

Monumental Effects: The Lost Cause & Confederate Symbols in the Post-Reconstruction South*

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Abstract

Symbols of the Confederacy have become central to debates over racism and discrimination in America. Recent work has shown that symbols of the Confederacy, specifically Confederate street names, are associated with worse economic outcomes for Black Americans in the present day. But what was the effect of these symbols when they were first dedicated, and why were they erected in the first place? To assess these questions, I situate Confederate symbols in the context of public art and cultural revivals. I argue that public symbols are cultural items that shape social behavior by sending signals about the values of their society. Next, I combine data on Confederate symbol dedications from the Southern Poverty Law Center with election and census data from ICPSR to create a congressional election-year panel dataset of former confederate states between 1878–1912. I then use Two-Way Fixed Effects and event study models to explore symbols' effect on voter turnout, voting for Democrats (the anti-Reconstruction party), and the Black population. I find that newly dedicated symbols led to a decrease in voter turnout, an increase in the percentage of voters voting for Democratic congressional candidates, and a decrease in the Black population relative to counties without symbols in this time period. There is little measurable suppression of Black political activity by Confederate symbols, as much of it was already formally suppressed by restrictive voting laws. The results have implications for current debates over Confederate symbols in the United States.

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“There was a right side and a wrong side in the late war, which no sentiment ought to cause us to forget, and while today we should have malice toward none, and charity toward all, it is no part of our duty to confound right with wrong, or loyalty with treason.”

— Frederick Douglass, May 30, 1878

1 Introduction

Monuments and other symbols are frequent sights in public spaces. Who and what public symbols honor are not dictated by chance, but rather consciously chosen with an intended purpose. In the United States, Confederate symbols (most notably monuments) are a cultural flash point with significant portions of the population vehemently supporting either their preservation or removal. In the wake of the killing of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 many monuments were removed from public view—some voluntarily by local or state governments, others through force. Of primary concern in adjudicating the modern question of Confederate symbols is whether they influence the society around them. I argue that symbols convey information about and create a “shared knowledge” within their communities, promoting specific values that are upstream from social, political, and economic behavior. To assess this claim, I investigate the impact of Confederate symbols on political and social behavior. Specifically, I measure the impact of symbol dedications on voting for Democrats, voter turnout rates, and population demographics at the county level from the first election after Reconstruction, 1878, to the election of 1912. In the process, I shed light on the influence of newly dedicated public symbols and explore those implications in light of the Confederate symbol controversy.

One key question is whether monument-building is equilibrium or equilibrating behavior. That is, are symbols erected when their conveyed values are already embraced by the public and social change has already occurred, or are they meant to drive social change and influence the public to embrace a new set of values? I find strong evidence for the latter. My results indicate that counties that dedicated public Confederate symbols during this period saw an increase in the percentage of voters voting for Democratic candidates in congressional elections, a decrease in voter turnout rates, and a decrease in the black population relative to counties that did not dedicate symbols. This effect may take an election or two to be fully seen, but persists over time. This is consistent with symbols becoming permanent fixtures in their communities and permanently changing its self-perception.

This paper contributes to the literature on media and propaganda. Important papers have documented the effect of radio and propaganda on support for oppressive regimes (Adena et al., 2015), and interethnic trust (Blouin and Mukand, 2019). Others have directly addressed the effect of propagandistic or ideological media on voting and electoral outcomes in both the past (Ottinger and Winkler, 2022) and present (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007). On the specific topic of discrimination and racism in the United States, Ang (2020) investigates the impact of screenings of *Birth of a Nation* (BON), a revisionist account of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era that de-emphasized slavery in southern history, valorized the Ku Klux Klan, and portrayed blacks negatively, on short-run acts of racial violence and the later rebirth of the KKK. The present paper expands this literature by moving beyond mass or entertainment media, turning instead to the more localized and symbolic media of public symbols and monuments.

Additionally, this paper touches on aspects of culture. Recent work has explored the interaction of culture and institutions, with an emphasis on how the results shape political and economic outcomes (Alesina and Giuliano, 2015; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2021). Most forms of what is called “media” may shape behavior, but only the most memorable, permanent, and impactful can be said to affect culture. Current work has shown the importance of cultural symbols in preserving, and even re-activating, cultural attitudes over long periods of time (Ochsner and Roesel, 2019). Confederate symbols served to commemorate the events of the Civil War and cement them, or an interpretation of them, in postbellum southern culture as permanent reminders of the Confederate era. Elites can preserve their political and economic power in this manner through what is known as a “cultural revival,” which is leveraged to block social change and preserve an inefficient status quo (Iyigun et al., 2021). This paper is essentially a “case study” in cultural revival, providing empirical evidence for the concept’s impact in the Postbellum South.

Finally, it also contributes to the growing empirical work on Confederate monuments and symbols in the southern United States. Currently, books and papers can be separated into two broad groups that analyze either (1) the causes of monuments or (2) the persistent impacts of monuments in the present. Papers in the first camp include Henderson et al. (2021), which presents evidence that a higher number of lynching victims is a significant predictor of a higher number of Confederate symbols dedicated in a county. This implies a connection between racist violence and neo-Confederate sympathies. On the other hand, studies on the persistent effects of Confederate symbols include Williams (2021), which shows that Blacks who reside in areas that have a relatively higher number of streets named after Confederate symbols are less likely to be employed, are more likely to be employed in low-status occupations, and have lower wages compared to Whites. Also included in this category are books by Hartley (2021) and Brown (2019), which grapple with the continued display of Confederate symbols and explore their effects on militaristic attitudes in the US, respectively. The present paper fills in a glaring omission in the literature: the concurrent effects of Confederate symbols immediately after their dedication. In conjunction with other recent papers, I hope to assist in laying a foundation for the study of symbols and monuments more broadly.

To begin, I provide a brief overview of the political climate in the South following the Civil War. I then discuss the history of postbellum Confederate symbols in the South, highlighting key examples and the political context in which they took place. Next, I present my empirical analysis. I use an unbalanced panel dataset of Southern counties from 1878-1912 to examine the impact of Confederate symbol dedications. I employ Two-Way Fixed Effect regression models and event studies to control for potential confounding factors and to account for unobserved heterogeneity at the county level and over time. I then conclude with a discussion of key take-aways and remaining questions to be addressed in the future.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The Reconstruction Era (1865-1877)

Following the Civil War, the federal government occupied the former Confederacy for 12 years (1865-1877) in an effort to physically and socially reconstruct the South. In the first 5 years of Reconstruction, the country also ratified three major constitutional amendments that ended slavery, granted citizenship

to former slaves, and sought to secure their civil rights. A primary role of the federal government in occupying the South was the enforcement of these new amendments. Former slaves voted for the first time in the South, electing some of the nation's first African American office-holders at both the state and federal level. New political alliances took shape throughout the South, with abolitionists, poor whites, and former slaves forming coalitions in opposition to the power of anti-Reconstruction whites.

This era was nonetheless wrought with problems, as racial violence was common and the small force of federal troops could only do so much to keep peace. There were also attempts to continue quasi-slavery at the local level through a maze of "Black Codes" that restricted freed slaves' rights, though these were technically invalidated by the post-war constitutional amendments. This was the era of the first iteration of the Ku Klux Klan, also known as the "1st Klan," which sought to enforce discrimination through violence. The paramilitary group violently intimidated freed slaves and pro-Reconstruction citizens and politicians, perpetrating lynchings and general violence on those who opposed their political agenda. In sum, violence was the high price paid for the exercise of limited civil rights by freed slaves in the Reconstruction South. While pro-Reconstruction southerners still saw some political success in spite of this shadow of violence, it waned over time. Anti-Reconstruction Democrats, also known as "redeemers", saw substantial gains in the early 1870s, and began to succeed in winning control of southern states before the end of Reconstruction.

Ultimately, conflicts over the direction of Reconstruction led to an incoherent implementation of its policies. In conjunction with rogue violence, southern resentment, and numerous corruption scandals, this led to Reconstruction's failure as a political project. While areas devastated by the war were indeed physically reconstructed, the broader attempt to assimilate the former Confederacy into a coherent national identity dictated by the North was unsuccessful. Over time, the desire to shape the direction of the South by force waned in favor of a more amicable reconciliation between North and South that allowed both sides to form unique views of the war, though this would not become the accepted norm until Post-Reconstruction (Piehler, 2004, ch. 2).

The final blow to Reconstruction was dealt in 1877. In the wake of the disputed 1876 presidential election, when the electoral college split and declared neither Republican Rutherford B. Hayes nor Democrat Samuel J. Tilden president, Republicans and Democrats struck a deal to avoid a severe political crisis. The Compromise of 1877 permitted an electoral commission made up of eight Republicans and seven Democrats, which would split along party lines, to decide the winner of the election. Democrats, who controlled the House of Representatives and could have blocked the commission, allowed the commission's decision to stand conditional on the removal of all remaining federal troops from the South. Rutherford B. Hayes was declared president and the remaining federal troops were withdrawn accordingly, bringing Reconstruction to its formal end.

2.2 The Post-Reconstruction Era (1877-1912)

The Post-Reconstruction Era was characterized by the near-complete erosion of the few black civil rights attained during the previous 12 years. Violence and lynchings surged in this period, in conjunction with an organized political movement against the beneficiaries of Reconstruction policies. Black political, economic, and social activity was rapidly suppressed in a bid to relegate them to a near non-citizen status. This was done through several means, both formal and informal.

Formally, southern states passed restrictive voting laws meant to disenfranchise black voters. These laws came in 3 primary forms: poll taxes, literacy tests, and ballot laws. Poll taxes charged a tax to vote that poor blacks were less likely to be able to afford. Literacy tests required the voter to demonstrate the ability to read, targeting the disproportionately poorly educated black population. Ballot laws complicated the voting process, requiring the placement of multiple ballots in different boxes or forbidding help for confused voters due to a “secret ballot” policy. Table 2 shows what types of laws were passed when in southern states in the Post-Reconstruction Era. Jones et al. (2012) show that these restrictive laws led to a large and disproportionate reduction in voter turnout in areas with higher percentages of blacks in the Post-Reconstruction Era. Though these laws likely also affected poor, uneducated whites, they disproportionately impacted the black population.

Informally violence also played an important role in the Post-Reconstruction Era, and previous scholarship has demonstrated its impact on the black population. Cook (2014) demonstrates an economic chilling effect of violence on innovation among the black population from 1870-1940, showing an impact of lynchings of patents claimed by black inventors. Cook et al. (2018) show a relationship between lynchings and segregation, showing the impact of violence on social behavior. Areas with lynchings had higher levels of neighborhood segregation, where mixed race areas would separate by race within the community, between 1880 and 1940. Additionally, Jones et al. (2017) establish a political chilling effect of lynchings on black voter turnout, showing that lynchings within 100 miles of a county in an election year disproportionately decreased voter turnout in counties with higher percentages of blacks in the Post-Reconstruction Era.

Southern identity was also in flux during this period. The concept of the “New South” emerged that wished to de-emphasize the past and push the South forward. This reflected a general rift in southern society over the direction of the South in the face of industrialization. While some Southerners embraced industrialization, many others balked at its perceived fraudulence and immorality in comparison to what they saw as the South’s historical commitment to morality and honor. In his discussion of reunion following the Civil War, Blight (2002) explains that, some 20 years on from the Civil War, “Americans needed a social and moral equivalent of war. They would achieve this, of a kind, in the realm of sentiment—in a resurgent cult of manliness and soldierly virtues recycled in thousands of veterans’ papers, speeches and reminiscences. But such a moral equivalent of war came increasingly to exalt the soldier and his sacrifice, disembodied from the causes and consequences of the war.” Rather than continue debating the causes and consequences of the war, the South turned to honoring the soldier’s sacrifice as the peak of morality and something to be memorialized and emulated. This arguably drove the increased monument-building activity of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

2.3 Confederate Symbols

Though believed by some to date back to the Confederacy itself, nearly every public Confederate symbol was erected after the Civil War. Given the Confederacy’s devastating loss, few celebratory symbols were dedicated in the immediate aftermath of the war. Early symbols were more likely to be simple monuments, placed in cemeteries as a form of bereavement and visually indistinguishable from other memorial monuments (Foster, 1987). Few, if any, depicted people. Figure 5 in Appendix A shows an image of a monument erected in a Confederate cemetery in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1870, which is

emblematic of most bereavement monuments. Due to their frequent location in cemeteries, Reconstruction symbols were also typically distanced from daily life rather than placed in prominent places. Rather than intending to shape everyday life, Reconstruction era symbols predominantly sought to memorialize the dead and process the grief of a destructive war that had ended in crushing defeat, while allowing life to continue on beyond the walls of the cemetery.

The sponsorship of Reconstruction Era symbols was highly localized, in contrast to later symbols. Memorialization was largely female-driven, but financially sponsored by men (Foster, 1987). Women across the south founded local Ladies Memorial Organizations (LMOs), and sought to shape the sentiment of the war. However, during Reconstruction, no state- or region-wide organizations were ever formed. Their primary purposes were remembering those from the local area who died, maintaining cemeteries, and participating in the celebration of annual Memorial Days.

Post-Reconstruction era symbols shifted strongly toward glorification and positive remembrance. There were rumblings of this glorification before the end of Reconstruction: the dedication of a statue to Stonewall Jackson in Richmond, VA in 1875 drew 50,000 people to the former Confederate capital for a day of celebration that included the prominent display of Confederate flags and memorabilia, a military-style parade of Confederate veterans, and speeches that declared Jackson a national, not merely Southern, hero. The potential presence of black militiamen at the celebration proved to be controversial (Blight, 2002, p.83). To allay concerns of race mixing, the organizers planned to place the militiamen at the rear of the parade. In the end, the militias did not attend. The only blacks in attendance were former slave workers who had been in the Stonewall brigade. The event marked the symbolic end of Reconstruction, and set a standard for how Southerners viewed the rightful place of blacks in memorializing the Civil War: they were to be almost entirely excluded.

Symbol dedications stayed relatively flat in the years immediately following the end of Reconstruction. Figure 7 in Appendix A shows the number of symbols dedicated per year from the beginning of the Civil War through 1912. This began to change when state- and region-wide Confederate memorial associations such as the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) were founded in the 1890s. These memorial organizations worked to venerate the memory of the Confederacy in public spaces across the South, and hosted yearly conferences where members from across the South could gather, memorialize, and plan as unified groups. Figure 9 in Appendix A shows southern counties with at least one chapter of the UDC in 1912. Dedications of public Confederate symbols rose dramatically from 1900-1912, peaking in 1911, the 50th anniversary of the Civil War. Figure 1 shows southern counties with public Confederate symbols by 1912. These symbols were far more likely to be monuments or statues commemorating notable Confederates like Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, or Jefferson Davis, and many were on courthouse or other government grounds. Monuments were being erected at such a scale that at least one marble company placed advertisements in a Confederate magazine, which can be seen in Figure 6 in Appendix A. The political identity of the South became increasingly tied to its Confederate past.

Counties with Monuments by 1912

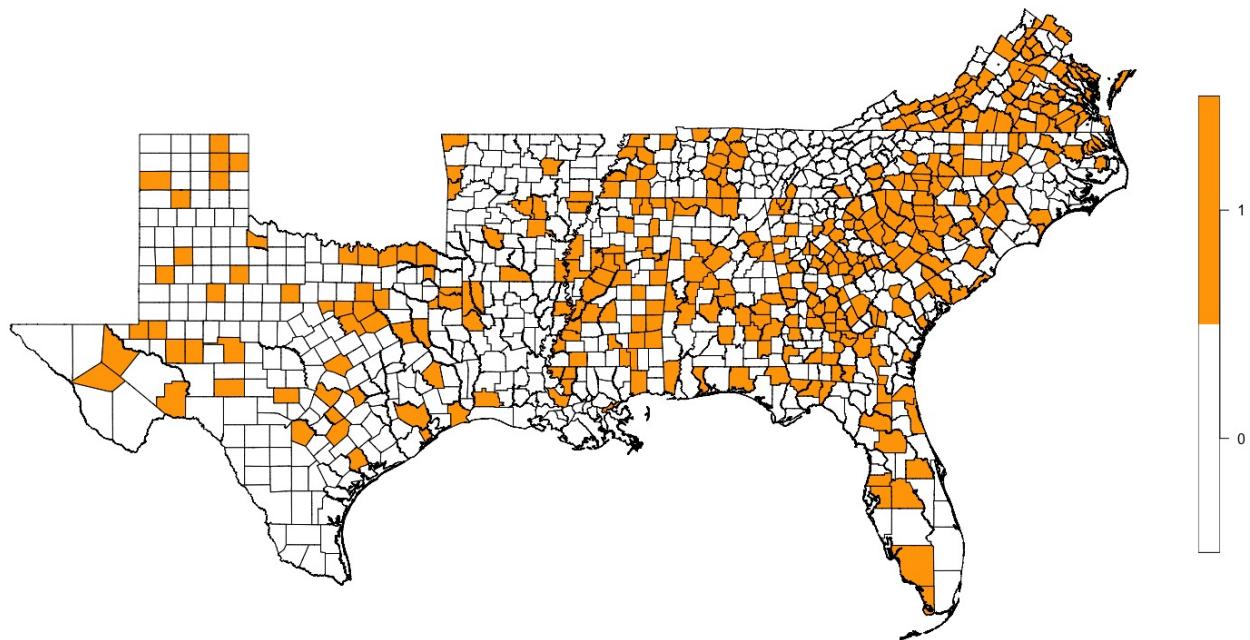


Figure 1: Southern Counties with Confederate Symbols by 1912

3 Symbols and Signals

Whether intentional or not, public symbols send signals to the public about their society and its values. Symbols have been shown to preserve cultural attitudes and features even over extended periods of time. Ochsner and Roesel (2019) provide evidence that coats of arms, monuments, and other public symbols in Austrian villages commemorating 16th and 17th century Turkish invasions preserved latent anti-Muslim attitudes until Muslim immigration became a political issue in 2005. In contrast, the relatively short-run effects of public symbols are of immediate interest here. Leveraging Kuran (1997)'s framework for understanding the divergence between private and public opinion becomes useful here, particularly Kuran's model of how public opinion may unexpectedly shift to align with private opinion. Applying Kuran's framework to the Post-Reconstruction Era yields interesting questions. Public opinion during Reconstruction, as measured by political representation, largely sought to move on from the Confederacy and its racial attitudes. By the 50th anniversary of the Civil War in 1911, public opinion had regressed and embraced a romantic image of the antebellum South. This could not only be due to the removal of freed slaves from political society through violence and discrimination, as non-elite whites were a key part of some pro-Reconstruction coalitions. What drove the realignment of opinion in the years between?

Given the strong opposition to Reconstruction among some in the South, a general shift to anti-Reconstruction politics can hardly be called unanticipated. Still, taking into account the diverse political coalitions of Reconstruction, the strength of support for grounding Post-Reconstruction politics in the memory of the Confederacy is unexpected. Poor whites previously aligned with freed slaves swung back to supporting a segregated society that romanticized the Confederacy. This shift was facilitated by the

failures of Reconstruction and the development of the Lost Cause narrative, which reframed the Civil War as being fought over states' rights and Confederate leaders as model gentlemen and citizens. Confederate memorial organizations played an important role in developing the Lost Cause, particularly through the dedication of Confederate symbols. Public symbols send signals to viewers about what the society values, and I argue Confederate symbols played a role in promoting the public expression of previously private pro-Confederate beliefs.

To those that identify with a symbol's message, the in-group, a symbol can be a point of pride and a rallying cry for their image of society. Iyigun et al. (2021) develop a theory of cultural revivals, and explicitly cite public symbols of the Confederacy in the Jim Crow South as a mechanism for reasserting the dominance of white identity. Furthermore, they can signal to those who privately agree with the symbol's message that public expression is acceptable if not encouraged. In this way, public symbols drive the realignment of public and private opinion described in Kuran's model. Before the dedication of a Confederate symbol whites have generally favorable private opinions on the Confederacy, but either do not prioritize expressing them publicly or fear social punishment for doing so. Following the dedication of a Confederate symbol, those previously silent or falsifying their public opinions perceive expected public opinion about the Confederacy as more positive and friendly than before. They are made aware that others hold their beliefs, and feel comfortable expressing (and seeing others express) them.

What may be one person's pride, however, may be another's shame. A sufficiently divisive public symbol also signals to the society's out-group that they are exactly that: outside the norm and not considered equal members of the society. Confederate symbols venerated an era of oppression and violence for southern blacks. While they may have been a point of pride for the in-group, to African Americans, the out-group, Confederate symbols going up in prominent, public spaces signaled that their society did not work for them and had no interest in doing so.

Given that the timing of the increase in Confederate veneration coincided with the reassertion of white dominance across the South, public Confederate symbols likely played a role in encouraging white, pro-Confederate political activity or suppressing black political activity. Symbols will either energize pro-Confederate sentiment and political behavior, suppress black political behavior, or both. In the following sections, I test both of these hypotheses and their relative importance, finding evidence for both.

4 Data

To explore the effects of Confederate symbols, I use five types of data: (1) Confederate symbol data, (2) voter turnout data, (3) demographic data, (4) economic data, and (5) data on restrictive voting laws. Here, I describe the sources for these data and methods of collection.

Data on Confederate symbols come from the Southern Poverty Law Center's "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy" Project (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021).¹ The database reports the location of symbols, the year they were dedicated, and the type of symbol, among other characteristics. The SPLC compiled their report using a variety of resources, including the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Park Service, the National Register of Historic

¹I use the 2nd edition of the SPLC's data published in 2019, though a 3rd edition was published in early 2022. I plan to update this data in future drafts. I am also in the process of acquiring separate data on Civil War symbols that also include Union symbols.

Places, private databases Waymarking and the Historical Marker Database, and crowd-sourced information verified by the SPLC. Symbols at historical locations such as battlefields, museums, and cemeteries are omitted from this version of the report. I restrict the dataset to symbols dedicated between 1878-1912, and find 499 symbols dedicated in this time period across 373 counties. The vast majority of these symbols are monuments, but also included are school names and other symbols such as state seals or holidays. Symbols that cannot be connected to a specific county are dropped.

I then pair the symbol data with county-level voting data. Turnout data are from ICPSR Study 8611 (Clubb et al., 2006), which contains county-level party voting and voter turnout data for both congressional and presidential elections from 1840-1972. Because this panel only includes election years, the final data contain only even years. Counties are considered post-treatment if a dedication occurs sometime between the past election year and the current election year.

I also include demographic and economic characteristics as covariates. Using data from the decennial census, I include both total and race-specific county populations, the urban population, manufacturing wages, and average farm value per acre. As the census is only done every ten years, I use a spline to interpolate values between census years and extrapolate when a county did not exist in a previous census year. Years between censuses are filled using a standard linear interpolation: if a county had a population of 1,000 in 1880 and 2,000 in 1890, the interpolated population is 1,200 in 1882, 1,400 in 1884, etc. To demonstrate extrapolation, assume this same county did not exist in 1870 but did in 1878. To determine the population in 1878 the spline continues the 1880 to 1890 interpolation backwards, calculating a population of 800 in 1878. Further, dollar values are all standardized to 1912 dollars. Finally, I collected data on voting laws across the South from Table 2 in Appendix B, which was assembled by Jones et al. (2012).

Put together, these data produce an unbalanced panel dataset covering every county in the South in election years from 1878 to 1912. As mentioned above, the dataset accounts for 499 Confederate symbols. All available Congressional turnout data is included, and counties & observations where data is unavailable are omitted. Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix B show the summary stats across the full sample and broken down by treatment status, respectively.

5 Empirical Strategy and Results

I now turn to empirically testing the impact of public Confederate symbols on voting behavior in the Post-Reconstruction South. As discussed above, there are two potential impacts of Confederate symbols: they may energize the political activity of the in-group (anti-Reconstruction whites), or they may suppress the political activity of the out-group (African Americans). These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive; public Confederate symbols may both energize the in-group and suppress the out-group. In this section, I test both hypotheses by estimating the impact of symbols on the percentage of voters voting Democrat, total voter turnout, and the percentage of the county population that is black.

| Dependent Variables: | % Dem | Turnout | % Black |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Model: | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| <i>Variables</i> | | | |
| Post | 6.092*** (1.132) | -1.590 (1.098) | -0.9568*** (0.2554) |
| Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <i>Fixed-effects</i> | | | |
| County | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <i>Fit statistics</i> | | | |
| Observations | 15,254 | 15,121 | 16,564 |
| R ² | 0.52540 | 0.65607 | 0.98586 |
| Within R ² | 0.00785 | 0.00922 | 0.01386 |

Clustered (County) standard-errors in parentheses

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

Table 1: TWFE Estimates of the Impact of Confederate Symbols

5.1 Two-Way Fixed Effects Models

I first use Two-Way Fixed Effects models to estimate the effect of Confederate symbols on political and demographic outcomes. Specifically, I estimate variations of the equation:

$$y_{ct} = \beta_1 \text{Post}_{ct} + \gamma \mathbf{X}_{ct} + \boldsymbol{\theta}_c + \boldsymbol{\tau}_t + \varepsilon_{ct} \quad (1)$$

where y_{ct} is an outcome variable in county c in election year t and Post_{ct} is a binary variable indicating the post-treatment period for counties in the treatment group. \mathbf{X}_{ct} is a vector of control variables including state-level voting laws, urban population, manufacturing wages, average farm value per acre, and total population. County and year fixed effects are added to control for spatial and time variant unobservables. The outcome variables here are % Dem, Turnout, and % Black. All are percentages ranging from 0–100. % Dem is the percentage of votes cast in county c in year t for Democratic congressional candidates. Turnout is the percentage of estimated eligible voters that voted in county c in year t . % Black is the percent of the population that is black in county c in year t .

The main results of all three variants are shown in Table 1. A full regression table showing all covariates is available in Table 5 in Appendix B. Across all three models, the results lend weight to both the energizing and suppression effects. First, in column (1), the estimate of 6.1 implies that monument dedications are associated with a 6.1 p.p. increase in the county vote share going to the Democratic party. This is an incredibly politically significant effect: a 6 p.p. swing could flip a county where Democrats previously trailed by 10 p.ps., i.e. where 55% of voters voted Republican and 45% voted Democrat, into a narrow win for Democrats, where they received 51% of the vote and Republicans received 49%. This could be a result of either an energized Democratic electorate or a suppressed Republican electorate.

Next, in column (2), I estimated the effect of symbol dedication on voter turnout. The results are inconclusive: while the estimate predicts a dedication reduces voter turnout by 1.6 p.ps., it is not statistically significant. At first glance, the negative sign appears to be consistent with the suppression hypothesis. Black Southerners no longer feel included in the society, and stop participating. However,

depending on the closeness of the election, it could also indicate that even if blacks continue to vote, Democrats now feel so comfortable in their hold on Southern society that they do not feel as obligated to participate politically. If Democrats go from receiving 60% of the vote to 66%, their political power is even more secure than before and may require less defending at the ballot box.

Finally, column (3) reports the impact of symbol dedication on the county black population. The results indicate that monument dedication is associated with a 0.96 p.p. decrease in the % of the county population that is black. This directly implies the suppression of black political and social activity. The status of Southern blacks in the 1875 Stonewall Jackson monument dedication discussed above seems generalizable. Confederate symbols specifically signaled to the black population that they were second class citizens, were not respected by their own society, and that the social in-group sought to honor those who fought for the right to enslave them, causing some blacks to move elsewhere.

With ideal data, I would also directly test the effect of symbol dedication on black voter turnout. However, racial voter turnout data was not collected in this period. I explore and attempt to measure the impact of Confederate symbols on black voter turnout in Appendix C.

5.2 Event Studies

Given the assumptions of TWFE models, further checks are useful to verify the validity of the outcome. Additionally, I would like to explore how the effect of monument dedication evolved over time. To do so, I construct event study models for all three regressions to better visualize the impact of Confederate symbols.

I estimate:

$$y_{ct} = \sum_{k=T_0}^{-2} \beta_k \times \text{Symbol}_{ck} + \sum_{k=1}^{T_1} \beta_k \times \text{Symbol}_{ck} + \mathbf{X}_{ct} + \boldsymbol{\theta}_c + \tau_t + \varepsilon_{ct} \quad (2)$$

where Symbol_{ck} is a series of dummy variables equal to one if a county dedicated a Confederate symbol k years ago. \mathbf{X}_{ct} is our set of control variables used previously, and county and year fixed effects are included.

Figure 2 graphs the resulting coefficients for the effect on Democratic voting and their 95% confidence intervals. The plot demonstrates a positive and persistent effect from Confederate symbol dedication. The effect takes several elections to fully take shape. There is no significant change until three elections after treatment, but after this point the effect flattens out, fluctuating between 5 and 10 p.p. higher than the control group. This and all other event studies show little difference between treatment and control groups prior to treatment, providing support to the parallel trends assumption.

Next, Figure 3 reports the results on voter turnout. While there is fluctuation prior to treatment, all estimates are near zero. Interestingly, while the TWFE estimate in Table 1 was not significant, there is a clear and persistent negative effect of symbol dedication on voter turnout. Further, the effect appears stronger here than in the TWFE model. Just as with the effect on Democratic voting, it takes several elections before the effect emerges.

Finally, Figure 4 reports the effect on the percent of the population that's black. Treatment counties once again appear similar to control counties prior to treatment. Just as in the TWFE model, the effect

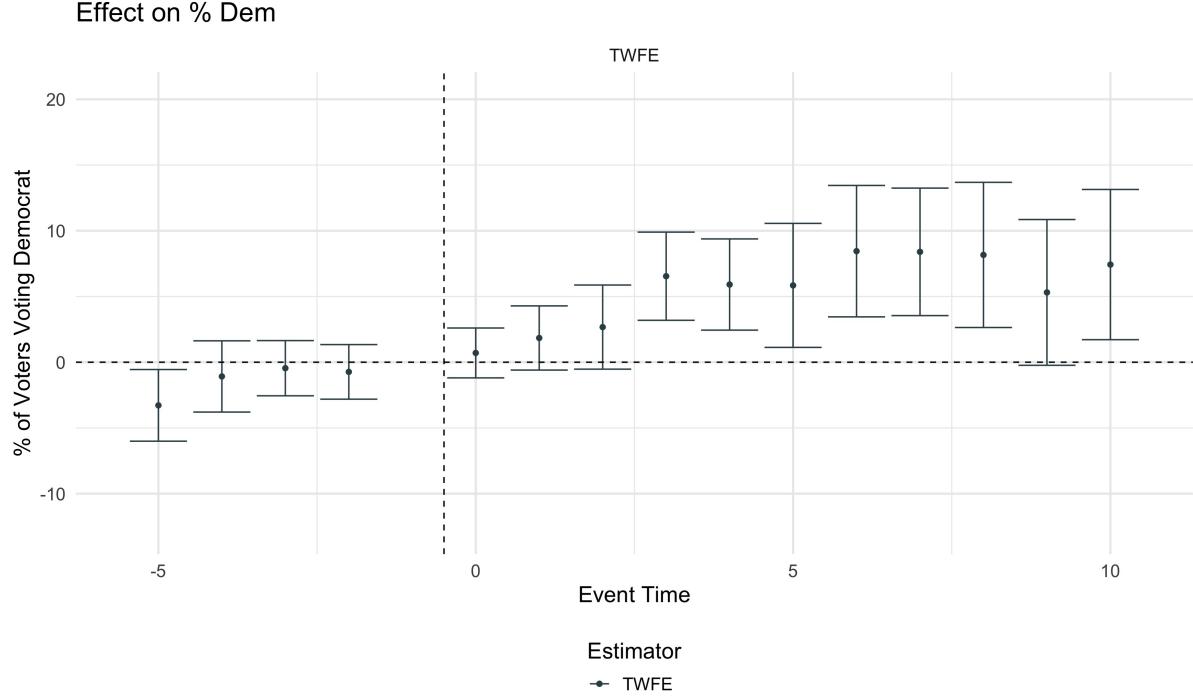


Figure 2: Symbol Dedication and % Dem

of symbol dedication on the black population is negative. Unlike the effect on Democratic voting and turnout, some of the effect on the black population occurs right after treatment. However, the overall effect is the smallest out of the three effects. This is expected, as moving out of a county is far more costly than changing voting behavior.

The slow emergence of the effect of symbol dedication in each event study is understandable when taking Iyigun et al. (2021) seriously. In their theory, the cultural revival emphasizes the communication of certain values to the next generation. Thus, we should not expect to see effects immediately. Rather, the effect should emerge over time as young people raised after the revival, who have been raised in societies with prominent Confederate symbols, become eligible to vote and participate in politics, where their behavior will be shaped by the revival.

Recent econometric work has highlighted problems with Two-Way Fixed Effects models as frequently used by applied economists (Roth et al., 2022). To address these concerns, Figures 10, 11, and 12 in Appendix A show alternate event study results for each of the three models discussed here. These figures were produced using the “did2s” package in R. The top left pane reproduces the standard TWFE figures displayed in this section. The top right pane shows the results of estimation using the imputation method of Borusyak et al. (2021). The bottom left shows the results of the two-stage difference-in-differences method of Gardner (2022), and the bottom right shows the results of the cohort method of Sun and Abraham (2021). Future drafts will better investigate which approach is most appropriate for these tests, and will include estimates to accompany the TWFE models reported in Table 1.

Effect on Voter Turnout

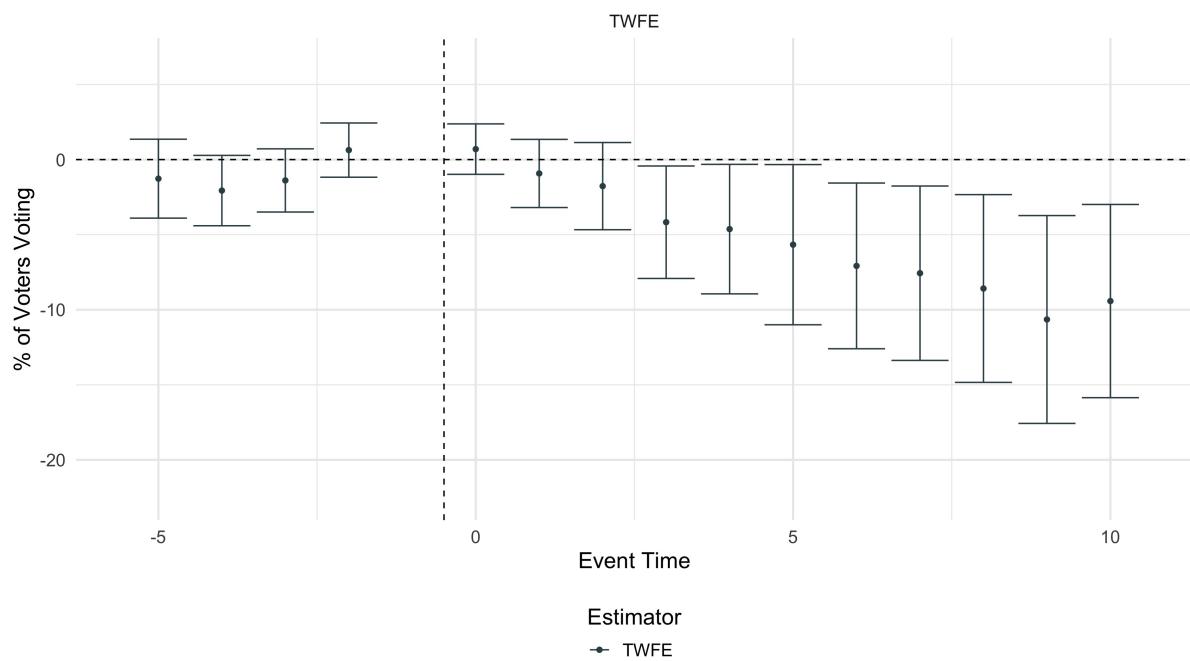


Figure 3: Symbol Dedication and Voter Turnout

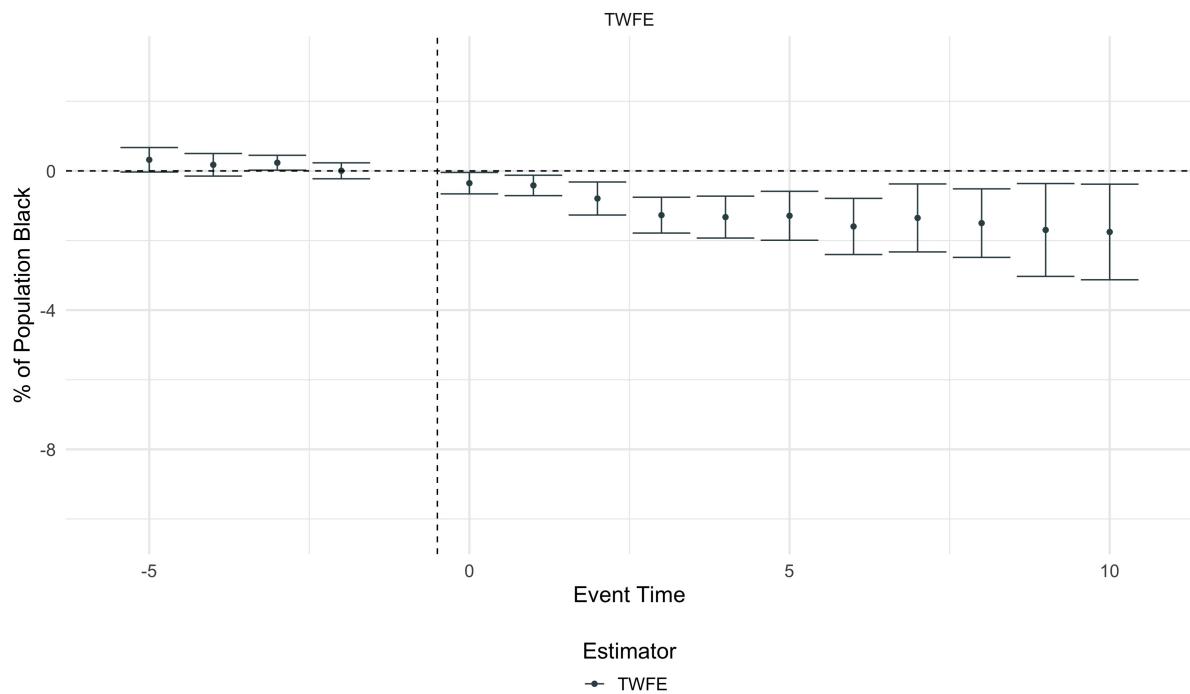


Figure 4: Symbol Dedication and % Black

6 Conclusion

I have provided evidence of a connection between public Confederate symbols and socio-political outcomes in the Post-Reconstruction South. The results demonstrate that Confederate symbols are not merely decorative pieces in city landscapes devoid of meaning and consequence. Public symbols are the silent and often-overlooked features that shape public knowledge, social understanding, and individual beliefs and behavior. How societies remember and commemorate their pasts shapes their futures. As societies grapple with conflicting visions of their histories, public symbols are increasingly pointed to as either honorable commemorations of the past or detestable preservations of outdated values unfit for the present.

Accordingly, these results have important implications in the current debate over public Confederate symbols. They had a measurable impact on the strength of the anti-Reconstruction movement, which swiftly suppressed the civil rights of the southern black population after the withdrawal of federal troops, and their presence in present-day culture can't be separated from this history. In future drafts of this paper, I plan to investigate the longer-run persistence of these monumental effects.

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A Additional Figures



Figure 5: Cemetery Monument in Raleigh, NC, Dedicated in 1870 (Mills and Simpson, 2003)

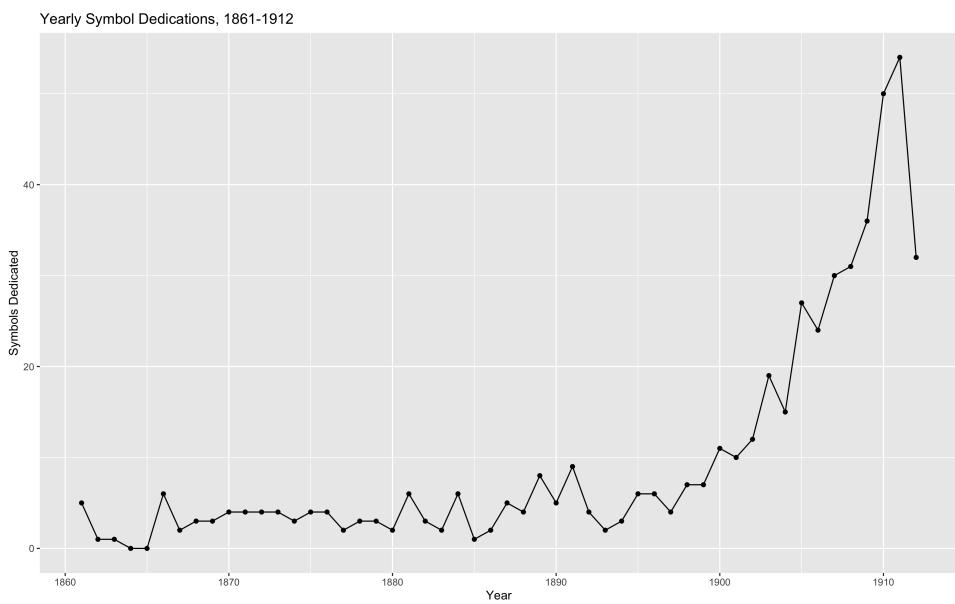


Figure 7: Symbols Dedicated Per Year 1861-1912



Figure 6: Ad for Monuments in *Confederate Veteran* Magazine in 1909 (Mills and Simpson, 2003)

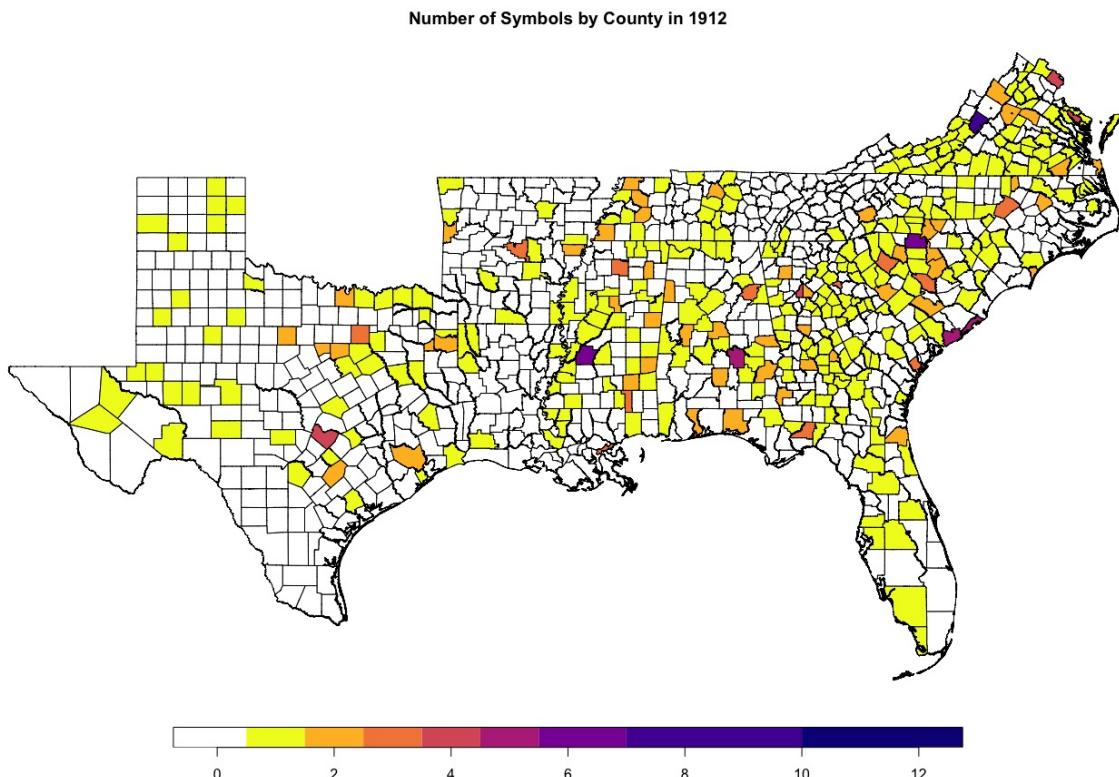


Figure 8: Number of Symbols by County in 1912

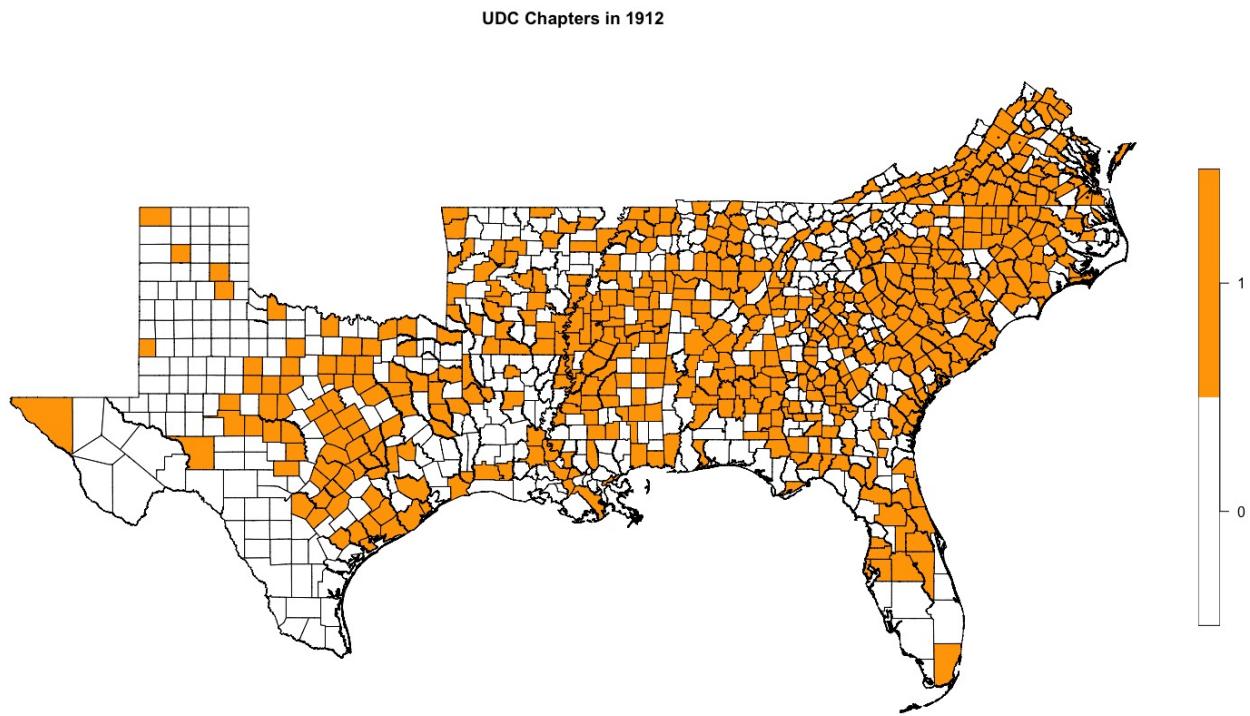


Figure 9: Counties with UDC Chapters in 1912

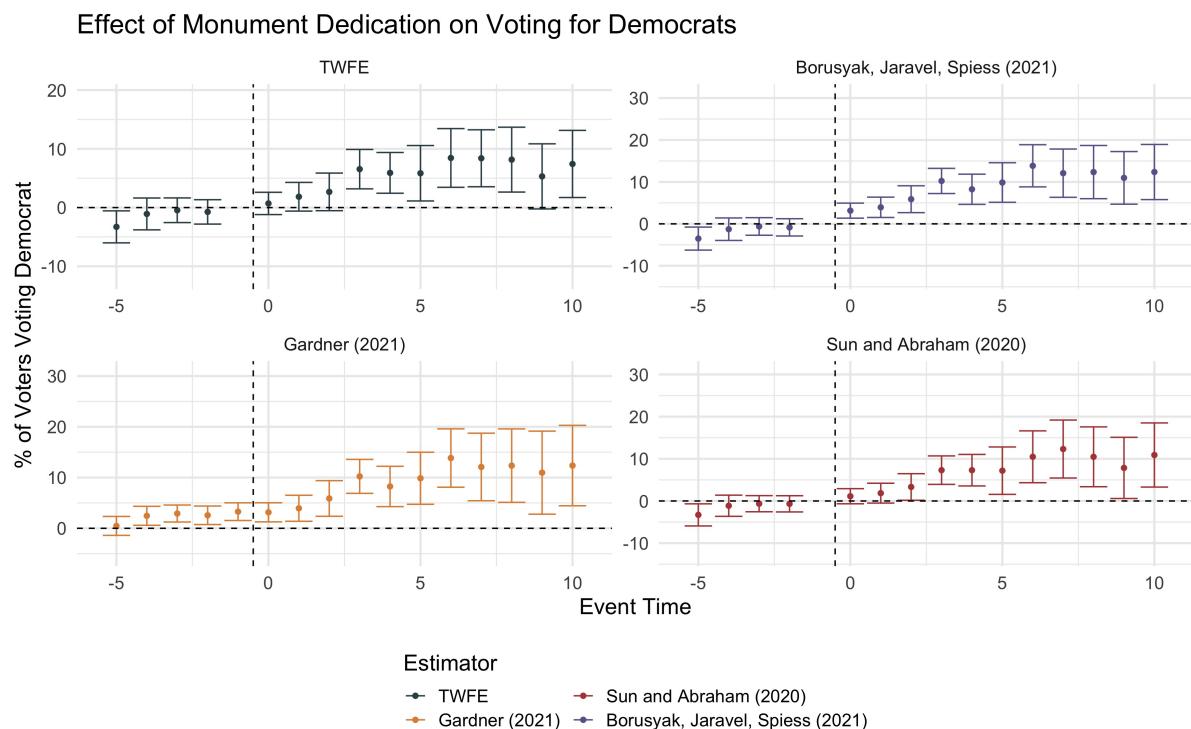


Figure 10: Alternate Event Studies for % Dem

Effect of Monument Dedication on Voter Turnout

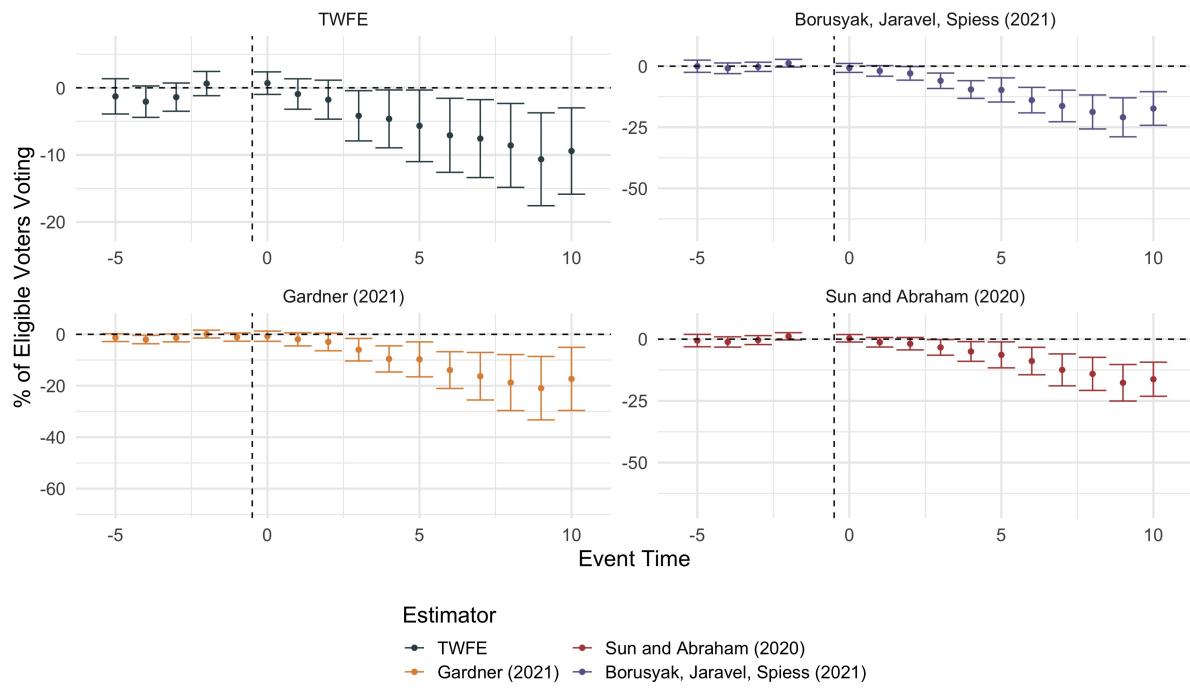


Figure 11: Alternate Event Studies for Voter Turnout

Effect of Monument Dedication on Black Population

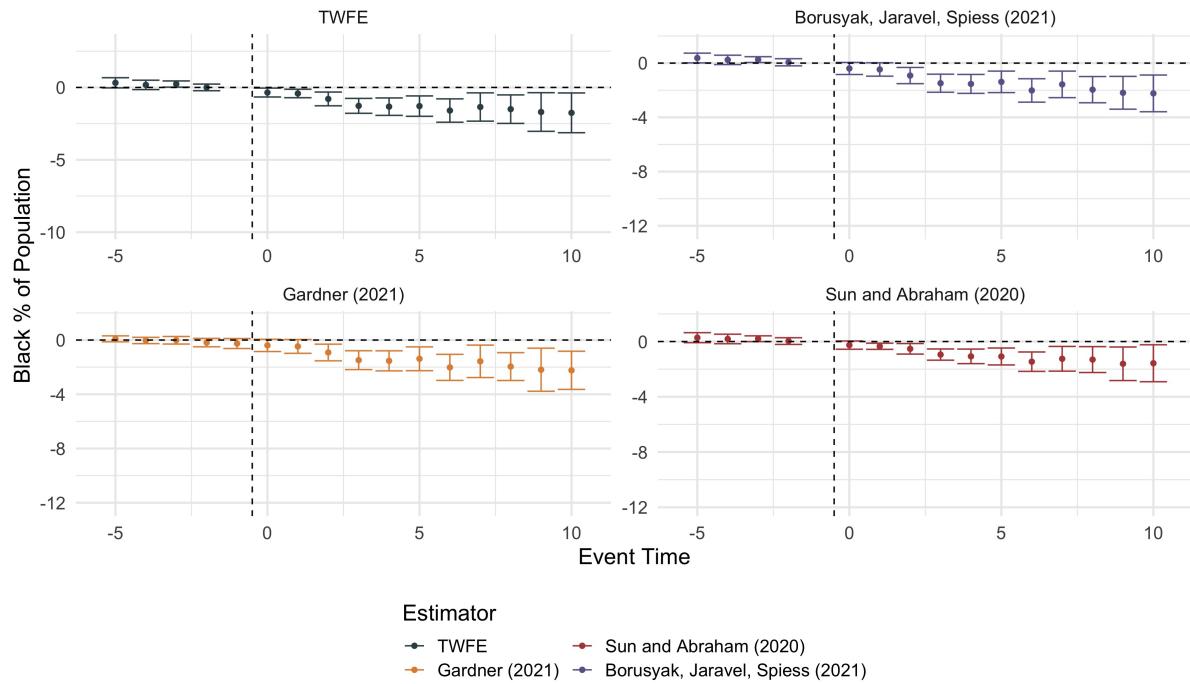


Figure 12: Alternate Event Studies for % Black

B Additional Tables

| State | Poll Tax | Literacy Test | Secret Ballot/Multi-Box |
|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Alabama | 1902 | 1903 | |
| Arkansas | 1893-1904 ^a , 1910 | | 1892 ^b |
| Florida | 1889 | | 1889 ^c |
| Georgia | 1877 | 1908 | |
| Louisiana | 1900 | 1899 | 1896 ^d |
| Mississippi | 1891 | 1892 | 1891 ^e |
| North Carolina | 1902 | 1902 | 1899 ^c |
| South Carolina | 1896 | 1896 | 1882 ^c |
| Tennessee | 1890 | | 1890 ^f |
| Texas | 1903 | | |
| Virginia | 1877-1882 ^g , 1904 | 1902 | 1894 ^h |

a. Invalidated by U.S. Circuit Court January 7, 1905, reenacted prior to the Election of 1910.
 b. The Election Law of 1891 mandated a secret ballot and standardized ballots. In concert, these requirements were a type of de-facto literacy test. Illiterate voters could no-longer rely on party symbols and/or similar devices to vote straight party and the secret ballot requirement created barriers to voting assistance.
 c. Several States adopted complicated “multi-box” election laws that required multiple ballots (typically 8) each to be placed in a separate ballot box. A mistake in filing a single ballot would disqualify all ballots – thus, these laws operated much like a de facto literacy test.
 d. Combination of Secret Ballot requirement and an onerous change in registration requirements.
 e. Secret Ballot.
 f. Secret Ballot w/out Party Identifiers & New Registration Law.
 g. Virginia’s Poll Tax was repealed 1882 and then re-instated in 1904.
 h. Secret Ballot w/ out Party Identifiers

Table 2: Voting Laws Passed by Southern States (Jones et al., 2012)

Table 3: Main Sample Summary Statistics

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Pctl. 25 | Pctl. 75 | Max |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|-----------|------------|
| c_dem | 15627 | 69.906 | 23.333 | 0 | 52.9 | 91.4 | 100 |
| c_tov | 15293 | 47.211 | 26.041 | 0 | 24.6 | 68.6 | 200 |
| pb | 16891 | 32.052 | 24.535 | 0 | 8.871 | 51.259 | 100 |
| post | 16998 | 0.092 | 0.289 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| any_law | 16998 | 0.566 | 0.496 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| p_urban | 16891 | 7.533 | 18.039 | 0 | 0 | 4.032 | 100 |
| mfgwages_pc | 16826 | 7.291 | 19.735 | 0 | 0.729 | 7.627 | 1344.699 |
| avfarmval_p_acre | 16629 | 12.2 | 13.445 | 0 | 5.33 | 14.6 | 336.047 |
| totpop | 16936 | 17385.649 | 16691.608 | 0 | 8229.75 | 22311.468 | 349310.962 |

Table 4: Summary Statistics by Treatment Status

| treatment | | 0 | | | 1 | |
|------------------|-------|-----------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|
| Variable | N | Mean | SD | N | Mean | SD |
| c_dem | 10849 | 68.853 | 23.648 | 4778 | 72.297 | 22.418 |
| c_tov | 10604 | 48.962 | 25.996 | 4689 | 43.253 | 25.708 |
| pb | 11607 | 27.572 | 23.98 | 5284 | 41.892 | 22.809 |
| post | 11701 | 0 | 0 | 5297 | 0.295 | 0.456 |
| any_law | 11701 | 0.522 | 0.5 | 5297 | 0.663 | 0.473 |
| p_urban | 11607 | 5.023 | 15.19 | 5284 | 13.046 | 22.117 |
| mfgwages_pc | 11565 | 6.326 | 18.108 | 5261 | 9.413 | 22.767 |
| avfarmval_p_acre | 11437 | 11.08 | 12.324 | 5192 | 14.666 | 15.35 |
| totpop | 11639 | 13797.732 | 9916.819 | 5297 | 25269.314 | 24173.211 |

| Dependent Variables: Model: | % Dem (1) | Turnout (2) | % Black (3) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <i>Variables</i> | | | |
| Post | 6.092*** (1.132) | -1.590 (1.098) | -0.9568*** (0.2554) |
| any_law | -0.3383 (0.4650) | 1.261*** (0.4537) | -0.2396** (0.1175) |
| p_urban | 0.0113 (0.0432) | -0.1826*** (0.0472) | -0.0030 (0.0181) |
| mfgwages_pc | 0.0448 (0.0380) | -0.1045*** (0.0397) | 0.0053 (0.0170) |
| avfarmval_p_acre | 0.1343*** (0.0437) | -0.0462 (0.0467) | -0.0325** (0.0147) |
| totpop | -0.0001** (7.09×10^{-5}) | 1.64×10^{-5} (5.4×10^{-5}) | $5.5 \times 10^{-5}***$ (2.06×10^{-5}) |
| <i>Fixed-effects</i> | | | |
| County | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <i>Fit statistics</i> | | | |
| Observations | 15,254 | 15,121 | 16,564 |
| R ² | 0.52540 | 0.65607 | 0.98586 |
| Within R ² | 0.00785 | 0.00922 | 0.01386 |

Clustered (County) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table 5: Full Table for Main Regression Models

C Symbols and Black Turnout: An Ecological Inference Approach

Though I would like to directly measure the impact of Confederate symbols on black voter turnout, data limitations prevent me from doing so. Instead, I follow Jones et al. (2017) in exploiting the variation in the size of the black population across both counties and time to estimate the differential impact of symbols on black turnout using an ecological inference approach. I estimate variations of the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Turnout}_{ct} = & \beta_1 \text{Symbol}_{ct} + \beta_2 [\% \text{Black} \times \text{Symbol}]_{ct} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Law}_{ct} + \beta_4 [\% \text{Black} \times \text{Law}]_{ct} + \beta_5 \% \text{Black}_{ct} + \boldsymbol{\theta}_c + \boldsymbol{\tau}_t + \varepsilon_{ct} \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where Turnout_{ct} measures the turnout rate in congressional elections in county c in election year t . Symbol_{ct} is our treatment, a binary variable that is 1 if county c had a Confederate symbol dedicated in that election year t . Law_{ct} is a binary variable that is 1 if county c 's state passed a restrictive voting law in that election year or earlier. $\boldsymbol{\theta}_c$ and $\boldsymbol{\tau}_t$ are county and year fixed effects, respectively. To identify the effect on black turnout, I interact the Symbol binary with % Black. The coefficient on this term estimates the differential impact of lynching on black turnout. The validity of the ecological inference method rests on a key assumption explained below.

C.1 Assumptions

Consider a model of turnout where white and black turnout are unaffected by each other:

$$\text{Votes Cast} = a(\text{White Population}) + b(\text{Black Population})$$

Here, “a” measures the likelihood of a white citizen voting and “b” the likelihood of a black citizen voting. Dividing through by total population yields:

$$\text{Turnout Rate} = a(\%) \text{ White} + b(\%) \text{ Black}$$

In our sample, % White is roughly equal to $1 - \% \text{ Black}$, so substituting yields:

$$\text{Turnout Rate} = a + (b-a)(\%) \text{ Black}$$

Therefore, regressing Turnout on % Black should yield a coefficient that reveals black voters' differential rate of turnout relative to white voters. So interacting % Black with the symbol variable should reveal how black voters' differential rate of turnout changes when a Confederate symbol is dedicated in their county.

C.2 Results

If there was a chilling effect of public Confederate symbols on black voter turnout, we would expect to see a negative sign on our interaction between the symbol variable and % Black. In an election year, a county with a Confederate symbol and a larger black proportion of the population would see a disproportionate

| Dependent Variable: | Turnout | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Model: | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| <i>Variables</i> | | | |
| (Intercept) | 0.1401*** (0.0038) | | |
| Pct. Black \times Symbol = 0 | 0.5811*** (0.0172) | 0.0470 (0.0374) | -0.0072 (94.32) |
| Pct. Black \times Symbol = 1 | 0.6201*** (0.0157) | 0.0478 (0.0394) | -0.0028 (94.32) |
| Symbol | -0.0118 (0.0117) | -0.0119*** (0.0046) | -0.0044 (0.0042) |
| Pct. Black \times Law = 0 | -0.7734*** (0.0252) | 0.0699*** (0.0054) | 0.0274 (337.5) |
| Pct. Black \times Law = 1 | -0.8672*** (0.0181) | | -0.0429 (337.5) |
| Law | -0.0232*** (0.0038) | -0.0179*** (0.0021) | 0.0060** (0.0025) |
| Pct. Black | 0.1641*** (0.0017) | | 0.0316 (243.2) |
| <i>Fixed-effects</i> | | | |
| cverid | | Yes | Yes |
| year | | | Yes |
| <i>Fit statistics</i> | | | |
| Observations | 10,132 | 10,132 | 10,132 |
| R ² | 0.32339 | 0.64862 | 0.75358 |
| Within R ² | | 0.30149 | 0.09477 |

Clustered (cverid) standard-errors in parentheses

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

Table 6: Impact of Confederate Symbols on Black Voter Turnout

drop in voter turnout. The results with weights by county population are presented in Table 6. While the first model without fixed effects produces statistically significant results, the somewhat unorthodox approach used here requires fixed effects to address a potential ecological fallacy. In short, if white voters turnout at a higher rate in counties with a large share of black voters (i.e. if white and black turnout are not independent), my approach may attribute the higher white turnout to African American voters. Jones et al. (2017) include fixed effects in all of their specifications to address this concern, and model 3 in Table 6 does so as well. While the full model produces the predicted sign on my interaction of Symbol and Pct. Black, it is near zero and highly insignificant. There does not seem to a relationship between Confederate symbols and black voter turnout.

Approaching the effect of symbols on black voter turnout in this manner presents two primary difficulties. First, it assumes that a larger change in turnout in counties with a higher percentage of black residents is indicative of a general reduction in black turnout, which may not be the case. Had the test produced significant results, they may have been driven by some other factor that only influences counties with a proportion of black residents past a certain threshold. Second, and more importantly, this approach only captures the impact of Confederate monuments in the election following their dedication.

While this is appropriate for events like lynchings whose impact may fade after they occur, public symbols are permanent features of their communities. Their impact may be felt beyond a single election cycle. So there may very well be an impact of Confederate symbols on black turnout, but it cannot be detected with the data available here.