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## **From South of the Mason-Dixon Line to South of the Equator: A Critical Exploration of the Transnational Contours of Confederate Memory**

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jordan P. Brasher entitled "From South of the Mason-Dixon Line to South of the Equator: A Critical Exploration of the Transnational Contours of Confederate Memory." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Geography.

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**From South of the Mason-Dixon Line to South of the Equator: A  
Critical Exploration of the Transnational Contours of Confederate  
Memory**

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jordan P. Brasher

May 2020

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## Abstract

The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, of right-wing populism, and incidences of white supremacist domestic terrorism associated with the presence of Confederate iconography since 2015 in the United States has brought much attention to the issue of Confederate memory. According to a study by the Southern Poverty Law Center, as of 2018, only eight percent of graduating high school seniors could correctly identify slavery as the primary cause of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). This speaks to a crisis of memory and identity around what the Confederate States of America (CSA) were and how we should remember the Confederacy today.

Yet, for all the scholarly work that has been done to understand the politics of Confederate memory in the United States, especially in the South, little known is the fact that thousands of Confederate soldiers and their families migrated to Brazil in light of the devastation of the war and the potential incorporation of formerly enslaved people into Southern society and politics associated with Reconstruction. Today, Confederate descendants in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil still celebrate their heritage with an annual festival called the *Festa Confederada*. A museum on the town square, too, narrates the Confederate migration from the perspective of descendants. The purpose of this dissertation is to broaden academic and public perspective on the Confederacy by exploring the racialized transnational contours of commemoration at these sites of Confederate memory.

This research is situated at the intersection of scholarly work in cultural-historical geography on the relationship between public memory, race and racism, heritage tourism, settler colonialism, Black Geographies, and regional identity. This dissertation advances understandings of public memory as socially constructed and negotiated by social groups competing over rights and recognition on the memorial landscape. Further, it examines how Confederate memory moves and takes shape across international boundaries and cross-culturally, and comes to resonate and make sense outside its traditional place of public memory in the American South. Finally, this dissertation offers sustained reflection on the challenges of working on issues of race in the Global South as a white male “gringo” American.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Background information .....	2
Geographic context and site description .....	4
Situating the research .....	7
Aims and key research questions .....	9
Dissertation outline .....	10
Statement of contributions .....	11
Methodology .....	13
Planned methods and divergence in fieldwork .....	15
Study limitations .....	15
Statement of positionality .....	16
Rationale for “article approach” .....	20
Works cited .....	24
<b>Chapter 1</b> Positionality and Participatory Ethics in the Global South: Critical Reflections on and Lessons Learned from Fieldwork Failure .....	28
Abstract .....	29
Introduction .....	29
Negotiating Positionality in the Field .....	31
Lessons Learned .....	39
(1) Think critically about every action you take in the field .....	39
(2) Be aware of the way technology is changing the dynamics and politics of reputation .....	40
(3) Take care of your mental, physical and emotional health in the field .....	41
(4) Always know to whom you are talking and with whom you are working .....	41
(5) Accept that your presence in the field may cause harm, “wring your hands of it”, and try to minimize it where possible .....	43
(6) Failure is normal and necessary .....	44
Concluding Reflections .....	44
Works cited .....	49
<b>Chapter 2</b> Contesting the Confederacy: Mobile Memory and the Making of Black Geographies in Brazil .....	52
Abstract .....	53
Introduction .....	53
History .....	55
The Festa Confederada .....	57
Charlottesville Tragedy Reverberates in Brazil .....	58
Making Black Geographies .....	60
Conclusion .....	62
Further Reading on the politics of memory and the Festa Confederada .....	64
Works cited .....	65



<b>Chapter 3</b> Creating “Confederate Pioneers”: A Spatial Narrative Analysis of Race, Settler Colonialism, and Heritage Tourism at the Museu da Imigração, Sana Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo .....	68
Abstract .....	69
Introduction.....	69
Museums and the making of settler colonial heritage .....	76
Settler colonialism in Latin America and Brazil .....	77
Weaving together the myths of the ‘Lost Cause’ and ‘racial democracy’ .....	82
Methods.....	84
Sense of place and commemorative atmosphere in the museum: confining a narrative.....	88
Creating Confederate pioneers and a settler narrative .....	93
A. The Lost Cause.....	95
B. Racial democracy.....	96
C. The settler narrative .....	97
Broader significance and context.....	100
Conclusion.....	103
Works Cited.....	107
<b>Chapter 4</b> Race, Affective Atmospheres, and Absent Presence: Racialized Tensions at the Annual <i>Festa Confederada</i> .....	116
Abstract .....	117
Introduction.....	117
Geographies of memory, affective atmosphere, and absent presence.....	122
Competing claims: slavery, racism, and the Confederate migration to Brazil .....	125
A. Introducing the memorialist authors .....	127
B. Critical historiographies of the migration .....	130
C. A brief history of the festival and local debates in Americana/Santa Bárbara d’Oeste over Confederate memory .....	133
Notes on methodology and positionality .....	137
Spatial-sensory pathways and the juxtaposition of affective atmospheres ...	139
A. The entryway: police presence, boundary actants, and geosemiotic assemblages .....	141
B. The celebration: tenseness and a mixture of emotions .....	143
C. The cemetery: “jumping on top of the dead” .....	147
Concluding remarks: toward sustainable management of difficult heritage ..	149
Works Cited .....	153
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	159
Intellectual Merit.....	161
Broader Impacts .....	164
Directions for future research .....	166
Works Cited .....	169
<b>Epilogue</b> .....	171
<b>APPENDIX</b> .....	177

<b>APPENDIX A: Figures .....</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>VITA .....</b>	<b>198</b>

## List of Figures

- Figure 0.1** Photo of Confederate monument at the Cemitério do Campo (Country Cemetery) with original Confederado family names inscribed ..... 178
- Figure 2.1** Photo of the ceremonial hoisting of the Confederate flag at the 2019 *Festa Confederada* ..... 179
- Figure 2.2** Members of the Americana chapter of UNEGRO protest the use of the Confederate flag at the annual *Festa Confederada* in 2019..... 180
- Figure 2.3** Photo of the *Cemitério do Campo* (Country Cemetery) in Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil ..... 181
- Figure 2.4** Women dressed in Antebellum-style hoop skirts and men in grey Confederate uniforms present the flags of the thirteen original Confederate states at the annual *Festa Confederada* in 2019 ..... 182
- Figure 2.5** Confederate kitsch for sale at the 2019 *Festa Confederada* ..... 183
- Figure 2.6** Confederate kitsch for sale alongside the yellow Gadsden flag, often associated with the American Tea Party ..... 184
- Figure 2.7** Banner greets visitors to the 2019 *Festa Confederada* by explaining what the flag “really means” – in both English and Portuguese ..... 185
- Figure 2.8** One of many pieces of literature exchanged by mail between Confederate American heritage preservation organizations and the Brazilian Fraternity of American Descendants ..... 186
- Figure 2.9** Members of UNEGRO protest the 2018 *Festa Confederada* with a sign that reads “For Zumbi, For Dandara, For Us!! Love Live Black Consciousness.”187
- Figure 2.10** Black Movement protestors pose with sign that says “Abaixo a Bandeira Confederada!” [Take Down the Confederate Flag], a slogan adopted from Black Lives Matter protestors in the United States ..... 188
- Figure 2.11** Protestors practice capoeira outside the entrance to the 2019 *Festa Confederada* ..... 189
- Figure 3.1** Map of field sites in Americana and Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil ..... 190
- Figure 3.2** Street view of the Museu da Imigração – located in a former prison – in Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil ..... 191
- Figure 3.3** Exhibit “The Early Times” at the Museu da Imigração displays photo of an enslaved man, listed only as “escravo” or slave ..... 192
- Figure 3.4** Photographs of the main room at the Museu da Imigração showing large artifacts in the center and dark corner where the exhibit displaying a photograph of the enslaved man is located..... 193
- Figure 4.1** Photo of young dancers wearing traditional Antebellum-style belle hoop skirts and grey Confederate uniforms at an early Confederate Festival .... 194
- Figure 4.2** Photo of a local newspaper article discussing the cancellation of the *Festa Confederada* due to the U.S. invasion of Iraq ..... 195
- Figure 4.3** Photo of the entrance to the *Festa Confederada* showing the Confederate and Gadsden flags which greet festivalgoers..... 196
- Figure 4.4** Photo of festivalgoer laying on the Gadsden flag ..... 197

# Introduction

## **Background Information**

Over the course of the last five years between 2015-2020, there has been a steep rise in right-wing populism and emboldened white supremacy across the globe. Accompanying this rise in the United States has been politically charged controversy over the display of Confederate iconography in public space that has reignited and brought public attention to underlying, unresolved racial tensions. The events of racially motivated domestic terrorism that took place in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015 and Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017 stand out as historic national moments of tension over Confederate memory. However, they were only the latest in a long line of debates over the meaning of Confederate iconography in public space in the United States. These unfortunate events have nevertheless drawn attention to unresolved racial tension over how to remember, forget, and interpret the difficult histories of slavery and racism and whose histories and contributions are valued on and through the memorial landscape.

While many consider conflicts over Confederate memory to be a national if not an exclusively Southern U.S. regional issue, this dissertation makes the case that Confederate memorialization and its attendant politics are a much more globalized phenomenon than most of the general public and even scholars recognize. Issues around Confederate memory cut across international borders and circulate cross-culturally, and have important implications for understanding white supremacy as a transnational, global force caught up in the rise of right-wing populism and extremism both within and outside the U.S. Yet, little research – and none in the field of geography since Jefferson (1928) – has examined Confederate memory outside its traditional place in the (southeastern) U.S. The Confederate States of America (C.S.A.) seceded from the United States, as declared in various forms by the seceding states but specifically

by the state of Mississippi below, to fight for the right to maintain the institution of chattel slavery as the basis of its political economy:

“Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world. Its labor supplies the product which constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of commerce of the earth. These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution, and was at the point of reaching its consummation. There was no choice left us but submission to the mandates of abolition, or a dissolution of the Union, whose principles had been subverted to work out our ruin. That we do not overstate the dangers to our institution, a reference to a few facts will sufficiently prove.”

*-A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union, American Battlefield Trust (1861/2020)*

The historical existence and present-day commemoration of the Confederacy cannot be separated from its explicit and self-admitted foundation on race-based chattel slavery. I argue in this dissertation that the ways people in both Brazil and the United States (mis)remember histories and geographies of slavery and racism linked to the expansive influence of the Confederacy are serious reflections of how contemporary issues of racism and white supremacy operate in the two countries today.

Romanticization and whitewashing of the brutality of slavery functions as a social mechanism for maintaining and re-entrenching traditional lines of racial power and shapes ongoing political realities, including the transnational contours of racism and global white supremacy.

Relatively unknown is the fact that thousands of Confederate soldiers and their families migrated to Brazil after the end of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) (Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995). As the last country in the Western Hemisphere to formally abolish chattel slavery in 1888 (Heille 2020), Brazil’s familiar political economy in part

made it an appealing migration destination for disgruntled Confederate soldiers and their families, whose lives and livelihoods were turned upside down by their defeat in the war, the end of the plantation agricultural economy, and ensuing Reconstruction (Jarnagin 2008; Saba 2012; Silva 2015; Brito 2015). Despite the passage of over 150 years, these descendants continue to memorialize their Confederate heritage in distinctly Antebellum and anachronistic ways, which whitewash the brutality of American and Brazilian slavery and the role and substantial influence of slavery in creating the conditions for and motivating the Confederate migration and settlement. As a result, this dissertation explores the globalized, transnational commemoration of a Confederate past through an examination of the local racial politics of the annual festival and local museum representation of the Confederate migration and settlement.

#### *Geographic Context and Site Description*

These migrant-settlers, who came to be called “Confederados” in Portuguese, formed autonomous communities in the interior of São Paulo, one of which retains the namesake of the place of origin – Americana. The other neighboring town is called Santa Bárbara d’Oeste. Today, more than 150 years after the end of the Civil War, descendants and members of the public still celebrate this Confederate heritage at the annual *Festa Confederada* (hereafter referred to invariably also as “festa”, “festival” or “Confederate Festival”) and many descendants can still trace their lineage through their surname to the original Confederados (Orizio 2001). In fact, many descendants enjoy finding their family name engraved on a large commemorative obelisk in the *Cemitério do Campo* (Country Cemetery) where the annual festival takes place (see Figure 0.1, Appendix A, p. 178).

The festival, which takes place each April, showcases women in long, flowing belle hoop skirts characteristic of the Antebellum period, men in Confederate battle uniforms, enthusiastically dancing the two-step, and singing Dixie. Festivalgoers enjoy traditional southern cuisine like fried chicken and biscuits alongside Brazilian staples like *farofa*, a toasted cassava or corn flour mixture. Brazilian Southern rock bands play the music of Johnny Cash, Allison Kraus, and Alan Jackson. It all happens on a large stage emblazoned with the emblem of the Confederate battle flag on the grounds of the Country Cemetery where the original Confederados are buried. Despite the fascinating nature of this obscure history and enduring commemorative event, very little is known about the Confederate Festival, or about the public commemoration and interpretation of the Confederate migration to Brazil, reflected in the lacuna of research published that addresses it.

As a result, this dissertation is the first study to explore the transnational contours of Confederate memory and make sense of the complex socio-political celebration of the Confederacy in Brazil today. Brazil, for its part, is also caught up in the global movement of right-wing populism, thanks in part to a large national corruption scandal that implicated the leftist Workers' Party president and high-ranking officials. That both the United States and Brazil, the two largest democracies in the Americas, are both in the throes of right-wing populist governments makes the topic of transnational Confederate memory even more critical to understand. The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to scholarship that broadens public perspective on the Confederacy and seeks to better understand its geographic expansiveness, scale, and politics. In other words, it explores the transnational contours of Confederate memory between the



southeastern U.S. and southeastern Brazil, from south of the Mason-Dixon Line to south of the Equator.

In addition to the festival itself, a local history museum in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste called the Museu da Imigração [Museum of Immigration] is also included within this dissertation research. The museum serves as a site for public memory and interpretation of the contested history of the migration, particularly over the role that the existence of slavery in Brazil played in motivating the Confederate migration and subsequent settlements. The museum's exhibits and interpretation were organized by the Fraternidade Descendência Americana (FDA), the same fraternal heritage organization responsible for organizing the annual festival. As a result, the museum is an important site for understanding how Confederate descendants make sense of the complex socio-political realities associated with the migration to Brazil and how that history is interpreted and represented to the members of the public who visit the museum.

Another key component of the geographic context that makes up the politics of Confederate memory in the region includes the public pressure that the *Movimento Negro* [Black Movement] puts on the FDA to register its indignation regarding the use of Confederate iconography at the festival and demand they stop using the contested symbol. The Movimento Negro refers to the diverse Afro-Brazilian social movements founded in the late 1970s (during the period of military dictatorship in Brazil) to advocate for the civil rights and recognition of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Brazilian culture (Covin 2006). A local chapter of this broader national movement affiliated with a university in Americana, which goes by the name UNEGRO (Union of Blacks for Racial Equality),

plays a key role in organizing the protests at the annual festival and bringing awareness to the use of the symbol. The efforts of this group play a significant role in the first two chapters of the dissertation as I explore my positionality in this work and the creative place-making practices Afro-Brazilians employ to counter the whitewashing of the memory of slavery and the use of Confederate iconography at the festival.

### *Situating the Research*

Unfortunately, for much of its disciplinary history, geography and geographers have neglected to engage in a full and critical study of chattel slavery, contributing to the process of whitewashing, downplaying, and sanitizing the history and geography of enslavement. Some of the rare early geographic studies of enslavement come from environmental deterministic perspectives and communicated a racist message that Black people are “stupid and incapable of little but simple routine labor” and framed enslavement as a natural and inevitable historical and geographic outcome (Emerson 1911: 15-16; Cleland 1920). Other geographers (Prunty 1955, 1956, 1963; Aiken 1998; Rehder 1999) studied enslavement from spatial perspectives that neglected its social aspects and held epistemological perspectives rooted in positivism that took a supposedly objective “view from nowhere” rational approach to spatial analysis (Feigl 2019). These studies had the unfortunate consequence of reifying dominant forms of knowledge production that presented information about the plantation landscape as fact without comment, social critique, or close attention to the relations of power that shaped plantation landscapes and their continuing legacies.

Fortunately, geographic scholarship has seen some advancement on this front in recent decades. Since the 1960s, geographers have increasingly grappled with the discipline’s racist, masculinist, and imperialist past through what have come to be

known as critical studies, and which emphasize social justice from diverse theoretical perspectives such as Marxism, feminism, Critical Race Theory, and postmodernism. Critical research on enslavement from geography and related disciplines like memory studies and tourism studies began to pick up steam in the late 1990s and 2000s, largely centered on studies and critiques of plantation sites operated as modern-day tourism destinations (Adams 1999, 2007; Butler 2001; Alderman and Modlin 2008, 2015; Butler, Carter, and Dwyer and Alderman 2008; Hanna 2015; Bright and Carter 2015; Potter 2015; Cook 2016 to name only a few). More recent work on the relationship between space, place, memory, and slavery has taken a number of different and fascinating directions, exploring for example the relationship between the development of the Blues music genre and plantation power in the Mississippi Delta (Woods 1998/2017), the “traces” of slavery on the cultural landscape through hidden trails and sites of resistance (Ginsburg 2007), the study of Black women’s geographies including the effects of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (McKittrick 2006), the plantation landscape as panopticon (Randle 2011), and counter-narratives of slavery at plantation tourism sites (Cook 2016).

Additionally, a new subfield of geography has emerged in recent years that has come to be called Black Geographies. Black Geographies draws attention to the longstanding links between Blackness, Black Studies, and geography and focuses on exploring the ways in which “racial violences shape but do not wholly define” a Black sense of place (McKittrick 2011: 947). Black Food Geographies in particular has been the subject of much scholarly attention in recent years, examining the structural forces that determine food access and highlighting how Black people navigate and resist

unequal food distribution systems, linking issues of food access to systemic racism, gentrification, and the politics of transnational food corporations (Ramírez 2014; Shabazz 2015; Reese 2019). The creative place-making practices that Black and other people of color employ to survive and thrive within structures of white supremacist power and dominance are a key subject of inquiry within Black Geographies (Shabazz 2015; Bledsoe et al. 2017; Allen et al. 2019; Hawthorne 2019).

### **Aims and Key Research Questions**

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to understand how Confederate memory moves and takes shape in a transnational context. To accomplish this, I pursue the following research questions as points of departure:

1. What challenges arise when conducting fieldwork on race and memory in the Global South as a white male “gringo” from the Global North? How can such challenges be addressed? What can be learned from “fieldwork failure” and what is the productive potential of such failure?
2. How do Confederate memory and white supremacy move and take shape across international borders and cross-culturally? How is the festival being contested by members of racial minorities and especially the *Movimento Negro* [Black Movement]? What kinds of creative placemaking practices, or Black Geographies, do activists create?
3. Given how little critical scholarship has been written about the Confederados, how does this migration and settlement fit into broader transnational histories and geographies of white supremacy? How have the history and geography of the migration and settlement been presented in academic scholarship and in public discussion? What patterns of inequity persist in these

- representations and to what extent is the role of slavery highlighted, downplayed, or ignored?
4. How does the Museu da Imigração represent the history of the Confederate migration? To what extent are racism and slavery discussed in the museum's exhibits? To what extent are dominant discourses of race in Brazil, like the idea of "racial democracy" present? To what extent is the dominant "Lost Cause" narrative present? How does the spatial organization of the museum influence its overall narrative?
  5. What is the commemorative atmosphere like at the *Festa Confederada* and how does it affect those who attend? How is the annual *Festa Confederada* understood and interpreted by members of the public and festivalgoers? What role do race and racism play in shaping an "affective atmosphere"?

*Dissertation outline*

Together, these questions move me to offer a theoretically informed and empirically grounded perspective on the transnational contours of Confederate memory. I engage each group of questions in the four following chapters. Chapter 1 addresses the first group of questions by exploring the role that my positionality as a white male "gringo" from the Global North played in gathering data and working with local populations with competing political interests. It also provides a few lessons learned from fieldwork failure. Chapter 2 addresses the second group of questions by exploring how Confederate memory has moved from the U.S. to Brazil through various fraternal and heritage organizations. It also provides insight into how Afro-Brazilian activists from the local chapter of the Black Movement challenge the public use of Confederate iconography and the creative placemaking practices in which they engage to create

alternative spaces of memory. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 all address the third group of questions, placing academic and public debates in Brazil around the use of Confederate iconography into dialogue with the politics of commemoration and representation at the Confederate museum and festival. Chapter 3 addresses the fourth set of questions by interrogating the spatial narrative of the local museum, focusing especially on how it creates a trope of “Confederate pioneers” and reifies settler colonial interpretations of the past. Chapter 4 probes the final group of questions by exploring the politics of atmosphere at the festival and the multiple (and sometimes contradictory) senses of place constructed through the built landscape of the festival, the felt sense of racialized tension amongst festivalgoers, and the absent presence of the memories of slavery and racism.

#### *Statement of contributions*

My dissertation builds upon the work of the many scholars working at the intersection of critical historical geographies of slavery and Black Geographies to understand how the commemoration of the Confederacy in Brazil fits into the histories and geographies of slavery, racism, and white supremacy in the Americas. I also draw upon the field of geographies of memory (in Chapters 2, 3, and 4), the study of how and why societies remember specific histories and how these commemorative acts shape and are shaped by the cultural landscape. Additionally, I contribute to critical heritage tourism studies (in Chapter 3), a branch of tourism studies oriented toward understanding the dynamics of power and politics at cultural heritage sites and tourism destinations. Further, my dissertation approach is also “critical” in the sense that it draws upon social theory including settler colonialism and critical race theory, and I distinguish critical historical geography and geographies of memory from other forms of

historical geographic scholarship in that I focus more on *how* people in the present selectively remember, celebrate, downplay, or ignore the past than on the actual histories themselves. In the case of researching slavery, I argue that the ways people in both Brazil and the United States (mis)remember histories of slavery and racism have serious implications for how contemporary issues of racism and white supremacy operate and remain unresolved in the two countries. This is particularly resonant at a political moment in which, at the time of this writing (January 2020), Brazil's Minister of Culture was recently fired for paraphrasing a speech from ill-famed Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels.

Given the wide geographic scope of places and the range of issues covered in this dissertation, like the Southern U.S., southeastern Brazil, and issues like the creative placemaking practices of the African diaspora and the politics of public commemoration, this study contributes to scholarship in Southern Studies, Africana Studies, and Latin American Studies. Given both the importance of the culture of the U.S. South in the American and global cultural landscape (Olsson forthcoming), and the history of blame and shame cast on the South for undesirable characteristics the entire country faces (i.e., racism, poverty, violence, etc.), it is important to understand how American Southern political culture is understood, interpreted, and appropriated abroad. Additionally, scholars of Latin America and the African diaspora can benefit from understanding how the history and iconography of the slaveholding South and of the Confederacy in particular come to be appropriated and assume new cultural meaning in other cultural and geographic contexts. As I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, both the United States and Brazil have much work to do in terms of coming to grips with

the lasting legacy that enslavement and colonization has had on both countries in different but often parallel ways.

### **Methodology**

This dissertation draws on empirical fieldwork and mixed qualitative methods conducted in the cities of Americana, Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, and Piracicaba in the interior of the state of São Paulo, Brazil between September 2018 and June 2019. I conducted 25 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members of the Americana chapter of UNEGRO (Union of Black People for Equality), which I also sometimes refer to as the *Movimento Negro* [Black Movement]; the Fraternidade Descendência Americana (FDA); Confederate descendants; museum staff at the *Museu da Imigração* [Immigration Museum]; and *Festa Confederada* festivalgoers. In addition, I observed UNEGRO meetings as well as the *Festa Confederada*, where I took photographs of the event.

At the *Museu da Imigração*, I conducted an auto-ethnography and spatial narrative analysis of the museum's exhibits, including texts, photographs, and historic artifacts. To understand how the museum spatially narrates the history of the Confederate emigration, I visited the museum twelve times, taking photographs of the museum's exhibits, speaking with museum workers, and taking meticulous fieldnotes on my experiences. Additionally, I adapted traditional discourse analysis, which emphasizes the value of looking deeply into exhibit texts, and views objects and artifacts themselves as texts that communicate meaning within the context of the museum as a spatially grounded place of memory. Adapted from Smith (2019), spatial narrative analysis builds on traditional discourse analysis by also considering the spatial design and arrangement of exhibits as reflections of underlying power relations. The



result of this analysis is often called a “spatial narrative.” These methods are elaborated further in Chapter 3.

I also conducted archival research at a number of museums and libraries in the region, including the *Centro de Memória* [Memory Center] attached to the *Museu da Imigração*, and the *Biblioteca Pública Municipal Maria Aparecida de Almeida Nogueira* [Public Municipal Library], all in Santa Bárbara d’Oeste. I also conducted archival research at the *Centro Cultural Martha Watts* [Martha Watts Cultural Center] in neighboring Piracicaba. Additionally, I gathered archival data from an online database that is part of the *Fundação Romi* [Romi Foundation] in Americana. Although the center was closed for the duration of my fieldwork, their online database of digitized photographs and newspaper clippings proved useful to my overall archival data collection.

Finally, I employed ethnographic methods over the course of my ten-month fieldwork period. In addition to collecting qualitative data, I also intensely studied Portuguese, made friends with local people, and travelled around to different regions of Brazil. Language training and cultural immersion proved invaluable not only for satisfying the requirements of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) David L. Boren Fellowship but also for getting a deeper sense of how people think about race and understand the Confederate migration and the use of Confederate symbols in the region. I kept a digital diary of my experiences meeting new people and recorded my thoughts in reactions to interviews with participants. These fieldnotes proved invaluable, especially for discussing the challenges associated with negotiating my positionality.

### *Planned Methods and Divergence in Fieldwork*

Originally, I intended to conduct semi-structured interviews with a larger number of festivalgoers, and I even trained and paid a team of four research assistants to help with conducting a greater number of interviews at the festival event itself. Additionally, I had planned to display an interactive dry-erase message board in which participants could write on the board one or two words or a short phrase describing their expectations for the festival. However, due to circumstances associated with my difficulty in negotiating my positionality in the field, which I describe in further detail in Chapter 1, I was not permitted to gather the full scope of qualitative data I had intended to collect at the festival event. Instead, I took advantage of my time at the festival to recruit participants in person by briefly describing my project to them and requesting their contact information to follow up with a phone interview. These adapted methods proved fruitful and in hindsight, I was able to gather more than enough data to complete this dissertation project and answer the questions I initially posed. Interviews were conducted in both English and Portuguese, depending on the preference of the participant, and transcribed by a third party. I translated all qualitative data myself.

### **Study Limitations**

This study is limited in several ways and is in no way a comprehensive examination of the transnational politics of Confederate memory, nor covers the full scope of how this dissertation research could have been undertaken differently, under different circumstances or by a different researcher. First, the sample size of research participants willing to participate in my study (25) was below the targeted participant population for interviews (50), given the circumstances described in Chapter 1 that led to my inability to conduct the full scope of interviews I initially planned to conduct at the

2019 Festa Confederada. However, based on the richness of the data contained within the 25 interviews and on the other sources from which I drew (i.e., archival sources, discourse analysis, autoethnography), it was still possible to gather enough data to write the chapters comprising this study.

Another limitation of this study is that although I conducted the interviews in Portuguese, Portuguese is my second language, so there were often times in the interview in which I asked the participant to repeat themselves and I did not always have the forethought to ask follow-up questions as quickly or smoothly as I would have liked to. Still, I feel confident that my Portuguese proficiency level (rated as low-advanced by a U.S. government language exam) was adequate to conduct the interviews and gather the data necessary to write this dissertation.

Finally, the limitations of this study include the unknowable implications of the ways that results and findings are shaped by who does or does not agree to participate in the study, how forthright they choose to be, and what they share (Crang and Cook 2011). Indeed, on more than one occasion, prospective participants declined to be interviewed or agreed to be interviewed but with the condition that they not be recorded.

### **Statement of Positionality**

It has become widespread practice within human geography to examine one's own position as a researcher in relation to the research project and participants. This type of reflection has been motivated by critiques of aspirations to objectivity in research and claims to absolute, universal, or objective knowledge. However, social constructivist scholars remind us that knowledge itself, and the attendant processes of knowledge production, are only ever partial and always "situated" in the socio-political location of

the researcher and the assemblage of power relations that the researcher inhabits (Parr 2020).

To avoid the predispositions toward objectivity and to thoroughly situate knowledges produced in research, feminist and other critical scholars have encouraged researchers to implement rigorous and systematic reflexivity – understood as the “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher” (England 1994: 82; Rose 1997). It involves locating oneself in relation to the work and then reflecting deeply on the ways in which one’s positionality may influence how research is approached, what kinds of knowledges or framings of those knowledges that participants may reveal to the researcher, and the writing of the research itself. In addition to the epistemological reasons for doing so, some scholars have noted that reflecting critically on one’s role in the research can also provide opportunities for learning about and improving the research process itself (England 1994). Though reflexivity is regarded as an essential part of research design and implementation for critical geographers, there is not widespread agreement on exactly how to do it (Rose 1997).

In the remainder of this section, I attempt to describe in detail my role in relationship to the research project, keeping in mind that according to England (1994), a researcher’s biography directly affects the research in at least two ways: 1) one’s personal characteristics allow for and even prioritize (often unintentionally) some types of data over others, and 2) one’s background may allow access to information that differently positioned researchers cannot access. In light of this, all analysis and commentary in this dissertation come from the perspective of a white, middle-class,

North American male; many of my friends and research participants in Brazil enjoyed reminding me of my outsider status as a “gringo.” My personal background influenced the selection of this topic of inquiry, given my own personal connection to the Southern United States and the fact that I have family members who fought for the Confederacy during the U.S. Civil War. At times, my ability to introduce myself as a Confederate descendant from the U.S. eased my access to certain forms of information and participants, especially within the Fraternity of American Descendants. Once during fieldwork before conducting a key interview with a member of the organization’s leadership, upon telling them that I was a Confederate descendant from Tennessee, they immediately informed me that I was “*em casa* [at home]” and that they had nothing to worry about from me, given that many recent outsiders who had come poking around for information had presented them in the media in ways that frustrated or angered many descendants.

Other times, however, negotiating my positionality proved quite difficult and disallowed access to certain potential participants and information. In working with members of the Black Movement and attending their organizing meetings, I was regularly reminded of my outsider status and at times had difficulty earning the trust of the activists, who were unsure whether I was truly on their side politically or just looking to benefit from their work. However, at the same time, my status as a North American academic with access to resources from my university’s library and English language proficiency proved to be an aspect of my identity that some activists wished to leverage for their cause and benefit. For example, as UNEGRO organizers were drafting a manifesto against the use of Confederate iconography, they sought my advice and help

in framing the historical background and current issues over the use of the symbol in the United States, which I willingly provided.

Additionally, research participants often asked probing questions to locate me ideologically in relationship to their opinions to determine exactly how to respond to my questions. For example, upon my first visit to the *Museu da Imigração*, I was accompanied by the museum's art educator as I explored the exhibits for the first time. Although the art educator did not have a formal scripted tour, she offered to answer any questions I might have about the museum. So, I asked whether she thought that the museum represented well the relationship between the Confederate migration and slavery. She laughed nervously, and before responding, asked me whether I preferred Obama or Trump as U.S. President. When I responded that I preferred President Obama, she then offered a sigh of relief and gave me her answer, which was that no, the museum does not represent this connection well, nor do any museums throughout Brazil for that matter, because slavery is not something that people like to learn about or be confronted with in museums. This sort of "litmus test" to determine my ideological positioning was something in which a number of participants engaged, sometimes by asking about U.S. politics in this way and other times by creating their own sort of test to determine how receptive I might be to their answers, and perhaps whether they felt safe to be honest with me.

I go into further detail with specific examples of the difficulty in negotiating my positionality in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. While researcher reflexivity is necessary to unpack the potential implications of encounters between the researcher and the researched, no exercise in reflexivity can ever entirely draw out the complexities of

these encounters (England 1994; Rose 1997). Instead of taking an exhaustive approach to unpacking how every single axis of my identity could have impacted the research, I have focused here and in Chapter 1 on highlighting what I believe to be the key aspects of my positionality that shaped the research. After all, as a researcher I can never know everything about myself or how I am perceived in the field or why participants respond how they do. The goal of reflexivity after all is not to fully understand or control research encounters but to bring some measure of transparency and honesty to the research and knowledge production process, recognizing that researcher positionality is not determined by the researcher alone (Rose 1997).

### **Rationale for the Article Approach**

The decision to write the dissertation as a series of individually publishable peer-reviewed articles came out of a series of multiple conversations and extended discussions with Dr. Derek Alderman, my dissertation advisor. While we considered the advantages and disadvantages of the options provided by the UTK Graduate School (the article approach or the more traditional manuscript style), I ultimately chose to pursue publishing a series of separate articles. I chose this option because I felt that each of the aforementioned clusters of research questions were distinct enough to deserve their own analysis and space to be developed as research papers that stand alone on their own. Additionally, each set of questions required their own theoretical frameworks for analysis based on the unique empirical data gathered from the festival, the museum, and the archives. Although inevitably some chapters end up addressing aspects of more than one cluster of research questions, by limiting each chapter to one primary research goal and using the most suitable methods and theories to achieve that

goal, each is conceptually and empirically strengthened. It also helps to clarify and focus the research by answering one specific and narrow set of questions at a time.

Additionally, the article approach allows me to study a vast topic – the transnational racial politics of Confederate memory – from multiple angles using a variety of methods. This approach allows me to study transnational Confederate memory by using discourse analysis, (auto-)ethnographic methods, spatial narrative analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observational and photographic fieldwork. I am also able to draw upon diverse theoretical frameworks from the literature and intertwine them as they best inform my empirical observations and analyses.

Moreover, I chose the article approach because it allows me to recalibrate the way I communicate as a scholar. I am able to write for multiple, divergent audiences, diversify the impact of my work, and as Dr. Alderman says, “be nimble” as a researcher. Being nimble means cultivating writing and communication skills that transcend the traditional boundaries of academic communication. Throughout my graduate career, I have developed skills in public writing and communication that allow me to reach wider public audiences outside those with privileged access to paywalled peer-reviewed journals. For example, Chapter 2 of this dissertation is published in the open-access, peer-reviewed journal *FOCUS on Geography* which utilizes multi-media content, maps, photos, and videos and operates as a digitally modernized version of the traditional paper magazine. The article approach allows me to publish part of the dissertation in a journal like this, which emphasizes jargon-free language and is geared toward an “informed general audience interested in geographic research and exploration” (FOCUS website, 2020).



Finally, I chose the article approach for pragmatic reasons. The article approach allowed me to publish one of the chapters and submit others for publication while still finishing the dissertation. Chapter 2 is already available online and Chapter 1 is in revision in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* for a special issue on “hen theory and reality collide: tales of theory and the field.” Additionally, Chapter 3 has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. I hope to submit Chapter 4 for publication in *Emotion, Space and Society*.

Each of the aforementioned journals comprises different audiences, and as a result has different expectations about which specific literatures with which the work published in each journal should engage. For this reason, the chapters in this dissertation read differently and conform to the expected norms established by each journal in terms of word length, framing, and audience. While this is true for all chapters, it is especially true of Chapter 1, which has been developed for a specific special issue in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* on “when theory collides with reality in the field.” The individual chapters that comprise this dissertation thus read differently because they are written for different audiences on different platforms and conform to different journals’ distinct expectations.

In summary, my dissertation investigates the little-known historical geography and politics of memory around the Confederate migration from the U.S. South to southeastern Brazil, through a focus on sites of memory, the creative place-making practices and protests of Afro-Brazilians, the spatial narrative of the migration and settlement presented by a local museum, the concept of “affective atmosphere” at the annual *Festa Confederada*, and the challenges of doing research on race as a white

North American male in the Global South. By concentrating on the politics of race and memory around celebrations of the Confederacy, ultimately this research advocates for historical responsibility and challenges geographies of white supremacy and exclusion via the largely unremarked and unremembered histories of enslaved people and communities. It advances the argument that, for former slaveholding societies interested in coming to grips with the lasting, unresolved legacies of chattel slavery on present day politics, it is crucial that its citizens have access to a more socially just and complete history and geography of slavery and white supremacy.

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**Chapter 1**  
**Positionality and Participatory Ethics in the Global South: Critical Reflections on  
and Lessons Learned from Fieldwork Failure**

Chapter 1, in full, has been conditionally accepted for publication in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* for the special issue “When theory and reality collide: tales of theory and the field.” The length of the article reflects the special issue’s 5,000-word limit on invited essays for the special issue. The dissertation author is the sole author.

### **Abstract**

This essay is a critical reflection on positionality, participatory ethics and fieldwork failure in the Global South. It argues that the collision of our academic theories with socio-political realities in the field cannot be separated from and often includes who we are and what we think we can do as researchers. It explores how my theoretical understandings of my positionality as a white, male doctoral student from the United States were applied and challenged during my fieldwork in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil. I explore the difficulties of negotiating my positionality amongst several different groups of people with competing political interests and ideologies at the annual Festa Confederada – a festival that celebrates US southern heritage and culture. I critically reflect on how my failure to negotiate the various axes of my identity with the local chapter of the Movimento Negro (Black Movement) and with the Confederate Festival’s organizers revealed political-ideological differences within the Movimento Negro and resulted in my being barred from conducting research at the annual festival. In an effort to be as transparent and self-critical as possible, this essay also explores valuable and sometimes embarrassing lessons learned that other researchers from the Global North should heed before entering the field.

**Keywords: positionality, participatory ethics, Global South, fieldwork failure**

### **Introduction**

In response to the special call for papers in this issue on when theory collides with reality in the field, this essay is a critical reflection on positionality, participatory ethics, and fieldwork failure in the Global South. It responds to growing calls for reflexivity in cultural geographic research by taking seriously the implications that the negotiation of positionality has on the theoretical development and outcomes of the research. In fact, I argue that considerations of the challenges to the theoretical underpinnings we bring into the field must also include questions of positionality and participatory research ethics, since who we are and the identities we bring into the field cannot be separated from the theoretical approaches we take or the kinds of knowledge we create. Additionally, following Sultana (2007), I argue that concerns around the



negotiation of positionality and participatory ethics are “even more important in the context of multiple axes of difference, inequalities, and geopolitics, where the ethics and politics involved in research across boundaries and scales need to be heeded and negotiated in order to achieve more ethical research practices” (p. 374).

What are the participatory ethics of conducting critical research on racism in the Global South as a white male North American? How does positionality influence access to certain people and spaces, the ways that participants interact with you, the ways you take up space in their lives physically, emotionally, and politically? How are postgraduate students from the Global North being prepared to ethically negotiate our positionality in the field? These are important questions which I explore through critical reflection on my own fieldwork failure and my struggle to negotiate my positionality in relation to the various groups of participants with competing political interests.

Despite some important contributions to discussions of fieldwork issues in geography – including the special issue in *Geographical Review* organized by DeLyser and Starrs (2001), and more recent pieces by France and Haigh (2018), and Frazier (2019), there remains a lacuna in geographic scholarship on the various issues researchers will face in the field when theory collides with reality. This essay responds to calls for more transparency in fieldwork by breaking geography’s “culture of silence” around fieldwork dilemmas (Caretta and Jokinen 2017) and pulling back the curtains on my own embarrassing mistakes, a rarity in a neoliberal university research publishing industry model (Caretta et al. 2018) dominated by egos and professional reputations and dependent on the publication of positive results in prominent journals for job security, promotion, and tenure. In the same way that field experience does not

automatically legitimize knowledge, fieldwork failure does not “automatically subvert the ability to produce knowledge from the experience” (Frazier 2019, pg. 10). Researchers have as much or more to learn from other people’s failures in the field than from the most cited publications in top-tier journals. This is particularly true for those of us who come from the Global North to do work in the Global South while trying to learn a new language and navigate new cultural norms in the field while minimizing the reproduction of existing historic and current colonial power relations between ourselves and our participants.

### **Negotiating Positionality in the Field**

Positionality refers to how one’s position within the social and political context of the field – in terms of identity markers like socioeconomic status, race, nationality, gender, sexuality, and ability status, among others – shapes the way that participants interact with you, whether they do so at all, what they share with you, and ultimately the results of the research (Rose 1997). As such, positionality includes the theory of self, or how we imagine ourselves as researchers in relationship to the identities and life experiences of our participants. This includes the limits of what we think we can accomplish and what we think we can do as researchers in the field. In this section I will briefly discuss how my theory of self – my positionality – collided with reality in the field in unexpected and challenging ways.

At the time of this writing I am a twenty-six-year-old white male graduate student at a department of Geography in the United States, finishing up a nine-month stint of dissertation fieldwork in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil. Before I started this project, I had mostly been interested in understanding conflicts around the politics of race, place, and public memory in the southern USA, especially the controversies around

(re)naming places and (re)moving monuments that commemorate Confederate soldiers, slaveowners and other white supremacists on college campuses and in public places. In a conversation in 2016, a fellow graduate student told me about a group of people called the Confederados who migrated from the southern USA to Brazil at the end of the Civil War, and today still hold an annual festival commemorating southern heritage and culture that features the contested flag (see Jefferson 1928, Harter 1985, Dawsey and Dawsey 1995, Jarnagin 2008, Saba 2012, and Silva 2015 for more on the Confederados). At the time of that conversation, a white supremacist had recently murdered nine African American worshippers in a Charleston, South Carolina church and posted pictures online of himself waving the Confederate flag. Later, in 2017 the tragic murder of anti-racist Heather Heyer in Charlottesville, Virginia at the protest of the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee sparked a new iteration of public debate about Confederate symbols and heritage that garnered international attention from news media.

Throughout the fall of 2017, I began developing grant proposals that would allow me to explore the transnational politics of Confederate memory in Brazil. In the spring semester of 2018, I took my first Portuguese class at my university in the middle of my doctoral program and learned that I had received the funding I needed to spend two months studying Portuguese intensively in the USA and nine months in the field in Brazil doing fieldwork to research how people who attended the Confederate Festival interpreted and understood the flag's meaning. In my dissertation proposal defense, I was asked about how I might negotiate my positionality doing the work. I told my dissertation committee members that I did not think I would have much problem

negotiating my positionality because my identity as a white male Southerner with descendants who fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War could serve as an inroad to building trust with the Confederate Festival organizers and working with them. At the time, I did not know that the Movimento Negro (Black Movement) had begun to protest the Confederate flag in reaction to the Charlottesville tragedy in 2017. The Movimento Negro (Black Movement) refers to the diverse Afro-Brazilian social movements founded to advocate for the rights and recognition of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Brazilian culture (Covin 2006).

It was not until I arrived on the ground in Brazil with an intermediate level of Portuguese that I first learned that controversy around the use of the Confederate flag at the festival had flared up. In 2018, activists associated with a local chapter of the Movimento Negro called UNEGRO, the Union of Black People for Equality, held their first protest of the use of the Confederate flag outside the festival. I decided to try to understand why the flag was being protested and to get a sense of the transnational and local politics at work by meeting with members of UNEGRO, listening to their needs and concerns about the flag's use, and when prompted, offering verbal explanations and written memos that outlined elements of dominant and subaltern conflicts over Confederate memory in the United States. Over the course of six months, I was invited to attend UNEGRO meetings by the group's leader, whom I first contacted through Facebook. She is a history professor and researcher, and over time we earned each other's trust through sharing resources and perspectives on the Confederate flag's history individually and together at UNEGRO group meetings. I was often the only white person who attended the meetings, and always the only white person who is also a

“gringo” (the term generally applied to white foreigners, typically Anglo-Americans, see Simai and Hook 2011 for more) from the Global North, so I viewed my role as one of listening to the group and only contributing when addressed. Over time, I began to feel comfortable more openly sharing my perspectives with the group and was even invited to participate in other events like the cultural event they helped organize on the Day of Black Consciousness. The Black Consciousness Day commemorative event included presentations of Afro-Brazilian dance, song, and other art forms, and its primary purpose was to increase public consciousness regarding the cultural traditions and political subjectivity of Afro-descendants in Brazilian society. The UNEGRO leader even agreed to allow me to interview her for my project. I felt that despite my positionality, and sometimes because of it, as a white North American researcher I had begun to earn members’ trust and build a professional working relationship with the group. On one hand, my race and nationality sometimes made it difficult to earn UNEGRO members’ trust. Members were often understandably doubtful about my intentions and questioned whether I was truly politically aligned with their organization’s anti-racist goals. Admittedly, when I entered the field, I did not know that the group was involved with political activity in relation to Confederate memory, so I felt that I was learning and adapting on the fly. They would often tease me by saying things like, “We’ll see if he really is one of the good whites” or “You know that being here is the very minimum you can do, right?” These interactions seemed to serve both as reminders of my privilege and my status as a group outsider; however, they also helped me build relationships with group members.

I imagined my goal in working with the group was to both gather data through participant-observation and semi-structured interviews and play whatever supportive role in their movement that I could by listening to their expectations and offering whatever help I might be able to provide. I thought that I would be able to do this and still secure permission from the festival organizers to set up a research table to interview festivalgoers. I did not think of myself as a “neutral” researcher but thought that somehow I would still be able to present myself in selective ways to both the festival organizers and the Black activists so that I could gather data and learn from both groups. The idea was that I could advocate for UNEGRO’s interests without the festival organizers knowing. However, as I recount in this essay, this became increasingly untenable as selective self-presentation requires a certain degree of political savviness that is difficult to muster in a second language and in a rapidly changing political environment I was not prepared to encounter.

As I mentioned, my status as a PhD candidate with access to American university training and information, and English language capabilities, provided key benefits that UNEGRO members wished to leverage. For example, in developing a written manifesto against the use of the Confederate flag at the festival, the group solicited my help with its writing, drawing on my English language proficiency and personal background – which includes traceable Confederate lineage (though to my knowledge none of my ancestors migrated to Brazil) – to find primary resources and translate them into Portuguese for the group’s public position in the manifesto. In this way my position within an American university, linguistic proficiency, area of expertise and personal familial history helped build my trust and form a working relationship with

the group. This is part of an established form of scholar-activism around the “politics of resourcefulness” in which scholar-activists channel the resources and privileges afforded academics to advancing the work of nonacademic collaborators (Derickson and Routledge 2015). I saw and presented myself as a scholar-activist working with UNEGRO, but when in contact with festival organizers, I knew that any mention of activism or politics would be unwelcome, so I presented myself as a curious but naïve Confederate ancestor (which I am) who also happened to be doing a graduate thesis on the Confederate migration. The obvious problem arose when trying to work with both sides, presenting myself as a scholar-activist in one context and a curious observer in the other.

During the same time, I was also working with Confederate Festival organizers to build contacts and obtain access to the cemetery where the annual Confederate Festival is held. Gaining the trust of the festival organizers from the Fraternity of American Descendants was not difficult at first. As soon as I told the fraternity’s ex-president that I was a Confederate descendant, he immediately let his guard down, telling me that I was “at home” with him and giving me full access to the fraternity’s headquarters, other research contacts, and agreeing to an interview with me. However, when the ex-president signed his consent agreement before his interview with me, he wrote on it “I do not authorize the use of these data for racial issues or anything associated with the Ku Klux Klan.” This presented a participatory ethical dilemma and certainly did not align with my theory of myself that I brought into the field. After all, he had put me at ease by telling me that as a Confederate descendant myself, I was “at home” with him, then unexpectedly introduced this caveat to his consent, signaling a

lack of complete trust. Should I have stopped right there and told him that my work addressed racial issues, risking my ability to continue working on the project at all and breaking the fraternity's trust, or continued with the interview? I decided to do the interview.

Two weeks before the annual Confederate Festival I made a series of critical mistakes in the field that caused a substantial fieldwork failure. I was invited by a professor whom I had met at a university function in São Paulo to give a lecture presenting an overview of the transnational politics of Confederate memory. I naively accepted the invitation without considering the consequences of giving a public lecture that could destroy the trust I had built with the Confederate Festival organizers, who did not know about the critical nature of my work. The university, without my consent, permission or foreknowledge created an extremely provocative flyer that included my name, the title of my talk, and the name of my university on a solid black background with a burning cross next to it. I found out about the image when the leader of UNEGRO, with whom I had built much trust, received the image in a text message from her daughter, who attended the university. She asked if I would share the image in a group text message to get word out about the talk and solicit participation of those within the movement.

Out of a desire to continue my working relationship with UNEGRO and maintain members' trust, I shared the image with the group. What I did not know at the time is that within that group message there were many members from many different local collectives – not just UNEGRO – with various and divergent political ideologies working together for the common cause to protest the use of the Confederate flag. The group



message contained people who did not know me or my work, and who responded with understandable confusion and even outright hostility at the notion that a white North American was working on a project about racism without their knowledge or participation. Although it is not possible to work with every group who might conceivably have an interest in the topic, going into the field as an outsider, I wanted to understand as much of the politics of Confederate commemoration as possible. This desire to do it all – to know as much as possible about a contested political controversy, to gather as much data as possible, and to work with both sides – became untenable as research method and praxis.

My next critical mistake was asking people in the group to not share the image because of the damage it would do to my relationship with the Confederate Festival organizers whose permission I needed to continue it. One member in the group message resented this request and sent the image directly to the lead Confederate Festival organizer, who was alarmed and barred me from conducting research at the festival, and set off an ideological debate among the different factions of the Black Movement about the value of research that could be conducted from inside the Confederate Festival for their movement, and the role, ability, and place of a white North American to do that work. Some members of the group message were significantly more militant than others, and were politically and philosophically opposed to a white foreigner from the Global North conducting antiracist research. It also meant that rather than focusing their (or our) efforts solely on making a meaningful intervention in public debate or substantive resistance to the use of the Confederate flag, much attention and emotional and intellectual energy was directed toward me and my place within the local

political landscape. I lost not only the ability to gather the bulk of data I had planned to gather through semi-structured interviews with festivalgoers and an interactive “graffiti board” that asked visitors to write what they thought about the festival on a dry-erase board, but also risked the trust I had spent months building with both the activists in the movement and the Confederate Festival organizers. It left me with a bruised ego, broken trust both from movement participants and festival organizers, and a sense of guilt that my presence in the field had done more harm than good.

### **Lessons Learned**

My fieldwork failed. However, this does not mean that there is nothing to learn from the experience as a scholar, or that the time and energy I spent in the field went to waste. The following reflection will offer some critical and concrete strategies for other researchers headed into the field to keep in mind and to practice to maximize the productivity of time spent in the field and to minimize the potential for harm that one’s presence may cause.

#### ***(1) Think critically about every action you take in the field.***

This might seem obvious. Each researcher will face a variety of new and often overwhelming experiences in the field, some directly related to the project, and some not, and some may be unanticipated. This is particularly true for researchers who are learning the language in which they will conduct their research and are encountering the cultural context of the field for the first time. It was a crucial mistake and lapse in judgement for me to not think critically about the potential consequences of speaking publicly about my ongoing research in a university setting. In a conversation with one professor about my realization that I may be barred from doing my work, she asked me: “why did you give the talk in the first place?” I was embarrassed to respond that I did not

know and had not even thought about it. Throughout my first four years of being in graduate school, I had never stopped to think about why I had given public talks at conferences or teach-ins. I always did it because it is what we do as academics and publicly engaged researchers, and even though I had spoken about controversial topics from a critical perspective before, there had never been any serious consequences to doing so. Most of my work up until then had been “armchair fieldwork” that I did from the comfort of my office or a local coffee shop. I had not really been forced to think critically about how the actions I took in the field could have serious impacts on my ability to conduct research or on the local political landscape. It is important especially for researchers to think critically and think ahead about the consequences of one’s actions in the field.

***(2) Be aware of the way technology is changing the dynamics and politics of reputation***

It is important to keep in mind that the control we have over the way our personal and professional identity as researchers is represented is much more in flux and subject to the rapidly changing technological landscape than it was just ten or twenty years ago. In the era before smartphones, a flyer like the one the university created for my talk would not have made it as quickly into the hands of so many people with divergent and often competing political interests. This rapid dissemination of information and misinformation is something for which budding researchers are decidedly under-trained and to which they are quite vulnerable. The world of instant technology makes critical social scientists vulnerable to the whims of competing interests who can (mis)represent you and your work without your consent. Being politically savvy and strategic is a skill which critical researchers must learn early in their education as

graduate students, as political conditions are subject to extreme fluctuation in the field, particularly in cases in which fieldwork is happening in a new or unfamiliar linguistic and cultural context.

**(3) *Take care of your mental, physical and emotional health in the field***

It is absolutely crucial that researchers take care of their mental, physical, and emotional health in the field. Researchers who have not spent significant time abroad immersed in a new linguistic and cultural context will face a variety of emotions in the field, especially loneliness and depression. It is important that you maintain connections with friends and loved ones at home and form and maintain healthy relationships while in the field. It is also important that you keep your body and mind sharp as you adjust to new landscapes, infrastructure, and diets in the field. Finding a way to exercise, drink plenty of water, and eat healthy food is an overlooked but sometimes extremely stressful part of the transition into long-term fieldwork, and you should develop a strategy for maintaining health and well-being. As I allowed my mental, physical, and emotional health to go by the wayside in the field, my mind was less sharp, and I thought less critically about each of my actions. Severe depression clouded my judgement and left me with a sometimes-nihilistic sense that my work was not making a difference so there was no need think ahead about the personal and professional consequences of my actions.

**(4) *Always know to whom you are talking and with whom you are working***

I made the mistake of sharing the flyer of my lecture with people I did not know and who did not trust me. When doing critical politically-engaged research, it is important that you get a strong sense of the local political landscape in which you are working and that you be extremely cautious with whom you share information and the

way in which you represent yourself. However, at the same time, one needs to share information in certain contexts to build trust with participants and participating organizations. When doing publicly engaged, participatory research with the intention of eventually making a political intervention in a public debate, there are times when you may wish to withhold your intentions or the main subject of your research and other times in which you wish to be more frank. Knowing to whom you are talking and with whom you are working can be a difficult process fraught with miscommunication and misunderstanding, particularly in my case working as a white male North American in the Global South, which carries with it sometimes privileged access to and easy participant trust, and other times extreme distrust and barred access. Develop a thorough plan for how you will approach the negotiation of your positionality with various groups and be as flexible as possible in the implementation of your approach, keeping in mind that – like it was for me – the local political situation on the ground may be entirely different than you thought it would be before you arrived.

Additionally, decisions about when, where, and with whom to share information are not just about protecting the integrity of the research project or oneself. It is also about protecting the organizations and individuals with whom you are collaborating. A basic ethical guideline with which to start is to focus on reciprocity and resource sharing (Derickson and Routledge 2015; Torres 2019). Reciprocity means “doing something with and for the people and communities with whom we work and thus moving toward decolonization of the conventional one-sided extractive research process” (Torres 2019, 165). Resource sharing involves channeling academic resources toward nonacademic collaborators and fiercely aligning research goals and questions with subaltern groups

with whom we work, remaining attentive to the intersection of power and knowledge (Derickson and Routledge 2015).

***(5) Accept that your presence in the field may cause harm, “wring your hands”, and try to minimize it where possible***

It can be hard to accept that your presence in the field may cause harm despite your best intentions as a researcher. The truth is that we live in a global landscape structured by power differentials based on race, gender, age, nationality, documentation status, and a variety of overlapping, contested, and intersecting identities, as well as different notions about what ethical participatory research means. When I went into the field as a white male North American in the Global South, I did not fully comprehend the ways in which my presence could cause harm nor have a clear perspective of how disinterested marginalized people would be in participating in the research without offering clear examples for how it would benefit them and not just myself. There is a sense of humility that we should bring with us into the field knowing no matter how well or how often we work with local communities, we and our work exist within a global hierarchy that benefits the people we work with in uneven and contested ways when it benefits them at all. It is our responsibility to practice a politics of resourcefulness that centers marginalized participants' needs and political goals in our work. Balance reflexivity in the field with “a certain assertiveness” (Frazier 2019: 10) by “plant[ing] oneself in the field and wring[ing] one’s hands about the politics of doing so at the same time” (Hyndman 2001: 267). Do not allow the probability that you will make mistakes and that your involvement is politically problematic to paralyze you into not engaging. “Imperfect engagement is better than no engagement, or a paralyzing angst” Hyndman (2001: 265) cautions. In the same way that as researchers we are not disconnected

from the powers that structure our day-to-day professional and personal lives in the university classroom, it is not possible for us or our work to exist outside this power hierarchy in the field, even though the circumstance and political context may be different in the field than in the classroom or office.

***(6) Failure is normal and necessary***

There is a tendency for researchers to think that our failure is somehow unique and to internalize our failure as a reflection of our weakness or inability as researchers or as human beings. This is not true. Even though failure is not something we usually write and publish about or something we are proud of, failure is one of the primary ways that researchers learn to become researchers. Just like any other profession, we do not always know what works until we know and experience what does not work. We do not always know what is or is not harmful or unethical behavior in the field, until we make a mistake that harms someone or ourselves. Be prepared to think critically about and receive criticism for the way that you take up space in the field. Seek the help of professional therapists and mental health specialists when necessary to work through the way that failing in the field makes you feel and take those feelings seriously as you reflexively engage your work.

**Concluding Reflections**

Researchers always bring with them into the field a multiplicity of identities that cleave along various and conflicting lines of power and privilege. In my case, I was sometimes assigned expert and authoritative status on my research topic and other times questioned or challenged as an outsider. Because my dissertation research focused on race in particular, friends I made, members of the Movimento Negro and of the Fraternity of American Descendants made different assumptions about my work and

challenged me in different ways. Most fraternity members assumed that because I have Confederate ancestors (something I would typically lead with when I introduced myself to them) that I would be sympathetic to their perspectives, not have any interest in racial issues, and that they did not need to worry about being associated with racism. Within the movement, I was met with mixed responses of curiosity and acceptance or distrust and rejection based on my status as a white North American male researcher. While some movement members seemed to trust me quite easily after hearing about the goals of my research project, others were much more hesitant, reminding me that participating in anti-racist research or political activity is the bare minimum that a white person can do. Others were wholly confused at why I might have an interest in Brazilian life and culture, and I at times received looks of bewilderment for having “exchanged the United States for Brazil.”

Despite entering the field with a privileged identity as a well-educated white North American male, I still experienced the precarity of being a postgraduate student in the field in an unfamiliar cultural and linguistic context and the pressure to gather enough data to be able to complete a doctoral dissertation within an institutionally established “normal” timeframe, often considered to be four years. In my research proposal, I had planned to gather the majority of the data for my project at the annual Festa Confederada. Since the festival only happens once per year, financial and temporal constraints meant that I really only had one chance to collect the data I wanted to collect. This not only placed stress on me to “get it right on the first try” but also intensified my sense of dismay and despair at being barred from conducting the full scope of intended research at the annual festival and left me wondering how I could



adapt my project into a dissertation that could be completed without significantly delaying the conclusion of my PhD program.

To conclude this essay, I reiterate the call of Caretta and Jokinen (2017) for geographers, particularly those with significant international field experience of their own and with mentoring other postgraduate researchers in the field, to “break the silence” around the profound and highly sensitive social, political, and emotional issues fieldworkers face when working in the Global South. Student researchers should be formally trained on these issues in introductory PhD courses, departmental seminars, and when presenting research proposals for research committee approval. Research advisors also play a crucial role in preparing doctoral candidates not just for the ethical and political challenges they will face in the field but also for the “loneliness, discomfort, frustration, and shock” (Caretta and Joniken 2017: 281) that we experience in the field and how to turn those emotions, which can feel so negative and overwhelming, into a vital learning process that informs the growth and maturation of researchers. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that one cannot foresee all potential ethical and political challenges when heading into an area to do fieldwork.

Researchers from the Global North, at the same time, also must take upon ourselves the ethical responsibility of doing the least amount of harm to already marginalized people while in the field and be reflexive about the extent to which our career aspirations and egos may pose risks to both our successes and ethical obligations in the field. Allow me to return back to the question that a professor asked me after making the first critical mistake that compromised my research project: “Why did you give the talk in the first place?” If I am totally honest, my ego, my desire to be

seen as a scholar capable of engaging a Brazilian public audience in Portuguese clouded my judgement and drove my mistake. I do not mean to say that all public engagement while in the field and working on politically sensitive issues is misguided, but I do mean to say that any public engagement must be driven by the people with whom one is working and critically consider the potential outcomes of being “outed” by publicly discussing your research project. Having a conversation with UNEGRO activists before agreeing to give that public lecture could have been one way to allow solidarity with their goals to drive my decision-making.

Just as important as the academic theories that we form and test through fieldwork in geography are the theories we bring into our work about who we are and our place within the field – our positionality. The numerous ethical dilemmas researchers face in the field have for too long been shrouded in a “culture of silence” by geography departments, whose traditional colonial origins posit(ed) a positivist framework in which white masculinist epistemologies dominate(d) (Sundberg 2003). Geography departments could institutionalize field training for student researchers that addresses this disciplinary history and provide practical strategies for minimizing harm in the field and ethically negotiating positionality. At the same time, researchers should remember that failure in the field, no matter how embarrassing it may be at the time, is always a learning experience. When your theory of who you are as a researcher collides with unexpected complexity in the field, instead of being paralyzed by angst (Hyndman 2001), continue to reflexively do the work as ethically as you know how, rely on your advisor and your instincts, and adapt to the circumstances. Find a way to document your experiences and emotions that are mediated by your positionality and by

your successes and failures, and bring them back to your department and your academic and professional community. Break the silence.

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**Chapter 2**  
**Contesting the Confederacy: Mobile Memory and the Making of Black Geographies in Brazil**

The text and figures included in Chapter 2 are based on the final version of the article published in *FOCUS on Geography* (published by the American Geographical Society). *FOCUS* is an open access, peer-reviewed online-only publication with a dynamic and interactive format that includes videos and other multimedia content. The first figure in this article was originally published in video format, but for the purposes of this dissertation is included as a screenshot of the original video. The length of the article reflects the journal's 3,000-word limit for feature articles at the time of publication. The dissertation author is the sole author of the published manuscript. This paper won the John Fraser Hart Award at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Division of the American Association of Geographers (SEDAAG).

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## **Abstract**

Despite all of the attention Confederate landscape iconography has gotten, it remains relatively unknown that the Confederate flag flies not just in the South, or in the United States for that matter. Thousands of people gather in a small rural cemetery two hours outside of São Paulo, Brazil each April to celebrate Confederate Heritage Month, proudly waving and ceremonially hoisting the embattled flag and keeping alive the traditions of their ancestors – known as *Confederados* in Portuguese – who fled the US South after the Civil War. Drawing on news reports, interviews, participant-observation and ethnographic methods from the nine months I spent in Americana, São Paulo this article explores how Confederate memory has moved and continues to circulate from one South to another. At a time of extreme political polarization in both the United States and Brazil, of resurgence of racial violence and the far-right, it is important to understand how the Confederate memorial landscape and myths about the Old South circulate not only within the southern United States but also across national and cultural boundaries. Finally, creative forms of resistance and protest at the festival lend insight into Black Geographies – the creative place-making practices Black people employ in the struggle for equality, recognition and self-determination.

## **Introduction**

The murder of nine African American worshippers in a Charleston, South Carolina church on June 17, 2015 reignited a decades-old debate (Leib 1995) about the meaning and place of the Confederate battle flag on the Southern and American memorial landscape when photos surfaced of the killer posing with it online. Black Freedom Fighter Bree Newsome scaled the flagpole on the South Carolina statehouse



grounds the following week (Ross 2015), setting off a national wave of protests from #BlackLivesMatter activists and others for whom the flag represents an ugly history of slavery and racism. Monuments and building names that commemorate Confederate generals and slaveowners have since come under renewed fire (Brasher et. al 2017) – being removed, renamed or torn down – sometimes stealthily in the night and sometimes by the force of protestors.

Incidents of white nationalist domestic terrorism have plagued the controversy around Confederate landscape iconography in the four years since, with one of the more well-known instances being the tiki-torch wielding white supremacists defending a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017. The “Unite the Right” rally, which made international headlines and culminated in the death of anti-racist protestor Heather Heyer, drew even more attention to the controversy over the existence of Confederate iconography in the memorial landscape. President Trump infamously equivocated that the deadly rally had “very fine people on both sides.” Since then, urban planners, academics, activists and even 2020 presidential candidates have offered their interpretations of Southern history and opinions on how the memorial landscape should – or should not – commemorate the Confederacy.

Despite all of the attention Confederate landscape iconography has gotten, it remains relatively unknown that the Confederate flag flies not just in the South, or in the United States for that matter. Thousands of people gather in a small rural cemetery two hours outside of São Paulo, Brazil each April to celebrate Confederate Heritage Month, proudly waving and ceremonially hoisting the embattled flag and keeping alive the traditions of their ancestors – known as Confederados in Portuguese – who fled the US

South after the Civil War (Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; see Figure 2.1, Appendix A, p.179). In recent years, the annual festival has received protests from the local chapter of the Movimento Negro (Black Movement) (see Figure 2.2, Appendix A, p.180). As a result, the scale of public debate around the history of the Confederacy and the place of its notorious iconography in the memorial landscape has grown to an international level. Confederate memory is on the move.

### **History**

After the US Civil War formally ended in 1865, ending chattel slavery in the United States, some 8,000 to 10,000 Confederate soldiers and their families left the defeated Confederacy and boarded ships bound for Brazil (Silva 2015), where slavery was still legal and would not be abolished for another 23 years (Heille 2019). The degree to which the existence of slavery motivated the Confederate exodus to Brazil has been the subject of much debate and disagreement within the historical and scholarly literature, with some authors denying that slavery played a strong role and others insisting that it did.

Historians Cyrus and James Dawsey (1995) and Eugene Harter (2006) for example argue that the Confederate migration was motivated by the Brazilian government's recruitment efforts, especially those of Emperor Dom Pedro II, who took an interest in the Southerners' agricultural expertise and wanted them to bring the plow to Brazil – a technology the country lacked at the time. Silva (2015) and Brito (2015) however, argue that the existence of slavery in Brazil played a central role in motivating the Confederate migration. Silva (2015) analyzes the letters received at the Brazilian consulate and vice-consulates inquiring about immigration to the country and finds that about three-fourths of them were written by slaveowners, even though only about one-

fourth of the free Southern population were slaveowners at that time. This suggests the people interested in migrating to Brazil disproportionately represented a small slaveholding part of the free Southern population. According to Silva (2015), at least 54 Confederate families purchased a total of 536 enslaved Africans upon arriving in Brazil.

Brito (2015) too finds evidence that slavery attracted white Southerners to Brazil. She analyzes the journals of Confederate migrants who express various but often related opinions about the state of race relations in the country. One Southerner wrote about his desire to purchase enslaved people in Brazil at a lower price than he could in the United States, another expressed disappointment that he could not bring recently freed people to Brazil, and others expressed fear of an “Africanized government” that could start to form after slavery ended there (Brito 2015: 156). Even Dawsey and Dawsey (1995), while rejecting slavery as a motivating force, documented one Southerner’s fear of having to submit to “n\*\*\*\*\* rulers” if he had stayed in the South (p. 27).

Either way, thousands of Confederate families settled in the twin towns today known as Americana and Santa Bárbara d’Oeste – the latter the home of the Cemitério do Campo (Country Cemetery; see Figure 2.3, Appendix A, p.181) and the annual Festa Confederada. They brought with them their language, culture and Southern traditions, continuing to speak English at home for generations and introducing their Protestant faith, the plow, and watermelons to Brazil (Harter 2006). Their influx to the country came on the cusp of Brazil’s formal “whitening” policy, in which the federal government began to recruit migrants considered to be white from Europe, North America and Asia. The abolition of the slave trade by the British in 1850 – though yet to

take place in Brazil – “gave rise to the first concern with the labor supply, based on a probable future shortage of hands needed for agricultural work” (Santos and Hallewell 2002: 61). Rather than implement affirmative action policies like the “forty acres and a mule” that freed people were promised – but most never ultimately received – in the United States after abolition, the Brazilian government poured its resources into what it viewed as an effort to “dilute” its African population by “whitening” it with Germans, Swiss, Italians, Japanese and others (Santos and Hallewell 2002).

The Confederate migration from south of the Mason-Dixon Line to south of the equator happened in the context of political destabilization as the South lost the Civil War and white Southerners feared the Reconstruction of society, especially the prospect of integrating freed Black people into white society. Drawing on news reports, interviews, participant-observation and ethnographic methods from the nine months I spent in Americana, this article explores how Confederate memory has moved and continues to circulate from one South to another. At a time of extreme political polarization in both the United States and Brazil, of resurgence of racial violence and the far-right, it is important to understand how the Confederate memorial landscape and myths about the Old South circulate not only within the southern United States but also across national and cultural boundaries. Finally, creative forms of resistance and protest at the festival lend insight into Black Geographies (McKittrick and Woods 2007; Bledsoe, Eaves and Williams 2017) – the creative place-making practices Black people employ in the struggle for equality, recognition and self-determination.

### **The Festa Confederada**

The first Confederate party – at the time called the Festa Country – happened in 1980. According to leaders of the Fraternity of American Descendants (FDA) with whom

I spoke, the event was created to bring descendants and their families together and to keep alive Southern culinary, musical and cultural traditions. Eventually, the party expanded into a local cultural event that attracts thousands of visitors and whose funds contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery. Fried chicken and biscuits, square dancing couples clad in Confederate uniforms and Antebellum-style bell hoop skirts represent some of these traditions the party celebrates (see Figure 2.4, Appendix A, p.182).

Neither the country sounds of Johnny Cash, Allisson Krauss and Alan Jackson nor the Dukes of Hazzard regalia would have been around the Old South in the Antebellum period but are featured here as southern kitsch. Mouse pads, miniature flags, flip flops and stickers with the Confederate emblem and phrases like “The South Will Rise Again” are available for purchase (see Figure 2.5, Appendix A, p.183). I even saw someone wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat. The yellow Gadsden flag with a coiled snake ready to strike and the words “Don’t Tread on Me” – a recognizable symbol of the American Tea Party – hangs alongside the entrance to the party and is available for purchase (see Figure 2.6, Appendix A, p.184). A banner explaining “What the Confederate Flag Really Means” in both Portuguese and English also greets visitors at the entrance (see Figure 2.7, Appendix A, p.185). For a Southerner like myself it was both a stunningly strange and an oddly familiar sight.

### **Charlottesville Tragedy Reverberates in Brazil**

In the time I spent searching the internet and getting to know members of the FDA, of the Black resistance movement, and of the general public, I have found no evidence of protest, debate, or public pushback of any kind surrounding the use of the Confederate flag during the three decades of the Festa Confederada before 2017. Soon

after the Charlottesville tragedy happened in August of that year, members of the local chapter of UNEGRO (The Union of Black People for Equality) in Americana called for and held a public debate with the FDA over the history and meaning of the Confederate symbol. Representatives from the FDA, UNEGRO, and other social movement groups discussed the history of the US Civil War, the Confederate migration, and the social uses of the flag.

In the 2017 debate, which was filmed and posted to Youtube, the opposing sides found very little common ground. The following year, a small group of activists from UNEGRO protested outside the party, emphasizing that they are not against the party itself, just against the use of the Confederate flag, a “symbol of oppression” and under which “a lot of Black peoples’ blood” (Rossi 2019) was shed. FDA representatives for their part have continued to rely on the Lost Cause version of Civil War history to justify their continued use of the flag, saying slavery was neither the cause of the Civil War nor the migration. The discredited Lost Cause interpretation of the war asserts that slavery was not the primary cause of the war, that enslaved Africans were faithful and loyal to their masters and the Confederate cause of “states’ rights” (Janney 2016). Letters and brochures exchanged between the FDA and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) and United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) – the heritage preservation organizations known for inventing the Lost Cause – suggests transnational pathways of memory (see Figure 2.8, Appendix A, p.186). Their exchange of information, money, and people – even in the form of exchange programs in which Brazilian descendants travel to the US to participate in Civil War battlefield tours – shows how Lost Cause memory is circulated from one South to another.

## **Making Black Geographies**

Black resistance groups, with UNEGRO at the helm, led a more organized effort in 2019 to protest the use of the Confederate flag. They published a manifesto that explains in great detail their historic and contemporary reasons for being against its use, citing the romanticization of a brutal, racist history as the primary reason. Members circulated the manifesto to other civil society groups throughout the region and eventually received over one hundred signatures. Parts of the manifesto made it into the local newspapers, which publicized the protests and highlighted the festival. The manifesto highlighted that the use of the Confederate flag in Brazil happens within a current social and political context in which deeply rooted structural racism persists – something reflected in the country’s 2018 presidential elections that saw the rise of far-right populist Jair Bolsonaro to power. Bolsonaro’s campaign centered on reaffirming anti-Blackness and drawing “lines of enmity” around Black Brazilian populations, marking them as an internal threat to national stability (Bledsoe 2019: 1).

UNEGRO’s manifesto against the use of Confederate symbols highlights racist epithets that protestors suffered at the Festa in 2018 and draws a comparison between the atmosphere of the Festa and the atmosphere of the Big House and slave quarters:

“In our observations we registered what we usually see in Brazilian society: white people in their luxurious cars and Black people working security. Even though we were treated politely by the party organizers and observed with attention by the police officers, it is impossible not to recognize there the permanence of the relationship between the Big House and slave quarters.”

Additionally, Black activists invoked the legacy of Zumbi dos Palmares – icon of the Black resistance movement in Brazil and quilombola leader – in one of the banners they hoisted at the protest that said: “For Zumbi, for Dandara, for us – Long live Black

consciousness!” (see Figure 2.9, Appendix A, p.187). Quilombos (also called Maroons) are communities in Brazil founded by individuals of African descent who escaped enslavement and founded separate settlements, creatively surviving in a society built on their dehumanization (Bledsoe 2017). When I asked a UNEGRO member why they invoked they legacies of Zumbi and his partner Dandara, she said that their legacy continues to strengthen the movement for the recovery of Black history and memory today.

“This is the motto of our struggle, the essence of our struggle. For freedom, freedom to tell our history, to have our history, that our children and our youth can know this history ... history books do not treat the history of these people.”

One prominent sign read “Abaixo a Bandeira Confederada” [Take Down the Confederate Flag], a slogan taken directly from the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States (see Figure 2.10, Appendix A, p.188). At one UNEGRO meeting, activists strategizing for the protest looked to me as an American to share information with them about the way African Americans had approached protesting the use of the Confederate flag in the United States. After sharing photos and images of protests and learning together about the #TakeDowntheFlag motto used by Black Lives Matter, UNEGRO members decided to translate into Portuguese and adopt the same motto for their protest. In this way, the Black Brazilian group’s strategy of resistance has roots in the Black freedom struggle in the United States.

Additionally, at the Festa protestors beat traditional African drums and practiced capoeira (see Figure 2.11, Appendix A, p.189). Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian dance and martial art form with a long history of practice as a form of protest (Talmer-Chvaicer 2008). Prohibited from celebrating their cultural customs or practicing any martial arts,



enslaved Africans in Brazil developed capoeira as a way to disguise forceful kicks as passionate dance moves, emerging as a tool of survival, self-defense and cultural identity. Practicing capoeira requires excellent spatial awareness skills, great strength and body control. As such, its practice outside the Festa Confederada as a form of protest can be seen as a form of place-making that claims a Black sense of place.

In this way, the Black resistance movement's occupation of space outside the Festa Confederada – in chant, battle dance, and martial arts as protest – transformed a memorial landscape characterized by white domination into a place for reclaiming the legacy of Dandara and Zumbi dos Palmares and asserting the right of Black Brazilians to belong and resist the romanticization and erasure of history and memory. This creative place-making practice, rooted in the embodied practices, memories and traditions of African descendants, and hoisting the motto of “Abaixo a Bandeira Confederada”, created new space – Black Geographies – for both resistance and recovery of memory.

### **Conclusion**

The festival in rural São Paulo state that celebrates Southern cultural traditions was mostly uncontroversial for its first three decades of existence, isolated far from the political controversy around Confederate iconography in the United States. With the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, its focus on removing public symbols of racism from the memorial landscape, especially in response to the domestic terrorist attacks in Charleston and Charlottesville, the scale of public debate became international. But the transmission of Lost Cause memory from the Confederate heritage defenders in the US to Brazil had been underway for generations since the formation of the FDA in 1954.

The Charleston and Charlottesville tragedies simply provided the catalyst for increased recognition and provoked further public debate.

Members of UNEGRO in Americana called a public debate on the history and meaning of Confederate symbols and began building grassroots momentum amongst other civil society groups to combat the romanticization of the history of enslavement. Black activists drew on the memory of quilombo communities' resistance to slavery in Brazil to take a stand against the use of the Confederate flag, invoking mottos of both American and Brazilian Black freedom fighters and leveraging the rich history of capoeira as place-making and protest. As the FDA continues to deny any connections between its organization, the Festa Confederada, and racism and enslavement, it appears the celebrations will continue in April 2020. The local chapter of the Movimento Negro will likely continue its protests as well, hoping to leverage the momentum and awareness they have been building since 2017.

Critical to understanding how memory moves and takes shape across national and cultural boundaries is an analysis of how Black people creatively survive through creating a sense of place – or Black Geographies – that values and centers their lived experience and understanding of the past. The practice of Afro-Brazilian cultural traditions like capoeira as protest of the use of the Confederate flag signals just that.

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**Chapter 3**  
**Creating “Confederate Pioneers”: A Spatial Narrative Analysis of Race, Settler Colonialism, and Heritage Tourism at the Museu da Imigração, Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo**

Chapter 3, in full, has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. The length of the article reflects the journal's 8,000-word limit on full-length manuscripts. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author of this paper.

### **Abstract**

Local history museums are important to heritage tourism, often presenting interconnected local, regional, national, and even – in this case – transnational histories. This article explores the settler colonial narrative presented at the Museu da Imigração (Museum of the Immigration), located in a former prison on the town square of Santa Bárbara d'Oeste in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil. Though much has been written about the relationship between the Confederacy and slavery in public memory and heritage tourism studies, the scale of discussion is typically limited to the U.S. South. Less well known about Confederate history and heritage tourism is the fact that several thousand Confederate soldiers and their families, rather than face Reconstruction, left their homes in Alabama, Georgia, Texas, and other southern states to restart their lives in Brazil. Using narrative theory, I show how a local history museum weaves together a settler interpretation of the past through texts, photographs, and historical objects and artifacts – knitting together discourses like the Lost Cause and Brazil's "racial democracy." Ultimately the museum constructs a narrative that frames the Confederate migrants as brave "pioneers" striking out to re-create their lives after they were destroyed by the U.S. Civil War. I conclude by placing the significance of the museum's settler narrative into broader context, highlighting how some scholars have perpetuated this narrative in academic and public discourse.

**Keywords: settler colonialism; Confederacy; racism; transnational history; narrative; Brazil**

### **Introduction**

Museums are hardly benign spaces of value-neutral heritage tourism and storytelling. On the contrary, they are situated within dynamic networks of values, meanings, power relations, histories, and ideologies, and often reinforce dominant existing social structures. This article analyzes the narrative presented at a museum of the Confederacy in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil. The museum narrates the story of a little-known part of U.S. Southern and Confederate history: at the end of the U.S. Civil War, a relatively large number of Confederates migrated *en masse* from the South to Latin America, with destination countries like Mexico, Cuba, Honduras, Peru, Chile, and Venezuela (Hill 1935; Harmon 1937; Knapp 1953; Sutherland 1985; Rolle 1992;



Simmons 2017; Horton 2007); most notably, several thousand were Southerners heading for Brazil (Jefferson 1928; Simmons 1982; Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; Jarnagin 2008; Silva 2015). Among these destinations, the only place known to have maintained any traceable cultural ties to the Confederate migrants is in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil, especially the twin cities of Americana and Santa Bárbara d'Oeste (see Figure 3.1, Appendix A, p.190).

The Museu da Imigração (Museum of the Immigration) in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste is a fascinating and important site of public memory and heritage tourism, given recent developments in critical heritage studies that recognize both the emancipatory potential of historical memory and the challenges of coming to terms with painful pasts at heritage tourism sites (Alderman and Inwood 2013). The “heritage” part of “heritage tourism” is often suspect, as sites of memory are just as often sites of forgetting. Indeed, narrating any version of the past in a museum or other heritage tourism setting requires making selective decisions about what content to include and exclude. Different heritage tourism sites have had uneven success in terms of presenting challenging issues and events of the past to public audiences. In fact, it can often be unclear how to even define or examine what that “successful” representation might look like.

Despite increased efforts at creating counter-narratives and honest engagement with difficult pasts in both Brazil and the United States, many heritage tourism sites continue to present an overly romanticized, traditional, hegemonic version of the past. Within the United States, much of the work analyzing the tension between hegemonic and emancipatory museum narratives – including a *Journal of Heritage Tourism* special issue (Alderman, Butler & Hanna 2016) – has focused on the complex legacies of

slavery for heritage tourism in the U.S. South. However, this forgotten transnational Confederate history is equally as problematic, given the fact that at the time of the Confederate migration, Brazil remained one of the last countries in the Western Hemisphere in which slavery was legal; it would become the last to abolish it in 1888 (Araújo 2015). Some critical historiographers have argued that the existence of slavery in Brazil at the time of the migration greatly influenced the Confederates' decision to choose the country as a migration destination (Brito 2015; Silva 2015).

Brazil's heritage tourism landscape, particularly in terms of museums, has long privileged the nation's European heritage and downplayed its African cultural influence (Araújo 2010, 2014, 2015, 2020). Despite having the highest population of African descent outside the African continent, Brazilian museums still largely ignore or minimize the role Africans have played and continue to play in forming the nation (Araújo 2015). Afro-Brazilian culture and history are mostly missing from the overarching national narrative as told through its museums (Cleveland 2015). This has begun to change with the 2004 opening of the Afro-Brazil Museum in São Paulo, but overall the country's museum landscape still favors its white, European heritage (Cleveland 2015). Additionally, cultural-institutional, economic, and racial inequity is especially stark between the northeastern and southeastern regions of Brazil; the state of Bahia in the northeast retains a large and mostly working poor Afro-descendant population and São Paulo in the southeast is considered a "whiter" (despite its large Afro-descendant population) and much wealthier state (Weinstein 2015). São Paulo, the most heavily populated and most industrialized city in Latin America, also happens to have the largest concentration of museums in Brazil (Cleveland 2015). It is within this context of

“internal colonialism” and the whiteness of the São Paulo state and region that the Museu da Imigração is situated (Cleveland 2015).

In this article, I deploy settler colonialism, an underdeveloped theoretical lens for understanding the past and present socio-spatial organization of political life in South America, a region commonly known for its racial “mixture” in the form of racial “whitening” policies (Andrews 1996; Santos and Hallewell 2002; Castellanos 2017). Settler colonialism is a “continuously unfolding project of empire that is enabled by and through specific racial configurations that are tied to geographies of white supremacy” (Inwood and Bonds 2016: 523). This unfolding project involves “the interplay between the removal of indigenous peoples from the land and the creation of labor systems and infrastructures that make the land productive” (Bonds and Inwood 2016: 721). Settler colonialism as a framework is useful in terms of understanding the continuing significance of white supremacy within the global racial landscape (Inwood 2018; Christian 2019) and in reappraising Brazil’s enduring international reputation as a “racial democracy” (Twine 1997; da Costa 2014, 2016). Though settler colonialism has often been conceptualized from the perspective of a white/indigenous binary, I argue, following Pulido (2018), that settler colonialism as a project is so deeply rooted in white supremacy that it also has implications for and harmful effects on non-indigenous people of color, especially Afro-descendants in Brazil.

Moreover, the Confederate migration highlights the transnational nature of settler colonialism, which is often theoretically oriented at the scale of the nation-state. Recent work in settler colonial studies reminds us that “we live in a settler colonial global present” (Veracini 2015) and while the configuration of the nation-state has been and

continues to be an integral way that settler societies have developed a distinctive place-based identity and claimed territorial sovereignty, the reaches of settler societies extend from the United States to Argentina to Kenya to Israel and across the globe in places where settlers construct a permanent society and assert control over indigenous lands and populations (Lloyd and Pulido 2010; Mar and Edmonds 2010; Veracini 2015). Additionally, insights from world-systems theory and studies of race in the global South point to the global nature of racism and white supremacy as it is embedded into discourses, ideologies and institutional practices (Christian 2019). As Christian (2019) suggests, it is important to foreground colonialism in transnational analyses of race because it can help “identify how racialization emerged historically amidst a global racial structural hierarchy between and within nations embedded in global white supremacy” (p. 170).

Confederate migrants were settlers when they invaded and settled on what is today known as the United States and eventually fought a bloody war to maintain slavery. When they lost, many sought a new place to re-settle themselves atop a racial hierarchy (Saba 2012; Brito 2015). Brazil was an ideal place for that given the continued existence of the legal practice of race-based chattel slavery at the time the U.S. Civil War ended. The Confederates who migrated to Brazil and became known as *Confederados* in Portuguese are settlers twice over – having settled once in North America and again in South America. In this article I examine the extent to which the themes of indigenous dispossession, racial and ethnic discrimination, slavery, and historical episodes of violence and tragedy shape the heritage presented in the Museu da Imigração. Using this museum as a case study, I argue that an explicit consideration

of the narrative presented at this site – including how that narrative is spatially arranged – enables a detailed exploration of the complex nature of constructing a coherent narrative of the Confederate migration, and link the museum’s themes to familiar dominant interpretations of both U.S. Southern and Brazilian histories. Understanding the museum’s socio-spatial narrative is important for expanding the scope and scale of Confederate memory and heritage tourism – traditionally limited to the U.S. South – and for further theorizing the complicated nature of cross-cultural commemoration, in which Confederate memory is woven into the Brazilian historical-geographic imagination.

The Museu da Imigração offers a good case study for investigating the relationships between narratives at different scales – U.S. southern regional and Brazilian national – and how those narratives are deployed together to create a new transnational settler colonial narrative. Situated within Christian’s (2019) global critical race and racism framework, the case study demonstrates both the permanence of white supremacy and the flexibility of racism and highlights the globally interconnected and linked nature of racist ideologies and histories. In particular, it points to the usefulness of interrogating the “transnational assemblages” of racist logics and projects that interact and intersect in local spaces (Patil and Purkayastha 2018 in Christian 2019).

In addition to the increased attention that the display of the Confederate flag has received in regional, national, and international news media since the tragic events of white supremacist domestic terrorism in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015 and Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, local Black activists in Americana and Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo have begun to protest the flag’s use at the annual *Festa Confederada* (Confederate Festival). The festival is an event organized by Confederate

descendants that to this day still celebrates southern and Confederate heritage and culture with southern rock and country music and Antebellum dance, dress, and culinary traditions (see Chapters 2 and 4). The festival is the primary cultural heritage activity of the region, the only one for the city listed on the state of São Paulo's official calendar, and receives over two thousand visitors each year, many of whom also make it a point to visit the nearby Museu da Imigração.

Yet the contested nature of Confederate heritage tourism in Brazil has not been examined in detail. What little published work that deals with the Confederados focuses on the history (Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; Jarnagin 2008; Jones 2015; Neeleman and Neeleman 2016) and historiography (Saba 2012; Silva 2015; Brito 2015) of the migration but does not explore current uses or interpretations of Confederate heritage either at the annual festival or the Museu da Imigração. Historians of the Confederate migration have typically focused their efforts on the devastation and destruction Confederates suffered during the Civil War and the contributions they made to Brazilian society in terms of agriculture, religion, and education. On the other hand, critical historiographers of the Confederate migration have analyzed the motivations of Confederates for choosing Brazil by exploring their diary entries (Saba 2012; Brito 2015), slaveholding records, and letters written to consulate and vice-consulate offices inquiring about immigration to Brazil (Silva 2015). The racial contours of Confederate heritage tourism today, particularly in terms of settler colonialism and white supremacy, remain unexplored in the scholarly literature.

Thus, this article focuses on several issues. First, it explores the Museu da Imigração's representation of the Confederate migration through its exhibits, artifacts,

photographs, and interpretive texts to gauge the extent to which it deals with the painful past of slavery and the role of racism in creating the conditions for the migration.

Although the heritage of slavery has received increasing attention in both Brazil and the U.S. separately, less work has explored the transnational connections between Brazil and the United States as they intersect with slavery and Confederate heritage. As a result, a key aim of this case study is to expand the scale and scope of Confederate memory and heritage, as well as the complex nature of cross-cultural commemoration, in which separate and seemingly unrelated historical narratives are woven together into one coherent settler discourse. Second, to explore this complexity, I employ recent innovations in discourse analysis to closely examine how the Museu da Imigração uses a spatial narrative to present this multiscalar transnational history to visitors. Analyzing how museums work to amplify or downplay certain narratives is important for understanding the role of museums within heritage tourism. I end my analysis by placing the importance of the museum's narrative into the broader politics of Confederate memory in popular and scholarly debate.

### **Museums and the making of settler colonial heritage tourism**

Museums are arguably the most fertile heritage arena in which to undertake identity work (McLean 2008). The unmistakable significance of museums for heritage tourism has seen an increase in attention from scholars across disciplines like geography, anthropology, public history, and museum studies. Most recognize the important role museums play in imagining, contesting, and negotiating history and heritage for public audiences (Crang 1994; Dicks 1997, 2003; Smith 2019). Particularly, when it comes to settler colonialism, “a key part of any colonialism is memory and narration” and the settler is “plagued by the insecurity of a never quite legitimate

possession” (Lloyd and Pulido 2010: 799). We can see then how museums are crucial tools for mounting a justification for and inoculating the public to the dispossession and violence of settler colonialism.

The growth of the heritage tourism industry has led to the construction of many new museums, sometimes promoted as major tourist destinations, and to more critical examination of the content presented within them. Museums often do not simply collect, present, arrange, and display historic artifacts and content, but also offer interpretations of the past for visitors. Using objects, interpretive texts, and – for more modern museums – interactive multimedia presentations, museums do not only present content but also create a “commemorative atmosphere” (Sumartojo 2016; Schorch 2013) – the “feel” of a place based on sensory experiences related to sight, sound, touch, and taste, among others. Even older and less well-funded museums like the Museu da Imigração that do not necessarily host the latest in digital technology and multimedia presentations arrange objects and exhibits to create a certain commemorative atmosphere that actively contributes to its overall narrative.

A central critique that scholars in museum studies lodge involves scrutinizing and deconstructing the role that museums play in creating and legitimizing dominant or hegemonic views of history (Mitchell 1988; Anderson 1991). Early museums, as well as many still in existence today, were and are deeply invested in legitimizing and explaining colonial and imperial worldviews (MacKenzie 2009). More recently, some museums have begun to question these dominant discourses and narratives as part of a broader engagement with grassroots and emancipatory memory projects. However, many heritage tourism sites continue to present “authorized heritage discourses”



(Waterton 2009, 37) that privilege the perspectives of whiter, wealthier, and settler classes of society and exclude or minimize the perspectives of other groups. As I outline in this article, the Museu da Imigração – for which most of the historic artifacts, materials, and funding were provided by the Fraternidade Descendência Americana [Fraternity of American Descendants or FDA] (the same group of Confederate descendants who organize the annual festival) – represents an example of privileging a singular perspective that mostly ignores the perspectives and historical memories of then-enslaved and indigenous peoples.

When it comes to the relationship between heritage tourism and settler colonialism, local history museums have been a particularly potent perpetuator of settler colonial discourse, especially in the United States (Levin 2007; Smith 2011) and Canada (Wrightson 2017; Grimwood et al 2019). Local history museums – like any other social institution – are subject to the wider power relations that shape society, and as a result often “exemplify a widespread yet largely unaware settler colonial historical consciousness” (Smith 2011: 156). Though Smith was describing local history museums in the United States, the same can often be said of local history museums in other settler societies (Grimwood et al 2019). Settler colonialism is first and foremost a territorial project typically conceptualized as a distinct form of colonialism concerned with usurping territory through a “logic of elimination” by “replacing natives on their land” (Wolfe 2006, 2008). It is characterized especially by settlers who “come to stay” in contrast to traders or merchants who would historically only temporarily occupy a region for resource extraction or trade (Mar and Edmonds 2010; Veracini 2015). Importantly, settler colonialism is a structure and an organizing principle of society and not an event:

it persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations and the assertion of sovereignty and control over their lands (Veracini 2015).

Working with the concept of settler colonialism in Latin America – a region commonly known for its racial “mixture” and racial “whitening” policies (Andrews 1996; Santos and Hallewell 2002; Castellanos 2017) – has proven slippery for scholars of settler colonial studies. In contrast to settler societies like Canada, the United States, and Australia, in which the settler logic of elimination involved direct forms of genocide and death, many Latin American colonial governments instituted policies of “racial whitening” in which financial resources and propaganda efforts were poured into recruiting populations considered “white” from other regions of the world, especially in Europe and Asia, taking up the strategy of racial “dilution” rather than direct elimination. Over time, this racial mixture has led to questions over who is and is not “white” or a settler, leading Lloyd and Pulido (2010) to highlight the complicated relationship between the “settlers of color” in Latin American countries and the people they helped displace from the region. Additionally, problems with translation into Spanish and Portuguese has left settler colonialism as a concept out of much current political discourse and even academic scholarship. In what follows, I further unpack the context of settler colonialism in Latin America and specifically in Brazil to contextualize the slippery nature of its usage.

### **Settler colonialism in Latin America and Brazil**

As mentioned previously, settler colonialism is typically conceptualized as a distinct form of colonialism concerned with usurping territory through a “logic of elimination” by “replacing natives on their land rather than extracting an economic surplus from mixing their labor with it” (Wolfe 2008: 103). While this framework for

settler colonialism arguably works well for the British imperial context in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and South Africa, recently some Latin Americanist scholars have called into question the usefulness of a binary opposition between land and labor that does not fit the historical specificity of settler colonialism in countries like Guatemala, Honduras, or Brazil (Castellanos 2017; Poets, forthcoming). Indeed, given the interrelated historical geographies of elimination and extraction that have long co-existed in settler societies, this land/labor binary merits some skepticism and interrogation. To address this, Castellanos (2017) and the other contributors to a special issue of *American Quarterly* on settler colonialism in Latin America advance an analytic project that understands indigeneity in Latin America as “continually shaped by a colonial legacy rooted in racial mixing, rather than indigenous elimination and white settlement, as is the case in the United States” (p. 778). In other words, racial mixing, rather than serving its intended purpose of dissolving racial boundaries or racially diluting the population, has merely functioned as a different social, political mechanism through which white settler colonialism is mediated and perpetuated. In fact, scholars like Poets (forthcoming) argue that racial miscegenation in Brazil should be considered a form of assimilation/elimination characteristic of Latin American settler colonialism.

Additional problems have plagued the application of a settler colonial framework to studies of Latin America. For one, the term itself is difficult to translate into Spanish and Portuguese (Gott 2007; Castellanos 2017), and as such lacks the resonance that it retains in English. Translations like *colonialismo dos colonos* (Portuguese) already imply settlement and make the term sound redundant and even confusing. However, similar terms like “genocidio constituyente” (constituent genocide) and “genocidio

colonialista” (colonialist genocide) have been used to describe what many would also characterize as settler colonialism in Argentina (Feierstein 2007). Other problems related to the disconnect between scholars in the Global North and South have left Latin America undertheorized in terms of its relationship to settler colonialism (Gott 2007; Castellanos 2017).

Exploring the contours of settler colonial discourse within the context of the Museu da Imigração is particularly useful for several reasons. First, following Castellanos (2017), it captures the slippery nature of settler colonialism in Latin America and especially in Brazil – but also its utility as a framework – by highlighting how inadequate the land/labor binary is for distinguishing regimes of colonialism in the Americas. Given that the historical conditions for this migration include evidence both of the material interest in Confederates re-inserting themselves atop the racialized hierarchy of an extractive labor regime (chattel slavery) *and* in claiming territory for agricultural purposes in which that enslaved labor would be used to work the land, it is possible to see how this particular iteration of settler colonialism should be framed as involving *both* labor exploitation *and* the dispossession of territories traditionally inhabited by indigenous peoples.

Additionally, drawing on Castellanos (2017) again, this case study exemplifies the flexibility of settler colonialism’s “logic of elimination” within the Latin American context. The logic of elimination in many Latin American nation-building projects, particularly that of Brazil, has historically posited racial mixing – rather than purity – as the primary “solution” to creating a “civilized” society (Andrews 1996; Santos and Hallewell 2002; Poets forthcoming). However, whiteness has remained privileged at the

center of both forms of settler projects. Indeed, Brazil's "racial whitening" policy, which is traditionally thought to have begun shortly after the end of slavery in 1888, involved recruiting Europeans and others considered to be white from countries like Italy, Germany, and Japan, amongst others, to fill the anticipated labor shortage that would come after the end of slavery (Marx 1998; Santos and Hallewell 2002) rather than remunerate or re-incorporate formerly enslaved people into the labor force. I argue that the Confederate migration, which began two and a half decades earlier than the end of slavery in Brazil, should be considered part of the country's history of racial whitening, given the influential role that Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro II played in recruiting Confederates and offering them land (Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995) they would eventually settle on at a greatly discounted rate.

Given these circumstances, the Confederate migration serves as a useful case study to explode the land/labor binary traditionally used to define settler colonialism and recognize the foundational role white supremacy plays in the ongoing settler colonial project in Brazil and Latin America. The Museu da Imigração knits together two distinct historical narratives into an overarching settler colonial narrative that whitewashes Confederates' exploitation of enslaved labor and fits into national Brazilian discourse about racial mixing. In the next section, I explain the historical roots and resonance of two narratives – the Lost Cause and Brazilian racial democracy – to contextualize the analysis of the museum's narrative that follows.

### **Weaving together the myths of the 'Lost Cause' and 'racial democracy'**

At the end of the U.S. Civil War, the southern white elite worked diligently to construct a narrative to justify the Confederacy's involvement in the war. They constructed Confederate monuments and named schools after Confederate heroes

(Southern Poverty Law Center 2019), and eventually rewrote southern history textbooks (Bailey 1991) and produced popular media like Margaret Mitchell's infamous *Gone With the Wind* to create a romanticized narrative of southern Antebellum life that obscured the racial violence on which it was built. What emerged has come to be called the "Lost Cause" in the scholarly literature – which is the now discredited notion that Confederate states seceded from the Union and entered the war based on "states' rights" and not to preserve slavery (Gallagher and Nolan 2000; Janney 2016). The Lost Cause version of the war often represents formerly enslaved people as "faithful slaves" who were loyal to their masters, to the Confederate cause, and were unprepared for the responsibilities of freedom (Janney 2016). Still today, many plantation museums, with some notable exceptions (Cook 2016; Bright et al 2016), that now serve as prominent heritage tourism sites in the U.S. South, celebrate the white-centric version of the Antebellum past and many visitors come expecting to confirm the Antebellum imagination they retain from *Gone With the Wind* (Carter et al 2014; Alderman et al 2016).

In contrast, Brazil is undoubtedly one of the most racially and ethnically diverse countries in the world. This reality of racial "mixture" combined with the mythology of early Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre has led to both an internal and external national reputation as a "racial democracy" (Andrews 1996). The idea of racial democracy is founded on the principle of *mestiçagem* – or miscegenation – that is said to have produced a thoroughly mixed population. Famed Brazilian sociologist Darcy Ribeiro even went so far as to say that racial mixture in Brazil had created an entirely "new race" of people, descended from a mixture of Portuguese settlers, formerly enslaved Africans, and indigenous people (Ribeiro 1995). But despite this racial

mixture, race still matters in a Brazil where the white elite still hold a disproportionate share of wealth and power (Telles 2006) and the country ranks 8<sup>th</sup> on the Gini index of inequality (World Bank 2018). Discourse around “racial democracy” (Twine 1997) in Brazil often revolves around employing racial miscegenation as a defense mechanism that explains its drastic inequality in “social but not racial” terms.

The Museu da Imigração weaves these two narratives into one settler narrative by (1) emphasizing the virtue of white settlers, (2) the relative emptiness of the land upon their “discovery” of it, and (3) framing settlement as turning the land from “wild, untamed” wilderness into a productive part of the emerging nation-state. The presence of indigenous communities and their differently productive relationship to the land is diminished and nearly erased, and their dispossession framed as an inevitable part of the march of time toward modernity. Additionally, slavery goes almost entirely unmentioned and its spatial marginalization within the museum contributes to a spatial narrative that elides its foundational role in creating the conditions for the migration and settlement. In the next section, I briefly explain the methods used to analyze the spatial narrative of the museum.

## **Methods**

Museums and heritage tourism sites have been analyzed using a variety of methods and approaches, each pursuing different questions and bringing different theoretical orientations. These include, among others, surveys and interviews focused on visitor experiences, ethnographies analyzing exhibit development, participant-observation of visitor behavior, and content analysis of the objects and texts within exhibits (Modlin, Alderman and Gentry 2011; Alderman and Modlin 2016; Bright & Carter 2016; Carter 2016; Potter 2016). This particular study does not focus on visitors’

experiences because there were not a significant number of adult visitors present at the museum to reach a representative sample size, as those visitors who were present on field visits were often children on school fieldtrips.

One of the more popular and useful approaches to understanding museums' narratives is discourse analysis, which "emphasizes the value of looking deeply into exhibit 'texts' – including spatial arrangements of objects and built environments, alongside the written word – as reflections of underlying relations of social power" (Smith 2019, 4). Discourse analysis is a qualitative method concerned primarily with the production of knowledge through all its various forms – especially visual images, verbal texts, and institutional practices (Rose 2012). Using this method involves a theoretical orientation that understands exhibits as active agents in the ongoing construction of meaning at heritage tourism sites in which visitors apply their own prior knowledge, experience, interests, and expectations to the content of each exhibit as they move through the museum (Carter et al 2014).

Following Alderman and Inwood's (2013) call to "pay closer attention to *how* stories are narrated and the affective connection they create between people of the past and people of the present" (p. 192), I examine how the Museu da Imigração narrates the history of the Confederate migration. However, it is not enough to simply identify whether marginalized perspectives are included; it is also necessary to assess how extensively these perspectives are incorporated into the thematic focus and narrative development of the exhibits – including *where* minoritized perspectives might be located (if present at all) both spatially within the museum assemblage and socially within the overall narrative. The idea that the museum is an "assemblage" refers to the collection



of objects, narratives, bodies, materials, and other elements that, though they might appear to be insignificant to the museum's narrative, actually, when taken together, actively contribute to it (Waterton and Dittmer 2014). The end result of the geographical arrangement of this assemblage produces what some scholars have called a "spatial narrative" (Azaryahu and Foote 2008; Smith and Foote 2016; Smith 2019; Hanna et al 2018) of the museum to capture how "the spatial qualities of commemorative sites are critical participants in constituting and structuring these sites' narrative power" (Hanna et al 2018: 50). Most studies involving spatial narrative analysis of museums have paid meticulous attention to where certain themes are emphasized on scripted but dynamic tours (Hanna et al 2018; Smith 2019). However, in the case of the Museu da Imigração, there are no scripted tours nor any tour guides to rehearse scripted narratives, so the spatial narrative analysis has been augmented. Instead of meticulously chronicling where particular elements of the museum's narrative structure are emphasized within a museum's tour and the paths and routes that visitors take, I focus on the spatial inequalities in the museum's layout of exhibits in terms of spatial-ideological centrality versus peripherality. It is possible to see through this augmented spatial narrative analysis that in addition to the overwhelming emphasis on the Confederate pioneer narrative in textual terms, the spatial arrangement of exhibits materially and ideologically center the settlers' artifacts while marginalizing and downplaying the role of slavery and the enslaved in the history and memory of the Confederate migration.

In fact, the emplacement of artifacts within the spatial layout of the museum can be conceptualized in terms of a spatialized "artifact politics" – a recognition of the fact that the material cultural artifacts from the past play a political and ideological role in

shaping the museum's narrative. This is a particularly resonant conceptualization in light of the long history of plantation museums using the remaining possessions of the white planter class to "deflect attention away from a discussion of the contributions and struggles" of the enslaved (Alderman and Campbell 2008: 340). The strategic emplacement of the settlers' artifacts – especially their spatial and ideological centrality juxtaposed against the peripherality of the experiences of the enslaved – is reflective of the way that white power and privilege is inscribed into the museum's spatial narrative.

To understand how the museum narrates the history of the Confederate emigration, I visited the museum twelve times over the course of the ten-month period from September 2018 – June 2019. Each time, I took photographs of the museum's exhibits, spoke with museum workers, and took meticulous fieldnotes. Drawing on the auto-ethnographic approach employed by Waterton and Dittmer (2014), Sumartojo (2016), and Smith (2019), I further reflected on my own responses to the kind of atmosphere the museum created and how it made me feel to see and experience the narrative expressed through its exhibits, captions, maps, photographs, and artifacts. Finally, I carefully photographed each exhibit, along with the captions in both Portuguese and English (which I transcribed from the photographs) explaining their significance, to critically analyze the kind of message it communicates. Because the quality of the English translations varied greatly, I re-wrote each of them based on the original Portuguese. This could be considered a limitation to my application of discourse analysis given that inevitably certain forms of meaning are quite literally lost in translation and the museum's narrative cannot be read or analyzed in English exactly as it would be in Portuguese. In this sense, though, my positionality as a white male settler,

southerner, and Confederate ancestor from the United States actually helps me key in to the discursive elements of the Lost Cause present in the interpretive text.

In short, I combine innovations in discourse analysis, namely an augmented spatial narrative analysis with an emphasis on the artifact politics of the emplacement of exhibits, with this auto-ethnographic approach to analyze the museum's overall narrative.

### **Sense of place and commemorative atmosphere in the museum: confining a narrative**

The Museu da Imigração is located on the town square in the city of Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo. It is surrounded by an enclosed courtyard with a metal, abstract art statue and activity space, where occasionally the museum hosts live music and other cultural events (see Figure 3.2, Appendix A, p.191). According to an informal interview I conducted with the museum's art educator, the museum is free and open to the public, and receives around 2,000 visitors each year. Many of those visitors are American and Brazilian tourists attending the Festa Confederada, but a substantial portion also include local schoolchildren, who frequently visit the museum on field trips. Though the museum does not conduct guided tours, nor have docents who rehearse scripted narratives, the art educator is there to accompany curious visitors in a more-or-less chronological tour and answer any questions they may have.

The museum's coordinator, responsible for overseeing the management of the museum, works for the city's Secretary of Culture and Tourism and is a Confederate descendant herself. In an interview, she told me that the planning for the museum was conducted by a commission that included people connected to the cultural organizations of the city government, including members of the Secretary of Education and what used

to be the Secretary of Culture. The FDA mentioned previously was also very involved in the planning process. According to the museum coordinator, FDA members, most of whom are also Confederate descendants, donated a majority of the artifacts associated with the museum's collection. Museum specialists from the capital in São Paulo also participated in the identification, selection, and organization of the collection.

Given the key role that Confederate descendants at the FDA and city and regional government administrators played in organizing the collection, it is no surprise that slavery goes almost completely unmentioned in the museum's exhibits. Bright et al. (2016) recognize that in plantation museums in the U.S. South, plantation ownership structures are very important for the overall assemblage and narrative presented at the museum. The FDA's role in leading the organization of the museum's collection is significant for the dominant Lost Cause ideology it has publicly repeated a number of times in interviews with the media, in a public debate held in 2017 with members of the local Black Movement who have been fighting the use of Confederate iconography, and in official statements released by the FDA. For example, in a newsletter released by the FDA, the organization explains "the reality of the facts about the Confederate flag" to "demystify the biased and distorted vision that is presented by various vehicles of communication" (FDA Newsletter 2018). The newsletter argues that the Confederate flag only began to become associated with racism in 1948 when the segregationist Dixiecrat party and the Ku Klux Klan started to use it, referencing the "lost cause" unironically when describing the original purpose for the construction of Confederate monuments in the United States. The newsletter goes on to say that the symbol was "appropriated" from its original intended use by hate groups and does not represent the

great majority of people, who consider the flag to represent a historic moment that “defined the destiny of the United States.” The newsletter describes Abraham Lincoln as a racist and reminds readers that slavery was legal in the U.S. at the time. The FDA’s website (FDA Website 2020) is a treasure trove of Lost Cause propaganda and as a result of the organization’s role in organizing the museum’s collection, this myth comes across strongly in the museum’s narrative.

Entering the museum’s first floor, one finds a series of exhibits that outline the general history of the city and of the museum building itself – a former prison. The building was chosen as the site of the museum for its architectural and historic significance as well as its central location on the downtown square. To reach the exhibits that treat the Confederate migration, one must walk up a set of wooden stairs to the second floor, passing a portrait of Confederate generals and a commemorative poster created by the state of São Paulo entitled: “Americans in Brazil: Profile of an Immigration” to commemorate the museum’s opening in 1988. Reaching the top of the stairs, one finds a U-shaped floor designed for the visitor to enter a small, square room on the left with exhibits along the walls and in the center of the room. There is barely enough space between the exhibits for two people to pass by one another and the textual exhibits stand about seven feet tall, limiting the line of site and visibility within the museum. The first small room leads into the larger, main room – an open room with high ceilings, which contains the bulk of artifacts and other exhibits.

The U-shaped second floor follows a more-or-less chronological format that places the immigration into a broader context with exhibits titled for example, “Brazil and the Immigration” and “The Intense Migratory Flux.” It then narrows to “The West of the

State of São Paulo and the Immigration” and “The Earliest Immigrants to the Region,” followed by “The Immigrants in Santa Bárbara.” In this sense, the first five exhibits provide background information on immigration that starts broad in scale and narrows from the nation to the region to the town. Then, the exhibits profile a number of Confederate women, children, and men with enlarged photographs and brief descriptions of who each person was. Before exiting the first room, a few exhibits set the stage for the thematic approach in the larger room by treating issues of labor, their role in the “modernization” of Brazil, and forecasting the events leading up to the migration. In the larger room, the visitor moves through exhibits treating the causes and consequences of the U.S. Civil War and Brazilian propaganda and the recruitment of the Confederates.

Continuing the somewhat chronological order of events, one then finds an exhibit labeled “The Early Times” tucked away in a dark corner of the main room of the museum that receives the least amount of light (see Figure 3.3, p.192). What was noticeable about the otherwise unremarkable exhibit is a photograph of a dark-skinned person, one of the only ones depicted in the entirety of the museum. The photo is simply labeled “escravo” [slave] and lacks any other information about who that person might have been. The body of the interpretive text associated with the exhibit does not mention the enslaved person other than to point out that “only a few [of the Confederates] could give themselves the luxury of acquiring slaves.” Otherwise, the exhibit’s text focuses on everything that needed to be done by Confederate settlers upon arrival: building houses, opening trails in the forests, building roads, and preparing the land to be planted. The spatial marginalization of the only enslaved person depicted

amongst the museum's exhibits – located in a dark corner and without any meaningful description of the person – signifies an ideological marginalization of the perspectives of the enslaved people that many Confederates bought and sold. The lighting (or lack thereof) within the museum plays an important role in the development of a spatial narrative by offering points of deflection or focus, with well-lit places serving as focal points and less well-lit places being de-emphasized. In addition to this exhibit's geographic marginalization within the museum's spatial narrative, the commemorative atmosphere reflected a certain tenseness around the issue of the role of slavery in the migration (see Figure 3.3, Appendix A, p.192).

I felt the tenseness of the commemorative atmosphere on my first visit to the museum, when I was accompanied by the museum's art educator, who did not give a formal, scripted tour but answered questions about the exhibits when I asked. When I pointed to the photograph of the enslaved person and asked who he was, the art educator hesitated and, apparently deciding how to frame her explanation, asked me whether I preferred Donald Trump or Barack Obama as president. After all, at the time of my first visit to the museum on October 05, 2018, Brazil was in the final month of its own presidential election and social and political tensions were running high. When I answered "Obama," her face relaxed and she seemed to feel comfortable more directly addressing her thoughts related to who the enslaved person was and how he was being represented in the museum. She admitted that the perspectives of Afro-Brazilians were not represented well in the museum or throughout other museums in Brazil, and told me a story about how some people believe that the enslaved man pictured likely killed one of the original Confederate settlers after getting into an altercation. In a longer

conversation on another visit the next month, I asked her if she thought that the museum represents the connection between slavery and the Confederados very well.

Her answer:

“Here it is very romanticized, but it has to be left that way. It wasn’t a good war.”

As a visitor to the museum, the location of this exhibit of the unnamed enslaved person in an unlit corner of the main room communicated to me a lack of importance and emphasis placed on the role of slavery in shaping the Confederate migration. This was later confirmed by the tense uneasiness with which the museum’s art educator approached the subject of slavery with me through her litmus test of which recent U.S. President I liked most and then again by her comments admitting the museum’s romanticized representation of slavery and racism. In a sense, the tense, uneasy atmosphere of the museum combined with the spatial narrative geographically and ideologically marginalizing the enslaved seemed to cordon off the degree to which questions of slavery could be addressed or even recognized as important components of the Confederate migration. Then, I remembered that, additionally, I was standing in a former prison, a symbol of settler power and confinement not unlike the narrative present within it.

### **Creating Confederate pioneers and a settler narrative**

Continuing along the walls of the main room are more thematic exhibits, treating themes like the Protestant religious faith of the Confederates, activities women and men and children participated in during times of work and leisure, the difficulty of the journey from the United States to Brazil, and the kitchen, food and domestic utensils. In the center of the main room, there are larger historic artifacts – things like a large spinning



wheel, a chest of drawers, and a floor length white dress that would have been worn by one of the original Confederate women (see Figure 3.4, Appendix A, p.193).

The spatio-ideological centralization of the large artifacts within its narrative follows patterns of representation within some plantation museums in the U.S. South in which the details of the architectural and spatial dimensions of master rooms within the “Big House” take center stage on tours and consume the expectations of visitors (Carter et al 2014;) – often indicating to heritage tourists that “the lives of the enslaved were simple and self-evident – possibly even boring – when compared to the planter’s house” (Modlin 2011: 156). Additionally, the spatial and ideological centralization of the chest of drawers, kitchen machinery, and spinning wheel serve as points of deflection within the artifact politics (Alderman and Campbell 2008) of the museum (see Figure 3.4, p.193). The artifacts, as interesting as they may be for some visitors, redirect attention away from the political conditions surrounding the migration (including especially slavery) and toward the richness of the inner lives of the settlers. Too, reducing the description of the sole enslaved person mentioned to “slave” and locating the exhibit in a dark corner of the museum represents a spatial inequality in the spatial narrative and communicates the message that slavery is not an important component of narrating the Confederate migration – despite the fact that it shaped every aspect of it (Brito 2015; Silva 2015) – from the cause of the Civil War to enhancing the attractiveness of Brazil as a migration destination.

In addition to a spatial narrative that minimizes the role of slavery in creating the conditions for the migration, the museum’s narrative perpetuates a settler colonial interpretation of the Confederates in a variety of ways, most notably by describing them

as “pioneers.” What follows in this section draws on examples from the museum’s interpretive text to highlight the key components of the settler “Confederate pioneer” narrative – the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, Brazilian racial democracy, and references to Confederates following their “pioneer instincts” to rebuild their lives after the Civil War.

### ***A. The Lost Cause***

The museum’s treatment and framing of the U.S. Civil War and the Confederacy’s role in it are rooted in a Lost Cause version of Civil War memory. Recall that the Lost Cause is a discredited interpretation of the war that posits the South as a region acted upon and reacting to a violent and tyrannical interventionist North, framing the Confederacy’s participation in it as a matter of “states’ rights” and not the protection of slavery as an institution (Gallagher 2000; Janney 2016). In one exhibit, the interpretive text describes the abolition of slavery in the U.S. as a result of the war as something done “in order to meet the immediate needs of the war” rather than its primary cause and consequence.

In another exhibit, the South is referred to as being “subjected to” an interventionist Northern regime. In yet another instance, southerners are described as “becoming a target of” an intense propaganda and recruiting campaign from the Brazilian government. Silva (2015) questions this traditional interpretation of causes of the Confederate migration, pointing out that many Southerners initiated the emigration by writing letters to the Brazilian consulate offices seeking out information about migrating there. Still, the framing of the South in these passive terms relies upon the part of the Lost Cause that represents the North as a tyrannical oppressor, and the South as a passive victim of historical circumstances, despite the fact that the

Confederate states initiated the migration, their own secession and as a result, the Civil War itself (Gallagher and Nolan 2000).

Finally, the hallmark of Lost Cause mythology present in the museum's interpretive text includes a reference to "states' rights" as a cause of the war. One exhibit frames the concept of states' rights as central to the formation of the U.S. as a nation by placing it in an historical location not typically used by Confederate apologists: in the U.S. Constitution. It says:

"With the War of Independence of the American colonies, a central power would be formed, purely American, confirmed by the Constitution of 1787 that founded a Liberal State, safeguarding the commitment of unity, the principle of sovereignty of the people and states' rights."

In relocating the trope of states' rights outside its traditional usage solely as a defense obscuring the centrality of slavery in the war's causes and consequences, the museum places states' rights at the core of this historical formation of the U.S. This powerful framing reworks the Lost Cause myth to legitimize states' rights discourse by locating it more centrally within Civil War memory than even the staunchest Confederate defenders typically do in the U.S.

### ***B. Racial democracy***

The museum's treatment of the conditions of life in Brazil – especially its emphasis on the cooperation of different groups of people with different nationalities and religious backgrounds – relies on the racial democracy interpretation of Brazilian history to make its case. One exhibit on "The Intense Migratory Flux" describes the immigrants arriving in Brazil this way:

"The immigrants came from the most different countries of Europe, the United States, Northern Africa, the Orient and from other corners of the world. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, with a common story: difficulties in their

country of origin, economic crises, wars, intolerance and persecution of the religious or political order.”

Another exhibit on “The First Immigrants to the Region” describes them this way:

“From 1870 on, a lot of Italians, Spaniards, Syrians and immigrants from other nationalities started to arrive in the region and the Italians represented the largest group among them.”

And finally, an exhibit on “The Labor of the Immigrants” described social relations

amongst different groups of settlers and migrants this way:

“The immigrants who settled in Santa Barbara d’Oeste collaborated enormously to the social and economic development of the city. Between those who dedicated themselves to commercial activities, the Portuguese, Syrians, Germans and Italians stood out, while the Americans would return primarily to agriculture.”

The diversity of the immigrants’ various countries of origin is repeatedly emphasized five separate times within the short span of 28 exhibits. According to Twine’s (1997) analysis of the primary discursive forms that the myth of racial democracy takes, the discourse of racial mixture – or *mestiçagem* – is used to obscure ongoing forms of white supremacy by insisting that since “somos todos misturados” [we are all mixed], race is no longer a significant axis of social-political privilege. The discourse of racial mixture in the museum exhibits performs ideological work through its repeated emphasis on the countries of origin and the diversity of immigrants’ backgrounds. Taken together with the defensive nature of the exhibits’ tone in terms of framing slavery as an aberration in relationship to the Civil War and not its central cause and consequence, the repeated emphasis on immigrants’ diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds mimics Twine’s analysis of the common refrain that “we’re all mixed, so there can’t be racism here.”

Additionally, according to Twine (1997), one discursive practice linked to the discourse of racial mixture is something she calls “spatial containment” – or, that racism

happens “over there” in some faraway town or province, but not “here” or close to home for the participants she interviewed. The museum works to repeat this discourse of spatial containment by, as mentioned above, highlighting the difficulties, intolerance, and persecution immigrants faced in their home countries before arriving in Brazil, but not mentioning any they may have perpetuated upon arrival. According to one exhibit:

“Those who adopted the country as their new homeland, here built their homes, built or rebuilt their families and worked together invaluable for the development and progress of the Brazilian nation.”

In other words, the persecution and discrimination that led to some immigrants choosing to migrate to Brazil was located entirely “over there” where they left, and not “here” where they arrived. One striking example of racism the Confederates brought with them could have been included for context. In 1888, just months before Brazil would formally abolish slavery, Confederate settlers James H. Warne and John J. Klink led a mob that carried out one of the most notorious lynchings of that chaotic period – bringing the practice and its associated racial terrorism with them from the U.S. to Brazil (Machado 2011; Saba 2017). The two Confederates killed Joaquim Firmino, a police chief at the time who – siding with many other abolitionists – refused to cave to demands from slaveowners to chase down and capture escaped enslaved people. According to local news at the time, Warne and Klink incited other Brazilian planters into a lynch mob by telling them they “had only cockroach blood” and that a revolution would have occurred before this in any other country (*The Rio News* 1888, cited in Saba 2017). This violent episode – completely absent from the museum’s narrative, taken in consideration with the fact of the only mention of slavery being in a dark corner of the museum and the reductivist description of the enslaved man as simply “escravo” [slave],

suggests that the discourse of spatial containment powerfully reinforces a narrative of white supremacy and the common refrain of “racial democracy” – that everyone is mixed and therefore there is no racism – and whatever discrimination or persecution existed was located “over there” and not “here.”

### **C. The settler narrative**

The overarching narrative at the museum reinforces a settler colonial interpretation of the Confederate migration. First, the defeated Confederates are framed as following their “pioneer instincts” to Brazil, despite evidence from Saba (2012, 2017), Brito (2015) and Silva (2015) suggesting that re-inserting themselves atop a racial hierarchy factored significantly into many Confederates’ decision to choose Brazil as a migration destination. The museum describes it this way:

“Deeply humiliated, morally and financially, many preferred to heed their pioneer instincts, abandoning their lands in search of new horizons.”

Second, the Confederate migration is framed as part of a larger narrative in which white settlers inhabited an “empty” land – a common settler narrative used to erase indigenous presence and justify settler colonialism. The museum describes it like this:

“Rigorously studied, one can consider all of Brazilian history as an immigration phenomenon. Effectively, what is our history if not a process of peopling a large territory that the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European navigators found *almost deserted* ... ?” (emphasis mine)

“São Paulo, having an intense movement of territorial and economic expansion, needed whoever could *settle the large emptiness* and make them *productive islands*.” (emphasis mine)

Third, and following the discourse of settlers occupying an empty land, is the notion that the land needed to be not only occupied but made productive:

“The occupation of the western part of the State of São Paulo was done under the march of coffee cultivation *in search of new and productive lands.*” (emphasis mine)

Finally, the migration of settlers to the region is framed as synonymous with the progress and modernization of Brazil:

“The great current of migration of the nineteenth century would be one of the most important factors in the *modernization* of Brazil.” (emphasis mine)

“Those who adopted the country as their new homeland, here built their homes, built or rebuilt their families and worked together invaluable for the *development and progress* of the Brazilian Nation.”

As evidenced by these excerpts from the museum’s interpretive text, the Museu da Imigração draws on traditional tropes and mythical imagery to create an image of “Confederate pioneers”, a group of humiliated and destitute Southerners who followed their pioneer instincts to a new, uninhabited land, which they made productive and ultimately through which they helped to modernize a previously underdeveloped Brazil.

### **Broader significance and context**

Why does this museum’s narrative matter? The issue of representation within academic and popular discourse around the Confederates who went to Brazil extends well beyond the museum and has seeped into popular transnational historical consciousness. Academic scholarship has not only not fully addressed the role of slavery and settler colonialism in the history and memory of the Confederate migration but has also actively contributed to the ongoing obfuscation of it. Works produced by Harter (1985), Dawsey and Dawsey (1995), Jarnagin (2008), Jones (2015) and Neeleman and Neeleman (2016), though written with varying degrees of academic expertise, either do not engage with slavery and settler colonialism, perpetuate the pioneer narrative, or outright reject the role of slavery in the causes and consequences

of the migration (Brito 2015; Silva 2015). The most recent book released by Gary and Rose Neeleman has been particularly influential; in addition to their book being made available for purchase at the annual Festa Confederada, the Neelemans appeared on a local news station in 2016 in São Paulo to discuss their book. In the interview, when asked about the meaning of the Confederate flag and its relationship to slavery, Gary Neeleman repeated the Lost Cause refrain that the flag simply stood for “states’ rights” (de Paula 2016).

Additionally, the most widely circulated and comprehensive account of the Confederate migration, *Soldado Descanso!* [Soldier Rest!], written by Judith MacKnight Jones (2015), represents the history and memory of the migration from the perspective of Confederate descendants. In her book, published by the FDA, she says that the reason that the Museu da Imigração was created was to remember the valor and courage of the Confederados (Jones 2015: 27). According to Lownes (2018), Jones’ (2015) narrative suggests that Confederados have internalized Brazilian discourse and ideology surrounding racial mixture and “assigned it to their ancestors as a defense against claims of racism from people outside of the Confederate descendant community” (p. 184). In short, the two most popular, recent, and influential books on the Confederate migration repeat the main themes of the Lost Cause, of racial mixture and democracy, and leave unexamined any critical reflection on the legacy of the Confederados.

Perhaps even more strikingly, the first author of the Dawsey and Dawsey (1995) book on the Confederados, Sonny Dawsey, contributed in 2019 to the settler narrative when he was interviewed on a popular history podcast produced by National Public



Radio (NPR) in the U.S. called *Throughline*. Dawsey, a retired professor of geography and former director of the Institute for Latin American Studies at Auburn University in Alabama, grew up in and around the Confederate descendants in Brazil. His grandfather was a Protestant missionary to the area.

In his interview with *Throughline*, Dr. Dawsey referred to the city founded by Confederates – Americana, São Paulo – as “Plymouth Rock,” the historic name used to refer to the place where the first American pilgrims/settlers landed on the *Mayflower*.

This is what he said on the podcast episode, which aired on September 26, 2019:

“I often like to compare it [Americana] to maybe Plymouth Rock here in the United States. It became an area that was known for being a place where the Americans were, and if you wanted to be with the Americans or the Confederates, then that was where you would go.”

Given these examples, the broader significance of the politics of Confederate memory within the Museu da Imigração is that they are not confined to the walls of the museum. Academic and popular works published on the Confederate migration also repeat the mythical and romanticized versions of the past bound up in the Lost Cause, racial democracy, and settler colonialism. Ultimately, the Museu da Imigração reflects McLean’s (2008) remark that museums are some of the most fertile heritage arenas for undertaking identity work.

Additionally, the significance of this museum’s settler narrative should be considered alongside the country’s difficulty in coming to terms with its slaveholding past in museums especially. According to Cleveland (2015), the vast majority of Brazilian museums do not reflect the fact that the country has the highest population of Afro-descendants outside the continent of Africa, imported more enslaved people than

any other country in the Transatlantic Slave Trade – in fact more than ten times the number of enslaved people brought to the U.S. (Emory Center for Digital Scholarship 2020). The museum fits with broader patterns of representation that center and privilege Brazil's European heritage while ignoring or downplaying its Afro-descendants' history, heritage, and culture.

Finally, the museum's significance should be considered alongside the urgency of the political moment and the prevalence of racism and white supremacy in Brazilian national politics. In a country where the ideology of racial democracy has dominated public discourse for so long, a rightward swing in the country's national politics suggests a more transparently racist shift marked by anti-Black racial antagonism (Bledsoe 2019). This indicates the urgency of identifying, studying, and challenging racist discourses in museums. At the time of this writing (January 2020), Brazil's Minister of Culture has been fired for paraphrasing Nazi-style propaganda in an ultra-nationalist speech on the future of Brazilian art that eerily aligned with the words of Joseph Goebbels, the infamous propaganda minister for the Nazi regime (Greenwald and Pougy 2020).

### **Conclusion**

This article, in exploring the politics of Confederate memory at a museum in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, has examined several issues. First, I emphasize the necessity of expanding the scope and scale of Confederate memory in analyses of collective memory and heritage tourism. This study reframes the scale of Confederate memory – typically explored at the regional or U.S. national scale – to the transnational. With the rise of far-right politics globally, the ways in which the symbols, narratives, iconography, and memories of the Confederacy are displayed, constructed,

represented, and even co-opted is an increasingly important area of analysis. Future studies in critical heritage tourism and collective memory could explore how and why the Confederate flag and identification with the sense of “rebellion” with which it is associated is employed outside the United States in other countries like Italy, Sweden, Germany, Northern Ireland, and the Ukraine (Speiser 2015).

Second, building on Smith (2019), this study offers exciting prospects for linking narrative analysis to the “commemorative atmospheres” of exhibits by employing innovations in discourse analysis and auto-ethnographic reflections. The combination of factors including the spatial design and arrangement of artifacts and exhibits, the tone of conversation with which docents – or in this case the museum’s art educator – engages visitors, the lighting within the museum, and the framing of events through interpretive text, all create a spatialized narrative in which certain elements of the Confederate migration story are downplayed and ignored while others are centralized and emphasized. These factors all contributed to the creation of a tense atmosphere in which slavery and racism are subjects broached with extreme hesitation and sensitivity and – by the art educator’s own admission – not adequately discussed within the overall museum narrative.

Third, this study develops links between settler colonial studies and heritage tourism in Latin America by highlighting how, in addition to ignoring the role of slavery and racism in the causes and consequences of the Confederate migration, the museum constructs an image of the settlers as “Confederate pioneers” – devastated, humiliated soldiers following their “pioneer instincts” to settle an “empty land”, make it “productive” and “work together” with other immigrants to the region with diverse religious and ethnic

backgrounds. By weaving together elements of Lost Cause mythology with the dominant Brazilian memory regime of “racial democracy”, the museum constructs an honorable Confederate pioneer – spatially and ideologically marginalizing the role of slavery and racism in the causes and consequences of the migration.

Fourth, I reiterate the importance of museums for heritage tourism by showing how museums selectively narrate the past. The inclusion of various exhibits on the positive contributions of Confederates to Brazilian society in terms of religion, education, and agriculture and the exclusion of any meaningful engagement with slavery and racism reflect broader trends of museum curation in Brazil that favor the country’s European heritage and marginalize or downplay its African cultural influences (see Araújo 2015). Additionally, the museum’s spatial narrative centralizes and emphasizes – geographically and ideologically – certain household Confederate artifacts while either romanticizing or marginalizing the historical and political causes and consequences that created the conditions for the migration to take place, particularly when it comes to considerations of racism and slavery.

Fifth, this study highlights and builds on the insight that museum narratives often serve to deflect our attention away from the global contours of white supremacy across different scales and places, rather than draw our attention to them. It is situated within a global narrative of whiteness that centers the heroism and valor of colonizers, slaveholders, settlers, imperialists and racists while obscuring or erasing the agency of the enslaved and the existence of indigenous people. In this sense, the museum is part of a larger global politics of failing to come to terms with settler colonialism, white supremacy, and ongoing racist violence and racial injustice and inequality.

Sixth, I show how the museum's construction of Confederate pioneers has broader implications in academic and public debate about who the Confederate settlers were and where they rest within popular imagination and discourse. Academics and scholars continue to contribute to the creation of the romanticized, settler framing of Confederates as pioneers. From popular books written by descendants and curious onlookers to academic ones by scholars, a concerted effort clearly seeks to ignore, reject, or downplay the foundational role that racism and slavery played in Confederate memory and heritage.

Finally, for far too long, indigenous peoples and other people of color have shouldered disproportionate levels of responsibility for resisting the many faces and stories of settler colonialism and white supremacy. White settlers like myself and others can and should play a role in disrupting the heritage tourism industry's investments in the settler colonial present and future. I argue, following Grimwood et al (2019), that it is our responsibility as settlers to push back against and deconstruct the structures, systems, and narratives that legitimize ongoing settler colonial occupation and white supremacy. Heritage tourism studies should trouble the museum as a space in which settler colonial power produces certain truths about – in this case – not only indigenous peoples but also the formerly enslaved. Ultimately, the central goal of this study has been to denaturalize the seeming inevitability of settler colonial “progress”, enslavement, and occupation inherent in the museum's spatial narrative.

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**Chapter 4**  
**Race, Affective Atmospheres, and Absent Presence: Racialized Tensions at the**  
**Annual *Festa Confederada***

**Abstract:**

The *Festa Confederada* is an annual festival that takes place in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil, celebrating an Antebellum-era, white supremacist Confederate heritage. Thousands of Confederate soldiers and their families decided to migrate to the area after the end of the Civil War rather than face the possibilities of Reconstruction and the incorporation of formerly enslaved people into Southern society and politics. The festival, which receives roughly two thousand visitors from all over Brazil and even parts of the United States each Confederate Heritage Month (April), features traditional dance, dress, musical, and culinary traditions of the U.S. South – including women in yellow belle hoop skirts and men in grey Confederate uniforms square dancing on a Confederate flag-emblazoned stage. This paper investigates the political-emotional elements of the festival's commemorative atmosphere and the absent presence of the memory of slavery and racism associated with the celebration of the Confederacy. Drawing on interviews with festival organizers and attendees, participant-observation, archival and autoethnographic methods, and situating the work within more-than-representational geographies of memory and ongoing debates around Confederate heritage in Brazil, I sketch the affective atmospheres of the festival, remaining attentive to the work the atmosphere does and relationships between emotion, space, materiality, and wider society. I conclude by charting paths toward sustainable management of difficult heritage.

**Keywords:** slavery, affect, atmosphere, commemoration, festival, Confederacy, Brazil

**Introduction**

Any time one attends a festival – whether it be centered around music or cultural heritage, beer, comedy, film or any other theme – there is a distinct kind of anticipation one feels as the event approaches. There is a sense that there is something “in the air” upon arrival and entry into the festival site and participation in its activities. In fact, the experience of the atmosphere at a festival is often a key motivation for tourists and others to attend festivals and cultural events (Maráková et al, 2018). That “feeling in the air” has been a source of growing interest for social scientists, including cultural geographers and critical tourism scholars, who seek to capture and analyze the “affective atmosphere” of a place (Moran and Doran, 2019; Closs Stephens, 2016; Bissell, 2010; Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2008). Sketching out a place's affective atmosphere can help us learn more about the relationship(s) between affect/emotion,



space/place, and society by drawing out the relationship between collective and individual identities, feelings, places, and events.

However, this phenomenon is ambiguous, “fleeting and fragile” and as a result it can be “difficult to be analytically precise when empirically researching atmospheres” (Michels, 2015: 255). On the other hand, though, it is exactly the fragile, fleeting, and at times ambiguous nature of affective atmospheres that make them interesting and important subjects for research and exploration. I describe atmospheres in the plural out of recognition of the multiple senses of place and circulations of feelings in the air that are often present at the same time depending on one’s point of view and positionality. Following Anderson (2009), I argue that the ambiguity of affective atmospheres – “between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite” is what enables us to reflect on affective experience “as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity” (p. 77). And while affective atmospheres can be intentionally shaped and designed by heritage authorities, they also emerge regardless of the intentions of designers in sometimes competing or contradictory ways. The fragile, fleeting, ambiguous, and multiple emotions the festivalgoer feels and that circulate in the air co-constitute visitor experience and have wider implications for better understanding the relationship between memory, emotion, space and society.

The particular festival this paper examines is one around and through which much emotion circulates. The *Festa Confederada* (Confederate Festival) is a cultural heritage festival that takes place on the last weekend of April annually in a rural cemetery in Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil. The *feira* celebrates the cultural

heritage and traditions of a group of Confederate immigrants (known as *Confederados*) from the southern United States who fled to Brazil after the end of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) in light of the material devastation wrought by the war and the possibility that formerly enslaved people might become integrated into southern politics and society (Jefferson, 1928; Hill, 1936; Hopperstad, 1963; Dawsey and Dawsey, 1995; Harter, 2006; Jarnagin, 2008; Saba, 2012; Silva, 2015; Brito, 2015). While the racial politics of Confederate memory have been interrogated across the United States in the scholarly literature (Gulley, 1993; Webster and Leib, 2002; Bohland, 2013; Sheehan and Speights-Binet, 2019), few if any studies deal with the modern-day politics of commemorating the Confederacy in a transnational context. As a way to place struggles over Confederate memory and atmosphere at the festival into a wider transnational context, I review in some depth the historiographic debates over Confederate memory in Brazil. Reviewing public and academic debates between traditional “memorialist” scholarship that venerates rather than critically analyzes the Confederate migration versus critical historiographers who take slavery and racism seriously as influential factors shaping the political and economic conditions of the migration connects the politics of atmosphere at the festival to wider struggles over Confederate memory in Brazilian society. Given these debates and the fact that festival organizers publicly and vehemently deny any association with slavery, the Festa Confederada presents an enticing case study. This paper investigates the political-emotional elements of the affective atmospheres at Brazil’s Confederate Festival and pays particular attention to the affective and ideological work the atmosphere does, creating an absent presence of the memory of slavery and racism associated with the celebration of the Confederacy.

Drawing on the concept of “affective atmospheres” currently gaining traction in cultural geographies and studies of emotion, space and society, this article asks how a sense of Confederate identity circulates in the atmosphere of the festival, is felt by attendees, and how the memory of slavery and racism associated with the Confederacy and Confederados actively makes an absent presence. “Absent presence” is a term that recognizes the powerful ways in which the apparent invisibility and silence of some phenomenon – in this case the memory of slavery and racism – affects the atmosphere, feel, significance and meaning of the *Festa Confederada* and, in turn, exerts a presence and has implications for those who experience and are affected by this commemorative event (see Miceli-Voutsinas, 2017; Moran and Disney, 2019; Bazek and Esson, 2019 for more on absent presence). In addition to the clear connections between the American Confederacy and the institution of chattel slavery in the United States (the Confederacy as a nation, including especially its economy, was dependent on race-based chattel slavery; see the Declaration of Causes of Seceding States (2020) for more information), critical historiographic scholarship suggests that the existence of slavery in Brazil after the end of the U.S. Civil War was a key factor in drawing Confederate migrants to the country (Saba, 2012; Brito, 2015; Silva, 2015).

However, the festivals’ organizers, most of whom are direct Confederate descendants and part of the *Fraternidade Descendência Americana* (Fraternity of American Descendants or FDA), insist that the existence of slavery played little to no role in influencing the migration to Brazil because the Brazilian imperial government, especially Emperor Dom Pedro II, actively sought out and recruited Confederate migrants to what would eventually become the last holdout country in the western

hemisphere to formally abolish slavery (which would happen more than two decades later in 1888). One goal of this paper is to explore how the FDA goes to great lengths to make absent the memory of slavery through the design of the festival's landscape and the creation of its affective atmosphere. I build on scholarship that explores how memorial sites like this commemorative festival symbolically express aspects of (trans)national history and memory through their built environments and the feelings they evoke in visitors (Johnson, 2007; Doss, 2012; Sumartojo, 2015, 2016). This links accounts of how affective atmospheres can be shaped by the material and aesthetic aspects of space (Zumthor 2006) with atmosphere, affect, and the impact of strategically designed spaces (Anderson, 2004, 2014; Bille et al, 2015), recognizing that affective atmospheres, though often planned, frequently emerge regardless of the planners' intentions. I use examples of different spatial elements or landscape features of the festival that contribute to the overall mood(s) of the commemorative event and explore how these interweave with first-hand experience of the ceremonies and established (trans)national narratives. In the case of the Festa Confederada, while the atmosphere is explicitly engineered to deflect from and not recognize or discuss slavery and racism, at the same time, alternative space is opened for the creation of new emotional meanings that contradict the planned atmosphere vis-à-vis absent presence. In other words, there is an underlying paradox that the strategic design of the festival's atmosphere contains "the seeds of its own undoing" (Dowling and Power 2016: 298).

The overarching goal of this paper is to sketch the affective atmospheres of the festival, paying special attention to the work the atmosphere does to make absent the memory of slavery and documenting the racialized if often contradictory emotions

evoked in visitors. Following Closs Stephens' (2015) invitation to "address how [atmospheres] matter politically," I use the concepts of affective atmospheres and absent presence to explore how the Festa Confederada feels to festivalgoers and what these feelings might mean for wider framings of transnational Confederate memory and identity.

### **Geographies of memory, affective atmosphere, and absent presences**

A growing body of literature at the interface of cultural geographies and critical heritage studies theorizes the significance of affect in shaping embodied counters at "places of memory" (Jones, 2011; Doss, 2012; Sakamoto, 2015; Micieli-Voutsinas, 2017). Moving beyond standard representational studies, this scholarship marks an important turn towards the "more-than-representational" geographies of memory in contemporary studies of the relationship between space, place, landscape and memory. These studies shift away from focusing on monumentality/governmentality theories that conceptualize memory as static, immobile, and congealed into place as authorized discourse in steel and stone and toward knowing the "unrepresentable" memories located in the body and circulating as emotion and affect in the atmosphere surrounding but also independent of memorials. Our senses play a crucial role in the psychological and physiological processes that co-constitute our memories and inform our subjectivities. More-than-representational theory helps us understand how deeply felt axes of social identity like race, gender or nationality can be characterized as "a set of feelings circling in the air" (Closs Stephens 2015, 182).

Rather than assuming a pre-existing sense of Confederate identity amongst descendants and festivalgoers, the provocation of "affective atmospheres" is an invitation to alternative ways of knowing that requires "a haptic description in which the

analyst discovers her object of analysis by writing out its inhabited elements in a space and time” (Stewart, 2007, 445). In this paper, I seek to “write out” or sketch some of the affective atmospheres and spatial-sensory pathways of the annual Festa Confederada during my attendance and qualitative data collection at the festival in April 2019. What kinds of sights, sounds, and performances take place and how do they combine with the designed space of the festival grounds to create specific feelings in the air? What kinds of spatial-sensory pathways are visitors encouraged to take through the spatial design of the festival? How do these elements combine with existing dominant racial ideologies in Brazil and hegemonic understandings of American and Confederate national identities? I sketch the festival’s affective atmosphere with these questions in mind.

Importantly, the festival’s affective atmosphere is shaped both by what is present and visible (i.e., sights, sounds, performances) and what is absent or invisible. The affective atmospheres of the Confederate Festival are shaped simultaneously by the happy tunes of Dixie along with the tense absent-presence of any mention of slavery. Recent work at the intersection of affective heritage and absent-presence in cultural geographies, especially the seminal piece by Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas (2017), acknowledges the powerful role that the spatial design of commemorative spaces can play in moving the emotions of visitors. In the case of the 9/11 memorial in New York City, the site’s traumatic past is felt by visitors through affective encounters with the site that point to the space the Twin Towers once took up in the Manhattan skyline. In this case, the authorized discourses within the National September 11th Memorial and Museum actively point to absent presence as a strategic mechanism used by curators and designers for evoking specific emotional responses from visitors. However, what

happens when particular memories are strategically avoided or de-emphasized by authorized heritage authorities seeking to downplay or even outright ignore or forget an inconvenient and difficult past?

In the case of the Festa Confederada, authorized heritage authorities (i.e., the FDA) go to great lengths to exclude any mention of slavery from the festival's events and image. Evidence from my fieldnotes and from public interviews FDA leaders conducted with local reporters suggest that the organization takes a defensive tone when slavery or racism is cited in relationship to their Confederate ancestors or the infamous Confederate symbol. This public defensiveness comes across in the organization and design of the festival space and the great pains the organization takes to avoid drawing any attention to connections between a sense of Confederate identity and the place of slavery within that. However, those historical connections have been hotly debated within both academic scholarship and public discourse in Brazil and the United States. While some traditional historians and FDA leaders argue that slavery played a minimized or insignificant role in creating the conditions for the Confederate migration to Brazil, critical historiographers and Afro-Brazilian activists have advocated for a re-framing of the migration that understands racism and slavery as powerful forces shaping the conditions for the migration based on evidence from letters written to Brazilian consulate offices (Silva 2015), the journal entries of Confederates interested in migrating to Brazil (Brito 2015), and the historical fact that Brazil still maintained chattel slavery for another twenty-three years after the end of the U.S. Civil War (Araújo 2015). In the next section, I review some of these historiographic debates over the role of slavery and racism in shaping the migration to chart the origins of wider struggles over

Confederate memory in Brazil and provide context for an analysis of the affective atmospheres present and absent-present at the Confederate Festival. The festival atmosphere happens amidst and with acknowledgement of the unsettled, racialized nature of the history of the Confederados.

### **Competing claims: slavery, racism, and the Confederate migration to Brazil**

The degree to which the existence of slavery motivated the Confederate exodus to Brazil has been the subject of much debate and disagreement within the historical and scholarly literature, as well as amongst descendants and local activist groups in Brazil, with some denying that slavery played an influential role and others insisting that it did. Although some full-length book manuscripts have been written about the subject of the Confederate migration, they have been written by authors with varying degrees of academic training in history or the social sciences, some with no training at all, and typically without a critical historical-geographic lens. The books on the Confederate migration I consider to be most comprehensive are those written by Eugene Harter (1985), James and Cyrus Dawsey (1995), Laura Jarnigan (2008), Judith MacKnight Jones (2015) and Gary and Rose Neeleman (2016). The first three were published in English and the latter two in Portuguese. Of the authors, only the Dawsey brothers and Laura Jarnigan ever held academic positions. Harter wrote his book as a retired US Foreign Service Officer and Confederate descendant. Jones' account is written from the perspective of one of the last surviving Confederate descendants living in Brazil. Gary and Rose Neeleman write from the perspectives of journalists, Mormon missionaries, parents of JetBlue airline founder David Neeleman, and U.S. diplomats stationed in Brazil for over thirty years who took an interest in the Confederate history.



None of these works take the role of racism or chattel slavery very seriously as potential motivating factors in shaping the political conditions for the Confederates' migration to Brazil. Harter (1985) for example completely rules out the possibility of Confederates acquiring and enslaving people in Brazil, even going so far as to suggest rather absurdly that the migrants were not staunchly pro-slavery in the first place. Dawsey and Dawsey (1995) deny slavery as essential to the Confederate migration (p. 18), suggesting instead that Brazil's imperial politics initiated the recruitment of Confederates, destitute and poverty-stricken from the humiliating defeat in the Civil War. Jarnigan (2008) favors a strictly economic framework in which the Confederate migration is framed as the "logical historical outcome" of an extensive set of familial, economic, and cultural relationships between elite capitalist merchants in the Western hemisphere, leaving to the imagination the role that race played within that economic framework. Jones (2015) and Neeleman and Neeleman (2016) present a largely romanticized version of Antebellum Southern life, Civil War history and memory, and the Confederate migration influenced by films like *Gone With the Wind* that perpetuate the Lost Cause version of the war – namely that the war was not fought over slavery but over "states' rights" (Janney 2016) and that the existence of slavery in Brazil was completely unrelated to the social and political conditions that led to the migration.

Instead, these authors' works focus on the richness of the inner lives of the migrants, what kinds of positive social and economic contributions they made to Brazilian society, and the hardships they faced in the aftermath of the Civil War's destruction and the arduous journey they made by ship to restart their lives in Brazil. In a sense these authors present a picture of the Confederate migration that parallels what

one might hear when visiting an American plantation home – a rich and detailed account of the inner lives of the “lady of the house” (Potter 2016) and other members of the white planter elite, including the color of the curtains and the spatial dimensions of the master bedroom, often to the exclusion of the experiences of the enslaved people whose coerced labor generated the white elite’s massive wealth (Alderman et al 2016; Walcott-Wilson 2017). As a result, Silva (2015) describes these authors as “memorialist” given that their primary goal was to memorialize rather than critically analyze the Confederate soldiers and their families who migrated to Brazil.

*A. Introducing the memorialist authors*

Memorialist authors make several broad arguments. First, they argue that slavery could not have been a primary motivating factor for Confederate migrants because it was the Brazilian government who recruited the Confederate soldiers in the first place to come to Brazil (Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; Jarnagin 2008; Jones 2015; Neeleman and Neeleman 2016). Emperor Dom Pedro II certainly had a vested financial interest in recruiting the Confederates, whose agricultural knowledge and expertise he saw as an opportunity to develop Brazil’s still largely agricultural economy based on enslaved labor. As an example, memorialist authors emphasize that the Confederates had a crucial agricultural technology that Brazil lacked – the plow – and that its introduction could improve the country’s agricultural productivity (Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; Jones 2015; Neeleman and Neeleman 2016). However, memorialist authors neglect the fact that the Confederates’ development of this innovative agricultural technology cannot be separated from the racist political economy of chattel slavery in which it was developed. This selective recognition of the contributions of

Confederates to Brazilian society is a hallmark of memorialist authors' interpretation of the Confederate migration.

Second, memorialist authors emphasize what they consider to be the Confederados' positive contributions to Brazilian society – namely in the areas of education, religion, and agriculture. In addition to the plow, Confederates were the first to introduce the watermelon and Protestant Christianity to Brazil (Harter 1985; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995). To this day the region remains heavily influenced by the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian denominations of Protestant Christianity they brought to an overwhelmingly Catholic country (Dias Filho 2012). In fact, the religious identity and practice of the Confederados is often suggested by scholars on both sides of the historiographic debate as one of the main reasons the community took hold where it did in Americana and Santa Bárbara d'Oeste in the interior of São Paulo. Since Protestants were not allowed to be buried with Catholics at that time, Confederados had to create their own cemetery, which one settler did on his farm. That farm and cemetery became a site of cultural cohesion around which a distinctly Confederado identity began to take shape, as throughout the years other Confederado families buried their loved ones at the Cemitério do Campo (Country Cemetery) and held family reunions and picnics there. Memorialist authors tend to frame the circumstances around the creation of this cemetery as a form of social exclusion and discrimination experienced by the Confederados upon their arrival in Brazil, a tactic that evokes sympathy for the Confederados' plight while at the same time eliding the fact that many of them enslaved people in either the United States, in Brazil upon arrival, or in both countries.

The influences of religion and education that memorialist authors emphasize are connected. Confederate descendants created a local university in the state of São Paulo, called Mackenzie Presbyterian University, which is still in operation. The university is known for developing innovative pedagogical techniques, involving for example little to no rote memorization and emphasizing active learning. Perhaps ironically, according to the university's website, it was also one of the first universities in Brazil to open its doors to the children of the enslaved (Mackenzie University website 2020). Biblical study became the primary way Mackenzie's teachers developed literacy skills in young children, leaving a lasting legacy in which Protestant religious values became tied up in the Confederados' contributions to education and literacy in Brazil (Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; Dias Filho 2012).

In sum, memorialist authors memorialize the Confederados rather than critically analyze them. They frame Confederates as passive agents in the migration to Brazil by suggesting that they were victims of the circumstances of the Civil War, but rarely if ever mention that those circumstances involved fighting to uphold a racialized political-economic system of chattel slavery. According to the memorialists, Confederates did not actively seek out Brazil as a migration destination but were instead recruited there. Additionally, as a Protestant minority in a Catholic-majority country, they were the ones facing social exclusion as they were not permitted to be buried with the Catholic majority. Second, memorialist authors reject the existence of slavery in Brazil as the only or the primary motivating factor for the migration. Third, they focus on the richness of the inner lives of individual Confederate migrants, mirroring patterns of representation of the white planter elite at plantation house museums in the southeastern US. Fourth,

memorialist authors emphasize what they consider to be the positive contributions that Confederates made to Brazil in the areas of religion, education, and agriculture, to the exclusion of any meaningful discussion of slavery.

*B. Critical historiographies of the migration*

Some Brazilian scholars have written more critically about the role that racism played in both creating the conditions for and motivating one of the largest out-migrations of Americans in history (Machado 2011; Silva 2015; Brito 2015; Saba 2012, 2017). Their work makes up what Silva (2015) calls the critical historiography of the Confederate migration. Silva (2015) shows how Brazil's Imperial government's diplomatic strategy combined with spontaneous Confederate interest in Brazil due to the existence of slavery created the conditions for the migration. He uses primary sources to highlight the fundamental role slavery played in the migration and affirm what the memorialist authors on the subject have been reluctant to suggest, or flatly denied, that "slavery had a central role in [the] immigration" (Silva 2015: 379). He pushes back on the memorialist authors' notion that the Brazilian government heavily recruited Confederate families to Brazil and instead uses letters written to Brazil's Consulates and Vice Consulates inquiring about the possibility of migrating to Brazil to show that the Confederates' own interest – disproportionately by slaveholding Southerners – in the country drove the migration more so than mere Brazilian diplomatic strategy. His data suggest that three fourths of Southern letter writers inquiring about migration to Brazil were slaveholders – an overrepresentation of free white Southerners, only one fourth of whom were slaveholders. In other words, based on letters of interest, an overwhelming majority of the free white southern population interested in migrating to Brazil were slaveholders.

Silva (2015) also shows how Brazilian historiography has struggled to come to terms with this conundrum, as it does not recognize a homogenous Southern emigration to the country, instead recognizing all migrants from all regions of the United States as simply “North Americans.” This ontological difference is reflected in my own fieldnotes from my time in Brazil, as the word “Confederado” (Confederate) often would not resonate with residents of Americana and Santa Bárbara d’Oeste and may even lead to confusion, while “Norte-Americanos” (North Americans) does resonate and is much more commonly used as the point of reference when considering the historic immigration or the annual festival which celebrates it. It also points to a lack of awareness or recognition around the controversial nature of Confederate identity and iconography, vaguely conflating it with being “North American.”

Luciana Brito’s (2015) primary contribution to the body of critical historiography of the Confederate migration includes tracking down the journals of individual Confederados who wrote about their views of and experiences in Brazil, and connecting their racial ideologies to the decisions they made about whether to migrate. One Confederate named Charles Gunter wrote about his desire to purchase enslaved people in the country, saying: “They say we can buy as much land as the number of slaves that we want” (Brito 2015: 154). Another Confederate named James McFadden Gaston, ex-surgeon in the Confederate Army, expressed disappointment that he could not legally bring enslaved people from the United States to Brazil. John Cardwell, a Confederate from Texas, also expressed fear of the large quantity of enslaved people who – while considered a benefit by most Confederates – presented the risk of overthrowing the Brazilian Empire and forming an “Africanized government.”

What Brito's (2015) work shows is that racial ideology not only saturated the decisions of whether Confederates should migrate to Brazil but also whether they should stay once they had arrived. On the one hand, a rigid racial hierarchy in which Confederates would be privileged was something many were looking for (Saba 2012), but the possibility of overthrow of the plantation empire, as well as intense miscegenation also presented what some perceived to be racialized risks. Either way, Brito's in-depth readings of Confederate journals shows just how central white supremacist ideology was to decisions of whether to migrate to, stay in, or ultimately leave Brazil for Confederate exiles.

Maria Helene Pereira Toledo Machado's (2011) contribution to the book *Caminhos da Liberdade: Histórias da Abolição e do Pós- Abolição no Brasil* (Paths to Freedom: Histories of Abolition and Post-Abolition in Brazil), also treated in Roberto Saba's (2017) doctoral dissertation, includes an important if overlooked story that provides insight into the racial ideologies and practices of some Confederate migrants. Two Confederate migrants named James Ox Warne and John Jackson Klink brought lynching with them from the American South to their new homes in Brazil and used it as a tool of racial terror and intimidation at a critical juncture in local and national Brazilian history, as legal chattel slavery was being challenged by abolitionists (Machado 2011; Saba 2012, 2017). In the late 1880s, as the country moved toward abolition, many enslaved people refused to wait for Princess Isabel to sign the Golden Law formally ending chattel slavery and instead chose to run away and free themselves. This left local police chiefs in the position of taking a political side as to whether they would

continue to rigidly uphold the dying racist social order of enslavement by pursuing runaways, or whether they would refuse to do so.

When one local police chief in the town of Rio do Peixe (later renamed to Itapira) named Joaquim Firmino refused to chase after runaways, Warne and Klink provoked a racist mob to lynch the police chief (Machado 2011; Saba 2017). Warne and Klink incited other Brazilian planters “by telling them they ‘had only cockroach blood’ and that a revolution would have occurred before this in any other country” (Saba 2017: 369). What Machado’s (2011) and Saba’s (2017) work shows is that the memorialist authors’ insistence that the only contributions that Confederates made to Brazilian society were in education, religion and agriculture were simply untrue – at least some also brought the lynch mob and hopes for reasserting themselves atop a rigid racial hierarchy like the one they left behind in the South. These historic racial tensions remain unreconciled in the uneasy feelings of many of the festival’s tourists and in the public debates and statements made by members of the FDA and the local chapter of the Movimento Negro (Black Movement). The Movimento Negro refers to the diverse Afro-Brazilian social movements founded in the late 1970s (during the period of military dictatorship in Brazil) to advocate for the civil rights and recognition of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Brazilian culture (Covin 2006).

*C. A brief history of the festival and local debates in Americana/Santa Bárbara d’Oeste over Confederate memory*

Based on my conversations with members of the fraternal organization that hosts the Confederate Festival each year – the Fraternidade Descendência Americana (FDA) – as well as on relevant archival data, the first festival commemorating the Confederacy in Brazil took place in the year 1980. The festival originally was named the “Festa



Country” according to a book published by a local minister examining the history of the Confederados (Dias Filho 2012). In 1992, the name was then changed to “Festa Confederada Brasil – Estados Unidos” (Confederate Festival Brazil – United States). Ultimately the country names were dropped, and it simply became the Festa Confederada, the name it retains to this day. Given the festival’s original name, Southern music and dance have always symbolized an important part of the cultural heritage that the FDA wishes to celebrate. Other elements, like the Antebellum-style belle hoop dresses and grey Confederate uniforms worn during dances, also seem to date back to the original festival (see Figure 4.1, Appendix A, p.194).

According to the public statements made by various FDA leaders throughout the years in local, national, and international news outlets, the festival emerged as a way for Confederate-descended families to get together, to honor and remember their ancestors, and to foster a sense of familial pride amongst them. All FDA leaders who have made public statements in recent years have emphatically denied that the organization has any political goals or promotes any form of racism, slavery, or white supremacy. Yet, evidence from the archival record suggests that the festival is less politically neutral than FDA members might wish for it to seem; at least some political consciousness was certainly involved in the planning and execution of the festival each year.

For example, the FDA in 2003 decided to cancel the annual festival due to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. A news article from the local paper in Santa Bárbara d’Oeste entitled “Descendants lament the war” and subtitled “The traditional Confederate Festival, put on every year in the month of April, was canceled by the Fraternity of

American Descendants” shows a picture of a young boy sitting on the dirt in Iraq with a U.S. military tank behind him (see Figure 4.2, Appendix A, p.195). Nanci Padoveze, the President of the FDA at the time, is quoted in the article:

“We do not think it is right to have a festival when there is a war.”

page 1, *O Liberal*, March 3, 2003, from the archives at Biblioteca Pública Municipal Maria Aparecida de Almeida Nogueira, Santa Bárbara d’Oeste

The decision to not host the festival based on the U.S. invasion of Iraq belies the assertion by FDA leaders and festival organizers that the festival is a benign, apolitical family event. It also reflects a certain level of sensitivity by the FDA to its public image and perception and perhaps even a desire to head off potential protests of a festival that could have been seen to be celebrating a country at war. It also points to the ontological difficulties in cross-cultural commemorations, suggested by the continual conflation of the United States with the Confederate symbol, heritage, and iconography.

Indeed, an image sensitivity can also be noted in the events that unfolded at the festival some years later in the year 2010. According to FDA members and regular festivalgoers that I interviewed, 2010 marked a shift in festival organization planning due to the violence that broke out at the event. Apparently, people described to me as “skinheads” in interviews attended the festival and a fight broke out between a group of skinheads and a group of motorcyclists in which one person was stabbed with a knife. The skirmish forced FDA leadership to cancel the festival for two years to reorganize and especially to increase the police presence at the festival, a fact that one long-time festival attendee mentioned as a noticeable change to the event in recent years. The interviewee, who attended the festival in the year of the fight, said:

“The first time we went there [to the festival], the skinheads went in and they got into an altercation with the bikers ... A guy sticking a knife in the back of another, and

the guy bleeding and the fight, a lot of violence and such. And the security was not enough, they didn't even have any..."

Additionally, the presence of the police and its influence on the atmosphere of the event was noted by the local chapter of the Movimento Negro, whose public statement in opposition to the Confederate flag included a comparison of the festival event to the big house and slave quarters of the plantation, with whites in their luxurious cars and Black people working security (see Chapter 2, p.58 for the full block quote). This certainly connotes, for the authors of the activists' anti-Confederate iconography manifesto, that an essence of the old plantation landscape remained in the festival's atmosphere.

Then, in 2015, the festival started to receive increased international attention, especially from American news media. This was a significant year for the festival for several reasons. First, it was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War, so FDA organizers wanted to celebrate the sesquicentennial year. Second, in the United States, it was the year of the Charleston Nine shooting, and when the killer was found to have posed with the infamous flag online, public interest and attention to issues of Confederate memory were reinvigorated. An FDA member told me in an interview that the festival got more media attention than it ever had before that year. Long form essays in *The Guardian* (2015), *VICE News* (Dwyer 2015), and *Reuters* (Levine 2015), among others, explored the curious history of the Confederados. From the perspective of the FDA, most of that attention was negative. The FDA member told me that some known descendants who attended the festival were fired from their jobs for suspicion of extremism and many descendants were angry with what they perceived as outsider misrepresentation of who they are (personal communication, 2018).

Then, when the tragic murder of Heather Heyer at the Confederate monument protest in Charlottesville, Virginia happened in August 2017, the international news the event garnered contributed to the buildup of local political pressure. Members of UNEGRO, a local chapter of the larger Movimento Negro affiliated with a university in Americana, called FDA leaders in for a debate over the history and meaning of Confederate symbols (see Chapter 2 for more on the debate). UNEGRO members followed the debate with a protest at the April 2018 Confederate Festival. Based on photographs from the protest, there were roughly ten people who participated. By April 2019, the protest had grown to around sixty people. This indicates growing political tension in the atmosphere around the use of Confederate iconography at the festival and an urgent need to advance the study of the politics of Confederate memory in Americana and Santa Bárbara d'Oeste. Before a discussion of this study's findings, I reflect briefly on my methodology and positionality.

### **Notes on methodology and positionality**

This project draws on semi-structured interviews with festival attendees and organizers conducted by phone and in-person, autoethnographic methods, and participant-observation conducted from September 2018 – June 2019, including attendance at the annual festival in April 2019. I, a white North American male from the former Confederate state of Tennessee, led the research effort along with a team of four research assistants (all from the Americana area) whose insights from their attendance at the festival also constitute the qualitative data on which I draw to make my case in this paper. My positionality, or how one's position within the social and political context of the research, shaped what participants shared with me in interviews, as well as the varying levels of access I received to FDA members and my experience of the festival.

The autoethnographic methods involved in this study rely on my own personal experiences of attending the festival, what some scholars have called “sensory ethnography” (Pink, 2009; de Matas, 2019; Drysdale and Wong, 2019). Sensory ethnography is a “methodological approach to utilizing the sense as both an object for analysis and the mode by which research can be conducted” (Drysdale and Wong, 2019). The method demands paying attention to the researchers’ own emplacement within the research context and requires reflexivity in the elucidation of complex meaning from cultural life. Following Drysdale and Wong (2019), I approach my attentiveness to my own senses as not only resources for mining data but also as a fundamental part of the ethnographic process that shows the emotional import for remembering the traumatic history of slavery through autoethnography. Throughout my ten months in Brazil conducting fieldwork, I took meticulous notes on my experiences and interactions with friends I made, research participants, FDA members, and members of the *Movimento Negro* (Black Movement) whose recent protests have brought significant local attention to the commemoration of the Confederacy.

In an effort to combat the power imbalance inherent in the long history of white males from the Global North writing disparagingly about people from the Global South and to mitigate the risk of perpetuating colonial power dynamics in knowledge production, I supplement autoethnographic methods with qualitative data from interviewees. Additionally, I prioritize comments from Afro-Brazilians whom I interviewed and who made public comments about their experiences and interpretations of how the atmosphere of the festival opens up a space for acknowledgement and resistance to the absence of slavery from memory. I also prioritize some comments from Confederate

descendants who expressed discomfort with and a critical perspective on the uncritical celebration of their heritage at the festival.

Finally, I rely on photographs and audio/video clips taken at the festival as part of my observations and fieldnotes to help capture its sense of place and affective atmosphere. Photos and videos provide an electronic record of the events at the festival and allowed me to revisit some of the feelings the festival events evoked in me. Using photo-video technology and mobile devices to capture commemorative events is a great way to capture commemoration in action and is an emergent but growing method in memory research (Birdsall and Drozdewski, 2018). Incorporating mobile devices allows for a textured, multilevel analysis of the visual, textual, and aural layers of the commemorative atmosphere and has been theorized as an alternative method of “reading” the landscape (Birdsall and Drozdewski, 2018).

### **Spatial-sensory pathways and the juxtaposition of affective atmospheres**

To get to the grounds of the *Cemitério do Campo* (Country Cemetery), where the festival takes place, one has to drive about twenty minutes down a red dirt road lined with sugarcane fields south of Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, a mid-sized town of about 180,000 people located two hours by bus or car northwest of São Paulo. The cemetery belonged to one of the original Confederate settlers’ families and became a site of familial reunion and eventually the infamous festival because, barred from being interred in Brazil’s Catholic cemeteries as Protestants, the first of the Confederate dead in Brazil were buried there. On April 28, 2019, I approached the cemetery from a long red dirt road in a white rental pickup truck packed with supplies and four research assistants. As we arrived at the parking area, I noticed armed police officers directing traffic alongside a growing crowd of Afro-Brazilian protestors just outside the paid

entrance only area. Rolling down my window to ask the officer where to enter, I had to shout in Portuguese over the drumbeats and chants of the protestors to be heard. A white van was shuttling attendees from the parking area in a defunct sugarcane field to the fenced area where the opening events of the festival were just getting underway. I could already feel a sense of tightness in my stomach at the presence of a crowd of protestors alongside the armed guards.

In this section, I explore the juxtaposition of multiple affective atmospheres of the festival by sketching the spatial-sensory pathways designed for festivalgoers to take as they enter and move throughout the festival grounds. In doing so, I emphasize the sensory and ideological connections that festivalgoers are encouraged to (not) make. The juxtaposition of distinct atmospheres and the design of unique affective environments adjacent to each other (co-)constitute the multiplicity of emotional-political elements of festivalgoer experiences and create a sense of racialized tension in the atmosphere that contrasts with the lighthearted enjoyment of song, music, dance, and food traditional to the U.S. South. I interpret the juxtaposition of these multiple affective atmospheres in part through the lens of “vexillgeographies” – derived from a combination of “vexillology” (i.e., the study of flags) and “geography” (Medway et al. 2019). Vexillgeographic inquiry recognizes the significance of flags for the multiple ways they contribute to spatial meanings as boundary actants/objects, parts of larger geosemiotic assemblages, and the multiple affective and emotional responses they evoke in festivalgoers (Medway et al. 2019). Since banners and flags are present in the entryway, celebration, and cemetery spaces of the festival and contribute to the multiplicity of designed and emergent atmospheres and felt senses of place, flags play a

key role in constructing the spatial-sensory pathways festivalgoers are encouraged to take and the overall affective atmospheres at the festival.

*A. The entryway: police presence, boundary actants, and geosemiotic assemblages*

Entrance to the festival requires that one purchase a ticket, pass through turnstiles in a controlled entryway, and then be searched with a metal detecting wand by police officers. Draped over the concrete wall that lines the cemetery near the entryway is a banner with the Confederate symbol and a description below it in both Portuguese and English explaining “what [the Confederate symbol] *really* means” (see Figure 2.7 again, Appendix A, p.185, emphasis mine). It explains the symbolism of each color and shape (i.e., red for the blood of Christ, white for God’s protection, the blue cross for St. Andrew’s Cross, the thirteen stars of the Confederate states, etc.) based on the original designer’s intent to the exclusion of any of the socio-political and racialized meanings that have come to be associated with the flag. The banner’s final line reads: “Through the blood of Christ, with the protection of God, we, the 13 states, are united in the Christian fight for liberty.”

Of course, the Confederate symbol has a long history of racism that was conveniently left out of this interpretation (Inwood and Alderman 2016). However, instead of explaining the “real” meaning of the Confederate symbol, I am much more interested in the emotional-political and ideological work this banner – and by extension the entryway itself – does. Of course, the banner is not located in socio-political isolation, but within a wider set of geosemiotic assemblages. “Geosemiotic assemblages” recognizes how signs can simultaneously convey meaning to space and take meaning from their emplacement, and how that meaning is shaped by wider



networks (i.e., assemblages) of signs and symbols that also contribute to the spatialized meanings symbols take on and produce.

In the case of the explanatory banner at the entryway, the banner seems to contribute to the construction of a racialized sense of place in relation to wider ongoing debates in the Americana and Santa Bárbara d'Oeste area and the assemblage of flags within the rest of the festival space. The banner's content and location at the entryway set an especially defensive tone for the atmosphere of the festival, and its presence seems to exist in direct response to the protest festivalgoers have just witnessed prior to entry. In a strikingly combative tone, its location at the entryway implicitly also recognizes the need to explain the significance of the Confederate symbol, both attempting to deflect from the memory of racism and slavery and drawing attention to it. After all, if the festival is really just an apolitical, ideologically neutral, "family event", why even bother presenting visitors with an interpretation of Confederate iconography? However, if the banner is understood as an actor in a wider geosemiotic assemblage, we can make much more sense of the ways it contributes to a racialized sense of place, affective atmosphere, and an absent presence of the memory of slavery.

Additionally, the banner can be interpreted as a social-geographical boundary actant, an identity check, reminding visitors who belongs and who does not. "Boundary actant" (Medway et al. 2019) in this sense refers to the banner's role in not only demarcating "Confederate space" but also reflecting and potentially reinforcing the divisions between the relational territory of Confederate descendants, enthusiasts, and apologists, and those outside that group. The banner serves to geosemiotically connect, both through its written text and its strategic spatial-ideological location at the boundary

of the festival's entryway, festivalgoers who may enter the festival space with various or even mixed emotions regarding the meaning of Confederate iconography and the significance of celebrating the Confederacy. Thus, the entryway is arguably transformed into an identity boundary at the festival that reinforces a racialized sense of belonging and exclusion, far from an innocent expression of heritage. It seems that although the festival planners engineer the atmosphere through the placement of the banner to *not* discuss slavery and racism, in doing so, actually draw attention to its absent presence, opening up space for emotional meanings that contradict the engineered atmosphere.

Beyond the representational elements of the banner's location within the geosemiotic assemblage of the festival, there is an affective element to the combination of the banner's placement with the experience of passing through the militarized entryway. Having a metal detecting wand pass over your body creates a sense of uneasiness and tension, immediately followed by a reminder of who is and is not welcome. There is also the felt sense of racialized tension associated with the fact that glancing around the entryway, it is immediately clear that the majority of the tourists are lighter skinned while the security workers are darker skinned, a reminder that the luxury of cultural celebration is reserved for white people and reinforcing the idea of the banner as a boundary actant. Taken together, the experience of being wanded down, having one's bags checked, passing through the checkpoint with the combative Confederate banner, and noticing the racial makeup of the festival, contributes to the production of a sense of racialized tension in the air.

*B. The celebration: tenseness and a mixture of emotions*  
After passing through the security area and the banner, one enters into the open-air celebration space of the festival where a large tent provides shade for festivalgoers to

relax in the sometimes-insufferable Brazilian heat. Hanging from the tent, in addition to the Confederate flag, is another bright yellow flag called the Gadsden flag (see Figure 4.3, Appendix A, p.196). The Gadsden flag is often associated with the right-wing Tea Party in the United States, and infamously features a coiled rattlesnake ready to strike and the phrase “Don’t Tread on Me” inscribed above it. The image of the coiled rattlesnake is often thought to represent amongst American Tea Party libertarians support for small government and individual property rights, and in recent years has taken on an acutely racialized meaning as an anti-Black, anti-government symbol during the Obama administration (Ashbee 2015). I certainly felt a sense of tenseness when I saw the flag.

Indeed, one of the research assistants for this project, an Afro-Brazilian woman, registered this sense of tenseness upon arrival at and entrance into the festival and observing the demographic composition of the attendees, a sense of tense uneasiness overcame her as she noticed that she was one of only a few Black people.

“So, the first thing I notice is that, being Black I always notice – I think it’s automatic – we always do that. When you enter an event you look, dang, I’m the only Black person. When I entered, I saw a lot of white people. Then, I thought: okay, I’m the only Black person. Then I saw another Black woman, very far away, she was sitting right in the corner. I thought ah, there’s one more – then I saw another Black woman. And the people who were working at the festival, the security guards, many of them were Black. But, of the festival’s participants there were very few. I saw two women. So, I got a little tense just because of that.”

Additionally, upon entrance into the festival, she saw someone she knew, who then introduced her to an older white male American tourist attending the festival. Her interaction with him increased the tenseness she felt because the tourist implicitly drew

attention to the racial dynamics of the festival in relation to his home state of South Carolina:

“... one thing that caught my attention was when he asked if I had been to the festival, if it was my first time; he asked me several questions ... Then he said to me – I remember it exactly as he said it – he said it in English, "If you went to South Carolina you would be crucified. You know that, right?" Then I opened my eyes wide and I said, "I know. I know, that's why I have no intention of going there." Then he said: "Ah, good. It's better!" I couldn't tell if he was joking or being serious, but I think he was being serious.”

This racially-coded remark that she received from this American man who had travelled thousands of miles to attend the festival was an experience situated in wider networks of power and meaning making, echoed for example by the members of the Movimento Negro who had protested the event in April 2018. In the public position statement the organization released against the use of Confederate iconography at the festival, Black activists cited the receipt of racial epithets at the previous year's event as one motive for protest.

“... since we did not aim to enter or confront the space restricted to invited guests, we positioned ourselves peacefully and yet inconveniently, and we were received, even after having formed a discussion roundtable on “the history of the Confederates and enslavement in Brazil” with racist epithets and hostilities...”

The racialized tension in the air was palpable. Given the geosemiotic assemblage of the heavily militarized police presence, the banner and flags that greet tourists as they enter, the plantation landscape dynamics described by Black activists, the overwhelming whiteness of the festival attendees, and the experiences of this Afro-Brazilian woman, it is hard not to feel a certain tenseness in the air at the festival. Tenseness in the atmosphere exists simultaneously alongside what one festivalgoer – a lead singer in a southern rock band that plays at the annual festival who also happens

to be a Confederate descendant – described as a “mixture of feelings.” For those who are aware of the politically charged nature of the public display of Confederate iconography, yet who also enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of the festival, there is a certain sense of inherent discomfort in attending the festival. One Confederate-descended musician, the lead singer in a southern rock band who plays at the festival every year, expressed his mixed emotions this way:

“ ... there are contradictory feelings, the happiness I feel at the moment because I know that this image [the Confederate symbol] doesn't hurt me, but it hurts other people. So, I already feel I think a discomfort, not for me, I feel a discomfort when I think, when I use empathy to put myself in the shoes of those who suffer from that. So, from time to time, despite the happiness of playing [music] for people, although everyone is having fun, there is this certain discomfort also. And in the cemetery part I regret that my ancestors fought for wrong beliefs, defending the wrong side of history ... Now, a huge flag painted on the stage [where he plays music] already complicates things a little. But there is not a simple answer to your question. It is a mixture of feelings. There are moments that I'm happy, I'm satisfied with what I'm doing there at the festival, but there are those moments of discomfort too.”

This comment sheds light on the utility of atmosphere in understanding the complexity of the politics of memory beyond that which seems to be congealed into place by monuments and memorials. It shows how dynamic and unsettled Confederate memory is in relation to the static and settled nature of the portrayal of this history by the banner at the entryway and the Confederate and Gadsden flags within the wider geosemiotic assemblage of the festival. It ultimately shows how, at the same time that musicians and festivalgoers enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of Dixie at the festival, the atmosphere carries with it the seeds of racialized discomfort and an unsettling sense that something is not quite right about the tone of the celebration.

However, the celebration space did not create a tense atmosphere for everyone. For many, the libations, the fried chicken and biscuits, the “Way Down Yonder on the

Chattahootchie” and “Away Down South in Dixie” songs were a lively and exciting atmosphere. Words that can be translated as “peace”, “companionship”, “happiness”, “pleasure”, and “pride” were common descriptors used by festivalgoers in interviews. Studies of affective atmosphere (Anderson 2009; Michels 2015) remind us that the interpretation of human affect and emotion is always complex and contradictory – at the same moment that some festivalgoers experience palpable racialized tension or a set of mixed feelings, others may not understand the racialized politics of atmosphere, especially if they are shielded by racial privilege and positionality.

Take for example a moment from the festival that I captured in the celebration space (see Figure 4.4, Appendix A, p.197). One festivalgoer who had evidently purchased his own Gadsden flag at the gift shop, or perhaps brought it himself, ran through the crowd of attendees holding the flag over his head, shouting drunkenly, and then collapsing to the ground before then spreading the flag out and laying his body onto it. A flag that made me and other interviewees feel a sense of discomfort seemed to be for this festivalgoer a prop for drunken folly lacking the sense of uneasiness others felt. It is a reminder of just how complex and contradictory that affective atmospheres can be. What feels like one person as pain or tension can be pleasure and peace to another.

*C. The cemetery: “jumping on top of the dead”*

During breaks from festival events, attendees would often wander over into the cemetery space, demarcated spatially by a tree line and covered in shade from the tree canopy, to explore the area where the original Confederate dead are buried. The cemetery is the third and final commemorative space within the festival grounds that

visitors reach along their spatial-sensory pathways, as it is opposite the controlled entryway.

For many, a cemetery is supposed to be a quiet place of solitude and reflection out of respect for the dead. Attending a cultural event with loud music, dancing, and drinking made another Confederate descendant whom I interviewed, who has in the past participated in the festival's Antebellum-era dances like square dancing, uncomfortable. She expressed her discomfort this way:

"I have a strong feeling, it feels like I'm jumping on top of the dead ... It seems that I'm jumping on top of a bunch of people that had to go to war ... that is what I feel like, it is like stepping on top of the dead ..."

This same Confederate descendant, like many others, saw the festival as a beautiful expression of her family's history and culture that at the same time also both felt out of place and as an act of erasure of the experiences of the enslaved. She said:

"... when you look, you say: "Wow, how beautiful, in Brazil!" And then you are in an environment, it seems that the ideas are out of place. It's beautiful, everything, but it's like ... "But, wait, where is this from?" I don't understand.

... I see the flag as a monument to a (...) barbarism that was the question of war, the way it was perpetrated, and the question of slaveowners' values ... So, whether we want to or not, the flag carries all that. And then it erases the slaves, it erases voices, in that sense."

Importantly, the mixture of feelings that the Confederate descendants, festivalgoers, and activists felt in the affective atmosphere of the festival are both distinctly racialized and question how the festival does justice to the memories of the Confederate dead.

There is the recognition that, on the one hand, the festival seems to be a celebration of Confederate heritage and culture that "symbolically annihilates" (Eichstedt and Small 2002) or otherwise romanticizes the memory of those the Confederates enslaved.

Symbolic annihilation refers to the ways that the identities and histories of the enslaved

are made invisible in the atmosphere and on the commemorative landscape. Yet, on the other hand, the symbolic annihilation is incomplete as the memory of slavery and racism retains an absent presence through the mixed feelings and racialized anxiety and discomfort interviewees expressed. Despite the fact that the festival is a pleasant experience, that the musical and culinary traditions are especially enjoyable, there is also a certain racialized tension, an absent presence of the memory of racism and slavery that – left as it is by festival organizers – leaves unfulfilled the potential of such an event to (ad)dress deep racialized wounds around the legacy of slavery and ongoing issues of racism in Brazil.

**Concluding remarks: toward sustainable management of difficult heritage**

What is the future of Confederate memory at the Festa Confederada? Will racialized tension and discomfort on the one hand, and drunken pleasure on the other, continue to coexist and shape visitor experiences of the festival? What forms of subjectivity will emerge at the event in the years to come under the Bolsonaro administration and a polarized national political climate in Brazil? How can difficult heritage tourism sites be managed sustainably in a country where at the time of this writing, Brazil's Minister of Culture was just fired from his post for paraphrasing the speech of Nazi extremist propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels (Greenwald and Pougy 2020)? Though Brazil is a country known for its festivities like Carnival, which present unique opportunities to bridge existing social divides (DeMatta 1991), the Festa Confederada seems to fall well short of this potential.

This article maintains that the FDA, in its landscape planning and design, strategically if implicitly makes an effort to render race-neutral and apolitical their “family event”, while at the same time belying their own intentions by making absent-present



the memory of racism and slavery, hanging a banner that explains “what [the Confederate flag] really means” and hoisting the infamous Tea Party symbol of the coiled rattlesnake ready to strike at the festival entrance. Engaging more-than-representational geographic theory on emotion and affect, I demonstrate the propensity for analyzing socially produced feelings, reactions, and perceptions at the Confederate Festival through the lens of affective atmospheres, arguing that the multiple if often contradictory atmospheres at the festival emerge in juxtaposition with one another as festivalgoers follow spatial-sensory pathways from the entryway, to the celebration space, to the cemetery, that evoke a range of emotions from racialized tension and anxiety to happiness, pleasure, and even senseless drunkenness.

Innovations in critical and sustainable tourism studies could help chart paths forward toward managing this “difficult heritage” – a term coined to reflect the difficulty of coming to terms with traumatic and painful processes by which heritage and identity are formed (Logan and Reeves 2008; Macdonald 2009; Huang and Lee 2019). Battilani et al. (2018) suggest two recommendations for managing difficult heritage: (1) building critical memory in the local area by involving the local population and (2) utilizing transnational cooperation strategies to achieve this result. Huang and Lee (2019) also suggest, building on Winter (2015), that “heritage diplomacy” is a useful framework for approaching the management of conflict as a resource in heritage tourism management. This framework posits heritage as diplomacy and urges heritage practitioners to carefully address the unavoidable tension between different frames of historical interpretation rather than overlook, ignore, or downplay them.

By way of conclusion, I would like to offer an imagination of what the Confederate Festival and other difficult heritage sites might learn from these recommendations and envision alternative management strategies. Although the FDA has participated in limited public dialogue in the form of a public 2017 debate with the Movimento Negro about the history and meaning of Confederate iconography, from my communication with movement leaders about the debate, there is a sense among many that the FDA exhibits a stark lack of openness toward good-faith debate and dialogue or toward any kind of change in festival management. What would the festival look like if the FDA took seriously the requests of the Movimento Negro, who have repeatedly said both publicly and in interviews with me that “everyone has the right to their own traditions”, that they do not want to necessarily see the festival come to an end, that they would simply like to see the use of the Confederate flag and symbol, which carries the heavy weight of slavery and racial oppression, to no longer be used? Reporter Ana Maria Gonçlavez (2017) may have put it best when she said: “That [Confederate] descendants want to honor their memory is completely understandable, but they ought to do so with the historical truth about the heritage they brought with them.” What would the festival look like if it stopped using the Confederate symbol but still celebrated the musical, dance, dress, and culinary traditions of the U.S. South?

What would the festival look like if the FDA, too, implemented transnational cooperation strategies in which they worked with heritage tourism planners in the United States who have experience dealing with the difficult heritage of slavery and the Confederacy? Plantation museums in the U.S. South who are making an effort to engage in counter-memory projects might have much advice to offer the Confederate

Festival managers (Cook 2016). What if they took a “heritage diplomacy” approach to festival management that faced head-on the truth that multiple frameworks of historic understanding exist around the Confederados instead of passive-aggressively posting the banner about what the symbol “really means”? The opportunities and possibilities for the festival to become a site of (ad)dressing racial wounds, rather than ignoring, denying, or downplaying them, could be transformed. However, so long as the festival’s managers continue to efface the central role of slavery and racism in the construction of their Confederate heritage, the festival – and parallel sites of difficult heritage – will not realize their affective and atmospheric potential to (ad)dress racialized wounds and promote historical responsibility and social justice in wider society.

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## Conclusion

This dissertation has explored several approaches to understanding Confederate memory in a critical, transnational context, from the U.S. South to southeastern Brazil, recognizing the importance of interrogating and making an intervention in how those in heritage tourism remember and represent the history of enslavement and how Afro-Brazilians are challenging hegemonic interpretations of a slaveholding past. The social memory of enslavement has traditionally been and, despite significant gains, often continues to be narrated in ways that ignore, downplay, or romanticize the relationship between white settlers and enslaved people. Injustices in the public representation of a whitewashed past continue to exert a strong influence and presence on the landscape; yet, at the same time, the geographies of public memory are undergoing challenges and changes as racially subaltern groups engage in protest and creative place-making practices to contest hegemonic versions of memory celebrated at the Festa Confederada and offered for public consumption by the Museu da Imigração.

The overarching goal of this dissertation has been **to study how Confederate memory moves and takes shape in a transnational context and advance an understanding of the politics of Confederate memory in Brazil**. The broader applications and significance of this research, beyond its contributions to the scholarly literature, include:

- (1) broadening public perspective on the Confederacy and promoting a more comprehensive understanding of its geographic expansiveness, scale, and politics, and
- (2) the ways its empirical results and theoretical advances can be applied to contemporary race relations in a modern-day, post-colonial, far-right-controlled Brazil in which at the time of this writing (January 2020) the country's Minister of Culture was just

fired from his post for paraphrasing a quote from notorious Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. The overarching framework that I employed throughout the dissertation has been to take a critical approach to understanding Confederate memory and the memory of enslavement in a modern, transnational context, theoretically informed by geographies of memory, critical heritage tourism studies, Black Geographies, Critical Race Theory, settler colonialism, and literatures on social justice and historical responsibility.

In the remainder of this concluding chapter, I revisit the main research goals addressed in the introduction of this dissertation in a discussion of each goal's intellectual merit and main findings and contributions. Then, the next section addresses the broader impacts of the research in academia, to heritage tourism planners, and to the wider public. In the final section, I briefly chart out some potential further avenues for research related to the topics and issues presented in this dissertation.

### **Intellectual merit**

Each chapter in this dissertation roughly corresponds to a cluster of related research questions that it seeks to answer. The first cluster of questions involves exploring the challenges faced by a white male “gringo” conducting research on race and memory in the Global South. Chapter 1 of this dissertation provides a critical reflection on the difficulties negotiating my positionality throughout the course of this work and on the lessons learned from fieldwork failure. The extended critical reflection contributes to scholarship on researcher positionality in qualitative research and responds to growing calls within human geography for researchers to transparently and critically consider how their positionality in relationship to their participants influences the kind of knowledge they produce.

Chapter 2 asks how memory and white supremacy move and take shape across international and cultural borders, how the festival is being contested by members of racialized minorities, and what kinds of creative placemaking practices they employ. The chapter draws on news reports, interviews, participant-observation, and ethnographic methods to explore how Confederate memory has moved from one South to another, particularly through the lens of the Confederate Festival and the Fraternity of American Descendants. It traces the change in the scale of public debate around Confederate memory from the local to the transnational and highlights the creative place-making practices of Afro-Brazilian activists who engaged in traditional cultural protest-as-art forms, namely capoeira, to create a sense of place (i.e., Black Geographies) that values and centers their lived experiences and understandings of the past.

Chapter 3 asks how the Museu da Imigração represents the history of the Confederate migration to Brazil with a focus on the extent to which racism and slavery are treated. The chapter traces the influence of dominant memory regimes like the “Lost Cause” in the U.S. South and the notion of “racial democracy” in Brazil to understand how they are knitted together into a coherent narrative that frames the settler-migrants as “Confederate pioneers.” I use settler colonial theory to explain the resonance of this narrative and contribute a case study that builds on innovations in discourse analysis (i.e., spatial narrative analysis) to highlight how the spatial organization of the museum influences its overall narrative.

Chapter 4 asks what the commemorative atmosphere is like at the Confederate festival and what role race and racism play in shaping the multiple, co-existing “affective

atmospheres” of the festival. The chapter situates the festival within research on more-than-representational geographies that recognize the emotional and affective capacities for memory and identity to be felt “in the air” and move beyond somewhat static interpretations that view memory as congealed into place. Results suggest that racialized tension and a sense of discomfort reflected in interviews with festivalgoers (including with musicians and dancers who perform at the festival) come from a distinctive absent presence exerted by the invisible but felt presence of the memory of racism and enslavement that are so central to the history of the Confederacy and the Confederate migration to Brazil. I conclude the chapter by charting paths toward more sustainable heritage tourism management at and beyond the Confederate Festival.

Finally, woven throughout Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are answers to the original research question of how the Confederate migration fits into broader transnational histories and geographies of white supremacy and the ways that the Confederate migration to Brazil has been represented in academic scholarship and public discussion. Chapter 2 highlights local debates over Confederate memory between the FDA and UNEGRO. Chapter 3 emphasizes the ways that (mostly American) scholars have uncritically written about the Confederate migration that do not take race and racism as serious and influential factors in creating the conditions for the migration. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth review of the academic debates between “memorialist” authors and critical historiographers that predominate public perception and academic discourse about the Confederate migration and explores the multiple affective atmospheres at the Confederate Festival. As a result, each chapter contributes in a unique way to ongoing academic and public debates about the role of racism and white

supremacy in creating the conditions for the migration. From the evidence presented in this dissertation, I argue that white supremacy significantly shaped the historical conditions of the migration and continue to shape public opinion through romanticization, whitewashing, and downplaying the history of enslavement.

### **Broader Impacts**

As briefly mentioned in this chapter's opening, the broader impacts of this dissertation research extend beyond their contributions to the scholarly literature on Confederate memory and into public debate around what and *where* the Confederacy is. In particular, this dissertation research broadens public perspective on the Confederacy by promoting a more comprehensive understanding of its geographic expansiveness, scale, and politics. Public and scholarly discussions around Confederate memory are typically and understandably limited to the region of the U.S. South, where the Confederate States of America were initially formed, while it is not well-known that the reaches of the Confederacy extend(ed) much further southward. Ongoing debates around what to do with Confederate iconography in the United States, too, stand to benefit from a broadened perspective on the geographic expansiveness, scale, and politics of Confederate memory beyond its how it has traditionally been conceptualized regionally.

Additionally, the broader impacts of this research include the ways its empirical results and theoretical advances can be applied to contemporary race relations in a modern-day, post-colonial, far-right-controlled Brazil. At the time of this writing, in a country defined for generations by an internally and externally perceived national identity as a "racial democracy" where race does not matter for one's life chances and opportunities, the rise of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency during the initial phases of this

fieldwork have made the myth of racial democracy increasingly difficult to believe. Amidst the recent firing (January 2020) of Brazil's Minister of Culture Roberto Alvim for his ultra-nationalist comments on the state of the arts in the country that paraphrased ill-famed Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, the broader impacts of this research contribute to renewed debate on the prevalence of white supremacy in Brazilian society and public memory. I plan to share the results of this research with my contacts at UNEGRO in Americana to bolster their efforts to resist the continued use of Confederate iconography and the romanticization of the history of slavery in Brazil.

Within academia, I have and plan to continue disseminating this research to a wider audience. I presented Chapter 2 of this dissertation at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Division of the American Association of Geographers (SEDAAG), where the paper won the graduate student honors paper competition and received the John Fraser Hart Award. The paper, published in an online only, open access journal, will certainly benefit world regional geography teachers looking to incorporate the curious transnational history and geography of the Confederados into introductory level courses. I have also presented this research at the 2020 Brazilian Studies Association Conference in Austin, Texas to expand the scope and broader impacts of this work beyond the field of geography. Each chapter, as indicated in its publication statement, has either already been published, accepted for publication, or is in preparation for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Chapter 4 is the only one that has not yet been at least preliminarily accepted for publication and I plan to submit it to the journal *Emotion, Space, and Society*.



Finally, the broader impacts of this research include its resonance and relevance for heritage tourism industry managers and planners. Museum managers and cultural tourism event planners stand to benefit from the analyses to develop best practices for representing difficult pasts in museums and avoid re-entrenching dominant ways of remembering difficult histories. Festival planners, too, could take some cues from this research to think critically about how inherently contested the concept of heritage is within the tourism industry and the ramifications for celebrating difficult pasts without explicitly acknowledging the atrocities committed under the flag of those being celebrated. Concluding remarks in Chapter 4 chart some paths toward sustainable management of difficult heritage that recognize the multiple, co-existing frameworks through which people groups understand heritage and the need for cooperation strategies that build a critical memory from local perspectives.

### **Directions for future research**

In light of the findings of this dissertation research, there are a number of potential future research directions to pursue further. First, and perhaps most provocatively, the politics of Confederate memory extend beyond the United States and even beyond Brazil (Speiser 2015). In an era of rising far-right authoritarianism on a global scale and the threat of racially exclusive and nativist politics, a robust understanding of the politics of Confederate memory in other countries and cultural contexts is an important and underexplored avenue for future research. How is Confederate iconography being knitted into the cultural frameworks and socio-political group identities of people who proudly hoist the flag in Italy and Sweden? Where is the flag mere kitsch and where is it appropriated to extremist ideological movements, especially in Europe? Some preliminary news reports coming out of countries like Italy

(Speiser 2015) suggest that the sense of “rebellion” that many American Southerners identify with Confederate iconography resonates in North/South political/regional identity conflicts in Italy. How is Confederate iconography and memory appropriated and woven into other political and regional struggles over identity? How is Confederate iconography embedded within global discourses of white supremacy beyond the U.S. and Brazil?

In a broader sense, I would like to build on the work presented in Chapter 3 to study the ways that lesser-known museums treat the history of enslavement and settler colonialism in Brazil. While a great deal of research explores the representation of enslavement and colonialism in larger, heavily trafficked museums in Rio de Janeiro (Vassallo and Cáceres 2019) and São Paulo (Araújo 2015; Jõesalu and Kõresaar 2018), fewer studies analyze this representation in lesser-known museums in smaller towns in the interior of the country. I am personally particularly interested in the representation of slavery in museums and other heritage tourism sites in the state of Minas Gerais, an interest that was sparked by a cave tour I did in the city of Ouro Preto – known historically for its gold mining done with enslaved labor – in which an Afro-Brazilian tour guide engaged in counter-storytelling. He highlighted the role and contributions of enslaved people to the region’s rich cultural history and the enormous wealth generated off enslaved labor during the colonial gold mining era. In particular, he highlighted how Afro-Brazilian creativity and intellect were historically crucial during the gold mining era, pushing back against the traditional interpretation of “slaves” reduced to their subservient status by including information on the tour related to the geologic knowledge and extraordinary engineering skills required of Afro-Brazilians to mine the gold. I am very interested in pursuing a research agenda that, building on recently

published work by Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos (2019), examines the way that museums and cave tour guides, among other heritage tourism sites and destinations, tell the history of enslavement and colonialism in what is undoubtedly one of the most strikingly paradoxical and complex landscapes in Brazil, architecturally beautiful and known for its Baroque style, nestled amongst rolling hills, whose beauty and wealth were forged through violence and the coerced labor of so many Africans.

Finally, as I started doing this work in Brazil, a number of people with whom I spoke, including activists in Americana, either referenced or expressed explicit concern about the way that the Confederate migration is taught in local schools and the use of Confederate iconography in class projects by students. Indeed, a local news article (Navarro 2017) covered an instance in which the father of a student at a public school in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste publicly denounced the use of the Confederate flag in his child's school fair. Scholars interested in the relationship between history education, pedagogy, and race and memory might be interested in pursuing a study of school textbooks and teachers to better understand how the history of the region is taught to students in the public schools of Santa Bárbara d'Oeste and Americana.

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## Epilogue

To end, I want to briefly reflect back on the dissertation research process, how I came to study this, and the challenges I faced throughout this dissertation study. I have come a long way in the past four years since I first moved to Knoxville to start my PhD in Geography. I could never have anticipated the breadth and depth of change I would undergo personally and professionally. During my PhD program, I learned a language with which I had no prior familiarity, lived for an extensive period of time in a foreign country, I fell in and out of love, and made and lost deep and meaningful relationships. Although living in Brazil and learning Portuguese was one of the most challenging things I have ever done and caused me to sacrifice a great deal, I will forever be grateful for the lasting personal and professional impact that this lived, embodied, cross-cultural learning experience has had on me.

Six years ago, when I first started my Master's program, I was an evangelical Christian without much cross-cultural learning experience and without a critical lens to structurally analyze social phenomena. When I took a cultural geography seminar with Dr. Alyson Greiner, we watched the documentary "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes" and it radically transformed my life. To use a biblical metaphor in honor of my Southern Baptist upbringing, the "scales fell off my eyes" so to speak; it was the first time I was able to see racism as something more than individual hateful attitudes and conscious prejudices, but as a deeply-rooted unconscious bias derived from a long history as a primary organizing principle of society. From 2014-2016 I voraciously consumed every book on the history of the social construction of race and racism I could get my hands on. A newly developing critical understanding of structural racism helped me locate

myself as a white man from the rural southern U.S. within the broader contours of society; it helped me to recognize my privilege and develop a political consciousness and motivation to fight against white supremacy – something I discovered that does not lurk only behind the pointed pillowcases of klansmen but in the mundane and ordinary status quo. I decided to get a PhD in part because this new consciousness, this new passion, gave me a new sense of purpose in life that replaced my old one as an evangelical (evangelism and conversion of others to Christianity).

I proposed and developed this dissertation project idea in a Grant Writing for Geographers course I took during my second year in the PhD program. Although my interests in the politics of (re)naming places for white supremacists in the U.S. South had originally driven my interest in working with Dr. Derek Alderman, I gave myself space in this grant writing course to explore other options for research outside my comfort zone. I also knew the pressures of making oneself a marketable candidate in an increasingly competitive academic job market, so I decided to try to apply for a major federally funded research scholarship/fellowship program (in fact I applied to many). I thought about what might give me the best chance of winning coveted research money that remained true to my interests and allowed me to fulfill my dreams of living abroad and learning another language. My friend Gustavo-Ovando Montejo had introduced me to the Confederados while we were at Oklahoma State together because he was reading a book that mentioned their migration to Brazil after the Civil War. A search of academic databases turned up very little information about the Confederados, so I decided to write my research proposal around going to Brazil and studying the politics of

commemorating the Confederacy and the Confederate migration. I got lucky; I got the funds and I went.

From the beginning of the project, I always wanted to take my positionality very seriously, to try to account for how my unique identity as a white male gringo from the Global North would be perceived, and barred or provided privileged access to information and to participants' feelings and experiences. Looking back, I was woefully underprepared to account for my own positionality and extraordinarily naïve about scholar-activism or activist scholarship. I do not have a background in activism, and though I have shown up to political rallies and protests before, all of my knowledge about how oppression works, as someone with every axis of privilege imaginable in terms of identity, lives in the abstract and not the corporeal. Undertaking a study involving racism in a country not your own as a privileged person from the wealthiest country in the world, coming from the Global North to the Global South, is an experience fraught from the very beginning with moral, ethical, and political problems and possibilities. How can a white male gringo go to the Global South and write anything about racism without re-entrenching historic and ongoing relationships of colonial power embedded in knowledge production? Especially for a person with no political organizing experience, no embodied experience of oppression, and a very young and only budding political consciousness about subjects like structural racism and settler colonialism? I wanted to do more than acknowledge my positionality but also find a way to be honest about the problems I faced in the field because of it.

What I wish I had known is that you simply cannot learn everything there is to learn from every angle and perspective – and more importantly, that you *should not*



*even try* to do this. Trying to interview and work with members of the Fraternity of American Descendants and members of the Black Movement was a major mistake. To maintain any sense at all of “scholar-activism” that seeks to intervene in the production of social relations rather than passively observe them requires one to take a political side explicitly and publicly. I no longer believe that there is any ethical option for a politically engaged scholar-activist who truly wants their work to have a meaningful impact to work with both sides of a political conflict, unless you are a highly trained spy who is politically savvy enough to be a double agent in the field without being caught. Justice movement activists will rightly question your every move and motivation and as an outsider they will be highly unlikely to trust you. This is something I took for granted, naively. It’s why an activist sabotaged my research project on purpose by selling out my intentions to challenge the use of Confederate iconography at the Confederate Festival. And although it was emotionally devastating at the time that that happened, I learned a difficult lesson: any scholar-activism requires one to forcefully, clearly, and publicly take sides. If you do not consciously do so, someone on either side of the political conflict you wish to understand or analyze will force you to.

So, my advice to anyone reading this who might be considering doing qualitative field research that requires building trust with activists, or to anyone who wants to do intensive ethnographic research in an unfamiliar cultural context for the first time, is to take sides. Perhaps it is already obvious for most of you reading this, but it certainly was not for me. Looking back, I could have taken two distinct paths in my research that could have been less ethically fraught and more academically productive than the one I took. I could have either deeply immersed myself in Confederate descendant

community circles OR in Black movement activism. I made the worst possible choice, which was to try to work with both groups. I think one thing that drove me to do this was a deep sense of aloneness living in a foreign place and an insatiable desire to belong. While white Confederate descendants in Brazil were really warm and welcoming to me at first while I was hiding my intentions to critique the way they celebrate their heritage, being on positive terms with them left me feeling as if I was not actually doing anything to challenge the status quo or promote social justice in my work.

Living in Brazil caused me to lose the Christian faith of my childhood, and while it was sometimes liberating to gain deep and rich cross-cultural insight, it was also the most crippling lonely experience of my life. Losing the faith of my childhood also required me to lose deep and meaningful friendships or become distanced from those people, and it was the source of extraordinary emotional trauma when I returned to Knoxville to find that my fiancé – to whom I had gotten engaged in Rio de Janeiro while doing this fieldwork – had left me because of my loss of faith. I wrote Chapter 1 of this dissertation at a time in which I was trying to recover from the depths of grief and loss I had never experienced before. When I wrote it, I was not emotionally at a place where I could firmly say that I believe I made a mistake in not taking sides.

That is what I want to say with this epilogue: *take sides*. Do not try to learn everything about everyone's perspective and everyone's politics and why they decide to do what they do. If you're going to research white supremacy especially, either embed yourselves in a white community and deconstruct or critique that community, or firmly position yourself on the side of activists who are already doing the work to challenge that white supremacy. The greatest mistake would be to try to both embed yourself in a

white community and critique it while also working with racial justice activists. In the age of social media especially, it is nearly impossible to hide one's identity enough to be able to work both sides. Don't do it. Just pick a side. Social and racial justice can be fought for and a deep and rich cultural analysis made by being on only one side. Don't let a fear of missing out on some information or not collecting enough data drive you into working with both sides. I will admit that I don't have an easy answer for riddling the problem of belonging, though, as a researcher. Likely, if you are doing research in a cultural context that is foreign to you, negotiating a sense of belonging will be difficult no matter what you decide to do. For me, trying to undertake this project while losing the childhood faith that knit all of my social networks and my senses of belonging together back home was excruciating and crippled my mental health both in the field and upon returning for my year of writing this dissertation. It is only after about nine months of seeing a therapist that I can honestly even write this.

## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: FIGURES



**Figure 0.1** Photo of the Confederate monument at the Country Cemetery with original Confederado family names inscribed. Photography by the author.



**Figure 2.1:** Original figure as published in *FOCUS on Geography* is a video showing the ceremonial hoisting of the Confederate flag at the 2019 Festa Confederada. This image is a screenshot of the original video, taken by the author.



**Figure 2.2:** Members of the Americana chapter of UNEGRO protest the use of the Confederate flag at the annual Festa Confederada on April 28, 2019. Photo courtesy of UNEGRO.



**Figure 2.3:** Photo of the Cemitério do Campo (Country Cemetery) in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil. In the foreground is the stage, painted with the Confederate flag, on which the dances and activities at the annual Festa Confederada happen. In the background is a Confederate monument to the first families who migrated. Photography by the author.





**Figure 2.4:** Women dressed in Antebellum-style hoop skirts and men in gray Confederate uniforms present the flags of the thirteen original Confederate states at the annual Festa Confederada on April 28, 2019. Photography by the author.



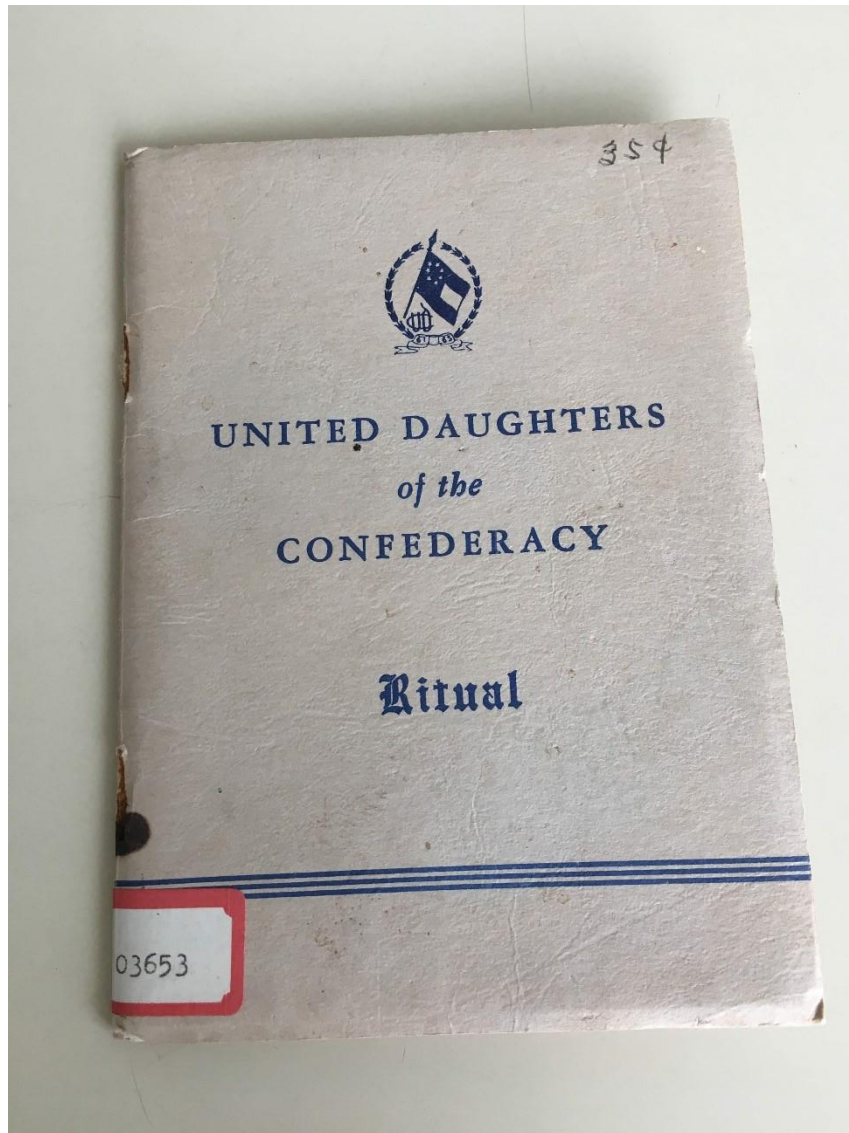
**Figure 2.5:** Confederate kitsch for sale at the 2019 Festa Confederada. Photography by the author.



**Figure 2.6:** Confederate kitsch for sale alongside the yellow Gadsden flag, often associated with the American Tea Party. Photography by the author.



**Figure 2.7:** Banner greets visitors to the 2019 Festa Confederada by explaining what the flag “really means” – in both English and Portuguese. Photography by the author.



**Figure 2.8:** One of many pieces of literature exchanged by mail between Confederate American heritage preservation organizations and the Brazilian Fraternity of American Descendants. Centro de Memória, Museu da Imigração, Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil. Photography by the author.



**Figure 2.9:** Members of UNEGRO protest the 2018 Festa Confederada with a sign that reads: “For Zumbi, For Dandara, for us!! Long live Black Consciousness.” Photo courtesy of UNEGRO.



**Figure 2.10:** Black Movement protesters pose with sign that says “Abaixo a Bandeira Confederada!” [Take Down the Confederate Flag], a slogan adopted from Black Lives Matter protestors in the United States. Photo courtesy of UNEGRO.



**Figure 2.11:** Protestors practice capoeira outside the entrance to the 2019 Festa Confederada. Drums visible in the background of the photograph were also used. Photo courtesy of UNEGRO.





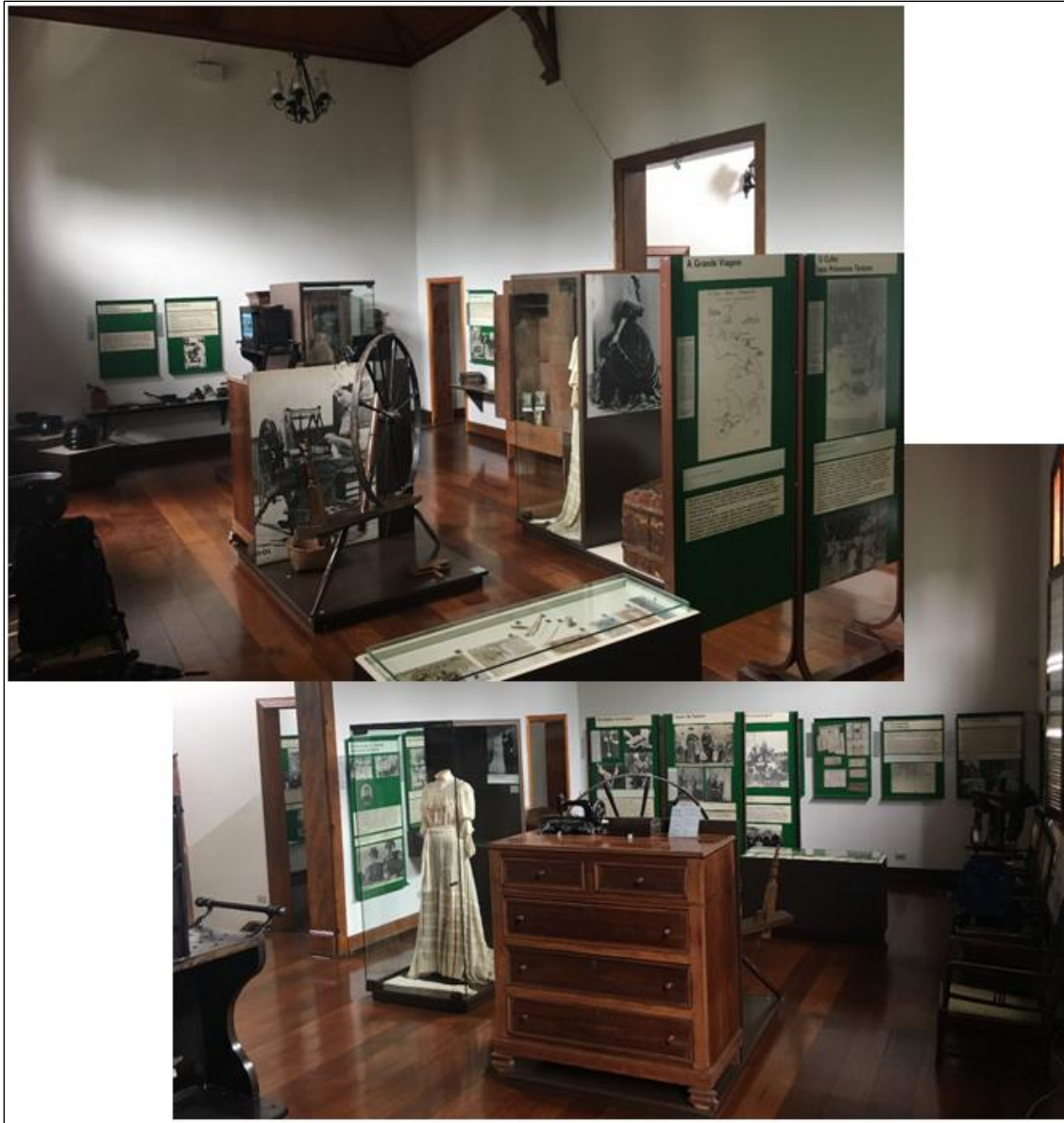
**Figure 3.1** Map of study area in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Created by University of Tennessee GIS Outreach and Engagement Lab. Data source is Natural Earth Data.



**Figure 3.2:** Street view of the Museu da Imigração – located in a former prison – in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil. Photography by the author.



**Figure 3.3:** Exhibit “The Early Times” at the Museu da Imigração in Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil displays photo of an enslaved man, listed only as “escravo” or slave. Photography by the author.



**Figure 3.4:** Photographs of the main room at the Museu da Imigração in Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil showing large artifacts in the center and dark corner (bottom right) where the exhibit displaying a photograph of the enslaved man is located. Photography by the author.



**Figure 4.1** Photo of young dancers wearing Antebellum-style belle hoop skirts and grey Confederate uniforms at an early festival, then known as the Festa Country. Photo appears to have been taken in 1990. Portrayals of an idealized U.S. South can be seen in the background, with a portrait of Robert E. Lee in front of a Confederate flag, surrounded by a covered wagon and bolls of cotton. Photo from the archives at the Centro Cultural Martha Watts in Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil. Used with permission.

# Descendentes lamentam a guerra

A tradicional Festa dos Confederados, realizada todos os anos no mês de abril, foi cancelada pela Fraternalidade Americana

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**REGIÃO** - Ela tem ascendência norte-americana. Ele nasceu em Belém, na Palestina. Origens e costumes totalmente diferentes, mas uma mesma visão sobre a guerra dos Estados Unidos da América (EUA) contra o Iraque, que começa a mostrar consequências catastróficas, com a morte de civis e a destruição de templos históricos. "Venos a guerra como qualquer brasileiro, com muita tristeza", respondeu a barbarena Nanci Maria Ferreira Padoveze, descendente de norte-americanos. "Isso é um crime, uma agressão absurda", afirmou o palestino Ibrahim Latif, que passou, na cidade de Americana, boa parte dos 44 anos de sua estada no Brasil.

A exemplo de manifestações de norte-americanos contra a guerra encabeçada pelo presidente George W. Bush, Nanci também se mostra contrária à guerra contra o Iraque. "Uma guerra não se justifica por nada e não vai resolver, mas somente criar mais proble-



Menino próximo a tanque, no Iraque, vivenciando a guerra: descendentes lamentam acontecimentos

longo alcance. Membro da Fraternalidade Descendência Americana, entidade que reúne cerca de 300 descende-

típica, realizada todos os anos no mês de abril em Santa Bárbara d'Oeste. "Não nos achamos no direito de fazer uma festa quando há uma guerra", explicou. Segundo

EUA depois da Guerra travada entre norte-americanos do Sul e do Norte, entre 1860 e 1865.

"Eles não vieram fugindo da guerra. Como o sul do país foi destruído, o governo deu condições

reconstruir suas vidas onde quisessem. E eles optaram pelo Brasil", contou. O grupo que se instalou nas cidades de Santa Bárbara e Americana chegou em 1868. Nanci disse também que a maior apreensão de membros da Frater-

## EUA mandarão mais 120 mil homens ao Golfo

**WASHINGTON** - O Departamento de Defesa dos EUA (Pentágono) anunciou quinta-feira que vai aumentar até o mês que vem em 120 mil homens seu contingente no Golfo Pérsico. Atualmente, há cerca de 310 mil militares em todo o teatro de operações, dos quais 100 mil no Iraque e os demais em porta-aviões, navios de transporte, unidades nos países do Golfo e em bases na Turquia, Alemanha e na ilha britânica de Diego Garcia. Há ainda 45 mil britânicos na região.

Vinte mil homens da 4ª Divisão de Infantaria vão partir nos próximos dias para

o Iraque e um contingente de 104 mil soldados marines, incluindo a 1ª Divisão de Infantaria, foram enviados para a Alcazar. O secretário de Defesa, Donald Rumsfeld, informou a rede de televisão CNN.

Em uma reunião do anúncio da do contingente, o secretário de Defesa, Donald Rumsfeld, o Pentágono tem seu plano de causa da resistência iraquiana se apressarem a enfrentar as tropas americanas. (AE)

**Figure 4.2** Photo of a local newspaper article from *O Liberal* on March 3, 2003 discussing the cancellation of the Festa Confederada due to U.S. invasion of Iraq. Source: Biblioteca Pública Municipal Maria Aparecida de Almeida Nogueira, Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, São Paulo, Brazil.



**Figure 4.3** Upon entrance to the festival, both the Confederate flag and the Gadsden flag, with its yellow background and coiled rattlesnake, greet festivalgoers. Photo by the author.



**Figure 4.4** Festivalgoer spreads out the Gadsden flag and lays on it. Photo by the author; blurred to protect the identity of the person photographed.



## VITA

Jordan Brasher grew up in West Tennessee, where he graduated in the top 15 of his class from Milan High School in 2010 before attending Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) in Murfreesboro, TN. At MTSU, Brasher obtained a Bachelor's of Science degree in Geosciences with an emphasis in Geographic Techniques and two minors in (1) Archaeology and (2) Environment and Human Society. While at MTSU, he decided to study geography at the graduate level, thanks to the advice of his major professors Drs. Jim Henry and Doug Heffington. He graduated MTSU with the *Magna Cum Laude* distinction in 2014.

After spending the summer of 2014 working a seasonal domestic labor position at Yellowstone National Park, Brasher began the Master's program in Geography at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, studying with Drs. Brad Bays, Alyson Greiner, and Adam Mathews. He conducted his master's thesis research on the "all-black towns" of Oklahoma, focusing especially on historic African American newspapers' representation of Oklahoma as a "promised land" -- a Black utopia and a haven from the Jim Crow apartheid system of racial segregation in the Deep South. He earned his Master of Science in Geography from Oklahoma State, graduating with the *Magna Cum Laude* distinction in May 2016.

In the fall of 2016, Brasher began the Doctoral program in Geography at UT Knoxville and began studying under Dr. Derek Alderman. In April 2018, Brasher was notified that he was a recipient of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) David L. Boren Fellowship, which would fund a year of language study (Portuguese at Middlebury Language School in Vermont) and international fieldwork (in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil). Brasher also completed all of the requirements for the Africana Studies Graduate Certificate at UT Knoxville. Upon completion of this dissertation, he will have completed all requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and he plans to begin a career in public service or academe.