



Living Among Confederate Icons: Perpetuating White Supremacist Beliefs and Blindness to Black Suffering

SUSAN H. SARAPIN
Independent Researcher, USA

RICHARD LEDET
Troy University, USA

PAMELA MORRIS
Indiana University, USA

SHARON EMEIGH
Independent Researcher, USA

ABSTRACT Almost 160 years after the American Civil War, where the Union defeated the Confederacy and ended slavery in the United States, approximately 1,910 tributes remain to Confederate military leaders located on public property in the 11 original Confederate states, particularly in cities with an exceptionally high density of Black residents. To Blacks, this iconography delivers a clear message of White supremacy. Six states have enacted laws to protect and preserve these memorials, making it almost impossible to use the court system to move them to private property. This paper explores connections between support for a myth called the Lost Cause, which is a revisionist history intended to spread misinformation about the true cause of the American Civil War, and attitudes toward placement of Confederate symbols on public land. We show that there is significant belief in the Lost-Cause myth among many White U.S. Southerners. Furthermore, we find those who believe most in the myth are the least likely to want to move the monuments or end taxpayer support for their maintenance.

KEYWORDS social justice; White supremacy; Confederate monuments; fundamental causes theory; racism

In cities across the United States, nearly 2,000 bronze, marble, aluminum, nylon, and asphalt monuments that memorialize Confederate figures, who fought to maintain slavery in the southern U.S. and lost the American Civil

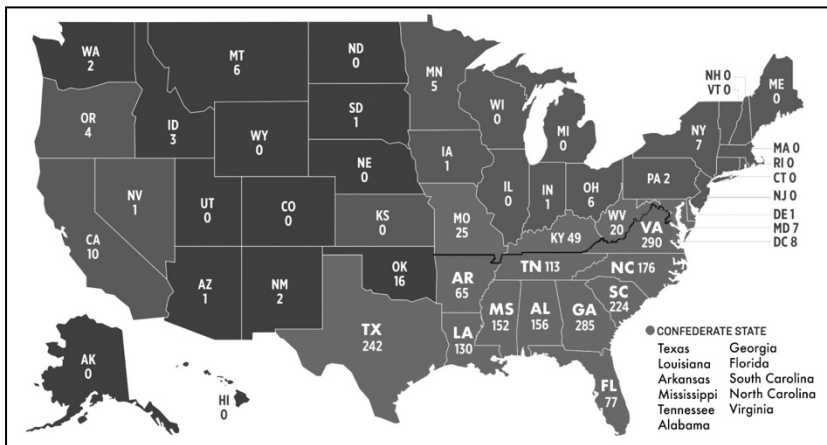
Correspondence Address: Susan Sarapin; email: ssarapin@troy.edu

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War, still stand as reminders of the beliefs contested in the war between the states (SPLC, 2023). The great majority of them dot the highways and capitol lawns of the 11 former Confederate states (see Figure 1). Many of these monuments were erected through efforts of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), a group founded in 1894 by female descendants of Confederate Civil War soldiers with the goal of commemorating their ancestors and romanticizing their version of history (Davis, 1982). Many are on public property and maintained through public funds.

Figure 1. Total number of live Confederate memorials in each state (modified from SPLC, 2023; Klein, 2022).



Monuments celebrating the Confederacy were also erected during the U.S. Civil Rights era (1954-1968) in response to the movement to strengthen the rights of Black Americans nationwide. These markers continue to convey the tale of the American Civil War congruent with the Confederate view, a narrative called “The Lost Cause.” First introduced by Edward Pollard in 1866, the Lost Cause is a deliberately deceptive reconceptualization of the Confederacy that continues to be embraced by millions (Young, 2021). This paper presents a Lost-Cause belief scale that identifies a source of compassion for the Confederacy. By doing so, we provide a way for scholars to measure perspectives that are hindering the promotion of social justice, and make a significant and unique contribution to the growing literature on the longstanding controversy in the U.S. over the effects of Confederate iconography situated on public property.

A whitewashed version of the Confederacy’s conflict history, the myth of the Lost Cause is one of the first successful, long-term campaigns of disinformation in the U.S., promoting heritage over hate and states’ rights over slavery as the true motivations for war with the Union (Klein, 2022; Lineberry, 2019; Owley & Phelps, 2020). Throughout the 20th century,

monuments celebrating the Lost Cause arose, sparking fear and igniting hope that the ideals of the Confederacy would return. Most scholars admit that the placement of these statues, particularly in Black neighborhoods, was strategic, because whether the monuments were first erected in neighborhoods populated mainly by Black residents or Black residents ended up there, the effect is the same: the monuments communicate the power of White supremacy, keeping Black people aware that they are second-class citizens in White society (Sturkey, 2018).

Since Dylan Roof's 2015 murder of nine Black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, interest has been renewed in removing Confederate memorials from public spaces due to the real and perceived harm inflicted by the beliefs they celebrate. In this study, we gather survey data from U.S. respondents about beliefs in the Lost Cause and opinions about solutions to the dilemma of the remaining Confederate monuments. We describe the characteristics of those who do and do not wish to remove these Confederate structures. We also present a Lost-Cause scale developed to evaluate respondents' attitudes about various dimensions of this White supremacist mythology. Briefly, the dilemma that the U.S. faces is how best to concomitantly subdue violent protests and also move the memorials to private property without giving U.S. Southerners, who are sympathetic to the Confederacy, the feeling that their heritage is somehow being erased. To address this dilemma, this study explores the nature of the relationship between belief in the Lost-Cause myth and attitudes about Confederate memorial removal.

We look especially at the White supremacy element as exerted by the mere presence of the Confederate memory. After summarizing how the belief in the Lost Cause arose and how it has managed to persist for more than 150 years, we then introduce the fundamental-causes theory and critical topography to help demonstrate the importance of the investigation of the treatment of Civil War Confederate monuments. Finally, we present an analysis of the results of our survey, which introduces a scale that measures participants' beliefs in the Lost Cause. Our analysis distinguishes between respondents living inside and outside the 11 original Confederate states. The Lost-Cause Scale helps us understand the relationship between perceptions of the confederacy and attitudes toward placement of Confederate symbols on public land.

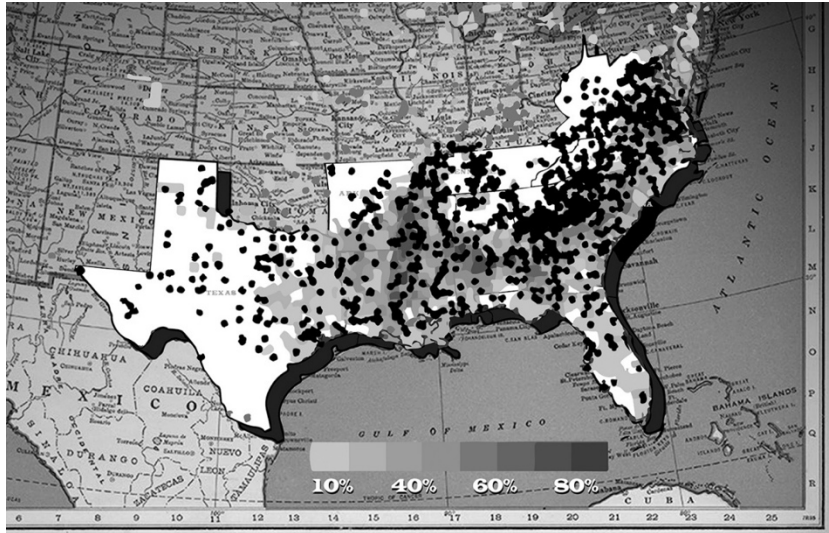
Background – The Meaning of Monuments

Countries all over the world have dealt with monuments built to dictators who lost power to another regime in war. The losers' statues and their corresponding symbols, for example, remnants of the Nazi Party in Germany, have, for the most part, been demolished (Neiman, 2019). In Germany, this ban has been codified into the criminal code, but in the U.S., Confederate

memorials are legally protected. Clint Smith, reporter for *The Atlantic*, has written about this topic at length, and has recently taken a page from Neiman (2019) by visiting some of Germany's many innovative Holocaust memorials and telling NPR about the experience (Smith, 2022; see also Davies, 2022). Smith (2022, n.p.) marvels that more than 75 years after the Holocaust ended, he "discovered there were intense debates about what kind of landmarks should be established and how the story would be told – debates that are ongoing." Not so ironically, the far-right Neo-Nazi groups in Germany see something nostalgic in using the Confederate flag as identification, and many Neo-Confederates in the U.S. see the same thing in raising the Nazi flag (Bernstein, 2021, n.p.). Yale Law School professor James Forman asserts, "the [Confederate] flag has been adopted knowingly and consciously by government officials seeking to assert their commitment to black [*sic*] subordination" (cited in Lowry, 2015, n.p.).

Predominantly Southern U.S. state governments have wielded power over Black citizens by their choice of sites for statues lauding the Confederacy and the timing of their construction. As shown in Figure 2, neighborhoods and cities with large percentages of Black residents are often the locations of the greatest number of Confederate memorials. Table 1 shows the city in each of the original Confederate states that is home to the most Confederate symbols. Nine of the 11 cities have both a Black population higher than the national average and the largest single-city number of Confederate memorials (e.g. Moss Point, Mississippi; Montgomery, Alabama; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana). Research has uncovered a striking correlation between the number of Confederate memorials in a county with the number of lynchings of Black people in that county. More Confederate iconography in an area is related to more lynchings in that area (data used range from 1880-2014) (Henderson et al., 2021). Notably, monuments were erected mainly during two significant time periods, the "Jim Crow" era (1877-1950), which was an era of legitimization and legalization of anti-Black racism, and the aforementioned Civil Rights era when Blacks were reminded of their second-class status in society despite having just "earned" new rights. Gaddie and Evans (2021) explain the mechanisms of community power in this situation: "American apartheid policies were translated from culture to policy to the built environment. They remain as echoes of spatial strategies of white [*sic*] supremacy, facilitated by hyperlocalism in government control" (p. 1128).

Figure 2. Monument distribution in the original Confederate states showing their location in areas more densely populated by Black people.



(Note: black dots represent placement of Confederate monuments and symbols. Gray areas under them are areas heavily populated by Black residents) (Adapted by Greg Skaggs (2022) from art by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2023). Copyright: Sarapin, Ledet, Morris, & Emeigh (2023)).

Monuments are important because, as Professor Thompson of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice explains, "statues have always been about power. From the beginning of human art-making, we see statues of rulers of powerful people, and they're meant to send messages...to keep reminding people that they're [the ones in power] in charge" (Thompson cited in Carrega & Allen, 2020, n.p.). Placement of these statues in Black neighborhoods has the effect of strategically communicating the power of White society. This reality is illustrated by the following story shared by a 22-year-old White participant in our study, a narrative that imparts the experiences of a Black friend, who lived on R. E. Lee Street. Robert E. Lee was a Civil War General who served as the overall commander of the Confederate States Army near the end of the war:

This was not my experience, but one of my best friends, who is Black, grew up on R. E. Lee Street. I will never forget the emotional trauma she endured when our class learned about the Civil War and who Robert E. Lee was, and in particular later on when we learned that he founded a fraternity that incorporated racist values. She was teased for being Black and living on that street by other kids and even though children can be cruel, I know those are things that have stuck with her to the point that her family ended up moving.

In 2023, Alabama and some other states in the South observe Robert E. Lee Day. Alabama and Mississippi commemorate Lee along with Martin Luther King, Jr. (the prominent U.S. civil rights leader) on the same day, calling it King-Lee Day. Both states also recognize each man’s birthday separately (Jackson, 2022). Alabama also recognizes Confederate Memorial Day and the birthday of Jefferson Davis, the president of the former Confederate States (Gore, 2020). Just as the monuments do, observing special days for certain people in history lends respectability to them. It is a natural aura of credibility that is socially constructed. Furthermore, combining the exaltation of a White Confederate general with that of a Black human rights leader conflates their meaning and accomplishments, giving equal reverence to both.

Table 1. Eleven original states of the Confederacy and the city in each state with the highest number of Confederate memorials, plus their populations divided by race.

Rank of City	City/State	Total # of Memorials/Markers		Black % of Population:		White % of Population:	
		City	State	City	State	City	State
1	Columbia, SC	38	194	39.80	26.77	53.40	68.60
2	Wilmington, NC	33	168	18.40	22.00	76.50	70.60
3	Alexandria, VA	29	242	21.75	19.90	62.19	69.40
4	Montgomery, AL	19	123	60.80	26.80	35.50	69.10
5	Atlanta, GA	18	201	33.60	32.60	45.50	60.20
6	Moss Point, MS	17	147	69.80	38.00	25.29	59.10
7	Little Rock, AR	17	65	42.10	15.40	50.30	79.00
8	Franklin, TN	12	105	6.64	16.76	73.30	78.40
9	Baton Rouge, LA	12	83	54.66	32.80	47.60	62.80
10	Jacksonville, FL	11	67	30.95	16.90	58.20	77.30
11	Alvin, TX	8	207	2.63	12.90	55.00	78.70

(Note: the total Black portion of the city population in nine of these 11 states (82%) is higher than the U.S. average, and in eight of these 11 states (73%), it is higher than the state average. In Wilmington, NC, it is somewhat higher than the U.S. average but lower than the state average. These states are identified in bold.) (Source: statistics are from the U.S. Census Bureau and SPLC).

As Talbert and Christie-Mizell (2021) explain, one reason for monument and symbol support is that it enhances the racial identity of Whites, and agreement with state and local governments’ efforts at “racial boundary

maintenance” (p. 116). There is much research to support the claim that these particular symbols indeed do matter to many Whites (Benjamin et al., 2020; Strother, 2021; Wright & Esses, 2017). They are demonstrations of Whiteness manifested through cultural objects that, if removed, would serve to detract from the perceived status of the identity of Whites who hold these views. Not only are these symbols cues that represent Whites’ desire for state-supported racial restrictions but they also inevitably imply a fixation on White supremacy, as these cultural symbols are capable of generating a sense of belonging among members of (right-wing) political causes supported by other like-minded Whites. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (2009) speaks to the bold declaration of White supremacist governor of Mississippi James Vardman at the beginning of the 20th century:

The black [*sic*] man, [Vardman] proclaimed, had “never created for himself any civilization.” Vardman’s strident claims are unlikely to be widely endorsed today. Yet the substance of his message still informs the commonplace use of “southern,” which implies that southern heritage is the exclusive property of whites [*sic*]. (Brundage, 2009, p. 2)

Given the high interest in Confederate memorials and statuary in recent years, it is fair to ask whether such iconography matters only when it is being taken down, riling up protesters to bring forth Confederate flags, also known as the “Stars and Bars.” To the contrary, these symbols have always mattered, in the way that other national symbols, such as the U.S. flag, matter, even if they go unnoticed. Billig (1995) argues that symbols that identify a national identity, such as that of the Confederacy, go unnamed and unnoticed, attract no special attention, and yet are not harmless. He argues that the “unwaved flag, which is so forgettable, is at least as important as the memorable moments of flag waving” (p. 10). Similarly, statues go unnoticed until someone does something to celebrate them (waving) or desecrate them (take them away). Why the uproar when they are removed? Because the unnoticed memorials signal acceptance of the ideology of the Confederate nationhood, reminders that “serve to turn background space into homeland space” (Billig, 1995, p. 43).

Support for Confederate monuments and other symbolism celebrating the Confederacy has become not only a racialized issue, but a partisan one as well. This is the implication of research by Benjamin et al. (2020), showing a significant relationship between the size of the Black population and the presence of an NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) chapter in a county to the removal of monuments. In states with no monument statutes in place, monuments have been removed in counties where there is a higher percentage of those identifying with the Democratic political party (who generally favor a left-leaning, liberal platform). In the U.S., to a great extent, racial and partisan group identity are politically entangled. Whiteness is part of the Southern heritage as it played out in the Civil War and as it continues to serve as an identifier wrapped up in

conservative political power associated with the U.S. Republican political party and the Lost-Cause story, which is enhanced by the proximity of the Confederate symbols.

One's perspective on Confederate symbolism involves not only abstract notions about the nature of identity politics in a representative democratic political system, but also how identity interacts with one's desire to achieve more-or-less equitable outcomes in terms of racial or partisan representation. This issue also has real-world daily consequences for individuals who are not aligned with the political status quo, or in agreement with the "Whiteness" that appears to dominate politics – and public spaces – in Southern states. Indeed, White power is grounded in personal identity, but identity does not have to be based on skin color alone. In fact, drawing support from both partisan and ideological identification, White power relies on downplaying the personal impact of continuing to be "put in one's place." Black Southern writer, Mamie Fields, wrote about a Charleston, SC, statue of John Calhoun, a slaveowning U.S. senator from South Carolina. She stated:

Blacks took that statue personally. As you pass by, here was Calhoun looking you in the face, 'N____er,^[1] you may not be a slave, but I am back to see you *stay in your place*. I believe white [*sic*] people were talking to us about Jim Crow through that statue.' (Fields cited in Cox, 2019, p. xxv; emphasis added)

Erecting symbols and insisting they remain in front of state capitols and other public buildings Black residents must enter to do business acquires for White supremacists the imprimatur of the party in power.

These memorials helped develop and continue to reinforce racial identities in the deep South, predominantly since the turn of the 20th century, which marks the end of the post-Civil War Reconstruction and the beginning of the Jim Crow era. During this time period, many Southern states rewrote their constitutions to reassert White supremacy and perpetuate the separate Black and White worlds that the Civil War was meant to end. Whether individuals are prejudiced against Black people or simply concerned about preserving heritage, visually consuming these images influences their support for maintaining these symbols on public property. To help us better understand the consequences of preserving the status quo, we draw on fundamental causes theory.

¹ The use of the real word for which "N-word" is substituted is recommended by the APA (American Psychological Association), because it is the exact word that the quoted Black author used. In addition, it is more reflective of the authentic attitude of those Blacks who view Confederate statues. However, we chose to use a substitute by showing only the first letter and last two letters so as not to be unnecessarily offensive.

Fundamental Causes

Although there are other theoretical perspectives (e.g., cultural psychology, social geography, antiracism, and more) we could apply we use fundamental causes theory to illustrate the power dimension of this problem. Link and Phelan (1995) decided to explore a persistent association they observed – the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and mortality. Whereas SES is routinely considered a “causally irrelevant confounding variable” (Phelan et al., 2004, p. 265) or at most a distal cause, in such associations, the authors pondered the possibility that SES played a more proximal role in health differences between groups of disparate people, a particular aspect of social justice. As they explain: “those with a higher SES status possess a wide range of broadly serviceable resources, including money, knowledge, prestige, power, and beneficial social connections that can be used to one’s health advantage” (Phelan et al., 2004, p. 267). Although Phelan and associates’ concern had to do with health outcomes, their ideas offer us a way to investigate the dimension of power as a resource related to White supremacy.

Power is viewed as “*the essential element* in maintaining, increasing or reducing social and economic inequalities” preventing the achievement of more just outcomes (McCartney et al., 2021, p. 21; emphasis in original). It is power alone that possesses the tentacles necessary to involve itself in every aspect of a person’s life, and it *is avoidable*. In addition, White supremacy is all about power. McCartney et al. speak of two perspectives of power: (a) “one that focuses on *power as domination* (‘power over’); and (b) one that emphasizes *power as empowerment* (‘power to/with’)” (2021, p. 23; emphasis in original). We feature the domination dimension, specifically in the Confederate belief in White supremacy, which speaks loudly to the inferior social position of Blacks (Talbert & Christie-Mizell, 2021). The Confederate symbols are meant to serve as provocative reminders of one’s place in society, that of enslavement with no pay to do the labor of wealthy White Southerners. The Confederate statues intimidate by their larger-than-life size and by placement high on a pedestal requiring one to look upward from an inferior orientation. They subdue and terrify because their placement on capitol lawns or in other public spaces signify an indisputable atmosphere of government endorsement.

Power through State Legislatures and Constitutions

Power works through institutions, as defined by Douglas C. North (1991, p. 97), “institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.” Those with access to power through more established institutions have greater political, economic, and social advantages. The advantages go to both societies as a

whole and to certain individuals in those sectors. Political power leads to a cascading series of consequences for both those in power and those not in power.

After the Civil War, the U.S. Constitution “outlawed slavery and ensured Black Americans were able to vote, to seek and hold elected offices, and to participate in their government at the local, state, and national level” (Pitner, 2017, n.p.). Terror infiltrated the South, where these rights were not generally endorsed by the White citizenry and government. Violence was perpetrated by Whites against freed Blacks, scalawags, and carpetbaggers from the North, who migrated to the South to see that the new freedoms and privileges enshrined in the revised U.S. Constitution were enforced. Power was firmly in the hands of the White population, despite the amendments to the Constitution.

Eventually, one state, Alabama, committed to and codified White supremacy in its constitution of 1901 by including language and policies that technically did not violate the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments and yet managed still to disenfranchise Blacks and poor Whites. John Knox opened the Alabama Constitutional Convention of 1901 with these words:

We have maintained white [*sic*] supremacy in this state for more than twenty-five years... the menace of negro rule still exists, and will continue to exist, as long as there are one hundred and eighty thousand ignorant negro voters who are legally entitled, just as much as you or I, to exercise the right of suffrage. (Knox cited in Young, 2021, n.p.)

There is some variation in how legislatures have acted on this issue, but several state governments are interested in the status quo of monument placement for now. Seven of the 11 original Confederate states have passed “state statue statutes,” laws whose strict language demonstrates the resolve to prevent any modification of the Confederate monuments. The law in Mississippi preserving its Confederate icons dates to 1972, despite it being the state with the highest proportion of Black residents, at 38% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Virginia repealed its statue statute in 2020, but six similar acts remain on the books for Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (WYFF News Staff, 2020). The last remaining Confederate statue from Richmond’s Monument Avenue was recently removed. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) keeps a record of Confederate memorials removed, those newly built, and those that remain. In 2021, 73 monuments or statues were removed or renamed, leaving 723, not including 741 named streets, 201 named schools, 51 buildings, 38 parks, and 22 holidays (Klein, 2022; Rhoden & Paul, 2022). Some counts differ because some organizations count only statues, and some organizations include other types of Confederate representations in their numbers. Legal attempts to remove these commemorations of people whose purpose was to perpetuate the enslavement of the Black race have been rejected in courts for

one overriding reason: Blacks have not demonstrated any “real,” measurable harm experienced – that is, any harm beyond psychological injury.

To illustrate one state government’s resolve on Confederate symbolism, on February 8, 2022, a committee of the Alabama legislature (77% White, 23% Black, 74% Republican, and 26% Democratic) voted to accept two bills (SB 53 and SB 54) that would markedly increase the penalties for violations of the 2017 Alabama Monument Preservation Act (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). Prior to this, such violations incurred a \$25,000 fine, but now the legislation converts the flat-fee penalty to a *daily* penalty of \$5,000. Additionally, the Act adds a punishment of up to 10 years in prison for damaging a historic monument. If the vandalism occurs during a riot, this felony earns a prison penalty of up to 20 years. As well as protecting standing Confederate monuments more stringently, the amendment offers a *sweetener* for Blacks in the form of *recommending* the erection of a statue at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, in honor of John Lewis, the Black Civil Rights-era hero and recently deceased member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The amendment is structured to serve as an even more effective deterrent to people contemplating the modification of a monument (Lyman, 2022). Here is Pleasant Grove Democratic Rep. Merika Coleman’s opinion of the bill’s token provision:

How disingenuous to compare someone who committed treason to someone who is an actual hero for all people. To think Black members of the legislative body would support the bill just because a statue of John Lewis is added... makes me angry. (Johnson, 2022, n.p.)

This one legal mechanism for preventing the modification or removal of Confederate memorials is barrier enough to maintain them where they stand.

Methods and Results

Survey Instrument and Sample

Data for this study were collected through an online survey of the public, conducted over the course of four weeks from February 20 to March 17 of 2022. A total of 304 adults over the age of 18 from 34 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey. Recruitment announcements were distributed on the authors’ Facebook sites, through COMMNOTES (the daily e-mail from the National Communication Association), and through organizational e-mails to the memberships of 11 Southern state chapters of

the NAACP (a liberal organization), and to dozens of Southern Republican organizations (mostly conservative).²

The online questionnaire consisted of 32 questions. Twelve questions asked about respondent demographics. The remaining 20 questions concerned participants' beliefs about the Confederacy and Confederate memorials and their effects on attitudes regarding racism, what should be done with Confederate monuments and symbols on public property, and the possible injuries done to Black people who live in their proximity.

Major Variables

We analytically distinguish between respondents living inside and outside the 11 original Confederate states. Other than the differences noted below in Table 2, the gender breakdown was nearly equal with 156 or 51% being females.

The Lost-Cause Scale. There is a shortage of literature on this subject. We created a scale of questions whose answers would indicate a respondent's overall feelings toward how we as Americans should deal with Confederate memorabilia. We asked 20 questions about attitudes toward the Confederacy in general and Confederate tributes in particular as an initial item pool for scale development. They were a mix of positively and negatively articulated attitudes so as to attenuate any participant impressions of bias. Response choices were given according to a seven-point Likert-type scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." After running a scale reliability test on all of the items, items were redacted until we reached an alpha of at least .8, which is commonly viewed as a "good" scale (DeVillis, 2003). While a five-item scale yielded an alpha of .79, the four-item scale returned an alpha of .83. Table 3 shows the effects of this scale on a variety of beliefs between residents living both inside and outside the original Confederate states.

Table 3, showing the effects of proximity to the Confederate symbols and scores on the Lost-Cause scale, demonstrates the intensity and, perhaps, the ironic imperceptibility of cultural osmosis when we live amidst something so large and unforgettable.

The final four items in this Lost-Cause Belief Scale are: (a) throughout the periods before, during, and after the Civil War, Black slaves were well taken care of by their masters in the South; (b) there is nothing harmful or hurtful for a Black family to live on a street named after Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, or Stonewall Jackson; (c) the South is no more racist than other regions of the U.S.; and (d) confederate statues and flags have nothing to do with

² These recruitment efforts were done to ensure diversity in the sample. The latter recruitment efforts were done to diversify the respondents in terms of race and political leanings because the initial sample after the first two weeks was not representative

racism. The scale has helped us discover that those living in one of the 11 original Confederate states who take a compassionate view of the Confederacy are significantly more likely than those living outside these states to: (a) believe Black people living within close proximity of the Confederate monuments are *not* experiencing harm; (b) be *less* educated; (c) believe that our public-school children from first grade through high school should *not be taught* about slavery during the Civil War (see Table 3). In other words, those who have attained lower levels of education are nostalgic for the old, false Southern narrative of the “happy Negro plantation worker,” (Hunter, 1922; Anderson, 2005).

Table 2. Major variables data from survey results, including information from respondents in states **inside** the original Confederate states and from **outside** the original Confederate states. The gender breakdown is almost equal.

Variable	Inside the 11 Original Confederate States		Outside the 11 Original Confederate States		Whole Sample
1. Age (mean)	49.36		50.25		49.69
2. Education (mean) ^a	4.36	≅ Associate degree or partway to a BA or BS	5.63	≅ Bachelor's degree plus some masters credits	66% with 4-year degree or higher
3. Political Leanings (mean)	3.01	Neither liberal nor conservative	1.86	Somewhat liberal	
4. Political Party Preference (mean %)	27.40	Dem. 27.90 Rep.	58.90	Dem. 14.00 Rep.	
5. Race/Ethnicity	White: 78%; Black: 14.5% ³ The Black and White numbers are almost identical to the national averages. These were the only two racial categories we compared in the analyses. Only one Black respondent was a resident living outside the original Confederate states.				

^a Education levels are coded from 1 to 7: 1 = Less than high school; 2 = High school diploma or GED; 3 = Some college; 4 = Associate degree; 5 = Bachelor's degree; 6 = Master's degree; 7 = Doctorate or professional degree, such as MD, DO, attorney, architect).

Table 3. T-tests between those living within the eleven original Confederate states and those living outside them, showing the effect of **proximity** to the Confederate culture and symbols and the effects of the Lost-Cause Scale.

Dependent Variable	Residents Living Inside the 11 Original Confederate States			Residents Living Outside the 11 Original Confederate States			Sig. Diff.
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	
1. Politics	3.01	1.69	197	1.86	1.50	107	<.001
2. Education	5.36	2.25	197	6.63	1.96	107	<.001
3. Church Attendance	1.72	1.57	97	1.29	1.40	107	.015
4. Confederate statues & flags are symbols of racism	1.42	2.41	197	4.61	1.91	107	<.001
5. Confederate symbols are <i>not</i> harmful to Black people	2.41	2.24	197	1.42	1.77	107	<.001
6. The South Is a Racist Region of the U.S.	2.77	2.20	197	3.61	1.90	107	<.001
7. Children in our public schools (1 through 12) should learn about the period of slavery in our country	5.30	1.16	197	5.68	.808	107	.001
8. Lost-Cause Scale	9.54	6.81	197	5.88	5.19	107	<.001

Note: Politics is coded from lower = liberal to higher = conservative; all other variables are coded such that a higher score indicates a higher frequency of that variable. For example, a higher score in education means that the group scored more highly in education attainment or that a higher score in the Lost-Cause Scale means that the group average is higher in the beliefs in that scale. It is this variable that is affected most by the geographic or proximity variable).

Results

The results indicate that the Lost-Cause belief scale is a valid measure of Confederate beliefs of residents of the former Confederate states. It was conjectured on the basis of reviewed research (Clark, 1997; Strother, 2021; Strother et al., 2017; Thornton, 1996; Webster & Leib, 2002) demonstrating that politically conservative respondents would be more likely than politically liberal respondents to perceive Confederate symbols as a sign of the South's heritage. An independent samples *t*-test was run between liberals and conservatives on the perception of Confederate symbols as representative of the South's heritage, $t(101.90) = -17.85, p < .001$, such that, in this case, a conservative political viewpoint is significantly more likely than a liberal political perspective to predict a belief that the Confederacy symbolizes a wonderful Southern heritage rather than slavery and racism (see Table 3).

In addition, people who live in the original Confederate states believe in the Lost-Cause narrative significantly more than those who live outside the original 11 Confederate states. An independent samples *t*-test run between respondents living in the original Confederate states and those living outside this area on the Lost-Cause scale finds $t(269.36) = -5.25, p < .001$.

Carrying this through to its logical conclusion, Table 4 presents the results of a hierarchical regression, which shows that after controlling for political conservatism, the belief that Confederate memorials are reminiscent of the South's great heritage, and the favorability upon viewing the Confederate battle flag, those who most strongly believe in the Lost Cause as the true narrative of the Civil War are those who are most opposed to relocating the symbols, monuments, flags, and Confederate street names from public to private property. All four variables' contribution to the variance in the dependent variable is an extremely high 68.7%.

Table 5 is evidence, too, of the reliability of the Lost-Cause scale. It shows the correlations between the scale and a variety of statements (beliefs) outside the scale. Some are so high that it would show at the very least an almost total insensitivity to Black living conditions in some of these neighborhoods. Readers may find it surprising that those who score highest on the Lost-Cause scale correlate very highly with the belief that if Confederate symbols and statues remain on public property, there will *not* be more violence and deaths over the attempts to remove them.

Living in a former Confederate state strengthens support of the Confederacy and the placement of Confederate symbols on public property. (See Table 3, middle two columns of top row in comparison with each other.) The results here are self-evident. Despite some of the raw numbers appearing small, all of the differences here are highly significant. It is interesting to note that even church attendance is significantly higher among the group of respondents reporting greater belief in leaving the statues where they are on public land. Whereas religious persons outside these 11 original Confederate

states may view racism negatively, those buying into the Lost-Cause myth do not believe that what these statues do is harmful to Black people.

Table 4. Opinion that monuments must remain in public spaces regressed onto several variables.

DV: Survey—Confederate Monuments Should Remain in Public Spaces						
	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^{2a}	β	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>N</i>
Block 1	.758	.574	.574			302
Belief that Monuments Are Reminiscent of Southern Heritage				-.276	†.000****	
Block 2	.794	.631	.057			301
Political Conservatism				-.265	†.000****	
Block 3	.816	.665	.034			300
Favorability upon Viewing of Confederate Battle Flag				-.308	†.002***	
Block 4	.829	.687	.021			299
Belief in Lost-Cause Story				-.111	†.000****	

Table 5. Correlations between the belief in the Lost-Cause-Story Scale and other beliefs (N = 304).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Lost-Cause Scale	—					
2. States should have laws preventing the removal of Confederate monuments	.73**	—				
3. Confederate monuments on public property are reminiscent of a great heritage	.79**	.77**	—			
4. I believe that slavery is supported by the Bible	.13*	.14*	.13*	—		
5. Children in our public schools (grade school through high school) should learn about the period of slavery in our country	-.42**	-.33**	-.34**	-.07	—	
6. The South fought in the Civil War over preserving its heritage	.32**	.35**	.35**	.08	-.23**	—
7. If Confederate symbols and statues remain on public property, there will be more violence and deaths	-.65**	-.57**	-.64**	-.02	-.22**	-.16**

Every few years or so, there are more violent protests against any positive remembrances that remain on public property. It seems that all we would need for any particular community with a problematic Confederate statue or memorial would be to ask one question of the electorate: Do you want this to be moved off of public property for a private entity to fund it? If the public were to vote in favor of removal, then the government would take care of moving it. However, some states have actively directed course away from this through state statue statutes. What is the nature of the relationship between belief in the Lost-Cause myth and attitudes about Confederate memorial removal? After much investigation of this dilemma over several decades, Sara Evans (2021) challenges researchers to untangle the who, what, and where of the Lost-Cause culture, and to “use their understanding of group dynamics and relationships to *empirically* study the divisiveness present today with the ultimate goal of breaking it down and encouraging this reconciliation” (p. 1044; emphasis added). As she and Clint Smith (2021) report, it is, indeed, a cult, but not of a people who lost a war but rather of a group who mourns the loss of a way of life. It is said that those who win the wars write the history. Therefore, by creating the Lost-Cause myth, Confederate sympathizers can cling to the claim that those who wish to move

their monuments want to do away with their Southern legacy and culture. Our survey responses, though, reveal a set of principles steeped in racism against Blacks and a disregard for the effects on Black citizens these monuments have (see Tables 5 and 7 in particular), principles that are anti-American.

Solutions and Discussion

In the survey, we offered four solutions that could be implemented to solve this contentious issue and a way for respondents to offer their own ideas. Table 6 shows how each solution fared within our sample. None of the 31 respondent-generated solutions was significantly different from the four the authors offered. Four participants suggested contextualizing the statues, telling the accurate history of the people enshrined in the monuments either on the pedestal, in the inscription, or on some adjoining signboard. One respondent recommended erecting an equal number of monuments to Northern Civil-War military leaders or to Black or White Civil Rights activists or abolitionists. Professor Thompson of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice thinks these are ineffective solutions because "somebody up on a pedestal is so powerful that it's hard to believe that putting up a little bit of additional text, or putting up another statue nearby is really going to overcome that" (Carrega & Allen, 2020, n.p.). Additionally, the costs involved would be astronomical and the issue of their legality on public property has yet to be conclusively decided in several states. Overall, the total percent of those in favour of moving the monuments and other icons off public property, excluding those offering their own suggestions, is 55.3%. Those wishing the monuments to stay where they are is 34.5%. Most of the 31 people who entered solutions via an open-ended "other" option favored removing the statues and monuments from public land.

Ideally, representative democratic governments should not function in ways that discriminate against their groups. Therefore, it is up to scholars, politicians, and journalists to look for government actions that do or may lead to discrimination and eventual measurable injury, develop solutions for these social problems, and find justice for those harmed. Without effective solutions, the harm continues until the life expectancy of the injured group diminishes significantly or until a large percentage of them, Southern Blacks in this case, move away. Now, this might be the purpose of so much of this prejudice, but it is our belief that the governments of the 11 original Confederate states have not fully calculated their great loss in human and financial capital.

Table 6. Chart of solutions to the Confederate monument dilemma, frequency of votes, and percentage of votes out of total votes, including comparison between two zones of residences (effect of proximity) – outside the 11 original Confederate states and inside the original Confederacy.

Solution	Freq. (Total Sample)	Percent (Total Sample)	Freq. (Outside)	Percent (Outside)	Freq. (Inside)	Percent (Inside)
A. Leave all Confederate statues on public property, but prevent the government from paying for their maintenance out of citizens' taxes.	22	7.2	7	6.5	15	7.6
B. Destroy and dispose of all the statues of Confederate soldiers and leaders, and rename all streets, government-funded schools, and other buildings named for Confederates.	27	8.9	14	13.1	13	6.6
C. Leave all Confederate statues and monuments on public property and continue to pay for their maintenance out of the people's taxes. In other words, make no changes at all.	83	27.3	10	9.3	31	15.7
D. Remove all Confederate iconography from public property, and relocate them to private Confederate cemeteries or museums. Also, change the names of streets named for Confederate soldiers and leaders.	141	46.4	61	57	80	40.6
E. Solutions offered by survey participants.	31	10.2				

(Note: the total percent of those wishing to move the monuments and other icons off public property, excluding those offering their own suggestions, is 55.3%. Those wishing the monuments to stay as they are, also excluding those offering their own solutions, is 34.5%).

What have we learned from those in favor of the two opposing solutions of interest? A few independent samples *t*-tests can explicate this for us. The Lost-Cause scale guides us through a novel method of predicting which respondents will want the memorials to remain and which participants will see the benefits to the community in moving them onto private property and not using tax payer money to pay for their maintenance. Referring to Table 6, we have selected two major solutions to compare as to the demographics of those who chose those two: C and D. D is the solution that calls for the removal of all the memorials from government property, and it is the preferred solution overall. However, just a walk down the street past the Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, makes it obvious that the public have not had the privilege of voting on a referendum to overturn the state statue statute. As long as the Alabama government remains as it is, this will not likely be put to a vote, which means that the persistence of this ugly intrusion on our landscape is socially constructed only for those social groups in power. Table 7 displays several independent samples *t*-tests that tell us which kinds of people have opted or are likely to opt for the maintenance of Confederate symbols on public property, no matter their likelihood of hurting the local Black residents. We find that these people are significantly less educated, more politically conservative, more religiously conservative, and more likely to score high on the Lost-Cause scale. No other demographic variables are significantly different, and neither is proximity.

One of the most effective ways to counteract the negative repercussions of Confederate iconography, in addition to moving them out of direct public sight, is to be truthful about slavery and its *avoidable and unfair* consequences. It should be taught, especially in the South, where it was deemed *necessary* to use slave labor to maintain the agricultural industry. An unfortunate finding in this study is that those most invested in the Lost-Cause narrative are those most resistant to teaching schoolchildren about the history of slavery in the South, $r = -.417, p < .001$. Professor William Sturkey (2018) writes of the poor coverage of the Civil War found in the public schools historically, such that the false stories persist today:

Many American students never learn about Jim Crow; just segregation. This distinction matters. When Jim Crow is taught merely as racial separation, the Southern system of racial apartheid that existed for nearly a century appears as an occasional minor inconvenience: a seat in the back of the bus, a poorly functioning water fountain, or balcony-level seating in a movie theatre. (Sturkey, 2018, n.p.)

Jim Crow was a strict system of anti-Black laws and racist practices. This is one of the reasons Southern governments cling to their Confederate memorials. It has a distinct political purpose. Sturkey states, “wealth and racial disadvantage were explicitly connected” (2018, n.p.). They still are. In the South, many believe this to be a zero-sum game, such that, if Black people do too well and enjoy upward social mobilization, White people will

suffer. After being promoted for a century and a half through its symbols, especially in densely populated Black regions of the 11 original Confederate states, the Confederacy and its false conflict story continue to exploit Black residents and increase racial tensions by making them aware of their place, even in their own neighborhoods.

Table 7. Chart of two main solutions to the Confederate monument dilemma and results of independent samples t-tests that illustrate the differences in those who select each solution.

T-tests: Of those selecting either Solution C or Solution D	C	D
A. Those highest on the Lost-Cause scale are significantly more likely to select Solution C, keeping the memorials where they are , $t(58.83) = -16.17, p < .001$.	(M = 16.45, SD = 4.82, N = 47)	(M = 4.29, SD = 3.17, N = 141)
B. Those selecting Solution D, the removal of the memorials from public property , are significantly more highly educated , $t(186) = 3.50, p < .001$.	(M = 4.96, SD = 2.26, N = 47)	(M = 6.26, SD = 2.19, N = 141)
C. Those selecting Solution C, keeping the memorials where they are , are significantly more politically conservative , $t(186) = -13.13, p < .001$.	(M = 4.43, SD = 1.30, N = 47)	(M = 1.65, SD = 1.24, N = 141)
D. Those selecting Solution C, keeping the memorials where they are , are significantly more religiously conservative , $t(186) = -8.96, p < .001$.	(M = 4.19, SD = 1.42, N = 47)	(M = 1.94, SD = 1.52, N = 141)

Limitations and Future Directions

Some limitations must be noted. We acknowledge that our sample is relatively small. As such, we are cautious in our analysis. However, a larger sample size would likely validate what we have found. Moving forward, a larger sample with a greater representation of conservative and non-White respondents would permit rigorous hypothesis testing. In order to more precisely assess the proximity variable, it will be necessary to sample more people in the states that have no Confederate monuments and in the states that border the original Confederate states. During the Civil War, bordering states were split in their political loyalties, and the remnants of those feelings persist to this day. Speaking of Illinois, Nardini (2011, n.p.) writes:

A state that was solidly for the Union did have some parts that actually sympathized with the Confederacy. In 1861, one-third of the State of Illinois actually sympathized with the Confederacy. This area, known as “Little Egypt” (today’s southern Illinois), was settled primarily by people from other southern states.

Conclusion

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on the longstanding controversy over the effects of Confederate iconography situated on public land by offering a scale of belief in the Lost-Cause myth. We show that it is this myth that is a significant contributor to the reasoning behind how people view the solution to the monument dilemma. The more a respondent believes the Lost-Cause myth, the more likely the respondent is to want the monuments to the Confederacy to remain in public spaces. One of the most important findings from this study is that Lost-Cause beliefs influence perspectives on current legislation, such as whether or not elementary-level public-school students should learn the history of American slavery. This is especially timely in that conservative Republicans have passed legislation in numerous states banning specific Civil-War history books.

Considering the depth of loyalty to and pride in the Confederacy perpetuated through the Lost-Cause narrative, social justice will depend on no small measure of humanitarian pragmatism and courage manifested by some of those in governmental power. The sooner it occurs, the sooner Black Southerners can see the social justice they deserve. Until these Confederate symbols are moved off public real estate, a form of psychological slavery remains. Unless the state governments and historical commissions of mostly Southern states admit the truth about their heritage, voluntarily relocate the Confederate tributes, and allow the public schools to teach the truthful history of the South's commitment to White supremacy and the degrading treatment of Blacks to this day, the typically unreceptive courts will be the only legitimate routes for redressing injuries to large sections of their populations. With the Republican Party largely in control of many Southern state governments, it is doubtful that this issue will ever be opened to a referendum. We are clear in our motivation not to erase the South's culture, history, or heritage, but merely to relocate it and tell it accurately.

Almost every week, we read in national newspapers how a Southern community has eliminated or moved a statue or monument dedicated to a battle or Confederate soldier off of government property. To achieve social justice for Black citizens, the memorials to the Confederacy must be moved off public property. How that happens remains to be seen. In some states, almost as soon as one monument comes down, another goes up (Fisher, 2020). Palmer and Wessler report that during the decade 2008 through 2018, "American taxpayers have spent at least \$40 million on Confederate monuments and groups that perpetuate racist ideology" (2018, n.p.). The movement of these Confederate shrines to places where Black residents do not have to see them should be brought about quickly as a national initiative. This would reduce the cost of monument maintenance for taxpayers, but most important, mitigate the human abuse being meted out daily.

It is time for at least two things to be done: (a) conduct a much more extensive investigation into the harm these monuments and other Confederate symbols are causing; and then (b) convene a meeting of representatives from the 11 original Confederate states and a few other states that are home to a large number of these Confederate symbols with economists, historians, textbook writers, and other experts to consider this serious issue, learn the harm they are causing, map out a plan, and act in the best interest of all residents of their states. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage (2017) recommends, a part of that plan should be the repeal of the remaining state statutes that forbid the removal or modification of historic monuments. The South could start a movement across the entire country, wherever racial prejudice still thrives. Then, and only then, can the economy, health, and reputation of the South rise again.

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