CONFEDERATE MONUMENT INSCRIPTIONS

Different Times, Different Places, Different Messages

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Abstract

Confederate monuments are a contested piece of the public landscape. Debates generally focus on the division between "heritage" and "hate," but some scholars have argued that the meaning of monuments is more complex. There is little research examining variation among Confederate monuments, but this may be critical to understanding their social foundations and consequences. We provide insight into Confederate monuments and their complexity by examining their inscriptions and how the use of different inscriptions changed over time and varies between the Upper South and Deep South. We employ content analysis to organize the inscriptions associated with 856 Confederate monuments located in public spaces throughout the U.S. South into common themes. Our results suggest three distinct types of inscriptions: those connected to the lost cause ideology that glorifies the Confederacy and its cause; those that were comparatively plain in their description of people, places, and events; and others that focused exclusively on mourning the death of Confederate soldiers. The majority of monuments (59%) contain a Lost Cause inscription. Plain monuments comprise 35%, and only 6% of public Confederate monuments were dedicated purely to the dead. Our descriptive analysis also indicates substantial temporal and spatial variation in the use of these different types of inscriptions. Despite sharing a connection to the Confederacy, we assert that the specific messages associated with a monument are more varied and, in part, reflect the social conditions of the time and place in which they were built.

Keywords: Confederate Monuments, Public Symbols, Social Meaning, Inscriptions, Lost Cause, Deep South

INTRODUCTION

As was common for a monument dedication ceremony, there was much to-do in Abbeville, SC when the monument recognizing the county's Confederate soldiers was

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unveiled. There was a throng of observers who attended a parade and a series of speeches made by prominent members of the community, including councilmen, reverends, and even a South Carolina State Representative. Despite its similarity in style to the hundreds of Confederate monument ceremonies that took place across the South, this particular occasion was somewhat unique; it took place in 1996. After major damage to the original statue, local residents raised as much as $360,000 in order to replace it (Seigler 1997).

Confederate monuments were erected immediately following the Civil War and residents have continued to place them in public spaces to this day, even as others take steps to remove them. How should we think about these monuments, both in terms of the original intentions of those who erected them and the meaning that may be drawn from them by contemporary observers? This has been the question at the heart of many recent debates as well as previous research on Confederate monuments and related symbols (Davis and Gross, 2012; Mills and Simpson, 2003; Shackel 2003; Whites 2004).[1] Simultaneously, these symbols have been attached to racialized tensions due to the central role of slavery in the Civil War and their subsequent use in acts of racial terrorism and subordination, particularly by Whites against Black Americans. Despite increased attention to public representations of historical figures and events, research into the specific details of Confederate monuments remains underdeveloped.

We contribute to existing research by focusing on variation among Confederate monuments. Specifically, we contribute to the understanding of these symbols by focusing on the inscriptions associated with public Confederate monuments located throughout the U.S. South and describing how the usage of different types of inscriptions changed over time. We supplement this focus on time with an examination of spatial variation between the Upper South and Deep South sub-regions to enhance our foundational, descriptive analysis.

We take the claim that monuments are socially constructed symbols as our theoretical starting point. Monuments, museums, and even historical sites are views of history that have been filtered through the perspectives of those who established and maintain the site (Roberts and Kytle, 2012; Schwartz 1982; White 1997). Extending this logic, we argue that Confederate monuments are a reflection of history but, more specifically, of multiple histories (also see Winberry [1983] 2015). Confederate monuments reflect the context in which they were built as much as they reflect the historical events associated with the Civil War itself. Undoubtedly, the implicit message of all monuments is one of worthiness and praise. However, we can gain additional insight into the feelings, memories, and motivations of a particular monument by examining the explicit message expressed through the inscription that accompanies it.

In our analysis, we draw on a newly compiled dataset of the inscriptions associated with Confederate monuments that remained in public spaces in the U.S. South as of 2017. We use content analysis to distinguish among the different messages associated with Confederate monuments; information on the date a monument was constructed to examine changes in the content of monument inscriptions over time; and the geographic location to assess variation across sub-regions. Our results suggest that while a majority of public Confederate monuments contain inscriptions that are consistent with the lost cause narrative that glorifies the soldiers and/or the cause of the Confederacy, there are a non-trivial number of monuments that contain much more neutral language. In addition, the temporal variation in when the different types of inscriptions are most prominent suggests that the explicit messages conveyed through these monuments shifted, to some extent, over time, perhaps in response to changing social conditions. We also find that the Deep South has the highest concentration of monuments inscribed with Lost Cause messages, suggesting that the local—in addition to the broader

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temporal—context may be related to how the Confederacy is remembered. Our descriptive analysis provides a foundation for a more nuanced understanding of Confederate monuments that moves beyond the dichotomy of heritage or hate to highlight variation even when focusing on monuments connected to the same broader mission. We argue that incorporating this variation will be critical as we, as a society and as scholars, grapple with the meaning and consequences of these contentious public symbols.

BACKGROUND

Confederate monuments were built in public spaces as early as 1868—three years after the end of the Civil War— but also as late as 2016.[2] There is some debate regarding the year the first public Confederate monument was built (for references to an earlier date see CWCCT 1963; Winberry [1983] 2015). Notwithstanding, public monuments were dedicated to Confederate soldiers almost immediately following the end of the war. Even earlier monuments were erected in cemeteries.

This shift from cemeteries to public spaces is important because it signals an accompanying symbolic shift (Foster 1987; Winberry [1983] 2015). During and immediately after the Civil War, monuments of Confederate soldiers were mostly associated with commemorating the dead, but they soon became symbols of the lost cause movement. The lost cause is described as "a public memory, a cult of the fallen soldier, a righteous political cause defeated only by a superior industrial might, a heritage community awaiting its exodus, and a people forming a collective identity as victims and survivors" (Blight 2001, p. 38; also see Brundage 2005; Foster 1987). This connection to the lost cause suggests that Confederate monuments—specifically ones located in public spaces—are culturally important and may be relevant for understanding the development of places in the South (Mills and Simpson, 2003). While the lost cause movement did not touch all corners of the South equally, and some who sought to understand the war and erect monuments employed a more religious rather than political perspective (Foster 1987), the ideology accompanying the lost cause movement was a dominant force in the South. In this research we further interrogate the connection between public Confederate monuments and the lost cause ideology while simultaneously contributing to our understanding of the social origins of public symbols by examining variation among the explicit messages etched in stone.

The Social Origins of Monuments

A central argument within historical research is that there is a social component to representations of history (Schwartz 1982; White 1997). In fact, research on the meaning of memorials suggests that the meaning attached to a particular monument or space can change depending on the time, situation, and even individual visitors (Allen and Brown, 2016; Barber 1949; Mayo 1988; White 1997). Matthew Allen and Steven D. Brown (2016) state that "[t]he organizing of commemorative spaces for collective memory involves more than simply recording an account of the past in stone or metal. It requires an ongoing practice of storytelling and reflection" (p. 12). The development of collective memory (i.e., a set of common frameworks that individuals can employ when recollecting previous events (Halbwachs 1992)) is an important by-product of monuments. Confederate monuments are center pieces of the Confederate tradition, and they provide a physical reminder of memories associated with that tradition (Blight 2001; Brundage 2005; Foster 1987; Mills and Simpson, 2003; Shackel 2003). Confederate

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monuments all share the same implicit message of support for the Confederacy; however, the explicit messages conveyed through the inscriptions may also be important in shaping the collective memories that are developed in connection with a particular monument. The inscription not only shapes the feelings and conversations had by future generations who view the monument;[3] it provides a window into the sentiments of those who erected the monument. As a result, we argue that it is important to understand the variety of inscriptions present on existing Confederate monuments.

A second component that may be relevant to the meaning attached to a particular monument relates to the time and context in which it was built. The construction of monuments and historical sites is a complex process connected to contemporaneous social dynamics related to power, access, and—inevitably in the United States—race (Brundage 2005; Roberts and Kytle, 2012). Monuments are not born directly from historical importance, suggesting that they are motivated by more than a desire to commemorate an historical event (Davis and Gross, 2012). Likewise, Confederate monuments are not pure representations of Civil War history. They are a reflection of the people who built them and the tensions of the time and place in which they were built (Foster 1987). Particular attention has been paid to the links between Confederate symbols and racialized tensions, but other social, political and economic conditions may also be important.[4]

The United States, and the South more specifically, have undergone substantial swings in the conditions that may influence the decisions surrounding monument construction, which we review below. These broad shifts provide the motivation for considering temporal patterns among Confederate monuments. However, we do not aim to test the specific relationships among these various conditions and monument construction. Instead, we rely on this variation to inform our larger argument regarding the social foundations of Confederate monuments.

Reconstruction—a period of attempted structural reform in the South—was followed by what has been referred to as the "nadir" of race relations in the United States (Loewen 2005), which included widespread lynching of Blacks by White mobs (Tolnay and Beck, 1995) and the simultaneous exodus of Blacks (and Whites) from the South (Gregory 2005; Tolnay 2003). Later years saw the rise of the Civil Rights Era as well as changing economic and social conditions in the South that some have connected to the subsequent return of Blacks to the region (Falk et al., 2004). When considering variation among Confederate monuments, these changing conditions may correspond with shifts in the dominant motivation for monument construction over time. To the extent to which the explicit messages intended to be conveyed by those who erected a monument respond to the social context associated with a period, we expect the type of inscription associated with a newly constructed monument to vary over time. In contrast, if the type of monument erected did not respond to the broader social context, then we would expect a more uniform usage of different types of inscriptions regardless of the year in which a monument was built.

In addition to the context associated with a period in time, more localized conditions may also relate to connections to the Confederacy and how it is conveyed to future generations. Similar to temporal trends, spatial variation would be suggestive of the social dynamics underlying the representation of the Confederacy through public monuments. There are multitudes of ways in which places across the South differ from one another but, again, of central importance to this study is the local racialized context. Scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that some places—even within the South—exhibit greater levels of Black-White inequality (Blalock 1956; Curtis and O'Connell, 2017; Kramer et al., 2017; O'Connell 2012; Roscigno 1995; Ruef 2003), have different political dynamics (Acharya et al., 2016; Valentino and Sears, 2005), more racialized

violence (Cunningham and Phillips, 2007; Gabriel and Tolnay, 2017; Tolnay and Beck, 1995), and more social movements centered on racialized issues (Andrews and Biggs, 2006; Brown 2010) than other places. A consistent finding across these bodies of research is the heightened racialized conditions within the Deep South sub-region (Corzine et al., 1983; Reece and O'Connell, 2016; Stovel 2001). As a result, we expect to find a unique mix of inscriptions within Deep South states (i.e., AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, and VA) as compared to places in other areas of the South to the extent to which the conditions that motivated the use of different inscriptions vary across space. Alternative spatial patterns might suggest the importance of social factors unrelated to racialized conditions. However, limited spatial variation would suggest that the factors contributing to the use of different inscriptions are evenly shared across the southern sub-regions.

Research on Confederate Monuments

Our attention to temporal and spatial variation among Confederate monuments connected to their inscriptions provides critical new insight into these symbols that is based on a systematic analysis of all existing public monuments. Previous research focusing on Confederate monuments has provided a wealth of information on the histories associated with establishing these monuments, including the people involved, how they were funded, and the celebrations that took place at their unveiling (Brundage 2005; Davis 1982; Foster 1987). Other case studies offer an in-depth analysis of the histories associated with specific monuments (Davis and Gross, 2012; Mills and Simpson, 2003; Shackel 2003; Wheeler 1998; Whites 2004). In addition to the research published within academic circles, there are several books that have been written on the Confederate monuments found in a particular state, including Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia (Butler 2013; CWCCT 1963; Cohen 2003; Hagler 2014; Sedore 2011; Seigler 1997), as well as one covering all fifty states (Widener 1982). There is a rich body of work on Confederate monuments, but little that speaks to the different qualities and conditions associated with these symbols that appear across the U.S. South.[5]

A partial exception is represented by the work of John J. Winberry ([1983] 2015), which remains the most comprehensive analysis of Confederate monuments despite being originally published in the early 1980s. He describes some of the features of the monuments in his study and provides suggestions for what is being conveyed by those features. Specifically, Winberry ([1983] 2015) draws attention to the various locations—courthouses, state capitol grounds, battlefields, and cemeteries—and forms of Confederate monuments, including a soldier at rest, a soldier at the ready, an obelisk, and a miscellaneous category for the arches, fountains, standing stones, and so on. He even examines the similarities and differences in the style of the inscriptions of nearly seventy-five of the 666 monuments in his analysis, but the coverage is far from complete and there is no indication that the selected monuments are representative of the larger population. Despite its seminal position within the Confederate monument literature, his analysis provides little systematic evidence regarding the content of the messages and even less with regard to temporal and spatial variation.

OBJECTIVES

We aim to provide insight into the variation among Confederate monuments through an analysis of their inscriptions. First, we address the foundational question regarding

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the different types of (explicit) messages inscribed on Confederate monuments. Second, we examine how the content of Confederate monument inscriptions changed over time. Third, we assess the extent to which inscription usage differs across sub-regions within the South. There have been few studies examining the full breadth of these Confederate symbols and filling this gap is critical to informing research on race, power, and collective memory (Blight 2001) as well as debates regarding the meaning and place of Confederate monuments in contemporary society. Our descriptive analysis, while broad in scope, lays the foundation for a rigorous research agenda that incorporates the complexities of Confederate monuments and their meanings.

METHODS

Data

We focus on Confederate monuments currently located in public spaces in the U.S. South. The South contains the vast majority of Confederate monuments. Perhaps as a result, the South has received far more coverage of its Confederate monuments than those located elsewhere, which facilitates data collection and reduces the likelihood of omissions. Given our objective of providing a foundation for future research and examining spatial in addition to temporal variation, a broad definition—rather than one rooted in specific regional histories (e.g., allegiance to the Confederacy)—is well-suited to our analysis. We define the U.S. South using the Census definition, which includes Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, DC. There are, not surprisingly, comparably fewer public Confederate monuments in states with weaker ties to the Confederacy, so our decision to use the broadest available definition does not substantively alter our results.[6]

We define Confederate monuments as stand-alone structures—most often constructed out of stone—that explicitly reference the Confederacy. These structures are distinct from historical markers that describe an historical event or building because markers are signs on posts as opposed to the more dominating (and expensive) stone monuments. We consider monuments to be "public" when they are located on city or state property, including courthouse lawns, town squares, state capitol grounds, street medians, parks, and outside of libraries. These public monuments are the most theoretically important for understanding the messages conveyed by monuments. The location on public property signals that the message is publicly supported and is a reflection of the place itself (Alderman 2000). Monuments located in cemeteries and outside of churches serve a more distinct purpose than those located elsewhere, and are less visible even to the local public, which limits their social importance (Foster 1987). Monuments located on battlefields, other historical sites, and residential/private property are similarly constrained. As a result, we exclude those monuments, and focus only on the more socially relevant, public monuments.

Our focus has two additional implications for the scope of our analysis. First, Confederate monuments that were originally erected in public spaces, but are now located in museums or cemeteries, are excluded from our analysis. We can only confidently identify public Confederate monuments based on their current locations given the broad scope of our analysis. Similarly, our data set does not include monuments that were removed prior to our data collection. We were able to find information on several monuments that were removed, but we did not include them in order to maintain consistency within our data. Second, as mentioned above, Confederate

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monuments have been constructed outside of the U.S. South, but records on those monuments are far less complete. Similar to our rationale for removed monuments, we have chosen to exclude monuments located outside of the southern states.

Our search for public Confederate monuments started with the inventory of all public markers that recognize the Confederacy released by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC 2016). However, we used websites (e.g., http://docsouth.unc.edu/commland/), a series of books (Butler 2013; CWCCT 1963; Cohen 2003; Hagler 2014; Sedore 2011; Seigler 1997; Soderberg 1995; Widener 1982), Google maps, and in-person visits to supplement and confirm the initial SPLC list. We used many of the same sources to find the inscriptions on a monument, but also The Historical Marker Database (https://www.hmdb.org/), and Waymarking (http://www.waymarking.com/). The end result is a data set of inscriptions for 869 monuments. Our analysis relies on the 856 with information on the date the monument was erected.[7]

Coding Definitions

We identified three themes through inductive coding to represent the range of messages that could be conveyed on a monument, which we label Lost Cause, Plain, and Dead. We coded each inscription independently and then compared our decisions for discrepancies. The vast majority of monuments were coded the same initially—92%—but the inscriptions on some were more ambiguous and required discussion before reaching a final decision.

The Lost Cause theme includes inscriptions that glorify either the Confederate soldiers or cause. This includes references to soldiers as "heroes," "patriots," and "defenders of states' rights," and to the cause as "pure," "righteous," and "just." These statements are not necessarily historically accurate, but instead are connected to the lost cause ideology that developed in the wake of the devastation of the Civil War in the U.S. South. The Plain theme reflects inscriptions that were more descriptive in nature. This included straight forward references to "Our Confederate Soldiers" and lists of local soldiers' names. Plain inscriptions were also commonly found when the monument was dedicated to a particular battle, building, or event. Finally, the Dead theme is distinct because the inscriptions specifically refer to "Our Confederate Dead" or otherwise mention the dead without any other lost cause reference. Given their focus on those who died, Dead inscriptions were also often much more poetic and mournful, rather than direct and disconnected, in tone.

Analysis

Our analysis proceeds in three steps. First, we examine the inscriptions of all Confederate monuments in relation to the three identified themes to provide insight into the variety of messages associated with these monuments. Second, we assess the extent to which the explicit message conveyed through the inscription has changed over time. We provide background on Confederate monument construction by examining its timing, and then we assess the differential concentration and prevalence of the inscription themes across six different periods that each cover twenty-five years (1866–1890; 1891–1915; 1916–1940; 1941–1965; 1966–1990; and 1991–2015). Our focus is on change over time more broadly rather than change in connection to specific historical events, which is well-served by blocks of time with a consistent number of years. The relatively arbitrary temporal thresholds for our periods are consistent with the exploratory nature of our analysis, yet the usage of twenty-five-year periods allows for a detailed analysis of the temporal trend. We have conducted the analysis using fifty-year periods as well as substantively-informed periods; the results are consistent with what we present below.

Finally, we provide descriptive analysis of spatial variation in the different types of inscriptions using two sub-regions within the South, namely the Upper South (i.e., AR, DE, KY, MD, OK, TN, TX, Washington DC, and WV) and the Deep South (i.e., AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, and VA).[8] There are a variety of ways to define the Deep South—the focal sub-region in our analysis—so we have chosen an approach that combines variation in attachment to the Confederacy (Reece and O'Connell, 2016; Vandiver et al., 2006) and a culturally-informed understanding of which states comprise the South (Odum 1936). Ideally, future research will refine our descriptive approach by drawing on more localized and substantively-defined contexts. However, these broad sub-regions are a useful first step before developing more specific, theoretically-informed hypotheses about spatial variation.

We represent concentration using the within-theme percentage for each period and sub-region (e.g., the number of Lost Cause, Plain, or Dead inscriptions in a period divided by the total number of inscriptions in that theme across periods). We examine prevalence using the within-period and sub-regional percentage of each theme (e.g., the number of Lost Cause, Plain, or Dead inscriptions divided by the total number of monuments constructed in that period). The values representing concentration and prevalence provide complementary insight into the extent to which different types of inscriptions were more likely to be used in specific periods and sub-regions (i.e., concentration), and the extent to which one type of inscription dominates the others in a given period or sub-region (i.e., prevalence). Our analyses cannot account for differences in the capacity to construct monuments. Moreover, our descriptive analysis will not be able to determine if the appearance of different types of inscriptions is in fact related to different historical events. However, this work provides the foundation for future work to do so while offering initial insight into the variation present among existing Confederate monuments.

RESULTS

There are 869 Confederate monuments located in public spaces in the U.S. South, 856 of which have information on the date on which the monument was constructed. Of the 856 public Confederate monuments in our analysis, the overwhelming majority—59% (n = 502)—have inscriptions that contain phrases consistent with the lost cause narrative (see Figure 1). Within this theme there is a range of ways to

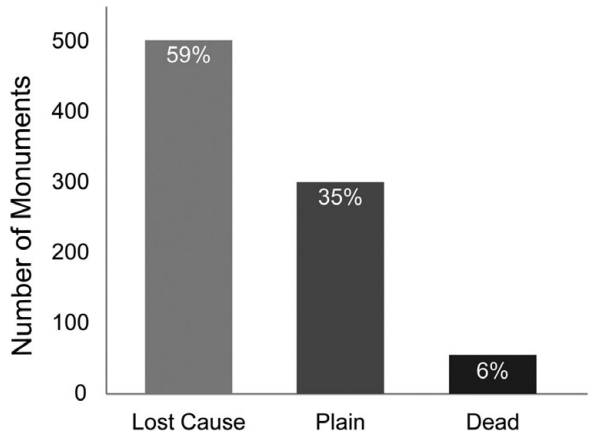

Figure 1. Confederate Monument Inscriptions

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express the lost cause narrative, but what remains consistent is the glorification of Confederate soldiers and/or the Confederate cause. We provide a couple of acute, yet not unique, examples below.

In Milledgeville, GA an elaborate monument comprised of a drinking fountain, towering obelisk, and two statues flanking the sides stands on a street median. Text is inscribed on all four sides. Starting from the front, the inscription reads:

> This tribute to the memory of the Confederate soldier, unveiled April 26, 1912.
>
> His heroism in the presence of the conquering foe was equaled only by his generosity to his fallen enemy.
>
> To the memory of the Confederate soldier whose name is as imperishable as the everlasting hills; whose courage is as unrivaled since the dawn of civilization; whose name shines in undying glory in the pages of history; this monument is lovingly erected by the Robert E. Lee Chapter Daughters of the Confederacy of Milledgeville, Georgia.
>
> His unconquerable patriotism and self-sacrifice rendered abortive the effort of his enemies, after his flag had folded forever, to destroy his proud inheritance.

This kind of inscription lavishes praise on soldiers who fought for the Confederacy—especially those who were residents of the town or county—by poetically describing their generalized attributes. More commonly, the women who erected the monument accomplish this goal in fewer words by engraving the phrase "Our Confederate Heroes" in large, bold font. However, the Milledgeville, GA example also makes clear that those who erected the monument see the Confederate tradition as a "proud inheritance" that should be recognized and preserved by future generations.

The monument located outside of the county courthouse in Abbeville, SC similarly proclaims the bravery of Confederate soldiers, but also engages more directly with the Confederate cause itself. On the southern-facing side of the obelisk's base, the inscription reads:

> 'The world shall yet decide, in truth's clear, far-off light, that the soldiers who wore the gray, and died with Lee were in the right.'
>
> 'Brave men may die – right has no death, – truth never shall pass away!'
>
> 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'

The above inscription is a series of quotes, the first of which appears on three other public Confederate monuments, two in South Carolina (Anderson, SC; Greenville, SC) and one in Virginia (Washington, VA). Other monuments use alternative phrasings to suggest the superior position of the Confederacy. For example, the monument in Florence, SC includes the quote "No nation rose so white and fair, none fell so pure of crime." We find the same text—or slight variations thereof—on multiple additional monuments (Centreville, AL; Augusta, GA; Butler, GA; Eastman, GA; Madison, GA; Montezuma, GA; Abbeville, SC; Gainesville, TX). Still other inscriptions more simply asserted that the cause "though lost" was "still just" (e.g., Brunswick, GA) and emphasize the importance of states' rights in the motivations of the Confederacy, at least one of which explicitly contrasts this with slavery: "Not for the preservation of slavery but for our greatest heritage states [sic] rights" (Taylorsville, NC).

Regardless of the approach taken, the result of Lost Cause inscriptions is not only a sympathetic image of the Confederacy, but one that is meant to inspire pride. Historical research indicates that fostering a southern identity and sense of pride was an explicit goal of some organizations involved in monument construction (Davis 1982; Foster 1987). In fact, the intention to speak to future generations and have them remember Confederate soldiers in a particular light is evident in several of the inscriptions in our analysis. For example, the monument in Burgaw, NC includes the following text: "Let future generations remember that these were men whom death could not terrify, whom defeat could not dishonor. That truth, courage and patriotism endure forever." The Confederate monuments with a Lost Cause-themed inscription most clearly contribute to that objective, and they do so by attaching positive qualities to Confederate soldiers and their cause.

In contrast, the second largest group of monuments at 35% (n = 300) contains descriptive text that inspires fewer emotions, or at least far less powerful ones. One of the most common inscriptions within the Plain theme is one that simply states (in large, bold font) "Our Confederate Soldiers." One of the monuments in Roxboro, NC is illustrative of this Plain type of inscription. The creators of the monument added only the following: "Erected by Person County Chapter United Daughters of the Confederacy." The Confederate monument located several feet away is similarly plain, but instead lists the Confederate soldiers by name. Another repeated example of a Plain inscription is one that gives matter-of-fact details. There is a series of pink granite headstone-shaped monuments, erected throughout Texas between 1963 and 1964, that remain plain in their description of people and events connected to the Confederacy despite the large amount of text. For example, the inscription on the front of one located in Rusk, TX reads:

> Cherokee County
> C.S.A.
> Civil War manufacturing, supply and military center. Field Transportation Bureau shop made and repaired wagons, saddles, harnesses. Gun factory produced 'Mississippi rifles' and pistols. Two iron works cast plows, skillets, pots, irons. Salt works provided a scarce item. Confederate commissary stored sugar and military supplies. Texas conscript district office directed drafting activity. Additional military activities included Union prisoner confine and two camps, one a camp of instruction for raw recruits.
>
> A Memorial to Texans who served the Confederacy
> Erected by the State of Texas 1963.

The implication of all monuments is that those people and events mentioned are worth remembering; however, Plain monuments—including those dedicated to specific individuals that are only inscribed with a name (e.g., Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson)—leave that sentiment implied rather than stating it outright as we saw in the Lost Cause inscriptions.[9] The social structures connected to, and public interactions with, Plain monuments may be significantly different from what we would observe in connection to Lost Cause monuments.

Finally, monuments with inscriptions that specifically reference the dead without the addition of lost cause rhetoric comprise 6% (n = 55) of all public monuments in the U.S. South. This is the smallest of our three themes. Dead monuments are similar to the Plain in the sense that they often have very simple inscriptions. "Our Confederate Dead"

is the most common phrase used in Dead inscriptions with very little additional text. In Okolona, MS the Confederate monument reads:

> Erected by Okolona Chapter No. 117, U.D.C.
> 1905
> Love's tribute to a thousand southern soldiers who sleep in our Confederate Cemetery who died in the war 1861–65.
> Our Confederate Dead.

However, in contrast to the Plain inscriptions that evoke very little feeling, Dead monuments are much more mournful and compassionate in tone. They do not go so far as to indicate that the Confederate soldiers were heroes or were in the right as do Lost Cause monuments, but Dead monuments suggest that the Confederate soldiers who died in battle are worth remembering for no other reason than because they died in service to others (albeit "others" who were implicated in the maintenance of slavery). The distinguishing factor is that Dead monuments direct our attention to mourning rather than pride whereas the Lost Cause monuments explicitly comment on the heroism of the soldiers and/or the righteousness of the cause.

The Timing of Monument Construction

In addition to their varying tones and points of emphasis, Confederate monuments were erected across an impressive number of years. In this portion of the analysis we assess the extent to which each of the three types of inscriptions were used more or less frequently depending on the historical moment as represented by six periods of twenty-five years. We set the stage for this analysis by first describing the general, temporal distribution of monument construction.

Confederate monuments have been constructed in public spaces within the U.S. South starting in 1868 all the way through to 2016, but our observation period ends with 2015. In Figure 2, we depict the number of public monuments erected in each year during the observed period. There are a steady number of additions in the first three decades, but construction really picks up at the turn of the century. The peak coincides with the year 1910 with a value just over fifty (n = 51). This decade corresponds with several important transitions that may have combined to result in such an impressive number of new public monuments. Of particular note are (1) the age of the Civil War generation—which raised concerns regarding the perpetuation of their memory after their passing (Foster 1987), (2) the fifty-year anniversary of the war, and (3) the increased (White) nationalism in response to the reconciliation of the North and South and new waves of immigrants.

Monument construction is similarly high in the years immediately preceding and following 1910, but it tapers off substantially. By the 1940s there is a clear drop in Confederate monument activity. This could be due in part to a shift in attention and resources towards World War II. A low level of new monument construction holds for nearly two decades before the striking re-emergence of Confederate monument construction in the early- to mid-1960s. In 1962 the number of Confederate monuments added to public spaces in the U.S. South was two, but that value jumped to twenty-one in the next year. The spike in activity may reflect broader trends related to wartime memorials; the United States had been most recently involved in the Korean War in the early 1950s and many towns erected monuments that recognized soldiers from all U.S. wars to date. It may also reflect the approaching Civil War centennial—1965 marked one hundred years since the end of the Civil War. However, the timing of the

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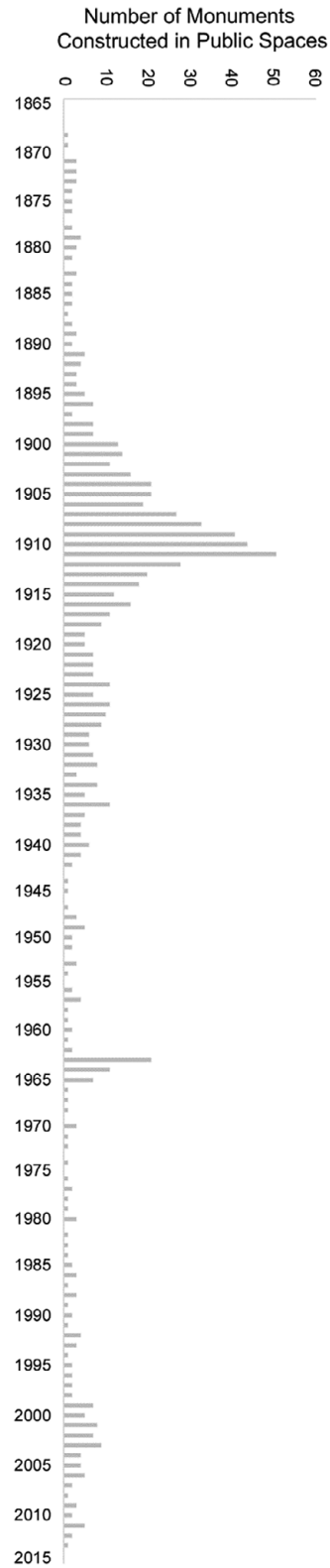

Figure 2. Monument Construction in the U.S. South, by Year

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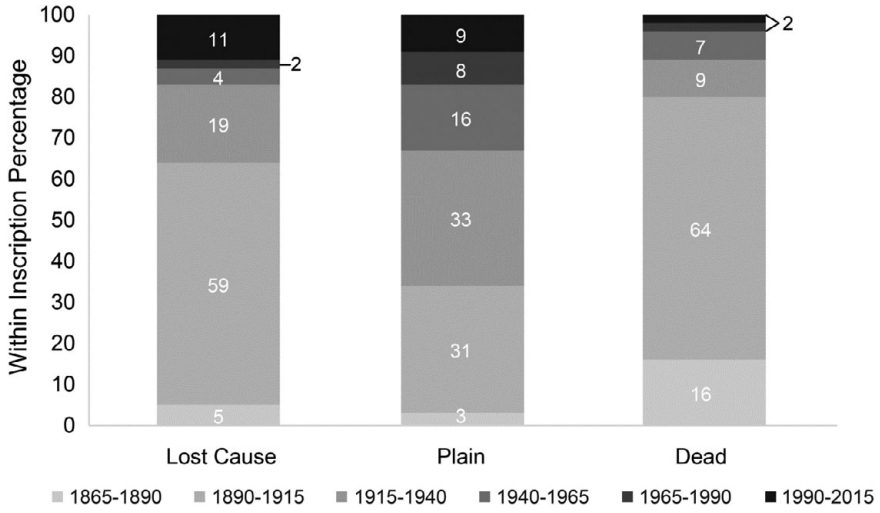

Figure 3. Concentration of Inscription Type across Twenty-five-year Periods

rise in Confederate symbolism has also been used to suggest its connection to the Civil Rights movement and racial tensions that had been brought to the surface in preceding years (SPLC 2016). After the spike in the 1960s, we find another lull in new monument construction that lasts until 1999. At that time there is a string of consistent construction for the next eight years that, despite declining, has persisted as late as the year 2013 in the period of observation.

Consistent with our expectation that the broader historical moment is related, at least to some extent, to the type of message selected for a Confederate monument, we find a highly uneven temporal distribution of the different types of inscriptions identified in the earlier portion of our analysis (Lost Cause, Plain, and Dead). In terms of their concentration (see Figure 3), results indicate that both the Lost Cause and Dead monuments were used most frequently in the second period, between 1890 and 1915. Of all of the Lost Cause and Dead monuments constructed, 59% and 64% respectively, were built between 1890 and 1915. This is consistent with the peak that we find for all public monuments in the year 1910, and the concentration of activity in the surrounding years, but also with the re-emergence of Whites' public expressions of anti-Black attitudes and their attention to the Confederate dead. After their peak, Lost Cause and Dead monument construction plummets in terms of concentration in the third period with only 19% of Lost Cause and 9% of Dead monuments being built between 1915 and 1940.

The temporal pattern for Plain monuments differs slightly from that of the Lost Cause and Dead monuments. There is a smaller concentration of Plain monuments between 1890 and 1915 (31%) when compared to Lost Cause and Dead monuments, but a higher concentration (33%) in the following period (1915–1940). The distinction between the temporal patterns for the Lost Cause and Plain monuments, in particular, is suggestive of the potential importance of racialized dynamics in explaining which type of inscription was used. The second period marked a time of race riots, the reign of the Ku Klux Klan, and the rise of Jim Crow in the U.S. South. The higher concentration of Lost Cause as compared to Plain inscriptions in this period suggests a potential connection between intensified racial tensions and the use of Lost Cause inscriptions.

The racial context likely does not explain the greater use of Dead inscriptions; instead, their higher concentration early on is more likely connected to the timing of

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mourning. In fact, despite the low level of construction overall in the earliest period, we still see a modest concentration of 16% for Dead monuments in the years immediately following the Civil War (1865–1890). This suggests that our results are not purely reflective of the broader trends in when public Confederate monuments were constructed. Moreover, the trend for Dead monuments is consistent with their more mournful message and confirms suggestions that the pure commemoration of the dead occurred most frequently in the earliest phases of the Confederate tradition (Winberry [1983] 2015).

To gain additional insight into the temporal trends of the different inscription themes we focus next on their prevalence within a given twenty-five-year period. The percentage breakdown within a period by inscription theme will show which type of inscription, if any, dominates or characterizes a particular period. Instead of a consistent, even breakdown, results suggest substantial variation in the usage of the different types of inscriptions across the periods (see Figure 4). In some periods it is the Lost Cause inscription that dominates; in others, it is the Plain. Dead monuments never reach majority status, but the usage of this type of inscription follows a telling and predictable pattern. We describe the results for each type of monument inscription in greater detail below.

Lost Cause monuments characterized the majority of Confederate monument construction in three out of the six periods examined: 1865–1890, 1890–1915, and 1990–2015. They comprised 60% and 70%, respectively, of all of the monuments that were erected in the two periods immediately following the Civil War. There is no clear majority in the third period (1915–1940)—the use of Lost Cause and Plain inscriptions reaches a virtual tie by this time, and Plain monuments come to dominate the fourth (1940–1965) and fifth periods (1965–1990). Lost Cause monuments again emerge as the most common, at 67%, in the most recent period. This resurgence in the use of Lost Cause inscriptions may be explained by the small number of monuments constructed during this period, particularly in comparison to earlier years. It is also possible that residents with different, more neutral motivations are simply less likely to construct a monument more than 130 years later.

Interestingly, Plain monuments reached a clear majority status in two out of the six periods, including the period that most closely overlaps with the Civil Rights Era (1965–1990). Between the years 1965 and 1990, thirty-seven Confederate monuments were erected in public spaces, and twenty-four of those (65%) were given inscriptions that we categorized as Plain. We find a similar concentration of 66% in the previous period that corresponds with the years between 1940 and 1965. The spike that we find in the total number of public Confederate monuments constructed in the year 1963 is driven primarily by Plain monuments. Our data indicate that twenty-one monuments were erected that year. Seventeen of them have Plain inscriptions. Although our results are exclusively descriptive and cannot identify direct relationships, the dominance of Plain monuments during the Civil Rights Era is somewhat in contrast to suggestions that monument construction was motivated by reactions to the Civil Rights Movement (SPLC 2016). This result accentuates the value of examining the inscriptions (and other features) of Confederate monuments and suggests the need for future research to distinguish among competing explanations for monument construction.

Finally, despite never comprising the majority of the monuments built in a period, the construction of Dead monuments exhibits a distinct temporal pattern. Rather than fluctuating as the Lost Cause and Plain monuments do, Dead monuments clearly decline in their prevalence with each successive period. They comprise only 1% of the public monuments built in the South by the time we reach the most recent decades. This finding is consistent with our concentration results and, again, suggests the more

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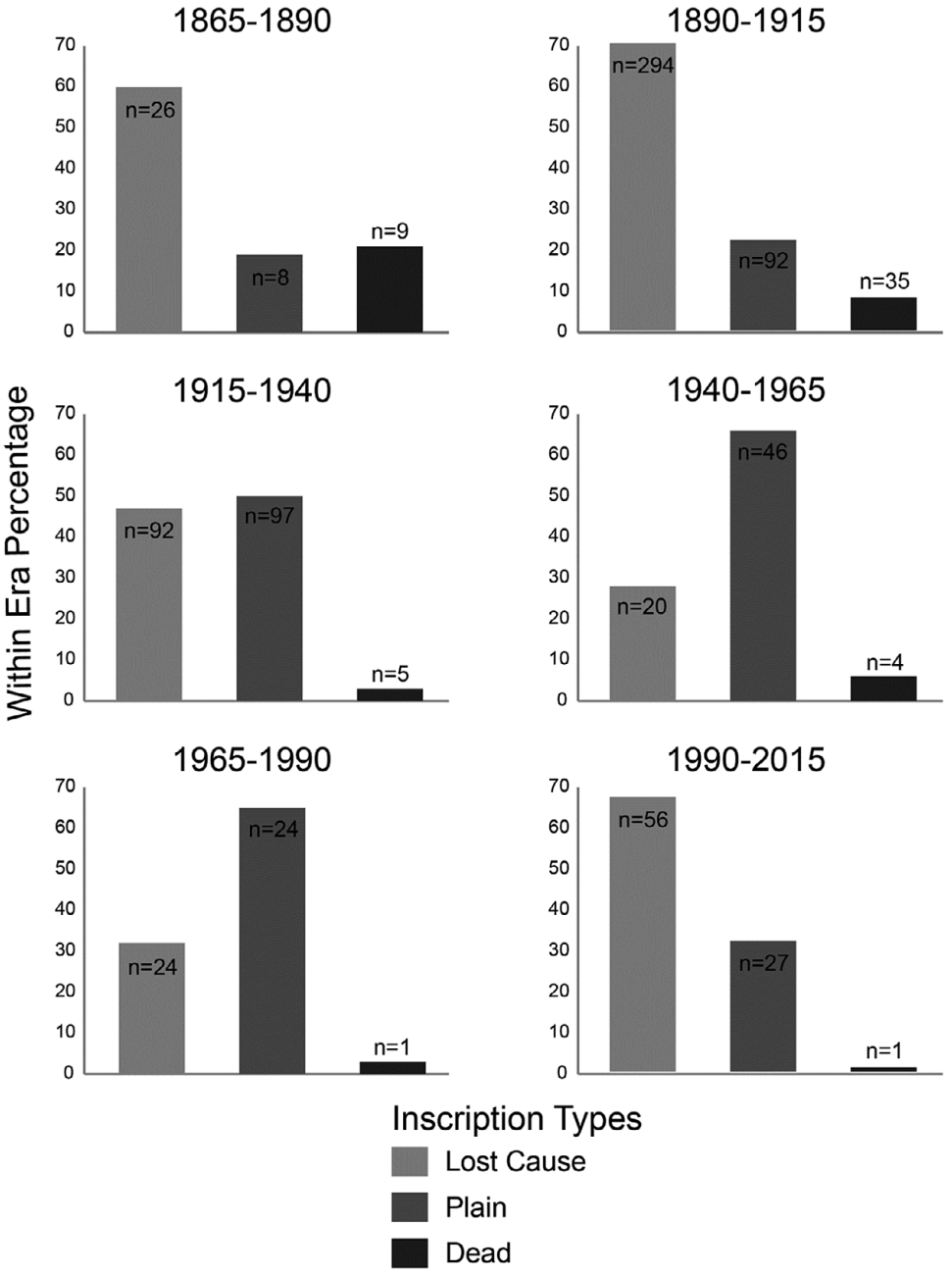

Figure 4. Prevalence of Inscription Type within Period

specialized use of this type of inscription. We argue that monument construction served different purposes at different times, and we see some evidence of that reflected in the types of inscriptions chosen by those who erected the monuments.

Sub-Regional Variation among Confederate Monuments

Confederate monuments vary in when they were built, but also in where. The vast majority of public Confederate monuments are located in Deep South states (see

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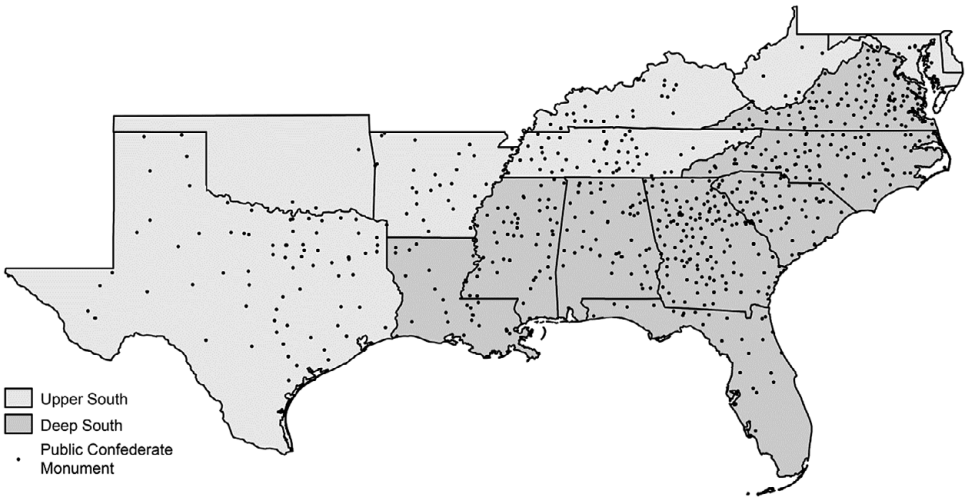

Figure 5. Public Confederate Monuments in the Upper South and Deep South

Figure 5). There are 624 Deep South monuments in our analysis, which is 73% of the ones with information on the year of construction.[10] Only 27%, or 232 public Confederate monuments, are located in the nine states of the Upper South. In fact, Delaware and Washington, DC have zero, an outcome that is unmatched among states in the Deep South. Given the stronger connection to the Confederacy within the Deep South, this finding is not surprising. However, what will be more telling for our understanding of the social origins of monuments is how the different inscription themes vary.

Consistent with the distribution of any type of public Confederate monument within the South, there is a higher concentration of all three inscription themes in the Deep South (see Figure 6). Each theme surpasses a concentration of 67%, which indicates that at least 67% of the total number of each type of monument can be found in a state in the Deep South. Interestingly, the highest concentration, albeit by a slim margin, is for Dead monuments rather than Lost Cause monuments. The concentrations are 78% and 76%, respectively. We may not give this as much weight given the smaller number of Dead monuments—there are only forty-three throughout the whole Deep South as compared to 379 Lost Cause monuments—but this connection is logical given the overlap between Civil War battles (and therefore death and destruction) and the states in this sub-region. The distinction between the Lost Cause and Plain themes is clearer and is suggestive, at least on a descriptive level, of the idea that Lost Cause inscriptions are associated with racially oppressive contexts.

The results are the mirror image in the Upper South such that Plain monuments stand out in their concentration. Despite the numbers being lower for each theme when compared to the Deep South, the highest concentration for the Upper South is for the Plain monuments at 33%. These results demonstrate a difference in kind (inscription theme) in addition to degree (number of monuments) when considering the two sub-regions' connections to the Confederacy.

Of the 624 monuments in the Deep South, 379, or 61%, have a Lost Cause inscription (see Figure 7). The prevalence of this theme drops to 53% in the Upper South. Plain monuments are nearly as common in the Upper South as are Lost Cause monuments at 42%, but they are twenty-nine percentage points behind in the Deep South—Plain monuments comprise only 32% of the monuments in the Deep South.

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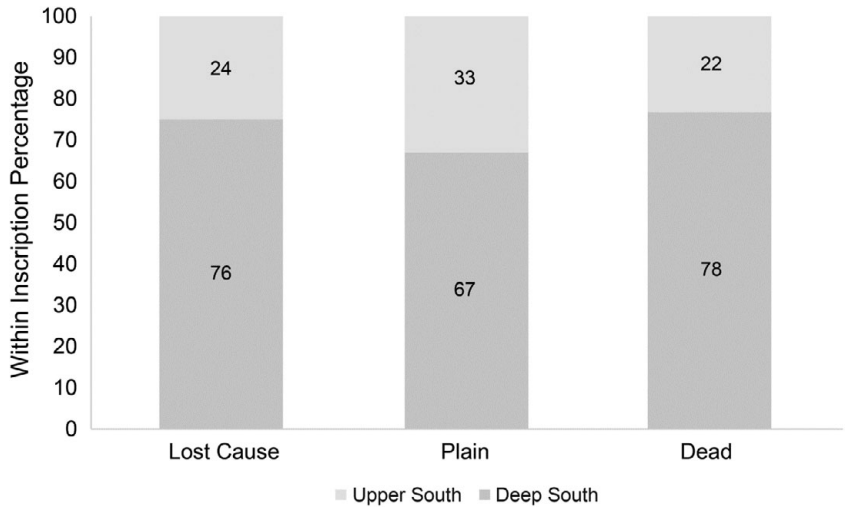

Figure 6. Concentration of Inscription Type across the Upper South and Deep South

Figure 7. Prevalence of Inscription Type within the Upper South and Deep South

In contrast, the prevalence of Dead monuments is remarkably similar across the two sub-regions; 7% in the Deep South, and 5% in the Upper South. This similarity in prevalence suggests that the Dead theme was equally as common in the two sub-regions after accounting for the larger number of total monuments in the Deep South. The same cannot be said when comparing the concentration and prevalence results for the Lost Cause and Plain themes; we find a lopsided split favoring the Lost Cause in the Deep South regardless of whether we look at the concentration or prevalence. This consistency suggests that there may be something associated with the Deep South context—something that may also be present in the Upper South but to a lesser degree—that relates to a greater likelihood of using a Lost Cause as compared to a Plain theme in a Confederate monument inscription.

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DISCUSSION

Monuments are a reflection of what is valued by a society, and Confederate monuments are an important—and contentious—piece of many communities in the U.S. South. In order to better understand their meaning and place within public spaces we examine the inscriptions associated with southern Confederate monuments and how the use of different types of inscriptions changed over time and differ across sub-regions in the South. We identify three distinct themes among the inscriptions used on public Confederate monuments through inductive content analysis, and we find temporal patterns consistent with the notion that these monuments were built at different times for different reasons. In addition, our results suggest a particularly strong connection between the Lost Cause inscription and the Deep South despite their appearance throughout the region. The descriptive analysis that we provide emphasizes the variation among Confederate monuments and offers a critical foundation for better understanding the meaning(s) of these public symbols.

The messages conveyed through Confederate monuments differ in tone and sentiment, ranging from the stereotypical assertion of Confederate greatness (Lost Cause), to neutral representations of people and events (Plain), to the mournful attention to the dead (Dead). Lost Cause monuments are representative of why opponents have expressed concern over the continued presence of Confederate monuments in contemporary society—this kind of monument embodies the lost cause movement that promoted the image of heroic (White) Confederate soldiers who fought for a righteous cause. This imagery, implicitly or not, feeds into a social structure that maintains divisions between Whites and Blacks. Confederate monuments privilege the perspective and concerns of White southerners while ignoring, and sometimes distorting, the realities of slavery and the Black American experience. Furthermore, as Winberry ([1983] 2015) asserts, "[i]t is not a symbol shared necessarily by blacks or newcomers, but it does unite a people and their history" (p. 29). To the extent to which Confederate monuments contribute to the development of a unique southern identity (Foster 1987), that identity is one primarily, if not exclusively, connected to Whiteness. The enhancement of racialized boundaries through the development of exclusionary identities does not bode well for local social dynamics and subsequent inequalities, particularly in places where race aligns with differential access to power.

We emphasize that inscriptions are only one of several cues that are used by contemporary viewers when interpreting the meaning of a monument. Simultaneously, they are only one signal of the intentions of those who erected the monument. Of particular importance are the visual cues and location of a monument.[11] Is the imagery one of (White) pride, or plain, mournful obelisks? Is the location prominent, visible, and connected to the heart of the city or town? To the extent to which viewers are not reading the inscriptions (Screven 1992), these visual and geographic cues may be more important for understanding how contemporaries interpret the monuments than the inscriptions, particularly if they are contradictory. We argue that the inscriptions still provide clear insight into the feelings intended to be evoked by those who erected the monuments, but this limitation should be kept in mind when considering our results. Moreover, future research should build on our work to incorporate these important pieces of the interpretive context.

In addition to being the most powerful in terms of content, Lost Cause inscriptions were the dominant form of expression among those who erected Confederate monuments in public spaces. This finding helps in understanding why Confederate monuments are often uniformly characterized as supporting the lost cause narrative, particularly in public debates by those who oppose their continued presence. However,

we emphasize that the messages associated with a particular monument vary quite substantially, at least the explicit messages conveyed through inscriptions. The implicit message of any monument is that the person, place, or event is of historical and contemporary importance. By extension, any person, place, or event that is not memorialized is less important. That said, we find the variation in the inscriptions enlightening when considering the opposing sides in the "heritage versus hate" debate.

Our results cannot speak to how individuals interpret the meanings associated with different inscriptions and monuments—an important avenue for future research—yet we can draw some preliminary distinctions based on the text alone. There are some monuments that only mourn the dead, which is consistent with the arguments of those who suggest Confederate monuments are there to remember and honor their ancestors. However, there are also clearly (more) monuments that support a lost cause narrative that is often at odds with historical fact, which is consistent with the arguments of those who emphasize the damages caused by Confederate monuments. Acknowledging that both exist may be helpful in productively moving public debates forward because starting from a place of understanding of the other side opens the door to conversation rather than blind argument. Considering variation in the inscriptions also helps focus public debates by isolating the most contentious of the Confederate monuments. Finally, beyond the specific heritage versus hate debate, our work has implications for future research. We expect that incorporating variation in the explicit messages may be critical when examining the causes and consequences of maintaining Confederate monuments in public spaces (O'Connell 2020).

Results also suggest some temporal variation in the themes expressed through Confederate monuments. Different types of inscriptions were used more or less frequently depending on the period. We demonstrate this variation using measures of concentration (how one type of monument is distributed across time) and prevalence (the extent to which one type of monument characterizes a particular period). Consistent with historical accounts and previous research on Confederate monuments (Winberry [1983] 2015) we find that monuments purely dedicated to the Confederate dead are heavily concentrated in the first two periods. However, even in the twenty-five-year period immediately following the end of the Civil War, Lost Cause monuments were the most frequently constructed. This reflects the large number of Lost Cause monuments but is also consistent with arguments suggesting that the movement from the cemetery (where the earliest monuments were erected) to the public realm coincided with a shift in the intentions of those who constructed them (Foster 1987). If an organization wanted to commemorate the dead, then they may have been more likely to locate the monument in a cemetery rather than in a public space.

The other potentially important piece of evidence regarding temporal variation relates to the use of Plain relative to Lost Cause inscriptions. Results indicate that Plain inscriptions were more heavily concentrated and more frequently used in new monument construction during the periods that overlap with the Civil Rights Era than were Lost Cause inscriptions. To the extent to which inscriptions shed light on the motivations for, or at least the messages being conveyed through, a monument, this finding suggests that the spike in Confederate monument activity is associated more so with broader interest in commemorating historical events than it is with promoting the lost cause ideology per se. This is perhaps related to the fact that the 1960s coincided with the Civil War centennial in addition to the Civil Rights Movement. Activity related to monument construction, as opposed to use of the Confederate battle flag during this era (Leib 1995; Strother et al., 2017; Wright and Esses, 2017), may be somewhat unique, and we emphasize, again, that the selection of which historical events were commemorated is telling (Wiener 2004). Additional research examining the full breadth of

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monuments constructed during this era and the share of those monuments focusing on the Confederacy will be necessary to further understand how race and public symbols intertwine during this important period in U.S. history.

Despite evidence of temporal variation suggesting that monuments were built at different times for different reasons, we also find substantial variation in the type of inscription used on Confederate monuments that were built in a single twenty-five-year period. Rather than all of the monuments erected in the earliest decades sharing a singular focus on mourning the dead, or only finding Lost Cause inscriptions on monuments constructed during the early 1900s, there is a mix of all three in each period we examine. This suggests that there are other dimensions of the context in which a monument is constructed; namely, characteristics that vary across place rather than time that are important for understanding the meaning behind Confederate monuments.

We provide some initial evidence on how Confederate monuments vary across geographic contexts by examining differences between the Upper South and Deep South. We find that Confederate monuments are more heavily concentrated in the Deep South and that the Deep South is more closely connected to the Lost Cause theme. This descriptive evidence suggests that there may be something associated with the Deep South that encouraged the use of this particular theme over others. In previous work scholars have emphasized the unique racialized context that predominates, but is by no means exclusive to, the Deep South and the South (Corzine et al., 1983; Reece and O'Connell, 2016; Stovel 2001). We argue that our results are suggestive of the connection between Confederate monuments and race. Future research will need to elaborate on this connection to provide more definitive evidence by focusing on direct measures of the racial context (e.g., indicators of racial violence such as lynching rates), but our results emphasize the potential importance of Confederate monuments to studies of race and inequality (also see O'Connell 2020). We note that while our research benefits from an analysis of all 856 public Confederate monuments in the U.S. South, and attention to how the broader social context changes over time and differs across sub-regions, this breadth comes at the expense of temporal and spatial variation occurring at the local level. This is a critical gap in the literature on Confederate monuments that should be addressed in future research and will be particularly helpful in identifying the extent to which Confederate monuments were erected in response to local (racialized) conditions.

Our research provides valuable insight into the Confederate monuments that occupy public spaces in the U.S. South. We echo the conclusions of those who precede us: monuments are symbols imbued with meaning that varies depending on the complex relationship between those who constructed them and those who later view them (Schwartz 1982; White 1997; Winberry [1983] 2015). However, we add to this perspective by demonstrating meaningful variation within the broader category of public Confederate monuments. It is more than just different interpretations of the same monument. Despite sharing a connection to a divisive piece of American history, they each reflect their own histories. Incorporating this variation into future studies of Confederate monuments may be vital as scholars continue to investigate their meanings and consequences for the people and places to which they are connected.

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NOTES

1. For research focusing on the Confederate battle flag see Leib (1995), Strother et al. (2017), Wright and Esses (2017).
2. People have dedicated monuments to the Confederacy in more recent years, including 2017 and 2018, but those additions are not on public property.
3. However, for research on the (in)effectiveness of museum labels see Screven (1992).
4. Research on public support for Confederate symbols, particularly their manifestation in the form of a flag, is suggestive of a connection between these symbols and negative attitudes towards Blacks (Glaser 2006; Holyfield et al., 2009; Leib 1995; Reingold and Wike, 1998; Strother et al., 2017; Wright and Esses, 2017). For a review see Talbert (2017).
5. Confederate monuments exist in states outside of the U.S. South, and even in other countries (SPLC 2016). A comparison of Confederate monuments across these distinct places would be a valuable contribution to future research.
6. For example, there are no Confederate monuments located in public spaces in Delaware or Washington, DC.
7. Thirteen monuments do not have a date. This represents less than 1% of all of the identified monuments. The small percentage of the total analytic samples suggests that excluding these monuments will not affect our results.
8. Our results are unaffected by how we treat North Carolina and Virginia—states not traditionally included in the Deep South, but with strong connections to the Confederacy, particularly in the case of Virginia.
9. Monuments dedicated to specific individuals may be a special case within the Plain inscription theme. Despite the plain nature of the text, these monuments more strongly imply that the individual should be considered as a hero, especially when the imagery is one of power and strength (e.g., riding atop a horse). We included these kinds of monuments in the Plain theme because there are other, similar monuments that do contain language explicitly praising the figures and/or the Confederacy. In order to maintain that important distinction, our results represent a somewhat conservative estimate of the number of Lost Cause monuments.
10. There are an additional ten monuments without a date in the Deep South and a corresponding three monuments in the Upper South. We omit these thirteen monuments to maintain consistency with our temporal analysis. The results are unaffected.
11. For a discussion of the social importance of geographic location see Alderman (2000).

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