Historical Narratives and Political Behavior in the US*

Diego Ramos-Toro† Elsa Voytas‡

December 10, 2024

Abstract

We examine how people think and speak about the history of race in the United States. Based on 14,044 surveys, we document substantial ideological divides in views about the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, and slavery's legacy, with pronounced differences among whites. The structure of historical narratives also varies by ideology: Conservatives, particularly white conservatives, emphasize individual agency and detach the past from the present, while liberals tend to portray the present as the continuation of the past. Evidence from two survey-embedded interventions suggests that historical narratives about race can deepen polarization in institutional satisfaction.

JEL Codes: D63, D72, H10, J15, P16, Z1

*This research benefited from comments by Jonathan Zinman, Erzo Luttmer, Alicia Cooperman, Blair Read, Andrew Proctor, Tanika Raychaudhuri, Brendan Nyhan, Nathan Nunn, Felipe Valencia Caicedo, Enrique Seira, and audiences at the University of British Columbia and ASREC (Chapman University). Philip Surendran provided outstanding research assistance. We received IRB approval from Dartmouth College (Study #32438) and preregistered our protocols on the AEA RCT Registry (AEARCTR-0009108; AEARCTR-0011305; AEARCTR-0012177; and AEARCTR-0012299).

†Department of Economics, Dartmouth College: diego.ramos-toro@dartmouth.edu

‡Research Scientist, Meta: elsavoytas@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Historical accounts provide individuals with a sense of where they come from and who they are. These ideas about the past can thus affect contemporary behavior by shaping identity and morality. Indeed, historical remembrance has been shown to affect the behavior of groups via institutionalized collective memory, historical narratives, and political rhetoric (Fouka and Voth, 2023; Ramos-Toro, 2023; Ochsner and Rosel, 2024). Yet, historical remembrance is not uniform, particularly in the context of episodes marked by intergroup violence or exclusion. To what extent does the content, transmission, and behavioral effects of accounts about historically-contested episodes vary across groups?

We address this question by documenting the coexistence of diverse historical accounts about race in the United States and exploring how these accounts contribute to contemporary political polarization. Recent debates surrounding the teaching and study of history underscore the potential for conflicting narratives about race to deepen political divisions. Indeed, a majority of states have implemented laws or taken steps restricting discussions of slavery's historical significance and ongoing influence in educational spaces (The Economist, 2022). These policies illustrate the power of historical narratives to influence political behavior and partisan divisions. Crucially, understanding the nature and political effects of historical accounts about race entails mapping these accounts beyond those formally imparted in educational spaces, as these are a subset of the many accounts and modes of transmission that may coexist across and within different demographics in the US.

Between 2022 and 2023, we conducted four rounds of online surveys involving 14,044 US respondents from a broad spectrum of ideological leanings. We relied on three different online data platforms to survey a wide, diverse set of participants, gauging historical beliefs about race from 10,307 white respondents and 3,737 Black respondents.[1] We asked participants about their views toward the causes of the Civil War, the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement, and slavery's ongoing legacy. Specifically, participants expressed their agreement with different claims pertaining to those topics and wrote a narrative justifying and elaborating

[1]We relied on Lucid (N= 1,936), Dynata (N= 7,959), and Prolific (N=4,149) to ensure the highest possible number of participants with different racial backgrounds and ideological leanings. Table 1, which section 2 discussed in greater details, contains the summary statistics of our participants.

on their views toward each claim. Leveraging participants' responses and rich narratives (the median response, net of stop words, contained 20 words), we assess patterns and discrepancies in historical perspectives about race in the US.

Our findings reveal nuanced differences in historical views across demographics, contingent upon the specific episode under scrutiny. While a majority of respondents, irrespective of ideology or race, agree that slavery caused the Civil War, this consensus masks substantial heterogeneity: Racial differences among older cohorts are virtually non-existent, whereas younger white people are less likely believe that the Civil War was fought over slavery compared to younger African Americans. Conversely, racial differences in views regarding the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement are stark among older respondents but have disappeared among younger ones. Finally, views on slavery's legacy generate striking divisions across race in all cohorts, and these racial gaps have widened among younger respondents. Interestingly, ideological gaps in historical views are pervasive, and the gaps are larger among white respondents, particularly when the episode under scrutiny is closer to the present.

We delve further into the structure and correlates of these historical discourses, drawing insights from participants' narratives. Pessimism and negative emotions seem to predominate discussions of race in historical perspective. Crucially, the way people discuss the past varies prominently by ideology. Conservatives, most notably white conservatives, view the past as having little to do with the present, seeing it as merely a reflection of individuals then. In contrast, liberals tend to discuss the past and the present as inexorably linked, emphasizing the responsibility of everyone today to address inequities of the past. The sources of historical narratives vary by race and ideology as well: A majority of Black respondents (but not white respondents) report relying on direct ancestors as sources of historical information that inform their present views. Moreover, liberals rely more heavily on institutional sources, including museums and schools, than conservatives, while differences across racial lines appear less pronounced.

The historical views we gauged are consistently correlated with different determinants of political ideology. Deep-rooted historical determinants of a conservative (progressive) political ideology appear to positively (negatively) correlate with a tendency to have an optimistic view of race in historical perspective (i.e., a tendency to claim that slavery played no role in the Civil

War, that the Civil Rights Movement was successful, and that there is no ongoing legacy from slavery). Similarly, individual-level characteristics such as education and income consistently predict respondents' historical stances. Moreover, we find that participants who report being exposed to people from different races and backgrounds while growing up are significantly more likely to have an optimistic view of history, while those who spoke about racial issues with their relatives are less likely to espouse optimistic historical views.

We next explore the potential for these historical accounts to affect political behavior. Specifically, we implement two interventions to examine whether historical reasoning and historical narratives widen the conservative-liberal gap in satisfaction with US institutions. In our first protocol ("Experiment 1," N=6,085), participants shared their views and narratives about race in historical perspective before or after we elicited their institutional satisfaction. Our second protocol ("Experiment 2") relies on the open-ended responses we collected in our first round. We used these responses to construct historical narratives that reflected the perspectives of respondents who shared similar ideological leanings and racial affiliations. In doing so, we formulated a separate Black liberal, Black conservative, white liberal, and white conservative historical narrative. After validating and confirming in the second round that these narratives aligned with the perspective of each racial-ideological group, we implemented our second experiment in the third round (N=7,959). Experiment 2 randomly exposed participants to one of these historical narratives.[2] In both protocols, we stratified the randomization by race and ideology. Our main outcome of interest was an index constructed with indicators for participants' support for democracy, capitalism, and the preservation of existing laws and institutions in the US.

Results from both experiments indicate that confronting historical accounts about race increases polarization in institutional satisfaction. In our first experiment, asking participants to think about and share their historical views reduces liberal respondents' reported levels of institutional satisfaction, whereas it marginally (but insignificantly) increases conservatives' institutional satisfaction. In our second experiment, we found that liberals who were exposed to a liberal historical narrative exhibit lower institutional satisfaction than those exposed to no historical narrative or to a conservative one. White conservatives, on the other hand, maintained

[2]We provide further details of this intervention and how we designed the treatments in Section 2.

stable levels of institutional satisfaction regardless of the historical narrative they were presented with. We observed similar patterns—decreased institutional satisfaction among liberals and stable institutional satisfaction among conservatives—among Black respondents. These findings are in line with the finding that thinking about the history of race (Experiment 1) or being exposed to a liberal narrative about the history of race (Experiment 2) reduces liberals' willingness to donate to a bipartisan organization. As for mechanisms, the interventions appear to disproportionately induce negative emotions for liberals, suggesting that negative affectivity helps explain these results. Taken together, these interventions suggest that liberal narratives about the history of race widen pre-existing ideological divisions by increasing greater pessimism among liberals regarding the American institutional framework.

Our paper contributes to several strands of literature. Recent research has delved into the influence of narratives on economic and political behavior (Shiller, 2017; Bénabou, Falk and Tirole, 2018; Kendall and Charles, 2023). In particular, there is growing interest in the extent to which narratives about race have contributed to either political violence or political reconciliation in the past (Masera, Rosenberg and Walker, 2022; Esposito et al., 2023; Ang, 2023). However, the content of historical narratives, especially concerning race, remains relatively underexplored. We address this gap by examining multiple contemporary narratives about race in historical context, assessing their divergence across race and ideology, and scrutinizing their structure, transmission, and correlates.

We also advance existing research on how historical events can influence present behavior through narrative mechanisms, whether within households (Dessí, 2008; Ramos-Toro, 2023) or via institutional channels (Balcells, Palanza and Voytas, 2022; Fouka and Voth, 2023; Ochsner and Rosel, 2024). These papers document how evoking the past can generate a coherent political or economic response from individuals whose ancestors were impacted by certain historical episodes. We focus instead on the contested nature of history and its potential to generate social dissent. Specifically, we document the coexistence of various (often opposing) organic historical narratives about race in the US. Our findings illustrate that different demographic groups within society may react differently to, and possess very different interpretations of, the same historical episodes.

Moreover, our findings add to the literature studying the nature and determinants of politi-

cal polarization. Research on this issue has identified various drivers of polarization, including media biases (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; Martin and Yurukoglu, 2017), the internet and social media algorithms (Levy, 2021; Guriev, Melnikov and Zhuravskaya, 2021), and exposure to information that may be interpreted differently across partisan lines (Fryer, Harms and Jackson, 2019; Baysan, 2022). We show that narratives about the past may widen pre-existing differences between progressives and conservatives, particularly in the extent to which they support and feel satisfied with the institutional framework of their country.

Finally, our paper contributes to the body of work leveraging large-scale surveys to probe people´s perceptions and preferences. This literature has advanced our understanding of how people make economic decisions (Stantcheva, 2020, 2022), how they think about contemporary pressing issues (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023; Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022), and how their political and economic preferences are shaped by ideology and behavioral biases (Enke, Rodríguez-Padilla and Zimmermann, 2023; Chinoy, Sequeira and Stantcheva, 2023). In particular, (Alesina, Ferroni and Stantcheva, 2021) studies beliefs about racial gaps, showing large differences across race and ideology in the perceived causes of those gaps. Our contribution to this literature is twofold: First, we leverage a similar large-scale survey approach to understand how people think and talk about the history of race in the US. Second, we provide a framework that can be adjusted and scaled-up to study historical narratives and beliefs in other contexts and over time. This framework is applicable not only to other historical episodes in the US but also to different regions and relevant historical events.

The remaining sections are structured as follows. In section 2, we describe the survey methods, samples, and protocols that we implemented to understand the nature and consequences of historical narratives. Section 3 examines the structure, variations and correlates of the historical views about racial issues held by different demographics in the US. Section 4 presents the results from the two protocols through which we examine the polarizing effects of historical narratives. Section 5 concludes.

2. Research Design and Data Collection

Data collection methods

Our multi-method data collection approach consisted large-scale surveys and qualitative focus groups. This multifaceted approach allowed us to capture the nuance and complexity surrounding the way Americans perceive salient moments in their nation's history, facilitating a deeper understanding of historical views than would be possible with a single methodology. All dimensions were reviewed and approved by Dartmouth's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (Study #32438).

We conducted two experiments through four rounds of surveys fielded between March 2022 and November 2023. In Experiment 1, we utilized an embedded order experiment and elicited respondents' perceptions of the causes of the Civil War, the success of the Civil Rights Movement, and the persistent negative effects of slavery on Black Americans today. The contents of their responses to these questions were repurposed to construct the historical narrative treatment conditions in Experiment 2. We describe both experiments in further detail below.

We designed our survey instruments on Qualtrics and used several distinct platforms (Lucid in round 1, Prolific in rounds 2 and 4, and Dynata in round 3). By recruiting participants from different intermediaries, we maximized access to a diverse pool of subjects which was essential to our task of understanding variation in historical narratives across demographic groups. We opted to use Prolific twice given that survey respondents displayed the highest attention levels compared to the other platforms. Surveys took less than 10 minutes to complete.

Across four rounds of data collection, we surveyed a total of 14,044 Americans (10,307 white and 3,737 Black respondents). Each survey was conducted among adult populations (18+) who reported having grown up in the United States. We dropped individuals who failed a pre-treatment attention check. We also excluded participants who did not self-identify as "White or Caucasian" or "Black or African-American."[3] All surveys began by collecting respon-

[3]In all rounds, we required that white respondents *only* self-identify as "White or Caucasian" and no other race or ethnicity. For Black respondents, we dropped participants who identified as multiracial in Round 1. We kept these individuals in Rounds 2 and 3 for theoretical and practical reasons. Research finds that African-Americans with multiple racial identities tend to internally identify as Black (Khanna, 2010). Additionally, online panels have limited numbers of Black respondents, and by relaxing our initial criterion, we were able to access a larger pool of participants.

dents' age, gender, place where they grew up (US or elsewhere), race or ethnicity, ideology, and partisan affiliation. For the ideology metric, individuals placed themselves along the political spectrum from "very liberal" to "very conservative" with "neither liberal nor conservative" in the middle. Respondents then completed the attention check. The rest of the survey differed by experiment but concluded with final demographic questions concerning income, marital status, education level, and occupation.

Each survey included three historical legacy questions, which consisted of claims that slavery caused the Civil War, that substantial progress has been made toward achieving the goals of the Civil Rights Movement, and that the legacy of slavery and discrimination impacts Black people's circumstances today (see Table 2). These questions first ask if respondents agree or disagree with a close-ended statement and then asks them to expand on their views through an open-ended follow-up. While these questions are central to the experimental procedures we describe below, we also utilize responses descriptively to analyze different beliefs about US history across key demographic variables, including age, gender, race, and ideology. We created a binary indicator variable for each question to capture whether the respondent expressed agreement with the closed-ended statement. We use natural language processing methods to analyze open responses.

The summary statistics of our sample are presented in Table 1. We examine the representativeness of our data by comparing these characteristics with census data and with those of participants in nationally representative surveys, such as the American Election Studies (ANES). Although our sample is similar to census data in various dimensions, Appendix Table A.1 shows that the average participant in our sample tends to be more educated than the average census respondent, and the average white respondent is also older. Crucially, however, Appendix Table A.2 reveal that our data aligns with the observable characteristics of participants in the ANES, suggesting that these differences are consistent with what can be achieved in nationally representative surveys, instead of being specific to our sample frame.

Table 1: Summary statistics.

	Black			White			
	Round 1 (1)	Round 2 (2)	Round 3 (3)	Round 1 (4)	Round 2 (5)	Round 3 (6)	Round 4 (7)
Woman	0.58	0.56	0.65	0.56	0.48	0.53	0.54
Married	0.27	0.26	0.24	0.52	0.42	0.57	0.44
18-29 years old	0.16	0.35	0.20	0.04	0.15	0.05	0.19
30-39 years old	0.19	0.26	0.24	0.10	0.27	0.14	0.28
40-49 years old	0.14	0.20	0.18	0.08	0.19	0.13	0.20
50-59 years old	0.14	0.14	0.19	0.12	0.21	0.15	0.18
60-69 years old	0.22	0.04	0.13	0.28	0.14	0.25	0.11
70+ years old	0.15	0.01	0.06	0.38	0.04	0.28	0.04
$0-$44,999	0.55	0.37	0.48	0.40	0.35	0.27	0.32
$45,000-$135,000	0.38	0.51	0.44	0.49	0.51	0.53	0.53
$135,001+	0.06	0.13	0.08	0.11	0.14	0.20	0.15
Liberal	0.45	0.64	0.41	0.53	0.51	0.40	0.49
Conservative	0.22	0.12	0.19	0.47	0.49	0.40	0.36
Democrat	0.72	0.64	0.64	0.47	0.44	0.41	0.43
Republican	0.05	0.07	0.08	0.37	0.42	0.37	0.30
Independent	0.21	0.28	0.26	0.15	0.12	0.21	0.26
Employed	0.32	0.54	0.46	0.23	0.51	0.35	0.52
Self-employed	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.04	0.14	0.06	0.09
Unemployed	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.05	0.12	0.05	0.12
College or more	0.37	0.52	0.35	0.49	0.57	0.57	0.57
High school or less	0.44	0.23	0.44	0.28	0.23	0.25	0.22
N	967	703	2,067	969	778	5,892	2,668

Notes: Rows correspond to proportion of sample self-identifying in each category. Columns 1-3 show summary statistics for Black respondents. Columns 4-7 show summary statistics for white respondents. Round 1 was conducted with Lucid; Rounds 2 and 4 were conducted with Prolific; and Round 3 was conducted with Dynata. The sample is defined as respondents who progressed in the survey past the treatment condition.

Table 2: Historical legacy questions.

Close-ended Questions	Open-ended follow-up
"The main case of the Civil War was slavery."	[If agree] How was slavery dealt with after the war? [if disagree] How was (stated cause of the Civil War) dealt with after the war?
"All or most of the goals of the Civil Rights Movement have been achieved."	[If agree] What has prevented progress toward the main goals of the Civil Rights Movement? [If disagree] Why do you think the goals of the Civil Rights Movement have been largely achieved?
"Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Black people to work their way out of the lower class."	[If agree] Why do you think that the legacy of slavery and discrimination still affects people today? [If disagree] Why do you think that the legacy of slavery and discrimination has little or no effect on people today?

Experimental procedures

Experiment 1 entailed an embedded order experiment where respondents either answered the questions about US history related to race *before* or *after* responding to our central outcome questions. Our central outcome questions measured agreement with the statements that: 1) "Democracy may have its problems, but it is the best system of government" 2) "Capitalism may have its problems, but it is the best economic system" 3) "Because they are fundamentally biased against some racial and ethnic groups, most US laws/institutions need to be completely rebuilt." As with the historical legacy questions, we create a binary indicator variable corresponding to agreement with each statement. Collectively, these questions capture respondents' institutional satisfaction, and we analyze them jointly as an index. We block randomized at the racial-ideological group level, ensuring that respondents identifying as different races and ideologies were assigned with equal probability to the treatment (historical legacy questions first) or control condition (outcome questions first). We reproduced this experiment in our second and final round of data collection.

After our first round of data collection in March 2022, we utilized the open-ended responses to the historical legacy questions in Table 2 to understand recurring themes in re-

sponses along racial and ideological lines. Using Python's TensorFlow library (Abadi et al., 2015), we built a model to predict and create a representative textual response for each question and demographic group (White Conservative, White Liberal, Black Conservative, and Black Non-Conservative). To do so, we used recurrent neural networks (RNN) and long short-term memory (LTSM) models trained on actual responses from each group. We then provided seed text that rephrased the open-ended questions in Table 2 in the form of incomplete statements (e.g. 'the legacy of slavery and discrimination still affects people because', 'the legacy of slavery and discrimination has little or no effect on people today because'), and our model returned predictive text for each prompt that we combined into a paragraph.

Because the raw output was disjointed, we refined the initial narrative with two approaches. First, we inputted the fragmened text into ChatGPT and asked ChatGPT to make the text into a coherent paragraph. Our second, alternative approach involved convening four focus groups comprised of members who self-identified as belonging to each racial-ideological group. We recruited focus group members on Facebook and held the conversations virtually over Zoom. Focus groups lasted 30 minutes and respondents were compensated with an Amazon gift card. During the focus group, we began by leading the participants in a discussion centered around the historical legacy questions. We then asked participants to read the disjointed text outputted by our model and produce a coherent narrative, inviting them to edit the text as they saw fit to best align with their own views and those expressed by others in their group. At the end of the focus group, we held a vote to determine which narrative participants felt best represented their views.

Our second round of data collection had two purposes. First, we reproduced Experiment 1. Second, at the end of the survey, we presented participants with the ChatGPT- and focus-group-generated narratives and asked them to pick which best aligned with their views. In all cases, except for white conservatives, respondents selected the ChatGPT-generated narrative. Importantly, less than 10% of each group disagreed with the historical views summarized in the selected narrative, suggesting that the narratives effectively represented each group's historical beliefs.

These selected narratives, depicted in full in Table A.3, became our treatment conditions for Experiment 2, conducted during our third round of data collection. In Experiment 2, re-

spondents were randomly assigned to one of the four racial-ideological group narratives, a pure control, or a placebo condition, where respondents answered the close-ended questions in Table 2 and one open-ended follow-up. Subsequently, they responded to our key outcome questions. In addition, we used supplemental questions to parse out potential mechanisms. Specifically, we asked individuals whether they were feeling any of the following emotions: reassured, disillusioned, angry, happy, sad, scared, energized, or indifferent. We use this question to consider whether respondents express higher levels of negative affectivity (expressing they felt angry, disillusioned, sad, or scared) and disillusionment in particular. We also utilized a behavioral question to map the institutional satisfaction outcome to more costly changes in participant decisions. We told respondents that we were going to donate $100, and that the $100 would be allocated between three different organizations according to the preferences of a randomly selected survey respondent. We then asked respondents to indicate—should they be chosen—how they would like the donation to be allocated. We prompted respondents to divvy up $100 between the following organizations:

- Donation to the **Free Enterprise Project**, a communication and research foundation that **promotes the principles of a free market, individual liberty and personal responsibility** as they "provide the greatest hope for meeting the challenges facing America in the 21st century"
- Donation to the **Step Up, a non-partisan organization that delivers "support to people experiencing serious mental health conditions and chronic homelessness**, to help them recover, stabilize, and integrate into the community."
- Donation to the **Race Forward**, a progressive organization working to address "**structural racism by building collective community power and transforming institutions**...to create sustainable change for racial equity in federal government structure, policy and practice."

The three organizations were selected to measure behavioral preferences aligned with conservative viewpoints (Free Enterprise Project), progressive ideologies (Race Forward), or nonpartisan ideals (Step Up). We assess whether the treatment (answering the historical legacy questions first) influences respondents' propensity to allocate money to the nonpartisan cause (Step Up).

In our fourth and final round of data collection, we reproduced Experiment 1 on a sample of only white respondents. We also included the additional mechanism and behavioral questions

described above. We restricted our sample to white respondents because we were using the Prolific platform, as we had used in round 2. During round 2, we struggled to recruit a sufficient number of Black respondents due to the platform's limited number of Black respondents and Black conservative respondents in particular. However, the white-only sample allowed us to gain additional understanding of the mechanism driving the high-level results we uncovered in Rounds 1-3, where white respondents displayed heightened polarization after treatment.

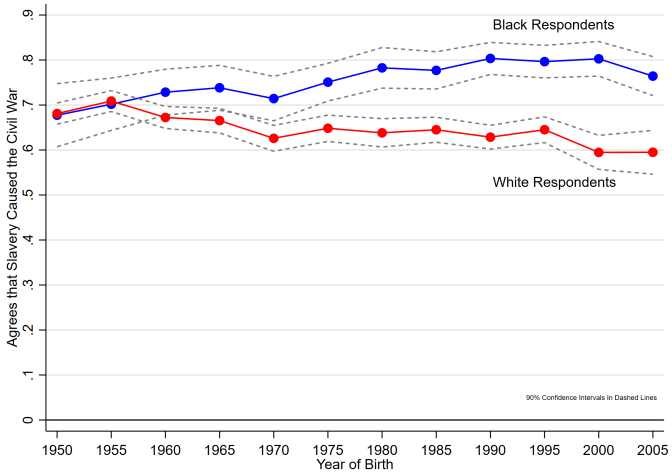
3. Variations in Historical Accounts

Recent research has delved into the causes and consequences of the Civil War (Logan, 2020, 2023; Masera and Rosenberg, 2023), the Civil Rights Movement (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Ang, 2019), and slavery's persistent effects (Acharya, Blackwell and Sen, 2016). We focus instead on how people *think* about these historical issues today, and how these views are structured and transmitted as narratives about the past. Crucially, our goal is to map the coexistence of different views and narratives about the history of race in the United States.

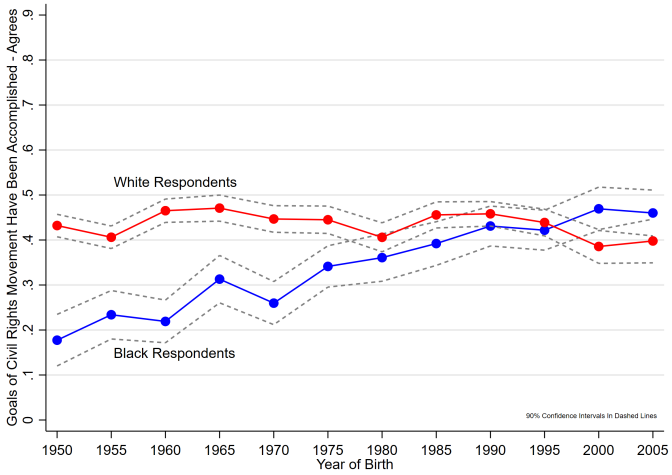
We begin by documenting differences across race and cohorts in views that relate to the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, and slavery's ongoing legacy. There is a consensus among historians of secession that slavery was the main cause of the Civil War (McCurry, 2012; Sinha, 2016). Panel A in Figure 1 plots the extent to which this view is pervasive among white and Black respondents from different cohorts. Notably, a majority of respondents of all ages and races agree that slavery caused the Civil War. As shown in Appendix Figure A.2, these trends are consistent across gender lines and regions of origin.[4] Despite this overall consensus, the graph also indicates a generational shift that varies by race. The percentage of older respondents who agree that slavery caused the war is virtually the same for white and Black respondents, but views on this issue have diverged across racial lines in younger cohorts: Relative to older respondents, younger white participants are less likely to believe that slavery caused the Civil War, whereas younger African Americans are more likely to hold this view.

[4]As with patterns pertaining to views on the Civil War, Appendix Figures A.2 and A.3 show that these trends and those relating to slavery's ongoing legacy are not driven by a specific gender or region.

(a) Slavery Caused the Civil War



(b) The Civil Rights Movement Was Successful



(c) There's a Legacy From Slavery

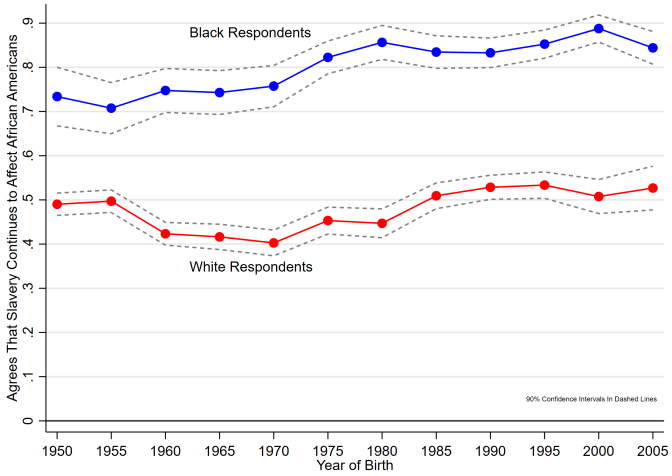


Figure 1: Race and cohort trends in views toward different historical episodes.

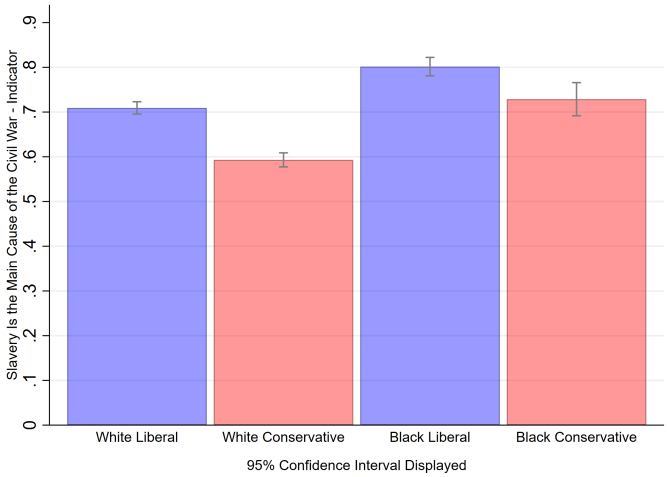
Notes: The graphs depict race and cohort trends in views about different historical episodes. In each panel-graph, a point represents the unconditional average of the variable on the y-axis for respondents born in the same five-year period with the same racial affiliation, and the dashed lines surrounding the points show the corresponding 90-percent confidence interval. Data comes from four rounds of online surveys conducted in the US between 2022 and 2023 (N=12,285, of which 9,227 are white and 3,737 are Black respondents).

Are these patterns predictive of variations across race and cohort in perspectives toward other historical episodes? Panel B in Figure 1 shows that views toward the Civil Rights Movement follow completely different trends. A minority of respondents from both races consider that the movement was ultimately successful, and this general disagreement holds across all cohorts. Remarkably, the figure shows that the percentage of agreement in younger cohorts has converged across racial lines. Views toward the Civil Rights Movement have been somewhat comparable across different cohorts of white respondents, while there's a stark generational difference among African Americans: Younger Black respondents are nearly 30 percentage points more likely to agree that the Civil Rights Movement was successful compared to older Black respondents.

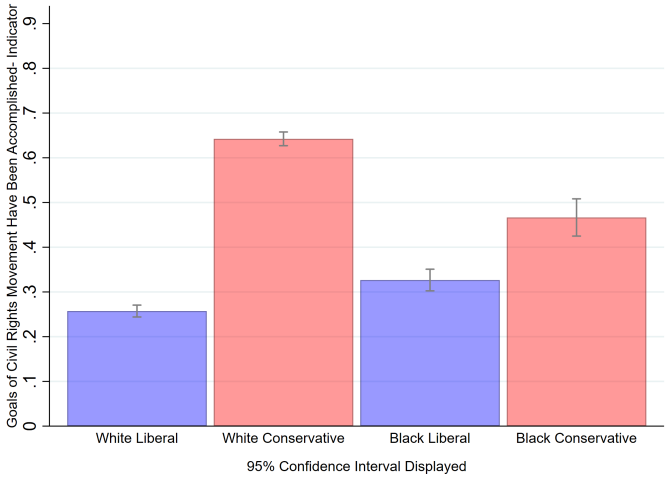
Perceptions of slavery's ongoing legacy differ from the views expressed about the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. In particular, Panel C in Figure 1 shows that, across all cohorts, there are noticeable gaps across racial lines in the extent to which respondents believe that slavery continues to affect socioeconomic outcomes. Crucially, the differences across racial lines have increased in younger cohorts: The racial gap on views about this issue has increased from nearly 20 percentage points in older cohorts to more than 30 percentage points in younger ones. All in all, Figure 1 shows that race and age do not consistently predict views toward different historical episodes; racial differences appear to persist only in perceptions regarding the legacy of slavery, while views on the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement vary across different cohorts.

To what extent does ideology explain variations in historical views? Figure 2 shows the percentage of agreement with each of the historical claims for respondents with the same ideology and racial affiliation. Several patterns emerge from these figures. First, there is a conservative-liberal gap in views on all historical episodes, observed among both white and Black respondents. Ideological differences thus significantly predict variations in views pertaining to any historical episode.

(a) Slavery Caused the Civil War



(b) The Civil Rights Movement Was Successful



(c) There's a Legacy From Slavery

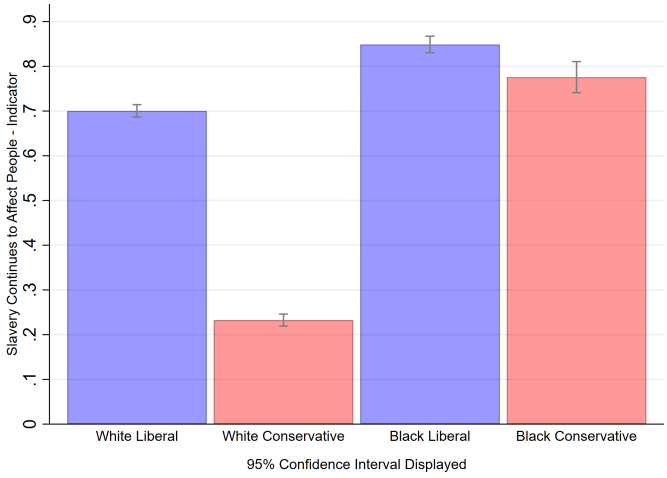


Figure 2: Differences in views toward historical episodes across race and ideology.

Notes: The figures show differences in historical views across race and ideology. Each panel-graph shows the unconditional averages of the variable on the y-axis for participants with the same racial affiliation and ideological inclination, and the corresponding 95-percent confidence interval. Data comes from four rounds of online surveys conducted in the US between 2022 and 2023 (N=12,285, of which 9,227 are white and 3,737 are Black respondents).

Second, the ideological gap among white respondents widens when the historical episode under scrutiny is closer to the present, whereas the gap among Black respondents remains relatively stable, regardless of the episode under consideration. This suggests that dissent among white respondents increases when questions about history are more explicitly linked to the present. Third, perspectives of white conservatives diverge from other demographic groups, preventing what would otherwise be a consensus on the (lack of success) of the Civil Rights Movement (Panel B) and slavery's ongoing social relevance (Panel C). Notably, Appendix Figures A.4 and A.5 show that these ideological patterns are true across gender and education, respectively.

The narratives shared by respondents shed light on other interesting differences in historical views across demographics. Appendix Figure A.6 shows that white conservatives are significantly more likely to mention states' rights compared to other racial-ideological groups when asked about the causes of the Civil War, whereas reference to that issue is negligible among other groups. Moreover, Appendix Figure A.7 shows that liberals (both white and African American) are substantially more likely to mention racism and exclusionary preferences when discussing the factors that have impeded the success of the Civil Rights Movement. Finally, Appendix Figure A.8 shows that African American narratives about the persistent effects of slavery are substantially more likely to mention the role of institutions in perpetuating slavery's ongoing legacy. Similarly, liberal narratives (both among white and Black respondents) are also more likely to highlight the role of institutions compared to their conservative counterparts.

3.1 Structure and Correlates of Narratives

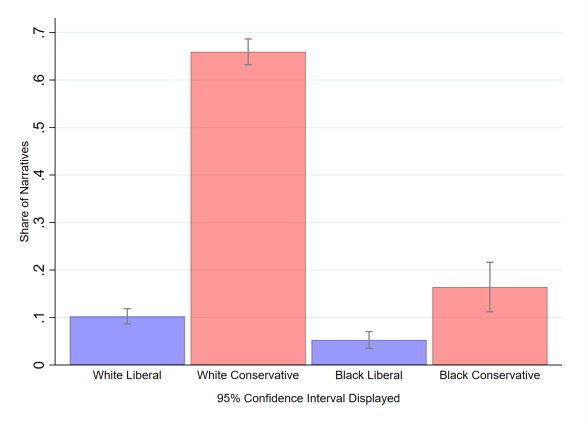
The open-ended questions also allow us to assess the structure and tone of the various historical narratives shared by participants. Appendix Figure A.8 examines the length and complexity of participants' responses across the three open-ended questions. It shows no discernible differences in the extent to which participants of different racial-ideological groups provided elaborate historical views. In addition to providing reassuring evidence on the qual-

ity of responses, the fact that length and complexity of these narratives is stable across demographics suggests that there are no meaningful differences in the extent to which these groups care about and are concerned with the topic.

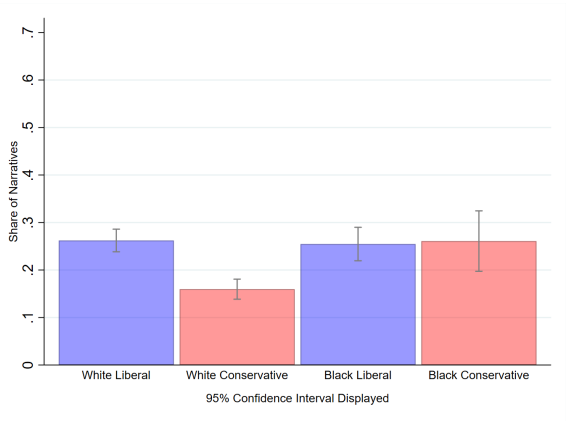
To assess the structure of the narratives shared by participants, we draw on concepts from economics and other social sciences. We begin by examining the prevalence of different types of narratives, following the typification proposed by Bénabou, Falk and Tirole (2018). Specifically, we create indicator variables for answers that reflect *exculpatory* and *responsibilizing* narratives, two prevalent types in discourse.[5] Exculpatory narratives provide excuses to justify self-centered behaviors, while responsibilizing narratives create moral pressure on the audience to promote morally desirable actions. Interestingly, Figure 3 reveals that white conservatives predominantly rely on exculpatory narratives, often rationalizing past errors and distancing themselves from historical wrongdoings. They are also less likely to discuss the past in ways that emphasize moral responsibility. By contrast, other demographic groups rely more on responsibilizing narratives, although Black conservatives are slightly more inclined toward exculpatory narratives than liberals.

Participants' open-ended responses also provide a window into deep-rooted perceptions about the nature of social phenomena. In particular, these answers can reveal a tendency to consider social phenomena to be the result of actions and interactions between individuals endowed with preferences and agency (Menger, 1871; Arrow & Debreu, 1954), or as outcomes of slow-moving macro-structures that determine individual choice (Durkheim, 1895; Braudel, 1949). Figure 3 shows that liberals tend to emphasize the role of structures in explaining historical processes, while conservatives highlight the influence of individuals and their choices as drivers of historical and social change.

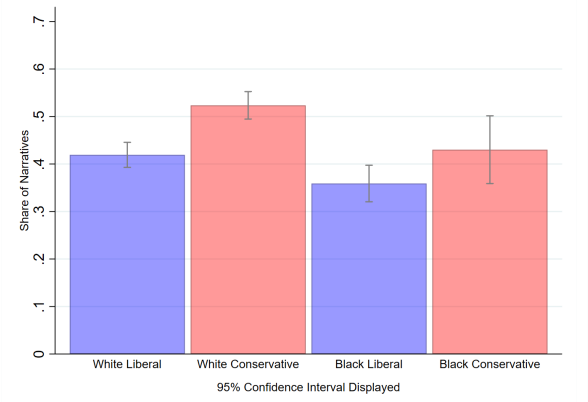
[5]We rely on the coding work of a team of 4 RAs who independently coded each of the open-ended responses, generating dummy variables that equal one for answers that make use of exculpatory or responsibilizing narratives following Bénabou, Falk and Tirole (2018). These RAs also coded these responses to determine which participants demostrated an understanding of social issues from the standpoint of methodolocial individualism and/or from structuralism (Menger, 1871; Arrow and Debreu, 1954; Durkheim, 1895; Braudel, 1949. The indicators are not mutually-exclusive (all, none, or some of these indicators could equal one) to account for the fact that organic historical discourse need not be fully coherent and cohesive.



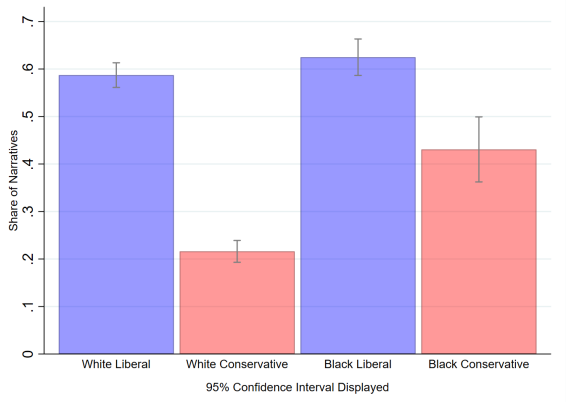
(a) Exculpating Narratives



(b) Responsibilizing Narratives



(c) Denotes Methodological Individualism



(d) Denotes Structuralism

Figure 3: Differences in How History is Discussed

Notes: The figures show differences in how the history of race is discussed across race and ideology. Specifically, it shows the prevalence of different types of narratives (*exculpating* or *responsibilizing*), as well as the underlying views of how historical processes come to exist (*methodological individualism* or *structuralism*). Each panel-graph shows the unconditional averages of the variable on the y-axis for participants with the same racial affiliation and ideological inclination, and the corresponding 95-percent confidence interval. Data comes from four rounds of online surveys conducted in the US between 2022 and 2023 (N=12,285, of which 9,227 are white and 3,737 are Black respondents).

What sentiments and emotions characterize the narratives about race in historical perspective? Appendix Figure A.9 graphs cohort and ideological trends in the mean sentiment of participants' open-ended responses. The narratives shared by participants from all cohorts and both races were characterized by negative sentiment scores, suggesting that pessimism and negativity are pervasive in discussions of race in historical perspective. Similarly, the emotional content of participants' responses suggests that discussions of history are intertwined with negative affectivity. Appendix Figure A.10 reveals that negative emotions (sadness, anger, fear, and disgust) are more prevalent than positive ones (trust, anticipation, joy, surprise) in narratives from participants from both races and all cohorts. Interestingly, analyzing views of different historical episodes separately reveals varying degrees of negative affectivity: Negative emotions are more pervasive in narratives about the causes of the Civil War (Panel A in Figure A.11), they are predominant but less so in narratives about slavery's legacy (Panel C), and they are not predominant in narratives about the Civil Rights Movement (Panel B).

Despite the pervasiveness of negative affectivity, there are strong ideological differences in the proclivity to express pessimism and negative emotions when discussing race in historical perspective. Indeed, the mean sentiment score of liberals' narratives is significantly lower than that of conservatives. (Panel A of Appendix Figure A.12). Similarly, negative emotions are significantly more likely to predominate in the narratives of liberals compared to conservatives (Panel B of Appendix Figure A.12). Notably, the ideological patterns in negative affectivity are observable among white and Black respondents, but racial gaps in negative sentiment are generally insignificant. Overall, discussions about race in historical perspective are thus more likely to evoke pessimism among liberals.

What factors shape these historical narratives and contribute to differences across demographic groups? We asked participants about the sources that informed their historical views. Figure A.13 shows the share of respondents from different demographic groups who report relying on distinct types of sources. Panel A examines the relevance of vertical sources (parents and grandparents), showing a clear pattern along racial lines but not along ideological ones. A majority of African Americans (both conservative and liberal) report drawing from direct ancestors when forming their historical views, whereas less than a fourth of white respondents mention these sources. The descendants of those who have overcome a history of exclusion are

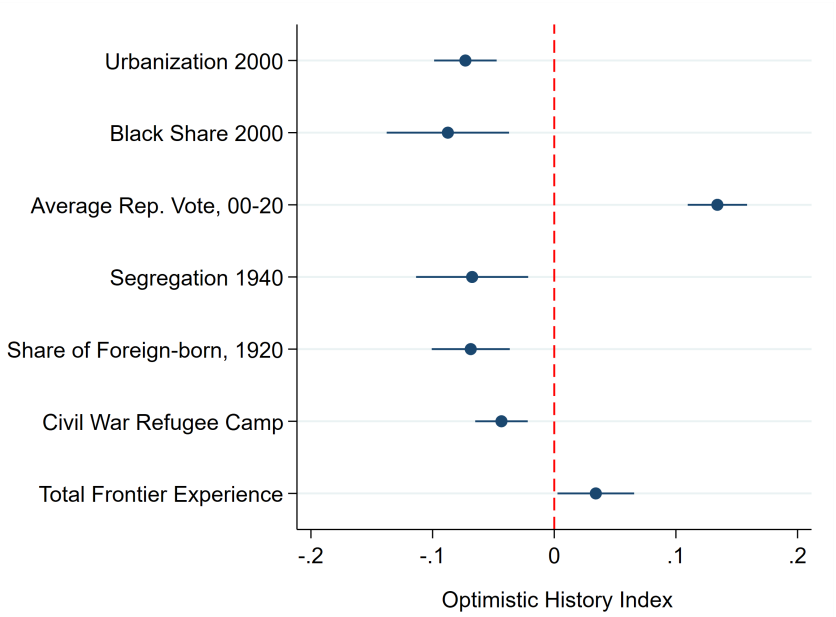
thus more inclined to rely on their direct ancestors, consistent with findings from other contexts indicating the primary importance of vertical sources among groups that have endured historical trauma (Ramos-Toro, 2023).

Despite no overall differences between liberals and conservatives in the extent to which respondents rely on vertical sources, Panels B and C in Figure A.13 show clear ideological patterns in the relevance of other sources. In particular, liberals are more likely than conservatives to rely on institutional sources (schools and museums) and on the media (traditional media and social media). These differences across ideology underscore the potential for social media and school curriculum to both shape and amplify pre-existing differences in beliefs between liberals and conservatives, particularly those pertaining to the history of race in the US.

Given the pervasive differences between liberal and conservative beliefs and narratives about various historical episodes, are deep-rooted determinants of ideology relevant correlates of historical views? To examine this issue, we focus on the participants' likelihood of holding an optimistic outlook on historical racial tensions. In other words, we assess the participants' tendencies to believe that slavery did not cause the Civil War, to agree that the Civil Rights Movement was successful, and to express that slavery has no enduring legacy. Specifically, following Anderson (2008), we construct a summary index that captures this underlying predisposition based on indicator variables for holding each of these views.

Based on respondents' counties, we can consider whether determinants of political ideology at the county level predict a higher or lower likelihood of having an optimistic view of race in historical perspective. Panel A in Figure 4 shows the correlation between the summary index and various county-level historical and contemporaneous determinants of ideology in the US, conditional on state fixed effects. Respondents in urban counties or those in counties with a high share of African Americans are significantly less likely to have an optimistic view of racial historical tensions. Conversely, respondents in regions where the Republican Party performs strongly are significantly more prone to hold this view.

(a) County-level Correlates of Having an *Optimistic History*



(b) Individual-level Correlates of Having an *Optimistic History*

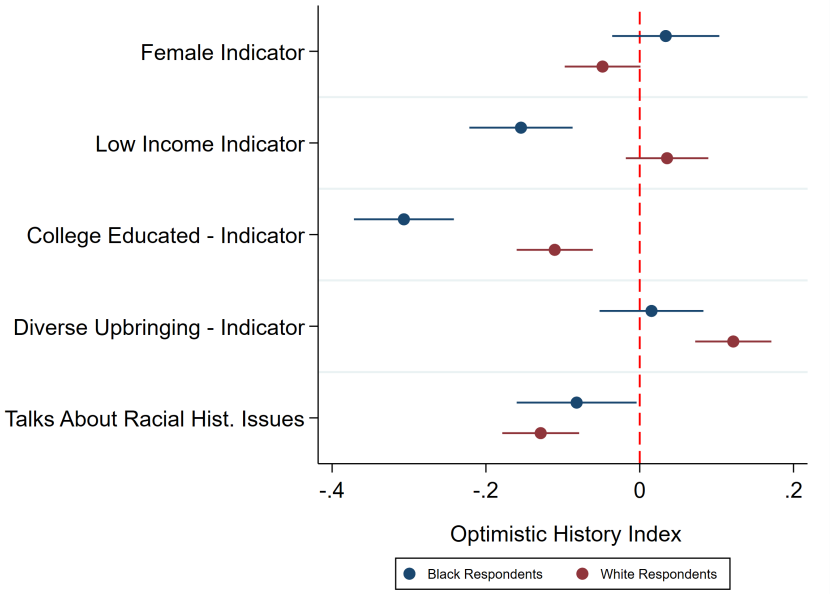


Figure 4: Predictors of optimistic view of race in historical perspective.

Notes: The figures show the association between holding an optimistic view of race in historical perspective and different geographic and individual determinants of political ideology. Each panel-graph shows the coefficients and the corresponding 95 percent confidence intervals of regressions of the Optimistic History Index on the variables on the y-axis, one at a time. Optimistic History Index refers to an index from the inverse covariance matrix (Anderson, 2008) constructed with indicators for believing that slavery did not cause the Civil War, that the Civil Rights Movement was successful, and that slavery has no ongoing legacy. Panel A shows the results of regressions of the index on county-level determinants of ideology (based on participants' counties of residence), accounting for state fixed effects. Panel B shows the results of regressions of the index on individual-level characteristics.

In line with previous studies that document deep-rooted determinants of ideology, an optimistic view of race in historical perspective is less prevalent among respondents in historically segregated counties, those in regions with historically high shares of foreign populations, or those where African Americans self-emancipated (Giuliano and Tabellini, 2020; Ramos-Toro, 2022). Conversely, those in counties with longer frontier experience are more likely to hold an optimistic view, possibly shaped by a cultural legacy of rugged individualism that aligns with conservative ideology (Bazzi, Gebresilasse and Fiszbane, 2020). Appendix Figure A.14 shows that these correlations are consistent for each of the historical views. Interestingly, however, the magnitudes of the correlations are higher for views about slavery's persistence and closer to zero for views about the Civil War, which is consistent with historical views becoming more divisive across partisan lines as history is more explicitly linked to the present.

What is the role of individual characteristics and experiences in predicting the aforementioned historical views? Panel B in Figure 4 shows, for white and Black respondents separately, the unconditional correlation between various individual-level characteristics and the index of optimistic history. Notably, not all correlations are consistent across racial lines. White women are less likely to hold optimistic views of race in historical perspective than white men, whereas gender differences are insignificant among African Americans (if anything, the point estimate shows the opposite trend). Conversely, low-income African Americans are substantially less likely to have optimistic historical views than high-income African American respondents, whereas income differences are insignificant among white participants. Notwithstanding these differences, some characteristics tend to consistently correlate with historical views across racial lines: Having a college degree predicts lower inclination toward holding an optimistic view of race in historical perspective (though the pattern is stronger for white respondents). Moreover, the likelihood of having these views is higher for those who reported growing up in a diverse environment, whereas the likelihood is lower for those who reported occasionally talking about racial historical issues with their relatives.[6]

[6]The correlation between these individual characteristics and views on each historical episode, shown in Appendix Figure A.15, are consistent with these patterns. However, there are some notable exceptions, such as the fact that having a college degree is uncorrelated with views on the causes of the Civil War for men, or the fact that women, irrespective of race, are significantly less likely to believe that the Civil Rights Movement was successful.

4. The Polarizing Effects of Historical Accounts

This section examines the degree to which historical accounts about race influence political behavior. Our empirical exploration leverages evidence from two protocols that examine whether being confronted with historical accounts about race in the US exacerbates pre-existing dissent between different demographic groups. In line with the relevance of race and ideology documented in Section 3, our main focus in both protocols is examining the prevalence of polarizing effects resulting engaging with history across ideology, both for white and Black respondents. Moreover, our main outcome of interest is the extent to which individuals support and feel satisfied with the current institutional setup in the US. This focus stems from the expectation that beliefsabouton the resolution of historical racial tensions (or lack thereof) may inform an individual's perceptions regarding the capacity and potential of the current institutional setup to address societal challenges and tensions. Hence, in both protocols we examine institution satisfaction as an outcome, operationalized as a summary index with indicator variables that equal one if the respondent reports supporting democracy, capitalism, and maintaining the current institutional framework in the US.

4.1 Thinking about History

We begin with an analysis of the polarizing effects of historical reasoning. As mentioned in Section 2, our first experiment relies on the order in which participants answered the historical legacy questions. Specifically, in the first, second, and fourth rounds we randomly assigned half of our participants to share their views on American institutions *before* answering the historical legacy questions, while the other half provided their degree of institutional satisfaction *after* answering the historical legacy questions. Because the legacy questions asked participants to share their own views and narratives, this protocol allows an examination of the effects of reasoning through one's own views about the history of race in the US. Moreover, it allows us to consider whether these effects vary by ideology, contributing to a widening of pre-existing gaps between conservatives and liberals when it comes to levels of institutional satisfaction.

Table 3 shows the results of our first experiment. Odd columns present the results from OLS regressions of the institutional satisfaction index on our treatment variable (*Historical*

Reasoning) without controls. Even columns control for survey-round fixed effects, gender, and fixed effects for respondents' region of birth. The results indicate that historical reasoning amplifies pre-existing differences in institutional satisfaction between liberals and conservatives. Columns 1 and 2 in Panel A show that liberals who are prompted to think about the history of race in the US report a significantly lower institutional satisfaction score compared to those who are not. Moreover, these effects are evident when we restrict the sample to white liberals (Panel B) and to Black liberals (Panel C), though results are not precisely estimated for the latter. On the other hand, thinking about the history of race appears to have no discernible effect on the institutional satisfaction of conservatives (white or Black). In fact, if anything, the institutional satisfaction of conservatives who are prompted to contemplate the history of race in the US is higher on average among conservatives compared to the satisfaction of those who are not prompted to do so (though the difference is insignificant).

The pooled analyses, presented in Columns 5 and 6, indicate that being prompted to consider the history of race in the US significantly widens the gap in institutional satisfaction between conservatives and liberals. Panel A shows that the increase in the liberal-conservative gap is 0.086 standard deviations (p=0.021), which corresponds to an increase of 18.9% with respect to the pre-existing ideological gap. Columns 5 and 6 in Panel B show that the significance and magnitude of the effect is virtually the same when restricting the sample to white respondents, whereas the magnitude of the effects is substantially higher though less precise when restricting the sample to Black respondents (Column 6 shows that the ideological gap increases by 0.182 standard deviations compared to a pre-existing ideological gap of only 0.014 standard deviations between Black conservatives and Black liberals). Crucially, the polarizing effects resulting from thinking about history appear to be driven, in all cases, by the significant decrease in institutional satisfaction among liberals.[7]

Do these results extend to incentivized outcomes? Appendix Table A.4 shows how contemplating history affects the share that participants in the fourth round allocated to a nonpartisan organization (as opposed to organizations aligned with conservative or progressive viewpoints). Consistent with the results shown in Table 3, being prompted to think about

[7]Appendix Figure A.16 shows that the effects of the intervention are largely consistent when examining each of the components used in constructing the index of institutional support.

Table 3: Effects of historical reasoning on reported institutional satisfaction

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dependent Var: Index of Institutional Satisfaction					
	Liberals		Conservatives		Both Ideologies	
			Panel A - Both Races			
Historical Reasoning	−0.070***	−0.062**	0.016	0.015	0.016	0.019
	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Historical Reasoning × Liberal					−0.087**	−0.086**
					(0.038)	(0.037)
Liberal					−0.453***	−0.438***
					(0.026)	(0.026)
Observations	3,109	3,109	2,099	2,099	5,208	5,208
Mean Dependent Variable	-0.172	-0.172	0.323	0.323	0.027	0.027
			Panel B - White Respondents			
Historical Reasoning	−0.071**	−0.054*	0.012	0.018	0.012	0.023
	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Historical Reasoning × Liberal					−0.083**	−0.083**
					(0.041)	(0.040)
Liberal					−0.484***	−0.466***
					(0.028)	(0.028)
Observations	2,220	2,220	1,801	1,801	4,021	4,021
Mean Dependent Variable	-0.118	-0.118	0.407	0.407	0.117	0.117
			Panel C - Black Respondents			
Historical Reasoning	-0.067	-0.062	0.105	0.121	0.105	0.132
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.087)	(0.086)
Historical Reasoning × Liberal					−0.172*	−0.182*
					(0.098)	(0.096)
Liberal					-0.037	-0.014
					(0.069)	(0.069)
Observations	889	889	298	298	1,187	1,187
Mean Dependent Variable	-0.308	-0.308	-0.185	-0.185	-0.277	-0.277
Survey-round FE		✓		✓		✓
Region FE		✓		✓		✓
Gender		✓		✓		✓

Notes: The table shows the effects of historical reasoning in Experiment 1 on reported institutional satisfaction. The unit of observation is an individual, and data comes from the first, second and fourth rounds of surveys conducted between 2022 and 2023. Each panel-column reports results from a single OLS regression of the dependent variable in the column heading on the variable(s) in the row heading(s). Historical Reasoning is an indicator that equals one for participants who were randomly chosen to answer the historical legacy questions before answering other survey questions, 0 otherwise. Liberal is an indicator that equals one if the participant reports being liberal.

US history in relation to race widens the divide between conservatives and liberals in their tendency to support nonpartisan causes. Historical reasoning significantly diminishes the inclination of liberals (but not conservatives) to support nonpartisan causes, which, in principle, unite conservatives and liberals.

4.2 Effects of Historical Narratives

We now turn to an analysis of the effects of exposing participants to different narratives about the history of race in the US. As described in Section 2, we created a narrative representative of the views held by individuals sharing the same ideology and racial affiliation, resulting in a total of four narratives (Black Liberal, Black Conservative, White Liberal, and White Conservative, see Table A.3 for full text of narratives). Experiment 2 thus consisted of exposing participants to one of these randomly-selected narratives before collecting other outcomes.[8]

Due to the difficulty in recruiting a sufficiently large sample of African Americans, we could only implement the four treatment conditions (i.e., the four historical narratives) plus the control condition for white participants. Black respondents were randomly exposed to the white conservative historical narrative, the white liberal narrative, or to no narrative. Notably, however, Appendix Figure A.17 show that white respondents (both liberals and conservatives) react the similarly when exposed to either the Black liberal or white liberal narrative (Panel A). Similarly, these respondents display similar reactions when exposed to either the Black conservative or white conservative narratives (Panel B). Therefore, in what follows we consider the white liberal and the Black liberal treatment conditions as a single category (which we refer to as the liberal historical narrative treatment condition). Similarly, we treat the white conservative and Black conservative narratives as a single treatment condition (which we call the conservative historical narrative treatment condition).

Table 4 shows the results of our second experiment when pooling participants from both races.[9] Odd columns present the results from OLS regressions of the institutional satisfaction

[8]Table 2 contains the specific narratives that served as the treatments in the second experiment. See Section 2 for more details on the process that we followed to construct these narratives.

[9]We pre-registered the intention to evaluate each narrative for white and Black respondents separately. We deviate from this intention 1) given the lack of differences across narratives from the same ideological group but different races as shown in Appendix Figure A.17 and 2) because we are underpowered in some of our pre-

Table 4: Effects of historical narrative exposure on reported institutional satisfaction

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dependent Var: Index of Institutional Satisfaction					
	Liberals		Conservatives		Both Ideologies	
Liberal Narrative	−0.071**	−0.062**	-0.023	-0.025	-0.023	-0.026
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Conservative Narrative	-0.025	-0.016	0.031	0.029	0.031	0.029
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Liberal Narrative × Liberal					-0.048	-0.037
					(0.043)	(0.042)
Conservative Narrative × Liberal					-0.056	-0.046
					(0.043)	(0.042)
Liberal					−0.255***	−0.249***
					(0.030)	(0.029)
Observations	3,194	3,194	2,780	2,780	5,974	5,974
Mean Dependent Variable	-0.072	-0.072	0.217	0.217	0.063	0.063
{(Liberal Narrative)+(Liberal Narrative × Liberal)} - {Conservative Narrative}					0.102**	0.092**
					(0.043)	(0.042)

Notes: The table shows the effects of exposing participants to different historical narratives on reported institutional satisfaction. The unit of observation is an individual, and data comes from the third round of surveys that we conducted in 2023. Each column reports results from a single OLS regression of the dependent variable in the column heading on the variables in the row headings. Liberal Narrative is an indicator that equals one for participants who were shown either liberal historical narrative. Conservative Narrative is an indicator that equals one for participants who were shown either conservative historical narrative. See Table A.3 for additional details on these narratives. The last two rows in Columns 5 and 6 show the estimated effect of the increase in the difference between liberals and conservatives when members of each ideological group are shown a historical narrative that aligns with their views. Liberal is an indicator that equals one if the participant reports being a liberal.

index on our treatment variables (*Liberal Historical Narrative* and *Conservative Historical Narrative*) without controls, and even columns control for gender and indicators for region of birth. The table indicates that being exposed to a liberal historical narrative decreases participants' reported institutional satisfaction. This is true among liberals (Columns 1 and 2) and conservatives (Columns 3 and 4), though the magnitude and significance of the effects are higher among liberals than conservatives. Interestingly, exposure to a conservative narrative slightly decreases the reported satisfaction of liberals but slightly increases conservatives' satisfaction, though we are under-powered to detect these effects with precision.

The coexistence of different historical narratives has the potential to heighten polarization. The last two rows in Column 6 show that the difference in institutional satisfaction between conservatives who are exposed to a conservative historical narrative and liberals who are ex-

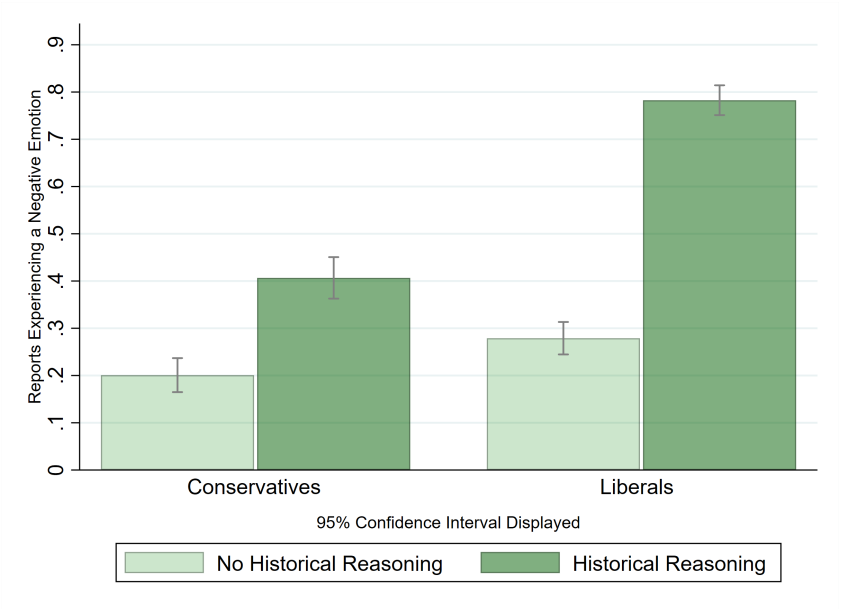
registered analyses. The pre-registered analyses can be found in the Appendix. Appendix Table A.5 contains the results of the analyses for white and Black respondents separately, showing a consistent pattern across races, though again, we are under-powered to precisely estimate some of these effects. Moreover, Appendix Figure A.18 depicts the results when examining each of the treatment conditions separately for white and Black respondents.

posed to a liberal historical narrative is 0.092 standard deviations higher than the pre-existing difference between liberals and conservatives (p-value=0.027), which corresponds to an increase of 37% of the initial liberal/conservative gap in institutional satisfaction. Appendix Table A.6 shows that the effects of these historical narratives on donations to a nonpartisan organization are in line with those shown in Table 5, though the effects are less precise than in Experiment 1. Overall, these exploratory results underscore the potential for historical narratives to contribute to polarization in institutional satisfaction, particularly in contexts where individuals are repeatedly exposed to historical narratives that align with their ideological inclination (such as in media echo-chambers). Moreover, the fact that effects of liberal historical narratives are economically and statistically significant among liberals (while conservative narratives are not) suggests that part of the effects documented in Experiment 1 may be explained by liberals reasoning through and confronting their own ideas and narratives about the history of race in the US (as opposed to the historical ideas of outgroups).

4.3 Mechanisms

This subsection shows evidence that negative affectivity is a possible mechanism behind the results discussed in the previous subsection. Negative affectivity is the predisposition to feel negative emotions (fear, sadness, anger, and disillusionment, among other). These emotions have been shown to activate neural processes distinct from those triggered by positive emotions (Lane et al., 1997), predisposing individuals to experience pessimism. Despite important differences between the negative emotions that collectively define negative affectivity, a common feature is thus that they make individuals susceptible to feel dissatisfied with the status quo.

(a) Negative Affectivity in Experiment 1



(b) Negative Affectivity in Experiment 2

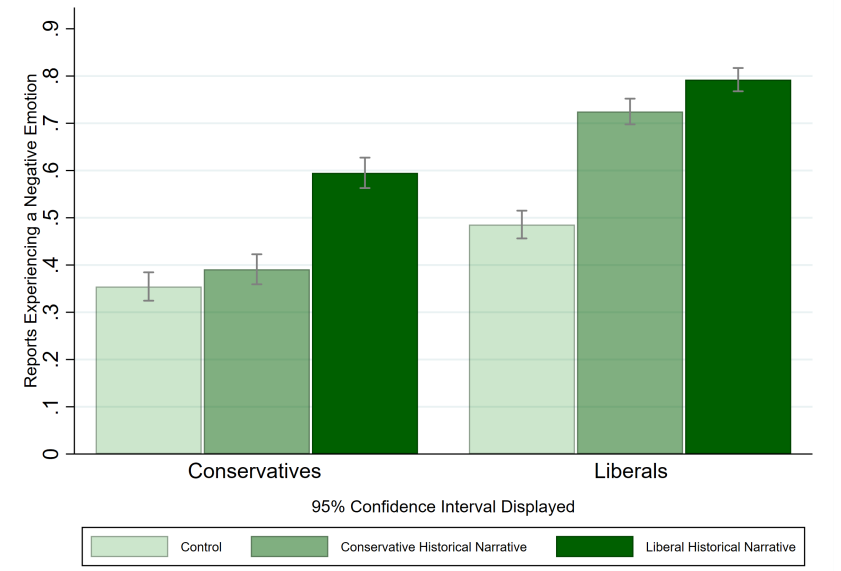


Figure 5: Effects of historical reasoning and historical narrative exposure on the likelihood of experiencing negative emotions

Notes: The figures depict the effects of prompting participants to contemplate their own views toward historical racial episodes (panel A) and being exposed to different types of historical narratives (panel B) on the likelihood of experiencing a negative emotion. Each panel-graph shows the unconditional averages of the variable on the y-axis for participants with the same ideological identity who were assigned to the same treatment condition, and the corresponding 95-percent confidence interval. Panel A depicts the results of Experiment 1, in which the treatment condition (Historical Reasoning) was prompting participants to share their historical views before (as opposed to after) answering outcome questions. Panel B depicts the results of Experiment 2, in which participants were randomly exposed to no historical narrative, to a liberal historical narrative, or to a conservative one. Data comes from the third and fourth rounds of online surveys conducted in the US in 2023 (see Section 2 for more details on each protocol).

Some of the evidence discussed in Sections 3 and 4 suggests reasons to believe that negative affectivity partially explains the experimental results. First, as shown in Appendix Figures A.9 and A.10, liberals are significantly more likely to convey negative sentiment and emotion than conservatives when sharing their views on race in historical perspective. Second, the consistency of liberals' response to the liberal narrative in Experiment 2 with the effects observed in Experiment 1 (where subjects were prompted to contemplate their own ideas) suggests that polarization is driven by liberals confronting their own views (but not others'), which, as indicated by Appendix Figures A.9 and A.10, triggers negative emotions.

As discussed in Section 2, we collected participants' reported emotions in rounds 3 and 4 as an outcome, which allows a formal examination of whether our interventions increase the likelihood of experiencing negative affectivity, particularly among liberals. Figure 5 shows how Experiments 1 and 2 influence the dependent variable of reporting a negative emotion. Panel A shows that historical reasoning increases the tendency of experiencing negative emotions, but it does so significantly more so for liberals than for conservatives. Indeed, the likelihood of experiencing a negative emotion increases by more than 50 percentage points for liberals (compared to an increase of 20 percentage points for conservatives), resulting in liberals being nearly 40 percentage points more likely to experience a negative emotion.

Panel B in Figure 5 shows that the results of Experiment 2 are in line with those of Experiment 1. Both the conservative and liberal historical narratives increase the likelihood of experiencing a negative emotion. However, the liberal historical narrative generates a significantly higher increase compared to the conservative narrative. Indeed, exposure to a liberal historical narrative increases negative affectivity among conservatives by nearly 35 percentage points and among liberals by more than 30 percentage points. In the end, the results from Experiment 2 indicate that a liberal exposed to a liberal historical narrative is nearly 40 percentage points more likely to experience negative affectivity than a conservative exposed to a conservative historical narrative. Notably, this difference is almost identical to the difference in the likelihood of feeling a negative emotion found in Experiment 1, which gives further credence to the claim that the treatment effects in the first protocol stem from liberals and conservatives actually thinking about their respective views of race in historical perspective (and liberals feeling disproportionately pessimistic and dissatisfied with the current institutional framework).

5. Conclusion

The literature on the persistence of historical episodes has documented numerous instances in which the past continues to exert influence on the present. In addition to merely documenting this persistence, scholars are increasingly intrigued by the role of historical remembrance in partially elucidating how and when the past remains relevant. Recent research has thus examined the repercussions of remembrance, especially when members of society interpret the past similarly. However, an aspect that remains underexplored is how different narratives about the past, often conflicting, coexist and contribute to dissent. This is especially relevant in cases involving a history of intergroup tensions and violence.

We address this issue in the context of the United States, investigating how citizens think about and discuss key episodes of race from a historical perspective. Leveraging over 14,000 surveys from adults of all ages and ideological inclinations, both white and Black, we document substantial variation in how individuals perceive the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the ongoing legacy of slavery. These variations are not consistently predicted by cohort and race differences, as generational shifts in historical views among white and Black respondents differ depending on the historical episode. Interestingly, however, ideological differences are significant among both white and Black respondents, though more pronounced among the former.

We explore how these diverse historical accounts contribute to political polarization through two experiments. In the first, we randomized the order of historical legacy questions, examining how historical reasoning (i.e., sharing one's views and narratives) affects polarization in institutional satisfaction. In the second, we exposed participants to different historical narratives, some representative of liberals and others of conservatives. Both experiments indicate that confronting historical accounts about race increases polarization in institutional support. In both cases, the polarization seems driven by significantly lower institutional satisfaction among liberals (but not conservatives). By disproportionately inducing negative emotions and pessimism among liberals, historical accounts about race thus exacerbate pre-existing ideological divisions in institutional satisfaction.

Our paper raises several lines of inquiry. An important next step is understanding how peo-

ple perceive other crucial historical episodes in the United States, particularly those concerning other demographic groups. This would allow an examination of whether other minority groups exhibit similar ideological and cohort patterns to those documented for Black respondents. Relatedly, an intriguing area of research concerns how people view historical episodes and processes of global transcendence, and how these affect attitudes towards trade and international cooperation. Finally, a promising research avenue involves exploring how narratives about the past shape narratives about the future, and how this may ultimately influence the goals and aims that different demographic groups envision and pursue.

References

Abadi, Martín, Ashish Agarwal, Paul Barham, Eugene Brevdo, Zhifeng Chen, Craig Citro, Greg S. Corrado, Andy Davis, Jeffrey Dean, Matthieu Devin, Sanjay Ghemawat, Ian Goodfellow, Andrew Harp, Geoffrey Irving, Michael Isard, Yangqing Jia, Rafal Jozefowicz, Lukasz Kaiser, Manjunath Kudlur, Josh Levenberg, Dandelion Mané, Rajat Monga, Sherry Moore, Derek Murray, Chris Olah, Mike Schuster, Jonathon Shlens, Benoit Steiner, Ilya Sutskever, Kunal Talwar, Paul Tucker, Vincent Vanhoucke, Vijay Vasudevan, Fernanda Viégas, Oriol Vinyals, Pete Warden, Martin Wattenberg, Martin Wicke, Yuan Yu, and Xiaoqiang Zheng. 2015. "TensorFlow: Large-Scale Machine Learning on Heterogeneous Systems." Software available from tensorflow.org.

Acharya, A., M. Blackwell, and M Sen. 2016. "The political legacy of American slavery." *The Journal of Politics*, 78(3): 621–641.

Alesina, Alberto, Armando Miano, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2023. "Immigration and Redistribution." *The Review of Economic Studies*, 90(1): 1–39.

Alesina, Alberto, Matteo Ferroni, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2021. "Perceptions of Racial Gaps, their Causes, and Ways to Reduce Them." *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 29245*.

Anderson, Michael L. 2008. "Multiple inference and gender differences in the effects of early intervention: A reevaluation of the Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, and Early Training Projects." *Journal of the American statistical Association*, 103(484): 1481–1495.

Ang, Desmond. 2019. "Do 40-Year-Old Facts Still Matter? Long-Run Effects of Federal Oversight under the Voting Rights Act." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 11(3): 1–53.

Ang, Desmond. 2023. "The Birth of a Nation: Media and Racial Hate." *American Economic Review*, 113(6): 1424–60.

Balcells, Laia, Valeria Palanza, and Elsa Voytas. 2022. “Do Transitional Justice Museums Persuade Visitors? Evidence from a Field Experiment.” *The Journal of Politics*, 84(1).

Baysan, Ceren. 2022. “Persistent Polarizing Effects of Persuasion: Experimental Evidence from Turkey.” *American Economic Review*, 112(11): 3528–46.

Bazzi, Samuel, Mesay Gebresilasse, and Martin Fiszbane. 2020. “Frontier Culture: The Roots and Persistence of "Rugged Individualism" in the United States.” *Econometrica*, 88(6).

Bénabou, Roland, Armin Falk, and Jean Tirole. 2018. “Narratives, Imperatives, and Moral Persuasion.” *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 24798*.

Cascio, Elizabeth, and Ebonya Washington. 2014. “Valuing the Vote: The Redistribution of Voting Rights and State Funds Following the Voting Rights Act of 1965.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(1): 376–433.

Chinoy, Sahil Nunn, Nathan, Sandra Sequeira, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2023. “Zero-Sum Thinking and the Roots of U.S. Political Divides.” *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 31688*.

Dechezleprêtre, Antoine, Adrien Fabre, Tobias Kruse, Bluebery Planterose, Ana Sanchez Chico, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2022. “Fighting Climate Change: International Attitudes Toward Climate Policies.” *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 30265*.

DellaVigna, S., and E. Kaplan. 2007. “The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122(3): 1187–1234.

Dessí, Roberta. 2008. “Collective Memory, Cultural Transmission, and Investments.” *American Economic Review*, 98(1): 534–60.

Enke, Benjamin, Ricardo Rodríguez-Padilla, and Florian Zimmermann. 2023. “Moral Universalism and the Structure of Ideology.” *The Review of Economic Studies*, 90(4): 1934–1962.

Esposito, Elena, Tiziano Rotesi, Alessandro Saia, and Mathias Thoenig. 2023. "Reconciliation Narratives: The Birth of a Nation after the US Civil War." *American Economic Review*, 113(6): 1461–1504.

Fouka, Vicky, and Joachim Voth. 2023. "Collective Remembrance and Private Choice: German-Greek Conflict and Consumer Behavior in Times of Crisis." *American Political Science Review*, 117(3).

Fryer, Roland G., Philipp Harms, and Matthew O. Jackson. 2019. "Updating Beliefs when Evidence is Open to Interpretation: Implications for Bias and Polarization." *The Journal of the European Economic Association*, 17(5): 1470–1501.

Giuliano, Paola, and Marco Tabellini. 2020. "The Seeds of Ideology: Historical Immigration and Political Preferences in the United States." *Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 20-118*.

Guriev, S., N. Melnikov, and E. Zhuravskaya. 2021. "3g Internet and Confidence in Government." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(4): 2533–2613.

Kendall, Chad W., and Constantin Charles. 2023. "Causal Narratives." *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 30346*.

Khanna, Nikki. 2010. ""IF YOU'RE HALF BLACK, YOU'RE JUST BLACK": Reflected Appraisals and the Persistence of the One-Drop Rule." *The Sociological Quarterly*, 51(1): 96–121.

Lane, RD, EM Reiman, GL Ahern, GE Schwartz, and RJ. Davidson. 1997. "Neuroanatomical correlates of happiness, sadness, and disgust." *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 154(7): 926–33.

Levy, Ro'ee. 2021. "Social Media, News Consumption, and Polarization: Evidence from a Field Experiment." *American Economic Review*, 111(3): 831–70.

Logan, Trevon. 2020. "Do Black Politicians Matter? Evidence from Reconstruction." *The Journal of Economic History*, 80(1): 1–37.

Logan, Trevon. 2023. "Whitelashing: Black Politicians, Taxes, and Violence." *The Journal of Economic History*, 83(2).

Martin, G. J., and A. Yurukoglu. 2017. "Bias in Cable News: Persuasion and Polarization." *American Economic Review*, 107(9): 2565–2599.

Masera, Federico, and Michele Rosenberg. 2023. "Slavocracy: Elite Capture and the Support for Slavery." *Mimeo*.

Masera, Federico, Michele Rosenberg, and Sarah Walker. 2022. "The Power of Narratives: Anti-Black Attitudes and Violence in the US South." *UNSW Business School Research Paper Forthcoming*.

McCurry, Stephanie. 2012. "Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South." *Harvard University Press*.

Ochsner, Christian, and Felix Rosel. 2024. "Activated History: The Case of the Turkish Sieges of Vienna." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics (Forthcoming)*.

Ramos-Toro, Diego. 2022. "Self-Emancipation and Progressive Politics: The Legacy from Civil War Refugee Camps." *Mimeo*.

Ramos-Toro, Diego. 2023. "Social Exclusion and Social Preferences: Evidence from Colombia's Leper Colony." *American Economic Review*, 113(5): 1294–1333.

Shiller, Robert J. 2017. "Narrative Economics." *American Economic Review*, 107(4): 967–1004.

Sinha, Manisha. 2016. "The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition." *Yale University Press*.

Stantcheva, Stefanie. 2020. "Understanding Economic Policies: What do people know and learn?" *Harvard University Working Paper*.

Stantcheva, Stefanie. 2022. "Understanding of Trade." *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 30040*.

The Economist. 2022. ""Critical race theory" is being weaponised. What's the fuss about?" *The Economist*.

Online Appendix

Historical Narratives and Political Behavior in the US

Diego Ramos-Toro

Dartmouth College

Elsa Voytas

Meta

	Black Respondents		White Respondents	
	Survey Participants	US Population (ACS 2022)	Survey Participants	US Population (ACS 2022)
Panel A - Demographic Characteristics				
Female	0.622	0.542	0.543	0.521
Marital Status	0.314	0.385	0.587	0.618
Age 18 - 29	0.219	0.281	0.092	0.227
Age 30 - 39	0.228	0.197	0.179	0.179
Age 40 - 49	0.174	0.169	0.150	0.167
Age 50 - 59	0.167	0.140	0.161	0.152
Age 60 and more	0.213	0.214	0.418	0.276
Panel B - Economic Characteristics				
Labor Force Participation	0.752	0.682	0.769	0.738
Unemployed	0.131	0.092	0.071	0.043
Annual Income $>$ 135,000	0.077	0.113	0.167	0.112
College Educated	0.359	0.290	0.597	0.401
Sample Size	3,742		10,317	

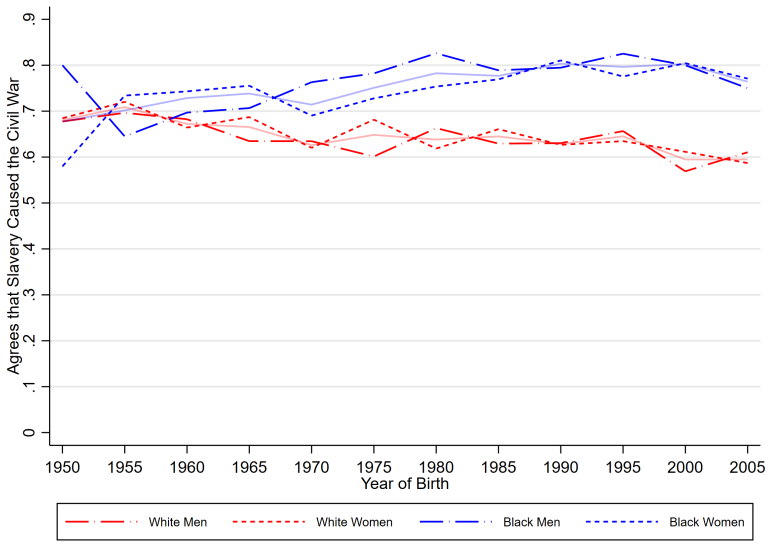
Table A.1: Characteristics of Sample Compared to Census Data

	White Liberals		White Conservatives	
	Survey Participants	ANES 2020-202	Survey Participants	ANES 2020-2022
Panel A - Demographic Characteristics				
Female	0.586	0.577	0.510	0.476
Marital Status	0.544	0.508	0.641	0.652
Age 18 - 29	0.113	0.065	0.076	0.034
Age 30 - 39	0.217	0.166	0.149	0.107
Age 40 - 49	0.152	0.178	0.140	0.131
Age 50 - 59	0.141	0.133	0.177	0.152
Age 60 and more	0.377	0.435	0.458	0.534
Panel B - Economic Characteristics				
Annual Income > 135,000	0.175	0.215	0.158	0.112
College Educated	0.665	0.642	0.531	0.436
Sample Size	4,561	1,833	4,183	2,274

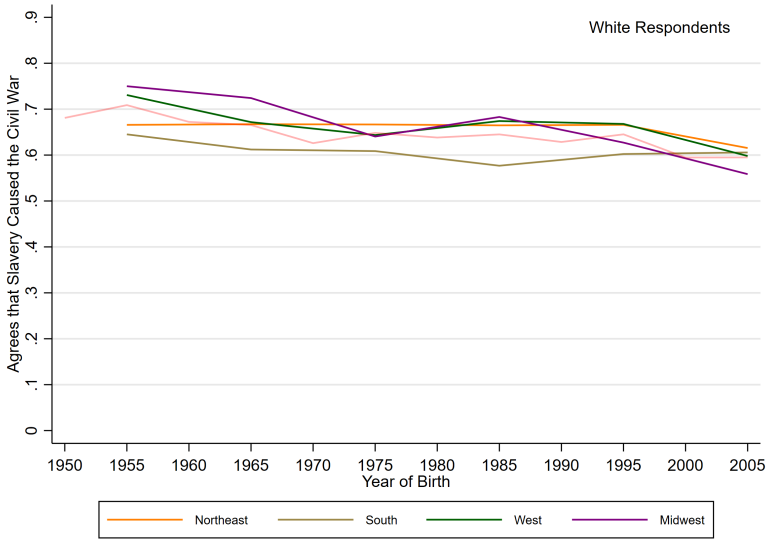
Table A.2: Characteristics of White Participants Compared to White Respondents in ANES

Racial-ideological group	Selected narrative
Black Conservative	The main cause of the Civil War is disputed, but it was primarily due to economic reasons with the South feeling undervalued for their cotton production. Slavery was also a major issue, as some states wanted to continue the practice and others did not. Slavery has been abolished, but racism is still a problem in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement helped achieve equal rights for all people, but discrimination still exists, and some people hold onto prejudices and stereotypes. The legacy of slavery still affects people today, as racism and discrimination continue to be issues.
Black Liberal	The main cause of the Civil War was slavery and disagreements between the northern and southern states regarding it. The issue of slavery was not completely resolved after the war, and racism has continued to exist and worsen over time. The Civil Rights Movement made progress, but there is still a long way to go, and some people are still discriminated against based on their race. Financial greed and ignorance are factors that have contributed to racism and discrimination.
White Conservative	The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's ushered in changes that focus on how laws in certain states were used to suppress people of color. In the proceeding years, those laws have been abolished and the rights of all to have opportunity is a reality. The limiting factors are one's ability and willingness to strive for those opportunities. Slavery was not unique to the United States and in some parts of the world persist still today. Slavery may play a part on the psyche of some Americans, but that's one of the challenges they must overcome. Everyone is treated the same and anything is achievable which is a huge accomplishment for the American people as we came a long way.
White Liberal	The causes of the Civil War were land rights, state autonomy, and slavery. While slavery was officially abolished after the war, racism remains a significant problem in the present day, and progress towards civil rights has been hindered by wealthy white people who believe in their superiority over people of color. Discrimination still affects many African Americans, with limited access to opportunities and equal pay, leading to ongoing poverty and distrust between races. Progress has been made, but there is still a long way to go in the fight for equal rights and understanding between different groups of people.

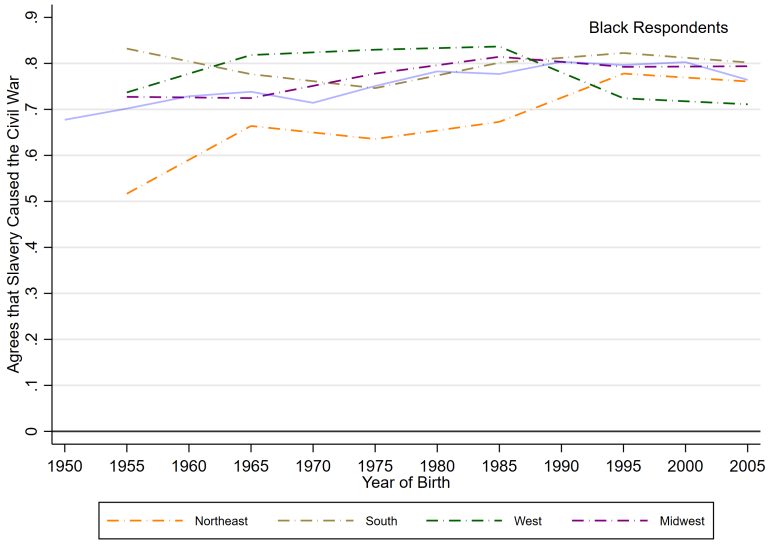
Table A.3: Experiment 2 treatment conditions.



(a)

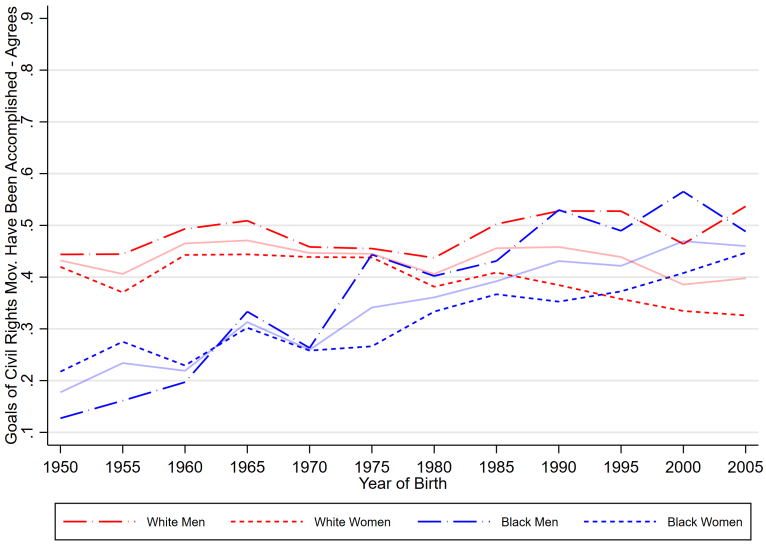


(b)

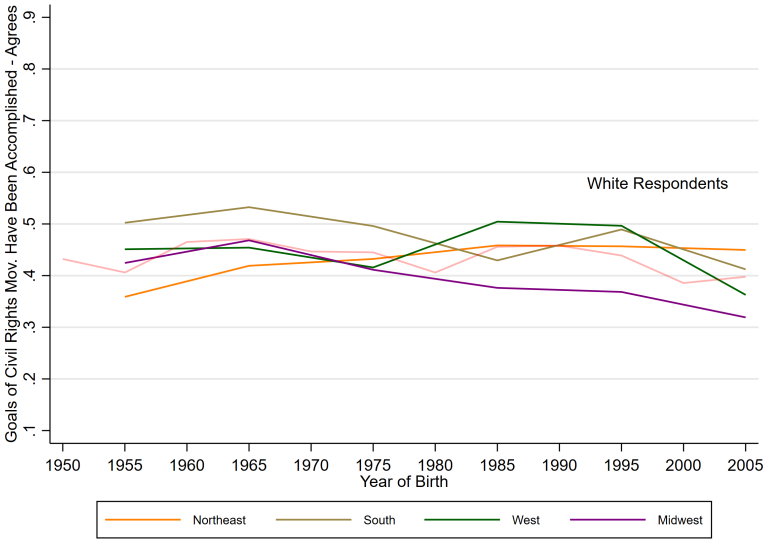


(c)

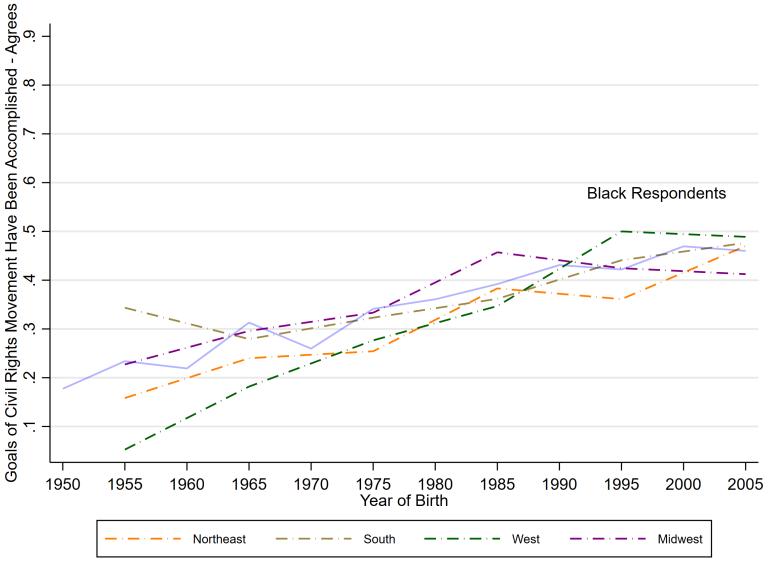
Figure A.1: Race, gender, and regional trends in views toward causes of the Civil War.



(a)

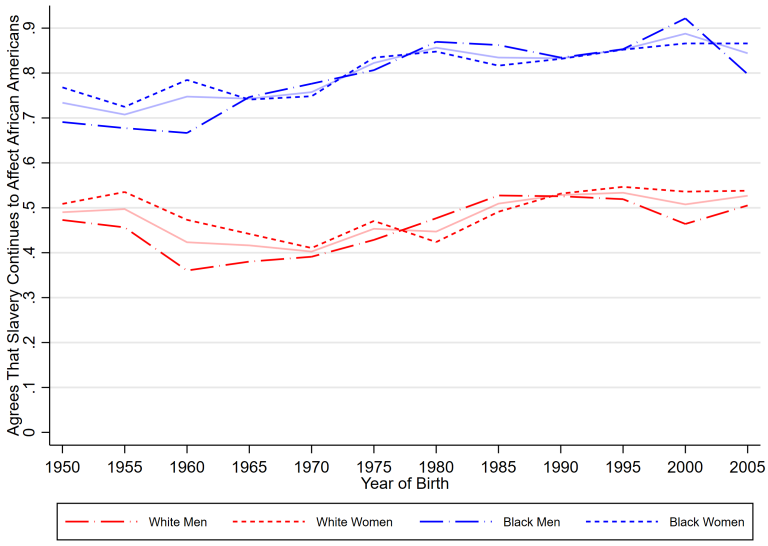


(b)

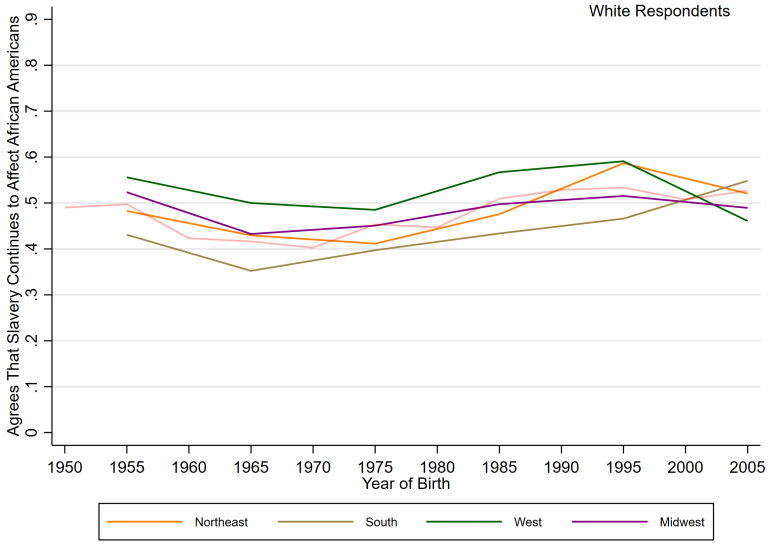


(c)

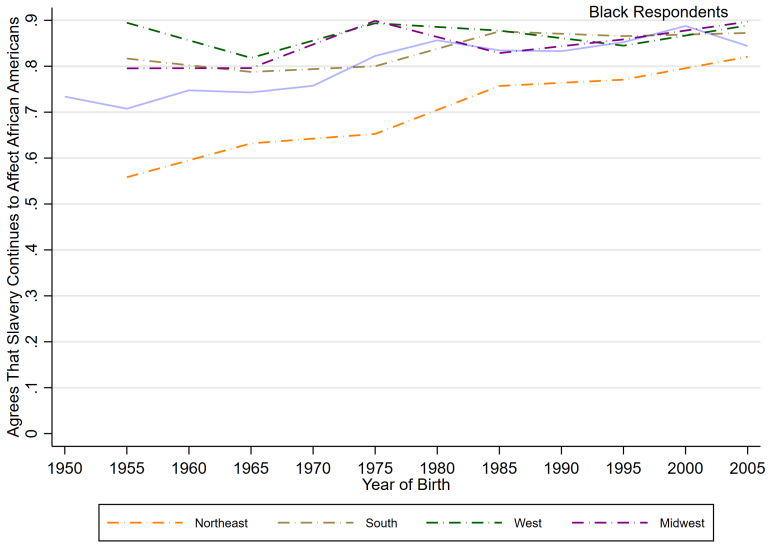
Figure A.2: Race, gender, and regional trends in views toward achieving goals of the Civil Rights Movement.



(a)

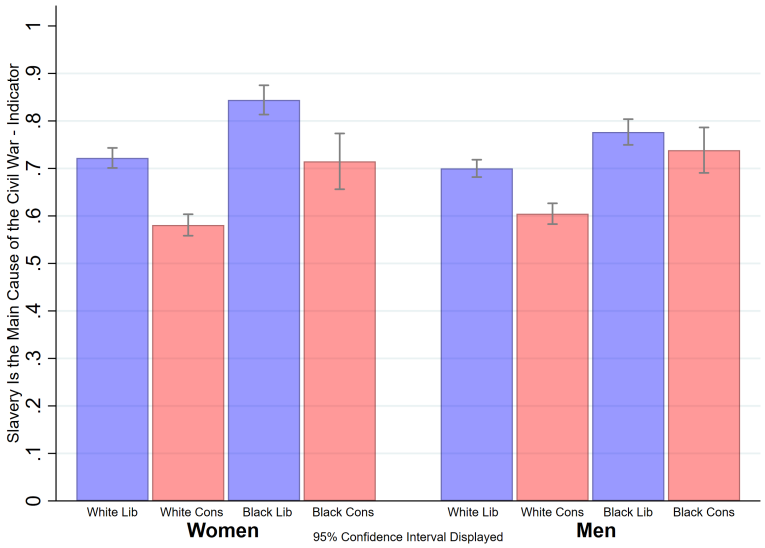


(b)

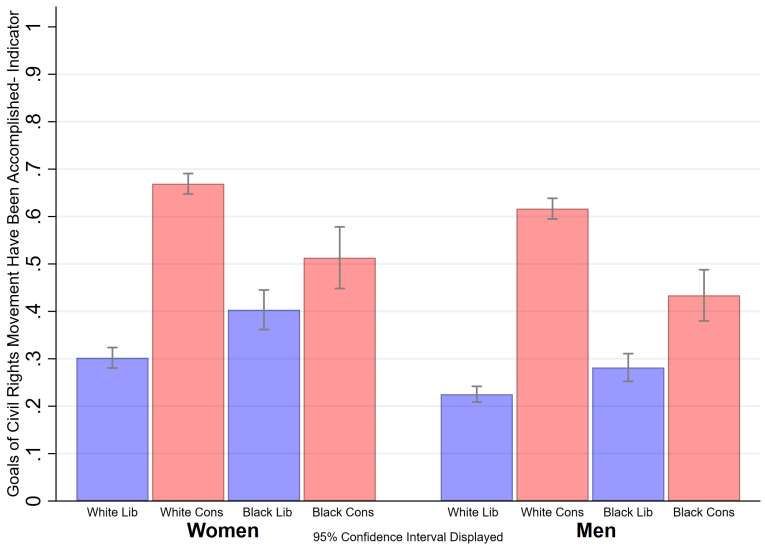


(c)

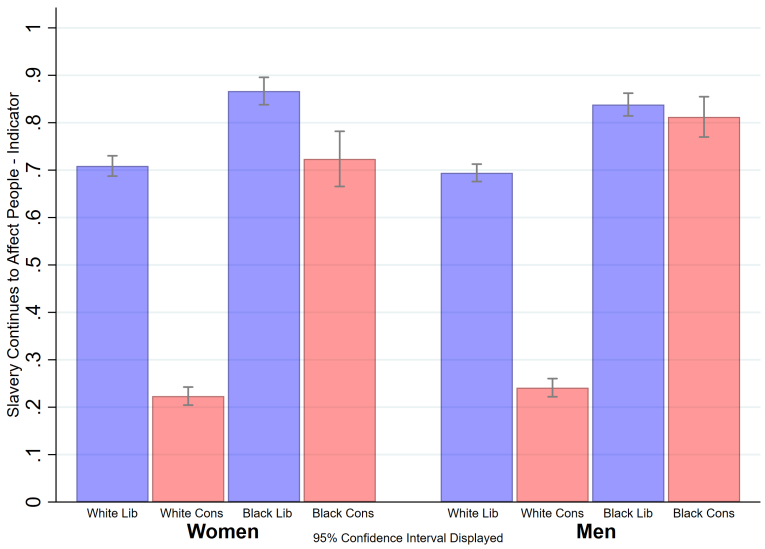
Figure A.3: Race, gender, and regional trends in views toward the lasting impact of slavery and discrimination.



(a)

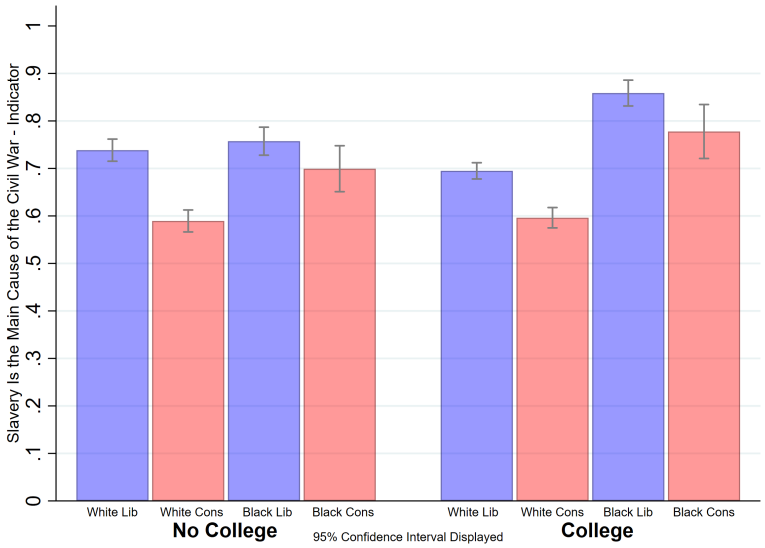


(b)

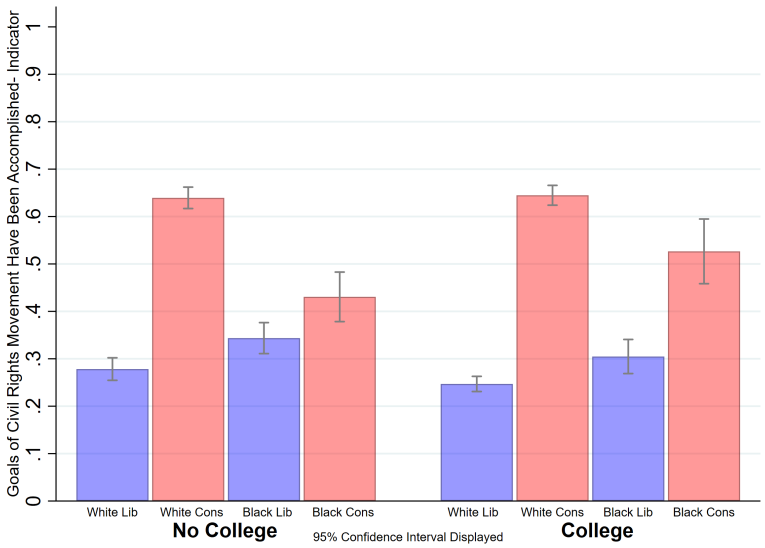


(c)

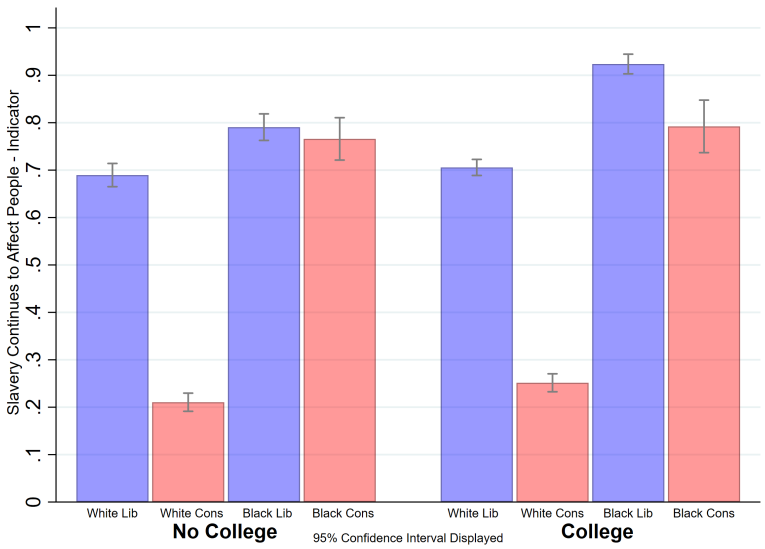
Figure A.4: Gender and ideological differences in views toward different historical episodes.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure A.5: Educational and ideological differences in views toward different historical episodes.

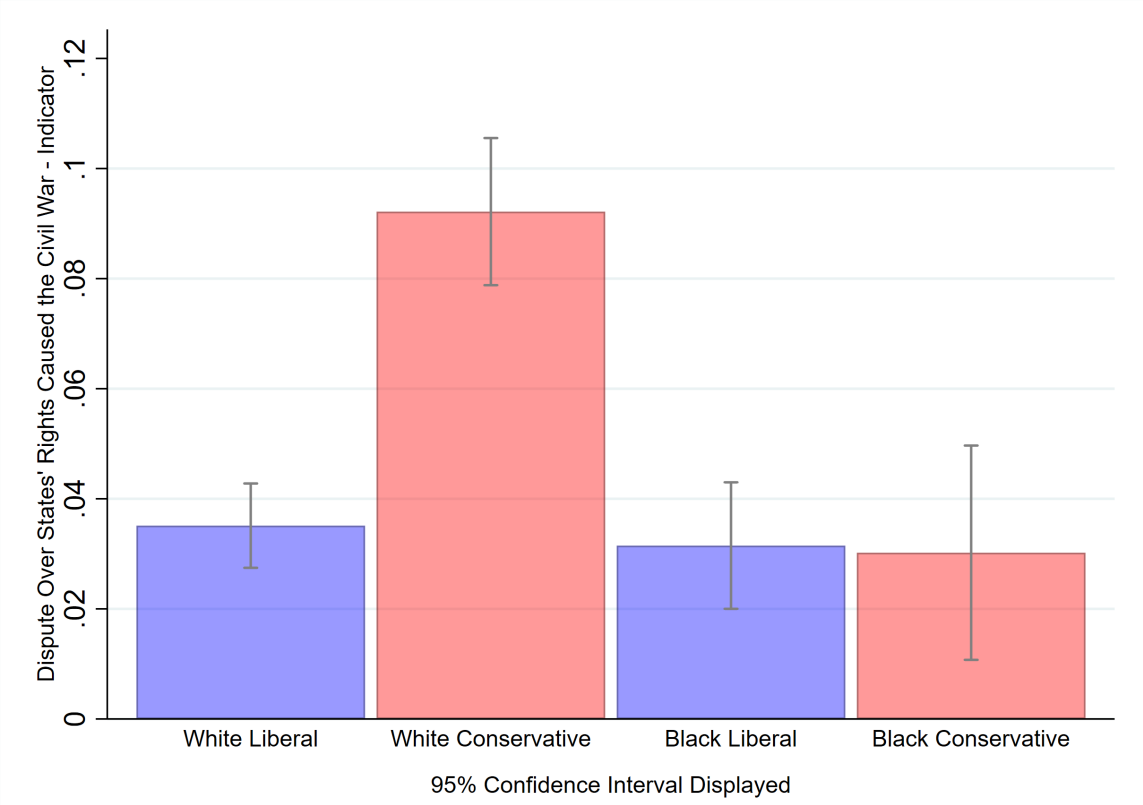


Figure A.6: Race and ideological differences in view that states' rights caused the Civil War.

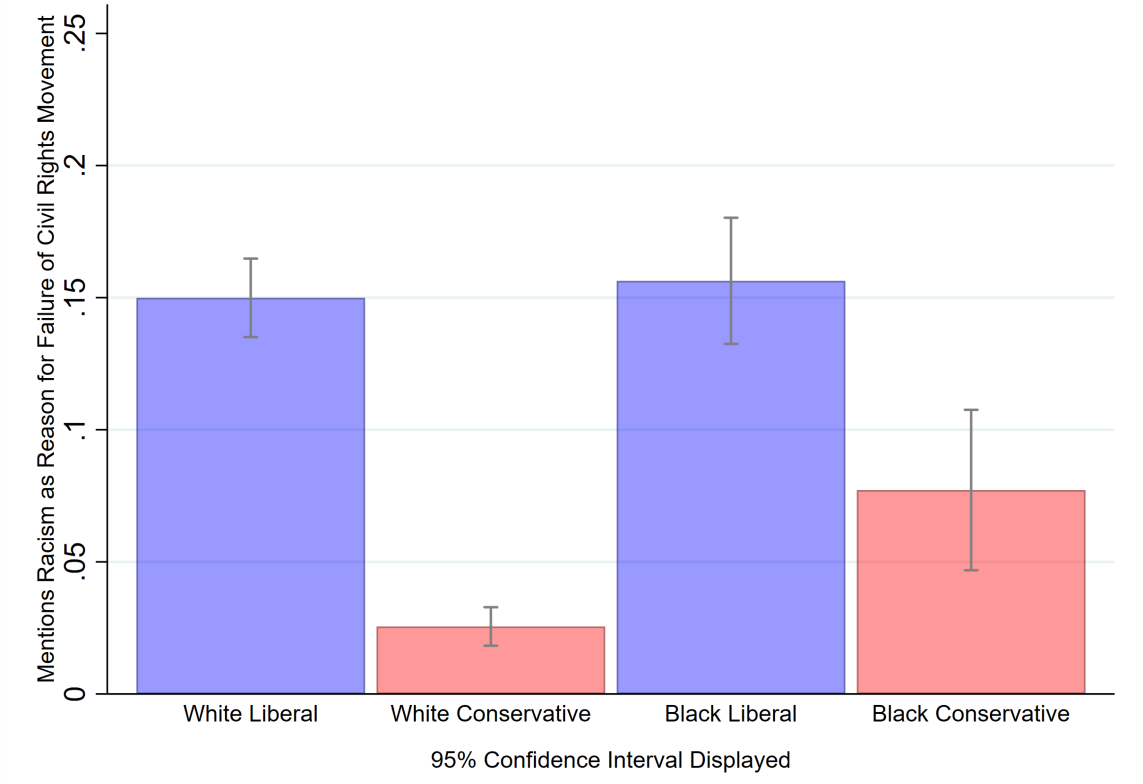


Figure A.7: Race and ideological differences in view that racism is linked to the failures of the Civil Rights Movement.

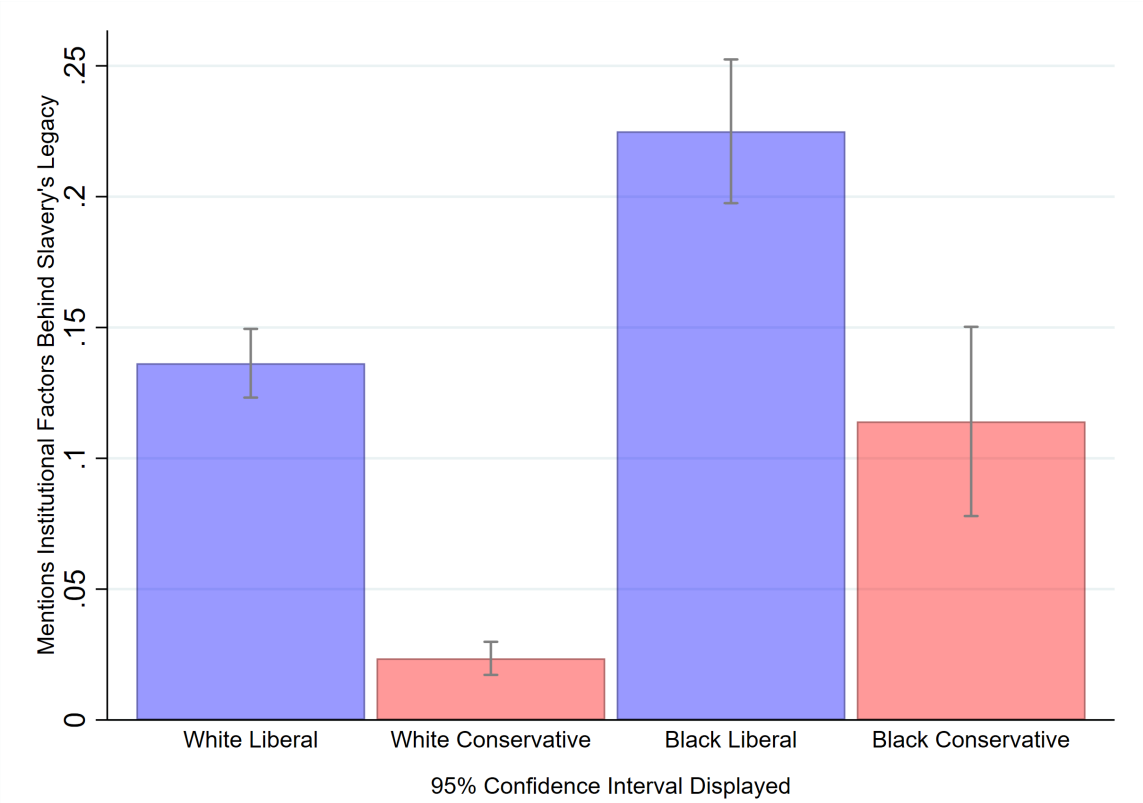
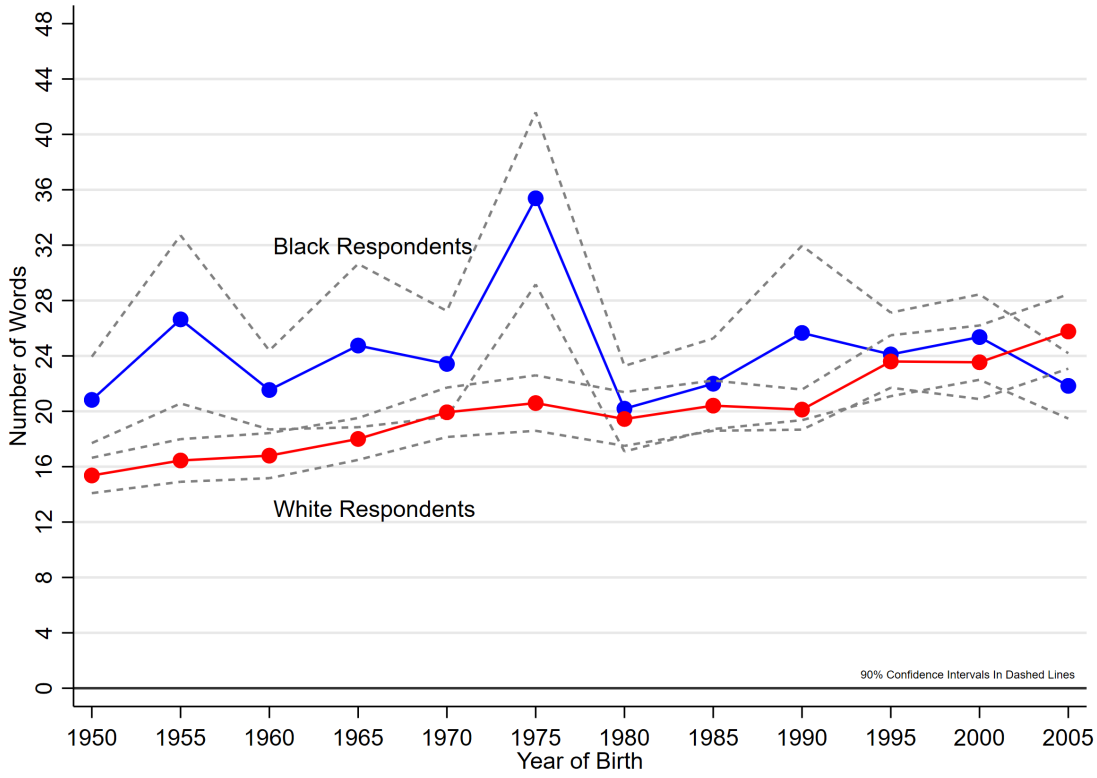
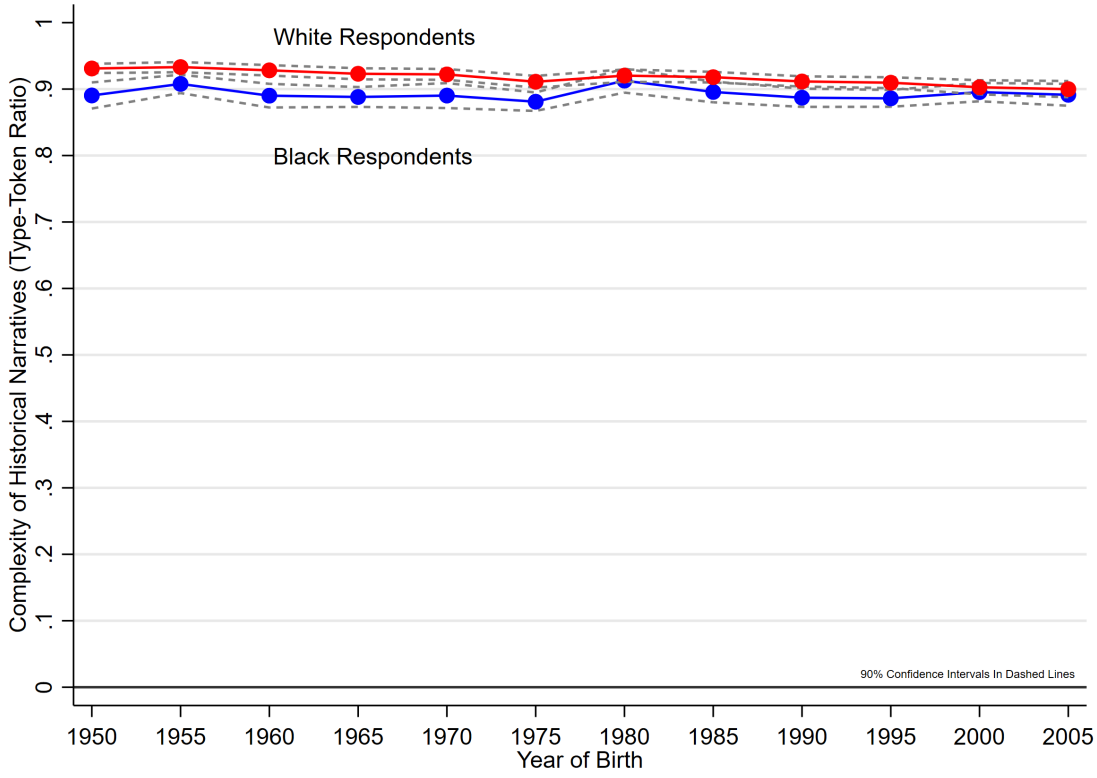


Figure A.8: Race and ideological differences in view that institutional factors are linked to slavery's legacy.



(a)



(b)

Figure A.9: Length and complexity of historical narratives.

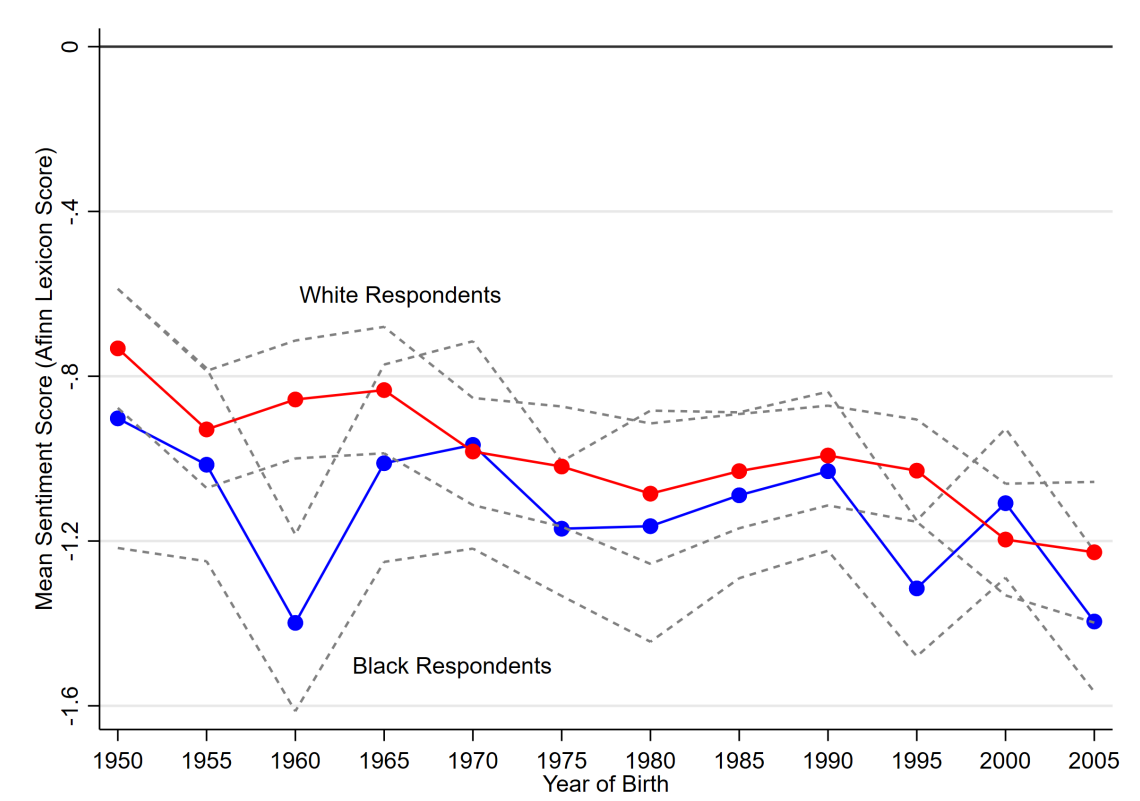
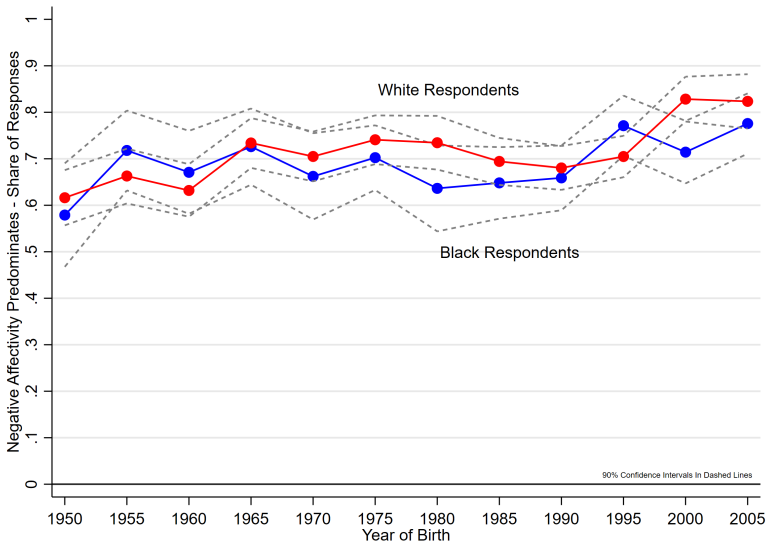
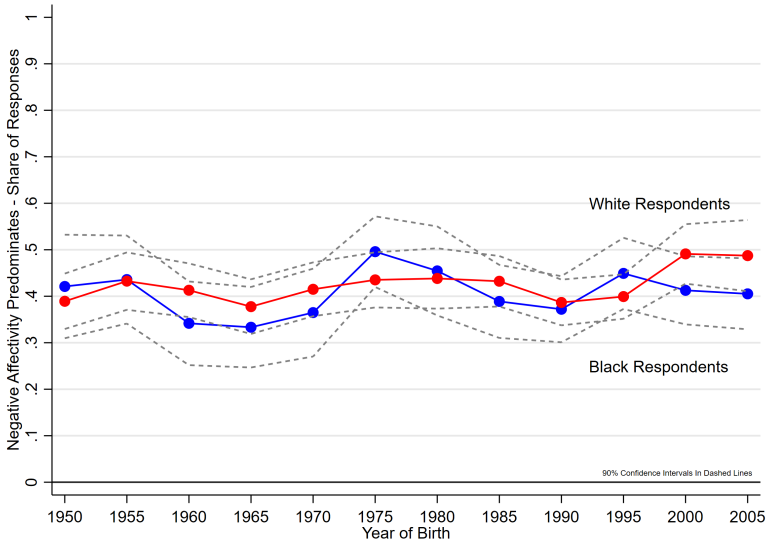


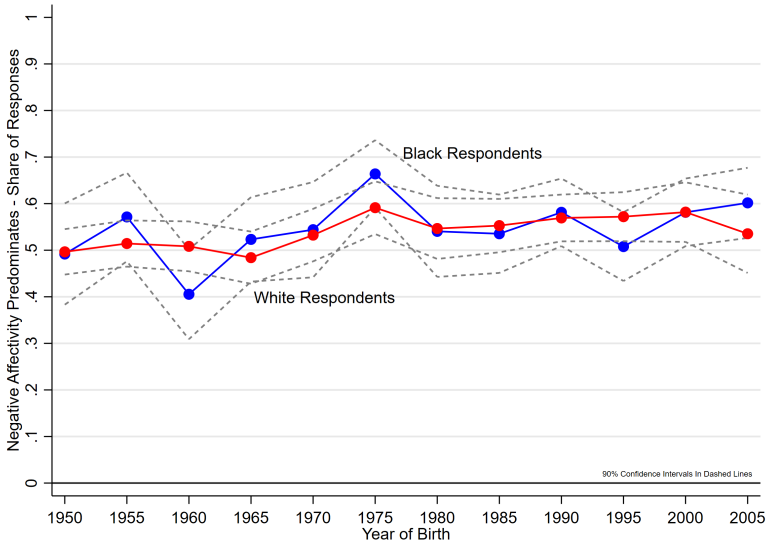
Figure A.10: Sentiment score of historical narratives.



(a)

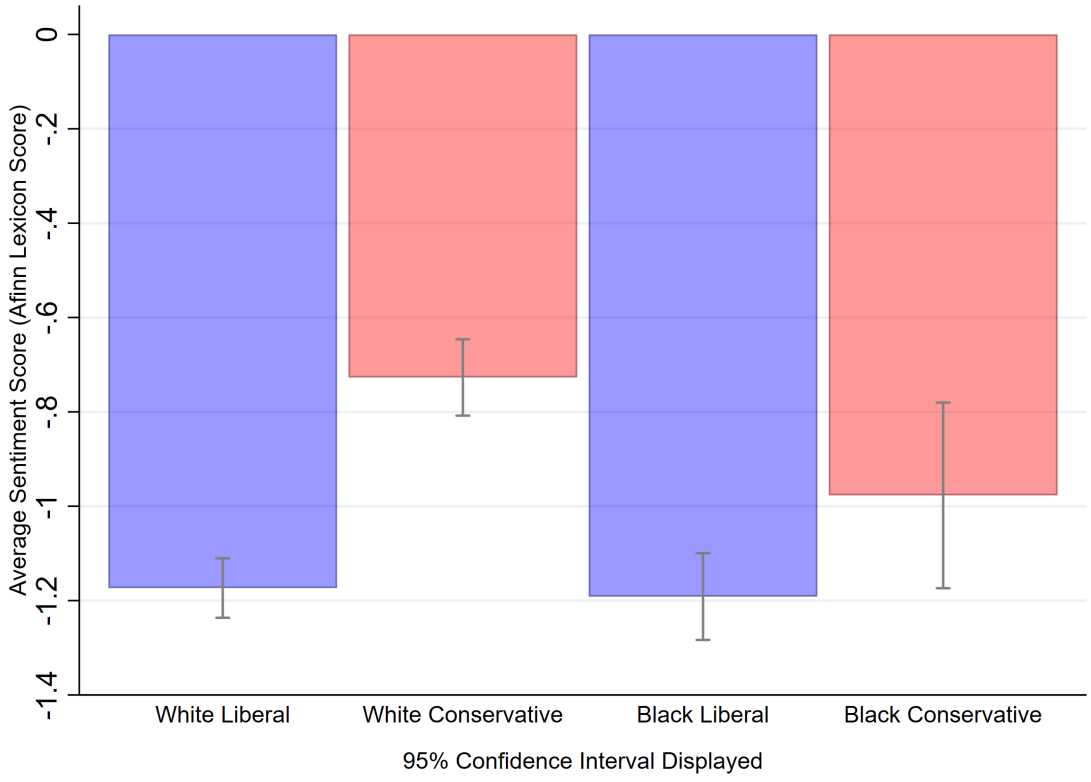


(b)

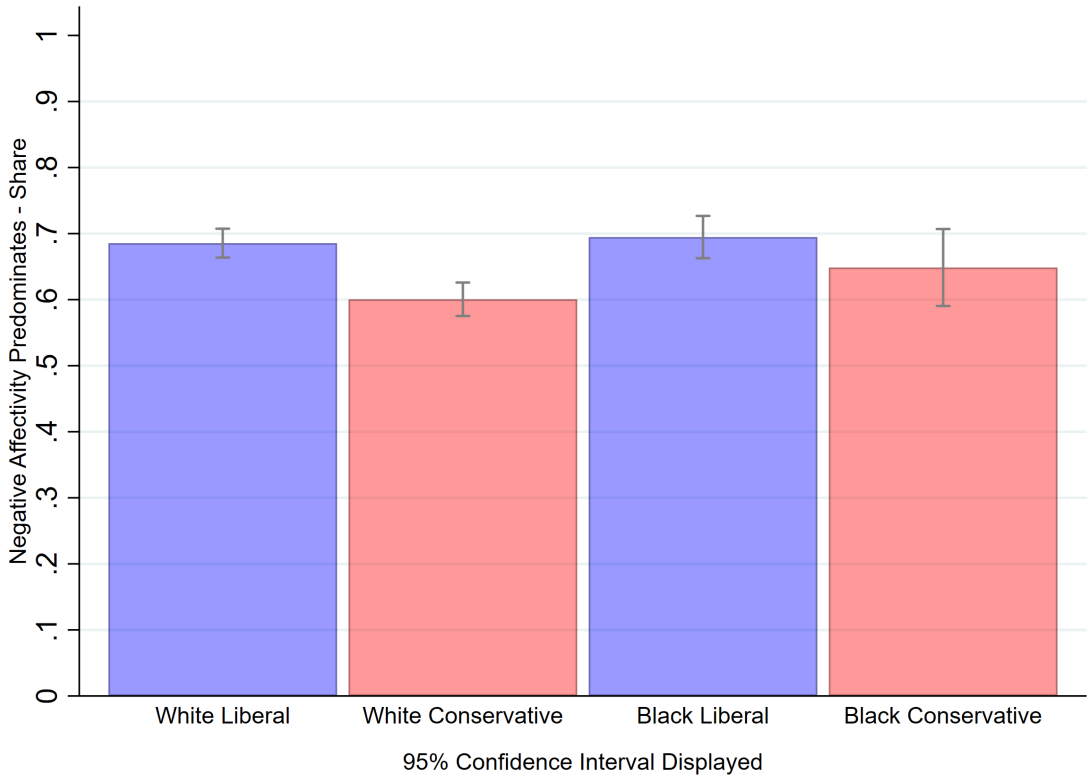


(c)

Figure A.11: Negative affectivity in views toward different historical episodes.



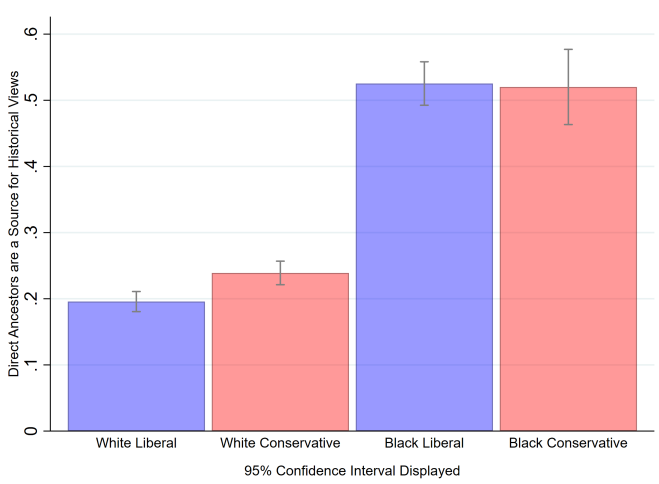
(a)



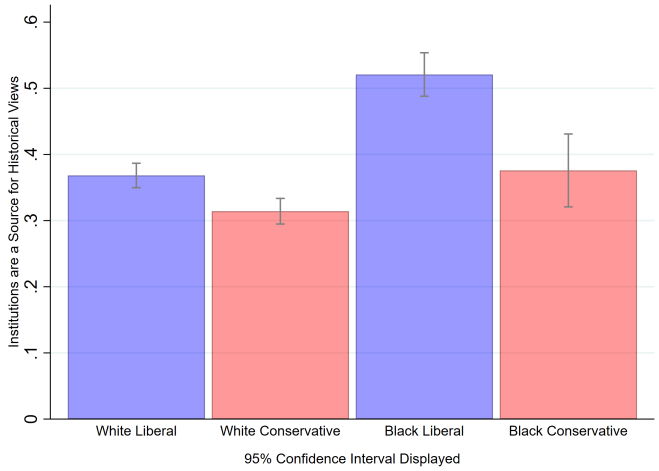
(b)

Figure A.12: Race and ideological differences in sentiment scores and negative affectivity in views toward different historical episodes.

(a) Relies on Vertical Sources



(b) Relies on Institutional Sources



(c) Relies on Media

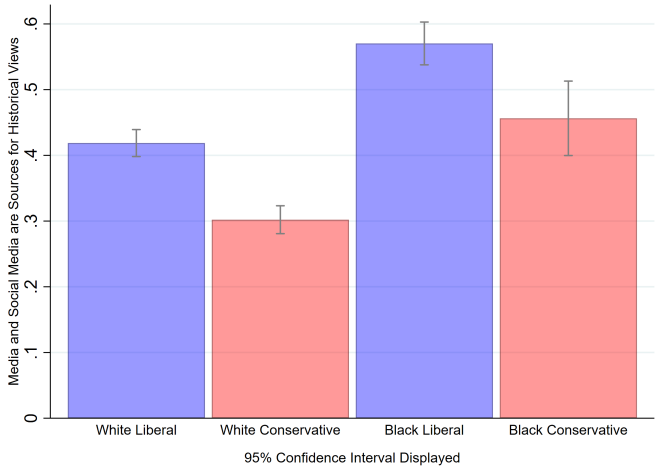
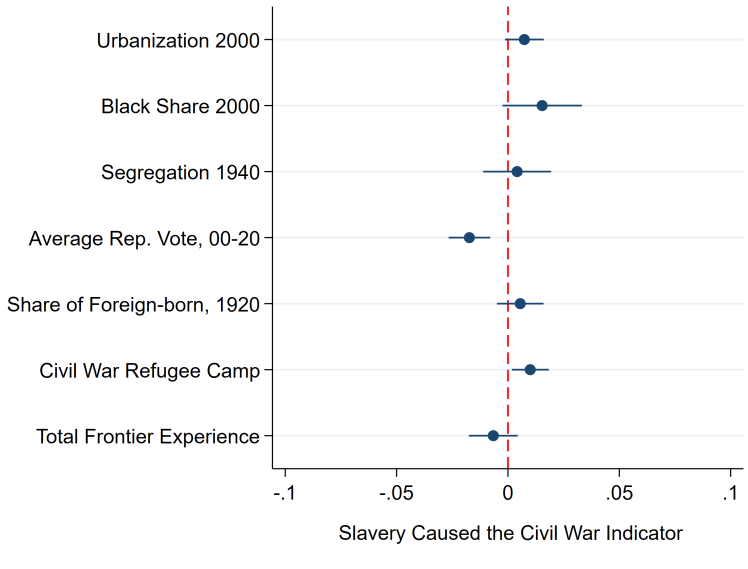
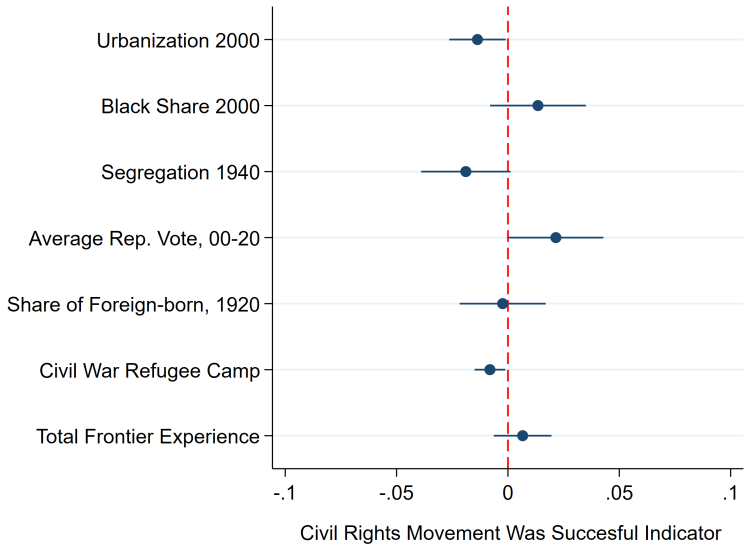


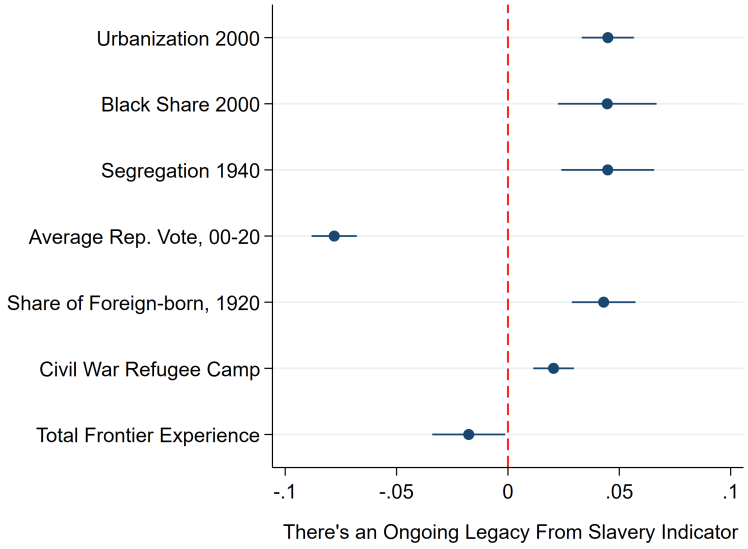
Figure A.13: Differences in historical sources across race and ideology.



(a)

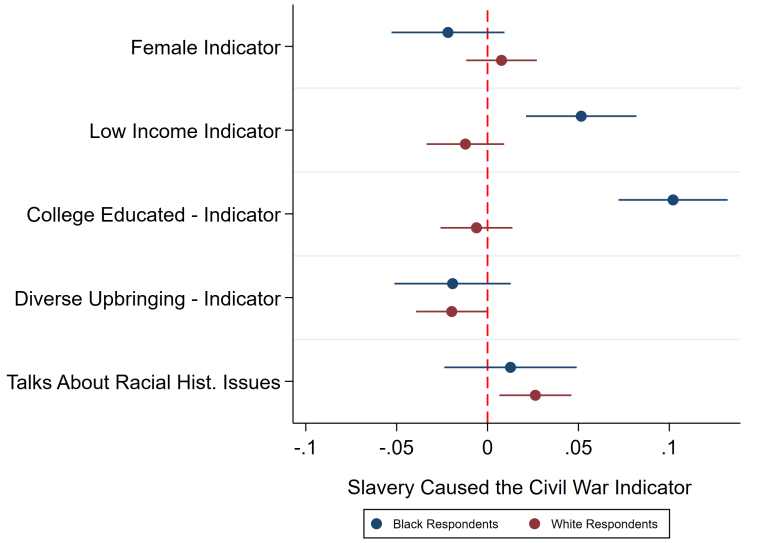


(b)

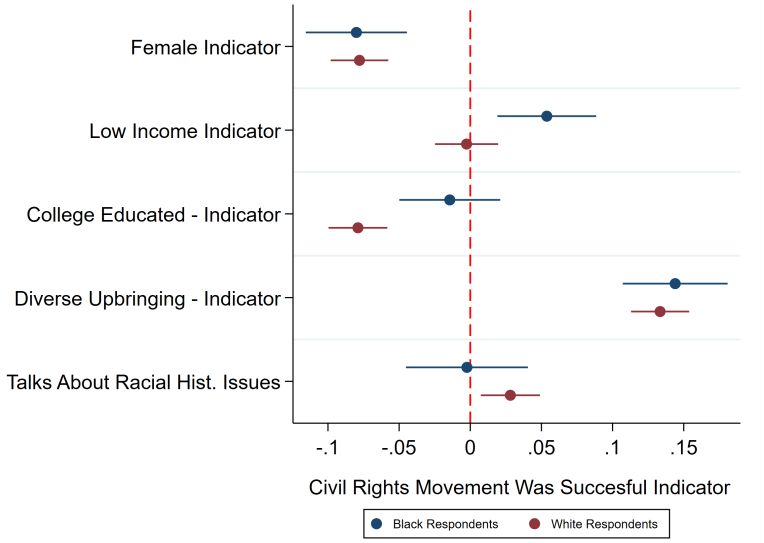


(c)

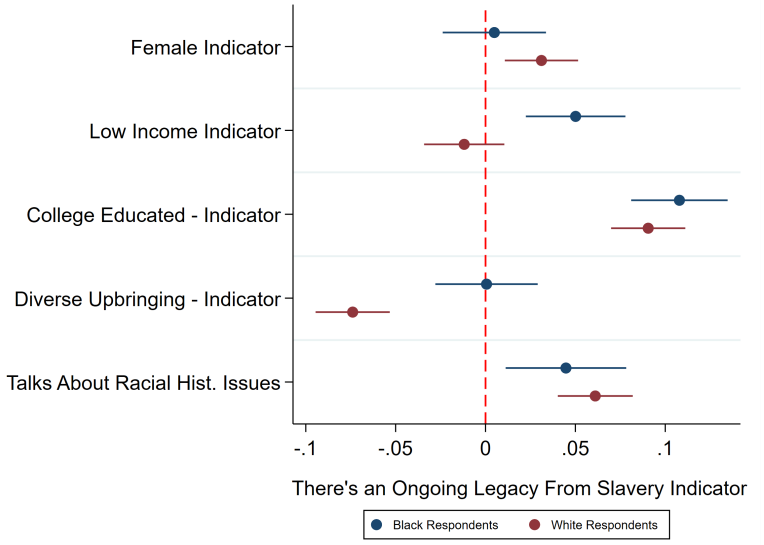
Figure A.14: Predictors of each of the historical views



(a)

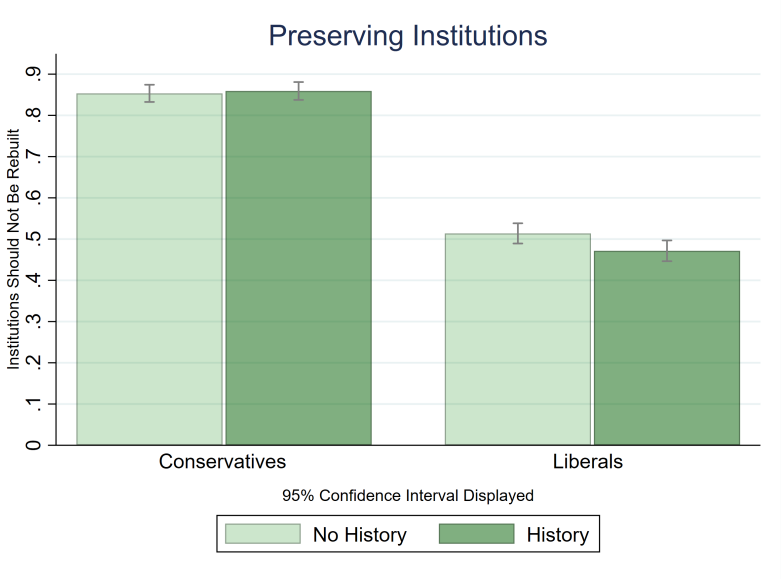


(b)

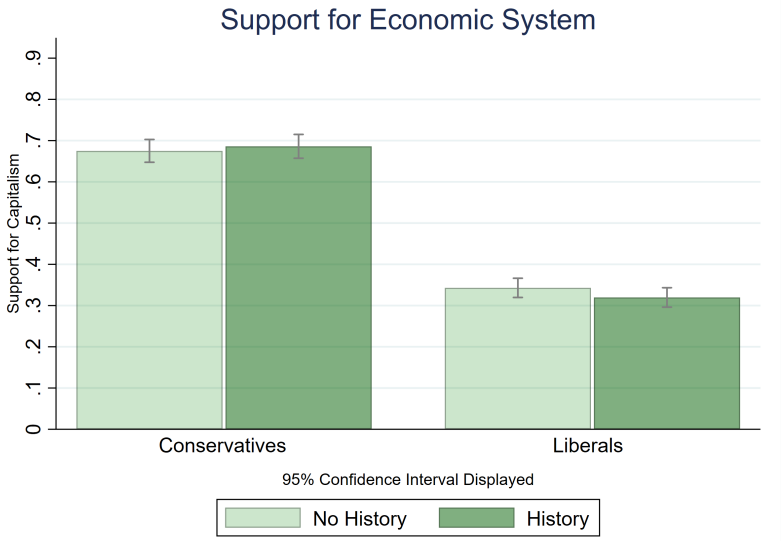


(c)

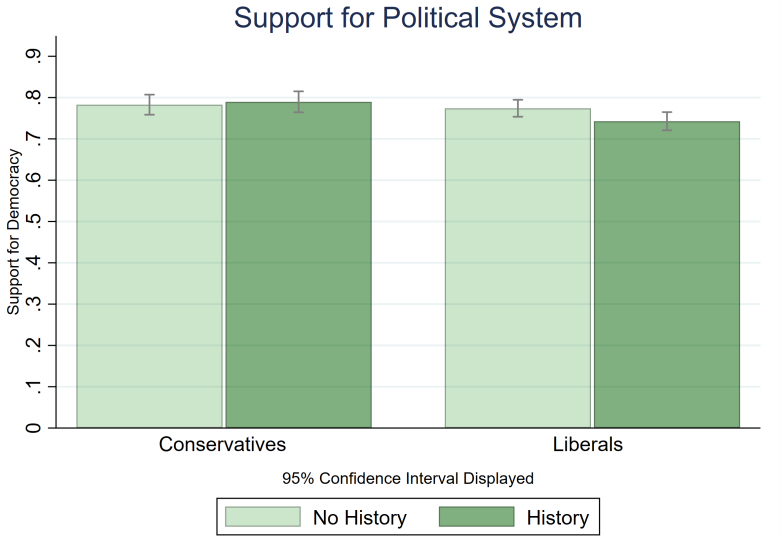
Figure A.15: Individual-level predictors of each of the historical views



(a)



(b)



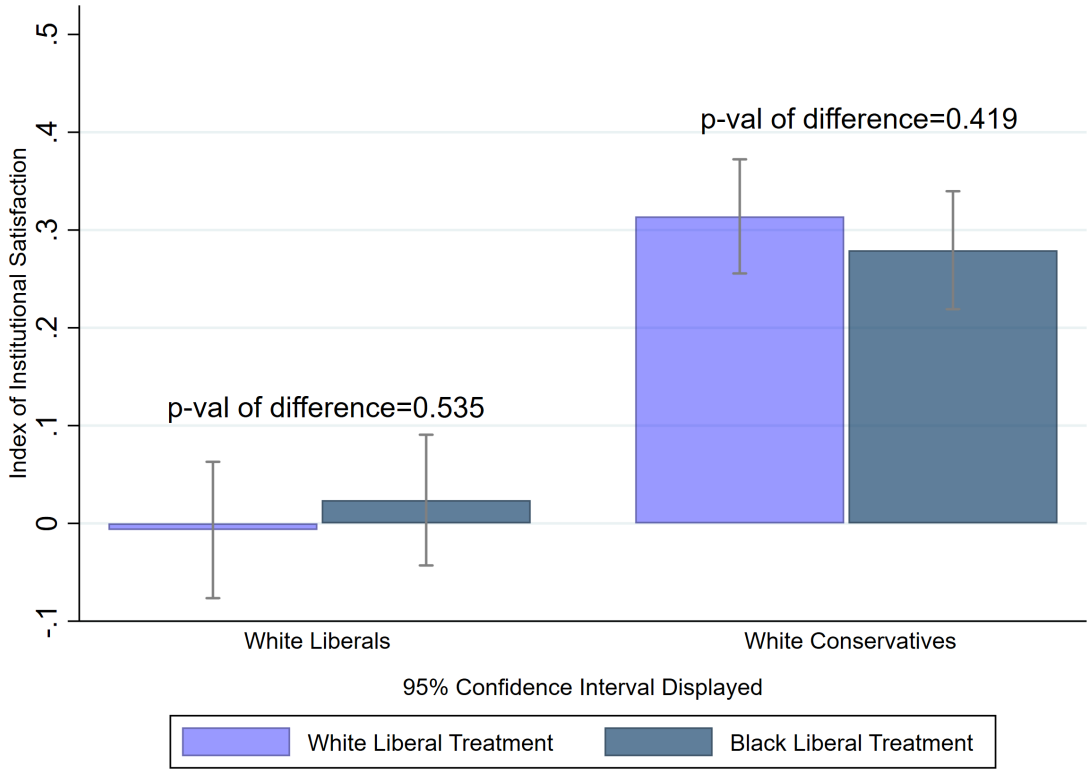
(c)

Figure A.16: Effects of historical reasoning on institutional support components

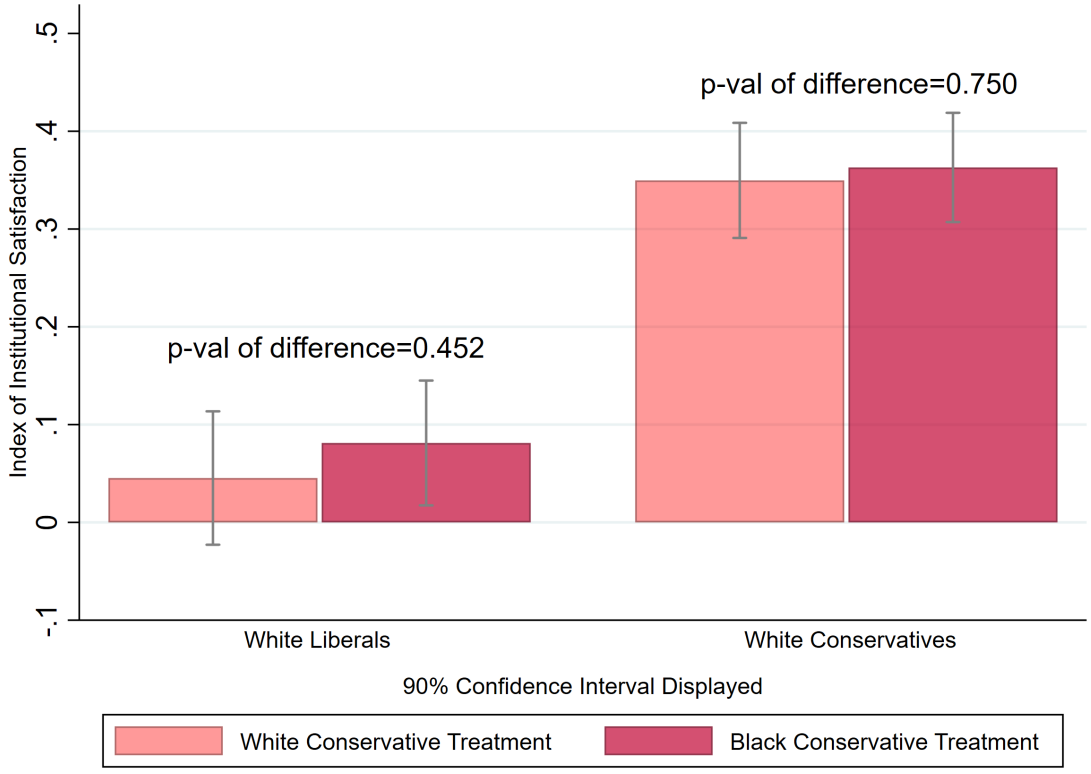
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dependent Var: Share of Money Allocated to Nonpartisan Cause					
	Liberals		Conservatives		Both ideologies	
Historical Reasoning	−0.044***	0.045***	0.004	-0.000	0.004	0.003
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Historical Reasoning × Liberal					−0.047*	−0.046*
					(0.026)	(0.026)
Liberal					0.003	-0.003
					(0.018)	(0.018)
Observations	1,314	1,314	959	959	2,273	2,273
Mean Dependent Variable	0.517	0.517	0.537	0.537	0.526	0.526
Region FE		✓		✓		✓
Gender		✓		✓		✓

Table A.4: Effects of historical reasoning on allocating money to a nonpartisan cause

Notes: The table shows the effects of historical reasoning on allocating money to a nonpartisan cause. The unit of observation is an individual, and data comes from the first, second and fourth rounds of surveys that we conducted between 2022 and 2023. Each panel-column reports results from a single OLS regression of the dependent variable in the column heading on the variable(s) in the row heading(s). Historical Reasoning is an indicator that equals one for participants who were randomly chosen to answer the historical legacy questions before answering other survey questions, 0 otherwise. Liberal is an indicator that equals one if the participant reports being a liberal.



(a)



(b)

Figure A.17: Difference in response to both liberal and conservative treatments.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dependent Var: Index of Institutional Satisfaction					
	Liberals		Conservatives		Both Ideologies	
	Panel A - White Respondents					
Liberal Narrative	−0.063*	−0.063*	-0.019	-0.025	-0.019	-0.025
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Conservative Narrative	-0.008	-0.005	0.040	0.036	0.040	0.035
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.028)
Liberal Narrative × Liberal					-0.043	-0.039
					(0.045)	(0.044)
Conservative Narrative × Liberal					-0.048	-0.041
					(0.044)	(0.044)
Liberal					−0.245***	−0.236***
					(0.031)	(0.031)
Observations	2,339	2,339	2,383	2,383	4,722	4,722
Mean Dependent Variable	0.048	0.048	0.323	0.323	0.187	0.187
{(Liberal Narrative)+(Liberal Narrative × Liberal)} - {Conservative Narrative}					0.103*	0.099**
					(0.045)	(0.044)
	Panel B - Black Respondents					
Liberal Narrative	−0.103*	-0.075	-0.079	-0.071	-0.079	-0.065
	(0.058)	(0.057)	(0.089)	(0.090)	(0.089)	(0.089)
Conservative Narrative	-0.079	-0.056	-0.029	-0.020	-0.029	-0.017
	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.087)	(0.088)	(0.087)	(0.087)
Liberal Narrative x Liberal					-0.023	-0.013
					(0.106)	(0.105)
Conservative Narrative x Liberal					-0.050	-0.042
					(0.105)	(0.104)
Liberal					0.041	0.040
					(0.071)	(0.072)
Observations	855	855	397	397	1,252	1,252
Mean Dependent Variable	-0.401	-0.401	-0.417	-0.417	-0.406	-0.406
{(Liberal Narrative)+(Liberal Narrative × Liberal)} - {Conservative Narrative}					0.073	0.061
					(0.105)	(0.104)
Region FE		✓		✓		✓
Gender		✓		✓		✓

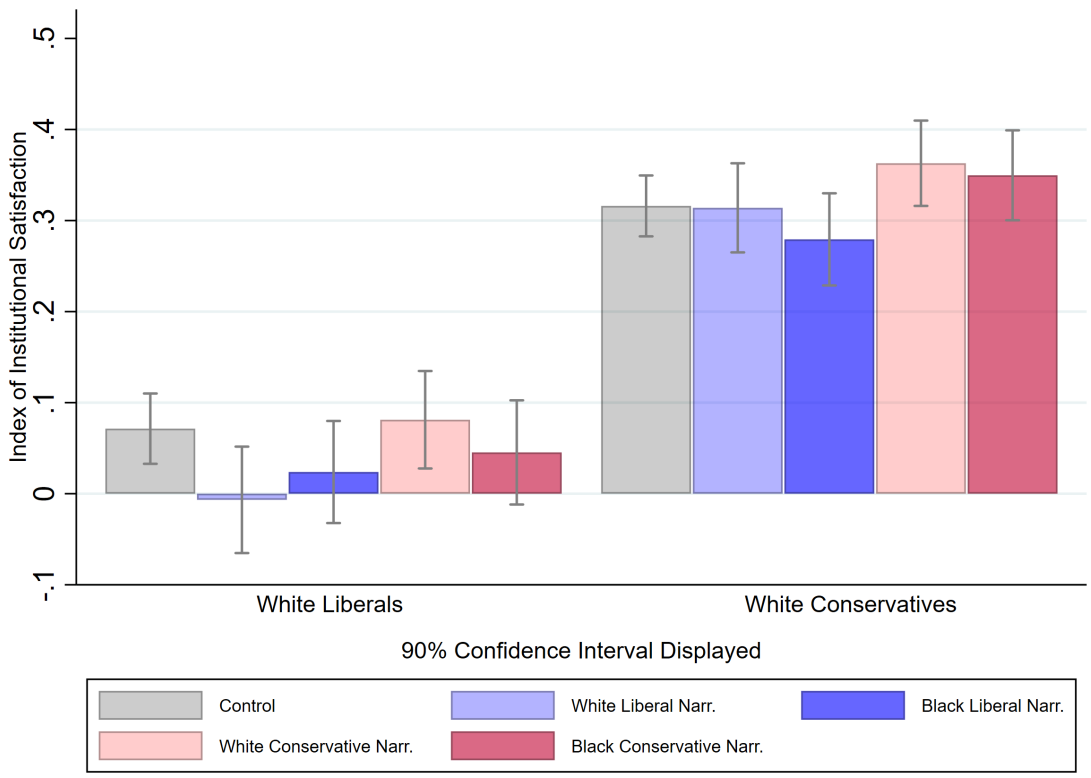
Table A.5: Effects of historical narrative exposure on reported institutional satisfaction by race

Notes: The table shows the effects of exposing participants to different historical narratives on reported institutional satisfaction. The unit of observation is an individual, and data comes from the third round of surveys that we conducted in 2023. Each column reports results from a single OLS regression of the dependent variable in the column heading on the variables in the row headings. Liberal Narrative is an indicator that equals one for participants who were shown a historical narrative representative of the views of liberals. Conservative Narrative is an indicator that equals one for participants who were shown a historical narrative representative of the views of conservatives. See Table A.3 for additional details on these narratives. The last two rows in Columns 5 and 6 show the estimated effect of the increase in the difference between liberals and conservatives when members of each ideological group are shown a historical narrative that aligns with their views. Liberal is an indicator that equals one if the participant reports being a liberal.

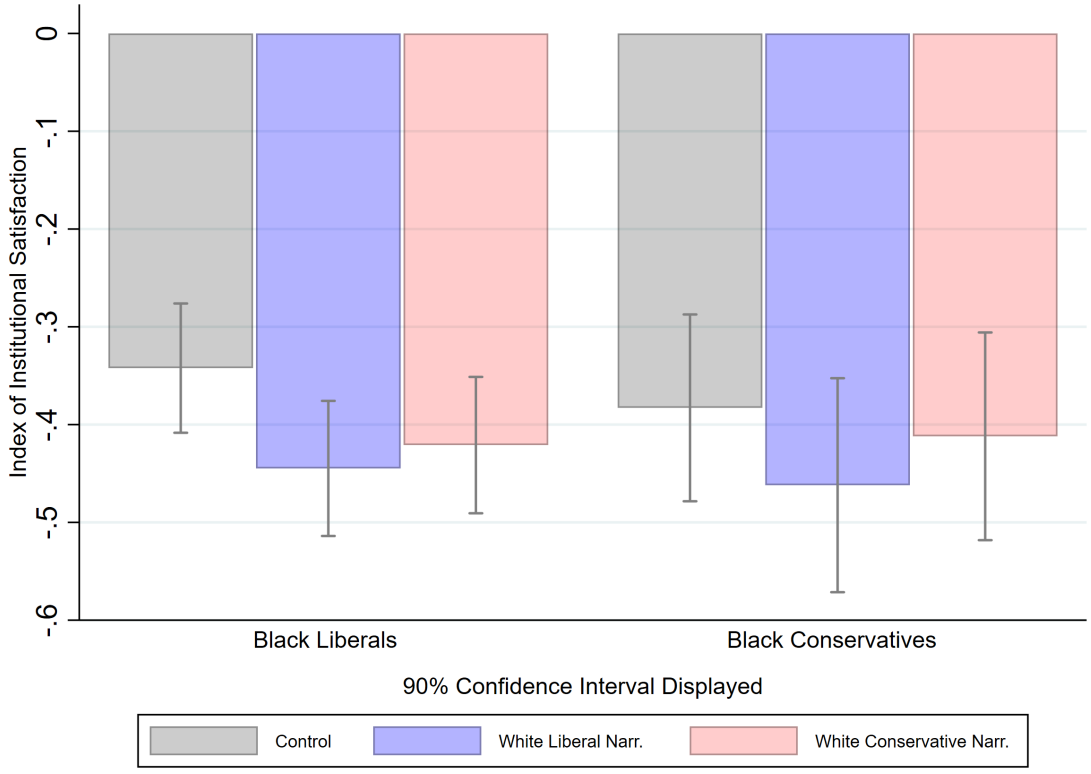
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dependent Var: Share of Money Allocated to Nonpartisan Cause					
	Liberals		Conservatives		Both Ideologies	
Liberal Narrative	−0.020*	−0.020*	0.013	0.015	0.013	0.014
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Conservative Narrative	0.014	0.013	0.013	0.015	0.013	0.014
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Liberal Narrative × Liberal					−0.033*	−0.036*
					(0.020)	(0.020)
Conservative Narrative × Liberal					0.002	-0.002
					(0.020)	(0.020)
Liberal					0.017	0.013
					(0.014)	(0.014)
Observations	3,168	3,168	2,736	2,736	5,904	5,904
Mean Dependent Variable	0.454	0.454	0.447	0.447	0.063	0.451
{(Liberal Narrative)+(Liberal Narrative × Liberal)} - {Conservative Narrative}					0.033*	0.038*
					(0.020)	(0.020)

Table A.6: Effects of historical narrative exposure on donating to a nonpartisan cause

Notes: The table shows the effects of exposing participants to different historical narratives on donating to a nonpartisan cause. The unit of observation is an individual, and data comes from the third round of surveys that we conducted in 2023. Each column reports results from a single OLS regression of the dependent variable in the column heading on the variables in the row headings. Liberal Narrative is an indicator that equals one for participants who were shown a historical narrative representative of the views of liberals. Conservative Narrative is an indicator that equals one for participants who were shown a historical narrative representative of the views of conservatives. See Table A.3 for additional details on these narratives. The last two rows in Columns 5 and 6 show the estimated effect of the increase in the difference between liberals and conservatives when members of each ideological group are shown a historical narrative that aligns with their views. Liberal is an indicator that equals one if the participant reports being a liberal.



(a)



(b)

Figure A.18: Effect of each historical narrative on reported institutional satisfaction.