PRELIMINARY, DO NOT CIRCULATE

The Influence of Historical Narrative on Individual and National Identity

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Individual identities and national identity

- Polarization and hierarchy along identity lines can lead to failed governance, social exclusion, and internalized negative identity among disadvantaged groups (Clark and Clark 1947, Esteban et al 2012, Besley and Persson 2021).

- While often treated as a fixed attribute (Oh 2023), identity has been found to be malleable (Tajfel 1970).
  - Responding to diversity (Bazzi, et al. 2019), political boundaries (Bazzi and Gudgeon 2021), national football victories (Depetris-Chauvin, et al 2020), cinema (Esposito, et al. 2023), priming (Levendusky, 2017).

- Historical narratives could shape national identity, in fact Anderson (1983) argued that nations are “Imagined Communities”, constructed by narrative, museums, maps...
  - “Rather than take preferences as given, political leaders and activists often strive to change a population’s preferences through a change in identity...Gandhi’s Salt March Sparked an Indian national identity” –Akerlof and Kranton (2000).

Historical Narratives and Monuments

- These narratives are conveyed in political speeches, works of art, commemoration of historic sites, museums, and teaching of history in schools.
  - Bowen, Greene, Kisida (2014, 2019) take primary school kids to museum and find increased critical thinking toward art and historical empathy.

- History can be taught in ways that focus on linguistic, racial, or other forms of identity, valorizing some groups over others, or emphasizing commonalities and national union.

- The political salience of historical monuments and school history curricula in countries from the United States to India highlights their relevance.
  - Anderson (1983) identified museums and historical sites as nation-building mechanisms through which states foment solidarity.
  - In the US alone: 36,000+ sites on the National Register of Historic Places $\geq$ 100m visitors annually.

Mexico and National Identity

- Conquest of Mexico was a violent effort by the Spanish to replace the political structures, religion, and language of indigenous people and replace them with a European one.
- The Mexican independence was a revolt by Criollos against identity-based exclusion imposed by the Spanish.
- Benito Juarez was a president of indigenous origin fighting against elites, Maximilian, and the French invasion in the 5 de Mayo battle in Puebla.
- The Mexican revolution (≈1m deaths) was driven in part by indigenous groups (original Zapatistas) rebelling against imposed identity and economic hierarchies.
- After the Revolution, the state developed the idea of a unique Mexican culture that combines European and indigenous elements (Itzigsohn and vom Hau 2006).

National narrative

- After a divisive Revolution, important Mexican intellectuals, including Vasconcelos as Secretary of Education, sought to implement the vision of Mexicans as a mixed mestizo race (indigenous and Spanish), and of cultural assimilation.
- This idea was inscribed in textbooks and has proved durable. It is the narrative that the Mexican government espouses.
- This narrative could have helped Mexico avoid conflicts present in Peru, Bolivia, and other countries.
- While there are some critiques around it, we concentrate on measuring the effect of this government narrative.

"Viajes del Patromonio" program

- Opportunity to rigorously test the impact of teaching this vision of Mexican history on conceptions of individual and national identity, as well as on social cohesion.
- The government of Puebla, Mexico's "Journeys of National Heritage" program takes secondary school students from marginalized public schools on field trips to the most important historical sites and monuments of Puebla.
- We partnered with the government and individually randomized student participation in the program.
- Puebla is the 5th largest city in Mexico, and the State of Puebla is the 5th poorest in Mexico (out of 32).
  - Rich history and art: colonial period, first public library in America, 5 de Mayo battle, Mexican Revolution.

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Population and treatment

- 2,400 2nd year secondary school students (ages 16-17) in 30 low-income public high schools in Puebla.
  - low-income, 35% self-identifying as indigenous and 47% self-identifying as having dark skin color at baseline.
  - 97% have not been to the main sites.
- Control: belong to the same classroom; business as usual school day. While we can't rule out spillovers, we think the experiential component is hard to share; spillovers may lead to underestimation.
- Treatment: 5-hour tour of Puebla's most important museums and monuments.
  - Tour script developed from textbooks, national curricula, and the historical records and sites of Puebla and was intended to provide a coherent narrative reinforcing the modern relevance of history, the mixed national identity of Mexico, and the connections of history and identity.
  - Professional tour guides were then trained in the script and observers monitored compliance. The tour was free for the students.

Tour details, 3 themes

- "Roots in cultural riches" with Museo Amparo and its pre-columbian exhibits tracing history and culture up to the arrival of the European Conquistadors.
  - *"through different works from the Amparo Museum, we will learn how architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and dance of our Mexican ancestors were linked to daily life, and how this way of understanding and interacting with the world is still present in each of us today, in our food, in our colors and in our attitude towards death."*
- "Building a unique, mixed, and shared identity"
  - Biblioteca Palafoxiana (oldest public library in the Americas), and the main town plaza.
  - Puebla's Cathedral, and the Baroque Capilla del Rosario, explaining *"the mixture of indigenous culture with the new customs and beliefs that the evangelists brought to us in Mexico, such as the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe..."*
  - Talavera.
- "Defending our identity"
  - Museum of the Mexican Revolution—role of Puebla's Serdan family, sites of the famous 5 de Mayo victory against Napoleon III.
  - Narrative conveys how groups forgotten by history such as women, indigenous communities and young people were crucial for defending the national sovereignty.

Script conveys strong emotional message of unity of ethnicities

- *"We are going to walk through streets and buildings that have witnessed our history, that have occupied a place in our past but that, today, continue to be part of the daily life of thousands of Pueblans, Mexicans and visitors from all over the world."*
- *"The history of Mexico is still standing. No one has died here...Cuauhtémoc, Maximiliano and Don Porfirio, the conquerors and the conquered, are alive...Every past is a pulsating present."*
- *We will go to the Zócalo, where thousands of people gather daily, where we rest from the hustle and bustle of the city among the trees, where we walk and buy Esquites. All of this is the inheritance of our ancestors, monuments built, the planted trees, and the culinary ingredients of the Esquite, which are the inheritance of our indigenous ancestors who already ate corn with chili and epazote, but who now we mix it with the lemon that the Spanish brought us."*

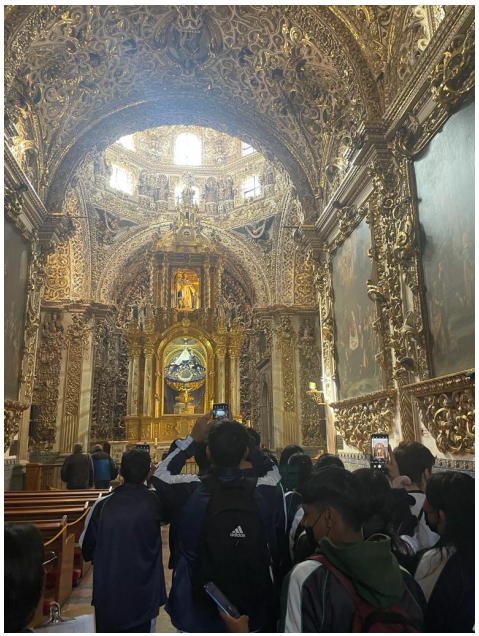
...more on script

- *"Today, we are going to take a trip in which we will see how Mexicans have been raised in diversity, in the fusion of cultures and the exchange of customs. We are a people that, as Octavio Paz also said, "is rebellious against classifications" because it results from many fusions and mixtures that have existed before and continue to change now."*
- Museum: *"Today we continue to maintain these traditions and attitude towards death, whether dressing up as catrinas, making rhymes and calaveritas, or offering chocolate and sugar skulls in today's altars for the dead in the Dia de Muertos".*
- Capilla: *"Beyond its gold-leafed interior, the Rosary Chapel's true richness lies in its syncretism, which tells us about the mixture of indigenous culture with the new customs and beliefs that the evangelists brought to us in Mexico. We have many examples of this syncretism in our daily lives, such as the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Various Patron Saint Festivals, the tradition of the Posadas, and the Day of the Dead.*

Tour pictures

- We piloted the tour before, and it had a deep impact on students.
- *“Wow, I did not know this existed”*; *“I did not know we were Spanish also”*; *“It was very impressive, I can’t wait to talk to my family about it.”*





Baseline measurement

- Surveyors went to all classrooms and implemented survey in tablets.
- Survey lasted 45 mins on average, and asked about sociodemographics, historical knowledge, identity, self-reported skin color, trust, civic behaviors.
- Pictures with frame to measure skin tone on the 11-point scale developed by PERLA.





Experimental design (Experiment in Progress)

Final Sample: 30 schools $\approx$ 2400 students

- Dropped students with no parent permission, violations of attention checks at baseline.
- Still going to 5 more schools for 400 students more.

Randomization stratified by classroom, skin color, gender, national identity measure.

As of now, we have:

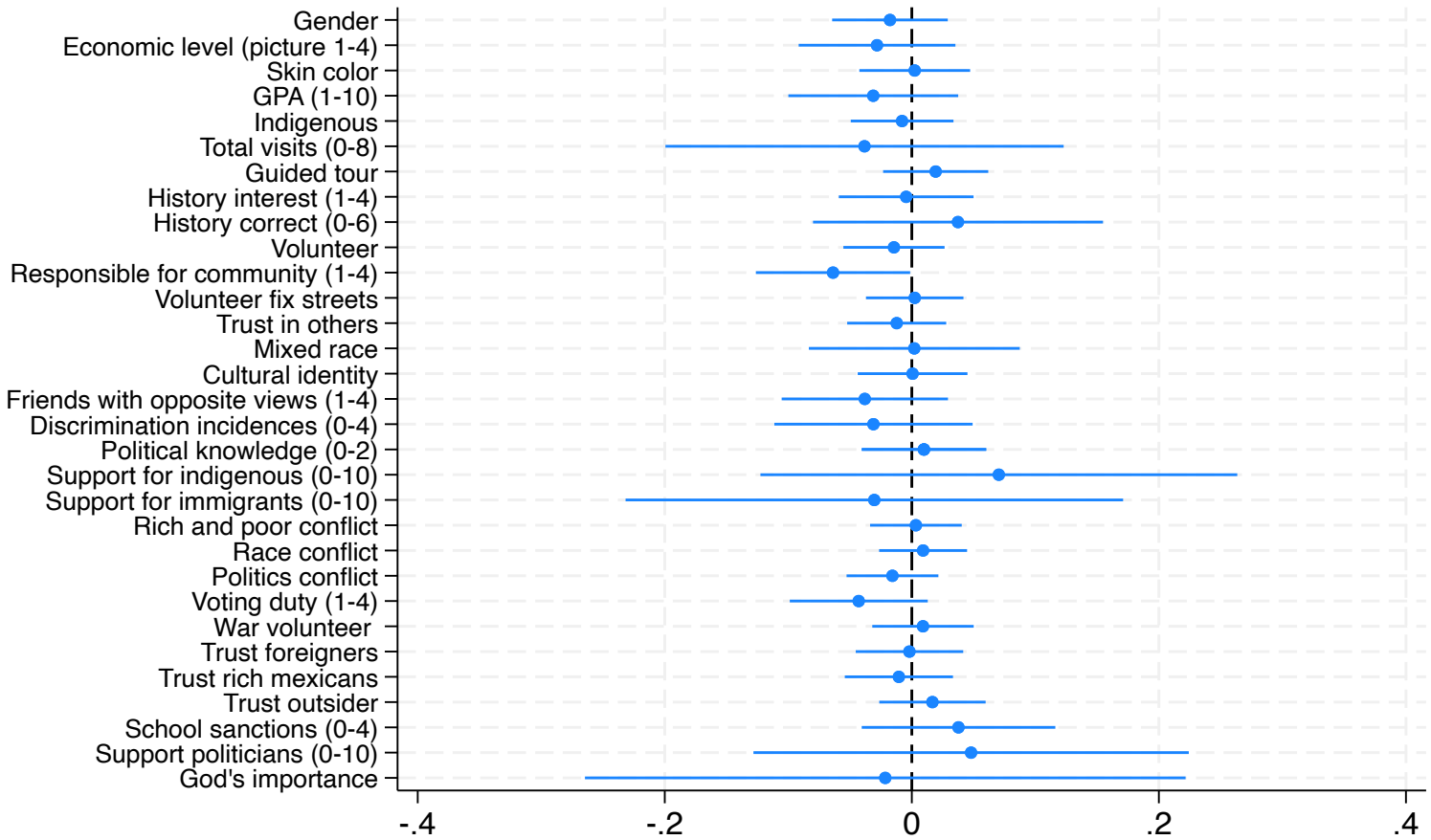
- **Treatment:** 1031 students assigned to the tour.
- **Control:** 1044 students assigned to control.

Compliance rate with tour was 83% (first stage F-stat 435).

Measures to date: baseline + follow-up survey. Plan for future measures.

Balanced Sample

- The response rate for the first **follow-up survey was 94%.**
- No differential attrition (coeff 0.011, pval=0.270).
- Sample is balanced in 20+ observables (joint F-stat pval=0.934)



Previewing some results

- Treatment caused students to self-identify as more indigenous, report darker skin color, identify more with Mexico, and increase trust in neighbors.
- It also led to lower feelings of sadness and anger,
- and being more willing to subscribe to a newspaper and volunteer time for the community.
- Contrary to theories that increase in identification with a group lead to negative feelings toward an out-group, but consistent with Clingingsmith et al (2009)'s work on the Hajj, we find no negative effects on attitudes or incentivized measures with respect to support for non-Mexicans.

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ITT Specification

For the follow-up survey, we estimate regressions of the forms:

ITT:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta \, \mathbb{1}(Assigned)_i + \gamma_s + \delta \mathbb{X}_i + \epsilon_i \tag{1}$$

where:

- γ_s strata: school fixed effects, gender, dark skin, national identity.
- $\mathbb{X}_i$ are control variables from baseline, such as GPA, identifying as indigenous, total visits to historic sites, ever having been on a guided tour, socioeconomic status, and a follow-up answer quality proxy.
- we use unclustered robust standard errors.

Tour going, knowledge

- 65% increase in the number of historical sites visited.
- 25% increase in objective knowledge of history covered on tour.
- No significant increased in knowledge of historical characters not in tour (e.g. Cortés).

	(1) Visits	(2) Knowledge	(3) Knows Palafox	(4) Knows Cortés
Selected for tour	2.158***	0.696***	0.031***	0.006
	(0.094)	(0.072)	(0.009)	(0.005)
Observations	1,303	1,303	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	3.30	2.78	0.94	0.98

Visits is a variable that counts the total number of visits to historic sites reported by the students. *Knowledge* is a variable that counts the number of correct answers to objective history questions (takes values from 0 to 6). *Knows Palafox* is a dummy variable where 1 means the student knows who Juan de Palafox is (he is covered in tour). *Knows Cortes* is a dummy variable where 1 means the student knows who Hernan Cortes is.

National identity (stated)

- Statistically significant increases in Mexico should not resemble other countries (12%), willingness to help if Mexico went to war (7%).
- Increase in students declaring that their identity is mainly based on cultural elements (19%).

	(1) War	(2) None like Mex.	(3) Cultural identity
Selected for tour	0.052***	0.053**	0.044**
	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.019)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	0.72	0.44	0.23

Help Mexico is a dummy variable = 1 if willing to help Mexico in a war. *None like Mex.* =1 if the student thinks Mexico should not resemble another country from a given list. *Cultural identity* =1 if the student's identity is mainly based on cultural aspects.

National identity (revealed)

- More likely to prefer Mexican art/music index (7%).
- Increased enrollment to help organize the 5 de Mayo parade (7%).
- No statistically significant effect on choosing Mexican (PanAm) shoes over Nike.
- See examples here.

	(1) Mexican art	(2) Mexican shoes	(3) Parade
Selected for tour	0.245***	-0.029	0.038*
	(0.065)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Observations	1,953	1,912	1,912
Dep. Var. Mean	3.38	0.29	0.51

Mexican Art is a variable that takes values 0 to 6, where each additional point means the student preferred a Mexican art sculpture, painting, etc. against a foreign one in incentivized choice. *Mexican part* =1 if chose the Mexican shoes over the American shoes in case of winning the raffle. *Parade* =1 if they would like to show support for their school to participate in the parade.

Attitudes toward foreigners

- No significant effect on trust in foreigners, or on priority for Mexicans when jobs are scarce.
- No increase in the distaste of Americans or Europeans on an affective thermometer.
- Contrary to some theories of group identity formation, but consistent with Clingingsmith et al (2009).

	(1) Foreigners	(2) Mexicans in jobs	(3) Americans	(4) Europeans
Selected for tour	0.017	0.012	-0.032	-0.061
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.093)	(0.092)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	0.32	0.72	5.72	5.82

Foreigners =1 if student trusts foreigners. *Mexicans in jobs* =1 if student agrees Mexicans should be prioritized over foreigners if jobs are scarce. "We would like to know your stance towards some groups. For the following groups, rate them from 0 to 10 according to the following criteria: A rating of 0 means that you completely reject that person/institution. A rating of 5 means that you are indifferent to them. A rating of 10 means that you fully support that person/institution."*Americans* measures the degree of support in Americans. *Europeans* measures the degree of support in Europeans.

Identity more broadly

Students are more willing to say they have dark skin and are indigenous. They also want to know more about their origins.

- Stated: 13% more identified as indigenous, 7% increase in skin darkness.
- Revealed: 9% more devote money for DNA Test.

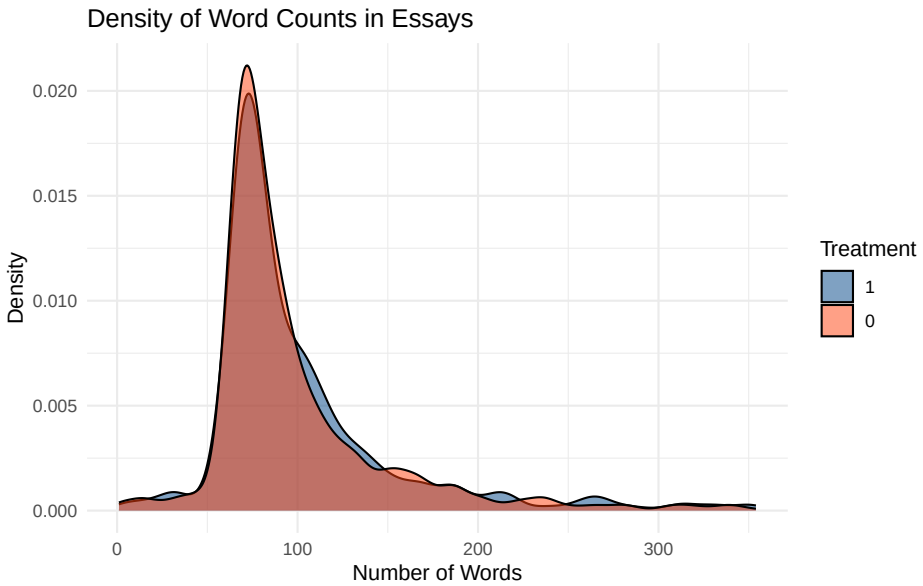
	Stated				Revealed
	(1) Skin color	(2) Indigenous	(3) Cultural identity	(4) Mexican Spaniard	(5) DNA
Selected for tour	0.031*	0.074***	0.044**	-0.083	0.047**
	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.069)	(0.023)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,912
Dep. Var. Mean	0.46	0.55	0.23	5.40	0.51

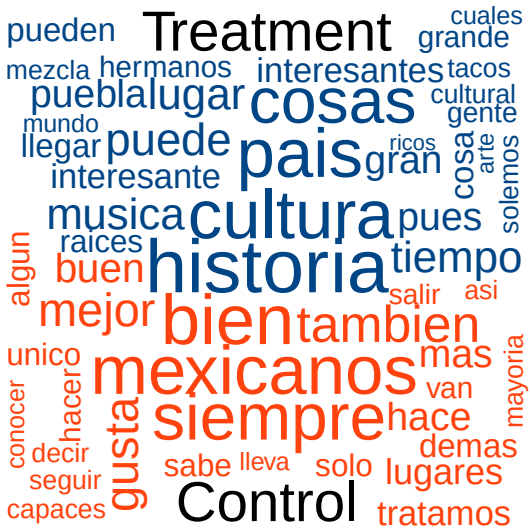
Skin color is a variable that takes values 1 to 11, where students state their skin color (11 being the darkest). These 11 reference categories were created by the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA). *Indigenous* =1 if the student self-identifies as indigenous. *Cultural identity*=1 if the student's claims main identity is having Mexican culture. *Mexican Spaniard* is variable from 1-10, =1 if the student identifies as average Mexican, =0 if completely indigenous, =10 if completely Spaniard. *DNA* =1 student willing to put his/her incentive money to do a DNA test to know genetic origin.

Essay

"We would like to know what you think about Mexicans. Imagine you're explaining to an alien what Mexicans are like. Write a short essay (minimum 400 characters) in 5 minutes... The best essay wins a $5,000 Samsung tablet. Finish the essay to receive $50 and a chance for more prizes. Go ahead and share your perspective!"

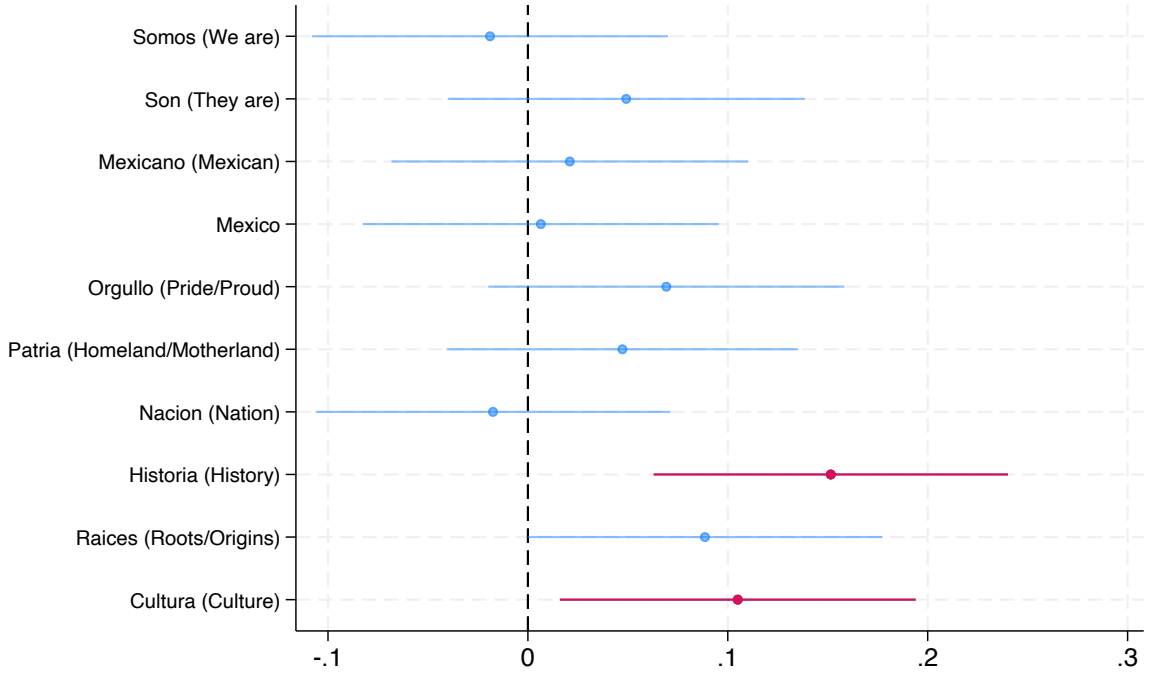
- Most essays exceeded the character limit, but there was no difference across arms in the number of words.





Word counts

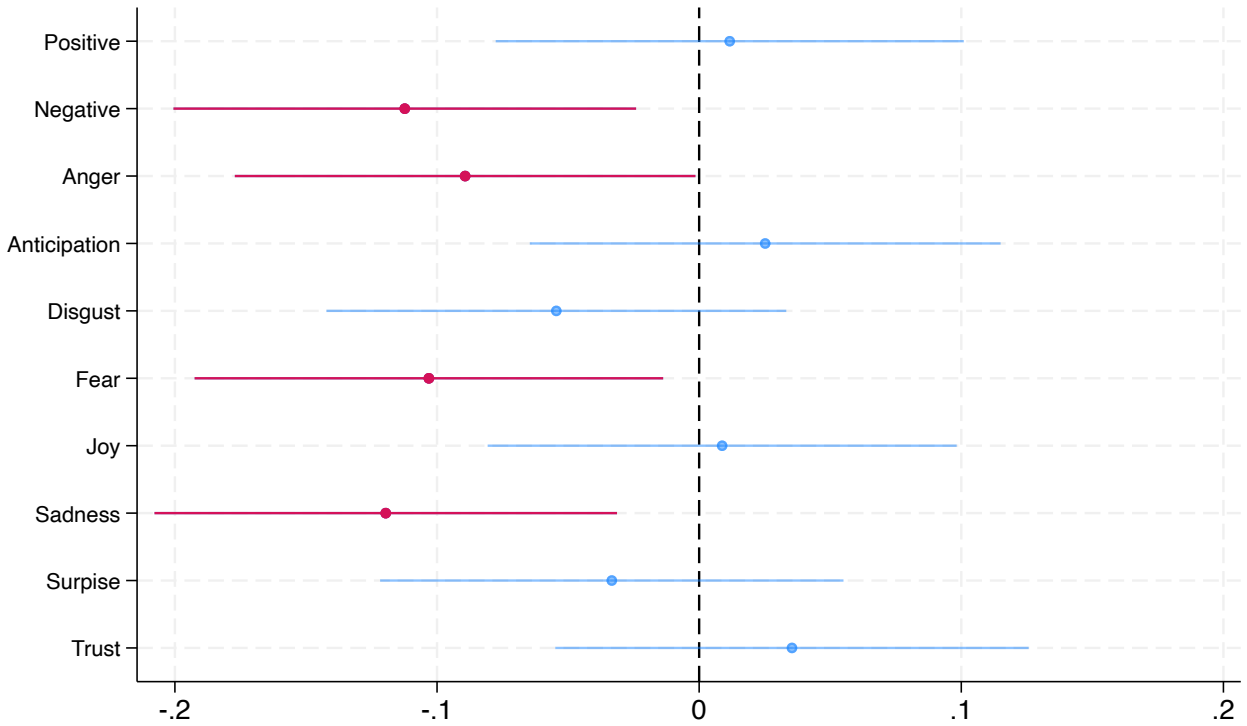
- We don't find different in 1st ("we are") person vs 3rd person ("Mexicans are") count. Need more work using more sophisticated algorithms.
- More use of "history" and "culture" words.



=1 if that the word was present in the essay.

Sentiment analysis

- We find lower negative feelings, lower anger, fear, and sadness.



The NRC Emotion Lexicon contains 25,000 words that are categorized into sentiments (positive and negative) and emotions (anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, trust). Each word is assigned a value from 0-3, meaning the word is not associated, weakly, moderately, or strongly associated. A word can be associated with more than one emotion or sentiment. The dependent variable is defined as the sum of the scores across the essay for each category divided by the essay word count, and standarized.

Perceived conflict and Trust

(1) We don't find effects on the perceived conflict between races, economic classes, ideologies, or nationalities.

(2) We do find an increase in trust in neighbors (11%).

	Conflict				Trust	
	(1) Wealth	(2) Race	(3) Nationality	(4) Ideology	(5) Rich Mexicans	(6) Neighbors
Selected for tour	0.018	0.004	0.019	-0.003	0.004	0.063***
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.022)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	0.82	0.81	0.70	0.80	0.33	0.55

Wealth=1 if the student believes a strong conflict exists between rich and poor people. *Race*=1 if the student believes a strong conflict exists between people of different races. *Nationality*=1 conflict exists between Mexicans and foreigners, and *Ideology*=1 for conflict between people of different political ideologies. *Rich Mexicans*=1 means the student trusts rich Mexicans, and *Neighbors*=1 means the student trusts her neighbors.

Dictator Games (incentivized)

- We are not finding an effect on dictator game giving.

	(1) Donation poor	(2) Donation private	(3) Donation foreigner	(4) Donation indigenous
Selected for tour	1.285	0.380	0.903	-0.523
	(1.346)	(1.125)	(1.139)	(1.250)
Observations	1,768	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	63.60	31.87	37.90	60.24

Donation poor is a variable that measures the amount the student sent to a poor student in the dictator game (out of 100 pesos). *Donation private* measures the amount the student sent to a private school student. *Donation foreigner* measures the amount the student sent to a foreign student in the dictator game. *Donation indigenous* measures the amount the student sent to an indigenous student in the dictator game.

Bad behaviors (self-reported)

- No effect on measured norms of good/bad behavior.

	(1) Graffiti	(2) Tax avoidance	(3) Underage drinking
Selected for tour	-0.068	-0.150	0.045
	(0.097)	(0.099)	(0.094)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	3.16	3.26	2.46

Graffiti: "On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not justifiable at all' and 10 is 'completely justifiable', how justifiable do you think it is to graffiti public or other people's walls?". *Tax avoidance:* "On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not justifiable at all' and 10 is 'completely justifiable', how justifiable do you think it is to evade taxes on your salary?". *Underage drinking:* "On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not justifiable at all' and 10 is 'completely justifiable', how justifiable do you think it is to consume alcohol as a minor?".

Civics and participation in community

- We find that students are more likely to say young people can make a difference (3%) and that they feel responsible for their community (7%).
- Students also enroll more in social service volunteering club (31%).

	Stated			Revealed
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Make a diff.	Responsible	Donate blood	Volunteering club
Selected for tour	0.027*	0.051**	0.013	0.056***
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.018)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	0.88	0.69	0.84	0.18

Can make a difference: =1 if the student agrees "Young people in Mexico can improve the country by voting and participating in political life" R: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree. *Responsible for my community:* "I feel responsible for my community." *Donate blood:* "If you were asked to donate blood (without financial compensation). Would you accept?". *Volunteering club* =1 if the student registered to be part of a volunteering club at her school.

Democracy-related civic behaviors

- Satisfaction with democracy increased by 4.8%, and Interests in politics by 11.3%.
- No effect on planning to vote
- No effect on preference for authoritarianism.
- 17% more willing to use the incentive money to buy a newspaper subscription.

	Stated				Revealed
	(1) Plan to vote	(2) Dem. satisfaction	(3) Auth. Index	(4) Interest in pol.	(5) News subscription
Selected for tour	0.026	0.034*	0.040	0.060***	0.036*
	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.022)	(0.019)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,912
Dep. Var. Mean	0.81	0.70	-0.02	0.53	0.21

Plan to vote =1 if student plans to vote when she turns 18. *Dem. satisfaction* =1 if student is satisfied with democracy in Mexico. *Auth. index* is an index composed of three questions related to preferences for authoritarian governments. *Interest in pol.* =1 if student is interested in politics. *News subscription* "Reforma is one of the most important and well-recognized newspapers in the country. The newspaper provides information on the most important political news in Mexico. If your virtual money, earned in the latest games, turns into real money, would you like to exchange your real money for a subscription to the Reforma newspaper to stay informed?" Ans: Yes=1

Interest in culture and history

- 3% more interest in culture, and 6% more have a plan to go to college.
- No effect on liking art, although positive (p-value = 0.11).
- 24% more enrollment in history club/civics course, no interest in clay class at Amparo museum.

	Stated			Revealed	
	(1) Culture	(2) Art	(3) College	(4) Clay class	(5) History club
Selected for tour	0.113***	0.044	0.044**	-0.002	0.039**
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.019)	(0.007)	(0.017)
Observations	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953	1,953
Dep. Var. Mean	3.34	3.50	0.73	0.02	0.16

Prehispanic culture: "How motivated do you feel to explore and learn about pre-Hispanic cultures?" Very motivated, Somewhat motivated, A little motivated, Not motivated at all. *Art general:* "How motivated do you feel to explore and learn about art?". *Go to university:* "What are your plans after finishing high school?" Study a technical career, Study a university degree, Look for a job with a family member, Look for a job in the government, Look for a job in a non-family company, Start my own business, Join armed forces, home care, Other, don't know. *Clay museum* =1 if student reported wants to attend a free clay class at the Amparo Museum. *History club* i=1 if student registered to be part of a history club at school.

Heterogeneity

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta\, \mathbb{1}(Assigned)_i + \delta\, \mathbb{1}(Het)_i + \phi\, \mathbb{1}(Assigned)_i \times \mathbb{1}(Het)_i + \gamma_s + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

We found some but (limited) heterogeneity. Mostly with indigenous identification and self-reported strong cultural identity. Found: $\hat{\phi}$ large, but wide CI. Need to do multiple testing corrections.

- Interactions of main results with Het dummies:
  - Few visits dummy
  - Indigenous
  - Skin color
  - Gender
  - Cultural Identity
  - Poverty

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Map of schools picture



Historical monuments pictures



(a) Amparo Museum



(b) Cathedral



(c) Palafoxiana Library

Historical monuments pictures



(a) Municipal Palace



(b) Revolution Museum



(c) Rosario chapel

Tour pictures



(a) Students taking pictures in the Rosary Chapel



(b) Students in the Amparo Museum



(c) One group in the Cathedral of Puebla

Find more pictures of the tours here

Survey picture



(a) Ignacio Zaragoza doing the baseline survey



(b) High school Guillermo González Camarena



(c) High school Los Héroes Puebla

Picture of a student and the color frame



(a) Example of the color frame



(b) Example of the color frame

Art Index and Shoes comparison

Next, you will see groups of images featuring various painting styles, portraits, musical posters, and architectural sites.

Observe and choose which one you like the most. Choose carefully, as we will be holding a raffle, and if you are selected, you will be gifted one of the posters you chose.

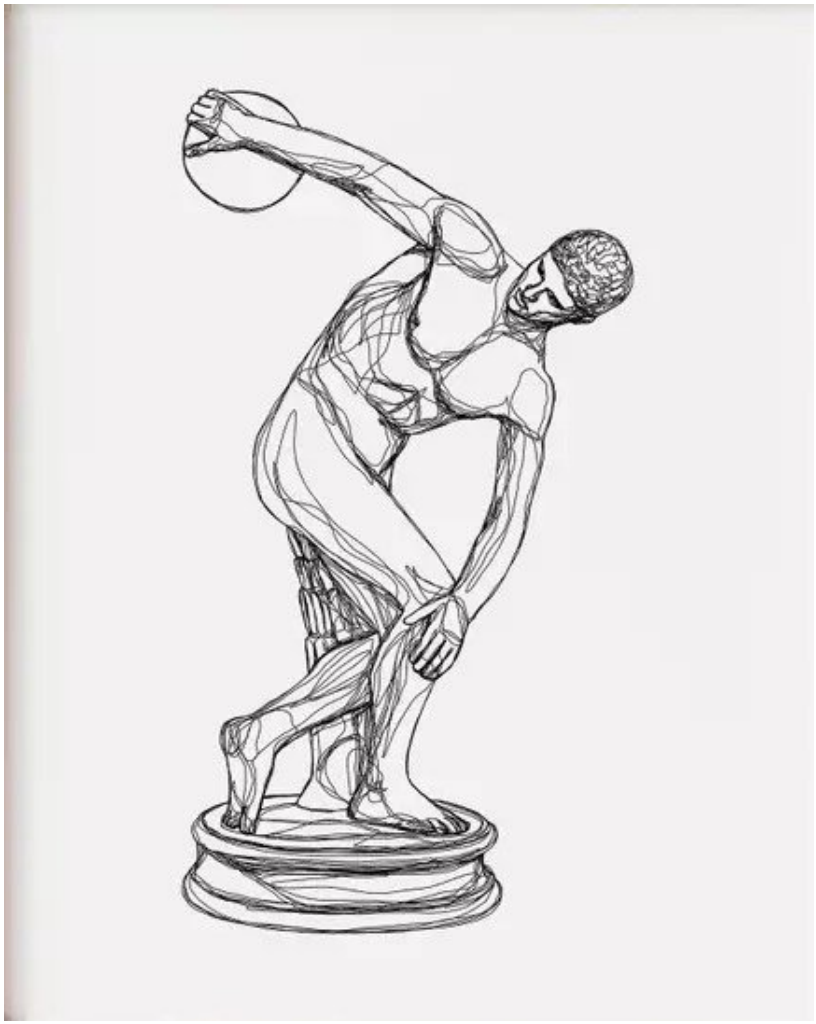


(a) Paris poster



(b) Mexico poster

Art Index and Shoes comparison



(a) Greek sculpture poster



(b) Mexican sculpture poster

Art Index and Shoes comparison

We will give you a choice between two types of brands, both of similar quality. One is PANAM, a 100

The models that will be available are shown below. Please choose which one you would like to receive in case you win. Return to the presentation here.



(a) PANAM shoe



(b) Nike shore