

Monumental Effects: Confederate Monuments in the Post-Reconstruction South

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Confederate Monuments in History



Overview

I measure the impact of Confederate monuments on political outcomes and the southern black population

- **Where & When:** Former Confederate Counties, 1878–1912
- **Data:** Election Year Panel
- **Design:** Generalized D-in-D with staggered treatment (TWFE)

Findings

- Monuments increased Democratic vote share, decreased voter turnout and black population share
- No effect on lynchings
- Political results **not** explained by black out-migration

Conceptual Framework: Constructing Collective Memory

- Public symbols act as a coordinating mechanism for the construction of collective memory and social self-perception
 - Credible cultural cues are key for maintaining cultural attitudes (Gervais et al. 2021)
 - Can promote unifying or dividing collective memories
- Confederate monument dedications spread a racially divided understanding of the past and present
 - In-group/out-group dynamic

Confederate monuments communicated to Whites that they were the rightful elites and told Blacks they were non-citizens

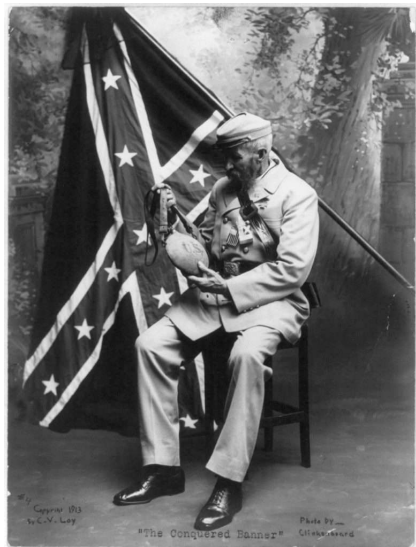
The Post-Reconstruction South

- Reconstruction ends after the disputed 1876 election
 - Electoral college split down the middle, election decided in backroom deal
 - Republican (Hayes) given presidency with the condition that Reconstruction ends
- Southern states worked to disenfranchise black voters
 - Formally, all southern states passed restrictive voting laws meant to disenfranchise black voters
 - Informally, mob violence and lynchings against African Americans created a culture of fear
- Southern Whites reassert a culture of discrimination and segregation, largely through the Lost Cause myth

The Lost Cause Myth

A pseudo-history of the Civil War from the “southern perspective” promoted through:

- Scholarly articles written by pro-Confederate academics
- Lost Cause organizations
 - United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC)
 - Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV)
- History Textbooks
- Monuments to the Confederacy



The Lost Cause: Major Points and Modern Relevance

Quotes from “fan mail” in August 2023...

① Slaveholders were largely benevolent

- “Race relations in the South were mostly very good.”

② Civil War fought over states’ rights

- “The Confederacy was fighting for the preservation of the U.S. Constitution...”

③ The Confederate cause was noble, but doomed from the start

- “Confederates were fighting an illegal invasion of murderers, looters, arsonists... to defend their homes and families.”

④ The “truth” of the Confederate cause must be preserved

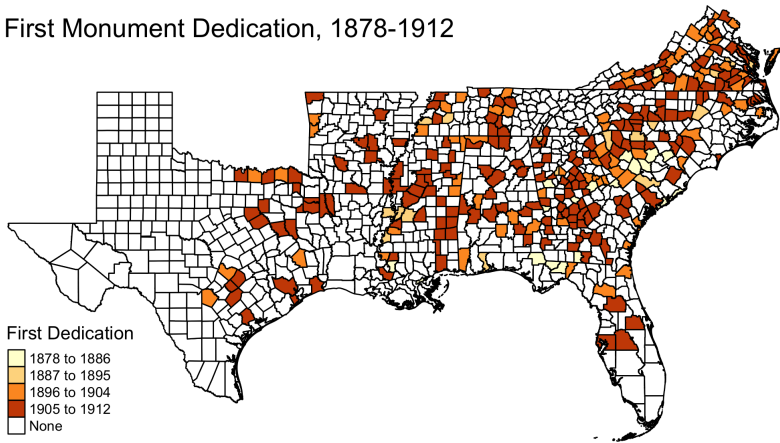
- “It is up to each of us to sift out the truth from the lies if we are to completely understand why [we] are where we are today.”

Data Details

- Monument data from Southern Poverty Law Center's "Whose Heritage?" Project
- County-level election data from Clubb et al. (2006)
- State-level voting law data from Jones et al. (2012)
- County-level economic and demographic data from the US Decennial Census
- Lynching data from Tolnay and Beck (1995)
- Newspaper data from Gentzkow et al. (2011)
- UDC chapter data from organization's annual meeting minutes

Monument Dedication Timing, 1878–1912

First Monument Dedication, 1878-1912



Empirical Strategy

- Generalized Difference-in-Differences design (TWFE models)

$$y_{ct} = \beta \text{Post}_{ct} + \text{law}_{st} + \gamma \mathbf{X}_{ct} + \boldsymbol{\theta}_c + \boldsymbol{\tau}_t + \boldsymbol{\varepsilon}_{ct} \quad (1)$$

- **Outcomes:** Democratic vote share & voter turnout in congressional elections, Black population share, Black lynchings
- Also estimate using Sun & Abraham (2021) cohort method
- Event studies for a number of estimation methods

Controls: % urban, manufacturing wages, average farm value per acre, total population, black population share, and total black population

Period-interacted fixed effects: 1892 populist vote share, newspaper access, and presence of UDC chapter

Political Effects: Democratic Vote Share

Dependent Variable: Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	% Dem (4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Variables</i>							
Post	6.011*** (1.142)	5.475*** (1.194)	5.268*** (1.847)	5.232*** (1.204)	5.215*** (1.203)	3.982*** (1.214)	3.858** (1.960)
Controls	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outcome Mean	70.64	70.64	70.64	70.64	70.64	70.64	70.64
<i>Fixed-effects</i>							
County Version	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Populist-Year			Yes				Yes
Newspaper-Year				Yes			Yes
Dem. Newspaper-Year					Yes		Yes
UDC-Year						Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>							
Observations	15,392	13,786	13,547	13,786	13,786	13,786	13,547
R ²	0.56472	0.55782	0.74422	0.55918	0.55915	0.56234	0.74775
Within R ²	0.00451	0.04070	0.03418	0.04162	0.04170	0.04116	0.03100

Clustered (County Version) standard-errors in parentheses

Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Political Effects: Turnout

Dependent Variable:	Turnout						
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Variables</i>							
Post	-1.205 (1.122)	-2.199** (1.106)	-3.690** (1.504)	-2.023* (1.117)	-1.983* (1.115)	-1.871* (1.122)	-3.359** (1.533)
Controls	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outcome Mean	47.19	47.19	47.19	47.19	47.19	47.19	47.19
<i>Fixed-effects</i>							
County Version	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Populist-Year			Yes				Yes
Newspaper-Year				Yes			Yes
Dem. Newspaper-Year					Yes		Yes
UDC-Year						Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>							
Observations	15,110	13,701	13,467	13,701	13,701	13,701	13,467
R ²	0.68363	0.70880	0.83474	0.71008	0.71009	0.71065	0.83674
Within R ²	0.00019	0.11306	0.11642	0.11154	0.11204	0.11516	0.11401

Clustered (County Version) standard-errors in parentheses

Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

Effect on Black Population Share

Dependent Variable:	% Black						
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Variables</i>							
Post	-0.7960** (0.3138)	-1.272*** (0.3103)	-1.109** (0.4676)	-1.189*** (0.3134)	-1.248*** (0.3091)	-1.132*** (0.3259)	-0.8280* (0.4960)
Controls	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outcome Mean	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
<i>Fixed-effects</i>							
County Version	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Populist-Year			Yes				Yes
Newspaper-Year				Yes			Yes
Dem. Newspaper-Year					Yes		Yes
UDC-Year						Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>							
Observations	4,216	3,878	3,746	3,878	3,878	3,878	3,746
R ²	0.98684	0.98838	0.99204	0.98847	0.98840	0.98840	0.99235
Within R ²	0.00245	0.11209	0.12253	0.11215	0.11149	0.11101	0.13066

Clustered (County Version) standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Effect on Black Lynchings

Dependent Variable:	Lynchings						
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Variables</i>							
Post	-0.0088 (0.0065)	-0.0106 (0.0066)	-0.0126 (0.0098)	-0.0100 (0.0066)	-0.0102 (0.0066)	-0.0089 (0.0067)	-0.0112 (0.0098)
Controls	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outcome Mean	0.0410	0.0410	0.0410	0.0410	0.0410	0.0410	0.0410
<i>Fixed-effects</i>							
County Version	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Populist-Year			Yes				Yes
Newspaper-Year				Yes			Yes
Dem. Newspaper-Year					Yes		Yes
UDC-Year						Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>							
Observations	38,710	32,404	31,323	32,404	32,404	32,404	31,323
R ²	0.11104	0.10649	0.39943	0.10804	0.10762	0.10788	0.40477
Within R ²	6.78×10^{-5}	0.00210	0.00170	0.00206	0.00207	0.00208	0.00161

Clustered (County Version) standard-errors in parentheses

Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

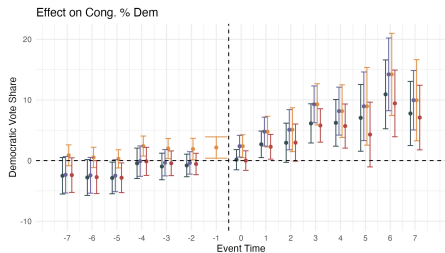
Sun & Abraham (2021) Cohort Method

Dependent Variables: Model:	% Dem (1)	Turnout (2)	% Black (3)	Lynchings (4)
<i>Variables</i>				
ATT	3.880*** (1.233)	-3.918*** (1.287)	-1.049*** (0.2795)	-0.0123 (0.0136)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outcome Mean	70.64	47.19	32	0.0410
<i>Fixed-effects</i>				
County Version	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>				
Observations	13,786	13,701	3,877	32,403
R ²	0.57084	0.71836	0.98845	0.14616
Within R ²	0.06895	0.14215	0.11723	0.04640

Clustered (County Version) standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

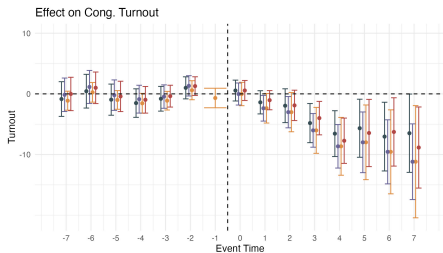
Identification: Parallel Trends



Estimator

- TWFE
- ◆ Borusyak, Jaravel, Spiess (2021)
- Gardner (2021)
- Sun and Abraham (2020)

(a) % Dem

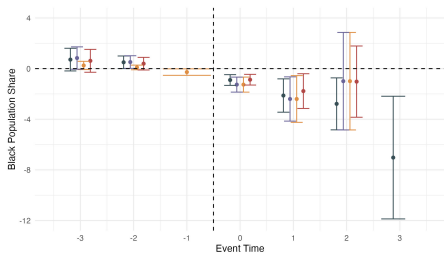


Estimator

- TWFE
- ◆ Borusyak, Jaravel, Spiess (2021)
- Gardner (2021)
- Sun and Abraham (2020)

(b) Turnout

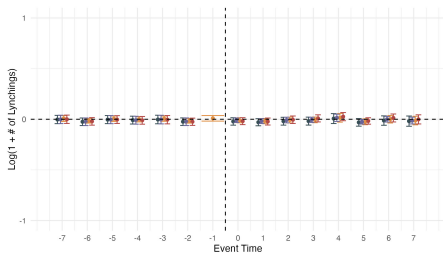
Identification: Parallel Trends



Estimator

- TWFE
- Borusyak, Jaravel, Spiess (2021)
- Gardner (2021)
- Sun and Abraham (2020)

(a) % Black



Estimator

- TWFE
- Borusyak, Jaravel, Spiess (2021)
- Gardner (2021)
- Sun and Abraham (2020)

(b) Lynchings

Robustness

① Propensity Score Matching

- Match on variables from 1860 census, critically includes county-level counts of slaves and slaveholders
- Do both (1) “naive” matching on a few selected variables and (2) matching on variables selected through LASSO
 - Political results robust, not effect on % Black

② Permutation Tests on Monument Timing

③ Leaving Single States Out

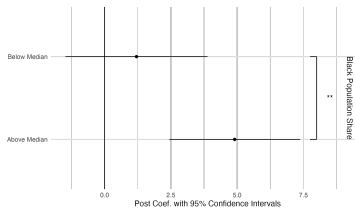
- VA main driver of turnout results
 - Home state of major Confederate figures, contains Confederate capital (Richmond), had more competitive elections, and was closer to the North

Mechanisms

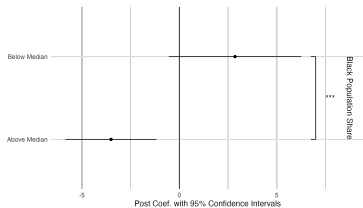
- 1 The conceptual framework has two implications:
 - Monuments persuade southern Whites that the Lost Cause myth is correct, leading to more support for Democrats
 - Monuments suppress southern Black political activity by signaling stronger anti-Black sentiments, leading to lower Black turnout
- 2 The estimated effect on Black population share also suggests Black out-migration could be a mechanism for the political findings

I examine Black out-migration as a potential mechanism here, and am in the process of addressing White persuasion and Black suppression

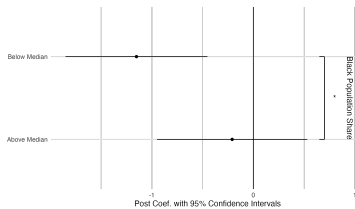
Political Mechanisms: Black Out-Migration?



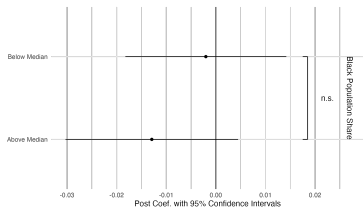
(a) % Dem



(b) Turnout



(c) % Black



(d) Lynchings

Other Monument Margins

- 1 Reconstruction Monuments (1868–1876)
 - No effect of Reconstruction monuments
- 2 Monument Intensity (Count instead of Post)
 - Compounding effects on % Dem and % Black
 - Small negative effect on lynchings
- 3 Monument Characteristics (Triple Difference)
 - Monuments dedicated to key Confederate figures had large positive turnout effects
 - Monuments on government grounds had negative turnout effects
 - No heterogeneous effects on % Dem or % Black
 - Small *positive* effect of govt. grounds monuments on lynchings

Conclusion

- Positive effect on Democratic vote share, negative effect on turnout, maybe negative effect on black population
- No effect on lynchings
- Political effects **not** driven by black out-migration

Public monuments are not mere decorations for parks and town squares, they communicate what a society values and shape its understanding of itself.

Conclusion

Thank You!

For a current version of the paper or to learn more about my research:



Or shoot me an email: ataylo46@gmu.edu