

Reclaiming Their True Selves: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Creation of Southern Identity

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Abstract

Founded in Tennessee on September 10, 1894, the United Daughters of Confederacy (UDC), a genealogy-based Southern patriotic organization was created with the goal of keeping the values of the former Confederacy alive. The UDC used the ideas of the *Lost Cause*, an ideology which stressed the cultural and racial distinctness of Southern civilization as well as the South's proclaimed innocence in the American Civil War (1861-1865), in order to mold Southern identity. By writing their own historical narrative, the UDC was able to establish and solidify certain 'truths' as central characteristics of Southern identity. Their efforts created a new form of Southern nationalism built on the idea that the South was a distinct civilization to the North. Using Ernest Renan and Benedict Anderson's theories on nation building and nationalism, this thesis explains the ways in which the UDC understood these concepts as centered around history and race and executed its agenda in order to create a separate Southern identity based on these. Furthermore, the UDC sought to maintain the antebellum South's racial hierarchies and white supremacy in order to preserve 'authentic' Southern identity. Finally, the UDC's control of school textbooks, memorializing traditions and their creation of the Children of the Confederacy (CofC) are discussed and reveal the ways in which the *Lost Cause* was perpetuated and solidified into Southern society by the Daughters.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
Part I: The Lost Cause, Writing ‘Truthful’ History and the Creation of Southern Identity and Nationalism	7
Part II: Practices and the Perpetuation of the Lost Cause	16
Conclusion	20
Bibliography	23

CofC	Children of the Confederacy
DAR	Daughters of the American Revolution
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
SCV	Sons of Confederate Veterans
UDC	United Daughters of the Confederacy

Introduction

The American news today is flooded with headlines relating to identity, or ‘what it means to be an American.’ The current administration’s policies towards immigration, the ‘Muslim Ban’ and the building of the Border Wall have sparked heated debate about the essence of American identity, who that includes, and who it does not. Many would argue that immigration is what has defined American identity, and that it is the very fact of having been an immigrant that *makes one an American*. The special character of Americans, that is, the ability to become one by subscribing the American Creed, implies that in this perspective, no one is ‘more’ American than anyone else, and thus there are no ‘true’ or ‘original’ Americans.¹ Not everyone agrees with this, and a much more limited idea of American identity, one that is often combined with white supremacy and racism, exists as well.

Despite the flexible and heterogenous definition of ‘American,’ patriotism and nationalism are strong forces in the United States: hanging the flag outside one’s home is common and singing the pledge of allegiance in schools has been tradition for many years. After the victory in the American Revolution, the fledgling country struggled to create an identity that was purely its own, rather than defined in contrast to Europe or Britain.² However, the situation changed in the 1890s, as a sudden onslaught of patriotic agitation swept the United States, and heritage organizations sprouted all over the country, celebrating different aspects of American history in an attempt to shape their own identities.³ One of the most prominent Southern heritage organizations, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), was created to celebrate the members’ heritage as descendants of the soldiers involved in the Civil War (1861-1865). The UDC focused on maintaining the identity of the Old South as the entire country, especially the South, underwent changes in the years following the War. It worked to educate Southerners as well as the future generations on the ‘true’ history of the Civil War and maintain the racial hierarchies of the antebellum South.

The UDC’s racist rhetoric and depictions of slavery have made it a controversial topic of discussion, especially as its name has resurfaced recently as a result of the debate over the removal of Confederate monuments in the United States, the majority of which were erected by the UDC.⁴ There exists one main study on the Daughters, namely *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, written by Karen L. Cox, which focuses on the ways in which the organization created a mnemonic community around the ideology of the *Lost Cause*. The *Lost Cause*, a multifaceted ideology which primarily stressed the nobility of the South’s cause in the war and the benevolence of slavery, was used, according to Cox, by the UDC

¹ The American Creed refers to core tenets of American national character namely the belief in democracy, freedom of speech and religion, equality and justice.

² Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (New York: Harper Row, 1963), 1-18.

³ Stuart McConnell, “Reading the Flag: A Reconsideration of the Patriotic Cults of the 1890s,” in *Bonds of Affection*, ed. John Bodnar, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 103, 104.

⁴ Peter Galuszka, “The women who erected Confederate statues are stunningly silent,” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 2017, accessed January 3, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-women-who-erected-confederate-statues-are-stunningly-silent/2017/10/13/2e759dde-a920-11e7-b3aa-c0e2e1d41e38_story.html?utm_term=.ce807ea669ba.

in order to create a new generation of Southerners devoted to keeping the memory of the Civil War alive.⁵ The feeling that the 'true' identity of the South was being degraded as a result of their loss in the war, pushed Southerners to want to preserve what they felt was their 'real' identity. The support for, and the perpetuation of the ideas of the *Lost Cause*, for example the South's innocence in the war, was an attempt to create a past which put the South in a favorable light and raised a new generation of Southerners, whose identity matched the beliefs of the antebellum South. One of the most striking, controversial and central claims of the *Lost Cause* and one that was perpetuated by the UDC, was the belief that slavery had not caused the Civil War. The desire to dispel this fact was one of the main driving forces behind the UDC's practices. While this thesis will make use of some of Cox's insights, it differentiates itself from Cox in its attempt to show that the *Lost Cause* was used by the UDC as a nationalist ideology as part of their effort to establish the South as distinct to the rest of the United States.

This thesis seeks to understand the ways in which the United Daughters of the Confederacy defined Southern identity and how this created a particular form of nationalism. It wishes to discern the ways in which the UDC constructed Southern identity in the thirty years after its founding and how the characteristics of this identity created a particular form of Southern nationalism that was based on a unique Southern perspective on the past and its heritage. The reason to study the role that the UDC played in this process lies in the fact that it was arguably these women who dictated the route that Southern identity would take after the Civil War ended. Just ten years after the UDC's founding in 1894 membership reached 30,000, more than some of the biggest women's organizations in the South.⁶ They, along with the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) and the Children of the Confederacy (CofC) became a powerful voice for the memorialization of the Civil War in the South. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to understand the ways in which the UDC actually implemented their ideological beliefs in order to perpetuate the ideals of the *Lost Cause* into wider Southern society. Thus, it will study the organization's practices in order to understand how it did this, and when possible, ascertain the degree of success of these practices.

Therefore, this thesis will unfold as follows: it will firstly tackle the ways in which the UDC created a Southern identity and fostered nationalism. This section will make use of theories on *nationalism* and *nation-building* by Ernest Renan and Benedict Anderson. These theories will be used as a basis for understanding the ways in which nations and nationalism form and how the UDC understood these concepts. In other words, the thesis will study UDC primary source material in order to understand how the UDC itself understood what constitutes a nation and how this informs identity, as well as vice versa. The second part of this thesis will focus on the various heritage practices the UDC performed in order to perpetuate their ideals. It will use a variety of sources, analyzed through the

⁵ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 1,2.

⁶ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 29.

lenses of theories on the *invention of tradition* and *collective memory* in order to understand the reasons behind what they did, and when possible, to determine their success.

This thesis will make use of various sources produced by the UDC at the end of the 19th century and into the 20th. Most sources were produced in the first two decades of the 20th century, only *The Handbook of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* was produced later, in 1959. The Handbook provides answers on the way in which the UDC understood the South to be a distinct nation in both politics and race, to the North. Analyzed through the lenses of both Renan and Anderson, it answers the question of how the UDC defined its identity and nationhood. The most useful source however, is an address given by the Historian General of the UDC, Mildred Lewis Rutherford in 1914: "The Wrongs of History Righted" provides an insight into the ways in which the UDC believed history could be written, and the power it had in identity formation and as the foundation of a nation's consciousness. The emphasis on historical 'truth' motivated the Daughters to control historical production and education in schools, something which, as analyzed in Part II had lasting impact on how the Civil War and Southern identity were understood. *The UDC Catechism of South Carolina Confederate History*, published in 1923, and the *Catechism for Young Children*, also probably published at the beginning of the 20th century, illustrate the methods used by the UDC to teach Southerners the ideology of the *Lost Cause*, and in doing so, raised a new generation of racists. Briefly, this thesis will use the booklet *Corner Stone of Confederate Monument Laid*, written by the Granville, North Carolina Chapter in 1909 to show the ways in which the UDC invented traditions to memorialize the Civil War. With the aid of Eric Hobsbawm's theory on the *invention of tradition*, this source will show the power that tradition has to inculcate ideas and knit communities together.

Part I: The Lost Cause, Writing 'Truthful' History and the Creation of Southern Identity and Nationalism

Tennessee, September 10, 1894: The date in which The General Organization of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was founded.⁷ The UDC began as an outgrowth of various ladies' hospital groups, sewing societies and knitting circles that had operated throughout the American South during the "War Between the States," widely known as the Civil War.⁸ However, after the war was over, these groups evolved into "cemetery, memorial, monument and Confederate Home Associations and Auxiliaries to Camps of Confederate Veterans."⁹ Only a year later in 1895, when the groups met to work on memorializing the Confederacy did they all unite under the name the United Daughters of the Confederacy.¹⁰ The UDC's aims are five, namely "historical, benevolent,

⁷ United Daughters of the Confederacy, "History of the UDC," *The United Daughters of the Confederacy*, accessed December 10 2019, <https://hqudc.org/history-of-the-united-daughters-of-the-confederacy/>.

⁸ UDC, "History of the UDC."

⁹ UDC, "History of the UDC."

¹⁰ Angela Esco Elder, "United Daughters of the Confederacy," *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (University of Georgia: 2010), <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/united-daughters-confederacy>.

educational, memorial” and patriotic, with the goal of honoring the memory of Confederate soldiers, “protect[ing], preserv[ing], and mark[ing] the places made historic by Confederate valor,” and significantly, “collect[ing] and preserv[ing] the material for a truthful history of the War between the States.”¹¹ In 1896, the CofC was founded as an auxiliary to the UDC to teach children about the Civil War.¹² With a focus on raising the next generation of ‘true’ Southerners, the CofC became a very important way in which the UDC perpetuated the ideas of the *Lost Cause* and sought to fulfill their goals.

The UDC was fueled by the ideology of the *Lost Cause* which consequently determined the group’s historical perspectives and the education of children and adult Southerners. Cox, in *Dixie’s Daughters* describes the cult of the *Lost Cause* as a way in which post-Civil War Southerners could reconcile with their loss in the war and preserve an image of the “Old South.”¹³ The national rebuilding efforts directed by Congress after the war, illustrated a desire to create a “New South,” which, to many Southerners felt like an attempt to erase their heritage and identity.¹⁴ Believers in the *Lost Cause* wanted to uphold the values of the former Confederacy, keep their agrarian past alive and “honor the region’s heroes and heroines by preserving a history of the war,” which “viewed white southerners as defenders of the US Constitution, specifically the Tenth Amendment, supporting states’ rights.”¹⁵ The *Lost Cause* was a way to rationalize the loss in the war and its supporters declared the innocence of the South, insisting on the “Confederacy’s moral and righteous victory against aggressive outside sources despite military defeat.”¹⁶ Southerners argued that the blame for the war should lay with the North and the Abolitionists, and that the South had not been beaten, but overwhelmed.¹⁷ Furthermore, slavery had not been the cause for the war and the South was certainly not a traitor nor a rebel.¹⁸ Amy Lynn Heyse put it bluntly: the purpose of the *Lost Cause* was to make “white ex-Confederates feel better about themselves by creating favorable memories of their collective past.”¹⁹ Finally, the *Lost Cause*’s white supremacist rhetoric is impossible to ignore - the idea of “Confederate culture,” posed by Cox, spread through ideas and symbols that *Lost Cause* supporters associated with the Confederacy, were based on racial hierarchy and class, and painted the picture of the South as run by a benevolent farming class who worked in harmony with a loyal, and more importantly, content slave workforce.²⁰ Put simply, believing in the *Lost Cause* meant supporting the antebellum South’s racial hierarchies and believing in the supremacy of the white race.

¹¹ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Handbook of the United Daughters of the Confederacy First Edition - Compiled 1959* (Virginia: 1959), 9.

¹² UDC, *Handbook*, 20.; Kristina DuRocher, *Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 107.

¹³ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Amy Lynn Heyse, “The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC’s Catechisms for Children,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38, 4 (2008): 415.

¹⁷ Heyse, “The Rhetoric of Memory-Making,” 415.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 416.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 421.

The *Lost Cause* could therefore be understood as a nationalist ideology. As will be discussed later on, the UDC employed the *Lost Cause* to build and preserve a Southern national identity and establish its distinctness from the North. In fact, the UDC created a form of Southern nationalism that was rooted in the ideas of the *Lost Cause* and stressed the South as a separate nation. The ways in which nations and nationalism form has been a topic of discussion for hundreds of years. Since the publication of *Imagined Communities* in 1983, Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as something which lies in the imagination, understanding and commitment from people, has been the most ground-breaking and influential idea on the subject. Anderson wrote that a nation is an "imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."²¹ Nations are imagined because all of their members will likely never meet one another, and yet in their imagination lies the understanding that they form and belong to one. In other words, as Seton-Watson said, "a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one."²² However, before Anderson wrote his book, Ernest Renan, exactly one hundred years prior gave a lecture entitled *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, posing an idea of nationhood that in many ways resembled Anderson's.

In his lecture, Renan concluded that elements such as "race, language, interests, religious affinity, geography, [or] military necessities" do not create nations as they are, rather "a spiritual principle"²³ does, a term he coined. A nation's spiritual principle is the 'soul' of the nation, constituted by two elements: the past and the present.²⁴ The past is "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" and the present is the "consent, the desire to live together, [and] the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage."²⁵ One does not automatically belong to a nation then, rather one makes the decision to dedicate oneself to it. Renan identifies the cult of ancestors as the most important aspect of national identity; their sacrifice, heroism, and glory are the foundations of national ideas.²⁶ Memories of suffering and grief are more important than ones of triumph, the memory of "having suffered together" unites people and imposes common duties on them.²⁷ Renan thus describes a nation as a vast solidarity, a place constituted by the recognition of the sacrifices that had to be made in the past and will be made in the future.²⁸

²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 31.

²² Robert William Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Westview Press, 1977), 5 in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37.

²³ Ernest Renan, *What Is a Nation? and Other Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 260, 261.

²⁴ Renan, *What is a Nation?*, 261.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The main way in which the UDC dedicated itself to the South was by ‘reclaiming’ Civil War history and providing a ‘true’ Southern perspective on what happened in the war, which they argued, was the *truth*. This is most clearly shown in an address given by Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Historian General of the UDC in 1914. The extensive and extremely thorough address, first of all shows the meticulousness of the UDC and the lengths that were taken to cover every minute detail. The index’s topics range from the causes of the Civil War, the history of the United States, the life of Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, to the cruelties of Northern prisons and slavery.²⁹ Rutherford opens by saying that the South had suffered misrepresentation too long, and warns that “[i]f history as now written is accepted it will consign the South to infamy.”³⁰ This theme, that the South must take history writing into their own hands in order to ascertain that their history is fairly and truthfully written, is a call to all Southerners. The ability for the South to write their own national history would be an extremely powerful tool to mold Southern identity to reflect the ideas of the Old South and to create a distinct type of nationalism built around history and race. The belief, that if the past was not taken into its blood descendants’ hands, and instead warped and destroyed by historians of the North, motivated the UDC tremendously. In fact, it was this, along with the decreasing number of living Civil War veterans, that motivated the birth of the UDC in the first place.³¹ Rutherford urges listeners and says:

“[I]t is full time for the Daughters of the Confederacy and Veterans to become insistent that the truths of history shall be written, and that those truths shall be correctly taught in our schools and colleges.”³²

There is an urgency in Rutherford’s words, as well as a call to action. Teaching history ‘truthfully’ and ‘correctly’ is a duty that the UDC felt they had to Southerners and to their children, ‘the future of the South.’ As evident in many sources, and also in this one, the importance of children and the cultivation of their education, had been deemed paramount to fulfilling their goals. Rutherford makes the point of addressing parents, and says:

“[The] responsibility is yours, mothers and fathers, to know the training your children are receiving; to know by whom taught, whether true or false to all we hold dear. Only in this way can we stem the tide of falsehoods that have crept in [...]”³³

Children, the new generation of Southerners, were of utmost importance to the UDC, and later on, *A Measuring Rod to Test Textbooks, and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries* will

²⁹ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, “Wrongs of history righted; address delivered by Miss Mildred Lewis Rutherford, historian general, United Daughters of the Confederacy [at] Savannah, Georgia, Friday, Nov. 13, 1914,” 2.

³⁰ Rutherford, “Wrongs of history righted,” 3. Note: she quotes Dr. Curry, no citation for this.

³¹ James M. McPherson, “Long-Legged Yankee Lies: The Southern Textbook Crusade,” in *Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, eds. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

be analyzed to understand how the UDC made sure they controlled what was taught in schools. Here, the argument Renan made is also evident, that becoming a citizen of a nation is not an automatic process, but it is through dedication to the past in the present that does.³⁴ Just as Anderson wrote, the nation is an imagined community with its citizens committed to its existence.³⁵ Therefore, to be a true Southerner according to the UDC was just this: dedication to the *Lost Cause*, the 'true' account of Southern history.

The emphasis on 'truth' is evident throughout the address: the approach to history, that is, the belief that its quality is defined by the 'truthiness' or 'falsity' of the facts presented shows an understanding typical of 19th century historians that Hayden White had discerned. In *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* he wrote that at the time, history began to be differentiated intellectually by its regard for truth - it was thus set against fiction and depicted as the representation of the "actual" rather than of the "possible" or "imaginable."³⁶ Out of this came the determination for historical discourse to consist of nothing but factual statements about events that had been observable.³⁷ In other words, rather than understanding that history is a matter of perspective, it was understood as 'wrong' or 'right.' This fact has implications in the present because it means that the past can be falsely written, and thus has the power to deeply jeopardize or change the reputation and identity of a people. This is why Rutherford and the UDC are so urgent in their mission to educate, memorialize and perpetuate the *Lost Cause*. Rutherford's address is all about setting the record straight, she lists facts upon facts, 'correcting' the Northern narrative of the Civil War as the address goes on. For example, the UDC viewed the United States in 1861 as a Republic of Sovereign States, not as a nation and thus referred to the Civil War as the "War Between the States."³⁸ Rutherford's urgency in the need to present the past in a specific, or 'right' way shows the importance of history in the formation of identity. She believes that the integrity of Old Southern identity and culture rests in the past, and this is exactly what Renan argued, that the soul of a community is based on a shared past, suffering and ancestry. This furthermore shows Anderson's idea of imagined communities. As he says, Rutherford will never meet all other Southerners, yet she understands that all of them together, united by common heritage and traditions belong to a unique community. 'The South' is seen as a limited entity, its borders defined by beliefs and in this case, what side one fought in during the Civil War.

The importance of the UDC's ability to write their own history, is that it gave them the agency to create their own identity on their own terms. While identities form in the present, they are bound to the past, as Renan argued, it is the present's dedication to the past which forms a nation and creates

³⁴ Renan, *What is a Nation?*, 261.

³⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 31.

³⁶ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 123.

³⁷ White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 123.

³⁸ Rutherford, "Wrongs of history righted," 5.

a peoples' identity.³⁹ Thus, by having control over which version of the past is available in the present, the Daughters were able to dictate what the future generations of Southerners would think, learn and believe. By writing their own history, the Daughters could firmly establish a separate, and contrasting identity to the North, the example of "the War between the States," is the case in point. By setting out a collection of very basic facts, embedded in the law, the UDC traced United States history to promote the idea that that the Civil War could not be named as such. They argued that, in the 1860s, the United States and the Confederate States were actually two separate nations.⁴⁰ By establishing the two as separate, the idea that the South had betrayed the United States by seceding would be untrue, thus 'cleaning up' its historical reputation. The South was not only different to the North and unique in character, it was also a whole *separate* nation. By arguing that the South was its own nation established Southern identity as truly legitimate and 'real.' Institutions and political tradition were important in what constituted the identity of the South as a nation and could be argued to be what Renan considered as the 'soul' of a nation because they informed the people's character and beliefs. Additionally, while the UDC never claimed that the South after the Civil War was a "limited and sovereign" nation, its argument in favor of a distinct identity and heritage was built on these two concepts.⁴¹ The South after the war was understood to be part of the United States but had its own stream of nationalism and national consciousness. This ran alongside a more general stream of American patriotism but was based on a mythical past of the Old South as an independent nation. The section on the War Between the States in the *Handbook of the UDC*, published in 1959, shows this:

"The fact is that for four years the Confederacy maintained an entirely separate government (with its own currency, commerce, army and navy) and established the Confederate States of America as a separate nation. This nation, the Confederate States of America, levied and collected revenue, enlisted its armies and issued cotton bonds which were accepted in foreign commercial marts."⁴²

Evidently, politics and governmental traditions became part of the Southern nationalist rhetoric, as they were considered important factors to Southern identity because they underscored the ways in which Southern society was different from the North. In the first half of the 19th century, James McPherson writes that a different form of nationalism, namely ethnic nationalism began to take shape.⁴³ It could be argued however, that the UDC's form of nationalism could be more adequately called 'racial nationalism.' While it is debated, ethnicity and race are usually differentiated and

³⁹ Renan, *What is a Nation?*, 261.

⁴⁰ UDC, *Handbook*, 92.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 31.

⁴² UDC, *Handbook*, 92.

⁴³ James M. McPherson, "Was Blood Thicker than Water? Ethnic and Civic Nationalism in the American Civil War," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 143, 1 (1999): 105.

defined along the idea that membership to an ethnic group is voluntary, and to a race it is not.⁴⁴ Race, depends on physical characteristics that have been subjectively chosen, while ethnicity is based on cultural ones like language and religion.⁴⁵ Most importantly, ethnic social relations are not necessarily hierarchical, exploitative and conflictual like race relations are.⁴⁶ As will be discussed, the UDC's racism and racially bound ideas of civilization are why Southern nationalism can be best understood along racial lines.

In fact, race, and the claim that the South was racially distinct, became a strong part of Southern nationalism and the UDC's agenda. In "The Wrongs of History Righted," Rutherford refers to Southerners and their Confederate ancestors as "Cavaliers," this term stems from the Southern Cavalier myth.⁴⁷ Edward A. Pollard, the famous Southern writer and Confederate sympathizer wrote about this in his book, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the Confederate States*, in which he concluded that the Civil War was the result of two different civilizations, namely the Puritans, and the Cavaliers.⁴⁸ This belief can be seen in Rutherford's address:

"[j]ust as long as there is pure Puritan blood in the veins of some and pure Cavalier blood in the veins of others, there will be a difference in the thoughts and ways of the people. We cannot be alike..."⁴⁹

She does conclude with a conciliatory sentiment, saying that the whole country should be united and should work together as one, making sure that the jealousies that caused the war and divided the North and South will not do so again.⁵⁰ What is omitted however, from Pollard's notion of the Southern Cavalier, is another, more long-term racial aspect. Cavaliers were believed to be descendants of Norman conquerors by way of English Cavaliers of the 17th century.⁵¹ By supporting the idea that Southerners were of Anglo-Saxon descent, the *Lost Cause*, and the UDC's endorsement of the ideology, ensured the hegemony of whiteness and the existing racial hierarchy. McPherson explained that beginning around 1860, Southerners began to believe, and disseminate the idea that they were descended from William the Conqueror and were

⁴⁴ Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

⁴⁵ Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 7.

⁴⁶ Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*, 81, in Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 7.

⁴⁷ Rutherford, "Wrongs of history righted," 18, 35.

⁴⁸ Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E.B Treat & Co Publishers, 1867), 49.

⁴⁹ Rutherford, "Wrongs of history righted," 35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ McPherson, "Was Blood Thicker than Water?" 105.

“a race distinguished in its earliest history for its warlike and fearless character, a race in all times since renowned for its gallantry, chivalry, honor, gentleness, and intellect. The Southern people come of that race.”⁵²

By ascribing such characteristics to Southerners, the UDC could create the ‘model’ Southern citizen. One who remembered his roots, ascribed to particular morals, worked to maintain the existing racial order in the South, and believed in white supremacy. Essentially, the UDC was working to create a new generation of racists. It must be noted, that in addition, the UDC’s existence as a genealogical organization meant that their definition of a ‘true’ Southerner was also decided by genetics. Therefore, new immigrants to the South, even if they were white and Anglo-Saxon could never be ‘true’ Southerners unless their ancestors had fought for the Confederacy.⁵³ In “White Women’s Heritage Organizations in Texas, 1870-1970,” Mercy Harper identified this effort to maintain white supremacy when studying the Texas division of the UDC. She writes that the UDC had a clear racial dimension in their understanding of history, which she identifies in a speech given by Mrs. D. A. Nunn, the leader of the Texas Division’s committee to secure legislation.⁵⁴ In the speech, Nunn argued that the South had stood up to the North, not only to defend their liberty and rights but also “in defense of ‘the integrity of the Anglo-Saxon race.’”⁵⁵ Harper argues that Nunn’s choice of the words ‘racial integrity,’ rather than racial superiority were actually code for racial segregation.⁵⁶ Thus, Nunn’s belief was that racial ‘integrity’ meant that the South had fought not for the preservation of slavery, but for the “preservation of a racial system that ensured the ultimate purity and dignity of whiteness.”⁵⁷

While Harper argues that the South did not necessarily fight to preserve slavery, there is evidence in Rutherford’s speech of the opinion that perhaps it would have been better to do so. The idea that slavery benefitted both the slave and the master was typical of racist thought at the time. Slavery was part of a civilizing mission that Southerners had chosen to commit themselves to. This stems from what Pollard argued: that the central reason for the creation of different civilizations in the North and South was the presence of slavery in the latter.⁵⁸ He believed, that slavery had created a nobler and sentimental type of people, very different from the North, who were envious of it and which had led them to start the war.⁵⁹ With this, came the belief in a civilizing mission, that it was the duty of Southerners to ‘civilize’ the African slaves to the ways of American life. This belief is clearly illustrated in Rutherford’s address: “How did the Cavaliers regard slavery? They were very thankful to have a

⁵² Quoted from *The Southern Literary Messenger*, 30 June 1861, 404-405, 40, in McPherson, “Was Blood Thicker than Water?,” 106.

⁵³ UDC, *Handbook*, 9-12.

⁵⁴ Mercy Harper, “White Women’s Heritage Organizations in Texas, 1870-1970,” (PhD diss., Rice University, 2014), 40.

⁵⁵ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Proceedings of the Annual Convention, Texas Division, 1905*, 38, in Harper, “White Women’s Heritage Organizations,” 40.

⁵⁶ Harper, “White Women’s Heritage Organizations,” 40.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Pollard, *The Lost Cause*, 50.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

part in such a wonderful missionary and educational enterprise.”⁶⁰ The main currents of racist ideology behind the rhetoric of the civilizing mission shown in this quote can be best exemplified by George Fitzhugh’s *Sociology for the South or The Failure of Free Society*, written in 1854. Fitzhugh argued that slavery benefited African people, who were deemed inferior and incapable of sustaining themselves in society.⁶¹ “The Southerner is the negro’s only friend,” wrote Fitzhugh, arguing that slavery was a benevolent system, that only benefited black people who would live better under it than they would have in Africa.⁶² Rutherford made similar statements in the address, praising slavery and saying that without it, the slaves would have been “savage to the last degree [...] without thought of clothes to cover their bodies, and sometimes cannibals [...]”⁶³ Being abducted and brought to America however, had ‘saved’ them, making them become “the happiest set of people on the face of the globe, free from care or thought of food, clothes, home, or religious privileges.”⁶⁴ She goes on to say that slave holders loved their slaves, and vice-versa, and paints a picture of plantations as being ‘a big happy family.’⁶⁵ The slave holder was the parent, and the slave the child, who at times, she conceded, had to be punished.⁶⁶ This belief, that black people were infantile and child-like, is also a core feature of racist thought, and as Fitzhugh wrote, there was no difference between the authority of a parent and of a master.⁶⁷ The UDC felt it paramount to include these ‘truths’ about slavery - as long as Northern histories of the South and slavery were being written, the Southern slaveholder would be treated like a criminal, and needed to be defended.⁶⁸ In *Dixie’s Daughters*, Cox writes that for the UDC, writing a ‘true’ history, served both an educational and political purpose.⁶⁹ Rutherford would apparently send her pro-Confederate writings to African-American schools believing it would benefit black pupils to understand the past as the UDC saw it.⁷⁰ Cox writes that if black students accepted the Daughters’ narrative on “what constituted appropriate race relations in the Old South, then perhaps those students would realize the necessity of maintaining the status quo in the Jim Crow South.”⁷¹ In other words, African Americans could be convinced of the benefits of white supremacy.⁷² More broadly, what this shows is that perhaps Renan was naive in his thought that concepts like race do not create a nation.⁷³ Of course what the Daughters were doing was not actual nation-building, but it was an effort to create and preserve an imagined community defined by whiteness. To be part of the effort to keep the Old South alive meant not only preserving its history and legacy, but also to *be white*.

⁶⁰ Rutherford, “Wrongs of history righted,” 18.

⁶¹ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South or The Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, Virginia: A. Morris Publisher, 1854), 82, 83.

⁶² Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 88, 95.

⁶³ Rutherford, “Wrongs of history righted,” 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15, 16, 17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁷ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 247, 248.

⁶⁸ Rutherford, “Wrongs of history righted,” 16.

⁶⁹ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 125.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Renan, *What is a Nation?*, 216.

Part II: Practices and the Perpetuation of the Lost Cause

Now that UDC ideology and the way in which it informed the creation of Southern identity and nationalism has been discussed, this section will analyze the ways in which the UDC actively promoted and disseminated the *Lost Cause* in order to fulfill their goal of creating a new generation of 'true' Southerners as part of their nationalist agenda.

As described in Part I, the UDC focused on the writing of 'true' history as a way of ensuring that the South was not 'unjustly' treated by their Northern enemy. Not only however, did they write their own histories, they also published their own guide to acceptable historical writing and ensured that history textbooks that did not meet their standards were not published. In 1919, the UDC published *A Measuring Rod to Test Textbooks, And Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries*, as a framework and guideline to textbooks.⁷⁴ Textbooks that were to be published would be tested against the booklet's standards in order to ascertain if it told a truthful and balanced history, otherwise it would be deemed "[u]njust to the South."⁷⁵ The importance of controlling what textbooks were being produced and disseminated in Southern schools lies in their ability to shape the collective and cultural memory of a community. *Collective memory*, as defined by Astrid Erll, in her book *Memory in Culture*, is "the creation of shared versions of the past which results through interaction, communication, media, and institutions within small social groups as well as large cultural communities."⁷⁶ The distinguishing feature of collective memory, is that it does not have any direct or personal link to the individual's life, and may not even be based on anything the individual has actually experienced, yet it brings people together and provides commonalities between them.⁷⁷ Maurice Halbwachs argued that it serves the purpose of maintaining "impersonal remembrances of interest to the group," and thus does not regard the individual personally and remains distinct from it.⁷⁸ Collective memory is "borrowed memory," and Halbwachs understands it as conceptions and symbols which deeply influence national thought because they impact institutions and traditions in all aspects of society.⁷⁹ For this reason, as mentioned above, collective memory rests in the foundations of a nation's identity.

Differently from history however, collective memory does not focus on the changes or processes that have occurred throughout time, rather it is based on a much more stable idea of the past which is *not* defined by its difference to the present.⁸⁰ By producing booklets such as *A Measuring Rod to Test Textbooks*, the UDC was able to formalize a mythical and distant past (based on the *Lost*

⁷⁴ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *A Measuring Rod to Test Textbooks, And Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries Prepared by Mildred A. Rutherford* (Athens, Georgia: United Confederate Veterans, 1920).

⁷⁵ UDC, *A Measuring Rod*, 3.

⁷⁶ Astrid Erll trans. By Sarah B. Young, *Memory in Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 15.

⁷⁷ Maurice Halbwachs trans. By Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 50, 51.

⁷⁸ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 50, 51.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 51, 52.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 85, 86.

Cause) into the cultural memory of the future generations of Southerners. Additionally, the lack of difference between past and present makes collective memory's focus and importance lie in the present where it continually informs identity. This last aspect of the concept is important when it comes to myths and traditions which rest on a very static idea of the past, something which the UDC built and invented respectively in order to perpetuate the *Lost Cause*.

According to Fred Arthur Bailey in "Textbooks of the 'Lost Cause,'" the UDC's efforts to counter "unjust" historical writing were ultimately successful: "twentieth-century Southern whites absorbed a veneration for the Confederate cause, an intense resistance to black civil rights, and a deferential spirit toward their "proper" leaders."⁸¹ The historical 'truth' that the Daughters had defined would continue to ensure that Southerners "would retain cultural values detrimental to the progress of their own native land."⁸²

The mnemonic socialization of children did not only happen through their reading of textbooks in school, but also by what they were taught as members of the CofC. Mnemonic socialization refers to the process of socialization within a certain memory (or mnemonic) community. Eviatar Zerubavel, in "Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past," writes that people are mnemonically socialized by the communities and individuals around them who shape the way their memories form and consequently help in the creation of their identities.⁸³ Southern children, by being taught about the *Lost Cause* in school and by being part of the CofC were socialized to become the next generation of 'Old Southerners'. One way in which children were taught about their Southern past to become 'true' Southerners was through learning the *Confederate Catechism*. This booklet comprises questions and answers focused on different topics which children (and also adult members of the UDC) were required to learn. This catechism faithfully followed the *Lost Cause* and taught children that the Civil War should be called the "War Between the States", that slavery was not the cause of the war, and it even included a pledge of allegiance to the South.⁸⁴ The adult catechism illustrated a much stronger focus on the racial aspects of the *Lost Cause*. *The UDC Catechism of South Carolina Confederate History*, published in 1923, explicitly references the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) as being a savior to Southern society.⁸⁵ The KKK was believed to be an "honorable body of Southern men, who would not bow to negro domination," who had fought to defend the South and to preserve white supremacy.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Fred Arthur Bailey, "The Textbooks of the "Lost Cause": Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75, 3 (1991): 533.

⁸² Bailey, "The Textbooks of the "Lost Cause," 533.

⁸³ Eviatar Zerubavel, "Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past," *Qualitative Sociology* 19, 3, (1996): 283-299.

⁸⁴ J.P Allison, *Confederate Catechism: Confederate Catechism for Young Children* (Concord, North Carolina: n/a), 2, 4, 5, 10.

⁸⁵ The Historical Committee South Carolina Division, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, *U. D. C. catechism of South Carolina Confederate history* (1923), 14.

⁸⁶ The Historical Committee South Carolina, *U. D. C. catechism of South Carolina*, 14.

Naturally, the catechisms emphasized the heroism and gallantry of Confederate soldiers.⁸⁷ The *Lost Cause* presented Confederate soldiers as fearless warriors who would have done anything to save the South. The soldiers were mythologized as heroes and celebrated in various ways which became staples of UDC practices. Monument building was perhaps the UDC's main activity, for example. In fact, since its founding, the UDC has built seven-hundred monuments throughout the United States commemorating the Civil War and honoring Confederate soldiers, according to a 2017 article in *The Washington Post*.⁸⁸ The *invention of tradition* as a way of celebrating one's history and collective memory are important ways in which populations express their nationality and keep their communities alive. These are what solidify groups and delineate who belongs and who does not. Eric Hobsbawm's seminal book *The Invention of Tradition*, discusses how the *invention of tradition* is important in establishing continuity with the past, solidifying ideologies, and historical narratives.⁸⁹

Hobsbawm writes that invented traditions are particularly relevant to the notion of the nation and nationalism, and argues that these phenomena cannot be studied fully without taking the *invention of tradition* into account.⁹⁰ Hobsbawm defined it as, "a set of practices, [...] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with [...] a suitable historic past."⁹¹ Hobsbawm writes that one of its purposes is to socialize, instill beliefs, values and behavior, based often on a largely fictitious past.⁹² Through repetition, traditions are able to convey certain ideas to its practitioners, and keep ideologies alive. In fact, plenty of political institutions and ideological groups have completely invented a past or created a mythology of the events in order to establish continuity.⁹³ The *Lost Cause* is a perfect example of this. Traditions also establish "membership of groups, real or artificial communities," in order to create social cohesion.⁹⁴ The UDC understood this and executed it brilliantly: they wrote histories helping to establish a separate tradition of historical writing; they controlled the production of written histories in textbooks in order to influence education; and they formed the CofC to continue to inculcate the *Lost Cause* in Southern children.

However, the UDC was also visible and influential in broader Southern society, building monuments and holding memorials and anniversary celebrations. It is traditions like these that reflect the thought and culture of a group, as expressed in the invention of "emotionally and symbolically charged signs" such as a monument or the Confederate Flag.⁹⁵ Hobsbawm wrote that signs convey particular ideals, often universal and vague, such as loyalty or patriotism, which would elicit a specific response or

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5,6.; Allison, *Confederate Catechism*, 1.

⁸⁸ Galuszka, "The women who erected Confederate statues are stunningly silent," *The Washington Post*.

⁸⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1, 7, 9.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 13, 14.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1.

⁹² Ibid., 2, 9.

⁹³ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 11

feeling from the practitioner.⁹⁶ The UDC wanted Southerners to be reminded of the Old South and of the struggle of the Civil War when viewing their monuments. As Cox wrote, the monuments served as a reminder that the values of the Confederacy were still alive and would continue to inform the post-Civil War South.⁹⁷ They furthermore provided that continuity between past and present that Hobsbawm described. When a monument was built, the UDC would host a ceremony in which important UDC members would speak, music would be played, or a parade held, the living Confederate veterans attending would be honored, and military traditions performed, all of course, under the watchful eyes of Southern children.⁹⁸ The booklet *Corner Stone of Confederate Monument Laid*, published by the North Carolina Chapter of the UDC in 1909, recounts the above-mentioned traditions and events of a ceremony held to memorialize a Confederate statue that had been built. It contains a description of what occurred as well as transcripts of the speeches that were given, putting events on paper and memorializing the event forever.⁹⁹

Determining the full extent of the UDC's success is difficult, as well as outside the scope of this thesis. There are, however, a series of events that occurred in 2017 which provide an indication of the long-lasting impact of the UDC's efforts in monument building. A case in point is the "Unite the Right" rally in August 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, a public debate and demonstration over the removal of the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from Emancipation Park.¹⁰⁰ Many of the protestors belonged to white supremacist and nationalist groups in the far-right.¹⁰¹ Many waved Confederate flags and protested against the removal of the statue, arguing that its removal disrespected Southern heritage and history. This belief, whether expressed in the form of history writing, or monument building goes back to the view that history is the basis of one's identity and national character, and that writing 'false' history, or removing a statue can erase them. Nowadays, to many people, the Confederate flag represents racism and white supremacy. Its continued popularity among white Southerners, however, who defend it as a symbol of their true identity, could be a strong example of the long-lasting impact the UDC have had.

Conclusion

The Civil War left Southerners feeling betrayed. Not only had they been defeated, they were considered traitors, and their way of life and identity were deemed criminal and needed to be changed. The UDC and the *Lost Cause* sought to convince Southerners that they did not need to

⁹⁶ Ibid., 10, 11.

⁹⁷ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 67.

⁹⁸ United Daughters of the Confederacy, Granville Grays Chapter (Oxford, N.C.), *Corner Stone of Confederate Monument Laid* (The Library of the University of North Carolina, 1909,) 3, 6, 10.; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 2, 4.

⁹⁹ UDC NC, *Corner Stone of Confederate Monument Laid*, 1-28.

¹⁰⁰ Sarah Rankin and Steve Helber, "Charlottesville's Confederate statues shrouded in black," *Fox5 NY*, August 3, 2018, accessed January 3, 2020, <http://www.fox5ny.com/news/charlottesvilles-confederate-statues-shrouded-in-black>.

¹⁰¹ Richard Fausset, and Alan Feuer, "Far-Right Groups Surge Into National View in Charlottesville," *The New York Times*, January 20, 2018, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/us/far-right-groups-blaze-into-national-view-in-charlottesville.html>.

abandon their heritage, rather the opposite of that. They needed to embrace it, protect it, and celebrate it. Southerners needed to feel proud of who they were again, and it was the UDC who became the protector of the South's 'true identity.' The *Lost Cause* provided the UDC with a narrative to give the South back its unique identity, one that was formed most importantly, on its own accord. The UDC's main way to achieve this was through writing their own historical narrative that established certain 'truths' and solidified them as central characteristics of Southern identity. The UDC and their efforts, created a new form of Southern nationalism built on the idea that the South was a distinct civilization from the North. This added to the argument that the South was its own nation to begin with: it was not only a separate nation to the North before the Civil War, it was also a different civilization, making its truly people unique. The *Lost Cause* allowed Southerners to frame their participation in the war and their loss positively and uphold the values of the Confederacy. Keeping the historical record and the South's reputation favorable was one of the UDC's main foci. The address, "The Wrongs of History Righted" by Rutherford showed the way in which the UDC used history to build and prove their identity and nationality in the present. Rutherford used the past to show that the South was a distinct nation to the North, in order to make their struggle in the Civil War legitimate. Anderson's theory on *Imagined Communities* showed that the UDC used the argument that the South had been "limited and sovereign" in order to prove the claim they were not part of the Union but were actually separate from the rest of the country, even after the war.¹⁰² By studying the *Lost Cause* as a nationalist ideology, the ways in which the UDC executed its agenda in order to create a Southern identity that was separate to American identity can be fully highlighted. The UDC wanted Southern identity to be defined by its past, ancestry and geographical limitations - that is, a true Southerner could *only* be from the Southern states.

The *Lost Cause's* depictions of slavery and African Americans solidified a racist element to Southern identity and limited the definition of 'Southerner' to include only white people. This showed that in the UDC's conception of the nation, race, unlike what Renan had argued, played a central role in the South's formation. "The Wrongs of History Righted" showed how the UDC declared a so-called civilizing mission that included extremely racist beliefs - namely the belief in a natural racial hierarchy, that slavery was a benevolent system and that it had 'saved' the African race. Their beliefs were characterized by the widespread ideas on race at the time. Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South* characterized this opinion, and his ideas can be clearly seen in Rutherford's address. The Daughters' ideas not only functioned to educate white Southerners but were also shared in an attempt to educate black Southerners in order to try and convince them of the truths of white supremacy.

Using the theories of *cultural memory* and the *invention of tradition*, the practices of the UDC were analyzed in order to understand the ways in which the organization promoted and instilled the *Lost*

¹⁰² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 31.

Cause among the Southern population. The UDC was able to regulate history textbooks by creating a Handbook which outlined what was allowed to be written and taught and what was not. This way, they were able to control the *collective memory* of the South. They were ultimately successful. Children were furthermore mnemonically socialized through the *Confederate Catechism* and membership to the CofC. Southern children, and adult members too, were groomed to become the Southerners the UDC had decided they should be. Catechisms and the memorialization of Civil War history and soldiers became characteristic practices of the Daughters. The UDC created an elaborate and repetitive memorialization tradition, which as Hobsbawm theorized functioned to inculcate values and norms in order to create societal cohesion and solidify the mythologized past of the Civil War. The monuments the Daughters built served as timeless reminders of Confederate values, reminders which we still see, and feel the repercussions of, today.

This thesis could have been further enriched with a more extensive discussion on the Children of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans in order to create a more complete picture of post-Civil War Southern identity, nationalism and religion. Studying sources produced by both of these groups as well as analyzing the ways in which these groups interacted and worked together could have also yielded more nuanced results. Furthermore, a more longer-term study of the UDC could have shown how the group's beliefs and perceived tenets of Southern identity have changed to fit according to the context and time. Along with this, the role of religion in the *Lost Cause* and how it informed the UDC's beliefs on race could have also been examined. The ways in which the Daughters (and/or other patriotic organizations) were involved in politics could have added another level to the conclusions on the success or failures, as well as the durability of their efforts. A comparative study of the UDC and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) could have also yielded interesting conclusions on the power that organizations like these have in the shaping of historical narratives and national *collective memory*. The DAR has not been studied extensively and thus a comparative study could produce new conclusions. Mercy Harper's thesis has already shown the power the DAR had in spreading conservatism across the United States, and a study on the group's beliefs on, and attitudes towards, race could be a very interesting addition. Finally, in the field of Gender Studies, further research could be conducted on the ways in which groups like the UDC changed the position of women in American society as well as the perceptions of femininity. How they defied or enforced traditional stereotypes of masculinity in their history writing, and femininity in their practices could also provide new conclusions.

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