MEANINGS AND IMPACTS OF CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS IN THE U.S. SOUTH

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Abstract

How do citizens interpret contentious symbols that pervade their community? And what downstream effects does state protection of these symbols have on how citizens of different backgrounds feel they belong in their community? We approach these questions through the lens of race and Confederate monuments in the American South. We rely on two original surveys to illustrate 1) the symbolic meanings Americans attach to these monuments and 2) how state protection of them impacts residents' feelings of belonging. We find that perceptions of Confederate monuments vary by race: White U.S. residents are drastically less likely to perceive them as symbolic of racial injustice than are Black U.S. residents. Further, state protection of Confederate monuments leads to a diminished sense of belonging among Blacks, while leaving Whites unaffected. This research moves beyond scholarship examining simple support for or opposition toward contentious symbols, developing a deeper understanding of what meaning those symbols can hold for individuals and what their impacts are on individuals' feelings of belonging and engagement in their communities.

Keywords: Confederate Monuments, Belonging, Political Symbols, African Americans, Race, Southern Politics, Social Identity, Commemoration

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2017, the City of New Orleans removed four Confederate statues amidst public outcry and organized protests. Pro-statue advocates, such as the Monumental Task Committee, claimed the statues represented an important part of the state's identity, Southern heritage, and history. Others supporting the statues argued they

merely memorialized young soldiers who died for a cause they believed in. Opposition groups, such as the Take 'Em Down NOLA Coalition, argued that the statues were an offensive celebration of the Confederacy and the institutional racial oppression it sought to preserve. Echoing Jeremy Waldron's (2012) argument that these monuments are harmful reminders of oppression, the Coalition contended they create unsafe spaces and have lasting implications for Black people. New Orleans is not alone in this debate. After deadly attacks on Black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015 and on protesters of a Confederate monument in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, the fate of Confederate symbols in public spaces has become a contentious issue in American politics.

In the context of pluralist, multiracial democracies—from Brazil to the United Kingdom and South Africa to the United States—where understandings of history vary across social groups, monuments are the subject of debate about whether such symbolic structures create politically divided societies and enforce past inequalities. Memorials and other public symbols are reflections of what a society or a particular group cares to remember. They are politically important because they embody a public recognition that victims are worthy of mourning (Butler 2006) and because they can be degrading or alienating to minority groups (Schulz 2019). Moreover, when governments endorse and protect monuments, they signal whom they choose to remember and mourn, signifying that some are more worthy of remembrance than others. As the New Orleans debate shows, supporters and opponents of Confederate symbols perceive the meaning of these symbols very differently. Given these widely disparate social meanings claimed by political factions, how does the public perceive or "read" Confederate symbols? And if these statues carry meaning for ordinary people, what are the consequences of their persistent presence and protection by the state?

In this article, we seek to further the understanding of perceptions of contentious public symbols and the consequences they have for citizens. Focusing on the example of Confederate monuments in the South—their meaning and their effects on belonging—we add to the literature on political symbols while also contributing to scholarly and popular debates about Confederate symbols in particular. Relying on an original national panel survey, we first explore how Black and White Americans perceive Confederate monuments (Study 1). Survey responses reveal important differences between Blacks and Whites on what these symbols fundamentally represent. Second, due to the rising number of states that have passed laws restricting the removal or alteration of public Confederate monuments, we examine how state government protection of these symbols affects citizens' relationship with their community (Study 2). We rely on an online experiment to determine how these preservation laws impact Black and White individuals' sense of belonging in their state. By examining the impacts of these symbols on how people of various backgrounds and beliefs engage in their communities, we gain more insight into the broader implications of maintaining such contentious monuments within pluralistic societies.

CONFEDERATE SYMBOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

Political and historical symbols are commonplace in the United States, from war memorials to street names. In 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 1740 symbols of the Confederacy, including over 700 statues on public property (SPLC 2018). Statues' presence on public property—like courthouse grounds and parks—marks a community's commitment, at least at the time of their erection, to the ideals the symbols espouse (Bodnar 1992). Many Confederate statues were built and

funded by civil society groups like the Confederate Daughters of America and Sons of Confederate Veterans. Most such monuments were built not immediately after the Civil War, when remembrance of soldiers for their surviving families would seem most timely, but decades later. A majority of these symbols were built in three waves: the early Jim Crow Era, the interwar period, and the Civil Rights Era (SPLC 2018). Each of these waves coincided with a strong White backlash to social change, suggesting that the statues were intended to reinforce White supremacy under threat.

Critics of Confederate symbols argue they glorify White supremacy and support continued racial oppression. In contrast, supporters argue they are not about race but instead symbolize Southern heritage or honor soldiers who died fighting for a "Lost Cause." Though many Americans cite these race-blind narratives as justification for their support of Confederate symbols (Webster and Leib, 2001), prior research demonstrates that race and racial prejudice explain a large portion of the variation in attitudes towards these symbols. Whites are far more likely to support the Confederate flag than are Blacks (Cooper and Knotts, 2006) and racial prejudice towards Blacks predicts Whites' support of the presence of the Confederate flag within their state flag (Clark 1997; Orey 2004). Moreover, in contrast to monument proponents' claims that these symbols promote Southern heritage, Southern identity is not as strong of a predictor of support for the flag as is racial prejudice (Reingold and Wike, 1998; Strother et al., 2017).

Given the racial history of Confederate symbols, it is unsurprising that Americans' attitudes about them are closely connected to race and racial attitudes. Public symbols like flags and logos are often used to cue commonly recognized political ideas, such as when candidates use American flags to demonstrate their patriotism (Kalmoe and Gross, 2016) or when group members strategically invoke political symbols in order to signal the appearance of group unity (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016). If Confederate symbols are implicitly or explicitly connected to race and racial attitudes, then they might be signaling group membership or exclusion, depending on how viewers of the symbols interpret them.

In this paper, we contribute to the literature on Confederate symbols in several ways. First, while the literature has largely focused on Confederate symbols in the form of flags, we focus on monuments. Unlike flags, monuments are distinct in that they usually occupy public spaces over which governments have authority. Where flags may be flown on state and local government grounds, they are also frequently flown or worn by ordinary people. Moreover, in contrast to other symbols of the Confederacy (e.g. building names), monuments are visually integrated into the built landscape, and therefore often are both physically and politically difficult to remove. Although both Confederate monuments and Confederate flags are politically contentious, only monuments have been the subject of widespread statutes prohibiting their removal. Finally, empirical scholarship on this topic almost exclusively focuses on explaining simple support for or opposition to Confederate symbols. We go a step beyond measuring support and opposition, instead asking people what these monuments fundamentally *mean* to them.

STUDY 1: THE MEANINGS OF CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS

While previous research finds that race and racial attitudes shape support for Confederate symbols, we expect that these factors must also shape the meaning people ascribe to them. Social meaning, a novel framework, is different from attitudes and ideology—it is a perception or interpretation of an object or idea, formed around a narrative that is

circulated by elites and/or the public. Social meaning is how individuals "read" an object, message, or symbol. It is informed by concepts from memory studies such as "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1980), or the common understanding of history shared by a group of people. Social meaning can also include counter-narratives, such as the work of historian David Blight (2001) revealing the White supremacist origins of Confederate monuments. The framework of social meaning allows us to parse out how different individuals and groups can have different understandings of what an historical symbol or idea "really means."

To understand variation in the perception of Confederate monuments' social meaning, we choose to focus on Blacks and Whites because these two racial groups are most closely connected to the history of American slavery and the Civil War. Whites and Blacks may perceive Confederate statues differently in part because their under-standing of race and racism often differs. Blacks are more likely than Whites to report repeated experiences of racism and discrimination, as well as to identify systemic forms of racism as prominent (Cooper and Knotts, 2017; Kinder and Sanders, 1996). Anec-dotal accounts suggest that although there are some Whites who see Confederate statues through the lens of racial justice, many Whites are disinclined to believe these statues are intentionally racially antagonistic (Norris 2018). Thus, it is likely that Blacks are more likely to perceive Confederate monuments through the lens of racial oppression than are Whites.

Common narratives that are invoked by proponents of commemoration of the Confederacy include the Lost Cause and the "heritage not hate" narrative. The Lost Cause social meaning frames the Civil War as a noble attempt to protect the liberty of the South from interference by the federal government and portrays Confederate soldiers as martyrs for a noble but lost cause (Wilson 2009). This narrative obscures the fact that the economy of slavery was the primary motivation for Southern secession (McPherson 2003). Similarly, the "heritage not hate" narrative claims that support for Confederate symbols is a celebration of Southern heritage, not of racial hatred. Such race-blind narratives allow Whites to justify support for these monuments without violating the norm of racial equality (Mendelberg 2001). In other words, the "heritage not hate" and Lost Cause social meanings allow Whites to support these monuments without appearing explicitly racist. Given the fact that Whites are significantly more likely to support Confederate symbols than are Blacks (Cooper and Knotts, 2006), Whites may be more likely than Blacks to perceive monuments through these more positive narratives that obscure the role of racial injustice.

But among Whites, what should shape perceptions of meaning? Because the strongest support for Confederate symbols comes from Whites with negative attitudes towards Blacks (Strother et al., 2017), belief in pro-monument narratives should be most prominent among Whites with negative attitudes towards Blacks. Racial resentment in particular should shape these attitudes, as it is the dominant form of racism we see today. Racial resentment reflects subtle prejudice, as compared to old-fashioned racism or "Jim-Crow racism," which included opposition to racial intermarriage and ideas about of Blacks' biological inferiority (Kinder and Sanders, 1996). Shifting norms following the Civil Rights Movement led old-fashioned racism to dissipate. In its place, racial resentment emerged, allowing Whites to suggest, for example, that Black people lack civic virtue, that they do not believe in working hard to earn their way up the ladder, or that succeeding in America is simply about individual initiative. In other words, although the norm of equality discourages Whites from being outwardly racist, by employing notions of American individualism and work ethic they are able to express their resentment of Blacks in ways that are less likely to violate social norms.

By ignoring the role of racial oppression in the Civil War, these narratives allow racially resentful Whites to gloss over historic and continued discrimination experienced by Blacks. Research on motivated reasoning certainly makes this elision of narratives that challenge worldview plausible (Taber and Lodge, 2006). Thus, we anticipate racially resentful Whites may be more likely to view Confederate statues as symbols of heritage or the Lost Cause than are less racially resentful Whites. On the other hand, a majority of Whites in the United States demonstrate racial sympathy, defined as feelings of distress over Black suffering (Chudy 2017). Thus, we anticipate Whites with little or no racial resentment may be more likely to perceive monuments as symbols of racial injustice compared to their more resentful counterparts.[1]

We have identified several social meanings that Americans ascribe to Confederate monuments based on the meanings that are often discussed in public discourse, and suggest how race and racial attitudes are implicated in those perceptions. In the following study, we take an exploratory approach to identifying the variety of social meanings Americans ascribe to Confederate monuments and what individual-level factors inform those perceptions.

Data and Methods

Data for Study 1 were collected through a panel survey in October of 2018 (Wave 1) and January of 2019 (Wave 2). Respondents were an opt-in panel recruited online by the survey firm Qualtrics. Both sets of respondents were recruited to match national distributions on gender, age, education, income, and race. Respondents were asked to fill out a survey asking about their political and social attitudes and were told that researchers intended to better understand how voting-age Americans think about politics. A total of 929 respondents participated in both waves. Wave 1 included a series of items measuring demographic characteristics as well as political predispositions. These included race, gender, income, age, education, self-identified ideology (recorded on a 7-point scale from "extremely liberal" to "extremely conservative"), and partisanship (7-point scale from "Strong Democrat" to "Strong Republican").[2] We include these in our models as control variables, consistent with previous work modeling attitudes towards Confederate symbols (Cooper and Knotts, 2006; Hutchings et al., 2010; Strother et al., 2017). Summary statistics for our sample are provided in Appendix B.

Because region of residence may shape how people perceive Confederate monuments, we asked respondents to report their region of residence in the United States (Southeast, Midwest, West, and Northeast) as well as how important being a part of that region was to them (ranked on a 5-point scale from "not important at all" to "extremely important"). Higher values of this variable indicated the respondent felt the region was more important to them. Finally, racial resentment was measured using four standard resentment questions (Kinder and Sanders, 1996) that were combined into an additive scale (α=.78). Higher scores indicate that respondents have more resentment toward Blacks. All variables were re-scaled to vary between 0 and 1 in order to help facilitate interpretation.

To identify meanings that ordinary Americans attach to Confederate monuments, we asked them directly. In Wave 1, respondents were asked to provide an open-ended written answer to the following: "There has been a lot of talk recently about Confederate monuments or memorials in the United States. What do you think Confederate monuments or memorials symbolize? That is, what do you think they are really about?" From these open-ended responses, we identified five of the most prominent themes: Southern heritage/pride ("heritage not hate"), racial injustice/slavery, those who

sacrificed themselves for a cause they believed in (Lost Cause), history that we cannot change/is not reflective of today, and past events or mistakes to be learned from.[3] This bottom-up approach is useful to us because it allows for respondents to tell us what these symbols signify to them, not vice versa. By allowing respondents to give open-ended responses, we are more confident that we are observing the wide range of social meanings individuals assign to these monuments.

In Wave 2, we asked the same meaning question from Wave 1. However, this time respondents were asked to select one or more meanings from the five categories identified in Wave 1, as well as "not sure" and "other." Responses were recoded using a dichotomous variable, where for each of the five meanings, respondents are given a 1 if they checked that meaning and 0 if they did not.

Results

We begin our analysis of perceptions of Confederate monuments by asking whether perceptions of social meaning vary by race. We are particularly interested in perceptions of meaning among those in the South, where the debate over Confederate monuments is most palpable. We limit our analysis to those living in Southeastern states, giving us a sample of 198 White respondents and 59 Black respondents. We also perform all analyses in Study 1 with our much larger national sample; our findings do not substantively change. Recall that in Wave 2 of our survey subjects were asked to choose at least one or more meanings they associated with Confederate monuments. Out of the five social meaning categories, the median number of meanings selected was 1 and the mean was 1.74.

Table 1. Chi Square Analysis of Confederate Monument Meaning Among Whites & Blacks in the South.

Social Meaning			Percent	Chi-Square Value	P-Value	Sig.
				Chi-Square Results		
Injustice				12.64	0.00	***
Racial Injustice/Slavery	White		15.1			
	Black		37.3			
Heritage not Hate				5.56	0.02	**
Southern Heritage/Pride	White		40.0			
	Black		22.0			
Lost Cause				11.29	0.00	***
Those who sacrificed themselves	White		37.2			
for a cause they believed in	Black		20.7			
History				4.85	0.08	*
History that we cannot change	White		42.4			
is not reflective of today	Black		28.8			
Learn				10.96	0.00	***
Past events to be learned from	White		45.5			
	Black		20.3			

***p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1.
Note: Percents indicate the percent of Whites and Blacks that indicated Confederate monuments meant each of the five social meanings. Percents do not add to 100. Whites (N=198). Blacks (N=59).

Table 1 presents the percent of respondents in each racial group (White or Black) in the South who selected each of the five social meanings. Clear patterns emerge. First, almost 40% of Blacks in the South believe these monuments represent racial injustice, while less than 15% of Whites do. Consistently, a larger share of White than Black respondents indicated that Confederate monuments symbolized all meanings other than racial injustice/slavery: Southern heritage, Lost Cause, history that we cannot change, and history to be learned from. To determine if the differences in meanings significantly vary by race, we use a Chi Square test for each of the five categories. For every social meaning, the low p-value indicates that race and social meaning are not independent of each other and there is a statistically significant relationship between them. Notably, using a chi-square analysis of the entire sample of Southern Whites and Blacks did not indicate any significant patterns across lines of gender, income, or age. As anticipated, it appears that race is the single most important fault line when it comes to perceptions of the meaning of Confederate monuments.

While the results from this survey suggest Southern Whites associate monuments with narratives not directly about slavery, to a lesser extent Black Southerners do as well. Over 20% of Black respondents said the monuments represented Southern heritage or a Lost Cause, a surprising finding. Perhaps this is because these narratives are ubiquitous in Southern culture. For example, official standards for education by state vary widely, where teaching materials in the South are far less likely to mention slavery than those in other areas of the country (Heim 2019). Respondents who currently live in the South, of course, have not necessarily always lived in the South. However, it is probable that, on average, those who live in the South have been more exposed to Southern culture and narratives than those living outside in non-Southern states. We opted to see how Blacks living in the South versus non-South in our study perceived these meanings differently. Among non-Southern Blacks, only 11% said monuments represent "heritage not hate" and 13% said it represents a Lost Cause. Thus, it appears that both race *and* geography are important factors in shaping how Americans see these symbols.

Our next step is to examine the variation in Southern White respondents' perceptions of Confederate monuments. Given the dichotomous structure of our dependent variables (coded 1 if they believed monuments have that meaning and 0 if not), we estimate a logistic regression model with several controls. The results of our five models (one for each meaning) are shown in Table 2. The model results indicate that some demographic characteristics are significant, but not consistently so across all models. For example, as age increases, Southern Whites are significantly less likely to believe monuments represent racial injustice and more likely to believe they represent Southern heritage. Southern White women are significantly less likely than Southern White men to perceive the monuments as a symbol of heritage. Interestingly, neither education nor income levels significantly shaped the meanings White respondents associated with Confederate monuments.

Some of the most powerful predictors of beliefs about the meaning of Confederate monuments are racial attitudes. The relationship between racial resentment and believing monuments represent racial injustice/slavery is negative and statistically significant (Model 1), indicating that White Southerners with greater racial resentment are less likely to cite racial injustice as a meaning of Confederate monuments. For Models 2 and 3, there is a positive and statistically significant coefficient for racial resentment, suggesting that Whites with higher resentment are more likely to believe Confederate monuments signify Southern heritage or a Lost Cause for which people sacrificed their lives than are Whites with lower racial resentment.

To better illustrate the relationship between perceived meaning and racial attitudes, we plot predicted probabilities from Models 1 and 2 in Figure 1, where all control

Table 2. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Perception of Meaning of Confederate Monuments Among Southern Whites.

	Injustice	Heritage	Lost Cause	History	Learn
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	2.42*	0.77	–1.78*	–3.09***	–1.44
	(1.35)	(1.07)	(1.03)	(1.05)	(0.97)
Age	–2.30**	1.52*	0.70	0.00	–0.28
	(1.06)	(0.81)	(0.78)	(0.74)	(0.73)
Female	–0.24	–0.90**	–0.16	0.48	0.14
	(0.50)	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.34)
Education	–0.34	–1.30	–0.54	1.15	–0.11
	(1.34)	(1.05)	(0.99)	(0.98)	(0.94)
Income	0.01	–0.88	–1.20	–0.65	–0.14
	(1.03)	(0.77)	(0.77)	(0.74)	(0.71)
Ideology	–0.52	–0.56	1.65**	1.37*	0.30
	(0.91)	(0.75)	(0.73)	(0.71)	(0.66)
Partisanship	–0.16	0.11	–0.01	0.03	0.06
	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)
South Important	0.23	–1.28***	0.05	0.97**	1.07**
	(0.67)	(0.49)	(0.47)	(0.46)	(0.45)
Racial Resentment	–3.08***	1.80**	1.90**	0.55	0.55
	(1.05)	(0.78)	(0.74)	(0.71)	(0.69)
AIC	146.06	227.57	236.58	247.71	256.18
BIC	174.70	256.21	265.21	276.35	284.82
Log Likelihood	–64.03	–104.79	–109.29	–114.86	–119.09
Deviance	128.06	209.57	218.58	229.71	238.18
Num. obs.	178	178	178	178	178

Results include logistic regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$

variables are set to their means. The effects are substantial. At the low end of the racial resentment scale, the predicted probability of believing Confederate monuments represent Southern heritage is 20%; at the highest end, the predicted probability almost triples to 58% (Figure 1a). Conversely, Figure 1b shows that White individuals at the low end of the resentment scale are predicted to believe the monuments represent racial injustice/slavery at 41%, while those with the highest resentment have a 4% probability of ascribing this meaning to Confederate monuments.

Models 4 and 5 in Table 2 tell a different story. Racial resentment has no significant effect on Southern Whites' propensity to believe Confederate monuments represent history that is in the past/cannot be changed (Model 4) or past events to be learned from (Model 5). Rather, one of the strongest predictors for both of these models is the degree to which respondents felt being from the South was important to them: those who feel a stronger Southern identity are more likely to judge these monuments as symbolizing history or as about past events to be learned from.

Discussion

The findings from Study 1 offer us insight into what Americans see when they encounter Confederate monuments, as well as help identify the individual factors that influence this
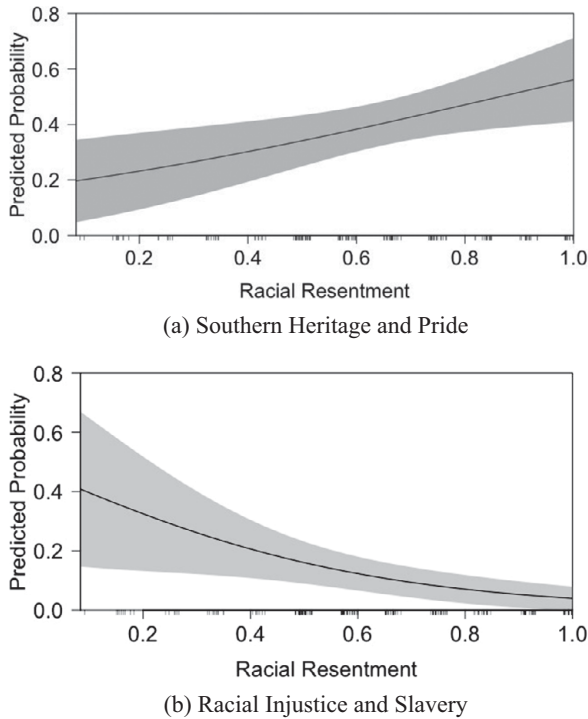
(a) Southern Heritage and Pride

(b) Racial Injustice and Slavery

Fig. 1. Predicted Probability of Perceived Meaning of Confederate Monuments among Whites in the South. Higher values of racial resentment indicate more resentment. Rug plot indicates observations.

perception. Ultimately, Blacks and Whites in the South have substantially different opinions on what Confederate monuments symbolize: Blacks are more likely to identify them as symbols of racial oppression, whereas Whites tend to associate them with more positive, "white-washed" meanings such as "heritage not hate" or history that is not reflective of today. Further, we find that racial resentment strongly shapes how Whites perceive Confederate monuments. Whites who are more racially resentful toward Blacks are less likely to see these statues as symbolizing racial oppression and more likely to perceive them as symbols of Southern heritage or a Lost Cause. Although many White proponents of Confederate monuments defend their support with such ostensibly race-blind narratives, our findings suggest racial attitudes may actually have a lot to do with how they choose to perceive these monuments.

We also identify two social meanings that are less apparent in public discourse but were frequently mentioned by our survey respondents: the idea that the monuments simply represent a history that cannot be changed by removing monuments, as well as the idea that monuments can stand as a cautionary tale. While these meanings are more likely to be endorsed by Whites than Blacks, we found no evidence they are necessarily grounded in racial animus. Rather, Southern Whites that say the South is important to them (who have strong Southern identities) are more likely to endorse these meanings. One possible explanation for this pattern of White endorsement of the "history" and "learn" narratives may be connected to belonging: perhaps Whites' Southern identity is driving a sense of belonging in their Southern community and contributing to comfort around these two narratives about Confederate memorials. Moreover, these two

narratives are relatively scrubbed of references to race or slavery, perhaps explaining their lack of correlation with racial resentment.

In this exploratory study, the analysis confirms our expectations that social meanings ascribed to Confederate symbols vary by racial identities. By moving beyond examining simple support for or opposition to Confederate symbols, Study 1 provides a more nuanced understanding of attitudes towards Confederate symbols. Our results paint a picture of a deeply divided public on the issue of Confederate monuments—not only over whether they should be removed, a topic of frequent discussion, but over what they fundamentally mean. Because we have gained more insight into what these monuments represent to individuals, we are better situated to explore how their continuing presence and preservation affect them. Building upon these findings, Study 2 examines Confederate monuments' impacts on feelings of belonging.

STUDY 2: THE EFFECT OF STATE PROTECTION OF CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS ON FEELINGS OF BELONGING

At the time of writing, seven Southern states have laws in place preventing the alteration or removal of memorials to various wars, including the Civil War. Four others have witnessed failed attempts at similar bills passing. While many of these contain no *explicit* mention of Confederate statues, others do. In Virginia, a provision forbids placing dedications to the Union on Confederate monuments, and the Georgia law specifically forbids the alteration or destruction of the Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial Carving. However, we have reason to suspect that even seemingly Confederate-neutral laws are in part an effort to protect Confederate statues. This is largely due to their timing: of the seven states with monument preservation laws, five have passed since 2000, two of these since 2015—the same year of the Charleston mass shooting and removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina state capitol grounds.

When states pass or attempt to pass monument preservation laws, they move from an implicit endorsement of Confederate symbols (by allowing statues to continue standing on public property) to an explicit endorsement (by endowing the symbols with formal legal protections). In Study 1, we found that Blacks are significantly more likely to perceive these monuments as symbols of racial oppression than are Whites. Given these disparate perceptions, state endorsement of monuments sends very different signals to citizens of different racial backgrounds. In the following section, we explore how these state laws, which are typically clustered in states within the American South, shape Black and White people's feelings of belonging in their state.

Symbols and Belonging

In 2017, controversy around a Confederate monument on a public university campus in North Carolina escalated. Chair of the Carolina Black Caucus, O. J. McGhee, argued that the monument "was erected purposefully to remind all who walked in its shadow, that no matter our advancements as a people, we would always be viewed as not equal and unwelcome" (Philip 2017). McGhee's statement succinctly captures the question of belonging: what is the impact of these government protected symbols on how citizens of different racial identities feel they belong?

Belonging as a distinct concept has only recently emerged in scholarship in political science, including studies examining belonging in the context of immigrant attitudes about their new countries and cultural origins (Brettell 2006), political and cultural boundaries that nation-states draw as a means of subjugating the population (Callahan

2004; Diamant 2004), and on feelings of belonging in international organizations, such as the European Union (Henderson 2007). However, there is no scholarly consensus on a clear definition of belonging (Croucher 2018). Previous work makes a distinction between externally-defined belonging and internal feelings of belonging, the former being a formal or instrumental membership in a group (nation, state, etc.) and the latter an informal, affective, or self-defined identity (Brettell 2006; Migdal 2004; Yuval-Davis 2011). Some scholars describe belonging as simple as feelings of attachment to a place (Isin 2002) or feeling at home (Yuval-Davis 2011). Belonging has also been described as component to self-identification within a social group (Brettell 2006; Phinney 1992). Indeed, at first glance, belonging might resemble social identity, but belonging and identity should be treated as separate concepts. Belonging's focus on feeling "at home" in a place and on feelings of inclusion in a community distinguishes it from social identity, which describes one's connection between feelings of membership in a group and feelings of self-identity (Antonsich 2010). For example, an individual might have a strong social identity with a group without feeling like she belongs in that community, such as an immigrant who feels they are an American but does not feel fully welcomed by the United States. On the other hand, an individual might have strong feelings of belonging without having a strong social identity, such an immigrant who feels welcomed by her new country but retains her social identity from her home country.

Belonging is also intertwined with spatial and political inclusion or exclusion; where there is belonging, there must be boundaries that circumscribe it (Croucher 2018). Belonging is often inherently spatial, with demarcations of who does and does not belong written into the landscape. Thus, as a visual means of communication, our physical environments convey boundaries by (re)producing notions about who belongs (Price 2004; Trudeau 2006).

Our understanding of belonging is multidimensional. We borrow Joel S. Migdal's (2004) definition of belonging as a "discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of sociospatial inclusion/exclusion" (p. 645). This suggests belonging is not a mere attachment to a place, but rather an attachment to and a feeling of being welcomed into the community. Therefore, we understand belonging to be 1) externally defined by the community, which may provide groups with formal markers of membership such as citizenship or positive recognition (Markell 2003) and 2) internally defined by individuals feeling "at home" in a community (Brettell 2006; Migdal 2004). Finally, our conception of belonging recognizes the ability of visual symbols to draw boundaries that welcome some and shun others. Although belonging can be hindered or cultivated by a variety of political messages and policies, we are particularly interested in the ability of governments to hinder or cultivate belonging through the protection of political symbols such as Confederate monuments.

We focus on feelings of belonging in the community, specifically the state in which one lives, because states have long been the political battlegrounds for contentious symbols, such as Confederate flags and monuments, Ten Commandment statues, and school uniforms. In the case of Confederate symbols, states are able to shape boundaries of belonging by having authority over the physical landscapes of the areas they govern. Many Confederate statues stand on public land controlled by state and local governments, and state monument protection laws apply to all such public monuments.

How individuals read symbols—what social meaning they ascribe to them—should influence how those symbols affect their feelings of belonging in the communities protecting those symbols. As we saw in Study 1, Blacks are more likely than Whites to see Confederate statues as symbolizing racial injustice. Thus, Confederate monuments, by symbolizing who is included or privileged (Whites) and who is excluded or oppressed (Blacks), signal groups' belonging. When states pass laws that preserve symbols and

enforce boundaries of belonging, this should affect the degree to which historically marginalized individuals (in this case, Blacks) feel like they belong.[4] Specifically, we expect that state Confederate monument preservation laws will decrease feelings of belonging among Blacks (*Hypothesis 1*).

We do not expect Whites' sense of belonging to decline as a result of Confederate monument protection laws. This is because Confederate monuments do not represent boundaries of belonging for Whites in the same way they do for Blacks. Unlike for Blacks, for whom Confederate monuments largely represent slavery and racial injustice tied to their own experiences of racial oppression, for most Whites these symbols represent a variety of social meanings (as shown in Study 1), none of which are strongly tied to personal experiences of exclusion and marginalization.

Data and Methods

To assess the effect of state protection of Confederate monuments on Blacks and Whites, we fielded a survey experiment in July of 2018. Survey respondents consisted of 239 adults who lived in one of the eight states in the South that have passed Confederate monument preservation laws (VA, NC, SC, MS, AL, GA, AR, and TN). Our sample consisted of Southerners recruited through the Amazon survey platform Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online community in which workers are paid to complete surveys and other Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs). We asked respondents to take a survey on their individual opinions, which we later described in the Informed Consent Form as a study about people's opinions about politics. Analyses of MTurk demographics suggest they reflect the general population more closely than do convenience samples (such as student subjects) and have been used successfully in past replication studies (Berinsky et al., 2012).[5] Because we were particularly interested in the effects of Confederate monuments on Blacks, we used a quota for the number of Black respondents to ensure an adequate sample was available for analysis.

Independent Variables

Subjects were asked to complete a battery of questions about their political and social predispositions, including their race, political ideology, and relationship to the South. The variable for race was coded as a dummy variable where 0= White and 1= Black. Ideology was measured on a standard 7-point scale, where respondents ranked themselves somewhere between "extremely liberal" and "extremely conservative." Higher values indicated more conservatism. To measure racial resentment, we included the following items in the survey: 1) "I disapprove of any special considerations that racial minorities like African Americans and Hispanics receive, such as in college admissions or in the workplace, because it's unfair to other Americans" and 2) "Racial minorities like African Americans and Hispanics bring up race only when they need to make an excuse for their failure." These measures were developed by David Wilson and Darren Davis (2011) and tap at more explicit racism than traditional racial resentment measures do by purposefully omitting political references. Wilson and Davis (2011) also argue these measures may be more appropriate in the post-Obama era, where more explicit racial rhetoric among Whites is perhaps more common and socially acceptable (Valentino et al., 2018). Responses were scored on 7-point scales from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with a neutral midpoint; higher values indicate stronger resentment towards racial minorities.[6] We created an additive scale with these two measures (α=.80). Finally, because many monument proponents claim that support for Confederate monuments is

rooted in Southern identity rather than racial animus, subjects' attachment to the South was measured with the following question: "Do you consider yourself to be a Southerner?", where respondents were scored on a 5-point scale from "definitely yes" to "definitely not." Higher values of this variable indicate the respondent was more likely to perceive themselves as Southern.[7]

Experimental Conditions

Subjects were asked to read a short article that they were told was from their state of residence. The article, entitled "State Legislature Passes Memorial Preservation Act," includes a short paragraph describing a law meant to prevent the removal or alteration of monuments. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions: a treatment condition with a law protecting Confederate monuments and a control condition with a law protecting monuments to the War of 1812. Figure 2 displays the full text and format of the conditions.

For subjects in the treatment condition, the article detailed a law protecting monuments to the Confederacy. Subjects in the control condition read an otherwise identical article; the only difference was that the law protected monuments commemorating the War of 1812. The War of 1812 stands as a race-neutral contrast. Survey data show that Americans are fairly ignorant about the history of the War of 1812, with 36% thinking it had no significant outcomes or being unable to name a significant outcome. Additionally, those Americans who could name an outcome of the War of 1812 viewed it as mostly race-neutral, with only 11% viewing the war as important for of a reason related to race or ethnicity (that it helped create an independent Native American nation) and the remainder naming non-racial reasons for its importance such as the creation of the Star-Spangled Banner or the burning of the White House (Ipsos Reid 2012). The treatment was coded as a dummy variable so subjects who were given the Confederate monument treatment received a 1, whereas subjects in the control (War of 1812) group received a 0.
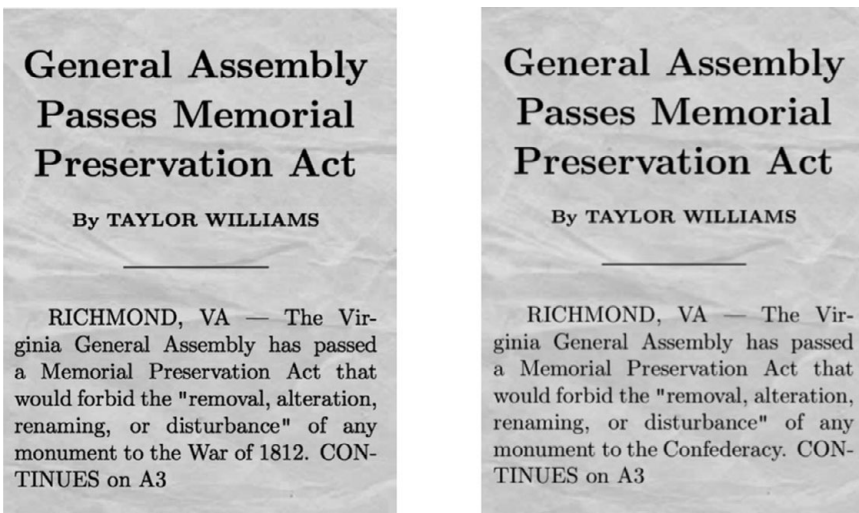

Fig. 2. Control (left) and Experimental (right) Treatments.

Dependent Variable

After reading the article, subjects were asked a series of questions intended to gauge their sense of belonging in their state. Belonging is difficult to measure given that it has not been widely included in surveys on political attitudes. Our belonging measures were influenced by previous survey research measuring attachment and belonging to ethnic groups (Phinney 1992). However, due to the dearth of theories and metrics of belonging, we develop a new measure that encompasses both an external sense of welcoming from the community and an internal sense of identification with the community. In our measure, sense of belonging includes agreement with the following three statements: 1) I feel as though people like me don't really fit in to my state, 2) I'm sometimes ashamed to admit that I'm from my state, and 3) I feel like I am a part of my state. All responses used a 7-point sliding scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Each of the three items was recoded so that higher values indicate responses that demonstrate higher levels of belonging. We then created an additive scale with these three measures (α=.78). Finally, all variables in our survey were recoded on a 0 to 1 scale.

Results

Of the 239 American adults in the eight Southern states in our survey experiment, respondents were reasonably representative of the South's population in terms of gender and partisanship. The experiment consisted of 134 White and 105 Black respondents.

Because our outcome variable is continuous, we model belonging using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Our primary independent variables are the condition assignment and race. Given that our theory predicts that the effect of Confederate monument protection laws on belonging varies by race, we interact the two independent variables in our model. Further, in order to improve the efficiency of model estimates and to guard against the possibility that differences in the distribution of sociopolitical variables might account for our results, we have included controls for ideology, racial resentment, and Southern attachment. In Table 3, we examine whether the effect of state protection of Confederate monuments on belonging varies for Blacks and Whites. If our expectation is correct, the interaction term between race and treatment will be statistically significant. In the first column, we model the interactive effect of the treatment and race, including control variables. Supporting our expectations, the interaction term is significant, suggesting that the effect of the treatment varies by respondent's race. The second model in Table 3 is the same as the first but omits control variables. None of our results are substantially altered if the control variables are removed.

Figure 3 plots the estimated marginal effect of the treatment condition (as compared to the control) with 95% confidence intervals for Blacks and Whites from Model 1. Again, higher values of the belonging variable indicate a stronger sense of belonging. Given that the confidence intervals for Blacks in Figure 3 does not include zero, we can conclude that the treatment had a negative and significant effect on belonging as compared to the control. The treatment effect for Whites is in the opposite direction, but is not statistically significant.[8]

The findings from this experiment indicate that when primed with the fact that their state government protects Confederate monuments, Southern Blacks feel like they belong in their state less than those who were not primed. On the other hand, being informed that one's state of residence has protected Confederate symbols produces no measurable effect on Southern Whites' sense of belonging. This comports with our

Table 3. The Effect of State Protection of Confederate Monuments on Belonging among Whites and Blacks in the South.

	Model 1 (with controls)	Model 2 (without controls)
Intercept	0.37***	0.60***
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Treatment	–0.11**	–0.11*
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Black	–0.03	0.02
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Racial Resentment 0.05		
	(0.07)	
Ideology	0.20***	
	(0.07)	
Treatment x Black	0.14**	0.13*
	(0.07)	(0.07)
R^2	0.22	0.04
Adj. R^2	0.20	0.02
Num. obs.	236	238
RMSE	0.25	0.28

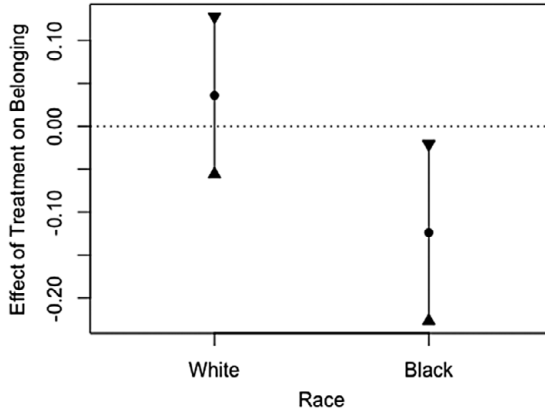*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, Control = 115, Treatment = 124.

Fig. 3. Marginal Effect of Confederate Protection on Belonging among Blacks and Whites in the South.

earlier findings that Blacks in the South are more likely than Whites to see Confederate monuments as symbols of racial oppression.

Discussion

As debates surrounding the fate of Confederate monuments and other historical markers are linked to racism in the United States, we have seen greater discussion of effects they have on racially marginalized people. In this article, we use survey research to illustrate

these effects empirically. We contribute to scholarship on Confederate symbols by exploring their perceived meanings and the disparate impacts of state protection of these symbols. We find that while Southern Blacks are more likely to perceive Confederate monuments or memorials as symbols of racial injustice, Southern Whites—especially racially resentful Whites—are more likely to see them through a less explicitly racial lens. The symbolic meanings that Whites are more likely to ascribe to monuments include Southern heritage ("heritage not hate") or honoring fallen Confederate soldiers (Lost Cause). Though such narratives are frequently defended by many monument proponents as having nothing to do with race, we find that racial attitudes do play a significant role: Whites with higher resentment toward Black people are more likely to perceive Confederate symbols as representations of Southern heritage or honoring soldiers than those with less racial resentment. We also find that racial resentment strongly shapes whether or not Whites recognize Confederate monuments as representing racial oppression. Specifically, Whites with the weakest reported racial resentment are four times more likely to identify Confederate monuments as symbolizing racial oppression than are the most racially resentful Whites.

We also contribute to the discussion of Confederate monuments by theorizing about how these state-protected symbols send signals to Black and White citizens, which in turn should have consequences for how they feel about where they live. Findings from our survey experiment indicate that a state's decision to protect Confederate monuments causes Black state residents to feel a weaker sense of belonging, while having no effect on Whites. Critically, this indicates that Blacks, disproportionately to Whites, feel excluded from their political communities when these communities take measures to protect exclusionary political symbols. This is confounded by the already weak sense of belonging that Black people feel compared to Whites (Masuoka and Junn, 2013). Our findings help to partially answer the question raised by contemporary debates about the political effects of Confederate monuments on racial minorities, especially Black Americans. These results show that Confederate monuments are *not* innocuous symbols. They have negative, measurable impacts on Black people.

Although we have restricted our study to understanding feelings of belonging, it is reasonable to expect additional effects on political behavior such as political participation and other attitudes such as political efficacy. Further research should examine the effects of monuments on these other political measures.

One limitation of our experimental study is the design of our treatment, in which we attributed the monument preservation law to the state legislature of each respondent's state of residence. One's state is not always one's most relevant political community; this could be one's hometown or country. Because the issue of Confederate monuments in the United States has mostly played out at the state level—with cities taking action or trying to take action within the confines of state regulations—we chose states as the community of analysis, but future studies may look to how the protection of Confederate symbols may have consequences for how citizens relate to their local or national communities. We also acknowledge that political reactions to Confederate symbols may be contingent on repeated exposure to the symbols. For these reasons, interviews and focus groups conducted in the South might also be useful ways to learn more about people's actual experiences with these symbols in their daily lives.

Finally, future research would benefit from theorizing about the perceptions and consequences of Confederate monuments for other racial and ethnic groups. Though Blacks and Whites are the most polarized groups on the issue of Confederate monuments, if these symbols represent White supremacy, this may directly affect all racial minority groups. Interestingly, about 54% of Hispanic Americans in 2017 reported believing Confederate symbols represent Southern heritage, a figure close to that of

Whites (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2017). Understanding how citizens of other racial and ethnic backgrounds understand and respond to these contentious symbols could help us better predict what the future holds for these monuments.

In this paper we aim to broaden the scholarly conversation around Confederate symbols by moving toward a deeper understanding of their meaning and consequences for White and Black U.S. Southerners. This study is relevant to important issues of race, historically contentious symbols, and political effects of the government's endorsement of certain historical narratives. While we chose to study Confederate monuments in the South, this project speaks to the effects of controversial historical symbols and the politics of memory on individuals' social and political attitudes more broadly.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

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NOTES

1. Though Chudy (2017) argues that racial prejudice and racial sympathy are distinct racial attitudes, those high on racial sympathy are also more likely to be have less racial prejudice.
2. See Appendix C for exact survey wording for all surveys.
3. For more on the coding scheme and process and examples of these responses, see Appendix D.
4. We study the effects of belonging on Blacks specifically because we are interested in testing the assumptions of political discourse, such as claims that these monuments or their protection by the government make them feel less welcome in their community. Because equivalent claims are not commonly made about White belonging (nor do they follow from theoretical expectations about the nature of systemic racism), we focus on Black belonging.
5. Researchers in political science have begun to notice the presence of suspicious respondents in the Amazon Mechanical Turk environment. Specifically, researchers have noticed an increase in the number of survey responses featuring incoherent open-ended responses, identical Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, and unusual distributions in expected/known scale measurements (Bai 2018). To address these concerns in our own work, we implemented a procedure to identify and remove suspicious responses in our MTurk sample. To be identified as a bot, at least one of three suspicious behaviors must have been met: the presence of identical, incoherent text in an open-ended question, the presence of an IP address shared with at least one other user, or the presence of a set of XY coordinates shared with at least one other user. We required only one suspicious behavior be met given the sophistication recently observed in bots to vary the length of time to complete the survey and provide falsified geographic information. Our procedure yielded a total of 329 suspicious MTurk responses, which were removed from this analysis.
6. We focus on White racial resentment because this measure is specifically meant to gauge White attitudes towards racial minorities. For that reason, we do not focus on so-called "reverse racism" of minorities toward Whites since such attitudes, to the extent that they exist in the population, are not reflected by and do not reflect the system of anti-Black racism and racism towards other non-White minority groups.
7. To avoid priming racial responses to the treatment, we asked demographic and racial resentment questions after the treatment and primary dependent variables questions. There is some evidence that the order or timing of moderator questions has little effect on treatment effects (Valentino et al., 2018). Additionally, we included a distractor task between the demographic questions and exposure to the experimental conditions.

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8. To account for any potential differences between states, we ran all of our models with state fixed effects as robustness checks, finding no evidence that included fixed effects changed our main results. See Appendix A for robustness check results.

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