

# Proceedings of the annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society

---

Volume 47  
Number 1 *Public Interest and Professional Anthropology in the South*

Article 4

---

2023

## Representing Rebels: The Semiotics of Neo-Confederate Heritage in Transnational Digital Spaces

Maximilian Conrad  
*University of Mississippi*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southernanthro\\_proceedings](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southernanthro_proceedings)

---

### Recommended Citation

Conrad, Maximilian (2023) "Representing Rebels: The Semiotics of Neo-Confederate Heritage in Transnational Digital Spaces," *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society*: Vol. 47: No. 1, Article 4.

Available at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southernanthro\\_proceedings/vol47/iss1/4](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southernanthro_proceedings/vol47/iss1/4)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Southern Anthropological Society at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Proceedings of the annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

# Representing Rebels:

## The Semiotics of Neo-Confederate Heritage in Transnational Digital Spaces

Maximilian Conrad

*This study examines the discursive profiles of two websites – the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Fraternity of American Descendants – in order to understand the transnational dimensions of neo-Confederate digital spaces. The Fraternity of American Descendants is a nonprofit organization that since 1954 has been based in the town of Santa Bárbara d'Oeste in the Brazilian state of São Paulo. The organization works to maintain the historic patrimony of immigration associated with Confederados, American Southerners who fled the United States after the defeat of the Confederacy in the American Civil War. In the United States, the Sons of Confederate Veterans is a fraternal organization with the purpose of commemorating the cause of the Confederate States through various forms of memorialization and educational outreach. These two websites have striking similarities in their semiotic representations of heritage. I argue that the two websites work to produce a lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage based on: 1) family, ancestry, and descent that define the boundaries of a claimed heritage; 2) heroic figures that become icons of heritage defense; and 3) narratives of historical truth that lionize and elevate master symbols. This paper challenges scholars to move beyond the United*

*States and consider the transnational digital worlds in which neo-Confederate heritage is produced in the twenty-first century.*

Keywords: Neo-Confederate, Digital Anthropology, Heritage, Branding, Discourse Analysis

## **Introduction**

This study examines the discursive profiles of two websites – the Sons of Confederate Veterans based in the United States and the Fraternity of American Descendants based in Brazil – in order to understand the transnational dimensions of neo-Confederate digital spaces. The Fraternity of American Descendants is a nonprofit organization that since 1954 has been based in the town of Santa Bárbara d'Oeste in the Brazilian state of São Paulo. The stated goal of the organization is the maintenance of the historic patrimony of immigration by Confederados, American Southerners who fled the United States after the defeat of the Confederacy in the American Civil War. The Sons of Confederate Veterans is a U.S.-based fraternal organization with the purpose of commemorating the cause of the Confederate States through various forms of memorialization and educational outreach. These two organizations are neo-Confederate heritage groups, a broad collection of right-wing organizations dealing specifically in the polemics and apologetics of the American Civil War (Hague et al. 2008; Loewen and Sebesta 2010). The websites of these groups bear striking similarities in their semiotic representations of heritage. These are only two examples of neo-Confederate groups that have

become observable in transnational digital spaces, which have become battlegrounds for identity, branding, and heritage defense.

This paper argues that the two websites work to produce a lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage. This lexicon includes categories and indices of: 1) family, ancestry, and descent that define the boundaries of a claimed heritage; 2) heroic figures that become icons of heritage defense; and 3) narratives of historical truth that lionize and elevate master symbols. Though not the only groups with a digital presence, these two organizations help to clarify the emerging modes of semiotic representation through which neo-Confederate heritage is defended, promoted, and valorized within twenty-first century digital worlds.

## Methods

This article used critical discourse analysis to evaluate the two websites (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000). This study began with the construction of a linguistic corpus from the websites of the Fraternity of American Descendants, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and thirty-one Sons of Confederate Veterans divisional websites representing thirty-five states. The Sons of Confederate Veterans, despite being a national organization, does not have a defined hierarchy or strict guidelines for the composition of its websites. Many sites are dated or lacking in content, while others are well maintained. Following the initial collection of data from the websites, images and text were open-coded using QDA Miner Lite software. Initial codes were organized into overarching categories and themes that defined what neo-Confederate heritage entails. As the discussion shows, there was significant overlap in the

key categories used by both websites, though there were some important differences.

This study focuses on the most significant categories within the websites: 1) ancestry, family, and descent; 2) heroic figures; and 3) historical truth and master symbols. The websites studied were limited to the individual domains of the websites themselves, not including any social media presence. This may represent an opportunity for further investigation, as the Fraternity of American Descendants and the Sons of Confederate Veterans have a steady presence on sites such as Facebook. To evaluate these two websites, the analysis depended upon fluency in English and Portuguese as translations were needed for the majority of texts on the Fraternity of American Descendants' website.

## **Neo-Confederacy and Branding**

Neo-Confederate ideology is both a contemporary force and a historical phenomenon that has been espoused and practiced by a wide variety of groups and individuals. At its core it is an anti-modern, reactionary political and cultural movement drawing heavily upon the Lost Cause ideology, the principal calibrating force behind neo-Confederate groups (Hague et al. 2008). The promulgation of the Lost Cause began shortly after the American Civil War with an eponymous 1866 work published by Edward A. Pollard, who called for Southerners to wage a war of ideas in defense of their ascendant identity. In the postbellum era, the Lost Cause would become institutionalized as what Charles Reagan Wilson (1980) called a "civil religion" of the American South – the marriage of patriotic ideals with religious devotion.

Confederate iconography and figures were and continue to be institutionalized in the public spaces of the U.S. South. Monuments and memorials to Confederate leaders and soldiers occupy town squares, parks, university campuses, and other spaces throughout the region. The Confederate battle flag (until fairly recently) could be seen flying atop several state capitols. The ubiquity of Confederate symbols is a product of concerted efforts by neo-Confederates to promote, ritualize, and defend their place in American public life. This rhetoric has achieved far-reaching institutional power (Monroe 2021). Neo-Confederate heritage groups such as the Fraternity of American Descendants, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the United Confederate Veterans, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy have been integral to maintaining and furthering the promotion of the Lost Cause ideology and, in turn, developing what I call the lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage. Scholarship on the Confederacy, the Lost Cause, and neo-Confederates has emerged as a critical field spanning contemporary politics and historiography to sporting events (Newman 2007). This scholarship has enriched our understandings of the overt and covert ways that neo-Confederate ideology is reproduced and circulated within the United States. However, scholarship has typically neither ventured outside of the United States nor engaged the growing role of transnational digital spaces for neo-Confederate ideology. This paper takes steps to begin the process of understanding transnational digital worlds and a shared neo-Confederate lexicon.

In establishing a lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage, the websites of the Fraternity of American Descendants and Sons of Confederate Veterans both attempt to establish organizational

brands and content that can be cited and circulated. Nakassis (2012) has provided a key anthropological discussion of the brand as a collection of symbols, language, and markers that constitute a group's identity, typically in the economic realm. Both neo-Confederate groups work to build organizational brands and to formalize the values of their specified heritage. In some cases, this value might be commercial. The organizations sell certain heritage products such as material goods (books, license plates, apparel) and touristic experiences (the *Festa Confederada*). It is important to note that the brand is an effect of an organization's ongoing attempt to marshal specific histories, values, objects, and rhetoric to produce heritage. A brand gains its authority through the circulation of symbols and rhetoric that make up the lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage. The use of statements, words, or phrases tied to the neo-Confederate lexicon develops complex chains of interaction that shape cultural and institutional value (Goodman et al. 2014).

An established brand works to create acceptable discourse around contested forms of heritage. Organizational brands need to be situated in their country contexts, where they may be mobilized to promote a specific vision of ethnicity or nationality. As I show, the case of the Fraternity of American Descendants is one of an ethnic brand employed to specify a U.S.-descended minority group within Brazil. This is done for cultural preservation and the promotion and marketing of tourism that celebrates the unique customs, traditions, and practices of this ethnic group (Esman 1984; Skinner 2006). By contrast, the Sons of the Confederate Veterans establish a nation brand that highlights the coexistence of the neo-Confederacy with the American nation-state. This brand

has sought to respond to the problematization of neo-Confederate causes and issues in recent years (Dzenovska 2005; Graan 2016).

The analysis highlights how the Fraternity of American Descendants and the Sons of the Confederacy establish organizational brands through the promotion of a neo-Confederate heritage lexicon linked to: 1) family, ancestry, and descent; 2) heroic figures; and 3) historical truth and master symbols.

### **The Sons of Confederate Veterans**

The principal neo-Confederate heritage organization in the United States is the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). Formed in 1896, the SCV identifies itself as the successor to the United Confederate Veterans, an organization established by former soldiers and sailors of the Confederate States' armed forces. Membership in the SCV is predicated upon descent from Confederate Veterans and limited to males. It boasts over 30,000 members in over thirty states, including all of the eleven states that made up the original Confederate States. Its prevalence in states far removed from the battlefields of the American Civil War (such as California, Michigan, and Hawaii) is considered part of a preponderance of Confederate iconography that extends far beyond the American South (Appelbaum 2011; Glavey 2019). Recent controversies around monuments and a reckoning with racial injustice in the United States have brought the SCV into the limelight of discussions around the racist legacy of the Confederacy. It is one of the most vocal and visible organizations within neo-Confederate discourse, known for its promulgation of the ideology



of the Lost Cause and historical revisionism of slavery, secession, and the antebellum South.

*Family, Ancestry, and Descent*

The first marker of the SCV's heritage lexicon is found in its highlighting of family, ancestry, and descent. Descent and ancestry are themselves essential to the organization, as proof of descent from a Confederate veteran is required for official membership. The SCV websites provide a number of links to state and national genealogical registries, suggesting to visitors that they can establish direct descent and thereby qualify for membership. The homepage of the national SCV website includes an embedded video entitled "The Face of the SCV Part I,"<sup>1</sup> wherein a member of the SCV educates a young boy about their shared heritage. A voiceover narrates the importance of preserving the history and heritage of the Confederacy so that future generations might "understand the motives that gave life to the Southern cause."<sup>2</sup> The boy in the video is introduced to the member, nodding and following the member attentively as they tour an antebellum style house. A Confederate heritage in this context is thus passed from grandfathers to fathers to sons.

Children and youth are similarly featured on the Georgia SCV's website. The site includes a page for the Georgia Confederates Youth Camp, billed as an opportunity "dedicated to presenting the TRUTH to our young ladies and gentlemen."<sup>3</sup> Unlike membership in the SCV, which is reserved strictly for males, the website highlights the broader SCV family that includes wives and daughters. Girls can be socialized into the values of the organization via this Youth Camp. The camp also focuses on maintaining a

Christian identity in addition to a Southern one, promoting the alignment of these two identities. According to the Georgia SCV, the camp's programs "are designed to build on the character already established in the home and increase knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and the true history of the Southern people."<sup>4</sup> A focus on family seeks to provide an educational experience for children in an environment curated carefully by the SCV and its supporters.

### *Heroic Figures*

The second marker of the SCV's heritage lexicon is found through the identification of heroic figures that become icons of heritage defense. This includes historical figures such as Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, Nathan Bedford Forrest, and Stephen D. Lee. The men in question are all generals and leaders of the Confederate Army, regarded as paragons of patriotic heroism. Robert E. Lee is perhaps one of the most recognizable icons of the neo-Confederacy, renowned as a tactical genius and emblematic of the genteel Southern planter. Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, and Stephen D. Lee are similarly heralded for their tactics and success on the battlefield. Nathan Bedford Forrest developed a reputation for guerilla tactics and insurgency, and later significant infamy as the founder of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Despite a shared pantheon of valorized figures (Loewen and Sebesta 2010), the SCV seeks to separate itself from organizations such as the KKK and individual acts of violence perpetrated by white supremacists. A 2017 statement released by the SCV shortly after the murder of a counter-protestor by a white supremacist in Charlottesville, Virginia, argued that this violence "has nothing to do with the Confederacy, the SCV, nor Southern history."<sup>5</sup>

### *Historical Truth and Master Symbols*

The likeness and quotations of Confederate leaders appear frequently on the websites of the SCV and its divisional sites. The quotations of Confederate leaders are frequently enmeshed with the stated goals of neo-Confederate organizations, specifically their pursuit of historical “truth.” One such quotation from Robert E. Lee can be found on the divisional website of the Tennessee SCV:

Everyone should do all in his power to collect and disseminate the truth in the hope that it may find a place in history and descend to posterity. History is not the relation of campaigns and battles and generals or other individuals, but that which shows the principles for which the South contended, and which justified her struggle for those principles.<sup>6</sup>

Lee’s quotation calls upon Southerners and their descendants to disseminate a truth that is colored by a reverence for the South and its principles. The principles themselves are not outlined but would later be interpreted as the primary principles of the Lost Cause: historical revisionism of slavery, secession, and the antebellum South.

Another quotation that appears frequently is the charge to the SCV made in 1906 by Stephen D. Lee, the first President of Mississippi State University, and a founding member of the SCV’s precursor group, the United Confederate Veterans. The speech reads as a symbolic passing of the torch between the two organizations and serves to validate and guide the SCV’s principles:

To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans, we submit the vindication of the cause for which we fought: to your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate

soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, and the perpetuation of those principles he loved and which made him glorious and which you also cherish. Remember, it is your duty to see that the true history of the South is presented to future generations.<sup>7</sup>

Stephen D. Lee's quotation illustrates a similar espousal of virtue, adherence to principles, and a commitment to an eternal and true "South." The Confederate soldier is presented as an archetypal master symbol, a blank slate for the impression of neo-Confederate values of chivalry, martial prowess, and fidelity to the cause.

The histories of the Civil War and Antebellum period are understandably a major focus of the SCV. The national SCV's website promotes an ideal reading list of acceptable books – 425 "Confederate Books" – that construct the official histories of the group. The SCV's promotion of their interpretation of these histories and events is a crucial component of the lexicon. This collection includes partisan titles such as *A Legion of Devils: Sherman in South Carolina*, *Confederaphobia*, and *Everything You Were Taught about the Civil War Is Wrong, Ask a Southerner!*. These books address oft-repeated topics of the Lost Cause, including the demonization of Union General William T. Sherman's March to the Sea and the disproven myth of Black Confederate soldiers (Litwack 1998). Despite the fallacies and inflation, this mode of historical truth-making is a form of heritage defense.

The Ken Burns-produced documentary *The Civil War* draws heavily on these SCV narratives, particularly through the amount of screentime given to the amateur historian Shelby Foote. Foote elided the relationship between the Confederacy and slavery,

opting instead for a forlorn nostalgia and erasure that bristles when challenged by historical evidence to the contrary (Boritt 1991). Despite his lack of credentials, Foote intimates the language of historians to propagate a series of myths consistent with the ideology of the Lost Cause (Litwack 1995).

### *Heritage Defense*

A distinctive feature of the SCV is their promotion of a politics of heritage defense. These efforts employ a martial rhetoric and include the SCV's disbursement of funds towards various activities surrounding the preservation of controversial monuments, statues, plaques, flags, and related symbols. The SCV and its divisional websites also provide a manual containing scripts for contacting representatives, talking points, and strategies for political organizing to advocate for preserving Confederate monuments and symbols. These fundraising efforts in turn contribute to litigation, lobbying, and maintenance of Confederate iconography in the wake of local, state, and federal efforts to remove or recontextualize them. One such instance of SCV heritage defense efforts made its way to the United States Supreme Court in a 2015 case, *Walker v. Texas Div., Sons of Confederate Veterans, Inc.* The Texas Division of the SCV unsuccessfully attempted to sue the state's Department of Motor Vehicles for denying its proposals for specialty license plates.

Another pertinent example of the SCV's heritage defense litigation occurred on the grounds of the University of Mississippi in 2016. A Confederate statue (see Figure 1) erected in 1906 was moved and recontextualized as part of efforts to reconcile the University with its historical ties to slavery, segregation, and the

Confederacy. The SCV's legal efforts were repeatedly rebuked by both local and circuit courts.



*Figure 1 - The relocated Confederate statue at the University of Mississippi (photo by author)*

While the politics of heritage defense continues to occupy a focal point of the SCV's identity, it has not translated into success at a legal level. However, as an institutional tool, the rhetoric of heritage defense conveys a sense of urgency to an alleged onslaught of historical revisionism. The purported importance of truth is a key component of the neo-Confederate lexicon. These monuments, flags, license plates, and their respective "truth" constitute what Wolf (1958) has called master symbols: symbols that embody the aspirations and pursuits of a society. The defensive rhetoric creates

a sense of urgency in the face of removal and recontextualization, exhorting supporters to come to the aid of a heritage under ‘assault.’ Neo-Confederate heritage is carefully organized around the truth of these symbols, with vocabulary and rhetoric constructing layers of protective meaning surrounding them.

### **Fraternity of American Descendants**

The Brazilian state of São Paulo became the destination for many immigrant groups from across the globe, including the Western Hemisphere (Adachi 2017; Jarnagin 1995; Seyferth 1998). The city of Santa Bárbara d’Oeste, founded in 1818, is home to the *Fraternidade Descendência Americana*, or the ‘Fraternity of American Descendants’ (FDA). The stated goals of the organization are the maintenance of the historic patrimony of American immigrants to Brazil, and “to unite the families of descendants and educate future generations about their shared history, as well as promote the contributions of our ancestors to the progress of the region and of Brazil.”<sup>8</sup>

#### *Family, Ancestry, and Descent*

The label of “American immigrants” is exclusionary. The immigrant population in question refers to the Confederados, American Southerners who fled the United States after the defeat of the Confederacy in the American Civil War. Since 1954, the last weekend in April has been marked by a convergence of overt and ostentatious displays of this identity. The *Festa Confederada* (Confederate Party) is a yearly festival organized by the FDA to celebrate both Confederate and American heritage. It has been

documented by scholars and journalists alike as a curious and anachronistic reimagining of the antebellum South and American culture (Brasher 2020; Marcus 2021). The FDA maintains a website detailing their interpretations of the history and contributions of American/Confederate migration to Brazil, as well as pages devoted to outlining the services and events that they organize, including a memorial chapel, a cemetery, the *Festa Confederada*, and a museum of immigration.

As is the case with the SCV websites, the idiom of the family is an important part of the FDA's creation of a neo-Confederate lexicon. The FDA's website features numerous instances, including one of its many uses of English. The subtitle "Our History, Our Family" is accompanied by photographs of the *Cemitério do Campo* (Field Cemetery), the privately owned cemetery where many of the original Confederate settlers were buried. Coincidentally, the cemetery is also the grounds for the *Festa Confederada*. Family and history are both invoked here to make a discrete association between the contemporary expressions of heritage and the historical immigration upon which they draw. Family is key to the FDA – living or deceased. Another photograph of eleven teenage girls in large, flowing yellow hoopskirts accompanies the website's advertisement for its *Festa Confederada*. The smiling children connote a familial, communal atmosphere that the FDA maintains in its public presence online. Despite bearing the moniker of a fraternity, the FDA possesses neither defined qualifications for membership nor a specific focus of patrilineal descent. The prominent presence of women and girls on the FDA website is a sign of its focus on family, a departure from the primary espousal of masculinity seen in the case of the SCV.



### *Heroic Figures*

The FDA establishes a more expansive group of heroic figures associated with heritage than does the SCV. The SCV focuses chiefly on the military leaders who fought during the Civil War and are associated with heritage defense. The FDA includes not only these martial figures but also more contemporary Americans who have sought to maintain ongoing connections between Brazil and the United States. The FDA brings together heritage defense with transnational heritage connectivity.

The FDA employs the image of Robert E. Lee as an icon of heritage defense. Written in a cursive script and accompanied by a portrait of Robert E. Lee, a quotation is presented in English without a respective Portuguese translation: “A land without memories is a people without liberty.” Robert E. Lee’s quotation represents a key fear reflected by neo-Confederates – that failure to preserve memory and historical truth is tantamount to a loss of liberty. This quotation draws important links to the Confederate Brazilian experience, such as the transnational and migratory basis of their identity. Robert E. Lee’s likeness and words cement the importance of identification with an American Confederate identity. It also centers the organization within the martial legacy that the SCV champions in the United States.

The FDA also embraces newer modes of transnational heritage connection. Another noteworthy figure encountered on the FDA’s website is U.S. President Jimmy Carter, pictured in the *Cemitério do Campo* in Santa Barbara d’Oeste in 1978. Carter can be seen with two children next to a white stone obelisk with a Confederate flag at the base. Carter’s wife Rosalynn was a descendant of Robert C.

Norris, one of the original Confederados buried at the cemetery (Epstein 1995). The visit of an American leader, himself a Southerner, is presented here to develop a sense of authority and deeper connection to the United States and the contemporary American South. This connection is rendered even more profound through Rosalynn Carter's own ancestral ties to the Confederados. The authority and vindication drawn from the use of a historical figure is a fundamental part of their identity mediated in an online space, and a prime example of a lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage at work.

#### *Historical Truth*

The FDA also refers to the veracity of historical events related to the American Civil War and their Confederate heritage. One of the dual English/Portuguese titles reads “*Guerra de Secessão*” (“War of Secession”) in Portuguese, followed by “War of Northern Aggression” in English. The choice here to use vastly different titles and translations to refer to the American Civil War is an intriguing one. The use of “Northern Aggression” conveys a strongly partisan position on the conflict rather than the more simply translated “War of Secession.” It highlights the imputed barbarism of the North and the imperialist violence visited upon the South, which was purportedly seeking liberation and self-rule. This phrase is highly indicative of a neo-Confederate lexicon, portraying the Confederacy as defenders against the intrusive forces of the United States federal government. Unlike the SCV, the FDA does not announce (on the website) an involvement in the politics of heritage defense in Brazil – for Confederate or other symbols. It also does not specify an ideal reading list of books that comprise the official histories of the U.S. Civil War and the Lost Cause.

However, its website does propagate a specific truth of their heritage and history that draws from the same pantheon of master symbols found in the SCV website. From this large set of symbols, the FDA has selected a smaller set through which to fashion their organizational brand and the lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage.

### *Language*

A unique consideration of the FDA is the role of English and Portuguese. The website contains large sections of Portuguese text to convey the majority of its information, but also includes a number of sections and headings that employ English exclusively. Despite its growing preponderance as a global language, English is not yet widely spoken or understood by large swathes of Brazil's population. As a second language, English is most readily accessible to those in elite spheres with higher levels of education and socioeconomic attainment. Alternatively, English may be employed here to allow presentation to an English-speaking audience from abroad. In this context, it may also be inferred that the English language is an important qualifier of the neo-Confederate lexicon from the Brazilian context.

The FDA website thus creates three different ways of understanding their heritage content associated with three linguistic audiences. First, there is the Portuguese-only reading of the website which provides basic information on the Confederados – their participation in the American Civil War, arrival in Brazil, and establishment of a colony. The Portuguese sections of the website also include administrative information, such as contact information and instructions on how to donate or financially support the FDA. Second, there is the English-only reading of the

website which is limited to the titles of pages and the Robert E. Lee quotation. The paucity of these English titles does not make for a lack of intriguing storytelling, however, as titles such as “Brazilian Heart, American Roots”, “Old Times That Are Not Forgotten”, “Our History, Our Family”, and “War of Northern Aggression” represent key roles in the lexicon. And third, there is the bilingual reading of the website, which is the positionality of the FDA itself. The two languages side by side show an organization eager to educate and interact with a local, Portuguese-speaking audience as well as simultaneously deal in markers and registers of English neo-Confederate discourse.

## **Conclusion**

Amidst the turmoil of the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection in 2021, a noteworthy historical ‘first’ occurred, wherein a Confederate flag could be seen in the United States Capitol. Brandished by a man from Delaware (another instance of the ideology’s expanded geography), it remains one of the more lasting images of the event. While groups such as the SCV and FDA might distance themselves rhetorically from violence, the symbols themselves make little distinction, appearing at the forefront of political extremism.

This study has examined the discursive profiles of the websites pertaining to the SCV based in the United States and the FDA based in Brazil. This paper has argued that the two websites work to produce a lexicon of neo-Confederate heritage. This lexicon includes shared themes: 1) of family, ancestry, and descent that define the specified heritage; 2) heroic figures that become icons of heritage defense or transnational connectivity; and 3) narratives of

historical truth that lionize and elevate master symbols. Focusing on these two organizations foregrounds emerging modes of semiotic representation through which neo-Confederate heritage is defended, promoted, and valorized. In creating a neo-Confederate brand, heritage groups develop a lexicon that is citable across both organizational and national boundaries. This lexicon is in turn employed to reflect and act upon the group's cultural and institutional values.

Though there are many similarities between the two organizations, there are also differences. The SCV is heavily invested in the politics of heritage defense, orienting its national brand towards political and legal action in the name of neo-Confederacy. The FDA has eschewed the politics of heritage defense on its website and leaned into an ethnic branding of neo-Confederacy that is decidedly more commercial and touristic, but equally integral to the maintenance of its heritage. The differences between these organizational brands are closely related to their respective country contexts. The SCV's brand is national, seeking to define itself as a nation within a nation and align its values in both broad American and specific neo-Confederate terms. The FDA's ethnic brand acts as a form of ethnic promotion within a pluricultural Brazilian nation. This derivation engages with contemporary and historical connections to the Confederacy through the legacy of immigration but does not reflect a national brand.

This study contributes to the existing scholarship on neo-Confederate ideology. Rather than focusing on the United States (or specifically on the South), I instead seek to locate the growth and proliferation of neo-Confederate ideology within transnational

digital spaces. The paper foregrounds the need to identify an emerging neo-Confederate heritage lexicon within shared digital worlds while remaining attentive to country context and organizational specificity.

The legacy of the Confederacy continues to be a hotly contested topic, and the mediation of such memory can have political and social consequences for marginalized groups. Recently, the town council of Santa Barbara d'Oeste voted in August of 2022 to ban the Confederate flag from public display. The issues at hand clearly extend beyond the United States, as the proliferation of neo-Confederate symbols and rhetoric has major implications for marginalized groups across the globe, such as in Brazil.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> “The Face of the SCV Part I”, embedded video on <https://www.scv.org>, published by a SCV-run YouTube account called “Make Dixie Great Again.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xkZEBOBRUE>.

<sup>2</sup> “The Face of the SCV Part I”, embedded video on <https://www.scv.org>, published by a SCV-run YouTube account called “Make Dixie Great Again.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xkZEBOBRUE>.

<sup>3</sup> “Georgia Confederate Youth Camps” Sons of Confederate Veterans, Georgia Division. <https://www.georgiascv.org/georgia-confederates-youth-camp/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Georgia Confederate Youth Camps” Sons of Confederate Veterans, Georgia Division. <https://www.georgiascv.org/georgia-confederates-youth-camp/>.

<sup>5</sup> “Sons of Confederate Veterans Support for Our Nation and the Rule of Law” August 18, 2017 Sons of Confederate Veterans. <https://www.scv.org> (erased from page, accessed using Wayback Machine Internet Archive <https://archive.org/web/>).

<sup>6</sup> “The Robert E. Lee Camp 1640” Sons of Confederate Veterans, Tennessee Division. <http://www.tennessee-scv.org/camp1640>.

<sup>7</sup> “Charge of Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee” Sons of Confederate Veterans. <https://www.scv.org>.

<sup>8</sup> The website of the Fraternity of American Descendants ([fdasbo.org.br](https://fdasbo.org.br)) is hosted by WordPress. The site is subject to periodical construction and closures, necessitating documentation of its text and images.

## References

- Adachi, Nobuko. 2017. *Ethnic Capital in a Japanese Brazilian Commune: Children of Nature*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Appelbaum, Yoni. 2011. "Confederates on the Rhine." *The Atlantic*. June 2. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/06/confederates-on-the-rhine/239724/>.
- Blommaert, Jan, and Chris Bulcaen. 2000. "Critical Discourse Analysis." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (1): 447-66.
- Boritt, Gabor. 1991. "Ken Burns' The Civil War." In *Ken Burns' Civil War: The Historians' Response*, edited by Robert B. Toplin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brasher, Jordan P. 2020. *From South of the Mason-Dixon Line to South of the Equator: A Critical Exploration of the Transnational Contours of Confederate Memory*. PhD Dissertation: University of Tennessee.
- Dzenovska, Dace. 2005. "Remaking the Nation of Latvia: Anthropological Perspectives on Nation Branding." *Place Branding* 1 (2): 173-86.
- Esman, Marjorie R. 1984. "Tourism as Ethnic Preservation: The Cajuns of Louisiana." *Annals of Tourism Research* 11 (3): 451-67.
- Epstein, Jack. 1995. "A Bit of the Confederacy Survives in the Deep, Deep South." *Christian Science Monitor* website. May 4. <https://www.csmonitor.com/1995/0504/04015.html>.



- Glavey, Paul. 2019. "Flagging Support for Rockabilly Rebels: The Confederate Battle Flag's Place in the Current European Rockabilly Scene." *Culture & Society: Journal of Social Research* 10 (1): 29-49.
- Goodman, Jane E., Matt Tomlinson, and Justin B. Richland. 2014. "Citational Practices: Knowledge, Personhood, and Subjectivity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (1): 449-63.
- Graan, Andrew. 2016. "The Nation Brand Regime: Nation Branding and the Semiotic Regimentation of Public Communication in Contemporary Macedonia." *Signs and Society* 4 (S1): 70-105.
- Hague, Euan, Edward H. Sebesta, and Heidi Beirich. 2010. *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Jarnagin, Laura. 1995. "Fitting In: Relocating Family and Capital within the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World Economy: The Brazilian Connection." In *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*, edited by Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Litwack, Leon. 1995. "Telling the Story: The Historian, the Film Maker, and the Civil War." In *Ken Burns' Civil War: The Historians' Response*, edited by Robert B. Toplin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Litwack, Leon. 1998. "The Black and the Gray: An Interview with Tony Horwitz." *Southern Cultures* 4 (1): 5-15.

- Loewen, James W. and Edward H. Sebesta. 2010. *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The Great Truth about the Lost Cause*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Marcus, Alan P. 2021. *Confederate Exodus: Social and Environmental Forces in the Migration of U.S. Southerners to Brazil*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Monroe, Stephen M. 2021. *Heritage and Hate: Old South Rhetoric at Southern Universities*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press.
- Nakassis, Constantine V. 2012. "Brand, Citationality, Performativity." *American Anthropologist* 114 (4): 624-38.
- Newman, J. I. 2007. "Army of Whiteness? Colonel Reb and the Sporting South's Cultural and Corporate Symbolic." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 31 (4): 315-339.
- Seyferth, Giralda. 1998. "German Immigration and The Formation of German-Brazilian Ethnicity." *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 7 (2): 131-154.
- Skinner, Jonathan. 2006. "Modernist Anthropology, Ethnic Tourism and National Identity: The Contest for the Commodification and Consumption of St. Patrick's Day, Montserrat." In *Tourism, Consumption and Representation: Narratives of Place and Self*, edited by Kevin Meethan, Alison Anderson, and Steven Miles, 253-269. Wallingford (UK): CABI.
- Wilson, Charles Reagan. 1980. *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Wolf, Eric R. 1958. "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol." *Journal of American Folklore* 71 (279): 34-39.