal occupation and the Freedmen's Bureau – had an impact on the ability of freed people to take advantage of economic opportunities. Finally, we are interested in whether the contemporaneous impact of Reconstruction had a longer-lasting effect on Black socio-economic outcomes.

We assess these possibilities by evaluating the impact of the presence of federal troops and Freedmen's Bureau offices on political, social, and economic outcomes. We first establish that a greater federal presence in a county, as measured by the number of troops or presence of Freedmen's Bureaus, was associated with higher rates of Black voter registration, Republican voting, and a greater likelihood of the election of Black politicians. This, we argue, led to higher local tax rates and greater expenditure on local public goods, especially schooling, which contributed to the increase in Black socio-

economic achievements. However, the positive effects of increased federal presence were substantially reduced in areas dominated by cotton, the most common plantation crop, suggesting the enduring political influence of an entrenched planter elite committed to opposing Black political and socio-economic advancement.

We find a wide variety of indicators of Black social and economic progress – school attendance, farm and home ownership, and occupational status (e.g., earnings and prestige scores) – were associated with a stronger federal presence. We similarly find that, even accounting for the direct impact of occupation, Black political engagement and empowerment were strongly associated with socio-economic development and that these effects persisted for several decades at least.

It is not surprising that in the former Confederacy, Black voting (proxied for by Republican voting) and Black political power (measured by officeholding), declined dramatically after Reconstruction and especially after white supremacists succeeded in disenfranchising almost all Blacks in the 1890s and early 1900s. However, Black socio-economic achievements persisted over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In line with our earlier findings, counties that had experienced more intensive federal presence and greater Black political empowerment before disenfranchisement continued to be distinctive in their higher level of socio-economic accomplishments. In these counties, Black farmers were more likely to own their farms and less likely to be sharecroppers; there were more Black individuals in high-earnings

and high-prestige occupations; and more Black families owned their own homes. Other socio-economic indicators tell a similar story.

These results speak to a broader discussion within Political Science and Economics concerning the role of institutions in driving economic growth and development. Our results suggest that changes in political institutions – even if imposed from outside – can have a powerful impact on broader categories of social and economic development. Of course, in this instance the institutions imposed were strongly favored by a very large portion of the local population – a fact which may itself be relevant to broader comparisons. In this sense the experience may be seen as an example of franchise expansion, although unlike in most other cases it was not the existing governing class that expanded the franchise. Nonetheless, the breadth and depth of the impact of franchise expansion is impressive. It is also important to note the moderating effect of cotton plantation agriculture on both political empowerment and socio-economic development, which suggests that political-institutional change may be limited by the nature of the underlying economic structure. And it is similarly important to note that the institutional change itself – equality under the law – was not enough; it required the force, often military, of state power to have effect.

Section 1 describes the general context of Reconstruction and its aftermath. Section 2 presents our research questions and our analytical expectations in the context of the existing theoretical and related work. Section 3 describes the data. Section 4

develops our empirical evaluation of the impact of Reconstruction on political outcomes in the immediate post-Civil War era. Section 5 expands this to the social and economic impact of Reconstruction. Section 6 explores the extent to which these effects persisted into the twentieth century. Section 7 suggests a mechanism which explains how increased political representation may have led to greater socio-economic achievement. Section 8 draws some broader empirical and theoretical implications. Section 9 concludes.

1. Reconstruction and Black achievement

The Civil War led to the emancipation of over four million Black Americans after more than 200 years of chattel slavery. As the war ended conservative Tennessean Andrew Johnson, who succeeded to the presidency after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, moved quickly to conciliate with Southern elites, countenancing attempts to subject freed people to renewed economic and political subjugation. Johnson was immediately opposed by "Radical Republicans" who insisted on full political and civil rights for Black Americans. When the Republicans, led by the radicals, swept Congressional elections in 1866 they instituted "Congressional Reconstruction," which brought more forceful measures to empower the formerly enslaved, and which continued until 1877. This is a complex period in American history, to which no simple summary can do justice, but some central facts are important to establish.[1]

Radical Republican leaders in Congress leaders and President Ulysses Grant (1869-1877) committed the federal government to a comprehensive attempt to install democratic rule in the former Confederacy. The ten states being "reconstructed" (Tennessee was excluded, having been readmitted under President Johnson) were divided into five military districts and an initial force of about 20,000 troops was stationed in the area. Congress created a Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen's Bureau, with offices throughout the region, to assist former slaves with their transition to freedom. Charitable, religious, and other aid groups sent many thousands of largely northern volunteers south, especially as teachers for the more than 3000 new schools established to educate Black families. Throughout the South, newly enfranchised Black voters rushed to create and join chapters of the Union League (sometimes called Loyal League), the Republican Party's grassroots organization (see, for example, Fitzgerald 1989).

The federal government mandated that states craft new constitutions guaranteeing the new range of rights before they could be readmitted to the Union and reestablish civilian self-government. Delegates were overwhelmingly Republican, dominated by southern Republicans ("scalawags"), northerners ("carpetbaggers"), and Blacks, who constituted more than one-third of the total. For most of the rest of Reconstruction Republicans dominated much of the former Confederacy, although the Democrats gradually regained political power by both legal and extra-legal means. The

southern Republican party brought together freedmen, committed white reformers, and southerners who had their own reasons to oppose the planter elite. There were, after all, substantial segments of southern society – especially poorer farmers outside the Black Belt plantation area – who had opposed secession and supported (even fought for) the Union. Although some of these people may have had little inherent sympathy for the cause of Black civil rights, they recognized that Republican political success depended upon Black votes. As W.E.B. DuBois observed, "the granting of the ballot to the black man was…the only method of compelling the South to accept the results of the war" (DuBois 2018). Whether for principled or partisan reasons, the Republican Party was a strong supporter of measures to empower freed people and ensure their voting rights.[2]

As a wave of political organization and activity swept through the Black population of the South, Black men registered to vote and voted in extremely high numbers. Black votes helped Grant to victory in the presidential election of 1868, but the full political impact of freedmen was not fully felt until 1870 and 1872 with the first elections held after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, which guaranteed universal male suffrage. Hundreds of thousands of freedmen registered and voted, which led the Republicans to dominate both presidential and congressional voting in the South. The Republican tide in the South receded somewhat in 1874 and 1876, due in part to voter suppression and in part to broader political trends. Nonetheless, Black voters remained an essential part of the national and southern Republican Party. This

was reflected both in southern Republican successes in national, state, and local elections; and in the election of well over a thousand Black officials in the former Confederacy (Foner 1993).

Black senators and congressmen may have been prominent at the national level, but for most freed people it was probably more important to have Black local officials to help secure their rights and represent their interests when raising taxes and allocating money for local public goods. White Republican officials, too, could hardly ignore the concerns of a community that was essential to their electoral success.

White supremacists fought every aspect of the democratic revolution. The Ku Klux Klan's campaign of terror, intimidation, and murder had some early success, but it was countered by a combination of Black resistance and federal reaction. The Republicans in Washington created the Department of Justice in 1870, and passed the 1870 and 1871 Enforcement Acts, largely to attack the Klan. By 1872 the Klan had been suppressed. However, especially after disenfranchised Confederates were amnestied in 1872, the Democratic Party rebuilt itself in the South and redoubled its attack on Black political power and Republican rule.

The contested presidential election of 1876 led to the "Hayes-Tilden Agreement" to limit the role of Federal troops and brought an end to Republican political ascendancy in the South. Over the next twenty years, Black political influence and Republican electoral success were gradually eroded by a combination of terror,

intimidation, and legal manipulation (Perman 2001). Especially in the Black Belt plantation areas, landowners exercised extensive local power, including social and economic control over sharecroppers and farm laborers, that they could count on massive local Democratic majorities – by legal or illegal means. The Fifteenth Amendment made it impossible for states legally to restrict the franchise on racial grounds, and substantial numbers of Black people were still voting in the 1890s – the last southern Black congressman served until 1901. To cement white supremacy, the Democrats called conventions in the 1890s and early 1900s to rewrite their state constitutions; these new constitutions instituted voting requirements that in effect disenfranchised the vast majority of Black men – along with many poor white men as well.[3]

The promise of Reconstruction was extraordinary – the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was a model for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Kousser 2000) – but the justice it promised was ultimately denied. Nonetheless, during Reconstruction and its aftermath, hundreds of thousands of Black Americans in the South, most of them former slaves, actively participated in politics; they constituted a crucial constituency for thousands of elected officials both Black and white. The fact that it took nearly thirty years for white supremacists to almost completely disenfranchise Black voters suggests that the episode was more than fleeting and may have had a lasting impact, allowing the previously

powerless to use new political rights to seize economic opportunities and social achievements. It is to a discussion of how that process might work that we turn.

2. Theory: Military power, electoral politics, and economic advance

Reconstruction brought about a massive change in the political institutions of the South. Political institutions affect political behavior and outcomes; political outcomes affect policies; policies have socio-economic consequences. We trace this process from the democratic revolution that was Reconstruction, through Black political empowerment, to Black socio-economic accomplishments that endured into the early twentieth century. Each step in this process raises important theoretical issues.

The political reforms of Reconstruction amounted to an expansion of the franchise to Black men and the temporary disenfranchisement of some former Confederates. We expect Black voting to have affected electoral outcomes since roughly a third of the South's population was Black, and Black voters constituted a majority in several states and many counties. This should be reflected in Black voting for the Republican Party, the party that supported Reconstruction and Black civil rights. We also expect Black enfranchisement to have resulted in the election of politicians sympathetic to this cause, and to have resulted in the election of Black politicians. Finally, we expect the political changes to have led to policies more in line with the interests of the newly empowered Black constituencies.[4]

A subsequent step is to consider how Black political empowerment affected Black economic opportunity. Especially in the aftermath of slavery and the immediate post-war attempts to rebuild white supremacy, Reconstruction-era officials and bureaucrats committed to enforcing rights would be expected to provide a more favorable environment for Black people to get an education, through greater taxation and spending on local public goods such as schools, to buy and hold farmland and other real estate, to establish businesses, and more generally enhance their economic position. As a result, we expect Reconstruction-era increases in Black political influence to be reflected in Black economic advance.

How can we assess the impact of Reconstruction, given that it was imposed on the entirety of the former Confederacy? Our approach, like that of Chacón and Jensen (2020), Chacón et al (2021), and Stewart and Kitchens (2021), is to use the location and number of federal troops and Freedmen's Bureau offices as an indicator of the intensity of Reconstruction policy. Our presumption is that in areas where there were Bureau offices and that were more accessible to a larger number of federal troops, Reconstruction-era policies would have been applied and enforced more rigorously and vigorously. There is substantial evidence of this in the eyewitness and secondary literature. For example, one freedman recalled his experience as a child in a village in the Florida Panhandle, in an environment of white hostility in the aftermath of the murder of a local Black man:

> They [the freed people] were in the midst of their troubles when a detachment of Union soldiers was quartered among them. This was a very great event. They made friends with the Negro people and with the few white loyalists. They represented the Union government in preserving law and order and in the adjustment of the labor relations of the former masters and slaves….Another important event was the opening of a Freedmen's school in the Negro church. Sergeant Smith and Private Davenport were detailed to the work of teaching the little black children their first lessons. The school was crowded with eager pupils from the beginning…. The bugle call for afternoon drill and parade was heard for miles around and was the first and sweetest music the freed people had ever heard. Have they heard any sweeter since? I doubt it.[5]

As a Freedmen's Bureau commissioner put it more pithily, "The wrongs increase just in proportion to the distance from the United States authorities."[6]

We expect, then, that Black voter registration, voting, political influence, and economic advancement will rise in counties with greater access to federal troops and Freedmen's Bureau offices. As we do not have detailed knowledge of the reasons for troop location, we do not pretend to know whether the placement of federal troops was random. Many of the forts pre-dated the Civil War, but many of them were established and manned afterwards, so that we cannot claim that the placement was exogenous;

troops may have been placed in ways that were related to the outcomes in which we are interested.

There are two closely related mechanisms by which Reconstruction might have facilitated Black economic advance. One is direct: the use of federal military and judicial (and extra-judicial) power to protect and enforce the rights of freedmen. Another is less direct and runs through Black political empowerment: the mobilized Black community would find its political engagement facilitated by federal force, enhancing its ability to use its political influence to enforce Black economic rights and fund local public goods that would enhance Black economic opportunities. We expect both to be important and are interested in their relative importance.

Political institutions exist within a socio-economic context, and this context varied widely throughout the South. In particular, where the planter elite was particularly well entrenched and maintained economic and social power even after the Civil War, we would expect it to be much more difficult for freed people to achieve economic autonomy. In most such areas, planters continued to own the land and parceled it out to sharecroppers or tenants who were in a highly dependent position. Sharecropping held farmers in a particularly subordinate relationship, typically without control of the land or the means of production and obligated to provide much of the output to the landowner.

Each plantation crop had a different production system, which seems to have affected the degree of socio-political and economic power of planters over freed people who worked on their lands. However, especially where "cotton was King," we anticipate that federal occupation will have less of an impact. In this period, cotton was a plantation crop characterized by large scale economies, low wages, and generally dependent labor relations, and we expect cotton to be associated with greater planter resistance to Reconstruction and greater local power. Rice and sugar were different. Rice plantations generally operated on the "task system" which gave workers substantial autonomy and a fair amount of free time to cultivate their own crops.[7] Sugar was distinguished by the extraordinary sensitivity of the harvest and processing to timing; this could give sugar workers bargaining power inasmuch as withholding labor threatened the value of the entire crop.[8] Tobacco, wheat, corn, and other crops could be grown at smaller scale and were not generally associated with a plantation economy, a planter elite, and the kind of extreme socio-economic power disparities that characterized the cotton economy.[9] We therefore expect the federal presence to have been less effective at overcoming white-supremacist opposition where the economic structure created a massive social and economic-power differential between landowners on the one hand, and freed people (sharecroppers, tenants, and laborers) on the other. This is most likely in the cotton regions of the South.

White supremacists were eventually able to disenfranchise most freedmen, eviscerating Black political power in the South for generations.[10] However, we believe that other effects of Reconstruction may have been harder to reverse. It took two or three decades to revoke the voting rights of enfranchised citizens, and then required terror, legal manipulation, and subterfuge. We surmise that it would have been very difficult to reverse or annul many of the other advances freed people achieved during and after Reconstruction. Those who gained an education could hardly have it taken away from them. This applied especially to those who received a higher and professional education from the wide range of new Black colleges and universities, including those established by the Freedmen's Bureau (Howard, Fisk, and Hampton). By 1888, as an example, there were 15,000 Black schoolteachers in the South, more than half of them trained at Freedmen's Bureau-founded teachers colleges (normal schools), the rest at schools run by Christian missionaries.[11] It would also have been difficult – albeit not impossible – to rob freed people (and the small number of antebellum "free Blacks") of established businesses, farmland, and other property. Indeed, there is little indication that most white supremacists had much interest in expropriating Black property – part of the mythology of "separate but equal" societies rested on the existence of a range of professions and services in Black communities.

As a result, we expect that areas whose Black residents were better able to achieve socio-economic success due to Reconstruction protections found those successes

to continue, and perhaps expand, over time. Where freed people were better educated, more likely to own land and other property, and more likely to run businesses in the 1870s, we expect those advantages to have continued and perhaps multiplied to them and to their descendants in decades to come. In other words, we expect the socio-economic achievements of Black southerners – but not their political influence – to have persisted for decades even after Reconstruction was reversed.

This study is one of a long line of analyses of Reconstruction and its impact. DuBois' classic 1935 work stood almost alone for decades; Foner 1988 launched the modern study of the period, with Hahn 2003 a major contribution.[12] In recent years, the dramatically increased availability of data and computing power has allowed scholars to subject the period to more elaborate quantitative analyses. Most of these studies explore the political impact of Reconstruction, often using (as we do) the presence of federal troops as an indicator for the intensity of Reconstruction. The election of Black politicians was associated with higher tax revenues, higher Black literacy rates and land tenancy (Logan 2020; see also Suryanarayan and White 2021). Military occupation was also associated with increased Black political representation and fewer political murders by white supremacists (Chacón and Jensen 2020, Chacón et al. 2021, Stewart and Kitchens 2021).[13]

Our analysis is relevant to a broader set of theoretically important issues. Indeed, the impact of Reconstruction suggests central questions and implications for the study

of the political economy of development. A region's endowments affect its economic development, but the path is hardly clear. Ample natural resources may – or may not – retard development; most plausible explanations run through politics and government policy.[14] More to our point, scholars have established clear developmental differences between regions associated with plantation crops, on the one hand, and those characterized by smallholder (family) farming. Again, the explanatory path runs from endowments through politics: historically, plantation agriculture leads to high levels of inequality, authoritarian political regimes, the under-provision of public goods, and hostility to broad-based economic development.[15] At the same time, scholars have recognized the powerful impact that political institutions can play in affecting developmental paths, by foreclosing or facilitating access to economic opportunities.[16]

The study of Reconstruction allows us to investigate in more detail how the institutional changes of the period affected political and economic behavior and outcomes. The most important institutional change was the enfranchisement of Black men, who made up about a third of the southern electorate, a substantial majority in some states, and an overwhelming majority in some regions. Reconstruction gives us an opportunity to see how expanding the franchise affected politics and policy, from voting behavior to the nature of politicians.

Analyzing Reconstruction also allows us to explore the impact of the region's endowments and the economic activities and structures associated with them; the role

of plantation-based agriculture is particularly important. We explore how these socio-economic realities affected the impact of the federal presence during Reconstruction, focusing on the impact of the region's main crop, cotton. Inasmuch as prevailing technologies dictated particular production relations – and subsequent social relations – we can analyze the impact of differences in agrarian structure on both politics and other socio-economic outcomes. At the limit, perhaps we can learn more about the relative importance of institutional change and economic conditions for subsequent political and socio-economic development.

Another potential connection is to the literature on post-conflict settlements and state-building. Scholars have studied whether and how the aftermath of war, especially civil war, leads to disparate outcomes: further conflict or enduring peace, democracy or authoritarianism, development or stagnation. Much of the focus is on whether the post-war authorities can build a state with the capacity to both govern and include the population – issues of clear significance to America's efforts at Reconstruction.[17] While the episode is certainly relevant these broader literatures, we have little to say about it.

3. The data

The availability of data about this period in American history, and the technologies to explore them, have expanded dramatically in recent years. This allows us to undertake a more detailed analysis of the political and socio-economic impact of

Reconstruction and its aftermath than has been possible in the past. In this section we describe the data we use.

Our principal indicators for the intensity of Reconstruction are the presence of federal troops and the presence of an office of the Freedmen's Bureau, which existed from 1865 until 1872. At the height of the Bureau's activities there were about 900 agents in the former Confederacy. Our preferred measure of military occupation is a cumulative monthly average of the total number of troops that are garrisoned within a county's borders or can march into that county from a neighboring county. This measure allows us to incorporate the role of both within-county garrisons as well as nearby garrisons that could project power through rapid deployment. Our measures follow Downs in computing "occupation zones" based on the spatial coverage of a fort's garrison that takes into account troop type (infantry vs. cavalry) and railroad networks (Downs 2015).[18] Finally, our primary variable measures the average monthly garrison size from May 1865 until December of the relevant year of analysis, thus taking into account the total (cumulative) exposure to military occupation.[19]

We cannot confidently argue that garrison locations were truly exogeneous (see Chacón et. al 2021, 334 for a discussion of this issue). The location of forts that predated the war may have been established using criteria (e.g., terrain, accessibility to transportation networks) that are correlated with our outcome variables. Even more problematic are forts and barracks that were established during the war and

Reconstruction, as well as garrisons headquartered in or near cities. We are in the process of gathering systematic data on pre-war forts and Reconstruction-era deployments that may help us to resolve this issue.

We have a variety of measures of Black political engagement and achievement. One is the extent of Black (male) voter registration for the late 1860s. Later data is not disaggregated by race, so for subsequent years we use Republican voting. This is an imperfect proxy for Black voting, for two reasons. First, not all Black voters voted for the Republicans, whether out of choice or due to coercion and/or social pressure from powerful elites. Second, many white people voted Republican, whether out of conviction or political expedience. We cannot really assess the role of Black partisan choice for Democrats, or coercion, and it is difficult to distinguish Black from white Republican voters. We also look at the election of Black officeholders, using the comprehensive compendium put together by Eric Foner of some 1500 Black officeholders during Reconstruction, which we have digitized and geolocated (Foner 1993). The purpose in all these instances is to see if, controlling for a battery of socio-economic and racial characteristics, Black voter registration rates, Republican voting, and Black officeholders were likely to be higher in areas with more, or a more consistent, federal presence.[20]

Our interest in the potentially mitigating role of economic structure in the agrarian South leads us to look at crops grown. Our preferred source of such data is the

Food and Agriculture Organization's measure of Global Agro-Ecological Zones.[21] As these zones are determined entirely on "well-established land evaluation principles…based on plant eco-physiological characteristics, climatic and edaphic requirements of crops" they are very plausibly exogenous to any socio-economic or political factors that might affect agricultural activity. There may be concerns that these might not be appropriate for economic analysis, as agricultural decision-making takes relative prices and price movements into account. However, we find that the cotton suitability measure yields results nearly identical to those for other measures which are less plausibly exogenous, such as cotton output and sown acreage. For this reason, we use the cotton suitability measure.

We evaluate the impact of Reconstruction on Black socio-economic achievements using two sets of potential explanatory variables: the impact of Black and Republican political power, and the impact of federal troops and Freedmen's Bureau presence. The former is based on the expectation that where Blacks and their Republican allies were more powerful, they would act to enforce and protect Black access to economic opportunity. The latter is based on the expectation that troops and Bureau agents could help enforce and protect Black economic rights. In the first instance we use as potential explanations the political outcomes drawn from the prior analysis; in the second we use the same Federal-presence variables as above.

We use several measures to gauge Black ability to take advantage of economic opportunities. These include basic indicators of socio-economic advancement, such as school attendance, literacy, occupation, and property ownership. They also include important data on position on the agricultural ladder: from lowest to highest, laborer, sharecropper, tenant, and owner. We also use a composite measure of occupational status, based on indices created by sociologists to allow comparisons over time. Details on all measures, and explanations as necessary, are presented in the Appendix (to come).

4. Analysis: Federal presence and Black political empowerment

The first step in our analysis is to assess how Black political behavior and accomplishments were affected by the presence of federal authorities. Specifically, we consider the effect of the proximity of federal troops to a county, and the location of a Freedmen's Bureau office within a county, on voter registration and voting by Black men[22] across the south.[23] The Freedmen's Bureau was established in 1865 and was active in assisting the transition to freedom of formerly enslaved people until Congress ceased to fund it in 1872. Despite its closure, the legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau branches, in the form of registered Black voters and schools, extends well beyond 1872.

We also employ several measures of Black political engagement. These include Republican vote share in the presidential elections of 1872 and 1876. We focus on the presidential election rather than congressional elections because the candidates were

uniform across districts. Correlation between Republican presidential and congressional voting was high across counties in the elections of 1872 and 1876 (with a correlation coefficient greater than 0.9). We recognize that this is an indirect method of assessing Black political engagement. Although former slaves were not the only Republican voters, once enfranchised they voted overwhelmingly for the party of Lincoln.[24] Hence, Republican voting should reflect, at least in part, Black political engagement.

We also employ additional measures of Black political engagement. Black voters as a percentage of a country's registered voters over the period 1867-1869 comes from Trevon Logan, using data from Hume and Gough (2008) on voter registration for electing delegates to the state constitutional conventions. Unfortunately, this source is only available in aggregate for this three-year period and so we are unable to follow its evolution over time.

We present an analysis of Republican presidential voting patterns in the election of 1872 in Table 1.[25] The most parsimonious specification (column 1) regresses Republican presidential vote in 1872 on the Black share of the county's population. The estimated coefficient is positive, in accordance with priors, and significant at the one percent level.

We then add to this specification a variety of variables to assess the effect of the presence of occupying troops on Republican presidential voting. We hypothesize that

the presence of federal troops made it easier for Black men to vote despite local hostility and, hence, increase Republican vote share. Ideally, we would confront this with data on Black voter turnout, however, we do not have turnout data by race. The coefficients on the average number of troops (measured in thousands) until 1872 (columns 2-4) is positive and significantly different from zero. The estimated coefficients range from 0.07 to 0.10, suggesting that an additional 100 troops (a bit more than one standard deviation) might have increased the Republican share of the vote by about one percent. Given the relatively tight margins in Virginia, where Grant won by one percent, and Tennessee, where he lost by 2.2 percent, the effect of troops might have been important. In columns 3 and 4, we add a dummy variable reflecting the presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office in the county. The coefficients on the presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office are positive and significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that a Bureau office was correlated with higher Black turnout and a 5 percent increase in Republican vote share. Finally, we add a variable representing an index of the suitability of the land in the county for cotton production, which we interpret as a measure of the strength of the incumbent plantation elite. The estimated coefficient on this variable is negative and significantly different from zero.

Interestingly, the signs of the estimated coefficients in regressions on the 1876 presidential election (not reported) are the same. However, the estimated coefficient on federal troops is no longer significantly different from zero and the coefficient on

Freedmen's Bureaus is closer to 3 percent than 5 percent, suggesting that the impact of federal intervention was already on the wane by 1876. It is perhaps not surprising, given that the Freedmen's Bureau was closed in 1872, that its influence had waned by 1876. It is nonetheless interesting in that it suggests that the legacy of a Freedmen's Bureau office, in terms of registered voters and schools, for example, outlasted the existence of the office itself. And again, in accordance with our priors, Republican voting was lower in areas that were likely still dominated by a cotton elite.

Table 2 focuses on a different measure of Black political empowerment: the proportion of a county's registered voters that were Black during 1867-69, the period when southern states were electing delegates to conventions to draw up new constitutions. The extent of Black voter registration is arguably a more direct measure of political empowerment than Republican voting. As noted above, however, voter registration data by race only exist for this three-year period.

In column 1 the coefficient on the percentage of Blacks in the general population is statistically indistinguishable from one, indicating that the percentage of Black voter registration varied one-for-one with the proportion of Black residents. Further, the R-squared indicates that the variation in that one variable explains 90 percent of the variation in the percentage of Black registered voters. In subsequent specifications, the coefficient remains quite close to one and is robust to the inclusion of additional variables. Including a dummy variable indicating whether the county had a Freedmen's

Bureau office (columns 2-5) increases the share of Black registered voters among all voters by about 2 percent. Average troops in the area until 1867, 1868, and 1869 (columns 3-5) have a positive and statistically significant effect, suggesting that 1000 extra troops increased Back voter registration by between 2.5 and 4.5 percent.

Table 3 presents our analysis of the effects of Reconstruction on the election of Black politicians to local and state office, using data from Foner (1993). Probit regressions in columns 1, 2, 3 look at the period 1867-70 and columns 4, 5, and 6 look at the period 1867-77. During both periods, the number of federal troops through the end of the period and the presence of the Freedmen's Bureau have a positive and significant effect on the likelihood of having a Black elected local official.

The results in this section provide a consistent picture. Our least direct measure of Black political empowerment, Republican voting, suggests it was greatest where there were high concentrations of Black people, a greater presence of federal troops, and a local Freedmen's Bureau office. More direct measures similarly suggest that federal presence, in terms of troops and Freedmen's Bureau offices, contributed to Black empowerment via voter registration (Table 2), and electing Black local and state office holders (Table 3).

5. Analysis: Federal presence and Black socio-economic achievement

The second step in our analysis is to assess the impact of Reconstruction on the ability of freed people (and southern Black people more generally) to take advantage of

newly available economic opportunities. We assess two channels by which Reconstruction might have had an impact. First, we follow up our previous analysis of the effects of federal presence on political outcomes by examining the impact of greater levels of Black political participation and success on Black socio-economic achievement. As shown above, greater Black political participation was associated with an increased likelihood of having Black officeholders. Given this, we assess the broader expectation that Black political participation – along with the participation of white Republican supporters and allies –allowed Black southerners to better take advantage of economic opportunities in agriculture, business, the professions, and elsewhere. The second channel is the direct impact of a federal presence on the ability of Black southerners to avail themselves of economic opportunities. The secondary literature suggests that the presence of Freedmen's Bureau offices and federal troops may have provided support and protection for Black citizens as they attempted to buy land, start businesses, enforce contracts, and otherwise advance socio-economically.

One of the first orders of business for freed people was to redress the forced illiteracy of the slavery era. Thousands of schools were built by a combination of local governments and residents, the Freedmen's Bureau, and northern charities. It took substantial effort to establish and staff a school – especially when local white citizens, and perhaps some layers of government, were not sympathetic. Where Republicans had greater political power, we expect higher levels of school attendance; we also expect

that the proximity of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau will assist in expanding schooling. These expectations are consistent with recent findings by other scholars: Logan 2020 finds that more Black officeholders led to higher taxation and higher literacy; Chacón and Jensen 2020 (and Jensen et al. forthcoming) similarly find the Black political power was associated with higher levels of taxation. (In the following section we provide a more detailed analysis of local taxation and schooling.)

The first column of Tables 4 shows that Black political participation – as reflected in Republican voting in the 1876 presidential election – had a positive impact on school attendance by Black boys between the ages of 6 and 16 in 1880. We do not show here ancillary analyses that reinforce these findings: Results for Black girls' school attendance, and for the difference between Blacks and whites on this measure, are very similar. The election of Black officeholders in the county had a similar effect (not reported). The impact of the share of Black men registered to vote in 1867-1869 is very similar (not reported), albeit more weakly and less consistently, suggesting that Blacks voted almost exclusively Republican. As elsewhere, we include controls for the Black share of the county population, and for the share of the Black population in the county that was urban. More heavily Black counties show less progress – perhaps due to the greater poverty of such counties – while counties with a larger Black urban population show more progress, presumably due to the generally higher incomes of urban areas.

The federal presence also had a powerful impact on Black schooling – in this case, especially the Freedmen's Bureau, one of whose principal tasks was in fact to establish and staff schools. The second column of Table 4 demonstrates that both the presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office and federal troop presence were associated with increased school attendance. (We include a control for the total population of the county to account for the possibility that more populous counties would have larger garrisons.) Note that there is undoubtedly some collinearity between the two federal measures, as forts—hence troops-- and Bureau offices were sometimes co-located (correlation coefficient 0.27). As before, the evidence (not reported) is very similar for girls' school attendance. When, in column 3, both Black political participation and Federal presence are included in the analysis, each has an impact on schooling. Results (not reported here) are analogous for the difference between white and Black males in the region.

We have argued that economic characteristics of the environment can mitigate the impact of these political changes. We expect that both political reform and federal presence will have less effect in areas where the cotton planter elite retained its economic, social, and political influence. We explore this in the fourth column of Table 4, adding indicators of cotton suitability to the basic models previously discussed. As can be seen, being in a cotton region reduced the impact of both Black political participation and Federal presence on Black educational advancement.

Apart from the statistical significance of these effects, it is valuable to evaluate their substantive importance. Drawing from the full model in column 4 of Table 4, a one standard deviation increase in Republican voting in a county (from a mean of 34 to 54 percent) was associated with a 2.4 percentage point increase in the percent of Black boys in school (from 20.1 to 22.5 percent). The presence of the Freedmen's Bureau in a county was associated with a 1.8 percentage point increase in school attendance, while a 100-troop increase in average presence (a bit more than a standard deviation) is associated with a 0.8 percentage point increase in school attendance. And a one standard deviation increase in cotton suitability was associated with at 1.3 percentage point decline in school attendance.[26] These numbers strike us as meaningful in the context of an educational system built almost from nothing, and given the difficulties faced by freed people in gaining access to educational opportunities in the face of widespread hostility from local white supremacists. We return in more detail to the schooling issue in section 7 below.

Basic education was one step on the socio-economic ladder. Other important steps include professionalization, whether through higher education or technical training, and the acquisition of property. Given the strongly agricultural nature of the region, it was particularly important for Black farmers to move up the agricultural ladder, away from the highly dependent status of laborers and sharecroppers and toward the more independent ranks of tenants and owner-operators.[27] We evaluate the

impact of Black political engagement, and federal presence, on these indicators of socio-economic advance with a series of interrelated measures.

We look at Black progress in occupational attainment and status by looking at both high status/pay and low status/pay workers. Our index of high pay/high status occupations includes most individuals categorized as professionals, managers, and skilled craftsmen, along with some others; details will be available in a forthcoming appendix.[28] At the other end of the occupational ladder, we look at the share of Black workers who were occupied as farm laborers, typically the lowest status and earning occupation in the region.

Table 5 shows the effects of the same set of explanatory variables that we used for education in Table 4 on these occupational and earnings measures for Black males in the South; columns 4 and 5, respectively, show the impact of the full range of explanatory variables on the share of Black workers in higher pay/status occupations and as farm laborers. The tables illustrate a similar impact to that of education and literacy. Both Black political engagement, as indicated by Republican voting, and federal presence, as indicated by the presence of troops and the Freedmen's Bureau, are associated with substantially higher occupational achievements by Black men. As expected, the impact of our explanatory variables is reversed in relation to the proportion of the Black population that is farm laborers. And again, these effects are significantly reduced in the South's cotton plantation regions – increased in the case of

farm labor. As before, results (not reported here) are analogous for the difference between white and Black males in the region.

The principal independent variables had a significant impact on the share of Black men in higher-earnings and higher-status occupations, and (in the opposite direction) on the share of Black men who were farm laborers. The presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office increased the share of Black men in higher-level occupations by about 1.3 percent, from a mean of 6.1 percent, while the positive effect of Republican voting was about 0.6 percentage points; together these two were associated with nearly a one-third increase in occupational advancement. Cotton suitability reduced the share by about 0.7 percent. On the other hand, an analogous increase in Republican voting was associated with a 3.3 percentage point *reduction* in the share of Black males who were farm laborers (from a mean of 34.9 percent of Black workers), the presence of the Freedmen's Bureau troop presence with a 2.2 percentage point reduction. Again, these are hardly enormous numbers – but remember that these achievements are measured barely three years after Reconstruction ended.

The principal indicators of economic achievement available for the immediate post-Reconstruction period are occupational; this is especially true for indicators that distinguish by race. There are other indices that attempt to measure occupational advance, but they are all closely related. Below we take advantage of the greater array of data available in later periods to explore the potential for an enduring impact of

Reconstruction. For now, we conclude that both Black enfranchisement and political activity, and the presence of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau, had a positive impact on the schooling of Black children, and on Black occupational and professional advancement.

6. Analysis of persistence

Our next step is to assess the extent to which Black socio-economic advances in the Reconstruction era persisted as white supremacists disenfranchised Black men. We can take advantage of richer data included in the census starting in 1900 (the 1890 census is unavailable). This is especially true of information about Black achievements in the all-important farm sector, which dominated the Southern economy. We start with an assessment of the potential lasting impact of Reconstruction on Black movement up the agricultural ladder.

Table 6 looks at factors affecting Black farm ownership. Most Black farmers were laborers, sharecroppers, or tenants, but a substantial number were able to obtain land in the decades after Emancipation. There is strong reason to believe that Black political power, as well as federal presence, would have been important to this process. To purchase and hold land typically required legal support to establish title and may have required official support in the event of challenges to title. Several thousand Black farmers took advantage of homesteading possibilities, which could be legally and politically complex. There is evidence that in some areas white farmers resisted Black

land ownership, which would have made political power and federal support particularly important. For example, an Army lieutenant in Florida who had enforced the right of a group of freed people to homestead there reported that local planters "will do all in their power to keep [land] out of the hands of the Freedmen. Although they will probably commit no overt act as long as there is a show of Military force in the state."[29] There is little doubt that the cotton planter elite strongly favored sharecropping and tenancy and resisted anything that would have broken up large landed estates.

Table 6 demonstrates that substantial Black progress up the agricultural ladder, and, in particular, toward farm ownership, are associated with the factors we relate to a more intense enforcement of Reconstruction principles. Both Reconstruction-era Black political participation, as measured by Republican voting, and the presence of Federal troops are strongly associated with higher levels of Black farm ownership. The Reconstruction-era presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office is also so associated, although less strongly and without statistical significance. The impact is quite substantial: a one standard deviation increase in the Republican voting variable is associated with a 5.1 percentage point increase in the share of Black farmers who owned, from the mean of 33.7 percent; a 100-person increase in troops with a 4.4 percentage point increase, and the cotton variable with a 4.7 percentage point decrease. The impact on sharecropping – in the opposite direction – was even larger: for example,

increasing troops by 100 is associated with a 7 percentage point decrease in the share of Black farmers who were sharecroppers.[30]

Table 6 does not fully address the *persistence* of Reconstruction effects over time, inasmuch as the measure used here of Black farm ownership is first available in 1900. However, it does indicate that the greater presence of Reconstruction-era institutions was reflected in greater Black economic advance in agriculture 25 years after Reconstruction ended. In the next section, however, we evaluate the evolution of schooling and its impact over a similarly long period of time, with specifications that are able to get more directly at a plausible mechanism by which the Reconstruction experience might have had long-lasting effects.

We can, however, assess the persistence of the occupational effects we documented in the previous section. The data on progress up the agricultural ladder gives a more differentiated view of the simple picture we had with the 1880 results. The occupational data we evaluated in table 5 are available continually into the twentieth century, which allows us to see if the positive impact on occupational success that we detected in 1880, in the immediate aftermath of Reconstruction, lasted after the reversal of Reconstruction and the disenfranchisement of Black men. Column 5 looks at our occupational index, and shows persistent effects of Reconstruction-era trends. While the variable measuring Freedmen's Bureau offices does not have the expected effect, both Republican voting in 1876 and the presence of Federal troops through 1876 increase the

occupational status of Black people in the counties in question. Substantively, a standard deviation increase in troop presence is associated with a 1.2 percentage point increase in the share of Black workers in high-status occupations (from the mean of 9.1%), cotton suitability with a 1.5 percentage point decrease. Because data on Black homeownership is first available for 1900, we include that (column 6) to indicate an enduring impact on property ownership even beyond that in the agricultural sector. This effect is again substantial, with a standard deviation in Republican voting associated with a 3.4 percentage point increase in Black homeownership (from its mean of 30.5%); the presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office is associated with a 4.5 percentage point increase, and cotton suitability with a 1.1 percentage point decrease. All these results continue to hold for 1910 data. There is still an impact of our Reconstruction-era measures in 1920, but as would be expected it is smaller and weaker – by then World War One and the start of the Great Migration had intervened.

In a way this is a normatively disappointing result, as the fact that Reconstruction-era advantages continued for decades afterwards suggests that there was little catching up by the poorer counties and individuals after Reconstruction – a finding in line with other work about the socio-economic retardation caused by Jim Crow (Althoff and Reichardt 2022). However, it does speak to the enduring impact of a period of Black political empowerment and Federal support.

7. A mechanism: local public taxation and local public goods

In this section we evaluate a plausible mechanism by which Black political activity and federal presence might have affected contemporaneous and persistent socio-economic conditions in the South after the Civil War. One of the most important goals of Black and Republican voters and politicians was to expand the provision of local public goods that had been neglected under white supremacy. Primary among these was schooling, which had been non-existent or illegal for slaves and very limited for others. State and local taxation, which funded schooling, were hotly contested: taxes, almost exclusively on property, were paid by the wealthy white elite while Reconstruction-era local government spending was targeted at poorer Black and white citizens. Much of the white mobilization against Reconstruction presented itself as an anti-tax movement (Chacón and Jensen 2020; Jensen et al. forthcoming). In these circumstances, state and local governments under Republican control typically raised tax rates to finance a wider array of public goods, while the restoration of white supremacy under the Democrats led either to a decline in taxes or a diversion of the revenue to purposes in line with the white elite's needs, such as public universities (ibid).

We expect county governments controlled by the Republicans to raise local property taxes to expand local public goods, especially schooling. We anticipate that the expansion of schooling will have both contemporaneous and lasting effects, allowing

newly literate or better educated freed people access to previously unavailable economic opportunities. We have data on local taxes from the decennial census. We focus on data from 1870, which reflect a period of substantial Republican political success. Ideally, we would have data from mid-decade, as 1880 data come after the restoration of Democratic predominance, however, these data were only gathered for the decennial censuses. Because of this timing issue, we use voting behavior from the 1870 House of Representatives election, since the 1868 presidential election is too early, and the 1872 presidential is too late, for our purposes, because our tax data pre-date that election.

Our first step is to confirm the association between federal presence, Black voter registration, and Republican voting, and the impact of these voting data on the local tax rate. In Table 7, columns 1 and 2 indicate the familiar association of troop presence and the Freedmen's Bureau with higher levels of Black voter registration and Republican voting. Substantively, a one standard deviation (about hundred-person) increase in troops presence is associated with a 1.6 percentage point increase in Republican voting; the presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office, with a 2.6 percentage point increase (the average 1870 House Republican vote share was 39 percent). Republican voting is associated with a substantially higher local tax rate, as can be seen from columns 3 and 4 of Table 7. Inasmuch as the outcome variable is a county policy (local taxes were almost exclusively set at the county level), [31] we also show the impact of the county

having a Republican plurality in the 1870 House election. Although we do not have local voting data, we think it is safe to presume that a county with a Republican House plurality will have had a Republican county government. (To be safe we have looked at the impact of counties with substantial – ten percent – Republican margins of victory, which yielded similar results.) To get a sense of the actual importance of the relationship, the average local property tax was 0.77 mills (tax rate in dollars per thousand dollars of assessed property). Column 4 indicates that having a Republican plurality in the county was associated with a 0.25 mill increase, equivalent to about a one-third increase in the average local tax rate, a substantial increase.

We also explore the role of Black officeholders. Table 8, columns 1 and 2, show that a federal presence was associated with a higher number of Black politicians in local office, even controlling for Republican voting and a Republican plurality in the county. Column 3 indicates that counties with more Black officeholders also had higher local tax rates – again, even controlling for having a Republican plurality. This confirms, as indicated by the work of Trevon Logan (2020), that Black politicians were especially likely to adopt policies seen as important by freed people. Adding a wide variety of controls does not appreciably affect these results. In some analyses, the proportion of free Blacks in the population as of 1860, and the share of Black people living in urban areas, has a positive effect on these outcomes, but their impact does not affect our results.

Our next step is to explore the effect of higher local taxes on the provision of local public goods, especially schooling. We do not have data on other local public goods, but public education was an overriding concern of freed people and Reconstruction governments more generally. It should also be noted that the Freedmen's Bureau was explicitly tasked with assisting in the creation of public schools for freed children (and for others as well), and that Federal troops were often enlisted in the task of establishing and staffing elementary schools. In Table 9, column 1, we see that – not surprisingly – higher local taxes are associated with more Black boys attending school. Substantively, a one standard deviation increase in the local tax rate (again, about a one third increase in the average tax rate) is associated with a .11 standard deviation increase in school attendance – from about 7 to 8 percent.[32] Again, given the central role of the Freedmen's Bureau in public education in this period, it is not surprising that the presence of a Bureau field office is associated with a 2.5 percentage point (i.e., more than one-third) increase in the school attendance rate.

We next turn to analyze the extent to which this increased investment in Black children's education had a lasting impact on the socio-economic achievements of future generations of Black citizens. Column 2 of Table 9 shows, again as expected, that higher levels of school attendance in 1870 are associated with a higher level of adult full literacy in 1910 (results are analogous for 1880 and 1900, and for Black girls and women). So too is the Reconstruction-era presence of a Freedmen's Bureau office; we

can speculate that this indicates a greater likelihood that more schools were established in the area at that time. The effects are not huge, but neither are they trivial, especially given that this is an outcome forty years after the initial "treatment." A one standard deviation increase in Black boys' 1870 school attendance is associated with a .13 standard deviation increase in Black men's full literacy, equivalent to about a 1.5 percentage point increase (over the 60.7 percent mean); the Freedman's Bureau dummy leads to a similar 1.6 percentage point increase. Other indicators of socio-economic achievement show a similar pattern: the impact of Reconstruction-era tax and schooling policy on school enrollment had a long-term effect on occupational and agricultural advancement. This is indicated in columns 3, 4, and 5 of Table 9. Column 3 uses our indicator of higher-status occupation, showing that higher levels of school attendance in 1870 are associated with more Black people in higher-status occupations, more Black farmers who are owners, and fewer Black farmers who are tenants (due to lack of clarity among enumerators, we cannot distinguish between cash tenants and share tenants/sharecroppers). Cotton mitigates the positive impact and exacerbates the negative one. Substantively, a one standard deviation increase in school attendance is associated with 10 percent of a standard deviation increase in occupational status; it is associated with nearly one-fifth of a standard deviation increase in farm ownership and decrease in tenancy, equivalent to a five percentage point increase in ownership and decrease in tenancy. We obtain similar results for other measures of socio-economic

advancement, such as particular occupations and homeownership. The results are robust to the inclusion of all relevant controls; in almost all cases, they are substantially reduced in cotton plantation regions.

In this section, we have suggested a mechanism by which Black political engagement and federal presence might have not only improved the position of freed people during Reconstruction, but have had a more enduring impact. Black political power was greater where there was a federal presence, of troops or the Freedmen's Bureau or both; that greater political power was commonly employed to raise taxes on local (largely wealthy white) property owners in order to fund local public goods; higher taxes allowed for more extensive educational facilities, more Black children in school, and higher levels of Black literacy. The greater local educational advantages obtained by people in these areas were, in ways that are not hard to imagine, reflected in greater occupational, social, and economic achievements over subsequent decades.

We have shown that Black political participation, and the presence of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau, had a positive impact on the possibilities for Black social and economic advancement. Black political influence, as well as federal presence, are associated with increased schooling for Black children, greater literacy of Black adults, and a higher occupational status for Black workers and farmers. These effects persisted for decades – at least until 1910. We now turn to some considerations about the broader theoretical implications of our findings.

8. Discussion and implications

The evidence presented here strongly suggests that the major institutional changes put in place during Reconstruction had many of the positive effects intended by their architects. Reconstruction facilitated, for a time at least, some Black political empowerment. Combined with a strong federal presence, via troops and Freedmen's Bureau offices, political empowerment had important and lasting socio-economic effects. Despite the opposition of a substantial segment of the southern population, Black people and their allies in the former Confederacy were able to expand massively the access of Black children to education, and to facilitate access to occupational and professional opportunities from which they had previously been excluded. Although white supremacists eventually reversed the enfranchisement of most Black men, the socio-economic impact of the advances achieved during and after Reconstruction endured for decades.

Although the achievements of the Reconstruction period and its aftermath are impressive and encouraging, the fact that they persisted may have ambiguous implications. On the one hand, it is significant that areas and people that had done better during and after Reconstruction were able to maintain their accomplishments. On the other hand, it is disheartening to acknowledge that this implies that areas that had fallen behind earlier did not close the gap in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries despite substantial general national and regional socio-economic progress.

This is, however, consistent with findings, such as those in Althoff and Reichardt 2022 and Collins et al. 2022, that the white supremacist restrictions imposed in the Jim Crow era that began in the 1890s dramatically limited Black socio-economic development such that unequal development as of 1880 was perpetuated after that.

It is nonetheless clear that Reconstruction had an important impact on Black political engagement and socio-economic achievement, and that impact persisted for decades. Counties with a greater presence of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau had higher levels of Black political participation and Republican voting and were more likely to elect Black politicians to office. Greater Black political engagement and greater federal presence were also associated with greater school attendance by Black children, greater literacy among Black adults, and a larger share of Black workers in higher-status and higher-earnings occupations. Increased Black political power did not last, of course, and by the early 1900s Southern white supremacists had disenfranchised virtually all Black men. However, the socio-economic impact of Reconstruction appears to have persisted into the twentieth century. In areas that had experienced greater Black political participation and more Federal presence, a substantially larger share of Black workers continued be occupied in higher-status and higher-earnings jobs and more Black males were fully literate; in addition, a larger share of Black households owned their own homes, a larger share of Black farmers were landowners, and fewer were sharecroppers.

This analysis sheds light on a crucially important period in the troubled history of American race relations. It demonstrates that freedmen were often able to take advantage of opportunities for political participation and for social and economic achievement. It also demonstrates that the support of the federal military and bureaucracy was crucial in ensuring access to these opportunities. This makes the withdrawal of federal support for Black citizens and the rise of the Jim Crow regime in the 1890s and early 1900s all the more tragic, as it suggests that the loss of government support and the onset of systematic legalized racial oppression dramatically retarded further advances. Indeed, a recent study (Althoff and Reichardt 2022) demonstrates that "states' Jim Crow regimes sharply reduced Black families' economic progress."

There are potential theoretical lessons beyond this specific case. Reconstruction policies -- extension of the franchise to Black men, extension of full rights of citizenship to freed people, and the presence of Federal troops and officials as enforcers – represented a major political-institutional change in the South. At some level the post-Civil War experience appears akin to the imposition of new political institutions after military defeat – a topic on which most analysts agree that success is unlikely (see Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2007, and Downes 2021, for examples). In Reconstruction, of course, the new institutions were strongly favored by a very large segment of the population; indeed, Reconstruction could be seen as an example of an (imposed) expansion of the franchise. There is an enormous literature on reasons for the

expansion of the franchise, and more broadly on democratization, to which this experience seems only tangentially relevant. However, Reconstruction provides quite a clear opportunity to analyze the *effects* of franchise expansion and democratization. A wide range of analyses typically find that these reforms lead to improvements in the socio-economic position of those newly empowered.[33]

The evidence presented here is very strongly in line with the proposition that political-institutional reforms to expand the franchise, especially to disadvantaged segments of the population, lead to improvements in the lot of those newly empowered. We have suggested at least one mechanism by which Reconstruction-era reforms may have led to increases in socio-economic advances, and more generally it seems fair to assume that the Black educational and occupational achievements of the period were in large part the result of purposive efforts by Republican local and state governments. Work by others (see especially Logan 2020, Chacón and Jensen 2020, and Jensen et al. forthcoming) connects greater Black political power to increased taxation, and we agree with their presumption that this was largely to increase the supply of local public goods, including education.

An important implication of the Reconstruction experience, however, is that formal institutional change is not enough. At one level this is obvious, since the franchise was eventually stolen back by white supremacists. More to the point, the fact that the presence of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau had a powerful impact

on political and socio-economic outcomes indicates the importance of organized state enforcement of the rights expanded by formal legal changes. This suggests an important amendment, even corrective, to a simple – perhaps naïve – focus on institutions and institutional change as in and of themselves catalysts of political and socio-economic change. In the Reconstruction context, institutional reform required the support of military might and dedicated government officials.

Another important corrective to the purely institutional view is that the underlying economic structure of the region affected the impact of the institutional changes. Counties in the cotton plantation zone lagged well behind the rest of the South, so much so that in some of our analyses being in a cotton region negated the impact of Black political engagement and federal presence. This is consistent with much of the secondary literature, which typically characterizes cotton plantations as enclaves within which the planter elite could exercise major pressure on Black workers and could often manipulate local institutions to produce desired political results almost at will.[34] This was borne out as Reconstruction ended and the Democrats reasserted themselves: the most solidly Democratic areas were often in the cotton-farming Black Belt, because the planters could either coerce their workers to vote Democratic or use fraud to erase Black votes. The production structure affected social and political power, and could in some instances overcome institutional change.[35]

9. Conclusion

Reconstruction brought massive, revolutionary, institutional change to the American South. Political enfranchisement was enacted legally but required a federal presence to enforce it militarily and promote it administratively via troops and the Freedmen's Bureau. Enfranchisement allowed Black men to contribute to Republican victories at the federal level and to elect state and local officeholders sympathetic to their needs, including Black officeholders. Even as the newly achieved political gains were reversed in the 1890s and 1900s, some of these advances seemed to have lived on, albeit briefly, in the shape of bi-racial political coalitions, such as the Readjusters in Virginia and the Fusionists in North Carolina. Even in the absence of explicit political empowerment, Reconstruction and the federal presence had direct, important, and long-lasting positive effects on a whole range of Black socio-economic outcomes, including schooling, literacy, occupational status, and land ownership.

Substantial further empirical work is needed to build on and clarify our results and those of others. It will be important to look in more detail at the placement of federal forts prior to the Civil War and the stationing (and abandoning) of garrisons during the War and Reconstruction periods (as well as Freedmen's Bureau offices during Reconstruction) to try to evaluate the extent to which fort and/or troop placement was endogenous. It will be important to supplement the analysis of Black empowerment with more work on the converse—lynchings and other anti-Black violence. There were potentially important differences among states and military

districts that deserve further analysis, along with more detailed assessments of the role of entrenched elite power by examining inequality in relative landholdings.

The evidence here demonstrates the profound and lasting impact that changes in political institutions can have on both political and socio-economic outcomes. However, it also suggests some cautionary notes. First, it makes clear that changing institutions – laws and rules – is not sufficient to overcome historical disadvantages and entrenched opposition. In the case of Reconstruction, it took the organized power of the state – including military power, in ways that mattered at the very local level -- to make meaningful and lasting change possible. Second, it makes clear that the underlying economic structure of an area can have a powerful impact on its susceptibility to reform. More specifically, the effects of political-institutional change can be stymied or blocked by entrenched interests, such as the cotton planter elite represented in the South. We believe that all these lessons remain relevant, and are of profound interest and value, today.

Table 1

Federal presence and Republican presidential vote share, 1872

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Percent population Black	0.536***	0.531***	0.475***	0.569***
	(0.0300)	(0.0300)	(0.0332)	(0.0328)
Average troops until 1872 (1000)		0.0982**	0.0651*	0.0857**
		(0.0398)	(0.0363)	(0.0342)
Freedmen's Bureau office			0.0563***	0.0509***
			(0.0129)	(0.0127)
Cotton suitability				-0.00317***
				(0.000479)
Constant	0.272***	0.269***	0.266***	0.372***
	(0.0138)	(0.0139)	(0.0139)	(0.0226)
Observations	839	839	839	839
R-squared	0.325	0.327	0.341	0.382

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2

Federal presence and Black share of registered voters, 1867-69

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Percent population Black	0.998***	0.975***	0.975***	0.974***	0.974***
	(0.00962)	(0.0136)	(0.0132)	(0.0132)	(0.0132)
Freedmen's Bureau office		0.0236***	0.0206***	0.0205***	0.0205***
		(0.00704)	(0.00697)	(0.00698)	(0.00698)
Average troops until 1867(1000)			0.0256***		
			(0.00507)		
Average troops until 1868(1000)				0.0367***	
				(0.00726)	
Average troops until 1869(1000)					0.0477***
					(0.00942)
Constant	0.0418***	0.0400***	0.0379***	0.0379***	0.0379***
	(0.00447)	(0.00428)	(0.00424)	(0.00423)	(0.00423)
Observations	739	739	739	739	739
R-squared	0.908	0.910	0.911	0.911	0.911

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, **
p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3

Federal presence and election of Black local official during 1867-70 or 1866-77

VARIABLES	(1) 11867-70	(2) 1867-70	(3) 1867-70	(4) 1867-77	(5) 1867-77	(6) 1867-77
Blacks as share of registered voters 1867-69	3.600***	3.633***	3.261***	3.852***	3.860***	3.536***
	(0.357)	(0.393)	(0.423)	(0.338)	(0.359)	(0.380)
Average troops until 1870		0.00135***	0.00114**			
		(0.000504)	(0.000454)			
Freedmen's Bureau office			0.708***			0.550***
			(0.180)			(0.156)
Average troops until 1877					0.00245***	0.00209**
					(0.000887)	(0.000815)
Constant	-3.014***	-3.175***	-3.441***	-2.967***	-3.084***	-3.252***
	(0.213)	(0.239)	(0.288)	(0.200)	(0.215)	(0.237)
Observations	739	739	739	739	739	739
Pseudo R2	0.231	0.289	0.320	0.255	0.296	0.316

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4
Federal presence and Black boys' school attendance, 1880

VARIABLES	(1) Share of Black boys (6-16) attending school 1880	(2) Share of Black boys (6-16) attending school 1880	(3) Share of Black boys (6-16) attending school 1880	(4) Share of Black boys (6-16) attending school 1880
Republican Presidential votes 1876	0.143***		0.134***	0.120***
	(0.0317)		(0.0317)	(0.0326)
Average occupying troops through 1876 (thousands)		0.0824**	0.0667*	0.0741*
		(0.0386)	(0.0391)	(0.0392)
Freedmen's Bureau office		0.0221***	0.0186**	0.0175**
		(0.00853)	(0.00844)	(0.00840)
Percent population Black 1880	-0.0740***	-0.0424**	-0.111***	-0.0804***
	(0.0273)	(0.0199)	(0.0264)	(0.0293)
Percent Black population urban 1880	0.158***	0.0677	0.0693	0.0762
	(0.0403)	(0.0483)	(0.0480)	(0.0493)
Total population 1880		1.79e-06***	1.48e-06***	1.43e-06***
		(3.87e-07)	(3.67e-07)	(3.71e-07)
Cotton suitability				-0.000861***
				(0.000306)
Constant	0.178***	0.178***	0.166***	0.198***
	(0.00942)	(0.0102)	(0.00993)	(0.0158)
Observations	848	867	848	848
R-squared	0.065	0.059	0.087	0.095

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5
Federal presence and Black occupational advancement, 1880

VARIABLES	(1) Percent of Black men in higher occupations 1880	(2) Percent of Black men in higher occupations 1880	(3) Percent of Black men in higher occupations 1880	(4) Percent of Black men in higher occupations 1880	(5) Percent of Black men farm laborers 1880
Republican Presidential votes 1876	0.0436***		0.0393**	0.0315**	-0.152***
	(0.0157)		(0.0157)	(0.0158)	(0.0334)
Average occupying troops through 1876 (thousands)		0.0291	0.0270	0.0310	-0.0496
		(0.0283)	(0.0268)	(0.0271)	(0.0793)
Freedmen's Bureau office		0.0152***	0.0143***	0.0137**	-0.0217*
		(0.00550)	(0.00551)	(0.00546)	(0.0113)
Percent population Black 1880	-0.0385***	-0.0413***	-0.0563***	-0.0398***	0.133***
	(0.0115)	(0.00901)	(0.0118)	(0.0122)	(0.0314)
Percent Black population urban 1880	0.219***	0.189***	0.188***	0.192***	-0.379***
	(0.0281)	(0.0331)	(0.0329)	(0.0336)	(0.0277)
Total population 1880		3.65e-07	3.48e-07	3.20e-07	1.19e-06***
		(2.49e-07)	(2.46e-07)	(2.48e-07)	(3.87e-07)
Cotton suitability				-0.000465**	-0.000137
				(0.000184)	(0.000389)
Constant	0.0545***	0.0586***	0.0512***	0.0687***	0.359***
	(0.00500)	(0.00561)	(0.00590)	(0.0103)	(0.0193)
Observations	848	870	848	848	848
R-squared	0.156	0.149	0.168	0.176	0.133

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6
Federal presence and Black farm ownership, share tenancy, occupational advancement, and homeownership, 1900

VARIABLES	(1) Percent of Black farmers who own 1900	(2) Percent of Black farmers who own 1900	(3) Percent of Black farmers who own 1900	(4) Percent of Black farmers who are share tenants 1900	(5) Percent of Black men in higher occupations 1900	(6) Percent of Blacks who are homeowners 1900
Republican Presidential votes 1876	0.228***		0.183***	-0.178***	0.0337*	0.166***
	(0.0407)		(0.0418)	(0.0411)	(0.0173)	(0.0295)
Average occupying troops through 1876 (thousands)		0.326 **	0.325***	-0.423***	0.0565***	0.0976
		(0.142)	(0.123)	(0.0892)	(0.0214)	(0.102)
Freedmen's Bureau office		0.0302*	0.0163	0.0105	-0.00506	0.0448***
		(0.0162)	(0.0157)	(0.0158)	(0.00464)	(0.0106)
Percent population Black 1900	-0.453***	-0.357***	-0.353***	-0.221***	-0.0673***	-0.338***
	(0.0309)	(0.0341)	(0.0374)	(0.0389)	(0.0138)	(0.0269)
Percent Black population urban 1900	0.0112	0.134**	0.171**	-0.185***	0.208***	0.0102
	(0.0531)	(0.0668)	(0.0666)	(0.0509)	(0.0239)	(0.0290)
Total population 1900		-3.46e-06***	-3.56e-06***	2.08e-06**	5.07e-07*	-2.09e-06***
		(1.04e-06)	(1.03e-06)	(9.29e-07)	(2.62e-07)	(4.00e-07)
Cotton suitability			-0.00222***	0.00239***	-0.000774***	-0.000717*
			(0.000569)	(0.000575)	(0.000217)	(0.000373)
Constant	0.418***	0.497***	0.537***	0.405***	0.107***	0.415***
	(0.0187)	(0.0208)	(0.0299)	(0.0290)	(0.0110)	(0.0186)
Observations	839	852	839	839	847	844
R-squared	0.158	0.176	0.223	0.134	0.261	0.245

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7
Federal presence and Black voter registration and Republican House votes, 1870;
Republican votes 1870 and Local tax rates 1870

VARIABLES	(1) % reg voters Black 1867-1869	(2) Republican House vote 1870	(3) Local tax rate 1870	(4) Local tax rate 1870
Troops until 1870 (1000)	.05501***	.095046***		
	.0011346	.0036015		
Freedmen's Bureau office	0.0221***	0.0261*		
	(0.00695)	(0.0150)		
%pop Black 1870	0.953***	0.570***	0.000107	0.000485
	(0.0143)	(0.0411)	(0.00174)	(0.00199)
Cotton suitability	0.000826***	-0.00201***	-1.17e-06	-4.06e-06
	(0.000169)	(0.000572)	(1.62e-05)	(1.67e-05)
Republican HoR vote 1870			0.00514***	
			(0.00148)	
Repub HoR plurality 1870				0.00250***
				(0.000577)
Constant	0.00810	0.264***	0.00491***	0.00608***
	(0.00644)	(0.0267)	(0.00100)	(0.000801)
Observations	739	718	704	704
R-squared	0.914	0.303	0.022	0.024

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 8
Federal presence, Republican voting, Black officeholders, and Local tax rates, 1870

VARIABLES	(1) Local Blk officeholders 1870	(2) Local Blk officeholders 1870	(3) Local tax rate 1870
Republican HoR vote 1870	0.206***		
	(0.0751)		
Troops until 1870 (1000)	.0518734	.0525388	.000097
	.0434309	.0426008	.0001232
Freedmen's Bureau office	0.124***	0.123***	0.000477
	(0.0370)	(0.0361)	(0.000514)
% pop Black 1870	0.274**	0.238**	-0.000655
	(0.111)	(0.114)	(0.00200)
Cotton suitability	-0.00105	-0.00104	-2.64e-06
	(0.00105)	(0.00100)	(1.67e-05)
Republican HoR plurality 1870		0.152**	0.00219***
		(0.0593)	(0.000573)
Local Black officeholders 1870			0.00162***
			(0.000546)
Constant	-0.0993**	-0.0582*	0.00604***
	(0.0421)	(0.0346)	(0.000823)
Observations	718	718	704
R-squared	0.064	0.070	0.044

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 9
Federal presence and Black boys' school attendance 1870;
Black male adult literacy, occupational status, and agricultural status 1910

VARIABLES	(1) Black boys schooling 1870	(2) Adult black Male literacy 1910	(3) Black males Higher occupations 1910	(4) Black farmowners % of total 1910	(5) Black tenant farmers % of total 1910
Local tax rate, 1870	1.314**				
	(0.627)				
Freedmen's Bur. Office	0.0253***	0.0156**			
	(0.00752)	(0.00678)			
%population Back 1870	-0.00948				
	(0.0201)				
Cotton suitability	-0.000483**	0.00110***	-0.00125***	-0.00366***	0.00365***
	(0.000220)	(0.000276)	(0.000276)	(0.000615)	(0.000623)
Black boys school 1870		0.142***	0.101***	0.512***	-0.525***
		(0.0548)	(0.0370)	(0.0868)	(0.0888)
%population Black 1910		-0.221***	-0.0648***	-0.349***	0.352***
		(0.0174)	(0.0142)	(0.0385)	(0.0389)
%Black pop urban 1910			0.145***	-0.0391	0.0317
			(0.0196)	(0.0482)	(0.0491)
Constant	0.0725***	0.614***	0.138***	0.656***	0.341***
	(0.00997)	(0.0132)	(0.0151)	(0.0261)	(0.0263)
Observations	824	843	842	835	835
R-squared	0.038	0.197	0.180	0.230	0.229

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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Notes

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[1] The essential sources on the period are DuBois 1935, Foner 1988, and Hahn 2003.

[2] Heersink and Jenkins 2020 provide an excellent history of the Republican Party in the South; Chapter 3 covers the Reconstruction era.

[3] Kousser's classic 1974 study has been updated and expanded by Perman 2001, who provides a detailed analysis of disenfranchisement, including data on the dramatic drop in both Black and white voting.

[4] See section 7 and the important work by Logan 2020, Chacon and Jensen 2020, Jensen et al forthcoming, and Stewart and Kitchens 2021.

[5] Sterling ed. 1994, pages 10-11.

[6] Quoted in White 2017, page 69. Thanks to Ken Shepsle for bringing this quote to our attention.

[7] See Foner 2007, Chapter 3 for details.

[8] Rodrigue 2001 is the classic study. See also Hahn 2003 p. 346ff on rice, and p. 349ff on sugar. Hahn emphasizes the fact that cotton sharecroppers and tenants were scattered and disunited, while sugar and rice workers were a unified labor force.

[9] Kerr-Ritchie 1999 details the evolution of tobacco.

[10] Perman 2001 refers to the process as "disfranchisement," both because it was the term used at the time and because it makes clear that the victims had their rights to vote

rescinded (rather than not originally given); although the point seems reasonable, we use the more common term.

[11] Richardson 1986, page 119

[12] Gates 2019 provides an excellent general survey.

[13] Jensen et al., forthcoming, analyzes the South over a century (1820-1910) more generally but includes substantial analysis (building on previous work) of the impact of Black enfranchisement on state fiscal policies.

[14] Ross 2015 and Savoia and Sen 2021 are surveys.

[15] Sokoloff and Engerman 2000 and the collection of articles in Engerman and Sokoloff 2011 are the canonical statements; see also the very relevant discussion of post-slavery sugar islands in Dippel et al. 2020.

[16] Recent canonical statements are in Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, and Acemoglu et al. 2005.

[17] On post-civil war settlements see, for example, the surveys in Cederman and Vogt 2017 and Fortna and Huang 2012; on post-war state-building there are entire research handbooks, such as Williams and Sterio 2020. Byman 2021 looks explicitly at Reconstruction in the South as an exercise in the study of post-conflict political violence; Stewart and Kitchens 2021 see it as an example of revolutionary social transformation, with findings very much in line with ours.

[18] This monumental study is accompanied by an equally monumental database and website, available at https://www.mappingoccupation.org/ .

[19] We exclude four entities in West Texas (El Paso, Presidio, "Bexar District", and "Unorganized Territory of Young") and South Florida (Monroe), where the army was not involved in Reconstruction.

[20] While Black voting, as indicated by voting for the Republican Party, declined gradually after the 1870s. and dramatically once the white supremacist state constitutions were put in place in the 1890s and early 1900s, there are a couple of potentially relevant exceptions. In some parts of the South, bi-racial political movements persisted and were successful even as the white supremacists dominated elsewhere. In the 1880s, a bi-racial Readjusters movement dominated Virginia politics. For much of the 1890s a bi-racial Fusionist movement between the People's (Populist) and Republican parties dominated North Carolina politics. The Populists varied from place to place; in some cases, they were bi-racial, in others they were rabid white supremacists. The Knights of Labor were typically bi-racial, and quite active in the South. In future work we hope to use more local data to see if these experiences had an impact and left a mark.

[21] Available online at https://gaez.fao.org/

[22] We note that even where Blacks were enfranchised, this did not extend to women.

[23] Not all Blacks in states where slavery was legal were enslaved prior to emancipation; however, the vast majority were. The exceptions were Delaware (where 91.7% of Blacks were free in 1860), the District of Columbia (77.8%), and Maryland (49.1%), which did not secede and are not included in our data set. Of the rest, the percentage of free Blacks was highest in Virginia (10.6%) and North Carolina (8.4%). The average state-level figure for the rest of the south was less than 2 percent. Berlin (1974: 137).

[24] Peter D. Klingman and David T. Geithman (1979: 172): "The overwhelming loyalty of the black community to the Republican Party in the wake of the Civil War is above question."

[25] We conduct a similar analysis of the 1876 election, with broadly similar results; however the coefficients on troops are not significantly different from zero.

[26] Note that the Freedmen's Bureau is a dummy (there either was or was not an office), so its effects can be directly interpreted.

[27] Racially distinguished data on landholding is lacking for the early period. Du Bois 1901 provides an extraordinarily detailed account of the situation in Georgia as of 1900, which illustrates the heterogeneity of experience in that state. Further analysis of the Georgia data would be instructive.

[28] There are many such indices, typically developed by sociologists, that provide a rough sense of occupational ranking. The one of greatest relevance to our purpose is the Occupational Income Score developed by IPUMS, "a constructed income score based on

the relative economic standing of occupations in 1950" (See this site for details: https://usa.ipums.org/usa/chapter4/chapter4.shtml). As this uses 1950 standings, we built our own occupational index, based on our understanding of late nineteenth-century conditions. The two indices are highly correlated (.72), and results using the IPUMS index are effectively similar to those presented here although many of the occupational categories would not have been relevant in the late nineteenth century.

[29] As quoted in Lanza 1999

[30] This is actually "share tenants" and is as close as we can get to sharecropping, as the census enumerators were not clear on the concept.

[31] Some local taxes were set by municipalities, but there were very few such instances. We include municipality taxes in local taxes. See Chacón and Jensen 2020 and Jensen et al. forthcoming for more details.

[32] The share of Black boys in school may seem low. But the Census data measure the share of Black boys between the ages of 6 and 16 in school. Very few children attended a full eleven years of school – three or four years was more the norm – so that a 7 percent current attendance rate implies a much higher share of children who would have attended school for a typical length of time.

[33] The literature is enormous. For an economic-development context see Brown and Hunter 1999; for an early American example see Ansolabehere et al. 2022.

[34] The central role of the plantation elite in disenfranchisement is detailed in Perman 2001.

[35] As mentioned above, the rice and sugar plantation zones were quite different. In future work we hope to explore this variation in more detail.