Moral Self Image and Black History Knowledge

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INTRODUCTION

- US history is often taught through a glorified, nationalist lens (Zinn, 2015)
- *Marley Hypothesis* – understanding history is important for understanding racism (Bonam et al., 2019)
- *Collective Memory* – groups remember their past together (Halbwachs, 1992)

METHODS

Morality, Race, Nationality, and History Scales

- $N = 59$ (31 male, 28 female, 0 non-binary/third gender/prefer not to say) undergraduate participants (White: 62.7%, Asian American/Pacific Islander: 13.6%, Black: 8.5%, Hispanic-American/Latino: 6.8%, Bi/Multiracial: 8.4%)
- *Explanatory Variables*: Attachment ($\alpha = 0.91$), Glorification ($\alpha = 0.89$), Collective Guilt ($\alpha = 0.94$), Moral Self-Image ($\alpha = 0.90$).
- *Dependent Variables*: Self-reported Black history knowledge (single-item variable), mean certainty of Black history knowledge ($\alpha = 0.89$), actual Black history knowledge.

Historical Figures Significance Responses

- Please think about [Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Frederick Douglass, or Harriet Tubman]. Please describe why this historical figure is important for you.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- Moral self-image was related to both self-reported Black history knowledge and certainty of Black history knowledge, but not with actual Black history knowledge.
- Participants placed more importance on White figures in terms of legacy, and on Black figures in terms of good values/qualities
- Limitation: Student sample from liberal arts college
- Suggests that people with inflated moral self images could see themselves as more knowledgeable in Black history without having the actual knowledge to back up their claims

Moral self-image is related to self-reported and certainty of Black history knowledge

Self-Reported Black History Knowledge

Model	*b*	SE	β	t	*p*
Attachment	0.020	0.025	0.328	0.79	0.431
Glorification	-0.026	0.028	-0.386	-0.93	0.354
Collective Guilt	-0.008	0.013	-0.138	-0.61	0.542
Moral Self Image	0.039	0.013	0.653	2.93	0.005

Mean Certainty of Black History Knowledge

Model	*b*	SE	β	t	*p*
Attachment	-0.011	0.014	-0.060	-0.78	0.440
Glorification	-0.014	0.016	-0.069	-0.90	0.374
Collective Guilt	0.000	0.007	0.000	-0.03	0.975
Moral Self Image	0.025	0.007	0.140	3.42	0.001

Actual Black History Knowledge

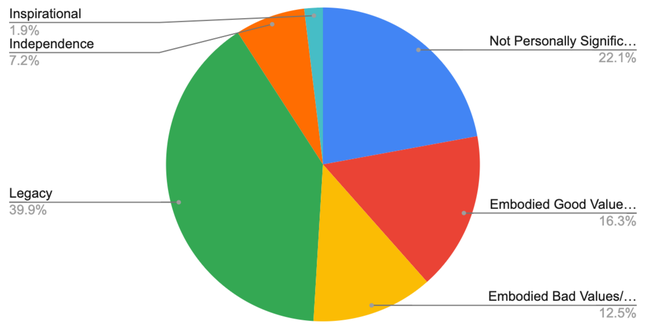
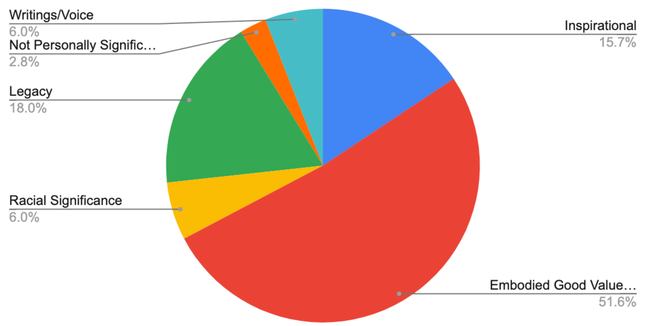
Model	*b*	SE	β	t	*p*
Attachment	-0.012	0.042	-0.116	-0.29	0.774
Glorification	-0.058	0.048	-0.505	-1.22	0.229
Collective Guilt	0.039	0.022	0.396	1.78	0.081
Moral Self Image	0.014	0.014	0.137	0.64	0.523

REFERENCES

- Bonam, C. M., Nair Das, V., Coleman, B. R., & Salter, P. (2018). Ignoring History, Denying Racism: Mounting Evidence for the Marley Hypothesis and Epistemologies of Ignorance. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 10*(2), 257–265. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617751583
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Zinn, H. (2015). *A People's History of the United States* (A. Arnove, Intr.; 35th ed.). Harper Perennial Modern Classics. (Original work published 1980)

THEME	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Inspirational	Figure is a source of inspiration for participant.	*"…an immense inspiration to the fight for equality in the United States." [Tubman]*
Embodied Good Values/Qualities	Figure had admirable qualities/values, and/or did good things.	*"He is a sign of perseverance and doing what is right." [Douglass]*
Not Personally Significant	Figure holds no personal significance to participant.	*"I don't find him to be very important to my life." [Jefferson]*
Embodied Bad Values/Qualities	Figure had unadmirable qualities/values, and/or did bad things.	*"I do not really identify with him as a person because he owned slaves…" [Jefferson]*
Legacy	Figure holds historical significance and/or has had lasting impact(s).	*"…without her today's America could be a far worse place, one with far less equality." [Tubman]*
Independence	Figure embodies the ideal of independence.	*"…important for me because he somewhat represents American ideals of freedom." [Washington]*
Racial Significance	Figure's race is one reason why they are important to participant.	*"…represents a strong Black woman, a person I hope to be." [Tubman]*
Writings/Voice	Figure had impactful writings and/or made their voice heard.	*"His novels inspired me; he is one of my favorite writers to read today." [Douglass]*

White Historical Figures' Significance Theme Distribution



Black Historical Figures' Significance Theme Distribution