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A mixed method investigation of historical narratives and representations within and across cultural contexts: Implications for political culture and national identity

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Statement of Authorship

The four empirical studies (spanning across three separate articles) that comprise this thesis have all been written for publication. I am the primary author for each article, having conceptualized the ideas, conducted the analyses, interpreted the findings, and written the final articles. Chapter 2 is currently published in the journal, Memory Studies. Chapter 3 is currently published in the European Journal of Social Psychology. Chapter 4 is currently being prepared for submission to the British Journal of Social Psychology.

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General Abstract

Growing fragmentation in historical attitudes can be observed alongside increasing political polarization and conflict in many societies, with both of these trends mutually reinforcing each other. Amidst these dynamics, there is a growing urgent need to understand both the politics and psychology of collective remembering. Although there has been much theorizing about the ways that historical narratives are curated by political elites and institutions in ways that promote a positive and moral image of the nation, there has been a lack of research investigating the ways in which such narratives are actually received, internalized, appropriated, and/or resisted by the individuals that they are directed toward. To address this gap, the current thesis identifies and maps out popular historical narratives that are shared by lay individuals embedded in the national context of the United States. Importantly, how and the extent to which these narratives are connected to the present-day context of nations is a key consideration throughout this endeavour. According to theories of collective remembering (Assmann, 2013; Rigney, 2005), historical narratives that are 'active' in public discourse ought to incorporate elements from the nation's distant, mythologized past in *continuity* with their more recent, living memories to connect the past meaningfully to the present, and to inform a meaningful and coherent sense of national identity over time. By investigating the dynamics of historical narratives, representations, and identity at the level of individuals, while still incorporating the political and social contexts that they are embedded in, the current thesis contributes to bridging the gap between psychology and politics in the domain of collective remembering. Chapter 2 investigated how communicative memories (memories of public events that have occurred within the lifetimes of people alive or personally remembered today) index the present-day climates of societies. The findings from this chapter demonstrated how recent memories of terrorism drive an extreme negative climate in Western countries, while recent memories of national independence underpinned a

positive climate across majority world countries. In Chapter 3, I explored how historical narratives are articulated by individuals (embedded in the American context) to give meaning to these historical representations, and thereby orient the nation's past to its present. This chapter identified popular historical narratives which were anchored in positive representations of national foundations, and in turn, were positively associated with national identification. However, these were identified alongside a popular counter-narrative that was critical of the mythologization of America's past. Moreover, there was considerable plurality and fragmentation in the narrative landscape, with many American participants failing to articulate a distinct historical narrative at all. In Chapter 4, I employed an experimental approach to show how this fragmentation is reduced, while endorsement of positive narratives about the nation becomes tighter when individuals are reminded of: 1) national foundations (the past reinforcing the present) and 2) a present-day context of intergroup threat (the present reinforcing the past). In Chapter 5, I discuss the theoretical and methodological implications of the studies and their findings within a dynamic framework of historical narrative and identity. The societal relevance of these findings is discussed in relation to the declining resonance of positive national narratives in the United States, amidst increasing domestic polarization and recent failures of the state to respond to crises. This has implications for the narrative resources that are available to political leaders in their rhetoric to mobilize the national identity of their followers and audience. Nonetheless, such rhetorical work does not occur within a vacuum, and the changing social/political context (see Chapter 4) may (re)activate the narratives that are still available within the minds of ordinary Americans today (see Chapter 3).

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Past events exist, after all, only in memory, which is a form of imagination. The event is real **now**, but once it's **then**, its continuing reality is entirely up to us, dependent on our energy and honesty.

Ursula Le Guin, Tales from Earthsea

Chapter 1: Introduction to Thesis and Literature Review

In the post-modern, "post-truth" internet age, we are witnessing heightened polarisation and fragmentation in how history is remembered and in turn, implicated in present day Western democracies. This can be illustrated with examples from various contexts across the world. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi is regarded as a founding document for the country, wherein recognition of a bicultural partnership between Māori and the Crown is symbolically agreed upon (Orange, 2015). The Treaty/Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed by Māori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown in 1840. Te Tiriti is a legal document, and its principles have been included in New Zealand legislation since the 19th century. These mainly pertain (but are not exclusive) to land and cultural rights of Māori and their relations with the Crown (Belgrave, 2018). However, over the years, there has been much disagreement and dispute about interpretations of Te Tiriti and its principles. This is especially pertinent due to differences in translation between the English and Māori versions of te Tiriti with the fundamental difference being that Māori cede sovereignty to the Crown in the English version, whereas in the Māori text (signed by most chiefs), they only give governance to the Crown (Orange, 2015). New Zealand/s 2024 coalition recently announced plans to review the principles of the Treaty, raising concerns that this will set back years of progress in Māori rights, self-determination, and well-being. Specifically, the ACT party, a right-wing libertarian partner of the coalition, has raised a bill that proposes to ensure *all* New Zealanders have the same political rights and duties, while framing the current principles of the Treaty as non-democratic (Stewart, 2023). This has activated much tension

between the government and Māori leaders, who are concerned that such a move would negate recognition of the partnership between Māori and the Crown as separate parties, and override the Treaty. In response, thousands of people gathered to march on the Treaty grounds and elsewhere on Waitangi Day in protest against the controversial bill (Paewai, 2024). Such contestation reveals the difficulty and struggle in arriving at a consensual understanding of history and its implications for contemporary society.

In the United States of America, critical race theory was introduced as an academic concept about how systemic racism has shaped society, its laws, and power relations which continue to systemically to impact the livelihoods of minority groups (Ledesma & Calderon 2015). While it is a concept that is typically taught only in higher academia, critical race theory has become the target of Republican legislators in states across the country. For example, the Board of Education in Florida state banned critical race theory from being taught in public school classrooms in 2021. The justification for this was that it would protect children from lessons that could "distort" historical events. This was taken even further the following year when a new bill in the state proposed to ban schools and businesses from inducing "discomfort" and "psychological distress" in students when teaching them about racial discrimination in U.S. history (Alfonseca, 2022). Educators and theorists have protested against such bills, which are viewed to be censorious to education about racial oppression in the U.S. by undermining teachers' ability to discuss central events in American history like slavery with their students (Alfonseca, 2022). Again, this case demonstrates the struggle to productively discuss, address, and confront the past as a society. As will be outlined in later sections, this case also demonstrates the vested interests of state institutions to curate sanitized versions of the country's past, in efforts to construct an image of the nation that individuals may positively identify with.

History continues to move and rally people towards action on one hand, as demonstrated by the Māori protesters at Waitangi. On the other hand, it has also been observed that people in modernized society are increasingly disinterested and unknowledgeable about history (Schwartz, 1998), trends which are exacerbated by political decisions like the banning of critical race education. Such dynamics reveal the complicated nature of history as remembered by individuals who hold different understandings, experiences, and motivations in an increasingly pluralized world. As evident in our examples, it remains crucially important for individuals to be engaged in history and critical thinking about the past. This is because history is invoked as a warrant of legitimacy for justifying a country's political arrangements and decisions. Through their agency to accept or reject certain historical justifications, people's understandings and interpretations of history have real political implications (Liu & Hilton, 2005). This thesis is interested in this bottom-up agency of *individuals* in making sense of the past and how this bears implications for psychological experiences of nationhood.

The institutional curation of historical narratives from the top-down has already been documented extensively by various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, ranging from sociology to museum studies. These descriptive investigations of public sites and practices of remembrance have been insightful in showing how certain elements of the past are centered, and in turn, what details and accounts about the past are neglected and omitted. These approaches take the perspective of collective memory as "objectivized culture" (Olick et al., 2011) that can be observed through cultural products (e.g., monuments) and practices (e.g., commemorations). Yet, the *psychological* and thus, functional implications of history as a tool for nation-building has not sufficiently been investigated at the level of *individuals* who actually engage with those cultural products and practices. For 'official' collective memory producers to have their intended effects, their audiences need to receive, engage,

reproduce and resonate with institutionalized representations of the past (Kansteiner, 2002). As highlighted by the cases above, reality is far from being as simple as individuals consistently conforming to culturally sanctioned versions of the past. While historical narratives may indeed circulate amongst *individuals* and become popular from the bottom-up, there is still a gap in understanding what these bottom-up historical narratives look like. The current research seeks to address this gap by investigating: how individuals configure their own narratives about the collective past, the extent to which their narratives diverge or align with what is culturally dominant, and whether these narratives function to psychologically reinforce a sense of national identity.

The need to address such questions have already been highlighted by researchers in social psychology. As called for by Smeekes and colleagues (2017, p. 294): "It may be particularly beneficial…considering how individuals explain and describe ingroup and outgroup narratives through their own discourse. This may also facilitate the development of a more reliable measure of ingroup and outgroup narratives for each context". Freel and Bilali (2021, p. 215) have further questioned what may be "the factors that influence the content of historical narratives prevalent in a society (e.g., the degree of consensus within society)", recognizing that "group members can endorse, accept, or reject various narratives to different degrees". Responding to these calls, the current thesis focuses on the active construction of historical narratives by individuals, and how this informs their experiences of national identity. On a broader level, such efforts may help contribute toward developing greater efficacy in historical narrative intervention studies (e.g., Garagozov & Gadirova, 2018; Ivanović et al., 2024) and strategies for promoting critical thinking in history education by recognizing and accounting for narrative biases that are common within specific national contexts.

Cultural Psychology Orientation

This thesis takes a bottom-up, psychological approach to studying collective and cultural phenomena. To do so, I adopt a *cultural psychology* orientation to inform this research-- the idea that culture and psychology are mutually constitutive (Shweder, 1991). Historically, there has been some tension between a more sociological versus psychological understanding of culture. The former tends to treat culture as 'superorganic', existing at a level beyond individual experiences (Kroeber, 1917). The latter has aligned more closely with the view that culture is constituted by people's experiences and imagination of those experiences, and thus takes the view that culture is inherently "local" (Geertz, 1973). In recent years, there has been much consolidation between these two camps, with acknowledgements that there is value in studying culture both at the level of institutions, policies, and wider social structures, as well as through the beliefs, values, knowledge, and representations held in the minds (and interaction) of individuals (Elcheroth et al., 2011).

Cultural psychology emerges through this consolidation between studies of mind (psychology) and culture (society), to allow for the study of 'mind-in-context' (Wang, 2008). This approach takes the view that ''psyche and culture . . . make each other up'' (Shweder, 1991, p. 1) through a process of mutual constitution. Such an approach assumes that there are psychological affordances that are embedded in our everyday practices and realities, which function to afford certain experiences, constrain others, and direct action and behaviour toward particular ends that work to maintain a certain culture. This conceptualization provides a framework for thinking about social/cultural practices as ''intentional worlds'' (Shweder, 1991, p. 1) that reinforce and promote particular beliefs and desires in individuals (Kurtiş et al., 2018).

The central question that social and cultural psychologists have increasingly sought to address over the years, concerns the question of how cultural norms, rules, and values are

"internalized" by individuals (Vygotsky, 1978). Importantly, the study of this phenomena cannot be separated or isolated from the institutions and structures themselves that are imposed to stabilize, maintain, and reproduce a culture over time. In short, culturally prescribed norms are legitimized by 'external' structures that exist beyond us, yet at the same time, they must be internalized and made comprehensible to our minds by making them our 'own' (Bruner, 1991). We are long beyond the point of accepting that mere conformity is sufficient for describing how and why individuals internalize and accept cultural prescriptions. Indeed, research has come a long way in uncovering processes of individual and collective agency and creativity in accepting, resisting, appropriating and (re)shaping the culture around them (Reicher, 2004). As mentioned, the current thesis is broadly interested in the bridge between individual psychology and culture. It aims to do so through advancing empirical research on the shared use of (historical) narratives by individuals to make sense of their social and national realities. That is, narrative is interpreted as a central mechanism that connects the individual mind to culture and society. While this is an area that has been much conceptualized and theorized about from top-down sources (as will be discussed below), it has lacked sufficient empirical operationalization and investigation at the level of individual members of society.

Literature Review

This section delineates the theoretical foundations that inform the goals and approach of the current research. Social Identity Theory (SIT/SCT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) is drawn upon as the *motivational* system that drives engagement with historical narratives for individuals embedded within national contexts. Further, we also consider the role of *content* in determining the possibilities (as well as constraints) for identity through a social representations (SR) approach (Elcheroth et al., 2011). These perspectives both align with Reicher's (2004) dynamic framework of identity, wherein content (or representations) is

what actualizes and mobilizes the collective potential of individuals as members of a common group. Both Social Identity and Social Representations Theory can be interpreted via the broader approach cultural psychology outlined above.

Developing A Social Representations Approach to Identity

Social Identity Theory (SIT), Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) and Social Representations Theory (SRT) provide the major pillars of theory to our current examination of collective memory as represented in the minds of individuals. Through an SIT perspective, the shared use of narratives ought to be organized by the boundaries of social categorization. In other words, the boundaries of salient social categories determine *who* certain norms, values, goals (usually communicated through group-based narratives) appeal to, and to whom they do not. This is because individuals' preference for certain narratives are driven by their underlying motivations for legitimizing and defending the important social categories that they derive membership from, such as nationality. In turn, historical narratives can be used by individuals to enhance their social category (e.g., nation) in comparison against relevant outgroups. Importantly, the social representational (SR) perspective adds the consideration that the kind of narratives that are *available* for mobilizing a social category are both constrained and facilitated by the *existing* knowledge, definitions, assumptions, and beliefs that are both culturally reified and interpersonally/socially shared within society.

To develop the theoretical foundations for this research, the following literature review covers the basic tenets of SIT/SCT before providing an overview of the SR approach to inform our discussion on how collective memory, as shared psychological representations and narratives of history, gives form and meaning for the realization and enactment of social (national) identity.

Social Identity and Self Categorization Theory

While often grouped together under the 'social identity perspective' (Hornsey, 2008), for technical purposes, it is important to delineate between social identity (SIT, Tajfel, 1978) and its related counterpart, self-categorization theory (SCT, Turner et al., 1987). Both SIT and SCT share the same core assumptions, however, have different foci or emphases. SIT focuses on competitive intergroup behaviour and its motivations and implications, including tendencies for intergroup differentiation and outgroup derogation. In turn, SCT focuses on the cognitive underpinnings of identity through muti-level categorizations of ingroup and outgroup across situations and contexts. These different emphases are delineated below.

According to SIT, a social identity provides the "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). The core assumption of this theory is that individuals are driven by motivations to maintain a positive and secure self-concept, including the part of their self-concept that derives from their group memberships. This is typically achieved through perceiving positive distinctiveness in comparison with other groups. The existence of the 'other' is thus inherent to the conceptualization of social identity. Furthermore, the social context provides a backdrop for determining *who* (or what group) is relevant for comparing ourselves against, and on what dimensions. Thus, there can be wide variability in how we define ourselves, depending on the 'other' that is available for comparison in a given context (Haslam et al., 1992; Oakes, 1987). From its inception, SIT has been applied for thinking about and understanding nations as groups. Since then, there has been extensive research exploring the dynamics of social identity in (cross-)national contexts of comparison, competition, and conflict (e.g., Li & Brewer, 2004; Reicher et al., 2006; Verkuyten, 2021).

According to SCT, a social category provides "cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40), wherein a social category can be understood as a collective of individuals "who have internalized the same social category membership as a component of their self- concept" (Turner, 1982, p. 36). When internalized, this cognitive category becomes a meaningful social *identity* for an individual. Once a social identity is adopted, an individual is guided by the norms, values, and beliefs that have been internalized as part of that identity. In this way, SCT provides an understanding of how individuals see their group (and relevant 'other's). Furthermore, this theory purports that particular contexts activate certain social categories to be more salient and accessible than others (Oakes, 1987). There are multiple social categories that an individual might identify with, like gender, nationality, work, extended family, etc. Any of these could be salient at a given time and become the basis for activating ingroup/outgroup distinctions. Amidst this multitude of identities we have access to, SCT proposes that group categorization occurs as a function of accessibility and fit. That is, how accessible, salient, or primed a social category is, and how well that category reflects the social reality and relevant group-based differences in a given context.

It is evident that both SIT and SCT are context-dependent theories that open up the space for considering the role and influences of various levels of context, including cultural and historical, on identity and intergroup relations (Reicher, 2004). Rather than being ahistorical and inflexible, identity is increasingly recognized as a dynamic construct that is both constitutive and transformative in ways that are 'contextually valid'.

A Dynamic Approach to Social Identity

Importantly, social identification does not merely involve the activation of identity, but the active process of constructing an identity that is in line with a particular agenda (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Turner (1999) himself argued that SIT and SCT are process

theories that require the incorporation of culturally and contextually specific *content* before any meaningful predictions can be made in their application and analysis. As such, we approach social/national identity from a constructivist perspective with the potential for transformation, rather than a perspective that is essentialist and assumes a shared and fixed ethnic core for groups. This comes from recognizing identity content as dynamic and constructed. Momentum for this dynamic approach to SIT that considers both the roles of content and context in social identification has grown in recent decades, emerging as part of a wider criticism of the minimal group paradigm's treatment of social identities as ahistorical constructs (Huddy, 2001). History provides a diachronic identity, wherein social identity can be conceptualized as being in a continual and complex process of becoming (Klein et al., 2007; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) rather than being abstract, static, and isolated from historical and cultural contexts.

The most significant project for constructing a group identity in the modern era has been that of nations and countries. Drawing upon history has been particularly appealing for such nation building efforts. This is because history provides concrete events and figures that can be weaved into emotionally compelling national narratives (Liu & Laszlo, 2007; Wertsch, 2008). History provides content for national identity by providing common understandings of the nation's origins and key experiences, through which certain characteristics and values of the nation are implicitly communicated (Ashmore et al., 2004; Branscombe et al., 2002). Beyond such functions of self-definition and self-verification, history provides resources for maintaining a sense of continuity as well as resources for coping through new situations and crises (Wagner et al., 2002). Furthermore, because individuals derive self-esteem from their group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), historical narratives provide resources for constructing a moral and positive image of the nation in comparison with other nation groups, especially those that they are (or have been)

in conflict with. However, it is noted that constructing a moral image does not necessitate a positive or heroic evaluation of the nation and its history. Commonly, a moral image of the ingroup is expressed through a victimhood position and identity (Noor et al., 2017). In these various ways, the internalization of historical narratives may serve to create and reinforce a collective identity for individuals as an imagined or 'mnemonic community' (Zerubavel, 2003).

Social Representations Theory

Social Representations Theory (SRT: Moscovici, 1984, 2001) enables theorizing about the processes and structures that facilitate knowledge and beliefs within a society to be shared. Social representations (SR) are the collection of values, ideas, beliefs, and practices that are socially shared among members of a group. Widely shared between individuals, SRs are able to prescribe the rules and norms for how group members act and communicate with one another. The core assumption of SRT is that certain ways of perceiving and understanding the world (i.e., social frameworks) come to be held by members of a society through social sharing. Social facts are established when people come to share common interpretations for understanding shared experiences. That is, members of a collective are exposed to and participate in the sharing of certain meaning systems through social interaction, to produce common perceptions of major events (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997) and ideas (Moscovici, 1976/2008). Patterns of interaction and communication may occur at the direct level between individuals or disperse through mass media. Thus, there can be "no communication without representations and no representations without communication" (de Rosa Annamaria, 2012, p. 77). This dynamic creates communities of shared understandings, providing the basis for people to communicate, make decisions, and act as a collective.

As forms of enacted knowledge, social representations are determined by the existing social institutions, structures and practices that we conduct our lives and actions within. In

turn, widely shared social representations have the effect of upholding and sustaining those very institutions and practices, functioning like self-fulfilling prophecies. In this way, social representations are both produced within and constitutive of social reality. Importantly, the other side of this coin is that social representations that contest or diverge from existing representations that are dominant in society, can contribute to processes of social change (Elcheroth et al., 2011).

The Intersection Between Social Representations and Social Identity

Both SRT and SIT arose from a dissatisfaction with the negligence of collective and historical factors in the investigation of human behaviour (Reicher, 2004). SR focuses on how shared understandings of the world are constructed and maintained, leading to certain possibilities for human action. SIT focuses on how social context affects intergroup relations (although it has commonly been applied under a dehistoricized minimal groups paradigm, which has since been criticized, see Reicher, 2004). SIT acknowledges that groups occupy different levels in a hierarchy of status and power, and that intergroup behaviour is driven by individuals' perceptiveness of such group-based arrangements (and their alternatives), (Hornsey, 2008). Both theories arose with a commitment to understanding social and societal influences of behaviour as well as processes of social *change*. There has been a growing recognition for the integration of SIT and SR to advance theory as well as practically and methodologically (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996; Reicher, 2004; Howarth, 2002).

As mentioned, SR is concerned with the ways that social knowledge and understandings get internalized and by whom. SIT/SCT provides an organizing principle to this process, wherein "the way we orient to representations depends on how we categorize ourselves in relations to the groups with which those representations are associated" (Elcheroth et al., 2011, p. 735). In other words, membership within the boundaries of a social category will determine what representations we are more likely to be exposed to and

assimilate to our sense of self. Membership in certain groups is what leads us to perceive some representations as more salient, meaningful, legitimate, and 'real' than others. In turn, how we relate with members of our own and other groups depend on the representations we have about those groups in the first place, to give meaning and relevance to group identities. By understanding that identities of groups are created through processes of shared meaning-making, we can assume that identification and intergroup relations are always contextual, socially determined, and thus culturally variable rather than being fixed and universal (Reicher, 2004).

This dynamic interplay between social representations and identities allows us to understand how the meanings of identities can become politicized to mobilize support for certain agendas (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Rooted in content and representation, this means that there are always multiple versions of national identity pushed by politicians and groups with competing agenda that are possible at a given moment, being contested, and competing for popular acceptance and legitimacy. This inherently makes identity a political project (Reicher, 2004). Those who have aspirations to direct and influence collective attitudes and behaviours in certain directions have interests in constructing social identities (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). As such, there are typically different versions of a group identity that are being advanced in a society at a given time. Advancing such identity projects often involves invoking representations of history to make claims of legitimacy and resonate with audiences.

Collective Memory

The term 'collective memory' was introduced by Halbwachs (1925/1992) in his seminal work The Social Frameworks of Memory. In this, he argued how the thoughts of individuals, including their memories, are structured according to their social/group contexts: "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories" (Halbwachs, 1925/1992, p. 38). Based on his

argument, group memberships provide the structural foundations for remembering; facilitating individuals' recall of particular events while facilitating their forgetting of others. This section will elaborate on conceptualizing the content of collective memory at the level of individuals who are embedded in these social frameworks, or in other words, through a 'local' lens of culture.

Social Representations of History

From a cultural psychological perspective, history could be read as a provider of materials for creating shared meaning via social sharing, communication, and internalization. In this way, historical events, figures, symbols, and settings can become social representations. As mentioned, this shared meaning is then often invoked by public figures as prior knowledge to legitimize certain versions of national identity (Reicher, 2004). Liu and Hilton (2005) describe these ideas through *social representations of history* (SRH), which involve widely shared knowledge of history that serve as the materials for constructing official accounts and narratives about a group's past and its origins. Since history (through shared representations of meaning) provides core content for identities in this way, we can assume that individuals have the potential and agency to contest, resist, and transform identities by re-imagining the meaning of the past and the implications this has for the group's future and goals (Elcheroth et al., 2011).

In research, SRH has been operationalized and studied as socially shared knowledge and beliefs about history held by laypeople at a given moment in time (Hilton & Liu, 2017). Through surveys, the SRH approach can probe collective memory by mapping popular beliefs and understandings of history (at a certain moment) and examining their associations and implications for political attitudes (this past research will be reviewed in later sections about the bottom-up approach to collective remembering). Large-scale surveys have shown that knowledge about central historical events and figures tend to be consensually shared

across many disparate groups in society (Huang et al., 2004; Liu, 1999), even in ethnically/regionally diverse contexts (Liu & Gastardo-Conaco, 2011; Liu et al., 2002). On the other hand, such studies have also demonstrated that the perceived importance and relevance of SRH to the group and their present politics is often contentious (see Liu & Hilton, 2005). In other words, even when knowledge of historical representations is widely shared, there may still be individual- or group-level variability around the perceived meaning of such historical content for dealing with current issues and crises (Sen & Wagner, 2005; Sibley et al., 2008).

The conceptualization of SRH also emphasizes a dynamic interplay between the past and how the past is produced (and reproduced) in the *present*. Events and figures from the past become salient when they are selectively mobilized for their relevance to current political agendas (Sen & Wagner, 2005). In this way, SRH provide a symbolic reserve of content that can be weaved into convincing narratives by political elites in their rhetoric, as suits their political projects at the time (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Thus, SRH are theorized to provide powerful narrative resources for managing public issues. For example, historical representations that are widely shared and commemorated within a society, such as foundational events, ought to be difficult to contest in public debate because they carry such widely shared legitimacy and emotional resonance for those who are highly identified with their group (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997). However, such dynamic functions of historical content have not sufficiently been tested empirically (see Liu et al., 2014).

In summary, SRH provide symbolic content that can be selectively recruited into narratives that communities mobilize around, but nevertheless whose interpretations are malleable and open to change (Huang et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2002; Spellman & Holyoak, 1992). In other words, SRH exist as an *open* system (Moscovici, 1984) of narrative resources that are subject to amendment, negotiation, and re-negotiation over time. Thus, collective

memory constitutes an active past (Halbwachs, 1925/1992) that has the potential to shift and evolve across generations. However, dominant historical narratives that are reinforced by state institutions provide a configuration of SRH that tend to be consensually shared across individuals as members of a society, and thus become relevant to perennial issues that they collectively face, providing a reliable source of collective stability and continuity.

Narrative Approaches to History

Rather than drawing from a single event, history is likely to be communicated as a temporal and themed story about nationhood. Narrative-based approaches to collective memory offer a layered and storied way of understanding historical representations. Among various ideas about historical narratives (which will be outlined below), *historical charters* (Liu & Hilton, 2005) provide a way of understanding those narratives about history that are central to upholding ingroup *identity*. Specifically, SRH that are hegemonic (i.e., normatively or consensually regarded as important) warrant the existence of an historical charter (Liu & Hilton, 2005). A nation's historical charter (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Hilton & Liu, 2017) constitutes a widely shared narrative of its foundational origins in continuity with its present-day affairs, and the historical mission or quest driving this narrative forward (see also Wertsch, 2021; Zerubavel, 2003). This is upheld by 'official' reification from cultural/institutional products and practices. Through establishing a historical charter, nation states seek to maintain temporal continuity between past, present, and future for their citizens as members of an enduring collective with core founding principles (Jetten & Hutchinson, 2011; Sani et al., 2007).

Owing to their "official" representation in society, historical charters work to legitimize and justify social and political arrangements and provide the foundations for national identity. As such, these narratives provide a cultural mechanism for collective stability, cohesion, and order, anchoring public opinion and debate in prescriptive ways

(Moscovici, 1984). As mentioned, historical charters weave widely shared representations of events, people, settings, and symbols into stories with temporal form and depth, and with a coherent starting point that is anchored in 'narratives of origin' (Geertz, 1973; Malinowski, 1926; Smith, 1998) or foundational myths. In this way, charters provide "the story of the making of an ingroup" (Liu, 1999, p. 1023). The origin story provides a particularly important class of representation within this wider integrative narrative, for a group's self-understanding and sense of primordiality. They also set the moral imperatives for a group, which continues to guide and justify certain actions and decisions when navigating their present (Hilton & Liu, 2017). Such an imperative provides a source of moral superiority compared to others while inculcating certain norms and values within the group (Yamashiro et al., 2022).

Wertsch (2021) describes a similar idea through the *National Narrative Project* (NNP) as an "overall biography or life history of a national community that is directed toward an aspiration or ideal that guides a national community's understanding of itself" (p. 184). Others have further described ideas of master narratives (Carretero et al., 2013; Hammack, 2011), which refer to the ways that a nation's history is narrated in a romanticized and essentialized way. Like the former, master narratives are proposed to provide interpretive frameworks for understanding a nation's self-concept. They essentialize the group's past by highlighting events that communicate and preserve a moral and positive image of the nation while silencing or downplaying any shameful events, thereby providing the basis for constructing a positive national identity. They provide heroic characters and motives as a source of identification and moral orientation for group members, while rendering a romantic and essentialist concept of the nation (Carretero et al., 2013).

These narrative approaches to history are all anchored in the common tradition of narrative psychology, which is centered around the idea of "storied realities" (Bruner, 1986;

1991). Narrative psychology highlights storied reasoning as a human form of making sense of the world and our environments. The narrative plot structure, through its capacity to provide a chronological and communicable order to events, gives shape and structure to the way we think about our experiences and understand reality (Laszlo, 2006). When applied to the way we think and talk about the past, “historical intelligibility requires not merely past events occurring at particular times, but a coherent story in which many events are skipped, others are coalesced, and temporal sequence is often subordinated to explanation and interpretation” (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 223). Through such selective interpretation, a historical narrative simplifies the past, presenting what happened from a subjective point of view (Novick, 1998). In other words, complexity and ambiguity of past events tend to get overlooked in the service of constructing a clear and simple narrative (Novick, 1998; Zerubavel, 2003).

According to a narrative psychology approach, individuals come to understand their reality through application of existing cultural resources and tools (Wertsch, 1998). In this way, psychological experience is constituted by the mediation of reality through culture (Vygotsky, 1978), as "there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 216). We as individuals do not produce historical accounts in isolation. Rather, we do so by appropriating the ‘mediational means’ like words and stories, that are already culturally available to us and used by those around us (Wertsch, 1991). This shared use and appropriation of cultural tools in the historical thinking of individuals as members of a society is what serves to reinforce our organization as a collective. Through this, individuals become members of distinct “mnemonic communities” (Zerubavel, 2003). That is, to espouse a certain narrative about how the nation came to be and what it stands for is to be enculturated and signify one’s identity as part of that nation (Van Engen, 2020). Thus,

narrative approaches to history are relevant for understanding how a meaningful sense of nationhood is constructed in *individuals* (Reicher, 2004).

The schematic narrative template (SNT) according to Wertsch (2002) provides a more explicit framework for mapping how historical narratives tend to be structured and organized. SNTs are proposed to function as generalized, cognitive frameworks that can generate predictable narratives about various events (Wertsch, 2012). This is based on the idea of the schema from cognitive psychology (Bartlett, 1932/1995). SNTs organize events according to a general and familiar plot structure, which facilitates the accessibility of a wide range of events for public understanding and communication. Through the easy assimilation of specific events by these recognizable templates, their narration often ends up following a similar and familiar story every time.

Structurally, narrative templates are organized around simple and accessible structures of temporality and plot. Thematically, they are grounded in ethnocentric and moralized representations over neutral and objective representations. According to Wertsch, 2002 (p. 124), in the ‘‘process of invoking an imaginary coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure, narrative also introduces a moral order into the picture’’. This tendency also allows individuals to emotionally resonate with the storyline. For example, the Expulsion of Alien Enemies has been identified as a common SNT that is observed in Russia. Furthermore, such templates incorporate little concrete information, endowing them with a property of nonfalsifiability. Their simple plot also means that they become communicatively and cognitively accessible to a wide range of people who may actually share little in specific knowledge about the event.

The Expulsion of Alien Enemies narrative template in Russia may have self-fulfilling implications and trigger Russian aggression and vigilance to threat when internalized by individuals. In contrast, Hungarians have been observed to be predisposed to a historical

narrative that follows a trajectory of a glorious distant past followed by centuries of struggle, which leads to a psychology of collective victimhood and a tendency to underestimate their future and in turn, show support for strong, authoritarian leadership (Jenei et al., 2022). This shows the importance of considering contextual and cultural specificity when examining the dynamics of collective remembering.

For the current thesis, I stick to the wider term of 'historical narrative' to encompass the common ideas proposed by historical charters, national narrative projects, and master narratives, with the main idea being that historical representations are selectively and subjectively weaved into a shared narrative that provides core content for ingroup identity. In summary, historical narratives that uphold and reinforce national identity are warranted by popular and widespread representations of history that are reified by cultural/institutional practices, tradition, and elite endorsement. The cultural dissemination of historical narratives is usually facilitated by the communication of historical narratives via a simple storyline or schematic narrative template (Wertsch, 2002). The next section will elaborate on the institutionalization of historical narratives from the *top down* and how this has been documented and studied. This covers a broad span of literature and past research which has contributed to important understandings of how institutions and elites curate a 'suitable past' through in-depth case studies. This will be followed up with a section covering the *bottom-up* internalization (or rejection) of these curated narratives by individuals, and the gaps we still have in understanding these—in both content and process.

Historical Narratives: A Top-down Approach

Researchers from a variety of disciplines across the social sciences, humanities and beyond have worked towards understanding how, why, and what societies selectively remember (and forget) about their collective past (see Olick et al., 2011 for a review). Such efforts have documented how institutionalized practices like formal education and public

commemorations attempt to frame a ‘suitable past’ that glorifies and/or essentializes the nation (Olick et al., 2011), and to bolster the power and legitimacy of the state (Hosbawm & Ranger, 1992). Nora (1989) expanded this perspective through his idea of ‘lieux de memoire’, or sites of remembrance, to demonstrate how the French state attempted to bolster official narratives of their national history while erasing the diverse historical accounts of local communities through formal and everyday memorialization.

Beyond practices and rituals, the past is also crystallized through cultural products like murals, monuments, and street/place names but also by being embedded in policy and legislation (Olick & Levy, 1997). These create institutional backdrops for routine and everyday practices of remembering. Beyond personal intentions to participate, people encounter such commemorative activities and sites in the flow of everyday life (Hakim & Adams, 2017). Formal education also provides a source of legitimacy and perception of consensus, enculturating students to an official historical narrative through standardized procedures like university entrance exams (Carretero & Kriger, 2011; Kurtiş et al., 2017).

It is important to emphasize that history is actively and intentionally curated to immortalize a certain version of the past that is not neutral. This active ‘memory work’ then creates the basis of justification for specific decisions and actions in managing a group’s ongoing affairs. Curated representations of history typically involve the denial or downplaying of shameful, unjust acts committed by the group throughout history (e.g., Blight, 2001), what decolonial scholars refer to as ‘cultivated ignorance’ (Mills, 2007; Nixon, 2011). This may be observed through outright silence around national atrocities (Leone & Mastrovito, 2010) or the downplaying of their negative consequences in the present by establishing historical closure (Sibley et al., 2008). In contrast, historical representations that provide positive distinctiveness for a group, especially glorified origins (Geertz, 1973), are likely to feature prominently in official historical narratives and representations as sources of

national pride. However, historical narratives that are conducive to a collective victimhood orientation in contexts like Serbia and Hungary, may instead emphasize a more negative and traumatic past. Importantly, such contexts of victimhood-based national identities may still espouse stories of glorious origins, which is then followed by traumatic downfall.

Cultural Memory

To provide terminology for distinct forms of collective remembering, Assmann (2013) coined the term 'cultural remembering' to explain the dynamic process of how history is selectively constructed from the top-down. Collective memories that are preserved through cultural remembering are those that have been crystallized through cultural symbols and practices as part of a society's official heritage and memorial tradition. Thus, cultural memories constitute representations of history that have been culturally inscribed and continue to be reified by routine practices and rituals (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Typically, they comprise a "body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 132). Through the technologies and mechanisms of cultural remembering, history becomes "disembodied, exteriorized, objectified and embedded in cultural institutions" (Assmann, 2013, p. 37). Therefore, cultural memory is represented in external and objectified forms, as part of a society's official heritage.

Since cultural memories that signify a group's heritage tend to be based on the remote past, eyewitnesses have long died out and there are only relics and stories left to rely on to learn about what happened (Assmann, 1997). Within cultural memory, Assmann (2013) further distinguished between archival and 'working' cultural memories. It is posited that archival memory exist in the mode of potentiality by being stored in archives, libraries, and museums; only being brought into the mode of actuality as working cultural memory when such representations are activated through communication and given relevant meaning within

present-day contexts. In this way, memories existing in the mode of potentiality lie dormant until communicatively brought back to life as meaningful stories, narratives, and common frames of reference for group members.

Expanding on these ideas, Rigney (2005) described how it is through the recursivity in actions and practices, such as visiting the same places and repeating the same stories that constructs cultural memory. For example, memories seek to attach themselves to particular locations (Halbwachs, 1950/1980), providing memory traces. However, monuments and historical sites only retain their value as facilitators of 'working' cultural memory insofar as their meaning is kept alive by the recursive enactment of stories and commemorative acts related to those locations. 'Working'cultural memory is continuously performed by individuals and groups as they selectively recollect the past and participate in various forms of memorial activity, from narrating and reading to attending commemorative ceremonies. Through these directed acts, we consciously or unconsciously select certain representations from all that are possible. This selectivity is noted by Rigney (2005) as not a limitation of memory, but rather, a major precondition of it becoming meaningful for people.

As mentioned, cultural memory becomes useful for a group to the extent that there is a relevant present-day connection from it that is perceived. Building and maintaining such meaningful associations between past and present relies heavily on the rhetorical and narrative work of political leaders and the media in public discourse. Here, we may link back to the idea of identity as political projects. Through the identity entrepreneurship of public figures, stories of nationhood are drawn upon by political elites to reinforce national identity in ways that align with their interests (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). For example, state leaders often invoke historical narratives to rally support for war (e.g., Hutcheson et al., 2004), political conflicts (Krebs, 2015), and public policy decisions, especially those regarding intergroup relations (Mols & Jetten, 2014). Certain narratives of history may also be used as a

source of restoring or redeeming a group's image. For example, historical narratives in Germany underwent a major shift from being sanitized to being rooted in a sense of social responsibility for the Holocaust (Welch & Wittlinger, 2011).

As mentioned, cultural memories become active or 'working' when translated into meaningful communication in the present. This was summarized by Liu and Khan (2021) that: "Collective memories are networked as narratives and exist as imprecise systems of meanings…Aspects are brought into focus for a particular political purpose, through the voice of leaders employing different forms of mass media" (p. 268). Often this is performed by political figures through a selective invocation of the past to promote a positive identity for their ingroup (Dresler-Hawke, 2005) and earn support for political decisions and actions that are framed as being in the best interests of the group, and especially in protecting the group from perceived threat (e.g., Bar-Tal et al., 2007; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).

Research has corroborated that political elites use historical narratives to frame group identity in positive terms and often, as being under threat in efforts to rally their audience toward supporting certain political action and decisions. For example, right-wing leaders in the United Kingdom selectively invoked a positive example from their nation's canonical history (Churchill's leadership against Nazi Germany) to frame a narrative where a glorious and strong past is contrasted against a negative future to foster collective angst and nostalgia as drivers of action (Mols & Jetten, 2014). In Germany, a corpus of public speeches showed that WWII was used to anchor a narrative of national responsibility stemming from the events of the war, to justify the country's representativeness as a leader of freedom and unity in Europe (Lienen & Cohrs, 2021). This exemplifies social creativity on the part of politicians who did not change the events of WWII but did adapt the representation of their implications for the nation's present and future. While such research in top-down political rhetoric has identified common ways that history is invoked for political means, it is just as

important to examine and understand the ways that such rhetoric is received and engaged with by their intended audiences.

Historical Narratives: A Bottom-up Approach

The top-down curation and dissemination of historical narratives (i.e., cultural remembering) only forms one side of the dynamic. It is important to consider just as importantly, how *individuals*, as members of the public, contribute to the (co-)construction of historical narratives over time (Kansteiner, 2002). This is what situates collective remembering as a dynamic and open system, open to negotiation, contestation, and resistance by individuals from the bottom-up as they continue to face new, incoming events and challenges. The top-down efforts of political elites described above, must be met by bottom-up acceptance for history to become a working narrative of identity for the group. In other words, the realization of a group narrative as an expression of group identity is determined by individuals' emotional and psychological commitment to the narratives that they are culturally exposed to. Actual public interest and participation shape dominant historical narratives in interaction with institutional and commemorative efforts (Soroka & Krawatzek, 2021).

While there has been criticism by some (e.g., Olick, 1999) that a bottom-up approach removes what is fundamentally 'collective' about collective memory, recently there have been shifts towards understanding collective memory as being relevant to the everyday lives, cognition, and communication of individuals, as indicated by Schuman et al. (2012, p. 452): "Collective memory cannot be reduced to the individual orientations that constitute it, but it is realized in these orientations". Indeed, it would be incomplete to study collective memory as products of cultural processes without considering how these products are received and consumed by their intended audiences (see also Hewer & Roberts, 2012; Hirst et al., 2018; Kansteiner, 2002).

While institutionalized historical accounts may contribute to upholding hegemonic representations of history, historical knowledge that intersects with individuals' personal experiences and interpersonal interactions may provide mediums through which hegemonic representations are discussed, contested, and even changed. The top-down framing of certain representations and the bottom-up contestation or acceptance of these both contribute to larger discourses around how the past is represented, especially in relation to in-group identity. The following section delineates conceptual frameworks for understanding collective memory from this bottom-up perspective, building upon those initial ideas of social representations of history (Liu & Hilton, 2005). This literature review will cover existing scholarship in the area of psychology and collective remembering before leading into a discussion about our current lack of knowledge regarding the form and content of historical narratives, as understood and produced by individuals (-in context). This discussion will situate the original contribution of the current research.

Communicative Memory (Living Historical Memory)

In contrast to cultural memory, communicative memory (Assmann, 2013) describes representations of historical events in the living memory of individuals that are shared through everyday informal communication, like hearing about 9/11 on the news or learning about World War II from one's grandparents. Alternatively, we refer to these as living historical memory: memories of historical events that individuals have lived directly and/or acquired through social sharing with their elders or peers (Choi et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). Social sharing may refer to direct and intergenerational communication with others as well as wider sharing about events through social and mass media. In other words, LHM applies to those representations of that past that have occurred within the lifetimes of individuals living or still personally remembered today.

These processes of communication constitute the earliest phase of collective memory formation, that is led by direct eyewitnesses and participants of the events. During this process, multiple narratives based on different experiences of the event circulate and compete with each other (Assmann, 1997). Communicative remembering lives in everyday communication in this way, especially since individuals are predisposed to engage in social sharing following emotional or consequential events (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997). Indeed, the prominence of war or conflict-related events in memory has been attributed to its narratability (Propp, 1968) and extreme emotion-laden nature (Bar-Tal 2001).

Relatedly, a recency bias in collective remembering has been consistently documented in free recall (e.g., Roediger & DeSoto, 2014; Liu et al., 2009), highlighting how collective memories have a strong bias towards the present and towards the personal (Kansteiner, 2002). Indeed, lived memories are typically remembered as specific events that are dateable and placeable, while distant memories tend to be described in more broad and expansive terms, thus aligning with temporal construal theory (Liberman & Trope, 1998). In response, many emergent studies have been dedicated to examining how the personal or autobiographical intersects with the historical (see Hirst et al., 2018).

In relation to autobiographical remembering of historical events, Schuman and Corning (2017) summarized decades of research on intergenerational differences in historical representations (see also Schuman & Corning, 2012). Their 'Critical Years Hypothesis' proposes that historical events that are lived and/or witnessed during one's own critical, adolescent years (between the ages of 10-30) will leave a stronger, more enduring mark in memory than events that are encountered later in life (Schuman & Scott, 1989). In support of this claim, they have consistently found that American participants who were in their critical years during the Vietnam War regarded the event as especially important, even as time passed and new events were encountered. In turn, participants in their critical years during

the September 11th bombing recalled this event as especially important, more often than their older counterparts. It seems that lived historical memories from one's critical years are carried along, remaining salient as people age and as other events occur (Schuman & Corning, 2017).

Such intergenerational differences can have implications for political attitudes. Schuman and Rieger (1992) found that there were intergenerational differences in what historical analogies Americans resonated with more during the onset of the Gulf War. The older cohort was more likely to perceive an analogy between the contemporary war and America's victory in WWII, thus showing more support. In contrast, those who experienced/witnessed the Vietnam War during their critical years, were more likely to perceive an analogy that led to viewing America's participation in the Gulf War more negatively. Beyond the Critical Years Hypothesis, historical representations may shift based on perceived relevance to changing group circumstances. For example, younger generations of Dutch-speakers in Belgium showed lower memories of past victimhood (inflicted by French-speakers) in their historical attitudes compared to their older counterparts, reflecting the changing intergroup circumstances in the region (Rimé et al., 2015). The same historical events have also been shown to be interpreted differently in relation to changing trends in educational practices and general social awareness. This is reflected in changes in Americans' attitudes toward the use of atomic bombs in war from more to less positive over the generations (Zaromb et al., 2014).

These findings speak to the varied and personalized nature of the way that more recent events in history are remembered, narrated, and communicated about. In contrast to the ordered, stable, and hegemonic representation of cultural memories, communicative remembering seems to be directed by "everyday communications about the meaning of the past characterized by instability, disorganization, and non-specialization" (Kansteiner, 2002,

p. 182). We may think of these living memories that are communicatively shared, as *informal* memory, in contrast to formal historical representations and narratives that are curated by state-level institutions. However, there are still systematic effects that have been identified within this disorganization. This connects us back to the dynamics of *social identity* (Turner et al., 1987).

Ingroup Biases in Historical Representations

Just as memories of one's personal past affects a sense of personal identity and self-esteem (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000), national memories have significant bearing on the meaning of national identity (Hirst et al., 2018). This has created a domain for researchers in social psychology to study the dynamic relationship between collective memory and identity, focusing on the individual as the unit of analysis. Indeed, collective memories are kept alive to the extent that they meet the identity-related needs and motivations of group members, by providing a clear representation of how the group came to be and has dealt with major events and crises over time (Liu & Hilton, 2005). This then informs and justifies what the purpose, values, and goals of the group are that drives their actions in the present and future (Abrams & Hogg, 2001).

Central to social identity (Turner et al., 1987), in-group history provides a source of distinctiveness from other groups (Jetten & Hutchison, 2012). Unsurprisingly, social identity motivations have been demonstrated to drive more positive and continuous interpretations of ingroup history. A positive image of the ingroup is often achieved by selectively downplaying inconvenient or unpleasant aspects of the group's past at the expense of historical accuracy (Hirst & Manier, 2008; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). This section will provide a review of the research in this area of collective memory and identity. Much of this research has focused on identity-favouring and identity-defensive attitudes as both predictors

and outcomes of selective historical interpretations, suggesting a bidirectional relationship where history and identity mutually reinforce each other.

Manipulating experiences of identity have been found to affect the way that history is recalled and interpreted. In a historical vignette study, those who read about in-group members as the aggressor in a historical event recalled significantly less of the passage compared to a condition where they read about another group as the aggressor (Rotella & Richeson, 2013). This suggests that when needs to defend ingroup identity becomes salient through negative historical information, people are motivated to disregard this information. In an earlier study, Sahdra and Ross (2007) found that participants who were already more identified with their group were more likely to remember episodes where ingroup members were framed as victims rather than perpetrators. Thus, in addition to the immediate experiences and salience of identity, one's pre-existing disposition in level of identification further moderates tendencies for selective historical interpretation and sanitization (see also Doosje et al., 1998).

Such tendencies have been found to be driven by needs to avoid negative group-based emotions like shame and guilt and in turn, boost positive group-based feelings like pride for the past. Feelings of shame predict distancing behaviours from past wrongdoers from the ingroup to defend group identity. This may occur by reappraising the events in a positive light or by simply making the shameful memories less accessible and less specific than prideful ones (especially for high identifiers), thereby reducing accountability of the ingroup for past injustices and wrongdoings (Branscombe et al., 2002; Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2014). This is evident in findings that members of a perpetrator group are less likely to experience collective guilt when their negative history is framed as having no impact on group members in the present (Imhoff et al., 2013) or when these negative events are perceived to be more distant in the past than recent (Peetz et al., 2010). Such

tendencies may be rooted in broader motivations for individuals to protect their subjective well-being. Indeed, associations between favourable historical narratives and subjective well-being have been shown in samples from Singapore (Ho et al., 2018), Estonia (Kus et al., 2014), and the United States (Adler & Poulin, 2009).

In contrast to negative historical episodes where ingroup members are positioned as perpetrators and wrongdoers, nostalgia for a romanticized past has been found to provide a positive resource for identity and well-being. Experiences of nostalgia for the collective past were found to increase when threat to the ingroup was perceived to be salient (Sedikides et al., 2008). Enhancement in nostalgia in the face of intergroup threat serves a protective function for group members by producing beneficial effects for psychological well-being and by boosting perceived ability to cope with challenges. Moreover, nostalgia seems to provide a buffer against negative feelings of collective guilt. Collective guilt was found to be reduced after reminders of past harm-doing for those who engaged in collective nostalgia, and this was especially pronounced for those higher in ingroup glorification (Baldwin et al., 2017). Perceiving historical continuity has also been shown to provide similar positive psychological effects. In this context, perceived historical continuity refers to the perception that there is continuity, connection, or stability between the group's past, present, and future. In contrast, perceived discontinuity occurs when individuals perceive a disconnect or disruption between the group's past, present, and future. Perceptions of historical continuity of the ingroup's characteristics and values were associated with reduced experiences of collective angst compared to perceiving historical discontinuity (Jetten & Wohl, 2012). Again, this effect was more pronounced for those higher in pre-existing identification with the group.

Recently, studies in this area have started to explore the meaning, associations, and implications of specific historical *events* within national contexts, as represented in the minds of individuals. As mentioned earlier, national origin events constitute a specific class of

historical representations that are an important source of meaning for individuals when understanding and making sense of their group identity. Across time, it has been observed that people are drawn to beliefs that their nation stems from a long history with quasi-mythical origins, because this affords a sense of timelessness and primordiality for their group (e.g., Geertz, 1973). In this way, ingroup accounts of history typically offer an essentialist account of the group's origins and relation to the land. Yamashiro et al. (2022) sought to identify Americans' collective memory for such 'quasi-mythical' national origin events. They found that positively evaluated events were in the majority when a general public sample of Americans were asked to identify foundational events of their nation. There was especially high consensus for nominations of: The American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, and Christopher Columbus' Discovery. This positivity bias was further pronounced for Christian participants and Republicans compared to other political affiliations. This stemmed from relatively lower nominations of negatively regarded events such as slavery and the Native American genocide. Nonetheless, these negative events were infrequently recalled across all ideological groups compared to the more positive events, and the American sample appeared to share a common set of historical reference points when constructing the American origin story.

Similarly, Roediger and DeSoto (2014) observed strong correlations between groups at different time points (1974, 1991, 2009) and across generations, in their nominations of American presidents. The first presidents (Washington, Adams, Jefferson) tended to be recalled frequently, followed by a steep drop until Lincoln who showed consistently high recall across the samples. Recent presidents also showed heightened accessibility, with a consistent decline across years passed since the president served in office. Of those recent presidents fading from memory, Kennedy appeared to be better retained than the others. These strong correlations indicate that recall of US presidents is highly stable across

generations, again pointing towards hegemonic representations in collective memory. The salience of recent presidents is predicted to fade linearly over time, while the ones that have stood the test of time (i.e., Washington, Lincoln) appear to be consensually regarded as important across time and across age groups.

Beyond origin events, Choi et al. (2021) focused on what Americans consider to be events that they feel proud of as a nation. An association was found where those who felt closer to their nation were more likely to generate a higher frequency of prideful events. There was no such inverse association with the frequency of shameful events that were nominated. However, in the different cultural context of Germany, there was indeed a significant negative association between felt closeness to the nation and number of shameful events generated. This indicates that cultural context is important to consider in understanding these dynamics. While a general association between identity and historical representations seems to hold, the specific ways that this plays out seem to vary across countries and regions, constrained by the historical circumstances of that place, and also shaped by the social creativity and subjectivity of individuals who are embedded in those different environments.

Another popular and influential category of historical events is the representation of past wars. Representations of war feature prominently in historical narratives as conflict provides the basic template for storytelling, according to Propp (1968). Furthermore, conflict is effective in generating strong emotions, which in turn, leads to a high degree of social sharing (Bar-Tal, 2001; Pennebaker & Banasik1997). As such, it is not surprising that much of collective memory research has focused on remembrances of war. Within the context of the United States, Zaromb et al. (2014) found that participants tended to impose a common narrative structure in their accounts of major wars including the Civil War, WWII, and the more recent 2003 Iraq war. This narrative structure followed: a beginning, underlying

justification for warfare, turning point in the war, and end point. This suggests that partly what may contribute to the salience of war in collective memory is an ease of narratability. It also demonstrates the simplification and generalization of complex events that occur in service of narrative coherence and communication, as previously described by Wertsch's idea of schematic narrative templates (2002).

War representations and narratives can also indicate how history is mobilized for group identity. At the global level, Abel et al. (2019) showed that samples from ten different countries, excluding Russia, shared a high level of consensus in what events constituted important events in WWII. These events appeared to align with an American perspective of the war, which suggests why Russians stood against the consensual view of the American narrative. This international discordance showed the reconstructive memory effects of the Cold War that have positioned these former allies apart (Dalby, 2009). In their cross-cultural study, Giner-Sorolla et al. (2021) also found that most nations assigned themselves to hero and victim roles in WWII and that these tendencies were positively correlated, showing ingroup favouritism linked to both interpretations of heroic martyrdom as well as victimhood in war.

While the research above examines the psychological and emotional drives that perpetuate selective and biased historical representations, there has also been research that examines the implications of individuals' *behavioural* interactions with their cultural environment. Specifically, it has been shown how history embedded in the cultural environment, shapes and influences historical representations in the minds of individuals. Kurtiş et al. (2010) highlighted how the silence about the Native American genocide that is reproduced in presidential proclamations in the US affects individuals' sense of identification with the nation. Participants exposed to texts that openly addressed ingroup accountability for the Native American genocide showed lower scores in national glorification than those

exposed to other conditions, which reproduced some form of silence over the genocide . More recently, Kurtiş et al. (2010) studied the effects of historical representations embedded in national history exams. They found that official representations of history portrayed in national exams defined Turkish identity in relation to Islam and were narrated from the perspective of the majority Muslim-Turks. In turn, participants who themselves endorsed such ethno-cultural constructions of Turkish identity tended to deny silenced events, which predicted reduced support for the rights of minority groups.

Similarly, in the US context, Eason and colleagues (2021) showed how individuals endorsing the continued celebration of Columbus Day were those higher in national identification. These were also the individuals who were less likely to be supportive of Indigenous People's day. In contrast, those who were lower in national identification (and thus in greater support of eliminating Columbus Day for Indigenous People's Day), were more likely to reject negative stereotypes about Native Americans. In this way, we can see that top-down commemorations and education do exert significant influence on the political and intergroup attitudes of individuals, especially in interaction with their level of national identification or glorification. Hakim and Adams (2017) further demonstrated that Americans tended to show greater vigilance against Iran and misattribute blame for the 9/11 attacks to Iranian sources after recalling 9/11 commemoration. Crucially, this effect only emerged as significant for those who actually reported engagement with the hegemonic commemoration practices of 9/11 in their real lives. In relation to war, Watkins and Bastian (2019) found that the more commemorative activities that individuals engaged with, the more likely they were to value war, partially explained by an increase in positive moral emotions.

Bottom-up Engagement with Historical Narratives

In this area of research, much less is known about the explicit and psychological knowledge of historical/national narratives, that weave these various representations and

attitudes together in a coherent way. While the implications of these are much theorized about through existing ideas of historical charters and master narratives (see earlier discussion), we do not yet know to what extent lay individuals actually know about, articulate, and resonate with specific narratives of history in their day to day lives. Some preliminary research addressing these questions have found that overarching ingroup narratives provide an important resource for identity enhancement and protection. This has been demonstrated by the tighter adherence to ingroup-favouring narratives in response to perceptions of threat to the ingroup. Psaltis and colleagues (2017) found that agreement with ingroup narratives predicted lower outgroup trust, mediated by reduced perceptions of symbolic threat and threat to group-esteem in Serbia, Cyprus, and Croatia. Smeekes and colleagues (2017) further demonstrated how perceptions of intergroup threat positively predicted higher adherence with ingroup narratives which in turn, predicted higher perceptions of collective continuity.

It is important to note here that the narrative measures used in these studies still did not actually reflect bottom-up constructions of historical narratives by individuals. They were derived from themes and interpretations that were prominent in cultural resources such as history textbooks. Thus, individuals' responses to these measures still reflect passive reception more so than active co-construction of historical narratives. There is still much to be uncovered in the historical narratives held and shared by individuals from their own active, psychological appropriation of the cultural means and tools that are made available to them. This gap is where this current thesis seeks to make a contribution.

At the individual level, there is likely to be much more difference, disagreement and contestation than what is represented from the top-down. While the research described in the previous section suggests that there ought to be much continuity and consensus in historical representations and narratives espoused by individuals to signal their membership to the

group, the dynamic is much more complicated. Indeed, the previous section has also reviewed research showing intergenerational differences in collective memories of events. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that national memory can diverge across sub-group communities within a nation (Schuman et al., 1994) despite state efforts (Nora, 1989). Here, it is important to note that the proliferation of certain narratives flow from differential exercises of power through time. It is those groups with greater influence, privilege, and status that are more successful in imposing their versions on the past to inform national identity (e.g., Trouillot, 1995).

Contestation of the dominant narratives that are imposed by political elites and institutions often emerge through opposing counter-narratives. While master narratives often work to serve the perspective and status of the dominant group in society, thereby maintaining the status quo, counter-narratives often represent the viewpoints and experiences of minority, marginalized, or disadvantaged groups (Bamberg, 2004). That is, counter-narratives often provide a means for disadvantaged groups to challenge the existing social order and its historically invoked legitimacy. For example, as part of pan-African liberation and decolonization movements, historical accounts that challenge Eurocentric perspectives have been gaining in popularity (Cabecinhas & Feijo´, 2010). Through such cases, we can see 'conscientization' (Freire, 1973) playing out through historical representations that contradict and/or diverge from the cultural canon of history (Liu et al., 2021), giving rise to coherent narratives that articulate this critical awareness.

This provides a potential pathway for communities to form their own narratives and points of view and thus exercise mnemonic agency (Freel & Bilali, 2021; Polletta & Redman, 2020). However, such contestation against the norms of remembrance may also emerge amongst those with nationalist motivations. For example, there is the rise in a right-wing counter-narrative in Germany that has emerged to challenge the narrative of collective guilt

and responsibility for the nation's Nazi past (Langenbacher, 2003). Thus, just as national identity projects are pushed by political elites and groups with power, they also emerge as part of movements that are driven by individuals on the ground. Understanding such psychological motivations of individuals in inextricable connection and situatedness within their social, historical, and political contexts is of central interest in the current project.

Although cultural and communicative remembering have been presented as separate sections above, there is no clear line between these two domains as they commonly intersect and overlap in lay representations of history. As mentioned, cultural memories become active (Rigney, 2005) when they are integrated with communicative (or lived) representations of history, and thus are made more relevant to the present context in public discourse. In turn, the representation of communicative memories may be institutionally mediated to become culturally inscribed representations over time. The upcoming section develops a narrative approach to bridging these dynamics, wherein narrative provides the symbolic backdrop for psychologically and meaningfully contextualizing historical representations across time.

Bottom-up Historical Narratives: How the Past Anchors the Present

SRT proposes that new ideas, concepts, events, and knowledge in general become embedded within a pre-existing cultural framework of knowing. Moscovici (1981) described this process as anchoring. New information is categorized according to existing systems of meaning, thereby undergoing transformation from 'unknown' into the 'known' or from the unfamiliar to the familiar. This can be applied to collective memories, as shared memories offer appropriate symbols and frameworks for the comprehension of new, incoming events as they enter collective consciousness and communication (Goffman, 1974). In this way, SRH provide important anchoring points for a society's political culture, as its members encounter new situations that require drawing from knowledge and wisdom of the past to face incoming challenges in the present and future (Liu & Sibley, 2009).

Anchoring within the domain of collective remembering has often been described as historical analogizing. According to Gilovich (1981), people form associations between past and existing circumstances so that perceptions of the present are influenced by the perceived implications and learnings from those past events. Associations may be formed on the basis of representativeness (Kahneman & Tversky, 1972), such as relevant similarities between what is happening in the present and a past event. Indeed, Kruglanski et al. (2007) found that grounding the 9/11 and Madrid attacks in a historical analogy to Pearl Harbour led to an increased likelihood for participants to represent these as war related events rather than crime.

Bottom-up Historical Narratives: How the Present is Projected on the Past

Historical analogizing reveals a dynamic process wherein the past (especially cultural representations of the past, Assmann, 2013) anchors and guides the present, however, there is also room for the past to be reactive and influenced by our more recent experiences (Berkowitz & Raaii, 2010). In other words, collective memories are drawn from how a society remembers (or represents) itself in terms of its *current* values, norms, and circumstances (Edy, 1999; Zelizer, 2008). Schwartz' (1998) archival case study illuminates this two-way process. Through newspaper sources, he described how the American Civil War provided an anchor or analogy for the WWII generation. In the direction of the past anchoring the present, historical representations of the Civil War provided a good rhetorical fit for the cause of WWII that was being promoted by the state. For example, an article on Lincoln day used visual imagery to analogize fascism (the present threat to American ideals) with slaveholding (the past enemy to American ideals). Morality provides a powerful link for identity entrepreneurs (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) to rhetorically fit the past as a model for current events. By linking WWII to the Civil War, US institutions could rhetorically frame the war as one that is fought for a moral cause (Schwartz, 1998). In contrast, the Korean War

(followed by the Vietnam War) lacked the framing of a moral cause that could meaningfully connect them to past wars, which may have contributed to its relative lack of support and lower salience in collective memory.

Importantly, Schwartz also highlighted an effect occurring in the opposite direction. That is, new experiences of WWII were projected back on to existing representations of the Civil War, which reaffirmed its symbolic relevance for Americans but also influenced its associated field of values so that the Civil War (and Lincoln) has increasingly come to be remembered in relation to social justice. Schwartz' (1998) analysis of cultural representations of George Washington further highlights this pathway of the past being influenced by present-day values. It was observed that Washington was increasingly celebrated and commemorated for his achievements (i.e., what he felt and did) rather than for his status as an American aristocrat. The industrial revolution and the ensuing Progressive era marked the beginning of a phase where American citizens preferred their leaders to be sympathetic and democratic rather than perfect and out of reach. A new side of Washington was rediscovered by looking back on the past from the vantage point of the present.

In summary, cultural representations of history provide an anchor for the comprehension and consolidation of new events in communicative memory. However, communicative remembering may also selectively activate and influence or bias what is interpreted and prioritized in the existing cultural archive. Put differently, historical representations have the potential to direct and constrain the range of what is possible in contemporary society, however, recent events (and their political implications) may also be cast over the past to shift and reconfigure its meaning (Liu & Sibley, 2009). These processes shape the meaning and relevance of new incoming events based on a group's past experiences, while also maintaining the relevance of specific collective memories to the present context. History, as remembered by people, provides an open-ended drama (Laszlo,

2013) and the canon is not closed as different historical representations are brought to the fore, or even undergo shifts and contestation in interpretation, as the political situation changes (Igartua & Paez, 1997; Schwartz, 1997).

The Institutionalization of Communicative Memories

While the past may indeed be open-ended and swayed by circumstances of the present, there is still great stability and endurance in the symbolic representation of history that is observed over time (Schudson, 1997). This may largely be owed to its embeddedness in a society's tradition and rituals that are preserved across generations, especially those elements of the past that are crystallized as part of a group's heritage and foundations. Similarly, we can observe that those communicative memories that are institutionally mediated and come to be commemorated or memorialized, eventually become part of the cultural canon of a society (Assmann, 2013). We may speculate about some historical events that have gone or are currently undergoing this transitional process from living and communicative to culturally and institutionally mediated, such as memories of WWII and the more recent memory of 9/11 in the United States. These are events that have had legal and political implications for societies. While World War II is now accepted as an official charter for legislation in many countries across Europe, 9/11 is still an event that is contested and not fully consolidated in American memory. Although 9/11 is officially commemorated, there is still much discourse and contestation about its implications, especially regarding America's military actions in the aftermath of the event.

From a bottom-up perspective, we have established that individuals embedded in collectives are motivated to remember their group's past in ways that serve ingroup identity (Leone and Mastrovito 2010; Liu and László 2007). These are often driven by avoidance of negative collective emotions such as guilt and shame (Klein et al. 2011; Licata and Klein 2010). However, this is now also understood to manifest as collective remembering of

victimhood (Noor et al., 2017) in some contexts, which invokes negative affect about the past in service of an agenda that is defensive of the ingroup in the present. This brings us to the question of how individuals negotiate the varied and often negative and turbulent events in living memory to align with ingroup motivations. Moreover, how do individuals maintain a sense of collective continuity and stability amidst the more chaotic and unpredictable course of communicative remembering?

In approaching such questions, we return to the central idea that narratives provide a subjective means for individuals to bridge relevant cultural and communicative representations of the past together coherently. In other words, narratives provide the framework or backdrop for connecting and contextualizing cross-temporal historical representations in ways that are meaningful for a group. More broadly, a seminal scholar in narrative psychology, Jerome Bruner (2008), argued that narrative provides a bridge between the individual (psychology) and culture (institutions). His argument for what constitutes cultural psychology was made up of four main points, that: 1) membership in a given culture is characterized by shared conceptions of what is 'ordinary' and what is not, 2) such conceptions of the 'ordinary' are institutionally bolstered, 3) this shared sense of ordinariness is psychologically rewarding, and that 4) a shared sense of the ordinary is maintained by framing any deviations from it as conventional and/or manageable (Bruner, 2008). Regarding this last point, narrative is proposed as a principal means for managing deviations from what is "ordinary", and thus, a means for maintaining a shared sense of ordinariness. Indeed, the use of narrative forms and genres to explain how people have coped with 'unordinary' circumstances (typically conflict) has been observed universally through the form of fables, myths, and folktales.

Through narratives, the past can appear coherent with how we perceive the present and this provides a means of manageable and accessible communication about the past

(Zelizer, 1998) that in turn, shapes and justifies what is considered as legitimate action in the present and future (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Indeed, as already discussed, ideas of master narratives and schematic narrative templates bear the assumption that group members use and apply collective interpretive frameworks (i.e., narratives) to make meaning of events and experiences. Narratives provide a schema for guiding the interpretation of events and experiences, which influences how they are consolidated in memory (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). In doing so, narratives are self-perpetuating by constraining possibilities of group perception and action to be in line with existing schema, so that congruent information tends to be consolidated while incongruent information is discarded (Hirst & Yamashiro, 2017). As an example, we may look to founding myths of nations that are often directed to contextualize, motivate, and justify certain actions and decisions of the group to be in line with 'who they are'. In turn, communicative memories may alter and bend the meaning of existing cultural representations via the salient narrative frames that they impose on the past. This was observed in cultural representations of the US Civil War increasingly becoming embedded in a narrative of social justice through a feedback loop between cultural and communicative remembering during the Civil Rights era (Schwartz, 1998).

Historical narratives seem to provide the selective backdrop within which certain historical analogies may resonate for a group more than others, and where certain communicative memories become meaningful and culturally inscribed while others do not. These dynamics are actualized by identity entrepreneurs who make such connections between current events and existing narratives visible through their storytelling, but on the other hand, they need to be received and accepted by group members as the storytelling audience.

Operationalizing Historical Narratives From a Bottom-up Perspective

In considering the mnemonic agency of individuals to accept or resist these narratives that are culturally offered to them, Liu and Laszlo (2007) argued that there ought to be

individual differences in the degree to which people identify with narratives, or ‘narrative empathy’. Narrative empathy ought to determine the extent to which individuals vicariously participate in the canonical narratives they are exposed to, empathize with the characters and storylines, and reproduce them over generations. This has been complemented with the idea of FENCE (Firmly Entrenched Narrative Closure; Klar & Baram, 2016). FENCE provides a variable for measuring individual differences in the extent to which group members believe in their group narrative as the only true perspective of what happened. This variable is related to higher needs for ingroup epistemic unity and higher perceptions of disagreement as a threat to ingroup cohesion (see also Kruglanski et al., 2006).

Such ideas point us toward useful directions for systematically measuring the dynamics of collective remembering through the active, shared use of historical narratives by individuals. However, the actual content and form of the narratives in question have not yet been identified within relevant contexts. That is, the content itself that configures historical representations in meaningful ways to drive the social identification of individuals has not been studied and identified. While studies have ventured to examine ingroup historical narratives, they have typically done so by using top-down sources such as history textbooks (Carretero et al., 2013; Smeekes et al.,2017). Other studies have recruited lay individuals as their sources, but have typically focused on isolated representations of historical events, with implicit narrative themes and structures imposed by researchers through their own interpretation (Liu et al., 2009; Soroka & Krawatzek, 2021; Wertsch, 2008). For example, Liu and colleagues (2014) describe the Treaty of Waitangi as a historical representation that indicates Aotearoa/New Zealand’s historical charter of biculturalism, However, the bicultural narrative is largely used hermeneutically as an explanatory device ‘post hoc’ to make sense of historical representations that are nominated by New Zealander participants. It is not known how and to what extent New Zealanders actually consolidate, understand, and

articulate their own knowledge of historical events like the Treaty of Waitangi in distinct, coherent narratives about their country. This lack of empirical precision in the *form* and content of historical narratives (as carried in the minds and communication of individuals-in-context) must be addressed first and foremost before studying their functions. A clear operationalization of the content of such narratives, as configured and indexed by (cultural and communicative) historical representations, would enable a systematic and dynamic investigation of narrative implications for people's experiences of social / national identity. By addressing this issue of narrative content, the psychological form and function of historical narratives produced by individuals (in context) will be investigated together in the current research.

Literature Review Summary

In summary, it is both the efforts of society, and the psychological representations held by individuals, which are socially shared between each other that affords and determines the collective memory economy (Hirst & Manier, 2008; Soroka & Krawatzek, 2021). In the direction of the past anchoring the present, it has been observed that history is invoked to make sense of novelty through analogy. In the other direction of the present weighing on the past, it has also been observed that history is often bent and used strategically, depending on salient political interests of the time. Both pathways are capitalized on by political leaders or identity entrepreneurs seeking to influence the populace for certain causes. Within these dynamics, the possibilities and extent to which the past may influence political thought and action in the present and vice versa, ought to be constrained by shared belief and participation in group narratives. The shared use and application of such narratives within national communities is much theorized about but has not been directly studied at the level of individuals embedded in those communities.

Bottom-up research has shown that although identity motivations tend to drive favourable and moralistic representations of the group's past and heritage, there is also considerable dissensus, disorganization, and plurality in historical representations as they get elaborated and consolidated in public memory. There is a lack of understanding how and whether individuals negotiate, contextualize, and weave together those events from the distant, mythologized past with more recent and pluralistic communicative memories as coherent narratives to inform their understanding of the nation. In addressing this, it is important to note that while there is indeed a tendency for stability and continuity in collective memory and thus the use of recognizable frameworks for talking about the past, there is room for mnemonic agency and alternatives. Indeed, de Saint-Laurent and Obradovic (2019) claim that historical representations become 'open' to interpretation through interactions and discourse (Marková, 2000), to the extent that there exist cognitive alternatives in interpretation. That is, only when there are different versions of the past that people can defend, the past (and its consequences for the present) becomes worth discussing and 'active' in public discourse.

Research Questions and Thesis Overview

Applying social representations and narrative approaches to social identity, this thesis is interested in the ways that shared representations of historical events (ranging from the cultural to communicative, Assmann, 2013) are configured as narratives that individuals use to make sense and meaning of their group's identity over time. Importantly, this will be studied at the level of individuals who are embedded within national group contexts, to develop an understanding of how narratives about the nation are understood and articulated by individuals in their own words and as they communicate to each other in their day to day lives. This is because historical narratives have typically been studied through institutional products and practices, and only on a descriptive level. Through the lens of social

psychology, the current thesis will focus on the role of individual agency, creativity, and participation that shapes the collective memory economy alongside such top-down mechanisms. In other words, this thesis will contribute to the 'local' perspective of how culture is made up and enacted (Geertz, 1973). In turn, I will also investigate the functional implications of historical representations and narratives beyond the descriptive level. That is, I will examine how narrative configurations of historical representations actively inform the ways and extent to which individuals derive a psychologically meaningful identification with their group (or nation). Overall, the studies seek to highlight how lay representations and narratives of history are charged with meaning and have psychological implications that direct individuals toward certain thoughts, experiences, and actions.

Study 1, Chapter 2

The first study focuses on communicative remembering and its implications for varying emotional climates across societies. While surveys on social representations of world history have been conducted before (e.g., Liu et al., 2009), none have focused specifically on memories of public/historical events that have occurred *within* the lifetimes of participants (and their peers). Moreover, by directly probing for country-specific events, rather than events about world history, we may observe representations that are more relevant to (recent) constructions of nationhood. Representations of communicative memories, or living historical memories, that are circulating within communities provides a way to focus on content of bottom-up collective remembering that is minimally influenced by the state and its institutions. These are memories of historical events that ought to be most relevant to the everyday communication and cognition of individuals and how they view (and feel about) the recent state of affairs in their country.

Studies on social representations of memory tend to show a U-shaped pattern where foundational and recent memories are nominated most frequently, with a fading 'gap' in

between (Assmann, 2013). While those foundational, cultural memories tend to be more consensual and script-like, reflecting the way that these are learned through cultural repetition and rehearsal, communicative memory is where we may observe more variation in representations across individuals, generations, and other sub-groups in society. In this way, mapping out communicative memories may highlight emergent indicators of change and pluralization in collective representations. Through a content analysis of living historical memories across 40 nations, this first study is concerned with the questions: *What events in living historical memory are most salient across national contexts and what are common emotional associations with those events? How consensual versus pluralistic are these representations? What kind of themes are prevalent across national contexts?*

By taking an explicit focus on communicative memories, the current study tracks the events that are being 'worked out' and made sense of by individuals. The following studies will then connect these to representations from cultural memory (Assmann, 2013), to identify narratives that individuals use to connect the nation's past to its present. While historical narratives have most typically been conceptualized through representations of the 'past' in general, identifying (and situating historical narratives in connection to) communicative or living historical memories specifically provides a way of conceptualizing historical narratives as *dynamic* and influenced by present contexts and climates. This is important for understanding how a narrative about the nation is negotiated by individuals over time and in the face of different incoming events. Communicative memories are also important for understanding how cultural representations of history must be reconciled with the lived or directly witnessed experiences of individuals alive today. While individuals are indeed able recite narratives that they have learned from textbooks or other scripts embedded in shared/cultural practices, communicative memories provide a site for more personalized narratives to take shape, from their *own* points of view.

Study 2, Chapter 3

The second study is concerned with bridging the narrative connection between communicative memories (investigated in Study 1) and cultural memories of history. More specifically, this paper seeks to address how communicative memories are meaningfully contextualized by cultural representations and in turn, how communicative memories feed into the existing cultural canon to influence the meaning of events from the distant (not lived) past. This brings us to the study of how shared representations of history are configured, connected, and contextualized as national narratives. Importantly, this investigation is focused on explicit and spontaneous constructions of narratives provided by participants to configure their nominated historical events, allowing a direct examination of narratives as they are understood, articulated, and resonated with by ordinary people from the bottom up (rather than in the specialized language of institutionalized history).

This investigation is anchored in the specific national context of the United States. Findings from Study 1 show that living, communicative memories of the 9/11 bombings have marked a critical juncture in popular American history. This provides a prime context to study how positive and glorified representations of national origins (as already identified by Yamashiro et al., 2022) are narrated together with such negatively regarded events in recent American living memory. In turn, this study will examine how the identified popular narratives are associated with American national *identity*.

Studies 3 and 4, Chapter 4

Study 1 concluded by asking the question of how communicative remembering of incoming events may affect enduring cultural representations in a society. Study 2 showed that narratives are used by individuals to integrate communicative memories with cultural representations in meaningful ways, whether that be in ways that bolster nationhood or in

ways that challenge it. The last paper of this thesis, also conducted within the US context, addresses and builds upon these elements.

Incoming events and their associated climates (Study 1) are operationalized in this study by reminding participants about current events. Cultural representations of the past are operationalized by reminding participants about events related to the nation's origins and foundations. Each of these constitute experimental conditions that are used to prime the activation of historical narratives (Study 2). To measure this priming effect, beliefs in the popular historical narratives identified in Study 2 are operationalized as closed-ended items that can be measured and compared across individuals. We expect that national origin representations would activate American narratives (of progress and glorification) and in turn, identity. Furthermore, we expect that certain current events would also activate these American narratives (and in turn, identity). This prediction is specific to Study 3, which coincided with the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In contrast, in Study 4, there was no current event related to intergroup threat or competition that was salient in American news media and thus, we did not predict for such narrative priming effects from current events to occur.

In short, these studies will show that cultural representations of history (national origins) and events in communicative memory (current events) may be meaningfully connected through their shared effects on the activation of national narratives. By priming national narrative and identity, Russia's invasion of Ukraine constitutes an event that fits within the template of the American story and self-understanding (like 9/11, both being an example of out-group threat). Thus, in its elaboration as communicative memory in America, this event may become institutionalized through the mediation of mass media and other top-down processes to garner consensus and longevity in a particular representation. In these

ways, the last studies will extend the earlier chapters by highlighting the functional relationships between representations, narrative, and identity beyond the descriptive level.

General Discussion and Conclusion, Chapter 5

This thesis will conclude with a chapter discussing the theoretical and methodological contributions of the current research. Theoretically, this discussion revolves around what these studies have demonstrated about the dynamic construction of historical narratives by individuals, which are both indexed and influenced by existing cultural representations as well as the communicative remembering of incoming events, and their implications for national identity. In terms of empirical/methodological contribution, this thesis demonstrates the innovative potential in employing a naturalistic paradigm for doing research with social representations and narrative.

Preface 1: Chapter 2

Chapter 2 focuses specifically on communicative memories that are shared amongst individuals within and across national contexts. An open-ended survey was administered across 39 countries asking participants to: “Please name 3 historic events that have occurred during the lifetime of people you know (or have known) that have had the greatest impact on your country”. Communicative remembering, which is the key concept drawn on in this chapter, refers to the remembering of events that have occurred within the lifetimes of individuals who are alive and/or personally remembered today (Assmann, 2013). This means that the events that individuals are asked to nominate, are supposed to be limited in time-scope to those that have been directly experienced, witnessed or passed down from their peers within their lifetimes. Through this focus, this chapter identifies the content and subjective evaluation of memories that have direct connection and continuities with the societal conditions in which individuals presently live. Broadly, the aim of this endeavour is to capture the key, formative events that are perceived by individuals to have shaped their present-day societies. These events ought to be influenced by the social sharing and communication that occurs amongst individuals, rather than being remembered through what is shown to them via institutionalized channels. This is important, as research on social representations of history (Liu & Hilton, 2005) has typically not distinguished between the characteristics of historical memories that are communicatively shared and those that are institutionally mediated. Identifying the content and evaluation of communicative memories taps specifically into the bottom-up processes of how recent events are being elaborated and interpreted in collective memory amongst individuals in society. Ideas about collective remembering as a dynamic and open system that is influenced from bottom-up processes become relevant for understanding the implications of the content and themes that are identified in this chapter. Do communicative memories align or diverge from nationalistic

themes? Do they indicate potential for change, pluralization, and/or resistance to cultural memories and their norms from the bottom up? In short, chapter 2 focuses explicitly on social representations of history that are shaped by the everyday communication and cognition of individuals rather than those that are culturally and institutionally curated, and how they inform the present-day climates of various societies. In doing so, this chapter provides an approach of investigating historical representations as indicators of change rather than markers of stable difference across cultures (e.g., Liu et al., 2005). Furthermore, this provides an overview of how individuals subjectively negotiate and elaborate new, lived events into collective memory. This will be followed u in the next study (Chapter 3) by investigating how historical narratives about the nation are used to make sense of this change and instability of the present context. Chapter 2 was co-authored with James H. Liu, Silvia Mari and Ilya Garber, and published in Memory Studies as an online first article in February, 2021.

Chapter 2: Content analysis of living historical memory around the world: Terrorization of the Anglosphere, and national foundations of hope in developing societies

Abstract

Recently, researchers have endeavored to extend cultural perspectives of collective remembering by examining communicative or living historical memory (collective memories that emerge from informal communication between ordinary people). The current study examined the content and subjective evaluation of living historical memory from open-ended nominations of historical events provided by samples from 39 societies. Results showed that Western societies were dominated by living memories of terrorism, reflecting a distinctly negative climate. By contrast, many developing societies displayed a more positive climate in living memory that was rooted in events related to their nation's foundation. The current study opens up avenues for conceptualizing the role of collective remembering in shaping emotional climates that influence (or may be part of) national political culture.

Keywords: collective memory, living historical memory, emotional climate, content analysis, cross-cultural analysis, social representations of history

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."

William Faulkner, "Requiem for a Nun" (1951)

This study documents a cross-cultural investigation of the relationship between the content and subjective evaluation of living historical memory across 39 societies (38 countries and the special administrative region of Hong Kong). Data was provided by open-ended but concise nominations of impactful historical events in living memory, which were then subjected to a cross-cultural content analysis. By examining what is collectively remembered in living historical memory across nations and how people feel about these memories, this study probes how living historical memory may relate to the emotional climate of a society.

Social Representations of History and Collective Remembering

Psychological research on social representations of history (SRH) investigates the content and functional implications of socially shared knowledge and beliefs about the past (Liu and Hilton, 2005). According to this perspective, representations of history provide a symbolic reserve of historical content (i.e., shared meanings), that can be mobilized by political leaders to legitimize their political agendas (Liu and Hilton, 2005; Pennebaker and Banasik, 1997). Under this approach, collective memories can be defined as "individual memories shared by members of a community that bear on the collective identity of that community" (Hirst et al., 2018: 439).

This extends work done on collective remembering in sociology (see Olick et al., 2011) and history (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2012), where researchers focus more on how shared memories of the past are shaped by institutional and cultural propagation. In such an approach, collective memories can be understood as "publicly available symbols maintained by society" (Hirst et al., 2018: 439). This has been termed cultural memory by Assman and

Czaplicka (1995), in contrast to communicative memory, which is more informal and interpersonally constructed.

There has been growing interest in the integration of cultural and communicative/social memories (Hewer and Roberts, 2012; Kansteiner, 2002; Olick, 1999); as a focus on cultural and institutional mnemonic practices appears incomplete without also considering how such practices are realized and received in everyday communication. Furthermore, while much attention has focused on how collective remembering might build the political culture of a nation (Hilton and Liu, 2017), little research has examined how it might contribute to emotional climate: the dominant emotions experienced or perceived by members of a society in response to shared events (De Rivera, 1992).

Living Historical Memory

Following Assmann's (2013) idea of communicative/social memory, living historical memory (LHM: Liu et al., in press) refers to representations of historical events with impact on society that have occurred within the lifetimes of people living, or still personally remembered today.[1] Such memories are thought to last up to three generations (Rimé et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2014), or a period of 80-100 years (Assmann, 2013), after which they may become institutionalized as part of cultural memory (or forgotten).

New events are constantly entering into living historical memory (like 9/11, or the current COVID-19 pandemic), inscribed into public discourse through informal and communicative (as opposed to official and state-produced) processes, especially mass media. These processes facilitate the communal sharing of events, as was the case of reactions to the

[1] Taken out of context of its contrast with cultural memory, Assmann's term "communicative memory" can be ambiguous, as it is a semantically broad term that could refer to memories of personal rather than historical events. So we use the term "living historical memory" for our research, but use communicative memory in reference to the larger literature.

September 11th terror bombing (Powell, 2011; Woods, 2011). Such events may be collectively forgotten as the people who experienced it pass away (like the Korean War in the USA, see Schuman and Scott, 1989), or they may come to be institutionally embedded, as appears to be the case for World War II.

Similar concepts have been explored, such as 'lived historical memory', which refers to "historical memories that unfold during one's life" (Muller et al., 2018: 974). Other concepts like flashbulb memories also involve vivid autobiographical memories of historical events (see Hirst et al., 2018 for a review). A key difference of living historical memory is that it is a communicative concept that includes both historical events that unfold during one's lifetime, and also those experienced in the lifetimes of people one has known. Therefore, living historical memory also includes historical events that are indirectly remembered through inter-generational communication, rather than just first-hand experiences. Such memories are still 'alive' in present discourses through continued social sharing.

More broadly, these are conceptualized as personalized memories of public events, rather than personal memories (of private events, like the birth of one's child). Previous research has demonstrated how personalized memories of historical events can carry profound cognitive and emotional significance (e.g., Brown et al., 2009; Hirst et al., 2015). When distributed across many people, this kind of shared resonance can have major implications for collective phenomena. For example, Páez et al. (2016) demonstrated how individuals' collective recall of World War II predicted their willingness to fight for their country in current conflicts. There is thus an important place for the personalized sharing of collective events as an important part of the emotional climate of a society (see Páez et al., 2007).

Living Historical Memory and Emotional Climate

Emotional climates are theorized to be generated by people communicating with each other about their emotional responses to shared events, as this social sharing builds emotional convergence (De Rivera and Páez, 2007; Rimé, 1997; Schneider and Reichers, 1983). Thus, communicative processes not only inscribe LHM, but also form emotional climates. For example, exposure to communication about collective violence reinforces a certain subjective interpretation of events that fosters a climate of fear (De Rivera and Páez, 2007).

It is important to note how such emotional climates have the potential to influence enduring political culture, that is, the "political system as internalized in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population" (Almond and Verba, 1963: 14). Enduring national and political culture exists in a dynamic relationship with the prevailing emotional climate, which appears to have a life of its own, influenced as it is by mass communication about incoming events (Schneider and Reichers, 1983). Cultural norms may or may not be followed by new generations (Schuman and Scott, 1989), as new LHM and their emotional resonances can gradually change the emotional climate of society (e.g., Cohn et al., 2004). In this way, social sharing of events usually helps to maintain an enduring national culture; but also has the potential to destabilize/reshape it.

The Present Study

We operationalize LHM as aggregates of historical memories that have been lived and/or communicated and shared amongst ordinary people today. Going beyond Liu et al.'s (in press) study that quantitatively examined LHM counts in relation to political attitudes, the current study investigates the qualitative content of LHM, and their corresponding evaluations (in terms of positive/negative valence). Content was analyzed by grouping historical events into categories like warfare, economics, or terrorism, rather than detailing specific events which were too numerous and idiosyncratic to compare across 39 societies.

Furthermore, their corresponding evaluations provided indications of how these events were subjectively interpreted by individuals to produce an overall climate of positivity/negativity.

Emotional climate researchers typically focus on dominant emotions either as an aggregate of the emotion itself (Fernández-Dols et al., 2007) or as an aggregate of how they are perceived (Páez et al., 2007); the approach taken here resembles the former. We also focus on affective valence (see also Honk and Schutter, 2006), which provides a simple approach to comparing emotional climates across 39 societies.

While no study to our knowledge has examined LHM across a wide sample of nationalities/societies, there have been studies investigating social representations of world history across cultures (Liu et al., 2005; 2009). Across these studies, representations of world history were consistently Eurocentric and revolved around themes of politics and war. Nominations of the World Wars were the most dominant, especially WWII. The main difference here is a tighter focus on representations of national histories that are shared through informal communication, rather than including more input from history education. Nevertheless, we can still make some broad predictions based on past findings. For one, we expect high nominations of WWII, as it still falls (barely) within the window of living memory (having been experienced by some grandparents and great-grandparents, living and/or remembered today). If there is continuity in the Eurocentrism witnessed in earlier studies (Liu et al., 2005; 2009), we might also expect to see more positive evaluations of WWII (and related events of democratization) in the LHM of the victorious Western allies, compared to the Axis or neutral countries.[2]

On the other hand, some memory studies have started to show emergent narratives of decline in these same Western societies (Yamashiro and Roediger, 2019). As hinted by Liu and colleagues (2009), we may expect events related to terrorism to come to dominate LHM as WWII begins to die out, especially in societies where such coverage is dominant in mass

media (Araújo et al., 2020; Powell, 2011; Savigny, 2016; Woods, 2011). This in turn, may be associated with more affectively negative evaluations of LHM, as many studies have demonstrated negative psychological responses to mass media portrayals of terrorism (e.g., Schuster et al., 2001; Silver et al., 2002).

We expect to find much greater nationalism than Eurocentrism across the board, given the study's focus on national histories. Furthermore, we expect to find more nominations of events that are foundational to the nation in societies that achieved official statehood relatively recently. This makes sense from a state-building perspective, which argues that there should be stronger motivation for newer states to construct justifications for their state and a national identity separate from their colonizers (see Cabecinhas et al., 2011). Thus, their LHM may be more influenced by a nationalist agenda (van de Bildt, 2015). Furthermore, there is less separation in time between cultural and living memory for these societies with recent statehood, and this may lead to more positive evaluations of LHM. Liu and colleagues (2009) found ethnocentrism in collective remembering to be most exaggerated and exceptionally positive in East Timor, the youngest state in the world at the time.

On the other hand, developing societies that have been experiencing political and economic instability in recent times may be preoccupied with recent memories of such instability and perhaps corruption. Indeed, Liu and colleagues (in press) found higher nominations of LHM to predict a more critical orientation to current political systems, especially in less socio-economically developed societies. Therefore, it is possible that developing societies, including many post-colonial societies governed by younger states, will actually report more negative evaluations of LHM, reflecting recent political/economic issues.

Method

Administration and Translation

The surveys used were part of a large-scale, international study examining a variety of social and political attitudes (The Digital Influence II project, see Liu et al., in press). These online surveys were administered in 42 societies from December 6th, 2018 to January 24th, 2019. They were administered in the dominant language of each respective society, except in the three African societies, where many different languages are spoken and thus it was advised that English would provide the best option. A large coalition of researchers, including at least two from each language group translated the survey from English to their home language using either the committee method (Brislin, 1980) or back-translation (Behling and Law, 2000).

Participants and Procedure

Participants in the online study were recruited through the Harris Panel curated by the international polling firm Nielsen. Participants were stratified by age, gender, and income. They were invited by local panel providers through email or were given access to the survey link through an online portal. In total, 27,527 participants answered the survey. To ensure data quality, approximately 10% of cases were deleted for showing signs of non-attentive responding (for exclusion criteria, see supplementary materials). The total sample after deletions included 23,999 participants from 42 societies. Turkey, Mexico and Peru were not included due to errors or lack of availability in coding historical data. Therefore, the final sample used for this study included 22,363 participants from 39 societies.

In terms of demographics, a single item was used to assess political orientation: “On political issues, where would you place yourself on a scale of 0 to 10?” Answers ranged from 0 (strongly conservative) to 10 (strongly liberal). Subjective social status was assessed with the item: “On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being people who are the most well off in society,

and 1 being the people who are least well off, where would you describe your position?" Level of education was assessed by asking: "What is the highest level of education you have completed?", with answers ranging from 1 (Elementary school) to 6 (Graduate school or higher). The overall sample was 50% female, varied in age between 18 and 89 (M = 36.71, SD = 12.39), was relatively well-educated (M = 4.34, SD = 1.14), relatively liberal (M = 6.42, SD = 2.59), and generally middle class in self-reported social status (M = 5.50, SD = 2.89), (see supplementary materials for age and gender proportions by country).

Materials

The open-ended item "Please name 3 historic events that have occurred during the lifetime of people you know (or have known) that have had the greatest impact on your country" was used. Participants were asked to write brief descriptions of their nominated events in the free blanks provided, together with their evaluations of the events on 1-7 scales ranging from very negative to very positive (see supplementary materials). Those events that were evaluated higher than midpoint (4), were interpreted as positive, while those evaluated below 3 were interpreted as negative, and those lying in between were interpreted as moderate. The average number of events nominated ranged between 1.16 in Bolivia and 2.21 in Kenya across the 39 samples (out of a maximum of 3, M = 1.67, SD = 1.32). The mean evaluation of all events ranged from 2.41 in Serbia to 5.13 in China (M = 3.95, SD = 1.74).

Coding

Country-specific events were coded by local collaborators who had extensive knowledge about the historical events in their region. According to a general coding guideline that was used across the regions (see supplementary materials), just under half of participants (42.8%) listed a total of 3 events that could be interpreted as historical. Around a quarter of participants (24.4%) gave a combination of some historical and some non-

historical responses, and just under a third of participants (32.8%) listed no historical responses at all. Only historical responses were included for our content analysis.

Each of the historical nominations were coded, using codes for globally recognized historical events (e.g., WWII) and figures (e.g., Gandhi), as well as codes for country-specific events and figures (e.g., "1997 Handover" in Hong Kong). Lists of the most important and/or salient historical events and figures in living memory (those nominated by at least 5% of participants) were constructed and tallied for each country. This resulted in lists ranging from 5 nominations in Canada and India, to 13 nominations in Poland across the 39 samples (average = 8.13). Over 300 events and figures were compiled on the final master list for all societies.

After refining coding instructions developed by Liu and colleagues (2005; 2009), events were then coded into one of the following categories: (a) terrorism (and related figures) (b) war (and related figures) (c) political events and figures (other than terrorism and war) (d) economic events and figures (e) disasters (f) scientific events and figures (g) sporting events and figures (h) cultural events and figures (i) crime-related events and figures. 96% similarity was obtained between two independent coders. Only a few questions arose which were settled through discussion. Detailed coding instructions are provided in the supplementary materials.

Results

Events in Living Historical Memory

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show percentages of participant nominations for global and/or international events across different societies. As expected, WWII was nominated the most across societies. However, these were much less dominant compared to studies of world history (Liu et al., 2005; 2009). Only 13 out of 39 societies surveyed had WWII as part of their salient living memory, compared to 23 of 24 in the world history survey. Percentages of

participants who nominated WWII ranged from 10% in the United States to 31% in Russia (for discussion of this variability, see Páez et al., 2016). This was followed by the September 11th bombing, which was nominated by 10 societies, ranging from 5% (Sweden, Pakistan, Spain) to 45% (United States). This was followed by the 2008 global financial crisis and World War I, which were each nominated by 5 societies. Three societies had the Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Fall of the Berlin Wall as part of their top nominations. We note that these "consensual" events were nominated mostly in Western societies. They were much less salient in non-Western societies, a radical departure from the world history survey.

Table 1.1

Percentages of Participants who Nominated the World Wars and Related Events

WWI		WWII		Democratization	
Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
Netherlands	23	Russia	31	Collapse of the Soviet Union	
New Zealand	6	United Kingdom	29	Russia	34
Serbia	6	Poland	24	Poland	21
United Kingdom	6	Serbia	23	Finland	8
Italy	5	Hungary	21		
		Italy	21	Fall of the Berlin Wall	
		New Zealand	19	Germany	36
		Canada	17	Finland	12
		Greece	16	Italy	7
		Australia	15		
		Japan	14		
		Sweden	14		
		USA	10		

Note. Nominations for WWII in Russia includes nominations of the Great Patriotic War, which refers to the phase of WWII after Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

Table 1.2

Percentages of Participants who Nominated International 21st Century Events

September 11th Bombing		**2008 Financial Crisis**	
Country	%	Country	%
United States	45	Hungary	11
Canada	24	Portugal	11
Australia	19	Spain	10
United Kingdom	12	Netherlands	6
Netherlands	9	Singapore	5
Italy	7		
Portugal	6		
Spain	5		
Pakistan	5		
Sweden	5		

Table 1.3 shows percentages of participant nominations for nationally foundational events across different societies. 12 out of 39 societies had a nationally foundational event as part of their salient living memory, with percentages of participant nominations ranging from 6% in Poland (Polish Independence) to 32% in Morocco (Moroccan Independence). Societies that nominated foundational events were predominantly non-Western and non-European, and as expected, tended to be those with more recent official statehood. We obtained official founding dates for the current state of each society from a list in the World Factbook Archive (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2020). According to these, only Poland, Finland and South Africa nominated a foundational event while having an official founding date that is more than 100 years old, although we note that the foundational event nominated in South Africa was the relatively recent 1994 Democracy/Freedom Day (signaling rebirth to a "Rainbow Nation").

Table 1.3

Percentages of Participants who Nominated Foundational Events for their Country

Foundational Events	
Country	%
Morocco	32
Kenya	27
South Africa	21
Singapore	19
Nigeria	18
Indonesia	16
India	16
Malaysia	13
China	12
Finland	11
Pakistan	9
Poland	6

Subjective Evaluation of Living Historical Memory across Cultures

Figure 1.1 shows averaged evaluations of LHM across the 39 societies for salient events (events nominated by at least 5% of participants) and all events (all events nominated, including idiosyncratic responses). Interestingly, it appears that those societies with positive salient memories (averaging greater than the midpoint of 4), were predominantly from non-Western and non-European regions. These included 4 from South East Asia, 2 from Northern Africa and 2 from Sub-Saharan Africa, along with 1 from East Asia, Latin America and South Asia. Most of these societies showed a tendency to nominate more positive events, especially China. That is, evaluations of their salient memories were more positive than the combined evaluation of all events.

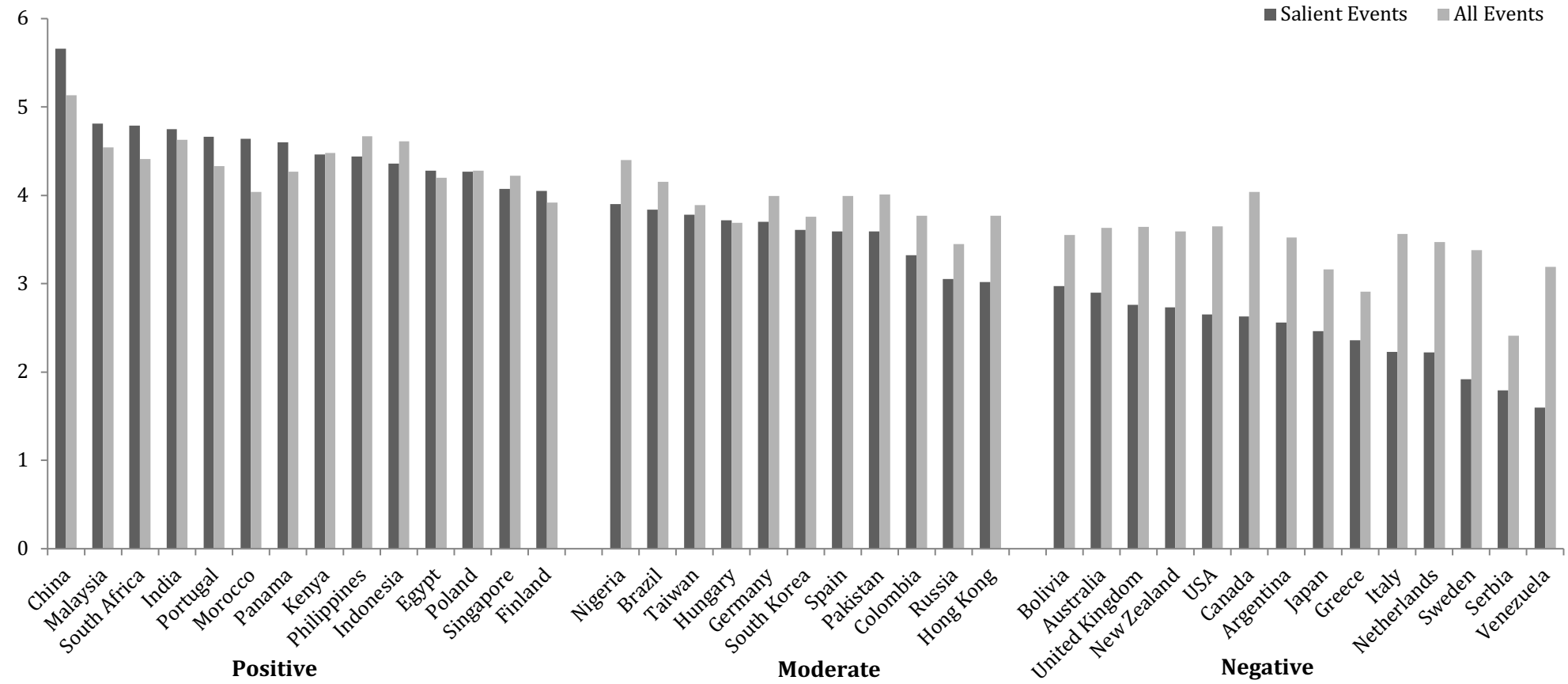
By contrast, those societies with negative salient memories (averaging lower than 3-4), were generally those that were more socio-economically developed, except in some

extreme cases (see Figure 1.1). Specifically, evaluations were most negative in Venezuela,[2] followed by Serbia,[3] after which there were 4 societies from Western (and Nordic) Europe, along with all 5 societies from the Anglosphere, 3 from Latin America and 1 from East Asia. Here, we note consistently strong tendencies towards nominating negative events. This salience of negative memories appeared in a few societies experiencing material hardship and political instability, but mostly included societies that were prosperous and politically stable, like Sweden, Canada, and New Zealand.

[2] Experiencing thousand percent inflation and political unrest.
[3] Severely bombed by NATO in the Balkan Wars after the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Figure 1.1

Averaged Evaluations of Salient and All Nominations Across 39 Societies

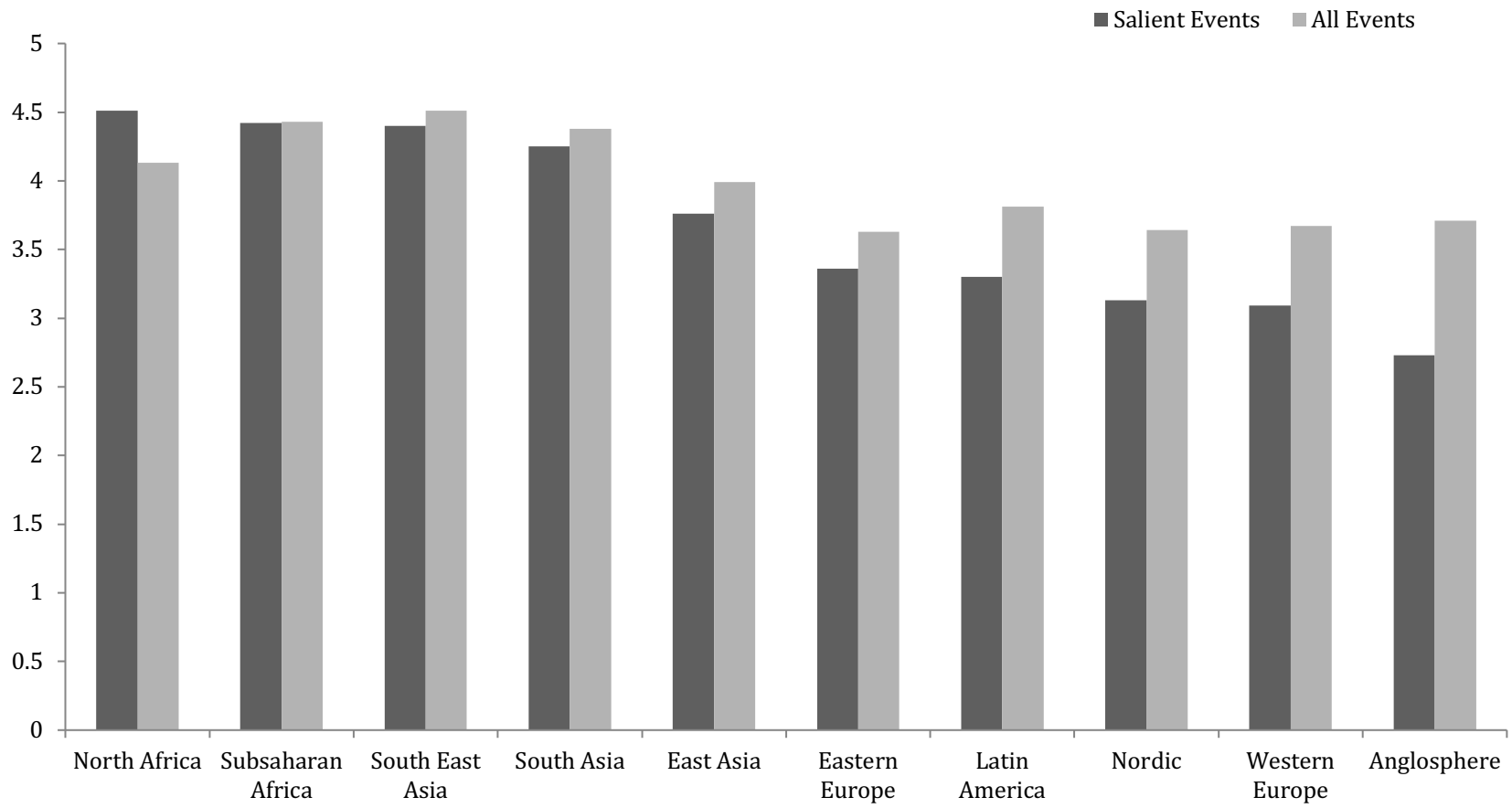


Comparatively, those societies with a salience of positive living memories appeared to be younger (in official statehood). Only 3 out of the 14 societies displaying negative remembering had an official founding date within the last century, compared to 12 out of the 14 societies displaying positive remembering (see Figure 1.1). Moreover, averaged scores of the Human Development Index (HDI: United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020) indicated that societies displaying positive remembering were less socio-economically developed (on average) than societies displaying negative remembering. A list of the societies with their respective HDI scores and official founding dates can be found in the supplementary materials.

Figure 1.2 shows this data with societies grouped into their respective regions. This figure shows a clear cultural gradation: Western and European regions were clustered together, followed by the Asian, and then the African regions. The Anglosphere showed the greatest tendency to remember negative events, while North Africa was the only region displaying a tendency to remember more positive events. Overall, these patterns suggest that it is surprisingly the more developed and stable societies that tended to evaluate events in LHM more negatively.

Figure 1.2

Averaged Evaluations of Salient and All Nominations Across Regions



The Moderation of Evaluation by Content

To contextualize these evaluations, we ought to connect them with patterns identified by a content analysis of events in LHM. Figure 1.3 shows percentages of event categories that emerged in the salient living memory of each region. Detailed results of the content analysis for each country can be provided upon request. We report the following results in order, from regions with most negative to most positive remembering.

Anglosphere

The content analysis for societies of the Anglosphere (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) revealed how their negative evaluations were largely driven by high nominations of events related to terrorism (see Figure 1.3). Although their living memory was still a story of war (29%) and politics (29%), terrorism also emerged as a dominant theme overall (26%). In all societies of this region, terrorism occupied more than 10% of salient memory. Furthermore, in 4 out of the 5 societies, terrorism was the most negatively evaluated category.[4] Mean evaluations of terrorism did not exceed 2 for all societies (M = 1.75, SD = 1.27), while mean evaluations of war were less negative (M = 2.63, SD = 1.81). Evaluations of political nominations were more variable, with the overall mean being close to mid-point (M = 3.53, SD = 2.37).

Western Europe

LHM in Western Europe (Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain) was predominantly a story of politics (35%) and war (25%), followed by economics in some societies and terrorism in others (see Figure 1.3). Political nominations were evaluated moderately positive overall (M = 4.7, SD = 2.36). This was followed by nominations of war, which were evaluated very negatively overall (M = 1.69, SD = 1.36); with particularly high

[4] In the USA, crime was evaluated slightly more negatively than terrorism, but it was much less salient.

nominations in Italy (53%). Greece had particularly high economic nominations (34%), which were also evaluated very negatively overall (M = 1.89, SD = 1.48). Thus, societies of Western Europe were haunted by negative memories of WWII and the 2008 global financial crisis. However, a smaller presence of terrorism (13%) seemed to afford this region less negativity than the Anglosphere overall. Only the Netherlands had substantively large nominations of terrorism (29%), which likely contributed to its greater negativity than others from this region (see Figure 1.1).

Nordic

The content of LHM across Sweden and Finland was vastly different, as reflected in their distant positions in Figure 1.1. Politics received the highest nominations, exceeding 40% in both societies but these nominations were evaluated more positively in Finland (M = 4.48, SD = 2.1), at least partially owing to their positive memories of Finnish Independence. In contrast, Sweden's negativity seemed to stem from substantial nominations of terrorism (21%), their most negatively evaluated category (M = 1.32, SD = 0.67), while Finland had no salient memories related to terrorism.

Eastern Europe

Political nominations were most common in the LHM of Eastern Europe (Hungary, Poland, Russia, Serbia), exceeding 30% of nominations in all societies (58% overall, see Figure 1.3). These were evaluated negatively in Serbia (M = 2.57, SD = 2.16), but quite moderately overall (M = 4.07, SD = 2.41). This was followed by nominations of war, which exceeded 10% of nominations in all societies (27% overall). Like Western Europe, this region seemed to be recovering from negatively remembered wars (M = 1.66, SD = 1.52), but this negativity was somewhat buffered by a complete absence of terrorism in salient memory. Poland's LHM contained foundational as well as cultural events related to the Pope,

contributing to its positive position in Figure 1.1. A recently war-torn Serbia appeared on the extreme negative end of remembering.

Latin America

LHM in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela) was also highly political, with political nominations exceeding 30% in all societies (68% overall, see Figure 1.3) and evaluated quite moderately overall (M = 3.43, SD = 2.5). This was followed by economic nominations (12%). War was much less dominant compared to previous regions (7%). Economic nominations were the most negatively evaluated out of the dominant categories (M = 1.79, SD = 1.64), thereby providing the main source of negativity for this region. However, this was somewhat buffered by low remembrances of war and an absence of terrorism in salient memory. Those societies with particularly high economic nominations, like Venezuela and Argentina, occupied the most negative positions of this region in Figure 1.1.

East Asia

LHM in East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) was highly political in all societies except Japan (49% overall, see Figure 1.3). This was followed by nominations of disaster (19%) and economics (16%). The main source of negativity for this region was disaster, as the most negatively evaluated category in 4 out of 5 societies (M = 1.93, SD = 1.5). Political nominations were moderately positive (M = 4.25, SD = 2.21), with mean evaluations exceeding 4 across all societies, except the SAR Hong Kong. Japan was the only country with considerable nominations of terrorism (10%) and war (14%). This, combined with exceptionally high nominations of disaster (37%), placed Japan as the lowest of this region in Figure 1.1, followed by Hong Kong. China, with its positive evaluations of political (M = 5.55, SD = 2.18) and economic (M = 6.6, SD = 0.87) events, occupied the most positive position.

South Asia

In South Asia, there was a considerable amount of terrorism in LHM (13%). However, this was not remembered as negatively as in the West (M = 2.14, SD = 1.88). Political nominations exceeded 25% in both societies (38% overall) and were very positively evaluated (M = 6.16, SD = 1.55). This was followed by economic nominations in India (43%), which were moderately evaluated (M = 3.91, SD = 2.15). In Pakistan, there were high nominations of crime (28%), that were negatively evaluated (M = 2.8, SD = 2.46). Here, political memories seemed to provide a major buffer against negative memories of crime and terrorism, with both societies having nominated foundational events as part of their most salient and positive events in living memory.

South-East Asia

LHM in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore) was overwhelmingly political, with political nominations exceeding 70% in all societies (82% overall, see Figure 1.3). These were consistently evaluated as moderately positive (M = 4.74, SD = 2.19). Terrorism was only nominated by the Philippines (5%), where it was not as negatively evaluated as in Western societies (M = 2.43, SD = 1.83). Like in Latin America, economic nominations seemed to provide the main source of negativity (M = 1.86, SD = 1.29). However, these were much less dominant, occupying only 4% of nominations overall. With low remembrances of war, terrorism, disaster, and economic issues, the LHM of South-East Asian societies was completely dominated by political nominations, which included positive foundational events for 3 out of the 4 societies (Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Nominations were highly political in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa), exceeding 70% of nominations in all societies (81% overall, see Figure 1.3), followed by nominations of terrorism in Kenya (13%) and Nigeria (12%). Political

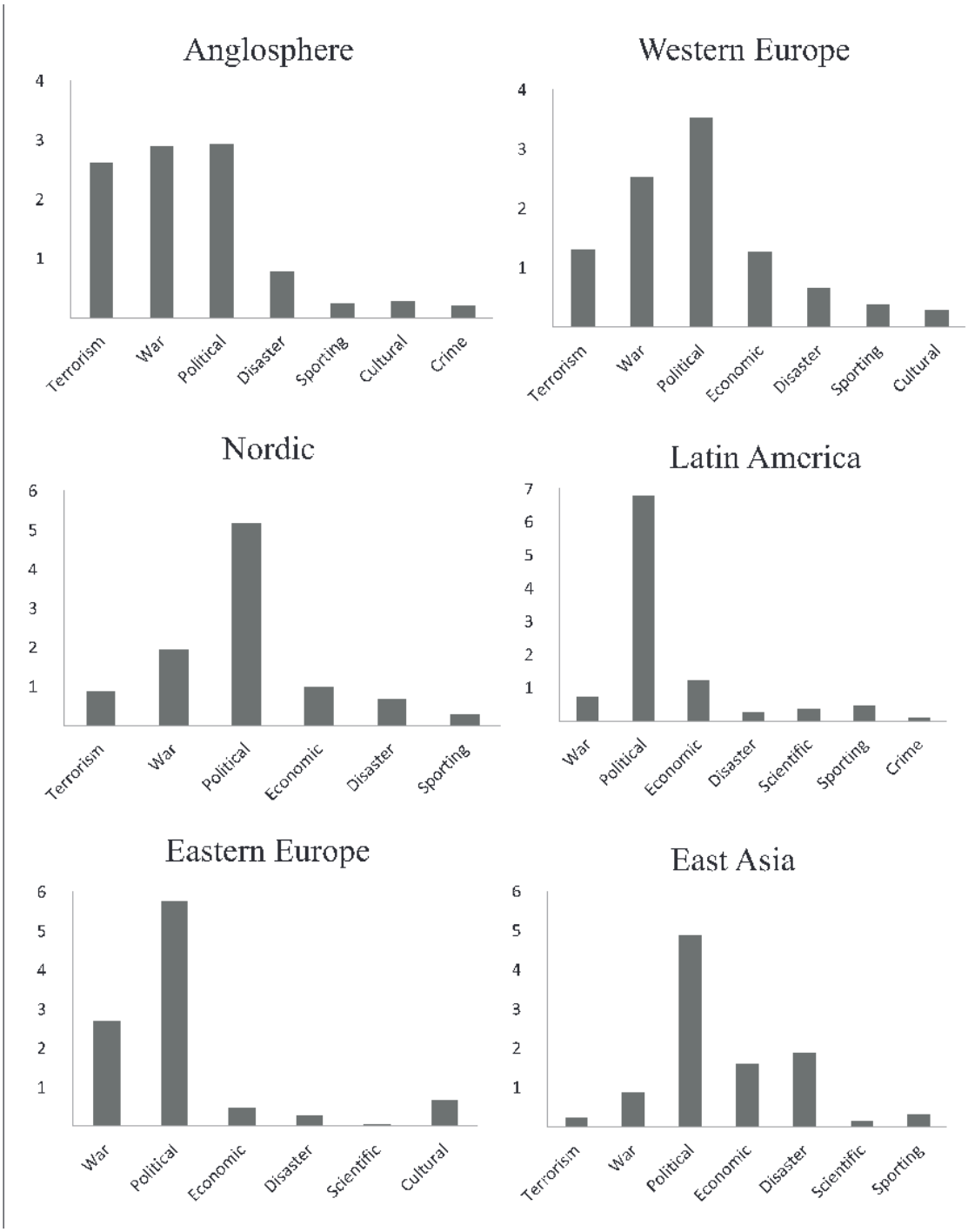
nominations were consistently evaluated as moderately positive (M = 4.67, SD = 2.56). Terrorism was very negatively evaluated in Nigeria (M = 1.45, SD = 1.32) contributing to its lowest position of this region in Figure 1.1. However, these memories were still buffered by foundational memories of Nigerian independence. South Africa had highly salient memories of a foundational event (1994 Democracy Day). Combined with the absence of terrorism in salient memory, this placed the country above Kenya and Nigeria in Figure 1.1.

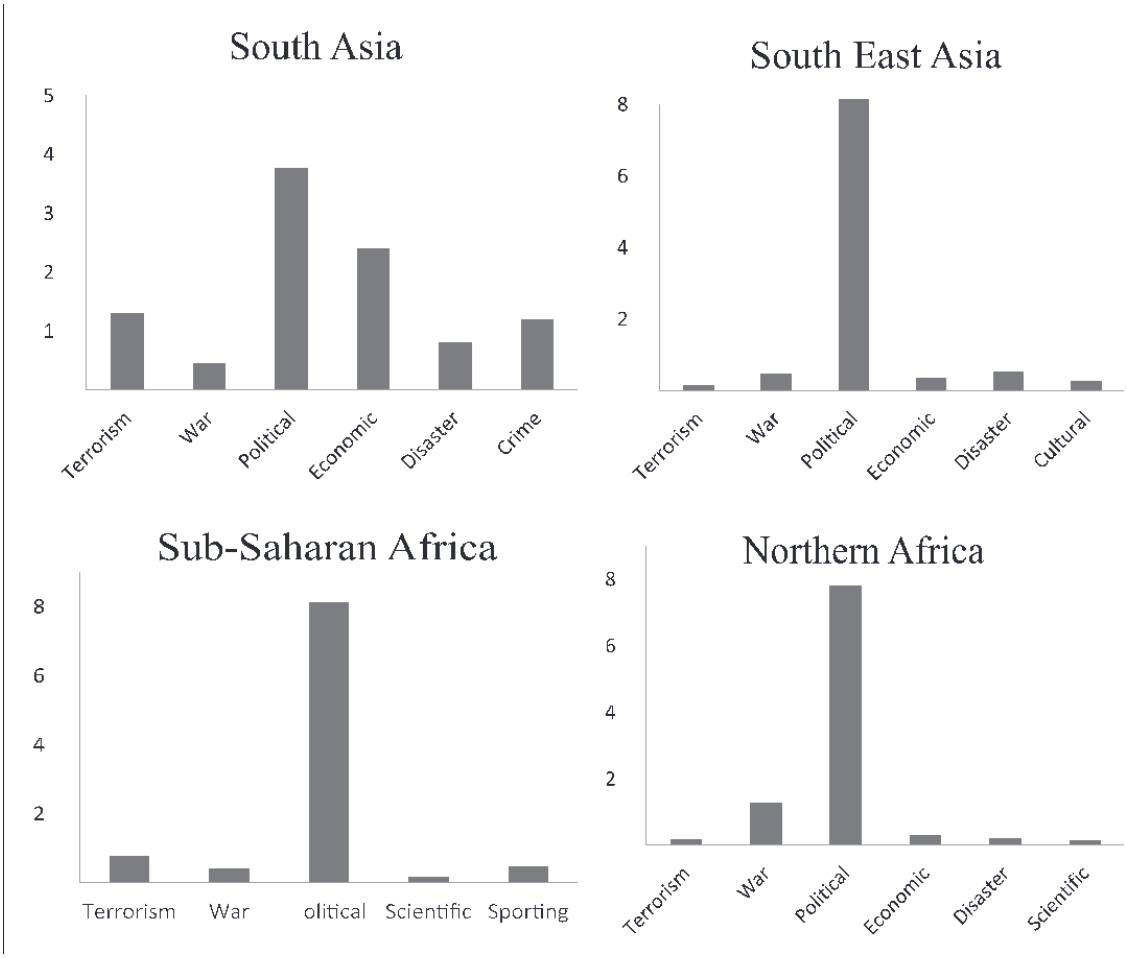
North Africa

Political nominations exceeded 70% in both societies of Northern Africa (78% overall) and were evaluated as moderately positive (M = 4.51, SD = 2.23). This was followed by nominations of war in Egypt (21%), which were positive (M = 5.48, SD = 2.24). Although LHM of Morocco included some (5%) negative nominations of terrorism (M = 1.3, SD = 0.64), it still occupied a higher position than Egypt in Figure 1.1, due to having more positive political nominations. Indeed, Morocco had a foundational event (Moroccan independence) nominated as part of its salient memory while Egypt did not.

Figure 1.3

Percentages of Salient Content Categories Across Regions




South Asia
5
4
3
2
1
Terrorism
War
Political
Economic
Disaster
Crime
South East Asia
8
6
4
2
Terrorism
War
Political
Economic
Disaster
Cultural
Sub-Saharan Africa
8
6
4
2
Terrorism
War
olitical
Scientific
Sporting
Northern Africa
8
6
4
2
Terrorism
War
Political
Economic
Disaster
Scientific

Discussion

The current study mapped and compared the living historical memory of 39 societies, by examining what is collectively being remembered (content) and how (evaluation). It appeared that LHM was predominantly a story of politics, especially in non-Western, non-European regions (i.e., Asia, Latin America, and Africa). In European regions, it was a story of politics and war; in the Anglosphere it was a story of politics, war, and terrorism. Negative collective remembering (see Figure 1.1) stemmed primarily from:

1) Nominations of terrorism (Anglosphere societies, Netherlands, Sweden).

2) Nominations of war (Serbia, Italy).

3) Nominations of disaster (Japan).

4) Nominations of economic (Venezuela, Greece, Argentina) and political (Bolivia) instability.

Positive collective remembering seemed to stem from events in the political domain, with a high degree of country-specificity in events. A major cluster of these were foundational events. Overall, this is a far less universal pattern than what was reported for the world history survey, where WWII dominated in almost all societies (Liu et al., 2005, 2009).

Living Memories of Politics in Developing, Post-Colonial Societies

Liu et al. (in press) showed how LHM functioned to bolster national identity while simultaneously enhancing critical evaluations against political systems, especially in developing nations. Such findings can be contextualized with our content analysis. On one hand, LHM of developing societies did indeed hold negative memories of political corruption (e.g., ANC corruption in South Africa), which may produce critical consciousness. At the same time, their political memories seemed to serve a nation-building function by also holding positive memories of national independence and social movements. While events like uprisings and protests were often violent and traumatic (e.g., Reformasi in Indonesia),

these formative events seem to be remembered positively, perhaps as a source of empowerment for overcoming on-going corruption or dictatorship (see Vázquez and Páez, 2010).

Our results add support to the speculations raised by Liu et al. (in press), that such narratives in developing societies are less likely to be direct products of states "manufacturing consent". Rather, they seem to be propagated by the bottom-up needs and aspirational hopes of ordinary people (Cabecinhas et al., 2011), and their beliefs in national history as being progress-oriented (Páez et al., 2016). Living memories of national independence may provide a sense of hope and promise for many developing societies that people (who are still remembered or alive today) fought for. How long this climate of remembering will be retained, may depend on how such promises are fulfilled by political developments in the future, and how much longer communicative remembering of foundational events will last. In turn, developing societies without foundational memories appeared to be less protected from negative climates.

Living Memories of Terrorism in the West

Nominations of terrorism conferred a much more negative climate than nominations of war, even though both involve collective violence. Some emotional/psychological distance from war seems to have emerged, as war was less negatively evaluated overall compared to previous studies (Liu et al., 2005; 2009). It is worth questioning whether such distance is afforded simply by the passage of time and generations (Schuman and Scott, 1989), or by its displacement with new negative events in LHM.

One of the most striking and consistent findings was a distinct climate of negativity in the wealthy societies of the Anglosphere. Our findings suggest that these negative climates were rooted in living memories of terrorism. Interestingly, memories of terrorism were considerably more negative than memories of war and natural disasters in Western societies.

Indeed, studies have shown collective stress (Schuster et al., 2001) and trauma (Silver et al., 2002) in response to portrayals of terrorism, but it is worth questioning why and how this differs from media portrayals of other negative events.

There seems to be something unique about how terrorism is communicated, at least in Western contexts, that goes beyond just saturation media coverage (see Araújo et al., 2020). It may be that on a deeper level, these events represent an erosion of economic and cultural power for Western societies. This symbolic threat that is publicly consolidated in living memory through channels like mass media, flowing into private social networks, may be at the root of what is cultivating negativity. The much higher salience of external threats of terrorism (e.g., 9/11, Manchester bombing), over local acts of collective violence (e.g., mass shootings) further speaks to the resonance of a deeper symbolic threat. Further discursive research is necessary for unpacking such claims.

By contrast, terrorism emerged less (and less negatively) in the living memory of South East Asian and African societies, even though it constitutes an objectively significant issue in some of these places (e.g., Nigeria, Indonesia). Instead, individuals prioritized memories of political events, particularly national independence and decolonization, producing a much less negative climate.

Cognitive explanations, such as recency effects, also deserve consideration (see also Liu et al., 2009). It is possible that the over-representation of terrorism reflects a greater recency or novelty of terrorism and related threats in more developed societies. Furthermore, given the nature of our probe, foundational events were inevitably excluded from nominations of most Western societies. The negativity that was observed may simply reflect this absence, rather than indicating a climate of decline over time (however, see Yamashiro and Roediger, 2019). Nonetheless, the finding that foundational events continue to be so salient in the living memory of many developing societies is noteworthy and ought to have

important functional/political implications (see Liu et al., in press). Moreover, the finding that similar categories of events were evaluated substantially more negatively in developed compared to developing societies is suggestive of a greater tendency for them to remember more negatively.

Towards a Balanced Model of Collective Remembering

It is becoming increasingly apparent that collective memory research should consider the complex interplays between individual/interpersonal and cultural processes. Research in collective remembering has traditionally focused on collective memory as what Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) consider to be "objectivized culture". As part of recent efforts to illuminate the social/interpersonal processes involved in collective remembering, the current study showed how communicative memories of public events can be associated with unpredictable and/or destabilizing emotional climates. In line with social-interactionist perspectives (Schneider and Reichers, 1983), this showed massive disconnects; with LHM being acutely negative, while many aspects of material/structural reality are quite positive in most Western societies; and the exact opposite pattern manifesting in many developing societies. Only in certain extreme cases did negative climates appear to reflect material realities (i.e., Venezuela, Serbia, Greece).

With this updated perspective (see also Assmann, 2013; Hewer and Roberts, 2012; Hirst et al., 2018), the civic/political culture of a country (Almond and Verba, 1963) can be seen as not only bound to the past through culturally inscribed, and largely unchanging historical symbols, institutions, and ritualized practices, but also swayed by emotional climates that arise from the bottom up, through the communicative remembering of interacting generations. This may have become the case with terrorism in the Anglosphere, as the current study suggests that people of English-speaking societies are now living with post-9/11 rather than post-WWII representations of history (Liu et al., 2009). Having the "War

against Terror" narrative embedded in informal discourse has significantly different (and less positive) implications compared to being "Champions" or "Defenders" of the "Free World" as in the aftermath of WWII (Araújo et al., 2020; Powell, 2011).

Such may also become the case with the current COVID-19 pandemic over time, where climates of fear and anxiety may be taking form in many societies as they consolidate these new events in living memory. Future research should use such opportunities to investigate the role of communicative remembering (and the emotional climates they produce) as sensitive early warning indicators of shifts in national political culture. This represents possibilities for significant theoretical advance, as the previous literature has more strongly emphasized the stabilizing rather than de-stabilizing properties of social representations of history (Liu and Sibley, 2009), and of collective remembering (Olick and Robbins, 1998).

Limitations

A significant limitation of our efforts to represent LHM around the world is the lack of data from Middle Eastern societies. Furthermore, by covering the LHM of 39 societies via broad content categories, we may have overlooked the more complex memory structures that exist within cultures. We acknowledge that the current study provides only general descriptive findings and thus, country-specific studies that incorporate the relevant historical and cultural backgrounds in their analysis are needed to contextualize these findings for deeper interpretation. For example, qualitative case studies may be able to examine emotional climates of LHM in greater depth, identifying culturally specific climates of fear versus hope (Bar-Tal, 2001). These could go beyond the survey methods used here to interface with the emerging literature in sociology (e.g., Gensburger, 2019) that looks at how communicative memory manifests in everyday life and ordinary places; and experiments in psychology that examine implicit relationships between autobiographical and historical memory (Brown et

al., 2009). Moreover, it may be worth charting the different properties of communicative/living memories and lived/autobiographical memories of history. Memories that are learned through inter-generational communication may have important functional and qualitative differences to those that are observed from one's own lifetime. Finally, future research should continue to explore different probes of communicative memory in efforts to arrive at a stable and coherent measure that best reflects historical memory in everyday communication and cognition.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the content and evaluation of LHM across 39 societies. Our content analysis provided a cross-cultural sketch of the kind of events that have converged in the living memory of these diverse societies, and how these memories were subjectively evaluated. This indicated that living memories of terrorism were associated with a climate of negativity in Western societies, while living memories of national origins were associated with more positive climates across many developing societies. Tracking shifts in communicative remembering using more in-depth, integrative methods across different societies and generations presents fruitful avenues for future research. These could provide insight into how specific processes of everyday social interaction feed into national political culture and its changes.

Preface 2: Chapter 3

This chapter is grounded in the specific national context of the United States to examine how ordinary Americans apply narratives to make meaningful connections between institutionalized, cultural representations of the past with the more recent, communicative memories identified in Study 1. Beyond the level of historical representations, this chapter takes a narrative approach to identify how recent events (Chapter 2) are meaningfully contextualized by lay narratives about the nation. In turn, these narratives should also show how distant memories of the past are meaningfully (re)oriented to become relevant for the present context and climate. To do so, the current open-ended survey operationalized historical narratives in a layered and nested way. First, participants were asked to provide a list of historical events that are important for nationals to remember. They were then asked to provide a narrative for connecting these events (if a meaningful narrative connection was indeed perceived by the participant). Through this approach, Chapter 3 investigates how historical representations are made sense of as narratives. Importantly, the narratives in this survey are constructed by individuals in their own words and based on their own understandings. We then examine how and the extent to which such understandings are also shared by others in society.

Chapter 2 showed that communicative memories exist as a distinct domain from cultural memories. In contrast to communicative memories, cultural memories refer to representations of those events that are indirectly remembered through institutionalized products and practices, since their direct witnesses have long since died out in the present day (Assmann, 2013). In Study 1, communicative or living historical memories showed great variability in both content (at both the event and thematic level) and subjective evaluation across national contexts, compared to the more consistent and culturally scripted memories of nation-building (Yamashiro et al., 2022). This provides a site or pathway for *change* and

pluralization in collective memory. More specifically, Study 1 showed how there was a high negativity bias in the communicative memory of Americans, which indicates a divergence from consensually positive representations of national origins (Yamashiro et al., 2022). How do these representations inform the way that a narrative about the nation is constructed?

In this chapter, we ask participants to nominate any relevant historical representations which are important for national remembering. This may span across cultural and communicative time. Cultural memories are typically recruited in constructing master narratives about the nation from the top-down, for example, through history education (Carretero et al.,2011) or in political rhetoric (Mols & Jetten, 2014) and commemorations (Schwartz, 2000). Importantly, if such institutionalized efforts are indeed internalized by individuals, cultural representations of history, especially those related to national foundations, ought to be visible as salient resources for constructing national narratives by participants. Our main interest is in seeing what narratives are used to then *connect* these consensual and positive representations of national foundations with those extreme negative representations of living memory in the United States (Study 1). The psychological, individual-level implications of top-down historical narratives can be investigated in this way. Master narratives are theorized to socialize individuals to positively identifying with the nation (Carretero et al., 2011). To address this key theoretical consideration, we examine associations of the popular narratives identified in this chapter with measures of national identification and other intergroup attitudes. This offers an important bottom-up contribution to various research on top-down rhetoric and narrative curation about the nation's past (see Olick et al., 2011). Chapter 3 was co-authored with James H. Liu and published in the European Journal of Social Psychology as an online first article in December, 2023.

Chapter 3: Identifying stories of 'us': A mixed-method analysis of the meaning, contents and associations of national narratives constructed by Americans

Abstract

How do lay individuals reconstruct, appropriate, or resist culturally sanctioned narratives about their nation's past? The current study examined this question through an open-ended survey administered to a United States sample, stratified by age and gender (N = 399). We identified three major historical narratives that were popular amongst Americans. Specifically, we identified positive narratives of the nation's progress over time and glorifying narratives of American exceptionalism, alongside a popular counter-narrative that was critical of the nation as reproducing ongoing cycles of injustice. Representations of national origins were significantly more salient for the narratives of Progress and Glorification, while more recent and lived events were salient for Critical narratives. Progress and Critical narratives were both associated with a constructive orientation to national identity, while Glorifying narratives were associated with blind patriotism. Critical and Glorifying narratives were consistently opposed in their associated political attitudes and in their patterns of endorsement across party affiliations. Overall, it appeared that narratives of progress were most popular and least polarized. We discuss the implications of these findings through the perspective that narratives provide dynamic content for identity construction as well as the means for articulating resistance to hegemony within specific historical and political contexts.

Keywords: Social representations of history, historical narratives, national identity, system justification, mixed-method analysis

Groups that aspire to immortality, such as nations, survive as distinct collectives insofar as people share meaningful representations of a common and continuous past. Political elites and state institutions curate coherent narratives about a nation's shared past in efforts to bolster identification with the state (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992; Olick & Robbins, 1998). However, there is still much to uncover on how these narratives are actually expressed or resisted by ordinary people from the ground up. Do individuals resonate with shared narratives about the nation's past? Through a mixed-method analysis of open-ended responses, we systematically assess the content and meaning of historical narratives currently shared amongst ordinary people in the United States and examine how they are associated with markers of national identity and political attitudes.

A significant development in social identity/self-categorization theory (SCT: Turner et al., 1987) was marked through the revelation that content is a central moderator to the processes and implications of ingroup identification (Elcheroth et al., 2011). Identity content is what makes a group meaningful for individuals, by providing a common group definition for its members (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Constructing a shared past also provides the foundations for 'imagining' the collective as a distinct entity that endures and is connected through generational time (Assmann, 2013; Hammack, 2011). In other words, historical narratives fulfill important epistemic needs (Abrams & Hogg, 2001), including the need to know where the nation came from and how it has dealt with crises over time (Ashmore et al., 2004). In this way, they may operate as charters for a group by reifying an official story of national origins ('where we come from') to justify specific actions and arrangements in the present ('the way things are') and uphold certain aspirations going forward ('where we are going'), (Liu & Hilton, 2005).

The current study examines the ways that events (or historical representations) are selected and woven together in service of an overarching group narrative (Reicher &

Hopkins, 2001). Under the constraints of narrative, certain events are selectively incorporated and remembered in continuity, while others are omitted and forgotten (Rigney, 2005). Such narrative principles of subjectivity and selectivity (Lowenthal, 1985) are what endow historical representations with meaning "over and above the 'bare facts' of history" (Liu & László, 2007, p. 87).

Interdisciplinary research has provided important insights about how such national narratives are curated and promoted from the top down (Olick & Robbins, 1998). These include cultural products like historical monuments, exhibits and texts, as well as memorial practices like commemorations (Assmann, 2013). History education in schools provide a particularly powerful means of socializing individuals to a nationalistic account of the past (Carretero et al., 2013). These practices tend to promote a morally just image of the ingroup, whether that be as a victim, martyr or hero, which requires the denial or downplaying of shameful, unjust acts committed by the ingroup in the past (see Blight, 2002; Kurtiş et al., 2017).

Importantly, this cultural production only forms one side of the picture. The realization of a group charter as an expression of collective identity ought to be determined by the extent to which individuals believe and resonate with the narratives that they are exposed to. In other words, it is important to recognize the mnemonic agency of individuals to collaborate and engage with the historical narratives that are offered to them (Kansteiner, 2002; Soroka & Krawatzek, 2021). As such, Liu and László (2007) acknowledged the need to measure individual differences in the extent to which people resonate with national narratives as a key mediator to narrative impact (see also Klar & Baram, 2016).

Pathways for Narrative Continuity

Unsurprisingly, much of psychological research to date has shown that individuals' knowledge and interpretation of historical events tend to be driven by needs to defend a

continuous (Jetten & Wohl, 2012; Sani et al., 2009; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2014) and positive image of their group (Bilewicz et al., 2017; Sahdra & Ross, 2007; Roth et al., 2017) leading to denial, minimization or reappraisal of the ingroup's historical misdeeds (Kurtiş et al., 2010; Sibley et al., 2005). This tends to be mediated by desires to avoid negative group-based emotions like shame and guilt (Doosje et al., 1998; Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006) and become heightened with perceptions of intergroup threat (Smeekes et al., 2017). Cross-national studies on representations of world history have also shown general trends for ethnocentrism (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2005). In these ways, individual-level historical biases seem to align with cultural constructions of history. However, there is still a gap in understanding how individuals narratively make sense of, justify, and reproduce these attitudes and biases.

Pathways for Narrative Change and Plurality

In contrast to the studies mentioned above, research has also demonstrated potential for bottom-up change (rather than continuity) in historical representations. Communicative memories (memories of public events that have occurred within the lifetimes of individuals alive today; Assmann, 2013) provide sites for new historical representations to emerge through spontaneous social sharing between individuals. Memories of more recent historical events that are kept alive by communication rather than official commemoration may provide content for alternative narratives to proliferate, that do not conform to existing canonical narratives. In line with these ideas, research has shown instances of inter-generational change in historical attitudes (e.g., Licata & Klein, 2010; Rimé et al., 2015). Therefore, while it is in the best interests of a nation-building project for individuals to converge on a shared narrative about the past, a unanimous narrative of history may be unrealistic. It is likely that there are multiple historical narratives across a given society that are diverse in their points of view.

Counter-narratives often emerge to challenge culturally sanctioned narratives. These are typically anchored by experiences of minority or disadvantaged groups, leading to active resistance and contestation (Freel & Bilali, 2022). For example, pan-African narratives have emerged to challenge Eurocentric representations of history and support decolonization/liberation movements in African nations (Cabecinhas & Feijo´, 2010). Local narratives based on collective struggle have similarly been identified across a range of other contexts (Eyerman, 2001; Hammack, 2011; Liu et al., 1999).

Although it is well established that ingroup-serving narratives are motivated and maintained by social identity concerns, there is less known about what may drive endorsement of these counter-narratives, especially among majority group members. The literature on critical consciousness (Freire, 1973) and communicative remembering (Assmann, 2013) suggests that historical events directly experienced and remembered by individuals and their communities, can provide opportunities for perceiving inconsistencies in the status quo (Pratto et al., 2013) and for making connections between events to understand how long-term social/structural processes are connected to the present (Watts et al., 2011).

On a macro level, archival research conducted by Schwartz has demonstrated change in cultural representations of historical events such as the American Civil War. A reframing of the Civil War as a source of heroic inspiration for America's participation in World War II worked to legitimize U.S. state interests during the world war period (Schwartz, 1996). By contrast, representations of the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln were revised and appropriated by activists during the Civil Rights era to mobilize for social change and defy the state's interests (Schwartz, 1997). This pairing or 'keying' between past and present contexts shifts the field of meaning and values that are associated with representations of the past. While this has been documented on a macro level across grand scales of time, there is a

gap in understanding the potential for change and divergence within collective remembering that occurs on a psychological or individual level.

The Present Context

National contestation about history has become widespread in the USA, manifesting in intense debates and protests about the removal of confederate statues and the renaming of Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day (Liu, 2022; Roediger & Wertsch, 2002). Reflecting this, studies have found individual differences in interpretations of national atrocities such as slavery and Native American genocide, depending on how strongly Americans identify with their nation (Eason et al., 2021; Kurtiş et al., 2010; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). There are also differences in historical representations that have been documented between White and African American students (Epstein, 2000; Griffin & Hargis, 2008) as well as inter-generationally (Zaromb et al., 2014).

It is worth investigating the narrative landscape in this context given such a climate of contestation. Among the most dominant narratives in Americans' self-understanding (that has been observed in political rhetoric) is a progressive temporality between past, present and future (Wertsch, 2021). This is a narrative about America as "a nation moving steadily forward and upward as each generation undertakes its own efforts to perfect the union" (Simko, 2022, p. 72). As a dominant theme in U.S. discourse, myths of progress work to minimize present-day injustices by emphasizing and celebrating social achievements (Alridge, 2006; Loewen, 2008). Even more state favoring rhetoric has been observed in right-leaning discourse where nostalgic narratives emphasize past greatness, framing the original 'American experiment' as a universal model that should serve as aspiration for the rest of the world (Simko, 2022). This echoes the well-known expressions of America as a "city on a hill" and historical justifications for ideas like "Manifest Destiny" (Lowenthal, 1994).

Counter to the above, Simko (2022) also observed a traumatic temporality of narrative that is organized around ongoing cycles of racial violence and oppression in the United States. Key to this is the message that "slavery did not end in 1865, but rather, evolved" (p. 79). Myths of progress or past exceptionalism are challenged by drawing explicit connections between past and present injustice (e.g., Alexander, 2012). For example, black history education in schools where African American students were the majority emphasized structural barriers that continue to be faced by their communities, whereas schools where White students were the majority placed much greater emphasis on progressive themes such as individual achievements and the celebration of diversity (Salter & Adams, 2016). The present study will examine whether individuals, as members of a national community, actively apply such narrative frameworks as 'mental habits' (Wertsch, 2021) to make sense of their nation's past.

Beyond this general historical context, the specific circumstances unfolding in recent times also have important implications feeding into the political climate (Choi et al., 2023). Specifically, the events of the Afghanistan withdrawal and 20th year commemoration of 9-11 were salient in news media at the time of data collection. There were also the events of the Capitol insurrection earlier in the year, and the mass protests of the Black Lives Matter movement in the previous year, all of which occurred within the wider context of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Being anchored in a present-day climate that is characterized by such polarization and unrest may influence the kind of narratives that Americans resonate with. Other than the commemoration of 9-11, the events listed above signal some level of collective discontent with institutions. Hence, it would be worth examining: 1) whether these events are saliently recalled in the repertoire of important historical events and 2) whether such lived events are barriers for constructing positive narratives about the country. Given our theoretical interests in the potential for change and plurality in identity content (e.g.,

through the emergence of counter-narratives), it is important to consider how this may be influenced by the current climate and context.

The Present Study

What is the 'story of the making of the ingroup' (Liu et al., 1999) that provides the content for national identification and aspiration amongst Americans? We attempt to empirically identify these narratives, and map patterns of their prevalence. This provides an important step in developing contextualized measures of ingroup narratives as a necessary complement to measures of ingroup identification. Secondly, what are the alternative stories that challenge or diverge from the dominant national narrative? In particular, we will explore how counter-narratives are related with living memories. Thus, the second contribution of this study is to identify a pathway of communicative remembering (Assmann, 2013) that connects historical narratives to the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1973).

This last point is particularly important for understanding how dominant narratives may be challenged and even changed from the bottom-up (Smeekes et al., 2017). To bring these points together, the current investigation aims to highlight the tension between continuity of identity content and meaning on one hand, versus tendencies for change and pluralization on the other. While much has been studied about the former (e.g., Sahdra & Ross, 2007; Sani et al., 2009), we believe that there is room for new contributions regarding the latter, as this is central for theoretically advancing social identity under a dynamic framework that recognizes the narrative agency of individuals (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Reicher & Haslam, 2013).

Taking an open-ended approach, the current investigation focuses on historical narratives as actively constructed by individuals in their own words. This minimizes the effects of 'leading' respondents with closed-ended scales and more closely captures people's vicarious participation in co-constructing national narratives (Liu & László, 2007), while

providing room to spontaneously exercise narrative creativity. By asking people to list historical events alongside their narratives, we will further examine how historical representations are mobilized in service of an overarching narrative.

The identified narratives will then be mapped across political party affiliations and ethnicity to get a snapshot of the group-based narrative landscape. To examine whether certain narratives provide content for American identity, we will also examine associations of narratives with existing measures of national identification. In acknowledgement of identity as a multifaceted concept, we will look at narrative associations with both constructive and blind (Schatz et al., 1999) orientations to national attachment, along with a generalized measure of national identity. While "blind patriots" or "glorifiers" have been characterized by ingroup conformity, an unwillingness to criticize the ingroup, and more antagonistic attitudes toward outgroups, "constructive patriots" have been associated with a greater willingness to criticize the ingroup, which comes with a greater openness to change (Penic et al., 2016). Thus, national narratives may have varying implications depending on what mode of identification they are associated with. Finally, we will provide an overview of how the narratives are associated with other relevant political attitudes in the present. While the current study cannot show causal implications of the identified narratives, our work does highlight ways in which narratives are complementary with certain identities, political attitudes, and beliefs. Since the goals of this investigation are to explore historical narratives as meaningful, contextualized content for collective identity, we take an inductive, descriptive, and open-ended approach as a necessary first step in this endeavour.

Method

Participants and Procedure

399 anonymous participants were recruited from the United States stratified by age and gender, through the online panel provider Prolific. Forty nine percent of the sample identified

as female and the age of participants ranged from 18 to 83 (M = 44.7, SD = 16.2). The sample was 70% White, 14% Black, 9% Asian, 4% Latin American, with the rest identifying as other ethnicities. Data for the current study was drawn from a wider survey on attitudes and beliefs about history, politics, and current events in America (the full list of items are presented in supplementary materials). The Qualtrics survey was posted on Prolific from the 26th to 29th of September in 2021 and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Measures

Historical Events and Narrative

First, participants were asked to "list up to four historical events that all Americans should remember, and briefly explain why Americans should remember those events". The wording of this open-ended question (revised from Yamashiro & Roediger, 2019) probed for historical content that participants view to be normative. As cultural signifiers of knowledge, commonly nominated events should provide insight on historical representations that are most salient for incorporating within an ingroup narrative. For each event that was nominated, participants were also asked: "How positively or negatively do you feel about this event?" on scales ranging from 1 (very negative) to 7 (very positive).

Participants were then asked to indicate their agreement to the question: "Thinking about the four events that you nominated, do you think they go together to form any meaningful narrative?" followed by an open-ended question: "If yes, could you briefly describe this narrative and what it means to you?". There was a 'back' button available so that participants were allowed to modify the historical events that they entered in the previous question. Through this procedure, we attempted to capture participants' deliberate attempts at producing a coherent narrative, even if it meant changing some of the events that initially came to mind. These open-ended items were presented in the beginning of the survey to ensure that effects of response fatigue were minimized. The rest of the measures included in

the current analyses were presented in the order below. We note that responses to these items, especially identity, could have been influenced by those open-ended reminders about history in the beginning of the survey.

Anti-War Attitudes

To measure anti-war attitudes, participants were asked to indicate their agreement to the statements: "I feel bad that America has been involved in so many wars in the last 50 years" and "I feel worried that America may be involved in more wars in the future", with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

National Identity

National identification was measured through a brief 3-item measure (Glasford et al., 2009): "I am proud to be an American", "Being an American is an important part of my identity" and "I feel very close to other Americans" ($\alpha = .875$). Responses ranged on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Blind Patriotism

To measure more specific dimensions of national attachment, we measured blind patriotism through four items derived from a measure developed by Schatz and colleagues (1999): "I would support my country right or wrong", "I believe that American policies are almost always the morally correct ones", "I support American policies for the very reason that they are the policies of my country", "There is too much criticism of America in the world and we its citizens should not criticize it" ($\alpha = .91$). Responses ranged on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Constructive Patriotism

Next, we measured constructive patriotism as another major aspect of national identification through four items derived from Schatz et al. (1999): "If you love America, you should notice its problems and work to correct them", "If I criticize America, I do so out of

love for my country", "I oppose some American policies because I care about my country and want to improve it", "I express my love for America by supporting efforts at positive change" (α = .801). Responses ranged on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

9-11 Justification

To assess willingness to justify America's military response to 9-11, participants were asked to indicate their agreement to the statements: "America was right to invade Afghanistan after 9-11" and "The actions that America took after 9-11 have made the world safer from terrorism", with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

4th of July Commemoration

Participation in the national 4th of July commemorations was measured through the items: "How often have you participated in 4th of July commemorations in the past?" and "How likely are you to participate in 4th of July commemorations next year?", with responses ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely), along with "How positively or negatively do you feel about 4th of July commemorations and celebrations?", with responses ranging from 1 (extremely negative) to 7 (extremely positive), (α = .841).

Voting

To measure voting frequency, participants were asked how often they vote: "In local or statewide elections" and "In national or presidential elections", with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always).

Demographics

Political orientation was measured on a 7-point scale that asked: "On political issues, where would you place yourself?", with responses ranging from 1 (far right) to 7 (far left). Mean political orientation was to the left of mid-point for the overall sample (M = 4.6, SD = 1.69). Partisan affiliations were identified by asking: "If a national election was being

conducted now, which political party would you vote for?". This revealed that the sample had 20% Republicans, 54% Democrats and 16% Independents based on current voting intentions. Perceived social status was measured on a 10-point scale by asking: "On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being people who are the most well off in society, and 1 being the people that are least well off, where would you describe your position?". Mean self-reported social status was 5.64 (SD = 1.78) for the overall sample. Finally, level of education was assessed through the item: "What is the highest level of education you have completed?". Highest level of education in the sample was .5% middle school, 10.5% high school, 27.6% College, 36.3% Bachelor's degree and 25.1% Graduate school or higher.

Analysis

Content Analysis of Historical Events

Responses on historical events were coded through a content analysis. Each event (from up to four events provided by each participant) provided the unit of analysis for coding. The first level of coding involved identifying whether each event could be classified as a historical event or not. Publicly shared events that have occurred in the past or are ongoing in the present were coded as a valid response (e.g., Choi et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2005). This revealed that 95.2% of all responses constituted actual historical events, with the remaining being identified as either non-historical (e.g., personal life events, religious events) or blank/non-sensical responses. The second level involved identifying the historical event that was described and assigning a unique code to each event. These ranged from general (e.g., World War II) to more specific events (e.g., Bombing of Pearl Harbor). Similar to the heuristic developed by Yamashiro et al. (2022), we coded a specific event under its own category if more than five participants mentioned it. If less than five participants mentioned an event, it was grouped into the relevant general-level category or not assigned an event code. The resulting coding guide consisted of unique codes for 53 events.

Thematic Analysis of Historical Narratives

Given the higher complexity of the narrative responses, a thematic analysis (TA) was conducted on this data (see Braun & Clarke, 2021 for an overview of different TA approaches). TA was chosen as the overarching framework because we judged that this would provide the most direct analysis for interpreting the central meaning of the narratives. The current analysis takes a codebook approach to TA (Boyatzis, 1998) given the specificity of our research questions and the nature of our data, which consisted of responses to a very particular survey prompt (rather than open-ended conversation). Given recommendations that such an orientation to content should be supported by rigorous coding techniques, we closely followed guidelines for applying coding procedures in a structured and systematic way (Syed & Nelson, 2015).

At the first step of our analysis, we familiarized ourselves with the data through careful and repeated rounds of reading of the entire dataset. Alongside reviewing of data, the first author began developing a dynamic, working coding manual. In the early stages of developing the coding manual, responses were inductively categorized based on similarities and differences in content, guided by repetition and recurrence (Owen, 1984) of words, phrases, and topics. We then further (re)categorized these through a deductive process, looking for patterns guided by the observations of Simko (2022) and Wertsch (2021) about progressivism and nostalgia as popular themes in the country's rhetoric. This process was further anchored in more general theories about collective remembering that ingroup narratives with positive foundations (Liu & Hilton, 2005) and historical and/or cultural continuity over time (Sani et al., 2009) tend to be most readily salient. Points of overlap and difference between these initial coding categories were discussed in depth between the first and second authors throughout this process. An exhaustive list of codes began to take form, consisting of specific inclusion and exclusion rules based on content. Then, we began an

iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of applying the identified codes back to the original data and combining closely related codes into wider coding families (Campbell et al. 2013), which were more broadly encompassing while retaining internal coherence and external distinctiveness. Detailed descriptions as well as examples (and negative examples) for each distinct code were then added to the coding manual (see https://osf.io/buafw/?view_only=14166057a5cb489a95ef5b5ec18fbc63). Using this, each response was coded by the first author into 1-2 thematic categories, thus themes were not mutually exclusive. A limit of two codes per narrative was set in attempts to strike a balance between dealing with ambiguous responses (that may mention more than one theme) with the aim to prioritize the main, central point of meaning that was communicated in each response.

At the next step, we trained a coder who was blind to the research aims and design and who had no specialized knowledge of American history. The coding manual was discussed extensively with the coder, and we provided a randomly drawn sample of data on which they could practice applying the coding manual. Once the coder indicated their understanding of its application, we assigned a further randomly drawn sample of data (30% of the dataset excluding blank entries) for coding.[5] There was a moderate level of agreement (see Altman, 1990; Landis & Koch, 1977) between coders for categorizing the narratives, $\kappa = .61$ ($p < .001$). Differences were resolved through discussion.

Results

Content Analysis of Historical Events

Through the content analysis, we identified overall counts of historical events that were nominated. Table 2.1 shows distinct events that were nominated by at least 10% of the sample. Of these, only 9-11 satisfied the criteria for popular consensus as an important

[5]Lilgendahl and McAdams (2011) recommended 20% of the dataset to be coded by the reliability coder.

historical event (by being nominated by more than 50% of the sample, see Zaromb et al., 2014).

Table 2.1

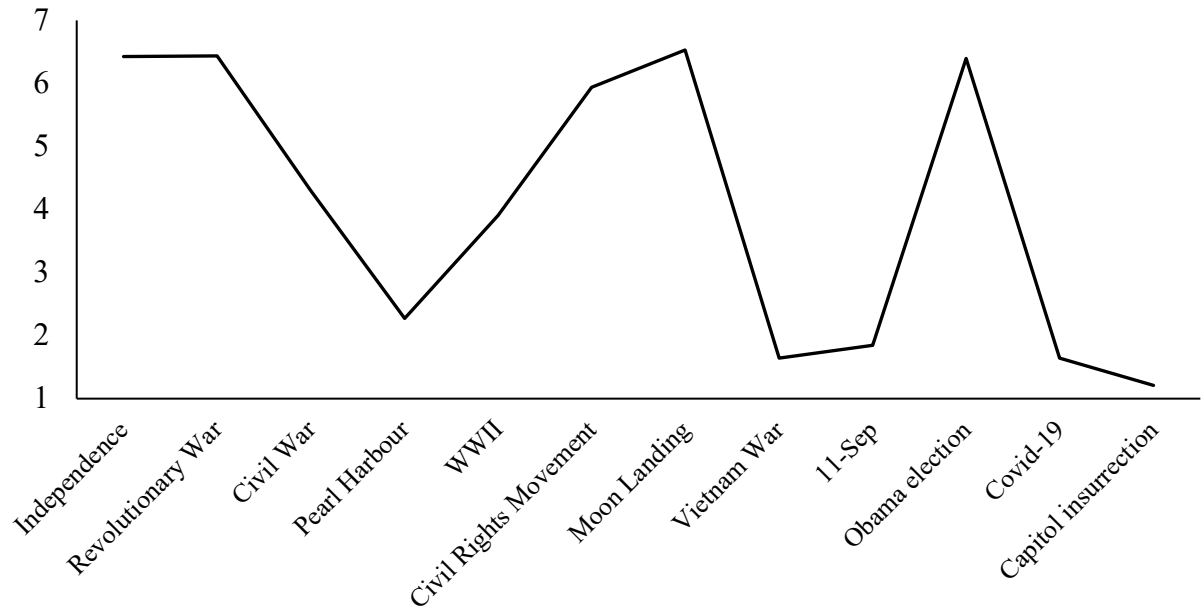
Frequencies of Top Historical Events

Event	**Counts**	%
9-11	237	59.4
Civil War	119	29.8
Independence	101	25.3
WWII	65	16.3
Pearl Harbour	56	14.0
Moon Landing	55	13.8
Civil Rights Movement	53	13.3
Revolutionary War	52	13.0
Obama election	47	11.8
Capitol insurrection	43	10.8
Vietnam War	42	10.5
Covid-19	42	10.5
Total Sample (N)	399	

The average emotional valence associated with events was slightly below mid-point overall, leaning towards negativity (M = 3.73, SD = 2.56). Furthermore, when the emotional valence of the most salient events were tracked in chronological order (see Figure 2.1), we observed a recurrent rise and fall pattern in emotional evaluation over time. Through our thematic analysis, we examined how participants subjectively made sense of these events through the construction of different narratives.

Figure 2.1

Mean Valence of Popular Events in Chronological Order



Thematic Analysis of Historical Narratives

Through our codebook TA, we identified ten unique categories of narrative themes. Of these, there were three that appeared to be the most widely shared amongst participants (see Table 2.2). In order to develop a more in-depth analysis, the current results will focus and elaborate on the meaning of these three main narratives that showed both rich content and considerable popularity. A description of all other narrative categories can be found in the full coding manual (see supplementary materials and Table S1 for example extracts). Given that these categories were not mutually exclusive, there were some co-occurrences between narrative themes. However, it was still more common for narrative responses to be assigned one primary theme, as shown in Table 2.3. These counts suggest that Progress narratives are complementary with both Glorifying and Critical interpretations of the past. On the other hand, the lack of Glorifying and Critical co-occurrences suggests conflict or incompatibility between these themes.

Table 2.2

Frequencies of Narrative Categories and Mean Valence and Dates of their Associated Events

	N	Overall % (N = 399)	Relative % (N = 278)	Event Valence M (SD)	Event Date M (SD)
Progress over time	66	16.5	23.7	4.38 (2.61)	1915 (93.5)
Critical	56	14	20.1	2.4 (2.17)	1946 (87.8)
Glorifying	52	13	18.7	4.61 (2.56)	1894 (115.6)
Conflict	26	6.5	9.4	2.87 (2.21)	1939 (76.2)
Decline over time	21	5.3	7.6	2.9 (2.62)	1928 (242.1)
Critical progress	18	4.5	6.5	3.9 (2.69)	1918 (140.7)
Trauma	15	3.8	5.4	2.77 (2.3)	1950 (68.3)
General national significance	15	3.8	5.4	4.53 (2.62)	1940 (87.2)
Equality	14	3.5	5	4.18 (2.78)	1914 (125.6)
Unity	13	3.3	4.7	3.94 (2.59)	1944 (78.5)

Note. Relative refers to % out of only those participants who agreed that their list of historical events formed a coherent narrative; Descriptives of valence and dates and their relevant analyses are based on averages derived from event nominations (N = 1598) rather than participants (N = 399).

Table 2.3

Frequencies of Main Narratives as Co-occurring and Solo Categories

	N
Progress X Glorifying	10
Progress X Critical	18
Glorifying X Critical	0
Progress Only	43
Glorifying Only	33
Critical Only	51

Note. Remaining counts constitute co-occurrences with other narrative categories; Co-occurrences between Progress and Critical narratives were coded under a distinct category named ‘Critical Progress’ as these showed recurrent and meaningful patterns in their own right.

Progress

The most popular narrative of Progress described America as a nation that, despite having an imperfect or difficult past, has the capacity to grow past it: "Things are not as rosy as we wish them to be, but we can overcome".[6] Importantly, whenever an imperfect past was alluded to, these were defined in very vague terms or only implicitly communicated through a positive temporal contrast to the past, such as "how far we have come as a nation" or how "the arc of justice is headed in a positive direction". In this way, Progress narratives focused on positive social change (or the potential for it) while avoiding explicit attributions for America's problems: "America isn't perfect, but it's worth fighting for". Responses that were coded as 'Critical progress' (a separate category) explicitly acknowledged ingroup flaws and wrongdoings while also recognizing the progress that has or could be made (e.g., "all groups mentioned in those 4 events had to fight to get laws changed to have the same rights as the majority"). However, generalized Progress narratives were much more common than those more nuanced perspectives. Vague acknowledgements of America as an imperfect nation worked to justify the ongoing aspiration for progress as the nation's shared mission (Wertsch, 2021).

This framing of continuous improvement and growth ("America strives to improve and learn") echoes the narrative arc of redemption that individuals from Western contexts commonly draw on for constructing personal life narratives (McAdams, 2006). A redemptive narrative places agency with the subject to choose to do what is right: "Human society is filled with a lot of struggles and pains. In spite of the pains, we ought not to sit without taking risk". In this way, the path to progress is framed as a moral choice, earned through one's own will and intention, and can even contribute to justifying past (albeit vaguely defined) mistakes: "We are forced to accept positive change though trial".

[6]All quotes that are presented come from separate responses.

Relatedly, Progress narratives emphasized the 'hard work' that it takes for achieving social progress. In this way, they were explicitly goal-oriented, describing various ways of working, striving, achieving, learning, developing, or growing to positive ends: "…despite setbacks many people still labor to ensure that these goals will one day be met". These themes echo life-narratives of hard work leading to upward mobility, or the promise of the 'American Dream' (Beasley, 2001). Many responses further focused on the inherent resilience or bravery of Americans in dealing with difficult events throughout history, again communicating a story of growth through struggle and hardship: "Americans are resilient. This country has been through a lot in its rather short history, but we've always managed to come back better", "never lose sight of the greater good that is to come out of adversity", "they show that the American people ultimately rose above the hardships and strife and continued on, working for a better future". This particular framing of negative events in the past as adversity further defuses ingroup accountability and blame from such negative events, with the promise of hard work and adversity creating a better present and future.

Importantly, the Progress narratives that were articulated did not always reflect a temporally positive linear trajectory that is commonly associated with the arc of progress (Topçu & Hirst, 2020). A linear trajectory did not fit with Progress narratives that began with a positive starting point rooted in national foundations: "The Declaration which declared that all men were created equal and had the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was not instantly bestowed on all just because it was written. These events show the hard work and sacrifice it takes to make those words a reality".

This framework of interpreting American history through a vague or simplified framework of progress (mainly encompassing themes of resilience, hard work, and growth) may work to provide a source of symbolic coping (Wagner et al., 2002) through the vicissitudes of time (Sani et al., 2009): "While not perfect, or in any way universal

throughout the country, I think these major events show what Americans hope our country can still be". After selecting only those narratives that were only coded under a single category, a one-way ANOVA found an overall significant difference in event valence across the major narratives, $F(2, 504) = 62.58$, $p < .001$, $n_p^2 = .2$. Mean event valence associated with Progress narratives ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 2.54$) was not significantly different when compared to Glorifying narratives ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 2.34$). However, mean event valence of both Progress and Glorifying narratives were significantly more positive compared to Critical narratives ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 2.12$, $ps < .001$).

Glorifying

Glorifying narratives communicated overtly positive evaluations of America through descriptions of strength, leadership or influence in international/global affairs, and greatness or exceptionalism in general. This was typically framed as a positive social comparison with other countries. Such comparisons were most explicit in responses that discussed America's participation in wars and conflicts: "The events describe the greatness of America and how we responded to defeat enemies and protect the world. America protected the world from the evils of the Nazis and the Japanese empire in WWII and ended the Holocaust. America defeated communism at the fall of the Berlin Wall and overcame the attacks of 9/11".

This emphasis on dominance, strength, and victory in warfare communicated an underlying sense of heroism, self-mythologization and national pride. In relation to this, a sub-theme of the Glorifying narrative was identified where events were interpreted in line with mythologies of America as a global 'Defender of Freedom' (Liu et al., 2005; Wertsch & O'Connor, 1994): "It is worth it to fight for freedom against tyranny and evil forces", "The narrative is our emergence as the land of the free", "The people here and around the world

who look toward us as the beacon of hope and freedom".[7] In these ways, Glorifying narratives were blatantly patriotic. Unlike Progress narratives, there were no attempts to deal (no matter how vaguely) with negative aspects of America's past.

Similar to Progress narratives, Glorifying narratives interpreted national foundations positively, and this was often used to corroborate claims of the country's exceptionalism: "It's the narrative of the creation and building of the world's greatest democracy", "Probably no country in the world has been as influential as the USA and that process started with its independence". However, rather than focusing on the inherent struggle of living up to these founding principles, Glorifying narratives tended to emphasize the importance of preserving and protecting these already realized ideals from deterioration or threat: "These events show the beginning of a great nation, a preservation of that nation and its values, an outside attack on this nation, and an internal attack", "I believe that we must examine all policies through the lens of our constitution. When we waver from our foundation there will be imbalance somewhere which may lead to collapse—of our economy, or security, etc". In this way, Glorifying narratives seemed to align with an essentialist orientation to ingroup identity, which prioritizes continuity and homogeneity of ingroup values over time (Sani et al., 2009).

Critical

Narratives that explicitly expressed specific critiques of America's faults, failures, misdeeds or wrongdoings (past and present), were categorized as Critical narratives. Beyond Simko's (2022) traumatic temporality which focuses on the ongoing legacy of racial violence and slavery, there was an array of content that was drawn upon for applying a Critical narrative. This included critical evaluations of the U.S. government (including politicians), racial injustice, economic inequality, U.S. military aggression and interventionism,

[7] All counts and analyses reported in these results combines the main category (Glorifying) with its sub-category (Defender of Freedom).

colonialism, the education system (most notably, the sanitization of history), capitalism, and the meaning of America itself: “American citizens grow up with the belief that we are inherently better than and blessed before others, which means that we have a lot of systems to dismantle and beliefs to unlearn”.

A key factor for distinguishing a Critical narrative from a narrative of Decline (see supplementary materials), was that negative evaluations were attributed to structural problems. In cases where critique was attributed to individuals, they were explicitly acknowledged as individuals with access to power: “The United States of America is a country founded by white property-owning men who put the interests of white property-owning men first”, “America is built on class warfare. In order for a handful billionaires to thrive millions of minorities and others must be exploited and abused”. In this way, Critical narratives mainly worked to communicate an ongoing sense of injustice (see Freel & Bilali, 2021). On the other hand, narratives of Decline tended to communicate a generalized sense of negativity, pessimism, or anxiety.

Critical narratives acknowledged historical and societal problems without turning to redemptive or nostalgic justifications through temporal contrasts; that is, without presenting temporal alternatives for how things were (Decline) or could be (Progress). Instead, rhetorical contrasts were drawn between America’s ideals and reality to reveal contradictions and communicate a sense of disillusionment: “We fought to be free of England, with admirable goals which “we” promptly forgot in our suppression of native peoples and economically based racial inequities”.

Directly counter to the former narratives, Critical narratives tended to interpret national foundations negatively, often expressed through explicit rejection or ‘rewriting’ of the popular origin story: “The U.S. was founded on human rights violations”, “We have racism ingrained into our society, we were built and founded on it”, “We are founded on

racism, colonialism, and the pursuit of happiness at others' expense", "I believe that the government that the founding fathers created no longer works. It needs a major overhaul". As mentioned, historical events remembered through a Critical lens were evaluated significantly more negatively than both other narratives discussed above.

Historical Representations as Content for Narratives

Our content analysis of historical events (see Table 2.4) demonstrated that temporally distant events were much more salient in Progress and Glorifying narratives, while there was greater incorporation of living historical memories in Critical narratives. When specific events were grouped into relevant content categories (see Table S2 in supplementary materials for these full coding details), both Progress (χ^2 (1, 399) = 13.85, $p < .001$) and Glorifying narratives (χ^2 (1, 399) = 32.11, $p < .001$) were significantly more likely to mention events related to national foundations compared to the rest of the sample. In turn, Critical narratives were significantly less likely to mention national foundations compared to the rest of the sample (χ^2 (1, 399) = 18.54, $p < .001$), while being significantly more likely to mention events related to ingroup atrocities (χ^2 (1, 399) = 42.03, $p < .001$).

Table 2.4

Frequencies and Mean Valence of the Top Events Nominated Across Narratives

Progress				**Glorifying**				**Critical**			
Event	Date	%	Valence M (SD)	Event	Date	%	Valence M (SD)	Event	Date	%	Valence M (SD)
9-11	2001	54.5	1.89 (1.8)	9-11	2001	61.5	2.06 (1.87)	9-11	2001	44.6	1.36 (.86)
Civil War	1865	40.9	4.52 (2.36)	Independence	1776	48.1	**6.8** (.5)	Civil War	1865	30.4	4.29 (2.26)
Independence	1776	34.8	**6.61** (1.03)	Civil War	1865	36.5	5 (2.26)	Vietnam War	1975	32.2	**1.23** (.6)
Revolution	1775	24.2	**6.44** (.81)	Revolution	1775	25	**6.38** (.96)	Trail of Tears	1850	21.4	1.58 (1.73)
WWII	1945	21.2	4.79 (2.05)					Capitol Riots	2021	21.4	1.17 (.39)

Given that the narrative categories were not mutually exclusive, some events were indeed associated with more than one narrative at a time. However, these averaged scores are still useful for indicating general directions in which these events tended to be evaluated, depending on the kind of narratives that they were associated with. Positive narratives about the nation appeared to be anchored by a consensual importance and positive view assigned to national foundations. This indicates success of state efforts to impart positive or inspiring narratives of the nation through national commemorations like the 4th of July. On the other hand, the more negative remembrances associated with Critical narratives appeared to stem from much more recent events. The averaged dates of events that were nominated alongside Critical narratives were more recent compared to the dates associated with Progress and Glorifying narratives overall (see Table 2.2). When comparing only those narratives that were assigned a single code, we found in a one-way ANOVA that this difference was significant, $F(2, 481) = 12.96$, $p < .001$, $n_p^2 = .051$. While Progress ($M = 1919$, $SD = 86.75$) and Glorifying ($M = 1900$, $SD = 94.94$) narratives were not significantly different from each other, the dates associated with Critical narratives ($M = 1950$, $SD = 82.96$) were significantly more recent compared to both Progress ($p = .003$) and Glorifying ($p < .001$) narratives.

Given that the valence of events was negatively correlated with the date of events ($r = -.282$, $p < .001$), more recent events tend to be interpreted more negatively than ones more distant in the past. Moreover, being anchored in this negative present-day climate seems to be conducive to constructing narratives that are critical of the nation. To further demonstrate this point, we compared counts of events that were salient in the immediate context for Americans during the time of data collection. Counts of the Capitol riot were significantly higher in Critical narratives compared to the rest of the sample ($\chi^2(1, 399) = 7.69$, $p = .006$). While counts of the Afghanistan War ($N = 9$) and retreat ($N = 8$), did not show any significant differences, counts of the Vietnam War were significantly more salient in Critical

narratives compared to the rest of the sample ($\chi^2(1, 399) = 8.79$, $p = .003$). This may be because America's failure in Vietnam (remembered very negatively as shown in Table 2.4) was salient as a historical analogy (Ghilani et al., 2017; Schuman & Rieger, 1992) for the Afghanistan withdrawal that was unfolding at the time.

Narrative Landscape Across Groups

Differences by Partisanship

We mapped the prevalence of these narratives across partisan groups (see Table 2.5). This revealed that Critical narratives were significantly more prevalent among Democrats (χ^2 $(1, 295) = 10.54$, $p = .002$) and Independents (χ^2 $(1, 144) = 13.51$, $p < .001$) compared to Republicans. In turn, Glorifying narratives showed significantly greater prevalence among Republicans compared to Democrats (χ^2 $(1, 295) = 7.59$, $p = .006$). Interestingly, there were no partisan differences in the prevalence of Progress narratives indicating that they may allow for a less divisive interpretation of the nation's past and origins. While Glorifying narratives may blatantly ignore the ingroup atrocities, Progress narratives may at least show attempts to deal (albeit vaguely) with the cognitive dissonance presented by past atrocities through redemptive justification, thus accommodating to a wider range of political interests (see Table S3 in supplementary materials for a further comparison of narrative co-occurrences across partisan affiliations).

Table 2.5

Frequencies of Main Narratives Across Partisan Groups

Republicans (N = 52)	**%**	**Democrats (N = 152)**	**%**	**Independents (N = 51)**	**%**
Progress	25	Progress	25	Progress	23.5
Glorifying	32.7	Glorifying	13.2	Glorifying	13.7
Critical	3.8	Critical	23.7	Critical	27.5

Differences by Ethnic Identification

Table 2.6 shows the extent to which each narrative was shared amongst different ethnicities in the sample. It appeared that White participants endorsed more Progress and Glorifying narratives, whereas most ethnic minority groups endorsed more Critical narratives. This accords with the idea that national charter narratives are typically narrated from the dominant group's perspective, working to maintain their positive image, interests and status legitimacy (Liu & Hilton, 2005).

Table 2.6

Ethnic Group Breakdown of the Main Narratives

	Progress %	Glorifying %	Critical %	Total (N)
White	16.8	14.6	11.4	280
Black/African American	16.7	7.4	16.7	54
Hispanic	7.1	0	21.4	14
Native American	50	0	25	4
Asian	8.8	14.7	20.6	34
Multiple races	30	20	40	10
Other	33.3	0	0	3

Given that counts of each ethnic minority group were relatively low, we combined them to draw comparisons between majority and minority groups. We only found significant differences in endorsement of the Critical narrative, where a greater proportion of ethnic minorities endorsed Critical narratives compared to White Americans, $\chi^2(1, 399) = 5.29$, $p = .021$ (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7

Frequencies of Main Narratives across Majority and Minority Ethnic Groups

	Progress %	Glorifying %	Critical %	Total (N)
White	16.8	14.6	**11.4**	280
Minorities	16	9.2	**20.2**	119

Table 2.8 displays example quotes of how each major narrative was expressed across majority and minority groups. There was considerable commonality in narrative content across ethnic groups. Extracts from Glorifying narratives showed common expressions of the country's greatness, strength, influence and a consciousness of growing threat to the nation. Among Progress narratives were common expressions of social change and development as accomplishments, national ideals of justice and fairness as admirable, and Americans' resilience over adversity.

Finally, Critical narratives also showed resonance across ethnic groups despite being much more specific in their content. A resistance to the mythologizing of America was provided by both majority ("a thinly veneered myth of American exceptionalism") and minority extracts ("the belief that we are inherently better than and blessed before others"). Critiques of racism and the systematic sanitization of history were also highlighted by members of both groups. However, it is interesting to note that these were often expressed from an insider position by White participants ("It's really sad that **we** can't own up to horrible things **we've** done"; "**we** have racism ingrained into **our** society") to communicate a sense of ingroup accountability and blame. For ethnic minorities, these were expressed without signifiers of ingroup membership, whether that be from a directly affected victim ("the white washing in school teachings **in America**") or an observing outsider ("Racism is a significant part of **US history and institutions**") position.

Table 2.8

Sample of Narrative Quotes Across Ethnic Groups

White	Ethnic Minorities
Glorifying	
These events show the beginning of **a great nation**, a preservation of that nation and its values, an outside attack on this nation, and an internal attack.	The events describe **the greatness of America** and how we responded to defeat enemies and protect the world. America protected the world from the evils of the Nazis and the Japanese empire in WWII and ended the Holocaust. America defeated communism at the fall of the Berlin Wall and overcame the attacks of 9/11. (Asian)
…America, as an international leader, has always been in the focus of attention of other countries and that is why any event inside the country had an impact on the whole world - be it a formation of a new democratic state (event 1), exploration of new territories (event 2), painstaking efforts to survive and thrive (event 3) and **the threats to its existence nowadays** (event 4)	I believe that we must examine all policies through the lens of our constitution. **When we waver from our foundation there will be imbalance somewhere which may lead to collapse**--of our economy, or security, etc. (Multiple Races)
All these events describes the narrative that, Americans **are stronger and united more than any nation of the world**.	America is **strong and its impact in modern world** is huge. (Asian)
Progress	
The Vietnam war aside, I feel like the other events eventually help lead this country to elect President Obama because **people were ready for progress and change.**	The series of events written above, from the event of moon landing, Obama's election, Terrorist attack of September 11th and the declaration of independence **helped America to grow significantly in numerous areas and developed rapidly** at a very higher pace. (African American)
America and its **people stand up for what is right**. Protecting human rights and working together.	America is a vastly transforming landscape. America went from aggressive initiatives for negative change and also for positive change. This to me means exactly what **America is all about "The Land of Opportunity".** (Multiple races)

On a positive note about these four terrible events in US history, they show tha**t the American people ultimately rose above the hardships and strife and continued on, working for a better future.**	When life gives us lemons we make lemonade and **never lose sight of the greater good that is to come out of adversity**. (African American)
Critical	
The preservation of white supremacy through state-sanctioned violence and oppression towards people of color**-- under a thinly veneered myth of American exceptionalism sold and widely believed by white Americans**.	The narrative is conflict and with the U.S. **needing to prove its power and divine right as the greatest nation**…We often feel that the world should follow our lead, speak our language, embrace our culture. It means that **American citizens grow up with the belief that we are inherently better than and blessed before others**. Which means that we have a lot of systems to dismantle and beliefs to unlearn. (Multiple races)
We, as a people, have allowed ourselves to become detached from uncomfortable moments in history. Each of the events I listed are either not talked about or denied. **It's really sad that we can't own up to horrible things we've done in the past,** whether decades ago, or just last year.	Don't erase black history. As a person of color **it is extremely sad that I was denied the right to learn about what really happened in history to my ancestors because of the white washing in school teachings** in America. (African American)
3 of the 4 events I included directly involve race and racism. T**he United States is an incredibly racist country, we have racism ingrained into our society, we were built and founded on it.** It is something we need to actively work to dismantle that not enough people are looking towards.	**Racism is a significant part of US history and institutions**. It explains the recent chaos in US politics and society that arose from a very long history. It shows there's much more work to be done to improve equality. (Asian)

Note. Similar expressions of content (emphasized in bold) are positioned on the same row.

Associations of Narratives with National Identity and Political Attitudes

Through a series of logistic regressions, we obtained bivariate odds ratios to examine whether these narratives bear associations with demographic characteristics and identity as well as current political attitudes. As would be expected, there were significant associations with political orientation where increases in a left-leaning orientation was associated with a reduced likelihood for endorsing Glorifying [OR: .8; 95% CI (.672, .951)] and higher

likelihood for endorsing Critical narratives [OR: 1.58; 95% CI (1.287, 1.928)]. However, in terms of other demographic variables (age, self-reported status, and education), there were no significant associations found.

Next, we turn to measures of national identification. Being higher on general national identification was associated with an increased probability of endorsing Glorifying narratives [OR: 1.42; 95% CI (1.137, 1.784)] and in turn, a decreased probability of endorsing Critical narratives [OR: .61; 95% CI (.508, .726)]. We found the same pattern with blind patriotism where higher scores were associated with an increased probability of endorsing Glorifying [OR: 1.2; 95% CI (1.002, 1.447)] and reduced probability of endorsing Critical narratives [OR: .48; 95% CI (.362, .637)]. Interestingly, with constructive patriotism, we found that higher scores were associated with increased likelihoods of endorsing both Progress [OR: 1.47; 95% CI (1.067, 2.029)] and Critical narratives [OR: 1.51; 95% CI (1.067, 2.142)], while there was no association with Glorifying narratives. Also relevant to nation building, we found that greater participation in 4th of July commemorations was associated with higher likelihoods to endorse both Progress [OR: 1.22; 95% CI (1.016, 1.453)] and Glorifying narratives [OR: 1.25; 95% CI (1.025, 1.531)] and in turn, a lower likelihood of endorsing Critical narratives [OR: .76; 95% CI (.632, .901)].

Out of interest, we examined associations between a lack of narrative (i.e., those who selected ‘No’ when asked whether they perceived a meaningful narrative in their nominated events) and identity. We found that not perceiving any meaningful narrative was associated with lower constructive patriotism [OR: .57; 95% CI (.452, .726)], and was unrelated with blind patriotism. Moreover, a general ahistorical orientation (e.g., “I don’t care about the history of my country”, see supplementary materials for items) was also negatively correlated with constructive patriotism ($r = -.304$, $p < .001$), while being unrelated with blind patriotism.

Finally, we examined associations with political attitudes that were relevant to the present context. Being higher on both anti-war attitudes [OR: 2.07; 95% CI (1.503, 2.862)] and willingness to vote [OR: 1.37; 95% CI (1.104; 1.698)] were associated with an increased probability of endorsing Critical narratives (but not associated with the other narratives). Higher justification of America's response to 9-11 was associated with an increased probability of endorsing Glorifying narratives [OR: 1.31; 95% CI (1.099, 1.568)] and in turn, a lower probability of endorsing Critical narratives [OR: .65; 95% CI (.545, .777)].

Discussion

The current study examined how American lay people construct historical narratives about their nation. Through our analysis, we described three popular narratives. These included narratives of progress, narratives that were glorifying of the nation and narratives that were critical of the nation. Progress and Glorifying narratives aligned closely with popular rhetoric in the United States (e.g., Simko, 2022; Wertsch, 2021). Critical narratives reflected a broader orientation of perceiving ongoing injustice, commonly found across contexts of resistance (Freel & Bilali, 2021). Importantly, there was no narrative that was endorsed by a clear majority of the sample. Furthermore, a 'mnemonic standoff' (Wertsch, 2021) between Glorifying and Critical narratives mapped directly onto the polarization between Republicans and Democrats, suggesting a landscape of contested and politicized narratives about the past, and especially of national origins.

Progress and Glorification: Different Stories From Common Origins

Historical representations differed in content and evaluation across the main narratives that were identified, showing that historical events are actively used as symbolic resources to serve a wider narrative (Liu & László, 2007). In particular, we found positive (and salient) representations of national foundations underpinning the narratives of progress and glorification. Both narratives were also associated with higher participation in 4th of July

commemorations. However, given that these narratives have distinct trajectories, this suggests that there is some narrative agency in how Americans interpret a positive trajectory from their nation's origins to the present (albeit choosing from a 'stock of stories' that are culturally available to them, see Wertsch, 2002).

Through narratives of progress, people interpreted America's founding ideals as being admirable yet still out of reach (see Wertsch, 2021). Contingent on this interpretation, history is narrated through the nation's continuous and ongoing quest to live up to such high-minded ideals. This fits the progressive rhetoric of politicians identified by Simko (2022) where America "moves optimistically forward" (p. 74), through commitment to the secular scripture to form a 'more perfect union'. Progress narratives resembled a form of interpretive denial by providing a way of humbly acknowledging an imperfect past while framing past injustices as being already resolved, less severe or as necessary lessons on the way to a better future.

Here, it is important to note that the narrativizing of American progress is and has been separate from real, objective markers of progress. Research corroborates this gap, as Kraus and colleagues (2017) have shown how American individuals are motivated to overestimate social and economic progress toward egalitarianism between White and Black Americans. This motivated optimism has implications for policy, as research has also shown how perceiving progress in racial equality tends to be related with lower support for affirmative action by White Americans (Brodish et al., 2008). This is likely because an arc of progress conveys the present as the best time in history (de la Sablonniere et al., 2013). Such feel-good rhetoric may be especially useful for Americans in coping with the fundamental contradiction between the nation's egalitarian ideals and history of racial domination (Shklar, 1991). Indeed, our findings showed how the articulation of progress lacked acknowledgement of specific details about America's "imperfect" past, suggesting either a lack of knowledge or motivated misperception.

In Glorifying narratives, America's founding ideals are interpreted as setting the nation up to be the best country and democracy in the world. History is narrated through the nation's preservation of those ideals, typically through conflict or warfare. This resembles one major dimension of nostalgic rhetoric, namely the mythologizing of the nation's distant past which is then used to justify its unique and superior status over others (Wildschut et al., 2014). Such differing frameworks for understanding the nation ought to bear implications for how individuals deal with ingroup wrongdoings, as well as other relevant political and intergroup attitudes in the present. Indeed, we found in our data that while the endorsement of Glorifying narratives was associated with greater justification for America's aggressive policy in response to 9/11, the endorsement of Progress narratives was not. Similarly, only the endorsement of Glorifying narratives was positively associated with blindly patriotic attitudes and a more right-leaning political orientation.

Being the most popular narrative that was shared, a progressive view of the nation seems to serve a particularly important purpose for American self-understanding. This may partially be attributed to contextual factors. For example, while the decision to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan was supported by most Americans according to a Pew Research article (2021), there was an even bigger majority who agreed that the U.S. mostly failed in achieving its goals in Afghanistan. The Capitol insurrection was also relatively salient as a recent memory in this sample (being within the top ten nominated events). Such a climate may not be conducive to espousing narratives that blatantly glorify the nation. Future research should consider specific enablers and constraints embedded in the context that mobilizes a narrative. Understanding such contextual factors (through field or experimental studies) would be central to understanding the situational dynamics of identity entrepreneurship (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) within national and political communities.

The Critical (counter)Narrative and Resistance

A key distinction of the Critical narrative was the relative absence of positively regarded national origin events. Furthermore, a critical self-awareness of America's 'official' origin story was often explicitly acknowledged. This suggests that it is not merely a lack of knowledge about foundational myths, but a conscious awareness of their cultural curation and an intentional resistance against buying into them. This in turn, left more room for anchoring the narrative with more recent events and ingroup atrocities. While level of education was not associated with the endorsement of Critical narratives, there may be some influence from recent changes in educational practices (like the introduction of Black History Month) and increasing exposure to historical discourses led by activism outside of 'official' commemorative spaces (e.g., the Black Lives Matter Movement).

Central to the perception of ongoing injustice (Freel & Bilali, 2021) was a marked salience of recent, lived events in the historical repertoire associated with Critical narratives. In addition to the dates being more recent, there were more events nominated that were directly relevant to the present context. The salience of the Vietnam War in particular suggests a recognition of how an event from the past can be applied to think critically about the present (Schuman & Rieger, 1992). The finding that Critical narratives were significantly more prevalent amongst ethnic minorities further suggests that particularly those events directly experienced, witnessed, or shared within minority communities are what contribute to the emergence of counter-narratives (Freire, 1973). Allyship is also important, as we qualitatively observed how (a substantial minority) of majority group members expressed Critical narratives via a sense ingroup accountability in place of direct experience. Further investigation into how living memories communicatively develop into Critical narratives may contribute to better understanding the etiology of how counter-narratives develop from the

bottom-up, especially for contexts where critically conscious education may not be easily accessible.

While some have pointed out that a narrative that fixates on the longevity of injustice can lead to hopelessness (Aubin et al., 2016; van Zomeren et al., 2008), perceiving long-standing injustice also leads to heightened anger and contempt, thereby providing fuel for collective action (Freel & Bilali, 2021). Though we did not measure collective action intentions directly, we did observe how endorsing Critical narratives was positively associated with voting intentions and anti-war attitudes, while the other narratives were not.

Although two of the three most popular narratives reflected positively on the nation, when looking at overall responses of the sample, positive narratives were far from hegemonic. Specifically, the more minor "conflict", "decline over time", and "trauma" narratives (see supplementary materials) have points of overlap in content with the critical narrative, as well as being associated with more negative and recent events in history overall. Narratives composed from positive/neutral events totalled to 178 responses, compared to 118 responses articulating negative narratives (see Table 2.2). Thus, rather than being a minority position, critical or disenchanted views on national history may be nearly as widespread (or at least on the rise) as their more celebratory or complacent counterparts (see also Choi et al., 2023; Yamashiro & Roediger III, 2019).

Narrative and Identity

Each of the major narratives showed some relationship with measures of national identity, supporting the idea that historical narratives provide meaningful content for understanding and expressing ingroup identity. Progress and Critical narratives were unrelated (or negatively related for the latter) with national identity, however both were positively associated with constructive patriotism. This corroborates research in the conceptualization of identity as a multidimensional construct (Roccas et al., 2006). This

particular mode of identification, which involves being more critically or constructively attached to one's nation, has been associated with a willingness to criticize the ingroup to change it for the better (see also Schatz & Staub, 1997). Endorsing progressive and critical narratives seems to inform a sense of identification that holds the ingroup to greater account (Schatz & Staub, 1997). Such findings are especially interesting given that partisan affiliation (Republican versus Democrat) was not associated with constructive patriotism, highlighting the potential of narrative in developing a constructive sense of identity, beyond pre-existing left/right ideology (Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019).

In turn, the espousal of Glorifying narratives was associated with a blind attachment to one's nation that is typically associated with uncritical conformity and intolerance of criticism (Schatz & Staub, 1997). As such, it made sense for these narratives to be associated with ingroup defensive attitudes such as justification for the military response to 9-11 even when such attitudes may have been controversial in the context of the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Finally, we also found how no endorsement of a historical narrative was associated with lower constructive patriotism and unrelated with other measures of identity. This aligns with the idea that those who do not perceive meaningful identity content (whether that be positive or negative content) are those who are actually more disidentified with the nation overall (Penic et al., 2016).

A link may be drawn here between glorifying narratives and ingroup glorification (Roccas et al., 2006), which has been associated with systematic denial of ingroup-perpetrated harms, lack of outgroup perspective taking, dehumanization of outgroup members, and the legitimization of violence against outgroup members (e.g., Bilali, 2013; Leidner et al., 2010; Li et al., 2023). Importantly, some recent studies have begun to explore how exposure to narratives may shape, direct, and contextualize ingroup glorification by providing it with content. For example, Americans and Israeli Jews exposed to critical

narratives of conflicts involving their group demonstrated reduced ingroup glorification, but not attachment (McLamore et al., 2019). This provides further support that glorifying and critical narratives are directly opposed, while also indicating that glorifying narratives may provide necessary content for mobilizing ingroup glorification. Future studies should examine associations as well as causal relationships between the identified narratives and measures of ingroup glorification (versus attachment) to extend these ideas.

While findings from narrative intervention studies would suggest that narratives have transformative potential to reinforce, shift, or alter modes of group identification, our current findings suggest that a reciprocal relationship between narrative and identity is more likely (see also Salter & Adams, 2016). When asked to assemble narratives of their own volition, our participants came up with narratives that aligned with pre-existing individual differences (political orientation) and sub-group identities (partisan affiliation and ethnic identification). This suggests that while we may use narrative-based interventions to temporarily challenge hegemonic narratives, in the absence of such prompts, participants tend to re-create narratives that feed back into priming and reinforcing their own pre-existing identification modalities. Such findings provide directions for understanding specific limitations and the need to consider individual differences in the important work of developing narrative interventions (see also Klar & Baram, 2016).

There are a few limitations of note for the current study. Regarding the sample, there was an over-representation of Democrats and Whites in the sample. Relatedly, given the low number of ethnic minorities in our sample, we could not examine associations of narratives for ethnic groups separately. It is likely that these narratives have different motivations and meaning for minority groups. For example, Selvanathan et al. (2022) showed that historical narratives held by African Americans tended to follow a progressive arc, beginning in experiences of victimization and oppression, followed by instances of resistance and

resilience. In this way, progressive narratives may serve a more specific identity-empowering function for minority groups, while still being critical and recognizing the need for structural change (example response: “As an African-American I can see our historical challenges, I can embrace our accomplishments and I can see the work that still needs to be in our quest to recognized as full Americans”).

The high number of narratives that were identified meant that the three main narratives only represented a minority of the sample overall. While this partly stems from our analytic procedure which aimed to identify specific narrative themes, it also highlights that there was considerable fragmentation of historical narratives in our sample, and suggests that there is no consensually endorsed historical narrative in the United States (at the moment). This diversity in and of itself provides an important and useful insight from doing bottom-up research. Future research may extend upon this work cross-culturally, and it would be interesting to observe not only differences in content, but also variation in level of fragmentation across different national contexts.

In terms of methodology, we also acknowledge that the findings reported in this study could be subject to order effects where being reminded about history in the beginning of the survey could have heightened a sense of national identification in the later items. As such, it is recommended for future studies to counterbalance the order of items about historical narratives and identity to further disentangle this relationship.

Following on from these qualitative findings, it would be beneficial to develop and validate culturally meaningful scales that can measure the degree of identification with ingroup narratives. This would be helpful for measuring how narratives guide specific attitudes and actions in the present in a standardized way (the past weighing on the present), as well as sensitively measuring the effects of context on how people interact with popular ingroup narratives (the present weighing on the past: see Liu & Khan, 2021 for further

discussion). The latter would be critical for building upon the interdisciplinary work of Assmann (2013), Schwartz (1996; 1997), and Freire (1973) to demonstrate how social and political contexts are related to processes of change that emerge from the individual level of meaning-making.

Conclusion

To conclude, narratives are important in providing meaning for national identification. The popular narratives identified in the present context are likely to be different to those identified in other places, such as narratives of victimhood in places like Eastern Europe (Obradović, 2016), which because of differences in meaning, are expected to bear different implications and associations with identity. We may also expect different narrative landscapes depending on the group, their political context, and history. For example, Soroka & Krawatzek (2021) suggested that historical narratives in Russia are likely to be hegemonic and more stable given the heavy and prolonged influence of the state in history education. Narratives provide the tools for mobilizing individuals as members of a group, and knowing these narratives provides us with the understanding of how these tools work, are used, and can be changed by people embedded within these groups. Significant differences in the kinds of narratives that were endorsed across groups suggest that America's present context of political polarization is feeding into the divergence and pluralization of collective remembering at the individual level. Progress seems to provide a recognizable framework for interpreting positive and somewhat constructive meaning in American identity. However, more polarized narratives also appear available, with important implications for the mobilization of identity and resistance in this context.

Preface 3: Chapter 4

The final studies that are presented in Chapter 4 are a follow-up to the descriptive narrative findings offered in Chapter 3. This chapter aims to demonstrate the positive effects of cultural and communicative remembering (Assmann, 2013) on national identification, via the functional activation of national narratives. More specifically, both cultural and communicative events that are related to group-based concerns are expected to activate heightened endorsement of national narratives, which in turn, reinforces and bolsters national identification. Chapter 4 tests the predictions that representations of national foundations and representations of current events related to intergroup threat (i.e., Russia's invasion of Ukraine) will lead to heightened belief in popular national narratives, which in turn, would lead to higher national identification. These predictions are based on social identity theory, where group members' motivations to perceive meaningful ingroup content whether that be to legitimize positive historical origins, or to enhance the ingroup's image compared to a historically relevant outgroup, should lead to heightened belief in national narratives.

In Chapter 3, positive narratives of progress and glorification, and a critical counter-narrative were identified to be most popularly shared amongst lay Americans. The need to ground identity in a meaningful origin story when exposed to reminders of national foundations, is expected to trigger heightened beliefs in the progress and glorifying narratives, compared to controls. The need to defend the ingroup's image against a historically relevant outgroup when reminded about Russia's invasion of Ukraine is likewise expected to elevate beliefs in progress and glorifying narratives of America, compared to controls. Importantly this study was conducted during the early days of Russia's invasion, when the event was highly salient in American news media. The second study, which was replicated at a much later time point, expected that such effects when exposed to reminders of current events would no longer be observed. That is, in the absence of a salient intergroup

threat, communicative remembering of current events is less likely to apply national narratives as frames for understanding those events, which in turn, would not reinforce national identity. This is especially the case given that under usual circumstances, salient current events in America tend to be focused on negative, domestic issues (see Chapter 2).

The experiments conducted in this chapter take a naturalistic approach, by using open-ended primes that recruit participants' actual knowledge of national foundations and current events (that are salient at the time), rather than exposing participants to pre-designed priming materials. This is what enables the studies to capture the implications of real representations of current events that are unfolding at the time of data collection. This taps into real societal events that participants are paying attention to and thinking about in their day to day lives. Chapter 4 draws functional connections between cultural representations of history (Chapter 3), communicative remembering of current events (Chapter 2), and between narrative and identity (Chapter 3), by showing how they are associated with each other in a network of meaning. Chapter 4 was co-authored with James H. Liu and is currently being revised for submission to the British Journal of Social Psychology.

Chapter 4: Investigating the dynamic activation of national narratives for identity construction: A naturalistic experiment utilizing event reminders in the United States

Abstract

Historical narratives are theorized to provide a source of definition, continuity, and enhancement for national identity. In the current studies, we examined this dynamic causally through two naturalistic experiments where American participants were reminded about national origin events, current events, versus personal events (as the control). Endorsement of popular American narratives and national identification were included as dependent variables. It was hypothesized that historical reminders of national origins (study 1 and 2) and present-day reminders of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (study 1) would situationally activate higher beliefs in particular national narratives compared to controls, which would in turn, predict higher national identification. Based on a social representations approach to identity, national origin reminders tested the intragroup motivation for constructing meaningful identity content through narratives associated with foundational myths of statehood. Secondly, current event reminders tested the intergroup motivation for positive comparison against a relevant outgroup but only in study 1, where Russia's invasion of Ukraine was salient in American news media. Our predictions were partially supported as national origin reminders led to a significant increase in endorsement of national narratives, and in turn, national identification compared to all other conditions across the studies except for reminders of the Russian invasion. These findings suggest that narratives are actively used by individuals in relevant situations to support national identification, advancing our understanding of dynamic identity construction.

Keywords: national narratives, social representations of history, national identity, social identity, naturalistic experiment, event priming

The current studies investigate the dynamic process of how individuals narrativize their nation's past to support a meaningful sense of identification with their ingroup across changing contexts and situations. The seminal work of Frederic Bartlett (1932/1995) demonstrated that remembering involves reconstructing what happened in the past in a way that is adaptive to the psychological goals and motivations that are salient in the present, especially those related to identity (McAdams, 2001). Building on this, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1950/2020) argued that collective remembering (i.e., remembering publicly shared events) ought to be anchored in the current social context, where certain group identity motivations are salient (see also Jovchelovitch, 2012). For example, a group's past is typically interpreted in ways that serve motivations for ingroup identity enhancement (Sahdra & Ross, 2007) and continuity (Sani et al., 2008). This augments social identity/self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987), wherein individuals strive to maintain a positive self-concept through their group memberships. The construction of meaningful and continuous identity content that is rooted in history (Andreouli & Chryssochoou, 2015; Mols & Jetten, 2014) allows and maintains processes of social identification (Reicher, 2004).

Applying this framework, the current paper aims to demonstrate that the meaning of a group's past is fluidly molded to meet group identity motivations that vary across (real) events and situations (see Hopkins et al., 1997). Specifically, we examine two major motivations of social identification mediated by historical content, including that for 1) defining positive and legitimate origins of the in-group (intragroup motivation) and 2) positive distinctiveness in comparison with a relevant out-group (intergroup motivation). To examine these dynamics, we test whether 1) historical reminders about the nation's origins and 2) present day reminders of intergroup threat both activate narratives that meet individuals' psychological needs to reinforce national identification via meaningful content.

Very little of the literature in this domain has used experimental methods, so the causal links between contextual primes activating historical narratives and in turn, national identification are often theorized, but still lacking in empirical demonstration.

Narratives in Intragroup Context

According to narrative approaches to history (Hammack, 2009; Liu & László, 2007; Wertsch, 2021), nation states curate a certain story about the past that provides a sense of continuity for its citizens as part of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). These narratives are anchored in founding myths (Zerubavel, 2003), which provide a coherent and official starting point for the nation's historical trajectory and unique heritage, thereby providing an important epistemic function for self-definition (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Furthermore, these myths implicitly communicate founding values (Yamashiro et al., 2022), that work in service of constructing a moral image for the nation (Branscombe et al., 2002), whether that be as a hero or victim (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2021). These ideas are complementary with a social representations (SR) approach, in acknowledging that knowledge, values, beliefs, and meaning-systems (i.e., representations) come to be shared between members of a distinct group through exposure, education, communication, and participation in shared practices (Elcheroth et al., 2011).

The curation of a nation's founding myths, and the implicit values associated with them, is typically observed descriptively through various top-down mechanisms theorized for maintaining tradition (see Olick & Robbins, 1998 for a review). These mechanisms include national commemorations, school education, mass media, museums, maps, and public speeches. However, it is also important to understand how individuals engage with narratives of the nation from the bottom-up, especially in contexts of foundational remembrance, and the psychological functions they serve for social identification (see Liu & Laszlo, 2007). To these ends, we aim to demonstrate the active use of national narratives by individuals when

thinking about national foundations, that then informs a stronger identification with the nation.

Specifically, our first prediction is that priming individuals with historical reminders related to national foundations would boost national identification through a heightened belief in meaningful and positive historical narratives. This would causally illuminate an important intragroup process (Haslam & Reicher, 2015) that individuals are socialized as members of a common group or social category (Turner et al., 1987) through shared beliefs in certain narratives and representations of reality (Wertsch, 2008), especially in relation to their group's past and origins (Liu, 2022).

Narratives in Intergroup Context

Narratives that bolster identification with the nation are also likely to be activated in intergroup contexts, such as contexts of threat and comparison against relevant out-groups (Reicher, 2004). As mentioned, historical representations become meaningful for individuals to the extent that they serve identity needs that are salient in a given context (Hirst & Yamashiro, 2017; Jovchelovitch, 2012). Addressing this dynamic, Liu and Khan (2021) argued that "only when there is a significant external driver that unites the people in society…does a historical charter…appear to have strong and consistent meaning across society" (p. 6). Aligning with these ideas, Smeekes and colleagues (2017) found that those living in conflict societies who held higher perceptions of out-group threat were more likely to endorse historical interpretations that aligned with perspectives of the ingroup. Relatedly, Rimé and colleagues (2015) showed how changing intergroup circumstances across generations in Belgium, were reflected in shifting historical attitudes (see also Ester et al., 2002; Lim & Leong, 2021; Schuman & Rieger, 1992). The subjectivity of historical narratives and variability in how much they resonate with people across time and situations,

seems to function to support and legitimize national identity when it is perceived to be under (real or symbolic) threat.

Applying the overarching SIT/SCT approach, the second aim of our research will be to examine how a relevant intergroup context would activate distinct national narratives (Wertsch, 2021) compared to a context where there are no salient intergroup concerns. This should then in turn, boost a sense of national identification (Reicher, 2004). Specifically, we utilized a real-world intergroup threat event (Russia's invasion of Ukraine) to examine whether the onset of this event would trigger American participants' use of national narratives to serve positive intergroup comparison (Turner et al., 1999). We anchor our investigation in the context of the United States and identify specific narratives that would be relevant for this investigation.

Popular Historical Narratives in the United States of America

How do ordinary people express narratives in their own words to make meaning and sense of their group's past? Do these reflect the narratives that are rehearsed from the top down and reinforce the state (Carretero, 2011), or do they include narratives that criticize or challenge the state (e.g., Cabecinhas & Fejió, 2010; Kus et al., 2013)? Choi and Liu (2023) examined these questions by asking a stratified sample of Americans to nominate important events from their nation's history alongside an overarching historical narrative that they wrote up to make sense of their nominated events. While other studies have already demonstrated positive and salient representations of American origins as specific events (Yamashiro et al., 2022) and through particular founding fathers (Roediger III & DeSoto, 2014), they had not yet identified popular narratives that contextualize and connect these historical events and figures across time, in ways that ordinary people are able to articulate.

Two national narratives (progress, glorification) and one critical counter narrative were identified to be the most popularly shared by a stratified sample of Americans (Choi &

Liu, 2023). Progress narratives described a positive arc of national growth, hard work, and resilience over time. While an imperfect past was acknowledged, participants did not go into specific details. Instead, this was used to communicate a positive temporal contrast of the present (or future) against the past to show "how far we have come as a nation". Alternatively, glorifying narratives described American strength, heroism, international influence, and exceptionalism. Such themes were typically communicated through superiority in comparison with other countries or through victory in warfare against 'enemy' countries. Finally, a popular counter-narrative was also identified, which expressed criticism of America's wrongdoings and/or structural issues. This included critical acknowledgements of racism, inequality, colonialism, and military aggression historically committed by the country. Importantly, this study found that progress and glorifying narratives were positively associated with measures of national identification, participation in national commemoration, and salient recall of foundational events as important events in history. As such, in the present research, we interpret progress and glorifying narratives as national narratives (Wertsch, 2021) that should have an identity facilitating function for Americans.

The Present Research and Context

For the current studies, we constructed Likert style items to form a scale for each of the three popular historical narratives that were identified above. These items provided the dependent variables of interest for the survey-based experiments reported here, where we examined the influence of different contextual reminders on Americans' endorsement of progress and glorification as national narratives, and counter to these, a critical narrative. Our experimental design is based in cognitive priming (Higgins et al., 1977), and more specifically, event priming (Kesebir et al., 2013). Two experiments test whether event primes reminding people of either historical national origin events (IV condition 1) or threat-related current events (IV condition 2) lead to heightened psychological endorsement of national

narratives (DV) and in turn, heightened national identification (DV) compared to a control condition.[8] Rather than presenting pre-prepared 'primes' as in typical experiments, we asked people to nominate their own relevant events within each reminder condition.

Firstly, we expect that reminding participants of national origin events will lead to increased endorsement of national narratives (compared to control), demonstrating that narratives are actively used by individuals to endow meaning to isolated historical events in ways that serve identification needs (Obradovic, 2019). This would suggest that commemorative activities of the state (such as 4th of July) may be effective in establishing distinct founding myth narratives that American citizens resonate with. Since these ideas were only explored descriptively in Choi and Liu (2023), the current studies aim to show this on a more functional level by causally demonstrating the active use of progress and glorifying narratives by individuals when reminded of their nation's founding (Oakes, 2003) in a measurable way. In turn, this narrative activation should function to bolster American identification.

Secondly, we expect that Russia's invasion of Ukraine provided a context where positive self-definition in social comparison (Turner et al., 1987) against Russia became a salient identity concern for Americans. Data collection for study 1 coincided with the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which provided a salient present-day context of threat, activated by aggression perpetrated by a past enemy or ideological opponent (Wertsch, 2008). Competing narratives about WWII have been documented between the United States and Russia (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2020) contributing to a 'mnemonic standoff' between these countries (Wertsch, 2021). Both Russia (Krawatzek, 2021) and the United States (Schwartz, 1996) tend to interpret WWII as an example of their nation's strength,

[8] Throughout the paper, *national* narratives refer to progress and glorifying narratives identified in Choi and Liu (2023).

while there is little to no overlap between their representations of the war (Abel et al., 2019). The effects of the Cold War likely pushed public opinion in these WWII allies apart (Dalby, 1990). Reinforcing these intergroup tensions, a Pew research poll showed that "Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a dramatic shift in American public opinion: 70% of Americans now consider Russia an enemy of the United States, up from 41% in January" and this was observed across both Democrats (72%) and Republicans (69%), (Pew, 2023). As such, endorsement of national narratives should be heightened in response to reminders of current events unfolding around Russia's invasion, to enhance American identification in comparison. This would demonstrate how national narratives are actively used by individuals to deal with salient external threats or competitors to the ingroup.

The key difference between studies 1 and 2 was the current event/s that were salient during their respective time periods. The second study provides a comparison against study 1 during a time when the Russian invasion was no longer salient in America's news cycle. Without a salient international event involving a relevant out-group, we expected that national narratives would no longer be used when participants were reminded of current events, since such identity concerns would no longer be salient. In short, we expected that reminding people of current events related to intergroup threat would activate American narrative and identification compared to control (in study 1), whereas in contrast, reminding people of current events that had become unrelated to intergroup threat (in study 2) would situationally remove this effect (see Oakes, 1987).

Naturalistic Paradigm for Studying Social Representations and Narratives

As outlined, collective remembering occurs as a dynamic and open system that is politically situated (with top-down/institutional levers) and is thus best studied in a contextualized way. An important innovation of our studies is the use of a paradigm that incorporates real-life contexts that participants are embedded in and already psychologically

and emotionally tuned in to. This is in response to demands that "if social psychology is to be able to step beyond the laboratory and have more direct relevance for current events and political emergencies, it must have a way to operationalize the sociocultural context for intergroup relations" (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 552). The current approach recognizes participants as active meaning-makers. It is a methodological extension to the standard experimental paradigm where psychological processes are isolated and detached from actual events and what people are paying attention to, thinking about, and making meaning in their everyday lives (Power & Velez, 2021). It acknowledges that people have agency to recruit their own narratives to configure incoming events (primes), rather than theorizing that external stimuli can provoke a specific causal response (Liu et al., 2014; Liu & Khan, 2021).

This is especially relevant for studying social representations (Elcheroth et al., 2011), which are inherently tied to people's existing knowledge and the dynamic networks of meaning that have been elaborated through communication and interaction with others (Moscovici, 1988). It acknowledges that no experimental manipulation that primes meaning is truly an "independent" variable. As soon as participants in the experiment think about the prime, they bring themselves and the social context for meaning-making back in. In accord with social representations theory, Liu and Khan (2021) write, "historical reminders are likely to be anchored in existing networks of meaning, and remind people of what they already know and believe… [an] experimental manipulation might function as a historical reminder and bring to mind knowledge, stories, or beliefs that are already familiar to the experimental participants and "resonant" with their collective imagination. They are therefore not strictly independent variables, but manipulations that, for some society members, build on the content and context of what is already known" (p. 6). Human beings have group-based mnemonic agency, where they may or may not resonate with top-down messages attempting to influence them (see Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988, also Liu et al., 2014).

Study 1

For the first study, we hypothesized that participants exposed to national origin reminders (H1a) and current event reminders (about the Russian invasion, H1b) will be significantly higher in endorsing narratives of American progress and glorification compared to those assigned to the control condition. We further predicted that the main effects of H1a would be significantly more pronounced for Republicans compared to Democrats (H2), based on past findings that Republicans provide more positive ratings of national origin events compared to other political groups in the U.S. (Yamashiro et al., 2022). To test the identity function of activating these narratives, we expected that national origin (H3a) and current event reminders (of the Russian invasion, H3b) would predict significantly higher national identification compared to controls, mediated by higher endorsement of national narratives.

Method

Participants and Procedure

All measures, manipulations and exclusions in the study are reported in this section**.** 600 anonymous participants based in the United States were recruited through Prolific, an online panel provider, stratified by age and gender based on US census data. We also aimed to get relatively equal and large samples of Republicans and Democrats for relevant comparisons. Ninety-three participants were removed for failing to provide appropriate responses to the reminder prompts (see exclusion criteria described later). In the final cleaned sample after content checks (N = 507), 50.1% identified as female. In terms of ethnic identification, 83.8% of the sample identified primarily as White, 6.3% as African American, 1.6% as Latinx, .4% as Native American, 4.7% as Asian, 2.0% as multiple ethnicities, and 1.2% as other. The survey was posted through Qualtrics from the 7th to 10th of March in 2022 and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. As a major point of interest of this study, this timing coincided closely with the days when international news about the Russian invasion of

Ukraine started breaking out (which officially begun on 24th February, 2022). A sensitivity analysis on G*Power indicated that with our sample size of N = 507, the minimum effect size that we would be able to detect is f = .138 or R^2 = .019. This was calculated based on the parameters of α = .05 at .80 power, in an ANCOVA (fixed effects, main effects and interactions) with an input of 3 experimental groups and 5 demographic covariates.

Measures

Event Reminder Manipulation

In the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to list a certain category of event(s) depending on what condition they were randomly assigned to. If assigned to the condition reminding participants about America's founding events, they were asked to: "Please list three historical events that you think have been important to the foundation of America as a nation". After nominating each event, participants were asked: "Why was this event important to the foundation of America?".

If assigned to the condition which prompted participants to think about a salient current event, they were asked: "What is an important event in the news that you think Americans should be paying attention to today?", after which they were asked to: "Please briefly describe your understanding of this event". Finally, they were asked: "Why is it important for Americans to pay attention to this event?".

The condition which reminded people about personal life events functioned as our control given that this category of events ought to be distinct from events that are political or societal in nature. Here, participants were asked: "What do you think are the four most important life milestones?". After listing each milestone, participants were asked: "Why do you think this is an important milestone?".

As a manipulation check to ensure that participants were thinking about the relevant category of events in each condition, a content check was performed on the responses. We

checked the events nominated in response to the reminder about national origins against a coding guide which included a pre-selected list of events: the American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, and the signing of the U.S Constitution. These were selected based on past research, which have identified these as popularly regarded foundational events amongst Americans (Choi & Liu, 2023; Yamashiro et al., 2022), as well as being informed by cultural signifiers such as the official national commemoration being 4th of July to celebrate American Independence. According to a study by Cyr and Hirst (2019), revolution, independence, and founding documents were cross-culturally regarded as being among the most prototypical foundational events for a nation. Thus, those who did not mention at least one of the events from this coding guide were excluded from analyses (N = 37), resulting in N = 156 for this condition. Through coding, we found that the American Revolution (nominated by 59% of participants) and Declaration of Independence (nominated by 50% of participants, see Table S1 in supplementary materials for counts) were among the highest nominated events and satisfied the criteria for popular consensus as a founding event (see Zaromb et al., 2014). Since it may be argued that the selection process might have inadvertently but systematically selected participants with certain characteristics into the conditions, we checked their demographic characteristics. Even after selecting participants based on content-checks, the demographic characteristics indicated social status (M = 5.7, SD = 1.85) and political orientation were around mid-point (M = 3.67, SD = 1.97). This was comparable with the social status (M = 5.56, SD = 1.89) and political orientation (M = 3.66, SD = 1.99) of the initial raw sample, indicating that the selection was not biased by the political or social position of participants.

For the current events reminder condition, we only kept those participants who nominated the Russian invasion of Ukraine for analysis, given our specific research interests in the effects of an intergroup threat context. As expected, a clear majority of participants in

this condition (N = 152) nominated the war in Ukraine compared to other current events, which were excluded from analysis (N = 55). Finally, content checks for the control condition involved checking whether the nominated milestone events were in the personal rather than public/societal domain of events. Only one respondent was identified as nominating public events in this condition and was excluded from analysis, resulting in N = 199 for this condition. Demographic characteristics indicated that social status (M = 5.59, SD = 1.77) and political orientation (M = 3.66, SD = 1.86) of the sample after content-checks were around mid-point and were similar to levels of social status (M = 5.57, SD = 1.72) and political orientation (M = 3.84, SD = 1.94) of the raw sample in the current events condition.

The allocation of participants to each condition met the criteria for sufficient power (Ns > 144). This manipulation was followed by the measures below, in the listed order for all participants. A full list of survey items for both studies is provided in the supplementary materials.

Progress

Based on Choi & Liu (2023), which identified popular lay narratives about American history, we constructed items that summarize and reflect the identified narratives (see Table 3.1 for full list of items). Firstly, to measure belief in the narrative of American progress, we included six items with statements such as: “Though America is not perfect, it is a nation that continually strives to be better”, “America has continued to move in a positive direction by learning from the past” and “American society is headed for decline” (reverse-coded), with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), (α = .88).

Glorifying

To measure belief in narratives that are glorifying of American exceptionalism, we included seven items, including statements such as: “America is a country built upon great and enduring ideals”, “Since its foundation as a nation, America has been looked on as a

beacon of hope by many people around the world", and "Some of the foundational documents of this country are outdated" (reverse-coded), with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), (α = .89).

Critical

To measure endorsement of narratives that are critical of historical injustice in America, we included seven items, including: "It is important to remember the historical injustices and wrongdoings committed by our own country", "America has historically done more wrong than right", and "Racial injustice is central to the history of America", with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), (α = .84).

Exploratory Factor Analysis of Historical Narratives

We conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using IBM SPSS to support the proposed factor structure of progress, glorifying, and critical narratives as being distinct. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was applied to perform the EFA. We assessed the results against Bartlett's test of sphericity, KMO statistic, and Eigenvalues higher than 1. The resulting correlation matrix of the factors was not arbitrary according to the Bartlett's test of sphericity of Approximate Chi-Square (190) of 6250.81, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the KMO statistic was .95, being above the minimum .7 requirement for assessing an EFA (Watkins, 2018). To establish the relevant number of factors, we applied the criterion of Eigenvalues being greater than 1 (Field, 2013). Three factors were retained with Eigenvalues higher than 1, with all but one of the items corresponding to our initially proposed progress, glorifying, and critical narratives (see Table 3.1). That is, extracted variance of each item was above the .4 threshold and/or most high for our proposed historical narrative categories, except for item #5 in the glorifying narrative which showed slightly higher extracted variance (when unreversed) as part of the critical narrative. As such, we also

tried running the analyses with this item removed from the glorifying measure. This yielded the same results as those main results reported below, where all items were retained.

Table 3.1

Results for the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Item	1	2	3
1. Though America is not perfect, it is a nation that continually strives to be better.	0.502	**0.657**	
2. America has proven that positive social change can be achieved through a nation's hard work and sacrifice.	0.481	**0.698**	
3. America has continued to move in a positive direction by learning from the past.		**0.796**	
4. American society is headed for decline. (reversed)		**0.792**	
5. Despite setbacks, America has made a lot of progress throughout its history as a nation.	0.486	**0.624**	
6. America has come a long way towards achieving a fair and equal society.		**0.646**	
1. It is important for Americans to honor their constitutional values.	**0.712**		
2. America is a country built upon great and enduring ideals.	**0.776**		
3. America was founded as 'Land of the Free'.	**0.682**		
4. Throughout much of its history, America has set a positive example for the rest of the world.	**0.691**		
5. Some of the foundational documents of this country are outdated. (reversed)	**0.487**		**0.599**
6. Throughout history, America has protected freedom and democracy around the world.	**0.612**	0.455	
7. Since its foundation as a nation, America has been looked on as a beacon of hope by many people around the world.	**0.718**		
1. America often struggles to learn from its own mistakes.			**0.677**
2. It is important to remember the historical injustices and wrongdoings committed by our own country.			**0.783**
3. America has historically done more wrong than right.	0.45		**0.453**
4. Generally speaking, American military interventions abroad have reaped more benefits than costs.			**0.423**
5. Throughout its history as a nation, America has invaded other countries too often.			**0.527**
6. America has committed many human rights violations in the past and in the present.	0.41		**0.651**
7. Racial injustice is central to the history of America.			**0.763**
Eigenvalue	4.833	3.982	3.699
% Variance Extracted	24.16	19.91	18.5

National Identity

To measure national identification, we included a three-item measure (Glasford et al., 2009): “I identify as an American”, “Being an American is an important part of my identity” and “I feel very close to other Americans”. Responses ranged on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) ($\alpha = .75$).

Demographics

The mean age of the sample was 44.5 (SD = 15.3). By asking ““If a national election was being conducted now, which political party would you vote for?”, we found that 50.1% of the final sample were Democrats, 46% Republicans, and 1.4% Independents based on current voting intentions. We also asked participants: On political issues, where would you place yourself?”, with responses ranging from 1 (far right) to 7 (far left). This showed that mean political orientation was around mid-point (M = 3.81, SD = 1.96). Self-reported social status was measured by asking “On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being people who are the most well off in society, and 1 being the people that are least well off, where would you describe your position?”. This showed that mean self-reported status was around mid-point (M = 5.62, SD = 1.76). Education level was also measured by asking: “What is the highest level of education you have completed?”, with answers ranging from 1 (Elementary school) to 6 (Graduate school or higher). 10.5% of the sample received their highest education in high school, 25.2% in some college, 43.4% in a Bachelor’s degree and 20.9% in graduate school or higher.

Results

Main Effects on Historical Narratives

Multiple regressions were performed to predict endorsement of each historical narrative, with the reminder conditions added as predictors along with demographic covariates (age, gender, political orientation, subjective social status, and education).

Demographic variables were controlled for to examine the effects of reminder conditions beyond any effects that may be predicted by pre-existing demographic differences. First, we created dummy-coded variables for each reminder condition (national origins, current events/Russian invasion, and control), (see Table S2 in supplementary materials for correlations). We then conducted a series of regressions with each dummy-coded variable being excluded from the model to be compared to as baseline. This showed that reminding people of national origins predicted higher endorsement of the progress narrative compared to controls, but not compared to those reminded of the Russian invasion (see Table 3.2).

Being reminded of national origins predicted significantly higher endorsement of the glorifying narrative compared to both other conditions. Even though the EFA supported our three-narrative structure, we also tried combining the items of progress and glorifying narratives since they showed high scale reliability together ($\alpha = .918$). When combined, reminders of national foundations predicted significantly higher scores of the combined national narratives compared to control but not compared to reminders of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. No other significant differences in narrative endorsement emerged.

We also calculated differences between narrative scores to examine whether the relative endorsement of narratives was different across conditions. As shown in Table 3.3, this showed that reminders of national origins predicted significantly higher progress ($B = -.429$, $p = .011$) and significantly higher glorifying ($B = -.443$, $p = .005$) narratives over the critical narrative compared to controls, but not compared to Russian invasion reminders. No other significant differences in relative narrative endorsement emerged.

Finally, we examined national identification across the conditions. This showed that reminders of national origins predicted significantly higher national identification compared to controls only ($B = .284$, $p = .008$, see Table 3.4). No other significant differences across reminder conditions were observed.

In terms of demographic predictors, a more right leaning political orientation and older age predicted significantly greater endorsement of the progress and glorifying narratives, both separately and combined. Higher self-reported social status also predicted greater endorsement of the progress narrative. In turn, a more left leaning political orientation, younger age, and lower self-reported status predicted significantly greater endorsement of the critical narrative overall (see Table 3.2). We also checked for any interactions between partisan affiliation and reminder condition to see whether the effects for Democrats and Republicans would be different. No significant interaction emerged, indicating that higher resonance with national narratives when reminded of national origins were observed for both Democrats and Republicans (see supplementary materials for these results).

Table 3.2

Multiple Regressions Predicting Endorsement of Each Narrative (with Foundational Reminders as Referent)

	DV: Progress			**DV: Glorifying**			**DV: Critical**			**DV: Progress + Glorifying**		
Predictor	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Age	.006	.003	.055	.021	.002	.000	-.009	.002	.000	.014	.002	.000
Gender	-.125	.09	.165	.102	.075	.174	.097	.075	.199	-.003	.073	.966
Political Orientation	.207	.023	.000	.361	.02	.000	-.403	.02	.000	.29	.019	.000
Education	.019	.054	.731	-.032	.045	.477	.009	.045	.841	-.009	.044	.844
Subjective SES	.077	.028	.006	.026	.023	.256	-.046	.023	.047	.05	.023	.028
Current Events (Russian invasion)	-.11	.113	.334	-.224	.095	.019	.088	.095	.354	-.171	.092	.064
Control	-.283	.108	.009	-.297	.09	.001	.145	.09	.107	-.29	.087	.001
R^2	.189			.491			.501			.392		

Table 3.3

Multiple Regressions Predicting Relative Endorsement of Narratives (with Foundational Reminders as Referent)

	DV: Progress - Critical			**DV: Glorifying - Critical**		
Predictor	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Age	.014	.005	.002	.03	.004	.000
Gender	-.22	.14	.114	.006	.13	.966
Political Orientation	.61	.036	.000	.764	.03	.000
Education	.01	.084	.91	-.041	.08	.605
Subjective SES	.12	.043	.005	.073	.04	.077
Current Events (Russian invasion)	-.2	.18	.264	-.31	.17	.063
Control	**-.43**	**.17**	**.011**	**.44**	**.16**	**.005**
R^2	.41			.55		

Table 3.4

Multiple Regression Predicting National Identification (with Foundational Reminders as Referent)

	DV: National Identification		
Predictor	B	SE	p
Age	.014	.003	.000
Gender	.208	.088	.019
Political Orientation	.297	.023	.000
Education	-.065	.053	.222
Subjective SES	.084	.027	.002
Current Events (Russian invasion)	-.152	.111	.171
Control	**-.283**	**.105**	**.008**
R^2	.33		

Historical Narrative and Identity

A mediation analysis was performed on the PROCESS macro Model 4 for SPSS with 5000 bootstrapping samples (Hayes, 2013) to test whether reminders of national origins predict higher national identification, mediated by higher endorsement of national narratives. This order of variables was selected based on a combination of methodological and conceptual justifications. Firstly, the predictor variable is constituted by our (quasi)experimental manipulation of event reminders, thus the pathway from predictor to both dependent variables may be interpreted as causal. The pathway from the national narratives (mediator) to identification (outcome) is based on theory that identity content informs, directs, and mobilizes experiences of identification (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). However, we acknowledge that this pathway cannot be proven to be causal in the current analysis, and we also run an analysis where identification mediates the relationship between event reminders and narrative endorsement.

Following Hayes and Preacher's (2014) guidelines, reminder conditions were entered as a multi-categorical predictor with three levels. This generated two dummy coded variables with the national origins condition as the reference group. Contrast 1 tested the effect of reminding people about national origins (coded 0) versus the effect of reminding people of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (coded 1), with the remaining condition (coded 0). Contrast 2 tested the residual difference between national origin reminders (coded 0) versus the control condition (coded 1), with the other condition (coded 0). Endorsement of progress and glorifying narratives were added as separate mediators and national identification was added as the dependent variable. Demographic covariates of age, gender, political orientation, subjective status, and education were controlled for.

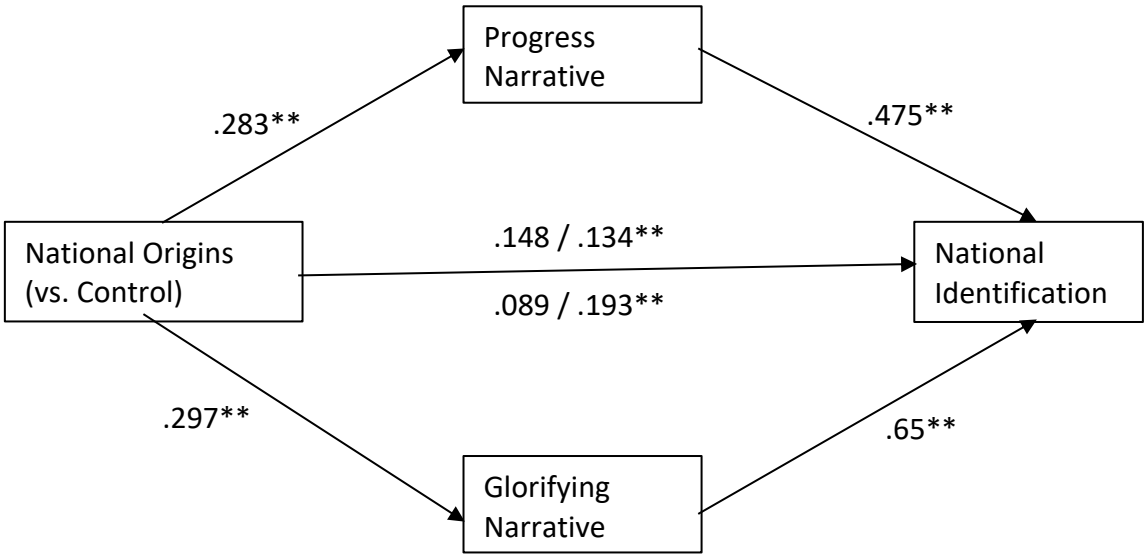
The analysis showed that only Contrast 2 had significant indirect effects on national identification via progress, as displayed in Figure 3.1. That is, the indirect effect of reminding

people about national origins predicting higher national identification via heightened belief in progress was significant compared to the control condition, a*b = -.1343, SE = .056, 95% CI [-.252, -.028]. Indirect effects of reminding people about national origins to predict higher national identification mediated via heightened belief in the glorifying narrative was significant compared to both the control a*b = -.193, SE = .06, 95% CI [-.317, -.078], and Russian invasion reminder conditions a*b = -.146, SE = .064, 95% CI [-.275, -.025].[9] Finally, the indirect effect of reminding people about national origins predicting higher national identification via a combination of progress and glorifying narratives was only significant compared to the control condition a*b = -.204, SE = .066, 95% CI [-.335, -.08]. While direct effects of national origin reminders on national identification were not significant, these became significant as indirect effects when explained through endorsement of the progress narrative (compared to control) and through endorsement of the glorifying narrative (compared to both other conditions). An examination of the opposite pathway, where identification mediates increased belief in national narratives showed significant indirect effects of Contrast 2 (national origins vs. control) with national origins predicting higher progress (a*b = -.14, SE = .054, 95% CI [-.248, -.035]) and glorifying narratives (a*b = -.134, SE = .051, 95% CI [-.235, -.033]) via national identification. As such, we acknowledge the possibility that while it is theorized that identity content informs experiences of identification (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001), there is likely to be a more mutually networked relationship between narrative and national identification (e.g., Salter & Adams, 2016) with each reinforcing each other.

[9]A parallel mediation where *both* progress and glorifying narratives were added as simultaneous mediators also yielded significant indirect effects via both narratives for Contrast 2.

Figure 3.1

Separate mediations testing the indirect effects of national foundation reminders (vs. control) on national identification via the progress and glorifying narratives. Contrast 2.



Discussion

As predicted, reminders of national origin events predicted significantly higher endorsement of positive national narratives compared to those in the control condition, supporting H1a. This suggests that the national narratives of American progress and glorification are indeed mobilized to configure foundational events in a meaningful way. In addition, reminding participants of foundational representations led to an increase in endorsing these positive national narratives over the critical counter-narrative compared to controls. This suggests that the activation of founding myths buffer against a more critical self-reflection of the nation. Furthermore, both progress and glorifying narratives significantly mediated increased national identification when participants were reminded of national origin events compared to controls. This suggests that the activation of progress and glorifying narratives as founding myths at least partially explained an increased experience of national identification (H3a).

On the other hand, reminders of the Russian invasion (that was salient in mass media at the time) did not predict significantly higher endorsement of national narratives compared to controls, thus H1b was not supported. We also did not find support for H2 that the mobilization of national narratives as founding myths would be particularly more pronounced for Republicans. While Republicans endorsed national narratives more strongly than Democrats overall, the relative increase in endorsement when reminded of national origin events held the same across both partisan groups.

While it was not initially hypothesized, we noted that there were mostly no significant differences between reminders of national origins and reminders of the Russian invasion. Following up on this, we expected that in a different present-day context, where domestic issues are more salient as current events, endorsement of positive national narratives would actually be significantly lowered when reminded of current events compared to national origins (see Choi et al., 2023; Yamashiro & Roediger III, 2019). This point of comparison across contexts provides the main focus for our next study.

Study 2

We replicated the previous study more than a year later, during a time when domestic political issues regained precedence in America's news coverage. In contrast to the previous study, we expected that without the unique situation provided by the media salience of Russia's invasion, thinking about current events should be domestically polarizing and thus weaken people's resonance with positive historical narratives about the nation and in turn, identity. In this case, national origin reminders should consistently predict significantly higher endorsement of positive national narratives compared to both the control and current event reminder conditions (H4). Since domestic current events may remind people of issues related to political polarization, differences between Republicans and Democrats may now become more apparent. Thus, we predicted that the activation of national narratives in the

national origins condition compared to current events may be significantly more pronounced for Republicans compared to Democrats (H5). To test the identity function of narratives, we again tested the mediational pathway in which national origin reminders would predict significantly higher national identification compared to both other conditions, mediated by higher endorsement of national narratives (H6).

Method

Participants and Procedure

Again, all measures, manipulations and exclusions in the study are reported here**.** 702 anonymous participants based in the United States were recruited through Prolific, and again this was stratified by age and gender based on US census data. As in the previous survey, we aimed to get equal amounts of Republicans and Democrats for relevant comparisons. After data cleaning (N = 587), 50.3% of the sample identified as female. In terms of ethnic identification, 74.4% of the sample identified as White, 12.1% as African American, 5.1% as Latinx, .3% as Native American, 5.6% as Asian, 2% as multiple ethnicities and 3% as other. The survey was posted through Qualtrics from the 19th to 20th of July 2023, and took approximately 12 minutes to complete. In this case, the timing of survey distribution did not coincide with a dominant event or crisis circulating in national news. A sensitivity analysis on G*Power indicated that, with our sample size of N = 587, the minimum effect size that we would be able to detect is f = .128 or R^2 = .016. This was calculated based on the parameters of α = .05, at .80 power, in an ANCOVA (fixed effects, main effects and interactions) with an input of 3 experimental groups and 5 demographic covariates.

Measures

Event Reminder Manipulation

Prompts for national origin events, a major current event, and personal life events were kept the same as in the previous study and placed in the beginning of the survey. Again,

we performed a content check of events that were nominated. Those who did not mention a national founding event from our coding guide were excluded, leaving 193 participants in the national origins condition. We found a similar pattern as the previous survey with the American Revolution (60.1%) and Declaration of Independence (50.3%) being consensually nominated (see Table S3 in supplementary materials for counts). Even after these content-checks, the demographic characteristics indicated that social status (M = 5.33, SD = 1.72) and political orientation of the sample was around mid-point (M = 4.06, SD = 1.97). This was comparable with the social status (M = 5.28, SD = 1.7) and political orientation (M = 3.95, SD = 1.95) of the initial raw pool of participants in this condition.

Given the variety of current events that were nominated in this round of the survey, we inductively developed a coding guide to categorize specific events/issues that were nominated. The coding guide provided in the supplementary materials shows that we identified 15 categories of current events overall. Of these, we further categorized the identified current events as being more relevant to either a domestic or international/global context. In particular, we were interested in domestic current events as a meaningful contrast to the previous study. Thus, only domestic current events were kept for analysis (N = 157) and responses listing international events (N = 70) were excluded. Of these exclusions, only 22 of the responses constituted those who nominated the War in Ukraine as an expected clear contrast to the previous survey. As expected, there was no single event that was consensually nominated or particularly salient during this time (see Table 3.5, see Table S4 in supplementary materials for all current events nominated). Again, the demographic characteristics of the participants retained in this condition showed similar levels of social status (M = 5.3, SD = 1.85) and political orientation (M = 4.06, SD = 2.04) compared to the social status (M = 5.33, SD = 1.85) and political orientation (M = 4, SD = 2.03) of the raw sample in the current events condition.

Table 3.5

Current Events (nominated by at least 5% of participants)

	N	%
Other political issues	27	17.20
Trump related	25	15.92
Crime / Shootings	17	10.83
Economic issues	17	10.83
Illegal immigration	15	9.55
Biden related	12	7.64

Only one participant was excluded from the control condition for nominating public instead of personal life events, leaving 237 participants in the control condition.

Progress

The same items for measuring beliefs in the progress narrative from the previous survey were used (e.g., "America has continued to move in a positive direction by learning from the past"), (α = .88). Again, an EFA showed that a three-factor structure that aligns with the intended narrative categories (progress, glorifying, and critical) met the recommended criteria (see supplementary materials, Table S6).

Glorifying

The same items for measuring beliefs in the glorifying narrative from the previous survey were used (e.g., "Since its foundation as a nation, America has been looked on as a beacon of hope by many people around the world"), (α = .89).

Critical

The same items for measuring beliefs in the critical narrative from the previous survey were used (e.g., "Racial injustice is central to the history of America") (α = .81).

National Identity

The same items from the previous survey were also used to measure national identification: "I identify as an American", "Being an American is an important part of my

identity" and "I feel very close to other Americans", with responses ranging on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (α = .82).

Threat Perception

Perceptions of threat to the nation was measured through the statement "How much threat do you feel as an American?"

Demographics

The same items as in the previous survey were used to obtain demographic measures. The mean age of the overall sample was 45.3 (SD = 14.73). According to current voting intentions, 47.4% of the sample were Democrats, 49.9% were Republicans and 2% were Independents, with .7% being undecided. Political orientation (M = 3.95, SD = 2) and self-reported status (M = 5.38, SD = 1.78) were both around the mid-point. The highest level of education was reported as .2% for middle school, 12.9% for high school, 26.2% for some college, 43.3% for bachelor's degree and 17.4% for graduate school or higher.

Results

Narratives and Identity

A series of multiple regressions were performed with historical narratives as dependent variables and reminder conditions added as predictors, with demographic covariates (age, gender, political orientation, subjective status, and education), (see Table S5 in supplementary materials for correlations). Again, dummy-coded variables were created for each reminder condition (national origins, current events-domestic, and control). As shown in Table 3.6, this showed that reminding people of national foundations predicted significantly higher belief in progress and glorifying narratives (both separately and combined) compared to controls and those reminded of domestic current events. In terms of relative endorsement of narratives, reminders of national origins further predicted significantly higher progress

over the critical narrative compared to both other conditions (see Table 3.7). No other significant differences in narrative endorsement emerged.

Next, we examined national identification across the conditions. This showed that reminders of national origins predicted significantly higher national identification compared to those reminded of current events (B = .254, p = .04, see Table 3.8).

Demographic predictors showed the same pattern of results as in the previous study, with a more right leaning political orientation, older age, and higher self-reported status predicting significantly higher endorsement of the national narratives (progress, glorifying) overall, as well as relative to the countering critical narrative (see Tables 3.6 and 3.7). In turn, a more left leaning political orientation, younger age, and lower self-reported status predicted significantly higher endorsement of the critical counter-narrative. Thus, all significant predictors showed stability from the previous study, only with the addition of current events now consistently predicting lower beliefs in national narrative measures compared to reminders of national origins. Interactions between partisan affiliation and priming conditions were checked, and no significant interactions emerged (see supplementary materials for these results).

Table 3.6

Multiple Regressions Predicting Endorsement of Each Narrative (with Foundational Reminders as Referent)

	DV: Progress			**DV: Glorifying**			**DV: Critical**			**DV: Progress + Glorifying**		
Predictor	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Age	.01	.003	.001	.023	.003	.000	-.013	.003	.000	.017	.003	.000
Gender	-.098	.091	.282	-.136	.077	.079	.118	.078	.13	-.118	.075	.113
Political Orientation	.11	.023	.000	.309	.02	.000	-.275	.02	.000	.217	.019	.000
Education	-.023	.053	.667	.011	.045	.806	-.015	.046	.736	-.005	.044	.916
Subjective SES	.134	.028	.000	.063	0.024	.008	-.093	.024	.000	.096	.023	.000
Current Events (Domestic)	**-.476**	**.116**	**.000**	**-.275**	**.099**	**.006**	.056	.1	.573	**-.368**	**.096**	**.000**
Control	**-.364**	**.105**	**.001**	**-.232**	**.09**	**.000**	.05	.09	.577	**-.293**	**.087**	**.001**
R^2	.147			.415			.337			.317		

Table 3.7

Multiple Regressions Predicting Relative Endorsement of Narratives (with Foundational Reminders as Referent)

	DV: Progress – Critical			**DV: Glorifying – Critical**		
Predictor	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Age	.024	.005	.000	.036	.005	.000
Gender	-.22	.14	.132	-.25	.14	.062
Political Orientation	.39	.04	.000	.58	.03	.000
Education	.008	.08	.928	.027	.08	.74
Subjective SES	.23	.04	.000	.16	.04	.000
Current Events (Domestic)	**-.53**	**.18**	**.004**	**-.33**	**.17**	.057
Control	**-.41**	**.17**	**.013**	-.28	.16	.074
R^2	.28			.44		

Table 3.8

Multiple Regressions Predicting National Identification (with Foundational Reminders as Referent)

	DV: National Identification		
Predictor	B	SE	p
Age	.018	.003	.000
Gender	-.153	.096	.114
Political Orientation	.256	.024	.000
Education	-.034	.057	.544
Subjective SES	.109	.03	.000
Current Events (Domestic)	**-.254**	.123	.04
Control	-.124	.112	.268
R^2	.257		

To examine the pathway where national origin reminders predict higher national identification through heightened endorsement of national narratives, mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro Model 4 for SPSS with 5000 bootstrapping samples (Hayes, 2013). As before, this pathway is justified by the predictor being a (quasi)experimental manipulation, and the pathway from national narrative (identity content) to identity being theory based. Given that the pathway from mediator to outcome is not causally justified, we also run the analysis with identity as mediator and narratives as outcome. Again, contrast 1 tested the effect of assigning participants to national foundations (coded 0) versus domestic current events (coded 1), with the remaining condition (coded as 0). Contrast 2 tested the difference between the national foundations condition (coded 0) versus control (coded 1), with the other condition (coded as 0).

The analysis showed that both contrasts 1 (a*b = -.262, SE = .067, 95% CI [-.3923, -.1379]) and 2 (a*b = -.2, SE = .059, 95% CI [-.318, -.089]) had significant indirect effects for predicting national identity via progress. Reminding people about national origins predicted higher national identity, mediated by higher beliefs in progress compared to both other conditions. Both contrasts 1 (a*b = -.197, SE = .07, 95% CI [-.336, -.06]) and 2 (a*b = -.167, SE = .065, 95% CI [-.293, -.042]) also had significant indirect effects for predicting higher national identity via the glorifying narrative. Furthermore, both contrasts 1 (a*b = -.291, SE = .076, 95% CI [-.443, -.139]) and 2 (a*b = -.232, SE = .068, 95% CI [-.362, -.098]) had significant Indirect effects for predicting higher national identity via a combination of the progress and glorifying narratives. As displayed in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, while direct effects of national origin reminders on national identity were not significant, these became significant as indirect effects when each of the narratives were added as mediators.[10] An examination of

[10]A parallel mediation where *both* progress and glorifying narratives were added as simultaneous mediators also yielded significant indirect effects via each narrative for both Contrasts.

the opposite pathway showed that again, there were only significant indirect effects for Contrast 2, where national origin reminders predicted higher beliefs in progress (a*b = -.1109, SE = .055, 95% CI [-.218, -.005]) and glorification (a*b = -.1348, SE = .067, 95% CI [-.269, -.009]) via identity compared to controls.

Given that foundational reminders were negatively associated with perceptions of threat to the nation (r = -.136, p = .001), we were interested in examining whether endorsement of national narratives would mediate lower perceptions of threat predicted by national origin reminders. Indeed, we found that higher beliefs in progress mediated the lower perceptions of threat when participants were reminded of national origins compared to both the current event (a*b = .083, SE = .03, 95% CI [.0334, .147]) and control (a*b = .0634, SE = .025, 95% CI [.021, .118]) conditions.

Figure 3.2

Separate mediations testing the indirect effects of national foundation reminders (vs. current events) on national identification via the progress and glorifying narratives. Contrast 1.

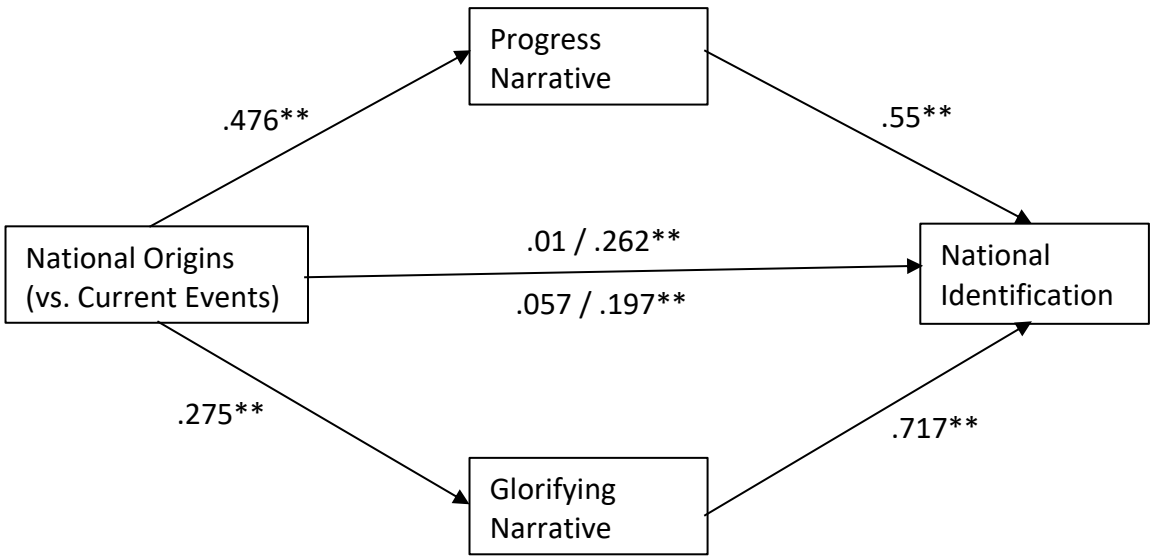
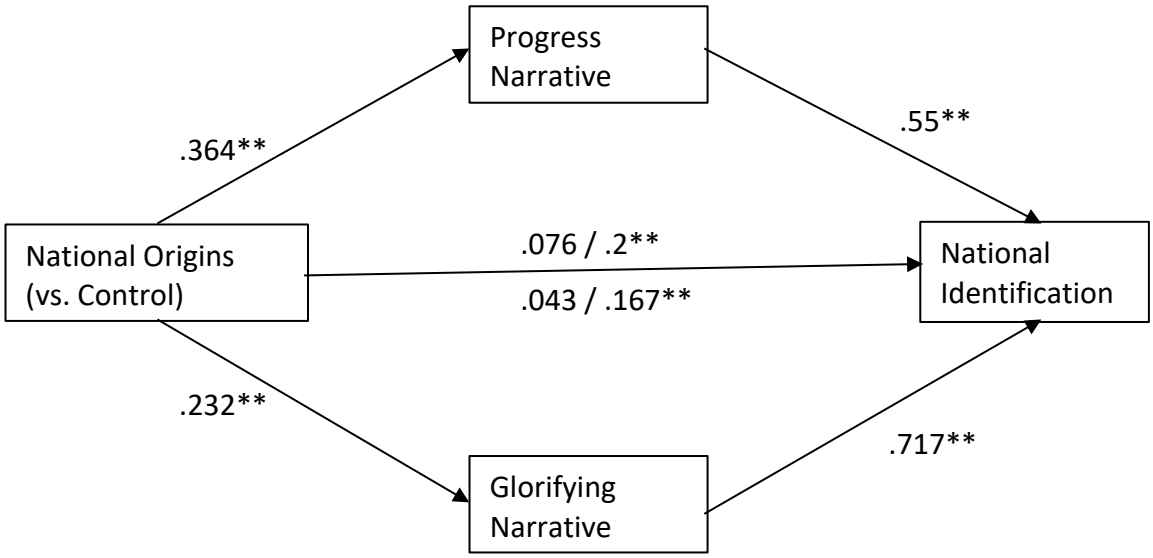


Figure 3.3

Separate mediations testing the indirect effects of national foundation reminders (vs. control) on national identification via the progress and glorifying narratives. Contrast 2.



General Discussion

Through two studies, we consistently found that thinking about representations of national origins activated higher belief in progress and glorifying narratives by Americans. In turn, the activation of these narratives significantly mediated increases in national identification. The dynamic activation of pro-national narratives when participants were prompted to think of national origin events compared to other conditions, suggest that these narratives are indeed applied by individuals as founding myths in relevant situations such as commemorations (Schwartz, 2008) or when leaders invoke national foundations in their public speeches and rhetoric (Kurtiș et al., 2010). Another important point was that the activation of these founding myths provided a buffer against a more critical narration of the past. That is, the gap between endorsing higher progress relative to critical narratives became higher when reminded of national origins. Overall, the current findings provide empirical and causal support for theories that founding myths provide core content that positively reinforces the identity of individuals as part of a national community (Wertsch, 2021).

Endorsement of these narratives were not heightened when reminded of the Russian invasion compared to controls in study 1, thus going against our prediction that being reminded of intergroup threat would situationally activate positive national narratives. However, we also noted that national narratives were not consistently lower when reminded of the Russian invasion compared to national origins. On the other hand, beliefs in positive national narratives were indeed consistently lower when reminded of domestic current events compared to national origins in the second study, indicating how thinking about the present context led to a drop in resonating with positive historical narratives. This aligns with findings that Americans generally perceive a trajectory of national decline in the present compared to the foundational past (Choi et al., 2023; Schwartz, 1998; Yamashiro & Roediger III, 2019). However, through the situation provided by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there

was a temporary buffer against this trend so that differences between present-day and foundational reminders were mostly absent. Thus, while national narratives were not necessarily activated in the context of the Russian invasion, they did seem more available to the extent that they did not resonate significantly less when compared to a context of foundational remembrance.

The Mobilizing Potential of the Progress Narrative

It was the progress narrative in particular that appeared consistent in level of endorsement across the Russian invasion and national origin conditions (by itself but also in combination with the glorifying narrative and relative to the critical narrative, see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). This suggests that narratives of American progress may have been particularly available as a rhetorical resource in this situation. Indeed, progress narrativizing to defend and mobilize American/Western identity was reflected in top-down discourse. Biden remarked on the unfolding situation in Ukraine in an international speech (The White House, 2022), juxtaposing Russia as a direct and categorical enemy to democracy, freedom, and progress: “Today, Russia has strangled democracy”. Historical reminders were used to connect this narrative to the past: “But the battle for democracy could not conclude and did not conclude with the end of the Cold War”. In turn, a positive temporal contrast was mobilized by drawing on themes of hope for the future: “We will have a different future — a brighter future rooted in democracy and principle, hope and light, of decency and dignity, of freedom and possibilities”. Finally, the idea that progress is only achieved through hard work and sacrifice was communicated to justify the cause: “All of us…must do the hard work of democracy each and every day. My country as well”. These expressions mirror bottom-up articulations of progress by lay Americans (Choi & Liu, 2023). It is clear that the progress narrative provided a distinct marker for America (along with the wider West) against Russia as an ideological out-group, that is rooted in the history of the Cold War. This aligns with

self-categorization research that the way in which an ingroup constructs its identity will depend on the dimension of comparison that is relevant to the specific out-group that is salient at the time (Haslam et al., 1992; Nigbur & Cinnirella, 2007; Turner et al., 1987). Positive ingroup distinctiveness through progress was communicated from the top-down and our current findings suggest that the public were relatively open to receiving such messaging.

Identity Mediated by History

Across both studies, we found consistent support for a pathway in which historical narratives feed into national identification. That is, progress and glorifying narratives consistently mediated increased national identification when participants were reminded of national origins compared to control (study 1) and compared to both control and domestic current events (study 2). Furthermore, these effects of founding myths seemed to be relatively universal, with no differences emerging across Republicans and Democrats. These findings aligns with dynamic theories of social identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) that meaningful content is what informs, shapes, and directs processes of identification. Future research should incorporate more specific national identification measures to examine whether progress narratives inform different modes of identification compared to glorifying narratives. These relationships may be further compared with foundational narratives like victimhood in other contexts (e.g., Obradovic, 2016), which are likely to bear very different implications for identity. Through this narrative perspective, identification has transformative potential rather than being a fixed trait-like variable. Nonetheless, it is more likely that there is a bidirectional relationship between narrative and identity (see Salter & Adams, 2016) as indeed, we found some (albeit less consistent) significant effects for the opposing pathway. Further study should be conducted to more systematically articulate the entanglements and disentanglements in this relationship.

The second study further showed that belief in the progress narrative mediated reduced perceptions of threat to the nation when participants were reminded of national origins. That is, the activation of progress as founding myth buffered against a perception of America being vulnerable to threat. Interestingly, it was the progress rather than glorifying narrative that mediated this effect. Nostalgia for past aspirations for progress seem to provide a source of comfort for Americans to defend themselves from feelings of threat, rather than nostalgia for past greatness, exceptionalism, and strength. While progress is typically conceptualized as a future-oriented narrative, these findings show more specifically how effectively they function as past founding myths and resources for symbolic coping in the American context (Hilton & Liu, 2017).

Limitations and Future Directions

It is worth nothing that we did not control for variability in how individuals were interpreting Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the first study. While public polling showed that Americans mostly supported Ukraine (Pew, 2023), there may still be individual differences in the extent to which participants condemn Russia or care about the issue at all. For example, one may condemn Russia while also being critical of America's funding of the war under current economic conditions. Such factors may have contributed to a lack of clearer narrative activation observed in response to this reminder. In future studies that employ this methodology, it may be helpful to incorporate more specific attitude ratings about the current events that are prompted and conduct more fine-grained comparisons of people with differing opinions about the same event. Of course, the extreme salience of the Russian invasion in public discourse during data collection of the first study still enabled a broad but meaningful comparison between intergroup (study 1) versus domestic (study 2) situations. We believe that this naturalistic paradigm has great potential for social psychology to make politically

situated and contextualized contributions to the fields of collective remembering and political psychology.

We may address the possibility that our experiment in Study 3 did not find the predicted effects for salient current events (Russia's invasion of Ukraine), *not* because the hypothesized relationship between relevant current events and the activation of national narratives does not exist, but rather because our chosen current event was not sufficiently strongly linked to intergroup concerns for Americans. Replicating the experiment with a different current event as a prompt in the US, or replicating the study design in a different context like Eastern Europe where intergroup concerns are more salient in everyday life (e.g., Ivanović et al., 2024) may help to explore such considerations.

Moreover, we acknowledge that the effects of the national origins condition across both studies could simply be triggered by the mention of 'America' in the prompt itself rather than foundational representations specifically (although we also note that the current events reminder also mentioned 'Americans'). Future studies may compare different categories of historical event reminders to check that this effect is unique to representations of national foundations by using different historical prompts. In addition, we note that our narrative dependent measures may have alternative conceptualizations depending on what and from who we draw our narrative sources from. Nonetheless the current measures are based on the spontaneous narrative expressions and phrases provided by lay Americans in their own words (Choi & Liu, 2023). Furthermore, they are complementary with common themes identified in top-down rhetoric employed by US politicians (Simko, 2022), which Americans are likely to be familiar with. Future studies could test these same narrative measures across different countries to add support to whether their functions for national identification are unique to the American historical context.

In a similar vein, an alternative explanation for our findings could be that when participants simply write about positive events about their country (e.g., the signing of the U.S. Constitution), they then identify more strongly with the country relative to a control condition. However, the equivalence that was observed between the national origins and Russian invasion conditions show that what is primed is more than just a mere positivity effect. Rather, foundational events were associated with similar levels of national identification as priming an international current event (Russia's invasion of Ukraine). Nonetheless, it may be worth comparing the effects of priming individuals with foundational events versus positive events in general, to more closely discern these effects.

It may be argued that implementing content checks on our responses before analyses could have introduced a selection bias, wherein people who are more likely to nominate officially commemorated foundational events or the Russian invasion are already predisposed to be higher in believing the national narratives (and higher in national identity). According to a more traditional experimental paradigm, our reminder variables might not be interpreted as exerting a true 'causal' effect. To address this, we ran the analyses with all participants in each condition retained, without exclusions. This showed largely the same pattern of results as reported previously (see supplementary materials, Tables S7-S8, Figures S1-S3). Thus, our conditions can be interpreted to have had the same main effects even without accounting for idiosyncratic responses to the reminder prompts. However, according to SRT, any content based reminder ought to exert causal effects only to the extent that they prime relevant, existing knowledge. Thus, the approach we take in the current paper is not to treat the reminder conditions as pure experimental variables, but as quasi-experimental variables that activate relevant knowledge first, that mediates causal priming effects. That is, we follow a pathway of stimulus-organism-response, rather than a direct stimulus to response model.

Through this, we take Moscovici's (1976/2008) warning into consideration and argue that social representations in society may never truly be 'manipulated'.

This approach acknowledges the agency that individuals possess in responding to their cultural environment. It shows how cultural knowledge can be actively and spontaneously recruited by individuals to produce political thought. This inevitably occurs alongside a minority who may not share common representational ground with the majority or mainstream society, whether that be driven by different motivations, lack of interest, or simply a lack of exposure/knowledge (for an extended discussion of cultural grounding see Liu & Páez, 2019). Designing our own primes of foundational events in America like the Declaration of Independence would indeed conform more closely to a 'pure' experimental variable. However, if we apply Moscovici's logic (1976/2008), what we are assuming is being primed is likely to be different to how these are actually being represented across the minds of individuals, depending on their existing knowledge, beliefs, and engagement with that representation in their own lives and in the real world. Our reminder prompts provide a way for individuals to bring up a certain class of representations themselves, of their own volition and interest, in ways that are already meaningful to them. This aligns more closely with how individuals interact with history in their day to day lives and how popular narratives come about. As experimenters, we utilize this existing meaning that is placed on the representation by individuals, similarly to how identity entrepreneurs tap into historical representations in the real world (that are mobilized toward real political ends). In this way, our quasi-experiments recognize and account for the fact that individuals are not passive subjects to the information and communication around them and thus, are unlikely to be influenced by experimental primes about social representations in uniform ways (Moscovici, 1976/2008; Reicher, 2004). The main results reported more accurately reflect the theoretical rationale behind the studies and therefore a more appropriate test of hypotheses.

Conclusion

To conclude, we found consistent and causal support that narratives of progress and glorification are activated as founding myths in contexts of foundational remembrance to bolster national identification for Americans. Furthermore, narratives of progress were not significantly lowered when individuals were reminded about Russia's invasion of Ukraine compared to national origins, whereas individuals did resonate with this narrative significantly less when they were reminded of domestic current events. This showed a decline in resonating with the American progress myth when there was an absence of salient intergroup threat. The current studies are theoretically and methodologically innovative in operationalizing real world situations to examine the effects of situational context (Oakes, 2003) on identity construction (Reicher, 2004). For Americans, a nostalgia for the progress that used to be the nation's founding mission seems to have lasting mobilizing potential for national identity when needed. A fruitful program for ongoing research would be to identify the rich and contextualized narratives that function as founding myths across varied national contexts to build an understanding of how different nations and communities define and commemorate themselves, and use these definitions to navigate the present.

Chapter 5: General Discussion and Conclusion

Aims of the Thesis

In this thesis, I examined the dynamic construction of historical narratives by lay individuals as a means of story-telling that meaningfully informs their national identity. In particular, I sought to investigate how individuals connect positive, celebrated representations of national foundations with a more uncertain and destabilizing climate in the present; that is, what are the narratives that individuals use to contextualize national events across time? The United States, which holds a vividly negative memory of the destabilizing event of 9-11 (study 1), provided an ideal setting to study such dynamics. Do individuals in the United States interpret a meaningful and coherent narrative between events of their mythologized origins and events related to their current climate of negativity, polarization, and threat (study 2)? Do such internalized narratives bear implications for their psychological experiences of national identity when they are activated, as indeed theorized by scholars in collective memory studies (studies 3 and 4)?

Summary of Findings and Empirical Contributions

This thesis was guided by the following research questions:

-What are the events (and themes) that inform the present-day climates of remembering across nations? (Chapter 2)

-How do individuals embedded in a national (American) context, construct historical narratives to understand events from their nation's past? Do popular narratives bear associations with national identification? (Chapter 3)

-How are individuals' use of national narratives influenced by group-based context? In turn, how do these contextual effects on narratives, dynamically inform experiences of national identification? (Chapter 4)

These questions were addressed in the current thesis through four empirical studies (published and submitted as three manuscript articles), which have combined qualitative with quantitative approaches and data. Study 1 used a typical technique that is employed in SRH survey research (e.g., Liu et al., 2009; Yamashiro et al. 2022), where participants are asked to nominate a select number of the most important historical events from the past. These responses are then coded from the more specific level of events to broader levels of content-based categories. Aggregates of events and content provide indicators for salient representations of history, and comparisons can be drawn based on these aggregates across groups or contexts. Thus, study 1 was not methodologically novel, however, it made an empirical contribution through its distinction of and focus on communicative remembering specifically. Communicative memories refer to memories of those events that have occurred within the lifetimes of individuals alive today and their peers. Moreover, the study took a focus on national memories (as opposed to global representations, see Liu et al., 2009), which provided an indicator of how members of a national ingroup are 'working out' the memories of recent events amongst themselves. In other words, national communicative memories provide information about memories that are most relevant to the present-day affairs and concerns of countries. Through a cross-cultural comparison encompassing 39 countries around the world, this investigation provided a barometer of present-day climates across various different regions, each with their unique sets of experiences and circumstances and thus, different subjective needs for meaning-making.

A major finding of the first study was the identification of a distinctly negative climate of communicative remembering in Anglo countries. More broadly, there was a pattern where more developed and wealthy societies were more negative in their communicative remembering overall. The content analysis showed that the negative remembering of the Anglosphere was driven by salient memories of terrorism. Negative

evaluations of terrorism (i.e., 9/11) in communicative memory were consensually shared by individuals across these societies, which were even more negative than their memories of wars and disasters. Moreover, terrorism was not as negatively remembered in other countries compared to the West. Countries across Europe followed the Anglosphere, which showed highly negative remembering of WWII. In neutral regions such as East Asia and Latin America, there were moderately negative memories of economic issues and politics. Finally, driven by the relative absence of terrorism as well as salient memories of national independence in communicative memory, developing societies across the global South showed more positive climates of remembering. These patterns show the vastly different symbolic materials that are available in the public discourse across countries and regions in constructing and understanding their present concerns and circumstances. This has implications for the kind of national narratives that may be relevant in their public discourses.

As would be expected, we observed nationhood related themes only in those societies across the majority world that have achieved official statehood in recent decades. For these regions, foundational narratives are likely to be more 'alive' and resonant in the hearts and minds of people today, through their direct or shared experience. This is an investigation that warrants further research. In turn, developing societies without foundational events in living memory appeared to be less protected from negative emotional climates. This suggests that there is indeed a universally positive function to representations of national foundations. In turn, there seems to be a uniquely negative function to representations of terrorism in Anglosphere countries. We may speculate that this is related to perceptions of intergroup threat but how and why 9/11 (and other events involving terrorism) is remembered so negatively across Anglo countries is left an open question in this paper. In the subsequent papers, we begin to address how these representations are contextualized by the narratives that individuals apply to make sense of these events. Nonetheless, the disconnect between the

positive material conditions and negative subjective representations of recent history across Anglosphere (and Western) countries was a key takeaway of this study, demonstrating the influence of representations (and implicitly, narratives) in driving the social reality of individuals embedded in collectives.

Study 1 showed the key events that individuals select as relevant to their national circumstances in the present, and how they are evaluated. Importantly, such events are not interpreted in isolation. Rather, they ought to be contextualized by existing frameworks of meaning. That is, the meaning of communicative memories ought to be elaborated and shaped in light of wider stories, memories, and narratives about the nation. In turn, the communicative memories that are salient for a given society, is likely to influence the narratives that become more accessible and relevant in public discourse. To address these questions, Study 2 asked participants in the United States to provide a narrative to explain the list of historical events that they nominated as most important for nationals to remember. For this study, there were no limitations set in the scope of historical events that participants were asked to nominate. Therefore, events spanning from cultural to communicative representations were observed in participants' responses. In contrast to communicative memories, cultural memories refer to representations of those events that are remembered indirectly by individuals alive today through culturally and institutionally mediated platforms and practices (Assmann, 2013). This approach was methodologically innovative in focusing on the explicit construction of lay people's narratives, rather than imposing interpretive frames of narratives externally, as has most typically been done in the past. Through a mixed-method approach, this study provided an investigation of deep and rich content of representations, narratives, and their underlying connections, as well as systematic associations of this content with standardized measures related to national identity, political attitudes, and demographic differences.

Through this open-ended survey, we identified two popular positive narratives about the nation, which we summarized thematically as progress and glorifying narratives of America. In terms of content, progress narratives resembled a form of interpretive denial by humbly acknowledging an imperfect past of the nation to show how much things have improved in the present (and/or signal hope for a better future). Specific attributions for this 'imperfect past' were absent, thus indicating its use as a rhetorical device for communicating a positive contrast across time, rather than a device for ingroup critique. Such general perceptions of motivated optimism that are shared amongst Americans has been corroborated by past findings (Kraus et al., 2017). Importantly, progress narrators interpreted the nation's founding ideals such as democracy and equality, as setting shared goals and missions for the nation to work towards. In turn, glorifying narratives emphasized the nation's strength and exceptionalism in comparison or conflict against other countries. Through this lens, history was narrated through the nation's ongoing preservation and protection of their founding ideals over time, typically involving a vigilance to both internal and external threats. In direct contrast to these positive narratives, we also identified a popular counter-narrative which expressed specific critiques of ingroup wrongdoings and structural issues.

An analysis of historical representations that were nested within these narratives showed that culturally inscribed representations of history (Assmann, 2013) were more salient for both progress and glorifying narratives compared to those who did not espouse these narratives. Most salient cultural representations incorporated in progress and glorifying narratives were those related to national foundations, such as the Declaration of Independence and American Revolution. This aligns with the idea that national foundations provide central symbolic resources for constructing national narratives. Indeed, both narratives were also associated with higher participation in 4th of July commemorations. Importantly, these narratives were not just isolated to the distant past, being detached from

contemporary concerns. Specifically, 9-11 constituted the most highly nominated event across both of these narratives, showing that stories of progress and glorification were constructed from symbolic materials that span from national foundations, all the way to 9-11. Nonetheless, foundational memories were much more dominant than communicative memories for progress and glorifying narrators overall (see Table 2.4, Chapter 3).

In contrast, communicative representations of history (Assmann, 2013) appeared much more salient in critical narratives. This was corroborated by the trend that the dates of events connected to critical narratives were significantly more recent compared to the rest of the sample. More specifically, a marked absence of positively regarded national origin events and greater mention of negative ingroup atrocities characterized the representational repertoire of critical narratives. Importantly, while representations of national foundations were not incorporated in the construction of critical narratives (see Table 2.4, Chapter 3), they were often broadly alluded to in the open text, as a means to demonstrate awareness of the founding of America as falsely curated myth. However, what did remain consistent across all narratives was the salience of 9-11. Representations of 9-11 were also the most highly nominated amongst critical narrators. The incorporation of 9-11 in American memory seems to be unavoidable, and this corroborates the findings of study 1 that memories of 9-11 have become a hegemonic representation for lay Americans. In other words, for narratives to be accessible and popular in public discourse, they need to contain a pathway that connects to some meaningful interpretation of 9-11. Through progress, 9-11 may be interpreted as an event that represents a period of downfall from which America will inevitably rise above through resilience and determination. Through a glorifying lens, it becomes another instance of threat that Americans need to be hyper-vigilant to. Through a critical lens, this may be interpreted as an event that America uses as justification for unwarranted military aggression.

By charting out the landscape of narrative endorsement across participants in the sample, we found that there was no narrative that was endorsed by a clear majority. Endorsers of the three main narratives only represented a minority of the sample overall, which highlights that there was considerable fragmentation of historical narratives. That is, there does not seem to be a consensually endorsed historical narrative in the United States (at the moment). When mapped according to key demographic variables, we saw that a 'mnemonic standoff' (Wertsch, 2021) between glorifying and critical narratives mapped directly onto the polarisation between Republicans and Democrats. In this way, America's present context of political polarisation may be feeding into the divergence and pluralisation of collective remembering at the individual level. Relatedly, ethnic minorities endorsed critical narratives significantly more than progress and glorifying narratives, while the majority group did not show such differences.

We also quantitatively examined associations of endorsing these narratives with national identity and political attitudes. Each of the popular narratives showed some relationship with measures of national identity, supporting the idea that historical narratives provide meaningful content for informing and enacting ingroup identity. Both Progress and Critical were positively associated with constructive patriotism. In turn, the espousal of Glorifying narratives was associated with a blind attachment to one's nation. Interestingly, those who did not perceive meaningful identity content via narratives were those who showed non-significant and negative relationships with measures of identity. These findings opened up some relevant directions for the next study. Specifically, identifying narrative content in study 2 afforded us with the opportunity to measure the dynamic effects of context on how individuals interact with ingroup narratives that are shared in popular discourse.

As a follow-up to the descriptive investigation of lay American narratives identified in the previous study, the final studies investigated systematic effects of context on individuals' resonance with national narratives and in turn, national identification through an event priming paradigm. We operationalized the independent variable of context through between-subject reminders of national origin events versus current events versus a control condition. On a broader level, these can be conceptualized as contexts of cultural remembering (national origins), communicative remembering (current events), and a control (personal events). We operationalized national narratives as the dependent variable by transforming the discursive repertoires identified in the previous study into closed-ended items that reflect each of the popular narratives.

Our predictions for these studies were based on principles of social identity theory, thereby bringing content (i.e., narrative) and identity into a dialogue that is dynamically influenced by context (see Reicher, 2004). We expected that representations of 1) national origins and 2) current events would both lead to individuals resonating more strongly with national narratives, which would in turn, predict higher national identification. However, the second prediction only held for study 3, within a real-world context where Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a salient current event in American news media. In study 4, when there was no salient intergroup threat in current events, we expected that the activation of American narrative and identity would no longer occur. Measuring the variability in endorsement of historical narratives across (real) situational, group-based contexts offers a way through which we may study the psychological function that narratives serve for individuals as a resource for identification, thus enabling their reproduction and active use as a tool for constructing and maintaining a sense of nationhood across time.

In short, the final article aimed to causally demonstrate the use of national narratives by individuals to bolster and positively reinforce national identification. Importantly, our use of the experimental paradigm was still contextualized by using real societal events as primes. Being self-nominated by participants, we could also be confident that these events were meaningful and relevant to the participants in their respective categories. Our findings demonstrated that Americans do indeed mobilize national narratives of American glorification and American progress in particular, for national identity when engaged in contexts of foundational remembrance, or in other words, when reminded of national origin events. A present-day context where domestic issues were salient led to a significant reduction in resonating with such national narratives (study 4), reflecting the general tendency to perceive decline from a positive, aspirational narrative about the past. Such a trend toward decline and negativity may hint towards the climate of negativity that Americans are currently entrenched in (study 1). In such a context, the relevance and effectiveness of national narratives as unifying and/or rallying resources seems to be dwindling. This is further exacerbated by trends of political polarization that appears to be feeding into the fragmentation of narratives (study 2).

In contrast, a present-day context where an intergroup threat was salient (Russia's invasion of Ukraine, study 3) did not trigger a decrease in resonating with American myths and in turn, identity compared to a context of foundational remembrance. This connects back to the question of how Americans deal with the meaning and representation of 9-11. If the memory of 9-11 is still saliently represented as a threat in American consciousness and discourse, it may have lasting potential in activating American (positive) narratives and identity. However, this is unlikely to be the case given the negative aftermath and lack of resolution resulting from the wars in the Middle East as a response to 9-11, which has led to much cynicism and disillusionment (e.g., Cavanna, 2015). Thus, we expect that priming 9-11

may lead to too disparate of responses among American participants that there would be no clear activation of narratives. Positive narratives may be activated for certain political orientations, while critical narratives may be activated amongst others. The contextual effects of studies 3 and 4 further suggest that real current events unfolding at the time matters for determining the direction of such effects. For example, during the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan (and return of the Taliban), there may have been negative narrative associations drawn to 9-11 whether that be expressed as a critical stance to American military aggression for those who are left-leaning (increase in critical narratives), or a failure of America to respond to threat in their "War against Terror" (decrease in glorifying narratives). In contrast, during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there may have been greater likelihood for Americans to (re)interpret 9-11 under the broader narrative frameworks of America as the Defender of democracy and freedom. The paradigm of studies 3 and 4 offers a way for investigating such dynamic and functional associations between context, representations, narrative, and identity.

Overall, we found consistent and causal support that narratives of progress and glorification were activated in contexts of foundational remembrance to bolster national identification for American participants. Endorsement of progress was not significantly lowered when individuals were reminded about Russia's invasion of Ukraine compared to national foundations, whereas individuals did resonate with the narrative of progress significantly less when they were reminded of domestic current events. This showed a decline in resonating with the myth of American progress under a 'normal' state of affairs, when there was no major international threat or crisis in American news. These findings contribute to our understanding of identity as a process of dynamic narrative construction that is reactive to context. Furthermore, empirical research on the active use of narrative is rare.

The current studies contribute to this gap by demonstrating how the shared use of narrative bridges the connection between the individual and collective identity.

Theoretical Contributions: Refining a Dynamic and Functional Framework of Historical Narrative and National Identity

Study 1 demonstrated how societies are not only bound to the past through culturally inscribed and ritualized representations of history, but are also dynamically constitutive of changing climates that arise from the bottom-up communicative remembering of individuals. While inter-generational differences in historical representations have been empirically demonstrated in the past, dynamics of representational change and fluidity have not yet been integrated into developing and refining a wider narrative theory of history and identity (see Liu, 2022). Such considerations are important to deal with, especially given the recency bias that has consistently been documented in social representations of history (Liu et al., 2005). Study 1 of this thesis invokes such relevant theoretically important questions. Are communicative memories anchored in narratives that connect them to the broader history of the nation? In turn, how are national historical narratives constructed to accommodate for unpredictable representations that emerge in communicative memory?

Study 2 responded to those questions posed above. This first required refining the terminology of national narrative. National narratives have been invoked in various ways, ranging from historical charters (Liu & Hilton, 2001) to master narratives (Carretero et al., 2013) to national narrative projects (Wertsch, 2021). All bear relevance to a theory of narrative and identity, wherein a story of the ingroup provides content for understanding and making sense of group identity, as well as acting in line with that identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Liu et al., 1999). However, the lack of clarity in the definition and operationalization of ingroup narrative has made it difficult to systematically study how historical narratives have implications for identity within specific contexts. In this study, we

conceptualized national narratives as narratives that explain, incorporate, and weave together any historical events from the group's past, both foundational and contemporary, that are deemed to be important by group members. This inductive narrative approach operates on a broader, integrative level that tracks an ingroup's overall trajectory from past to present, rather than treating narratives of individual events in isolation. The basic assumption is that there is subjectivity and selectivity inherent to narrative construction, which is what enables them to carry meaning to events that are interpreted through their lens.

Utilizing this approach, study 2 focused on identifying the content of American historical narratives across two levels: 1) the content and combination of historical events that are nominated under different narratives 2) the distinct themes of different narratives that inform how those events are interpreted. This endeavour addresses those key questions posed by study 1 as well as the wider literature (Liu, 2022): Are there actually explicit and coherent historical narratives that are widely shared and used by people? What do these narratives look like? Do they align or diverge from culturally inscribed narratives? The literature on top-down collective remembrance have observed that national foundations are central to the curation of national narratives, often leading to the preservation of a nation's 'founding myths' (Zerubavel, 2003). For example, this is observed through the generic commemoration of national days across countries. Furthermore, study 1 demonstrated how consensually positive representations of national foundations were shared in the communicative memory of countries with recent statehood.

In study 2, we indeed identified narratives that saliently featured representations of national foundations, as well as common discursive patterns that interpreted meaning in those events whether that be as setting a shared mission for the nation (progress) or justifying the superiority of the nation (glorifying). These were the narratives that showed positive and significant associations with national identity for Americans. Importantly, while progress and

glorifying narratives were grounded in foundational representations, they were still narrated in ways that were communicatively accessible in public discourses of the present day. That is, they provided discursive repertoires that could meaningfully be connected and made relevant to salient communicative memories, especially 9/11. Thus, these narratives may be interpreted as mechanisms that 'activate' archival memories from the distant past, like national foundations, as working memory that continues to resonate in contemporary public discourse and thus, apply to circumstances and concerns of the present day (Rigney, 2005).

The most popular alternative to those narratives of progress and glorification was a narrative that was critical of the nation. Interestingly critical narratives were most closely linked to communicative memories. That is, the most salient events underpinning construction of the critical narrative were those that occurred within recent decades. Thus, critical narratives were anchored in the present, while progress and glorifying narratives were anchored in national foundations with some connections to salient events from the present, like 9-11. This is unsurprising as study 1 demonstrated that 9-11 has become a hegemonic representation for Americans. Here, this was followed up by showing that narratives do need to 'deal with' how to make sense of 9-11 in order to be accessible in public discourse. What this also suggests is that the present climate and context in America, which is generally characterized by negativity (study 1), is actually more conducive to critical narratives of the nation overall. However, critical narratives lack consensus around a coherent story of national origins or foundations which may hinder their ability to mobilize individuals as members of a national collective. Rather, critical narratives appear to have more ready capacity for being mobilized in a domestic, political context (in conflict against those espousing glorifying narratives). In turn, progress and glorifying narratives do have the benefit offered by national foundations to provide their proponents with a coherent and positive 'story of the making of the ingroup' (Liu et al., 1999). However, progress and

glorifying narratives seem increasingly less relevant for communicative memories in America overall, which may even contribute to their receding in popularity and resonance, especially as new events that revitalize them fail to enter the canon.

Beyond identifying content, study 2 also addressed the question of degree of consensus around national narratives. Acknowledging that there is a myriad of narratives available to individuals at a given time, and that narratives are often combined, overlapped, or contradicted with each other, we explored plurality in the narrative landscape. Indeed, we found that there was no majority consensus around a unifying national narrative. The inductive methods used probably precluded such a finding, suggesting that top-down accounts of history provided by political leaders only connect to, rather than constitute bottom-up narratives held by ordinary people. In summary, this study was able to demonstrate that coherent and popular narratives that incorporate national foundations are shared by Americans. Though not endorsed by a clear majority of the sample, these narratives were recognizable and available and importantly, showed significant links with national identification. This provides support as well as necessary content to the theory that narratives inform dynamic understandings and experiences of identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

To test the psychological function of these narratives, we ought to test when or under what conditions that they become activated, and what the implications of their activation are. In particular, narratives ought to be activated under conditions relevant for social identity concerns and in turn, bear implications for experiences of identification. That is, under what circumstances do national narratives resonate with individuals, which in turn, bolsters their sense of national identity? Such functional processes are important for understanding the mechanisms and constraints of how historical elements are invoked by political figures in their rhetoric, and what the implications for their audience are. Through experimental

investigation in studies 3 and 4, we found that representations of national foundations do causally lead to higher resonance with popular national narratives (progress and glorification) which in turn, predicts higher national identification. This builds upon the descriptive links between national narratives and national foundations identified in study 2 and contributes to a theory of narrative and identity by demonstrating that foundational myths provide core content that mobilizes national identity.

The finding that the popular progress narrative was just as resonant with American participants when reminded of a real current event involving intergroup threat (Russia's invasion of Ukraine) demonstrates that this present-day context had a similar priming effect to priming national foundations. The effect being specific to the progress narrative may be explained by Americans being reminded of ideological differences between the U.S. and Russia stemming from the Cold War, with progress, capitalism, and democracy providing key markers of difference (against communism). This augments a dynamic account of social identity theory by demonstrating that context is central to determining when a given social identity and their relevant elements are activated. Only in an intergroup, rather than domestic contemporary context did national narratives not decline in resonance for Americans.

This final investigation integrates narrative and social identity approaches to collective remembering by demonstrating when a coherent historical narrative characterizes the collective remembering of individuals (see Liu, 2022). Certain events like those related to national foundations and threat seem to be more memorable than others through their activation of abstract narratives that are accessible for individuals embedded in a group. That is, the repetition of narratives through specific events is what reminds people of their relevance to the group (i.e., nation), and in turn, revitalizes those narratives. Commemoration by the state seems to provide such reminders to maintain people's resonance with narratives of the nation that have foundational elements. Similarly, political rhetoric performs a similar

function with more contemporary events by linking them to existing group-based narratives. These everyday reminders provide mechanisms that maintain a functional connection between (historical and contemporary) events and wider national narratives. Events related to social identity concerns like the ones we have outlined in our studies (national foundations and intergroup threat) may be universally relevant for such processes. However, there may also be events that are more relevant for activating national narratives in certain countries and regions compared to others, depending on specific themes of their existing narratives.

Methodological Contributions

Explicit Study of Narratives

As just mentioned, a key contribution of the current thesis was the identification and mapping of the content and themes of national narratives. This was enabled by an explicit, mixed-method investigation of narrative construction by individuals. Traditionally, narrative structures have been interpreted or inferred by researchers depending on the pattern of historical representations that are nominated by participants (e.g., Liu et al., 2014; Zaromb et al., 2014). This thesis recognizes that such an approach comes with the limitations and risks of researchers projecting their own categorizations of the social worlds upon the responses of participants. Moreover, such representation centric (rather than participant centric) approaches treat content as static rather than dynamic, and does not account for processes of change or fluidity in representations that are driven by the meaning-making of individuals across time but also across situations.

In the last two papers of this thesis, I employed an approach that centers the participants of the studies as active meaning-makers in response to the study prompts and materials. This involved asking directly participants to construct narratives that they interpreted and made sense of from their own nominated historical events. In other words, study 2 investigated how representations of history provided dynamic materials and resources

for individuals in their own active narrative construction. This allows us to access historical narratives in the vernacular language that is instinctively and intuitively used by individuals (Krawatzek, 2021), which is especially important considering that the spread and popularity of historical narratives ought to be enabled largely by their communicability (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997). That is, these open narrative responses allowed participants to enact a fundamental psychological motivation to communicate one's understanding with others, as part of their desire to participate in the construction of shared meaning (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997).

Naturalistic Paradigm for Studying Social Knowledge

A participant rather than representation centric approach also heeds Moscovici's (1984) warning that social representations cannot be created or destroyed experimentally in the lab. Rather, they are interpreted and appropriated by participants in interaction with their existing networks of knowledge and beliefs. Laboratory experiments aim to test theories in a controlled way and in controlled environments, which contradicts the inherently social function of social representations where they can only become meaningful within social context(s). A naturalistic approach to experimentation provides a middle ground wherein the aim is to identify conditions (i.e., contexts) wherein certain phenomena related to collective remembering may emerge. Studies 3 and 4 in particular, recognize that individuals do not respond passively to stimuli that they are exposed to but rather, use the stimuli that are offered to them in interaction with their existing knowledge and beliefs to create meaning. These studies utilized open-ended responses from the participants themselves as stimuli or information that further 'primes' their own responses to other items in turn. This allowed the activation of social contexts which were subjectively real and meaningful from the participants' points of view as primes, rather than passively being exposed to information with meaning that is pre-designed and pre-assigned by the experimenters.

This naturalistic approach to studying historical narratives and social representations treat individuals as fundamentally social subjects who actively make sense of information through interpretation and communication about the information that they are exposed to but also networked to information that they already hold, and who are aware about how others in their society think. Individuals are aware of different versions of reality, as exemplified by explicit articulations of alternative narratives in some open-ended responses of study 2, and can hold multiple interpretations at once, with certain narratives coming to the fore in certain contexts as demonstrated in studies 3 and 4. This overarching approach allows us to incorporate the dynamics of bottom-up change, fluidity, and pluralization in the study of representations, recognizing that people apply representations as symbolic objects in their cultural/social thinking "in a continuous process of appropriation and change" (Reicher, 2004).

Societal Relevance

A focus on the national context of the United States (prompted by study 1 and followed up by studies 2, 3, and 4) has provided a contextualized analysis of how highly negative, destabilizing communicative memories (i.e., the 9/11 bombings) are made sense of by Americans in ways that (re)stabilize national identity (or not). Such efforts require individuals to narratively "deal with" those destabilizing events and crises in communicative memory, in ways that maintain a coherent and continuous link to existing frameworks of meaning about the nation. Importantly, this was achieved in more than one typical way. Glorifying narratives were indeed conducive to an emphasis on national security and vigilance to threat, related to 9/11 and an endorsement of American military aggression overall. However, progressive narratives were also popular and more constructively informed American identity. Furthermore, it was this progress narrative that was more available in the psychology of individuals when faced with a new context involving a threatening outgroup

(i.e., Russia's invasion of Ukraine). These dynamics demonstrate the importance of the existing narrative landscape and the importance of context in determining the frames that individuals apply for thinking about and understanding history that is unfolding in real time.

A central, hegemonic representation of 9/11 in American communicative memory is clear from both studies 1 and 2. In combination with wider, societal observations, we may infer that 9-11 is no longer just a communicative memory. Rather, it has been institutionalized in a short amount of time to become dominant and epoch-making in American popular history. This occurs not only through institutionalization via mediums like texts and commemoration, but also through real political and legislative action. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had direct influences on the military industrial complex of the United States. This has also had ripple effects overseas, with other countries across the Anglosphere also saliently listing 9-11 as being important to their own nation's history. In contrast, terrorism has faded to a very minor (or completely absent) theme in communicative memories of the majority world. This contrasts with the findings of older surveys (e.g., Liu et al., 2012) where 9-11 was previously judged as one of the most important events in world history, even by countries of the majority world.

Representations of 9-11 seem to be intertwined with America's response to the event and its aftermath, leading to gradual shifts or fragmentation in the way Americans see themselves as a nation. Narratives of America as waging a "War against Terror" (glorifying) has somewhat different implications from narratives of America as defenders of democracy (progress), and even more stark differences compared to narratives of America as military aggressors (critical). Just as importantly, America's founding ideals have very different implications depending on whether they are interpreted as aspirational for the nation (progress), as justification for the nation's superiority (glorifying), or as falsehood (critical). In these ways, America's repeated failures to meet the nationalistic calls made by progress

and glorifying narratives in its various enterprises (including the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan), may have allowed us to observe the rise of the critical counter-narrative, and the decline in popularity and coherence of its more optimistic, celebratory, and mythologizing counterparts.

Understanding the Possibility Space for National Mobilization

The most obvious ways in which these findings hold societal relevance, lie in the implications that they have for politicians' identity entrepreneurship (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Political leaders often invoke national history in their public speeches to provide reference points and guides for action that draw from the past. This is especially noticeable when politicians respond to threat events (e.g., Graham et al., 2004). Well-known historical figures provide particularly powerful referents used in political rhetoric, often coming to serve as prototypes for the ingroup by embodying certain values. In narratives, these heroic figures are typically juxtaposed against historical villains who present direct contrasts to ingroup values. Through repeated invocations of narratives involving these characters, political leaders may effectively communicate desired values and action for group members.

However, there has been little empirical research to date that examines how national historical narratives shared and held by individuals actually respond to conditions like threat. Do they indeed become more coherent and salient under such conditions, thereby providing appropriate grounds for identity entrepreneurs to resonate with people through the mobilization of these narratives? While well-known historical events and figures may indeed provide powerful representations for political leaders in justifying certain agendas and rallying their audience for causes like war, they need to be perceived by individuals as relevant for present day concerns otherwise, they can be received as dry facts that are distant and detached from their social realities (see Liu, 2022). The studies of this thesis directly examines the bottom-up reception side of identity entrepreneurship dynamics.

The studies have provided insight into the symbolic materials that are shared in the hearts and minds of individuals, and how these change when individuals are faced with different conditions or situations. Understanding the symbolic representations and narratives that are available and their conditions of activation in the minds of individuals is important for understanding the field of possibilities that identity entrepreneurs work with in translating their rhetoric into possibilities for action. In other words, "leaders do not paint on an empty canvass" (Liu, 2022, p. 119). Symbolic resources of history may afford the cultural agency of leaders to advance their agendas, but only when they are already associated with shared meaning in the minds of individuals. The possibility space afforded by what individuals perceive, believe, and resonate with is what allows leaders to realize the opportunities provided to them in critical junctures of time, or when major events and crises occur (Liu & Pratto, 2018).

There are several key examples of identity entrepreneurship within the U.S. context through which we may observe the realization of leaders' cultural agency. What is common across these cases is that they appeal to some recognizable theme of the narratives that were identified in this thesis. As already outlined in study 2, President Biden made clear invocations to the progress narrative in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This has continuity with the discourse that was used to mobilize Americans against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. There may also be parallels drawn between how the progress narrative has been invoked to deal with the Cold War and 9/11. The ideological conflict between the U.S and an outgroup labelled as "Islamo Fascists" in response to 9/11, mirrors familiar elements of the 'clash of civilizations' discourse mobilized for the Cold War (Bonney, 2008). Elements of progress narratives in relation to ideology and justice, and elements of glorifying narratives in relation to threat and security, had continuity across those events, and thus, resonated with public opinion enough to rally people behind the cause of their leaders to

eventually launch two wars in the Middle East. In this way, acts of identity entrepreneurship that reinvigorate or extend already accepted, conventional, tried-and-true narratives are likely to face better reception and be less disputed. In the negative aftermath of America's response to 9/11, where it may be argued that it is harder to build continuity to those narratives, how may such invocations be received?

We can observe these impacts in Biden's response to the recent Israel-Hamas War. In his immediate remarks delivered on October (2023) Biden invoked rhetoric that rang very familiar to post 9/11 discourses, stating that: "This was an act of sheer evil" and "Like every nation in the world, Israel has the right to respond — indeed has a duty to respond — to these vicious attacks". An analogy between Hamas and ISIS was even explicitly drawn: "The brutality of Hamas — this bloodthirstiness — brings to mind the worst — the worst rampages of ISIS". In this way, Biden attempts to build continuity between narratives that were invoked in response to 9/11 and the present attacks. Furthermore, familiar elements of the progress narrative were invoked through statements like: "democracies like Israel and the United States are stronger and more secure when we act according to the rule of law". These themes were also drawn on to juxtapose their groups against Hamas as an outgroup to democratic, lawful countries: "Terrorists purposefully target civilians, kill them. We uphold the laws of war — the law of war. It matters. There's a difference".

However, trends in public opinion indicate that Biden's approach to identity entrepreneurship may have had limited effectiveness. A pew research poll collected in December (2023), showed that more members of the public actually viewed Biden as 'favoring the Israelis too much' (21%) compared to those who viewed Biden as 'favoring the Palestinians too much' (16%). Slightly more Americans were also partial to the view that 'Israel is going too far in its current military operation' (27%) compared to those who agreed that 'Israel is taking the right approach' (25%). Such a climate of public opinion may have

contributed to Biden shifting his approach, calling for a humanitarian "pause" to Israel's siege on Gaza less than a month after his initial address (Madhani, 2023). He also faced mounting pressure from members of his own Democratic Party to rein in Israel's attacks. This reflects a major shift in the position of the White House, which previously claimed that it would not dictate Israel's military operations. Through this course of actions, we can observe that the narrative themes employed by Biden in his initial address may have lost resonance with the public, and this was promptly recognized and accommodated for in his political tactic. The extent to which popular American rhetoric has been tainted by the negative aftermath associated with 9/11 is an important question to tackle in a continued program of research. While America's support of Israel still represents a hegemonic stance, the rise in popularity of critical narratives seems to hint towards a moment of change and juncture in public consciousness. This is further observable through the increasing coherence of decolonization as a discourse that is associated with the Palestinian situation (e.g., Masalha, 2012).

Finally, we may connect the landscape of American narratives to domestic issues going on in the country by linking back to Florida's case against Critical Race Theory, which was introduced at the beginning of this thesis. Study 2 found that critical narratives show relative popularity compared to alternative narratives, being comparable to its more positive counterparts of American progress and glorification. However, the case of Florida State's opposition to mainstream education of critical race theory and history demonstrates how as critical narratives become more popular and visible, so does the backlash get stronger. This conflict in mainstream discourse is indicative of how the dynamics of polarisation in America is entrenched in conflicting understandings of history as articulated through the opposing critical and glorifying narratives. Knowing the content and form of these narratives may allow us to develop ways to address their differences, but also understand the constraints and

limitations in overcoming fundamental differences between them, and the need to build up and leverage alternative narratives when bringing these groups into dialogue (Ivanović et al., 2024).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are a few limitations to note for the current thesis, which open up avenues for further examination and refinement in future research. In the first study, the content analysis involved grouping historical events into a limited number of content categories. This may have lost important diversity and nuance in events and themes in some contexts. However, this was a necessary strategy for dealing with the immense diversity and idiosyncrasy of events nominated across 39 societies. We followed this up with a deeper, richer, more contextualized investigation in the United States and future studies may follow up similarly in other countries that were included in the cross-cultural study. It may be especially insightful to follow-up on those countries in the majority world that show a reverse pattern compared to the Anglosphere, with national foundations being in more recent, communicative memory after a negative past of colonization. How may national narratives be constructed in these contexts and how may their implications differ?

A limitation of the second study was the one-sided format in which narratives were constructed by participants. The brief survey format that captures individuals' response only at a given moment in time, may have missed important nuance in how individuals engage with historical narratives. Studies that incorporate dialogue, through interviews or focus group discussions, may provide deeper investigations into how participants think about historical narratives in ways that account better for their reflexivity, awareness of alternative points of view, and narrative flexibility or creativity. Incorporating meta-representations, which refer to people's representations of how other groups perceive them, may be a particularly fruitful avenue to pursue in relation to the polarized landscape of narratives

across political groups in the United States. Relatedly, future studies may incorporate more specific structural conventions of narrative into their analysis. For example, studies may map out the specific use of characters or actors and settings in bottom-up narratives of history (beyond the emplotment of historical *events* which is the typical approach taken in studying social representations of history).

Finally, a limitation of the naturalistic experiment in studies 3 and 4 was the limited control over the variability in open-ended primes. Responses indicating relevant knowledge about the primes were selected based on the content of open-ended responses, but this may have neglected differences in opinions or attitudes related to that content. For example, while the Civil War was not counted as being relevant for the national foundations prime, for some individuals, this may indeed represent the 'beginning' of America as represented in their minds. Similarly, within those participants who nominated Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an important event, thus qualifying as having relevant knowledge for that condition, some may have not evaluated Russia negatively in this situation. Incorporating attitudinal ratings alongside open-ended responses may address this limitation in future research that employs this approach. Furthermore, given that the associations between national narrative and identification were only examined cross-sectionally in these studies, it may be helpful to examine the extent to which national narratives causally feed into identification through a narrative priming study.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, future replications of Studies 3 and 4 may explore different questionnaire items and formats to refine the hypothesized relationship between national narrative and identity. For example, the order of items could be changed to see whether reminding participants of national narratives *first* would influence the collective remembering of foundational events and/or the interpretation of current events. Importantly, the priming paradigm may be replicated in future research to discern the effects of national

foundations and current events on the narrative frames that individuals apply to think about their nation. As mentioned in Chapter 4, replicating this design across cultural contexts that vary in their present-day salience of intergroup concerns, or replicating the survey in the US using different events as prompts may help to clarify and build upon such questions.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine how national narratives are constructed by individuals embedded in national contexts using the historical representations that are available to them as symbolic resources, and the dynamic implications this has for their experiences of national identity. It has addressed this question by analyzing the content of historical representations across different cultural contexts (study 1) and as they are nested within narratives (study 2), and the content of historical narratives as constructed by individuals themselves (study 2) and in reaction to different group-based situations (studies 3 and 4). The first chapter of the thesis provided an overview of the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to narrative, representational, and social identity approaches to collective remembering. This illuminated a gap in the literature where research had not yet identified the content and organization of overarching ingroup narratives about history within national contexts. Without knowing the meaning of national narratives as represented in the minds of individuals, we cannot examine their implications. The next chapters of this thesis (Chapters 2-4) presented the empirical studies that addressed this gap in the existing literature by analysing historical representations, narrative, and identity and comparing their associations under different contexts/conditions in the United States. The findings from this section showed that: 1) salient communicative memories are shared by individuals within societies, feeding into distinctive present-day climates across societies 2) these communicative memories are contextualized within existing narratives of meaning that weave them in continuity with national foundations, 3) popular narratives have different implications for

national identity depending on the themes that inform their interpretation of historical events, and finally, 4) engagement with popular narratives vary across conditions (or contexts), which has implications for people's experience of national identification. The final chapter discussed the empirical, theoretical, methodological contributions of these findings and their societal relevance, as well as important limitations that may be addressed in future investigation.

In conclusion, this thesis advances the narrative and identity approach to collective remembering by identifying the narratives that individuals apply and resonate with in their understanding of the nation, and the conditions in which these narratives are likely to become activated. This was done by examining how individuals actively negotiate the various historical representations available to them to make sense of their nation's past. In the United States of America, there appears to be a pluralistic landscape of narratives characterizing vernacular communication and lay understandings of history. Across these varying narratives, there is conflict between some and overlap between others. In such a landscape, different contexts bring different narratives to the fore. National narratives that are anchored in positive representations of national foundations, including stories of American progress and glorified exceptionalism, are more psychologically accessible in commemorative contexts of foundational remembrance and present-day contexts of intergroup threat. However, a critical counter-narrative is also popularly shared, afforded by more negative communicative memories. Time will provide a test for which American narratives are revitalized in public discourse and which narratives recede from popularity, depending on events that enter the open system of collective remembering. A naturalistic approach that utilizes the elaboration and representation of these incoming events in real time, offer significant innovation and advance in investigating these dynamics.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Supplementary Materials for Chapter 2

Survey Item

Please name 3 historic events that have occurred during the lifetime of people you know (or have known) that have had the greatest impact on your country.

How positively or negatively do you regard each event?

Brief Description of each event	Very Negative			Neutral			Very Positive
1._____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table S1

Coding Instructions for Historical Responses

Code	Criteria
1	Dateable or placeable **historical** events or periods, or historically accomplished figures in their field (including people who have died, and people who are living and of historical significance).
2	**Personal** events including generic personal events like life, death, marriage; my birthday, my child is born. If someone mentions a historical event in a personal context, code as historical event (e.g. my father fought in WWII= code for WWII).
3	Meaningful **general or collective** events that cannot be dated. (e.g. Christmas, holy days, floods, events without a place or date; elections without person, place, or date). General/Collective events are typically regular and/or recurring.
4	**Cannot be categorized**: irrelevant answers, random words with obscure meaning, numbers, "don't want to answer" (also includes minor pop singers etc who are not really historical figures).
5	When they answered that they **didn't know** or had nothing: e.g., don't know, not applicable, NA, unsure, unknown, ?, none, no, can't think, –
6	**Missing**: nonsense sequences of letters or no answer whatsoever. Most of the later

	rows in the file we have sent you should be coded as missing.

Table S2

Coding Instructions for Content Analysis

Code	Description
1	**Terrorism**; events and figures related to acts of violence that aim to terrorize for political reasons
2	**War**; events and figures related to armed conflict between countries or regions
3	**Political**; events and figures related to political affairs (other than terrorism and war); including legislation, international relations (e.g. EU accession) and social movements. Also includes assassinations of political figures, and (other) political crimes that are not terrorism
4	**Economic**; events and figures related to economic affairs; including recessions, economic policy, international trade, and building projects designed to improve the economy
5	**Disaster**; natural and man-made disasters, including epidemics
6	**Scientific**; events and figures related to technological, scientific & medical advances; including building projects for technological advance
7	**Sporting**; sporting-related events and figures
8	**Cultural**; events and public figures related to entertainment, religion, humanitarianism, or the arts; including national celebrations with cultural meaning like coronations or royal weddings
9	**Crime**; crime-related events and figures (other than terrorism and political crimes); includes mass shootings with no political motives

Exclusion Criteria

People who chose a single option from the response scale to rate all 22 trust items (including trust in immediate family and trust in strangers or people from another country were deleted, 725 participants). For SDO, participants marking all 4 agree-disagree items as 1, 2, 6, or 7 (thus agreeing or disagreeing with items opposite in meaning) were deleted, 888 participants overall. We also deleted participants that answered the questionnaire in 16 minutes or less. As the overall survey contained 220 items, our analyses indicated that answering it at an exceptionally fast rate (4.4 seconds per item on average) was associated with poor data quality. Therefore, 2557 participants were deleted due to fast responding.

Table S3

Descriptive Statistics by Country

Country	N Total	N after deletion	Age		Female %
			Mean	SD	
Argentina	514	462	34.2	11.0	47.2
Australia	595	486	43.4	13.8	56.6
Bolivia	483	466	29.8	9.0	45.7
Brazil	1239	1126	34.3	10.5	58.2
Canada	591	463	43.0	13.3	54.9
China	658	571	31.0	8.6	52.5
Colombia	532	514	33.7	11.5	49.0
Egypt	614	562	29.4	8.6	44.3
Finland	530	459	40.2	13.2	54.0
Germany	601	468	43.4	13.0	50.9
Greece	543	500	39.2	11.6	52.0
Hong Kong	710	499	36.3	10.7	52.7
Hungary	515	463	40.0	12.9	54.2
India	1498	1306	32.5	10.6	43.1
Indonesia	744	590	33.3	10.1	43.9
Italy	990	847	41.0	12.4	55.0
Japan	678	510	47.8	11.9	51.0
Kenya	479	470	30.2	8.9	48.5
Malaysia	650	569	33.7	9.9	47.3
Morocco	526	495	31.2	9.6	45.7
Netherlands	1101	863	45.0	13.6	52.5
New Zealand	547	479	40.7	12.7	54.7
Nigeria	477	466	30.6	9.4	42.7
Pakistan	1007	926	28.1	8.4	23.0
Panama	516	489	30.8	10.1	50.9
Philippines	551	499	33.9	10.9	54.3
Poland	1084	977	38.9	13.0	51.4
Portugal	569	525	37.7	11.7	54.3
Russia	453	427	39.3	11.0	50.6
Serbia	476	463	38.1	12.0	53.8
Singapore	659	536	38.8	11.8	48.9
South Africa	493	476	34.3	11.2	48.7
South Korea	559	446	41.3	11.2	57.4
Spain	566	497	40.0	11.5	52.7
Sweden	595	496	41.6	12.8	52.0
Taiwan	584	482	36.5	10.8	53.7
United Kingdom	654	507	41.4	13.0	56.2
United States	594	458	41.5	13.1	56.8
Venezuela	525	515	35.1	11.6	47.2

Note. Descriptive statistics of age and gender are based on the sample after deletions

Table S4

HDI and Official Founding Year of State by Country

	Country	HDI	Founding Year
Nordic	Sweden	.933	1397
	Finland	.920	1917
Anglosphere	Australia	.939	1901
	Canada	.926	1867
	USA	.924	1776
	UK	.922	927
	NZ	.917	1907
Western Europe	Germany	.936	1871
	Netherlands	.931	1648
	Spain	.891	1492
	Greece	.870	1830
	Italy	.880	1861
	Portugal	.847	1143
East Asia	Japan	.909	1947
	South Korea	.903	1945
	Taiwan	.885	1949
	China	.752	1949
Eastern Europe	Poland	.865	1918
	Hungary	.898	1918
	Russia	.816	1991
	Serbia	.787	2006
South East Asia	Singapore	.932	1965
	Malaysia	.802	1957
	Philippines	.699	1946
	Indonesia	.694	1945
Latin America	Argentina	.825	1816
	Panama	.789	1903
	Venezuela	.761	1811
	Brazil	.759	1822
	Colombia	.747	1810
	Bolivia	.703	1825
Northern. Africa	Morocco	.667	1956
	Egypt	.636	1922
SubS. Africa	South Africa	.699	1910
	Nigeria	.532	1960
	Kenya	.590	1963
South Asian	India	.640	1947
	Pakistan	.562	1947

Note. Countries are organised by highest to lowest HDI within regions, and regions are organised by highest to lowest mean HDI; Hong Kong is not included given its status as SAR of China.

Appendix 2: Supplementary Materials for Chapter 3

Narrative Coding Guide

Theme	Code	Coding Rules
Glorifying	1	Ascribes a positive evaluation to America or American values, especially compared to other countries. May describe: • America's strength in warfare, military or strength in general • America's global/international influence (e.g., being a global leader) • Greatness as a nation • Honouring the sacrifices of Americans/military • Describing America's feats or achievements in warfare in a heroic or triumphant way • General ingroup favouritism for American citizens • Respect for or emphasizing the importance of 'foundational'/constitutional American values • Expressions of national pride Rhetorical contrasts may be used, example: "I believe that we must examine all policies through the lens of our constitution. When we waver from our foundation there will be imbalance somewhere which may lead to collapse--of our economy, or security, etc." This highlights the negative risks associated with not honouring the foundational values. **Defender of Freedom (sub-theme; 1.5)** Describes the importance or accomplishment of Freedom for the country or for other countries by America. May describe: • Valuing individual freedoms / freedom of choice, and importance of defending those freedoms • Fighting and going to war for freedom in America, or for saving other countries. This may mention fighting (and winning) against 'tyranny' or 'evil forces'

Conflict and Wars	2	Describes the importance or inevitability of war, conflicts, violence or force (internal and/or external) throughout history without any specific evaluation about it. May describe: • Memorability of conflicts/wars • High frequency of conflicts/wars throughout history • Conflicts/wars that happen abroad • Conflicts/wars that erupt in a crisis • Conflicts/wars as the basis of significant transitions/changes • Conflicts/wars as inevitable or important in politics • Cautionary about risks of conflict If America is positioned in a positive way in the description of war, code this as Progress (3) or Glorifying / Defender of Freedom (1) depending on the specific implication. If description of (America's position in) war is critiqued, code this as Critical (7). If description of war is tied with a general negative impact, code this as Trauma (8).

Progress	3	Describes any positive change, improvement or direction of moving forward (often despite or through a difficult or imperfect past) in America. In this way, there is a focus on optimism or hope. May describe how the events reflect: • Striving, fighting, or standing up for a cause / 'what's right' / 'what we believe in' • Working towards a goal or 'better future' • Working together towards something • Progress achieved from hard work and sacrifice • Resilience (overcoming adversity, setbacks and hardships) • Learning from the past to become better • Achievements and accomplishments (i.e., indicators of progress) • Growth or development as a country • Working towards better functioning of democracy, justice • How there may be certain difficulties, obstacles encountered in the path to progress • A general movement or capacity for progress: e.g., How far America has come as a nation • Common phrasing used: "America isn't perfect but…<positive justification or allusion to hope>" Rhetorical contrasts used, example: "The narrative is one of hope and hubris - we can do immense acts of wonder - but we can also commit great evil, so we should watch out for that, and not become complacent or apathetic." In this way, progress is framed as a moral choice between competing options that can be made. If response goes into specific details about the negative past and how they ought to be dealt with, code this as Critical-Progress (6). If fighting for a cause is related to defending freedom through military might / strength, code as (1).
Equality	4	Mentions the general importance of equality or equal rights, without explaining how / whether / by who this equality has been / is being achieved

Unity	5	Describes how Americans united, banded together or helped each other. May describe: • The importance of unity/community • Unity in good and bad or hard times (in the latter, to code together with Progress). • Importance of compromise between people
Critical Progress	6	Critiques a negative aspect(s) of America's past and how they have been or need to be dealt with in order for things to change for the better. There is some specific critique while acknowledging the possibility to overcome it (i.e., progress). May describe: • Specific struggles faced by minority groups in their past (and them fighting for their rights) • What minorities (e.g., African Americans, women) have achieved / have had to achieve for basic rights • Obligations to face or own up to the past more honestly or critically in order to move forward • Specific wrongdoings or mistakes that were made on the way to progress • Specific negative consequences or costs that can happen/happened as side-effects of progress • Acknowledges the need to change specific or core issues of the country in order to progress
Critical	7	Describes any form of critique on America on a structural level. Critiques of individuals may also be mentioned if power imbalance is acknowledged. These are highlighted as ongoing issues. The response may be: • Critical about America as a country (very generalized statements) • Critical about government or politicians in general and their failures • Critical about power (systemic or individual) • Critical about racism or racial injustice/lack of racial equality • Critical of media • Critical of economic/class inequality • Critical of American military interventionism • Critical awareness of and resistance to mythologizing of America (like 'city on the hill' or American exceptionalism) • Critical of ideology

		• Critical of colonialism/white supremacy • Critical of education, specifically how history is taught (or erased) • Critical of capitalism and consumerism • Critical of hate, greed, ignorance, typically of corporations or individuals with power • Critical of America's over-confidence and aggression • Highlighting past wrongdoings or atrocities • Acknowledgement of some form of injustice as central to US history If the response is only accusatory toward the political opposition party and leader (without specific claims of injustice) do not code this as Critical, as it is more a reflection of polarization (see code 9).
Trauma	8	Describes any direct negative effects or consequences of war and/or disasters. May describe: • Negative emotional effects • Losses and deaths • General negativity (words like tragedies) • Negative effects leading to concern for future
Decline	9	Describes a recent and/or steady decline in the state of America or American way of life. May describe: • Negative perception of the polarization between republicans/democrats (or expressed resentment for the opposing side) • A 'doomed' fate of the country • Deterioration of American values (e.g., Freedom) • Conspiratorial thinking (e.g., heading toward authoritarianism, fascism, dictatorship/police state) • Describes the general negative state of America but not with any specific critiques to corroborate this claim • A direction of moving 'backwards' or regressing Rhetorical contrasts use, example: "How we gained our independence, stepped out of our boundaries to become a better America only to fall back 50 years in progress by electing Donald Trump"

		A positive past that is exaggerated/idealized to emphasize the negativity of the recent decline.
General Significance	10	States the general importance of the events without discussing any more specific meanings or in what way they were important, and without any value judgement. May indicate that: • The events had an impact on society • States general importance of the events for each generation • States the general importance of history (very broad) • States that the events were important 'transitions' in society States that some events had positive impacts, while others had negative impacts but does not describe which
Non-interpretable	11	When the response doesn't have any meaning or is non-interpretable. No basic evaluation of importance or positive/negative attributed to the events.

Table S1

A Sample of Randomly Drawn Extracts from Each Narrative Code (50% of Extracts From Each Code)

Progress
Basically, we have to remember the past in order to never make the same mistakes and to always better ourselves for the future.
America has not always promoted justice, but sometimes we do it right
America is a great country but by no means perfect.
The Vietnam war aside, I feel like the other events eventually help lead this country to elect President Obama because people were ready for progress and change.
America is at its best when it is a big-hearted, open, welcoming country with the best interest of its citizenry being very important.
the story would describe how we were at war, whether it is war with terrorist, another country, virus or even each other. What it means to me is to me even through the fighting and the war, some good will come out it. The slaves were free, the states were united, we gained our independence, we united on 9/11. Even though there is controversy with the covid vaccine, this is protecting millions of people and hopefully we come through this storm.
Americans are resilient. This country has been through a lot in its rather short history, but we've always managed to come back better.
The series of events written above, from the event of moon landing, Obama's election, Terrorist attack of September 11th and the declaration of independence helped America to grow significantly in numerous areas and developed rapidly at a very higher pace.
American history and progress.
On a positive note about these four terrible events in US history, they show that the American people ultimately rose above the hard ships and strife and continued on, working for a better future. (Though my 4th event, Trump as President, is still happening and I'm not entirely convinced the American way of life will ultimately survive.)
Things are not as rosy as we wish them to be, but we can overcome.
To push the government in a positive forward movement that tells the people that even when there are failures the government is able to correct a wrong.

Each event demonstrates in very different ways that the United States was created to allow its citizens to live lives defined by their own choosing both individually and collectively while at the same time acknowledging that our diverse citizenship has often opposing views and our system of self government can move glacially slow and often impose unfair conditions on some groups of its own people but has the capacity to continue to move toward a state of more perfect equality of all.
The narrative they demonstrate is that the Declaration which declared that all men where created equal and had the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was not instantly bestowed on all just because it was written. These events show the hard work and sacrifice it takes to make those words a reality.
Americans have a past that is good, bad and “ugly”. We must continue to work together to improve our nation and build a nation we can be proud of.
Someday we'll get this right by learning from our past
America and its people stand up for what is right. Protecting human rights and working together.
We are forced to accept positive change though trial.
Me myself believes thing happen for a reason. If you forget the things that happen you will always repeat them and never learn from them
How far we have come as a nation
Our nation is strong and can survive anything but is not immune to bad times and the need for improvement in areas.
society/man can do positive things if they strive for it
I think from all of these events, there are instances in which we reflect on, positively or negatively, and use what we learn to improve ourselves as a country.
America is a vastly transforming landscape. America went from aggressive initiatives for negative change and also for positive change. This to me means exactly what America is all about "The Land of Opportunity".
The events show a will and determination for people to come together in times of need to either fight for what's right or offer support to get through hardships. Although we can have differences of opinion, we all share a common goal. We want a better life, to be respected, live in peace. Tragic events bring a lot of people together who might not get along, but are able to put those issues aside when duty calls.
All people in the United States are equal. The arc of justice is headed in a positive direction.

I think the Civil War, MLK jr. assassination, and the January 6 riot have correlations in that they all speak to divisions in our democracy. These are serious points in history in which moving forward in democracy was put in serious jeopardy. July 4 is a celebration of democracy at work and should be a reminder of all that we hold dear as Americans, serving to unite us.
When we are together as a nation for a greater good we can achieve great things. It's very much needed now. When we are at odds we pay a high price.
While not perfect, or in any way universal throughout the country, I think these major events show what Americans hope our country can still be. A country where everyone has equal opportunity to pursue their dreams and to not be discriminated against.
America as a nation is very strong and duels in togetherness. We never back down and we strive for what is best for us
Since America's inception, it has been steadily moving towards a society which values individual freedoms and equality. We are far from there yet, but despite setbacks many people still labor to ensure that these goals will one day be met.
I guess war would be the common denominator; what this country was willing to fight for.
America has flaws and vulnerabilities in it's relatively short history, but is also capable of achieving a hint at social equality.

Critical
Most of these events are about oppression. The narrative that I find most important for Americans is that we need to evaluate the needs of others and how oppressive those in power are. We have a long history of oppression, and it's important to remember the most turbulent times to reflect on the past for a better future.
Racism is a significant part of US history and institutions. It explains the recent chaos in US politics and society that arose from a very long history. It shows there's much more work to be done to improve equality.
The U.S. was founded on human rights violations
Every country is a sovereign land we should not interfere in their personal political matters. All these events should have been avoided saving millions of Humans life and trillions of dollars on warfare That money should have been invested in the betterment of the world .
We fought to be free of England, with admirable goals which "we" promptly forgot in our suppression of native peoples and economically based racial inequities.
9/11 brought many in the US together. 20 years of war in the Middle East tore the US apart. We need to remember that all problems cannot be fixed by invading other countries.
Hubris. Overreach. America is not the 'shining city on a hill'. It is as likely to be ruled by the corrupt as any other country on this planet. Actions taken by government can be seen as self-serving or serving the minority who can afford to pay or to appease those who threaten. The social compact that made American an exception between 1920 and 1970 has been eroded to the point where it is just another country controlled by special interests and a 'winner takes all' ethos.
The preservation of white supremacy through state-sanctioned violence and oppression towards people of color-- under a thinly veneered myth of American exceptionalism sold and widely believed by white Americans.
The narrative that America is built on racist principles that still thrive to this day.
Changes should be made that would not allow military interventions in foreign soil without a popular vote , as the government and military complex and private interests could start another war.
Black Americans have always been oppressed in the US, 300 hundred years ago, up until now. Donald Trump and the current Republican party have made overt racism ok again. Also, I believe that the government that the founding fathers created no longer works. It needs a major overhaul.
Lots of unnecessary killing happened

For the most part, there is a lot of wrongdoings that I think America has overall committed and when thinking of historical events, I had a hard time thinking of anything positive.
We, as a people, have allowed ourselves to become detached from uncomfortable moments in history. Each of the events I listed are either not talked about or denied. It's really sad that we can't own up to horrible things we've done in the past, whether decades ago, or just last year. We could all grow so much if we accepted what we've done wrong, and learn from past mistakes.
The death throes of white supremacy
I guess I was thinking high school history, since so few take it in college comparatively, and we emphasize things that make us look good; we downplay or ignore events that don't; we teach from a very Eurocentric position. More factual, honest, multiple perspectives, teaching the why and what led to events is necessary
All these events are things that make us question, what else can we do to make living in the U.S safer, and equal for all. It shows us that we still have so much change and work to be done, including more gun control, and rights to groups that are discriminated against
That America's history is not flawless and it's important to understand where we have failed and caused harm and why citizens need to stay actively engaged.
The United States of America is a country founded by white property-owning men who put the interests of white property-owning men first. To *actually* reach "liberty and justice for all" means —and has always meant— fighting against the insular power structures that enable discrimination and have sent the world hurtling towards climate apocalypse in endless pursuit of capitalist profiteering.
I believe it shows that capitalism isn't about our people, but money. COVID-19 was the one true test and while there are some good things, there were also a lot of system failures.
It shows the history of racism and how white powerful narcissistic men can gaslight a nation to rule the country. It also shows how we have not learned from our past.
3 of the 4 events I included directly involve race and racism. the united states is an incredibly racist country, we have racism ingrained into our society, we were built and founded on it. it is something we need to actively work to dismantle that not enough people are looking towards. one may even argue our involvement in the Vietnam war had racial biases with our record of invading or corrupting majority POC nations in the name of capitalism and false democracy.
That many different groups have been kept down but then fought for their rights to be a part of the ideal America

America is built on class warfare. In order for a handful billionaires to thrive millions of minorities and others must be exploited and abused.
The United States has a rich history of colonialism, racism, sexism, and oppression
I care very deeply about the injustices in the world, and those that are not taught, learned, or understood correctly royal history repeating itself. There were a lot of such events I never learned about in public school, and I haven't been out for too long.
Don't erase black history. As a person of color it is extremely sad that I was denied the right to learn about what really happened in history to my ancestors because of the white washing in school teachings in America.
The narrative is conflict and with the U.S. needing to prove its power and divine right as the greatest nation. Even Pearl Harbor as this leads to a retaliation of the atom bomb, a smiting from above. This all means to me that the U.S. rarely allows itself to be seen as vulnerable which leads citizens to feel the same. We often feel that the world should follow our lead, speak our language, embrace our culture. It means that American citizens grow up with the belief that we are inherently better than and blessed before others. Which means that we have a lot of systems to dismantle and beliefs to unlearn.
The failing of a country seen as the best, as great an unfailable by many of its citizens. It's important to remember the things a country has done badly or wrong, morally or not

Glorifying
From America's founding to today we have had our struggles to find ourselves and on most times we come together for the betterment of our country and the people here and around the world who look toward us as the beacon of hope and freedom.
America isn't perfect, but it's worth fighting for and the world (literally every human life) depends on America's example
The events describe the greatness of America and how we responded to defeat enemies and protect the world. America protected the world from the evils of the Nazis and the Japanese empire in WWII and ended the Holocaust. America defeated communism at the fall of the Berlin Wall and overcame the attacks of 9/11.
Any events that happen in the history of the country reflect the core of the country's values, beliefs, its goals, and the position in the world. America, as an international leader, has always been in the focus of attention of other countries and that is why any event inside the country had an impact on the whole world - be it a formation of a new democratic state (event 1), exploration of new territories (event 2), painstaking efforts to survive and thrive (event 3) and the threats to its existence nowadays (event 4)
It is worth it to fight for freedom against tyranny and evil forces
These events show the beginning of a great nation, a preservation of that nation and its values, an outside attack on this nation, and an internal attack.
The narrative would be to remember and honor the fallen military and to take a moment of silence for those that died for our country.
The narrative is our emergence as the land of the free and have vulnerable our freedoms are
mankind standing up against evil
This is apart of the tapestry of our country without these things we are not who we are as a country today.
Standing up for and protecting our citizens should be a priority.
The events I choose all represent the patriotic side of me being an American
America is strong and its impact in modern world is huge.
All these events describes the narrative that, Americans are stronger and united more than any nation of the world. We stay together in the time of crisis, ensure justice and then charge forward to enforce the justice through prosperity and sovereignty.
The success of the America we see today is as a result of brave men and women who sacrificed their lives to make America great.

Most of these signify what it is to be an American in my opinion and that is true freedom.
Americans were colonized and they later got independence. After the independence, the revolution of America started. This history means a lot to me since it helps me know what America went through be a great country it is today.
It brings together the idea that we live in a country that was founded on freedom, democracy and the concept that we the people help form the life we are entitled to live as Americans.
The United States has a strength of character which adapts to the goings on in the country and in the world at large. It strongly faces the challenges put before it, and acts decisively and immediately to address those issues and adapt to the changing political climate and difficult moral and ethical issues surrounding them.
Americans have freedoms and right and these needs to be protected from outside influences and untrustworthy people
What makes a nation great and how do you maintain that culture.
I believe that we must examine all policies through the lens of our constitution. When we waver from our foundation there will be imbalance somewhere which may lead to collapse--of our economy, or security, etc.
Our fight for freedom
Those events portray America in the way we define ourselves today. Our history has put us on the great pedestal which we found ourselves in today.
These four events make up the core values of America and without these events happening, we wouldn't be the United States of America. If we forget these core events we forget what America was founded on, and after that, we lose our identity as a country.
It’s the narrative of the creation and building of the world’s greatest democracy. Perhaps the narrative will not be complete until we lose it by worshipping a leader or party that repeats lies to stay in power.
America fought wars in order to become independent and form itself as a nation. We still fought wars in order to liberate other nations from oppression and at the end we too are on the receiving end of attacks.

Conflict
Three wars and an assassination. The narrative is, war and conflicts will continue to happen in the world and take lives and it is the tragedies and awful things that tend to be are memorable.
They all centered around violence
Terrorism doesn't just come from outside of the country it can come from within as well.
It's all war. War against disease, war against terrorism, war with other countries, war within our own country. "It is what it is." I'm not really moved in either direction by it all.
A narrative that forms from the events I listed is ones of conflict and how the results ultimately shaped America. It means to me that its usually conflict that leaves the most impression on people and usually has the most effect
Basically all about war whether with a foreign country or with our own people.
Wars and the decisions Presidents made in the face of a crisis.
Violence and politics run hand and hand.
The whole narrative is that one bullet, one person, or one person directing a group, can change the course of human history, so if you think you're going to change the world through force, be careful about who you decide to attack.
The wars that shaped America.
War, both civil and international, is foundational in this country's development. It can cause tremendous loss of life, but also spur transformational change.
World events largely revolve around wars and violence.
There is a narrative of America and its involvement in war. Apparently I associate America with the wars it's been involved in, but I don't particularly care much for wars.

Decline
The failing of a country seen as the best, as great and unfailable by many of its citizens.
USA began its world with Revolutionary war. And then the downfall of the world began again. Our world will end with this plandemic if we don't wake up. We are finished.
meaningful, in a completely evil way. These events show a steady decline in the morals, values and quality of life in the USA and the world. As things become more unpredictable and unbalanced, people get more dissatisfied and become confused about what is even right or true. People stop caring if something is true or right, and just do whatever they want in order to feel better, even if it means being completely stupid and uninformed.
Our country has become extremely divided.
A clear pattern of increasing fascism and dictatorial police state
America s downfall
How we gained our independence, stepped out of our boundaries to become a better America only to fall back 50 years in progress by electing Donald Trump
I think it points to the cohesion of the country. If we continue to be this divided we won't last much longer.
There are a lot of people in the US that do not have America's best interest at heart. They are evil and trying to destroy America. You can add the Covid Plandemic to the list. Look at what they have done to our great country.
One world order. Government taking control. America isn't the land of the free any longer.
This country was founded to get out from under authoritarianism, as a place where people could be free, and now coming full circle we are headed for the worst kind of authoritarianism, with the complete undermining of democratic principles.

Critical Progress
Probably no country in the world has been as influential as the USA and that process started with its independence. However slaves were still being bought and sold until they became free, beginning with the emancipation proclamation. White and black could now work together to build a better and more just society. It didn't quite go well, but MLK brought his style of peaceful civil disobedience that further earned rights for the Black race and this culminated in Obama's inauguration in 2008
The correlating impact that African-Americans have had on the history and making of America.as As an African-American I can see our historical challenges, I can embrace our accomplishments and I can see the work that still needs to be in our quest to recognized as full Americans.
Where our country makes great strides to overcome and remedy historic faults, we often are too caught up in the success of those accomplishments. In essence, we progress quickly and fall back hard.
Many of them encapsulate effects on American women over time, and how rights and societal expectations have changed through hard work and sacrifice of people who have come before us.
They all relate to the civil rights of minorities in America. All groups mentioned in those 4 events had to fight to get laws changed to have the same rights as the majority.
They possibly go together, at least slavery and the atomic bomb may. Slavery was something that furthered our nation at the expense of people. We used slaves to do almost everything that we did not want to do, from farm work, labor work, to even taking care of our children. They advanced our nation but they were a casualty. They never received enough reparations or enough thanks. As for the atomic bomb, it furthered our nation as well. We became seen as a real threat, something to be scared about. But again, it was at the cost of potentially innocent lives who had no part in this. The United States loves to be on top of the world, but it gets there at the expense of others.
I think that the narrative formed by this is one that addresses progress in the nation and, more specifically, the things that hinder it - for example, the Holocaust, assassination of MLK, 9/11, these are all things that mark specific setbacks in America's pursuit of progress, from the lack of interfering in the Holocaust early on when so much death could have been prevented to the way that, when progress was starting to be made in civil rights, the reaction was a violent assassination. 9/11 fits into this as it was a point where American's fear was used to justify atrocities - and while Obama's election isn't one of the setbacks, it shows, I believe, the kind of progress that then leads to some of these reactionary backlashes, as the fear of progress is so strong in the country.
Aside from 9/11 the other 3 events are a huge improvement and show liberation for minorities in the United States
Understanding the flaws perpetrated by americans and the american government. see how these flaws can be overcome by the working class uniting together.

Trauma
Yes, I think human life is important. Many innocent lives gone from poor decisions, tyrants, and lack of knowledge of history.
All four events were disasters faced by the United States and affected the people of this country significantly.
Killing, war is wrong and cowardly. Too many anti-social events causing emotional devastation to citizens
America has a long history of catastrophic life-altering events, with effects that can be felt decades later.
As the events demonstrate how fragile life is, our younger generation can be suffered in the future.
Death has been grieved by many people from different backgrounds .
Each of the examples I listed have to do with tragedy and loss, which can define a population as much as they can define an individual. I know loss has defined me and my life, and two of these 4 events have occurred in my lifetime. While I wasn't directly affected by either, I've seen the devastation and sadness and have been moved.
It's shock, sadness, fear, anger. The events inflicted a devastating emotional toll on Americans.

Equality
All people in the United States are equal.
It means equal rights and opportunities for everyone and that everyone needs to be involved and aware and not rely on politicians to invoke change
Everybody should have the same rights and same freedoms with out discrimination
Equal rights of all Americans are important.
People are valuable regardless of how different they may be.
Average people need protection help and human rights.
Human rights and equality

Unity
All the events either bad or good united the country/or states and led us to stick together or help one another.
It is essential, and a matter of life or death, if people within communities support each other bravely and positively.
The country works better when there is compromise rather than partisanship.
unity no matter the good the bad everyone got together
In the four events I nominated, I believe a sense of community was harnessed - whether a good or bad event. Caring for others in the highs and lows of life is extremely important for humanity.
The depths of depravity of people that place disunity above all other priorities versus the incredible accomplishments of collaboration.
This is what holds Americans together and unite against all.

General National Significance
They are all important and meaningful events in the history of the United States.
They all changed our country for better or worst in some way shape or form. It affected the lives of people when it happened and everyone after
Americans are primarily bound together by their generation and the major events that occurred during their formative years. For the oldest Americans, the Silent and Greatest generations, that unifying event is World War II. For Baby Boomers, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the Vietnam War are defining moments. For Millennials and Gen Xers, the 9/11 terror attacks and the Obama election leads the list by a greater margin than for other generations.
The events are very important to America news and it will be pass to future generations
The narrative is that they are all historical events that has shaped the lives of the country and citizens one way or the other
These historical events really mean a lot to Americans, because it is part of our history and definitely, they would be passed down to our unborn generation.
Despite the dates wildly ranging from the birth of our nation to the nearly modern day, these events all have a deep and long-felt impact on millions of lives.

Each highlight in its own way transitions in US social and political history. Four snapshots of our transformation as a nation and expressions of the voices that define us.

Content Analysis: Historical Representations

In the analysis of historical events that were nominated, there was a further level of coding which involved grouping the identified events into broader content categories. The coding guide used for this was based on ones developed by Liu and colleagues (2005) (see below), modified to be more culturally specific to the American context. Each historical event was coded into one of the following categories: (1) terrorism and mass shootings (2) warfare (3) national foundations (4) US civil war (5) social justice (6) atrocities and misdeeds inflicted by ingroup (7) general political events (8) disasters and accidents (9) technology (10) economic, and (11) other.[11] 96.9% similarity and $\kappa = .97$ inter-coder reliability was obtained between 2 independent coders, with any disagreements settled through discussion.

Coding Guide for Event Content

	Code
Terrorism and mass shootings (mass violence); Events and figures related to acts of violence, including those that aim to terrorize for political reasons (including political assassinations)	1
War; Events and figures related to armed conflict between countries or regions Including atomic bombs (Hiroshima and Pearl Harbour)	2
National Foundations; Events and figures related to the nation's foundations (including wars, legislations, speeches) Including events of the era (18th-early 19th Century) 'Discovery' by Columbus, Thanksgiving, Boston Tea Party, Louisiana Purchase, Whiskey Rebellions. And other Battles between America and UK (up to the early 1800s) Revolutionary War/American War Independence (July 4th)	3

[11]Although the U.S. Civil War was coded as a singular event, we also created its own content category given the unique set of meanings that it bears in this context. As a transitional event in US history, it is not quite 'foundational' while also being different from other wars coded under the 'warfare' category (which were all external rather than fought within the U.S.).

American Civil War; Including mentions of Abraham Lincoln or the Battle of Gettysberg (Note that Emancipation Proclamation or 'freeing of the slaves' goes in the next category = Social Justice)	4
Social Justice; Events and figures related to social movements and moments of social progress Including Emancipation Proclamation/'Ending of Slavery'/Abolitionists Protests (Civil Rights Movement) Women's rights/Equality Act Including election of Obama or 'first black president'	5
Historical Atrocities/Injustice; Events and figures related to abuses of human rights and prejudice/discrimination Including slavery, treatment/genocide of Indigenous people ('Trail of Tears'), Japanese Internment, Police Brutality/Murders of African Americans	6
Political (Other); Events and figures related to all other political affairs (other than terrorism, war, social justice, atrocities); including legislation, international relations, presidents, political scandals etc. e.g., Other elections or past presidents Political scandals like Watergate, Nixon, Reagan, JFK Storming of the Capitol Cold War	7
Natural and Man-made Disasters/Accidents Including pandemics and climate change/global warming Challenger Explosion Global Warming	8
Technology e.g., the Moon Landing Building of railroads, cars etc. Internet/Facebook/Smartphone	9
Economic e.g., Industrial Era New Deal	10

Great Depression 2008 Economic Crisis	
Other; All other events/figures that are non-political in nature (e.g., sporting, celebrity or humanitarian)	11

Table S2

Percentages of narratives where each event category was mentioned

	Terrorism	War	National Origins	Civil War	Social Justice	Atrocities	Political
Progress (%)	54.5	47.0	**65.2**	**42.4**	47.0	24.2	21.2
Glorifying (%)	61.5	40.4	**80.8**	36.5	50.0	11.5	26.9
Critical (%)	51.8	57.1	17.9	30.4	41.1	**55.4**	37.5

As shown in Table S2, there were significant differences in the broader content of historical representations associated with each of these narratives.[12] Compared to the rest of the sample, participants who narrated their historical events as Progress were more likely to mention national foundations (χ^2 (1, 399) = 13.85, p < .001) and the Civil War (χ^2 (1, 399) = 5.23, p = .022), while being less likely to mention general political events (χ^2 (1, 399) = 4.47, p = .035). Participants who constructed a Glorifying narrative were also more likely to mention national foundations (χ^2 (1, 399) = 32.11, p < .001), while they were marginally less likely to mention national ingroup atrocities (χ^2 (1, 399) = 3.85, p = .05) compared to the rest of the sample. In direct contrast, participants who constructed a Critical narrative were more likely to mention ingroup atrocities (χ^2 (1, 399) = 42.03, p < .001) while they were less likely to mention national foundations (χ^2 (1, 399) = 18.54, p < .001) in their list of events. Thus, both Progress and Glorifying narratives appeared to be anchored by national foundations, whereas

[12] Content categories of Technology, Disaster and Economic are omitted here considering their low incidence rates overall.

foundational events were noticeably absent as symbolic resources in the construction of Critical narratives.

Comparison of Narrative Co-occurrences across Partisan Groups

While Progress narratives appeared to be relatively unpolarized, we further examined whether they may be expressed in different ways, particularly between Republicans and Democrats. As shown in Table S5, there were differences in counts of Progress narratives co-occurring with the other narratives. While these differences were not significant (expected counts were too low), we can still see that more Republicans narrated progress in a glorifying way, while more Democrats (and Independents) narrated progress in a critical way.

Table S3

Frequencies (N) of Narratives Co-occurrences Across Partisan Groups

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Progress X Glorifying	3	6	0
Progress X Critical	1	11	5

Full List of Survey Items

In the following, please list up to 4 historical events that all Americans should remember, and briefly explain why Americans should remember those events:

Event 1:
Why is it important to remember this event?
How positively or negatively do you feel about this event?
1 (Extremely negative) – 7 (Extremely positive)

Event 2:
Why is it important to remember this event?
How positively or negatively do you feel about this event?
1 (Extremely negative) – 7 (Extremely positive)

Event 3:
Why is it important to remember this event?
How positively or negatively do you feel about this event?
1 (Extremely negative) – 7 (Extremely positive)

Event 4:
Why is it important to remember this event?
How positively or negatively do you feel about this event?
1 (Extremely negative) – 7 (Extremely positive)

Thinking about the 4 events that you nominated, do you think they go together to form any meaningful narrative?
-Yes
-No

If yes, could you briefly describe this narrative, and what it means to you?

Have you been following the recent news about what has been going on in Afghanistan?
-Yes
-No

What are your feelings about the Biden administration's decision to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan?

Have you been following the recent news about the 9-11 anniversary?
-Yes
-No

Did you participate in any 9/11 commemorations or remembrances this year?
-Yes
-No

Thinking about the loss of lives and damage done to New York by 9/11, I feel:
Anger
Disgust

Shame
Anxiety
1(Not at all) – 5 (A great deal)

How frequently do you watch the news?
-Never
-Less than once a week
-Several times a week
-Everyday
-More than once a day

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree)

I enjoy learning about history
History is boring
Learning about history is a waste of time
I enjoy having discussions about history
I don't care about the history of my country

I feel bad that America has been involved in so many wars in the last 50 years.
I feel worried that America may be involved in more wars in the future.

I am proud to be an American.
Being an American is an important part of my identity.
I feel very close to other Americans.

In general, I find society to be fair.
Most American policies serve the greater good.
Everyone in my country has a fair shot at wealth and happiness.
America's society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve.

I would support my country right or wrong.
I believe that American policies are almost always the morally correct ones.
I support American policies for the very reason that they are the policies of my country.
There is too much criticism of America in the world and we its citizens should not criticize it.

If you love America, you should notice its problems and work to correct them.
If I criticize America, I do so out of love for my country.
I oppose some American policies because I care about my country and want to improve it.
I express my love for America by supporting efforts at positive change.

America was right to invade Afghanistan after 9-11.
The actions that America took after 9-11 have made the world safer from terrorism.

How often have you participated in 4th of July commemorations in the past?
How likely are you to participate in 4th of July commemorations next year?
How positively or negatively do you feel about 4th of July commemorations and celebrations?

Usually, as far as you can recall, how often do you vote:
In local or statewide elections
In national or presidential elections
1 (Never) – 7 (Always)

What is your age?
What gender do you identify with?
-Male
-Female
-Other

If a national election was being conducted now, which political party would you vote for?
-Republican
-Democratic
-Independent
-Undecided or would probably not vote

On political issues, where would you place yourself?
1 (Far right) – 7 (Far left)

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being people who are the most well off in society, and 1 being the people that are least well off, where would you describe your position?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
-Elementary school
-Middle school
-High school
-Some college
-Bachelor's degree
-Graduate school or higher

What is your ethnicity?
-White
-Black or African American
-Latinx
-Native American
-Asian
-From multiple races
-Other

Which state do you currently reside in?

What sort of area did you grow up in?
-Urban
-Rural
-Suburban
-Small town
-Other

References

Choi, S. Y., Liu, J. H., Mari, S., & Garber, I. E. (2021). Content analysis of living historical memory around the world: Terrorization of the Anglosphere, and national foundations of hope in developing societies. Memory Studies, 1750698021995974.

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Appendix 3: Supplementary Materials for Chapter 4

Table S1

Counts of Foundational Events, mentioned by at least 5% of the sample (Study 1)

	N	%
American Revolution	82	52.56
Declaration of Independence	78	50.00
Civil War	75	48.08
U.S. Constitution	56	35.90
WWII	38	24.36
Discovery / Columbus	23	14.74
Emancipation Proclamation	21	13.46
Civil Rights Movement	19	12.18
9/11	15	9.62
Boston Tea Party	10	6.41
Women's Suffrage	9	5.77
Founding Fathers	9	5.77

Table S2

Counts of Foundational Events, mentioned by at least 5% of the sample (Study 2)

	N	%
American Revolution	116	60.10
Civil War	98	50.78
Declaration of Independence	97	50.26
U.S. Constitution	86	44.56
WWII	31	16.06
Discovery / Columbus	26	13.47
Civil Rights Movement	22	11.40
Emancipation Proclamation	17	8.81
The Louisiana Purchase	15	7.77
9/11	13	6.74
Founding Fathers	12	6.22

Table S3

Current Event Codes and Counts (Study 2)

	N	Domestic vs. International
Women's rights issues / Abortion law	4	Domestic
Gender issues	5	Domestic
Affirmative Action issue	9	Domestic
Illegal immigration issue	16	Domestic
Climate Change	39	International (unless explicitly focused on America's role in climate change)
War in Ukraine	22	International (unless explicitly focused on U.S. funding of the war)
Other political events and issues	28	Domestic
Trump related	26	Domestic
Biden related	13	Domestic
Student Loan decision	6	Domestic
A.I. / Technology	4	International
Crime / Shootings	16	Domestic
Economy / Housing Crisis / Inflation	22	Domestic
Covid / Vaccines / Other disease	7	International (unless explicitly linked to U.S. government / health system)
North Korea incident	5	International

Exploratory Factor Analysis of Historical Narratives (Study 2)

We conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using IBM SPSS to support the proposed factor structure of progress, glorifying, and critical narratives as being distinct. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was applied to perform the EFA. We assessed the results against Bartlett's test of sphericity, KMO statistic, and Eigenvalues higher than 1. The resulting correlation matrix of the factors was not arbitrary according to the Bartlett's test of sphericity of Approximate Chi-Square (190) of 7390.7, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the KMO statistic was .94, being above the minimum .7 requirement for assessing an EFA (Watkins, 2018). To establish the relevant number of factors, we applied the criterion of Eigenvalues being greater than 1 (Field, 2013). Extracted variance was above the .4 threshold or most high for each item in our proposed historical narrative categories (see Table S4) except for one critical item ("Generally speaking, American military interventions abroad have reaped more benefits than costs (reversed)") and one glorifying item ("Some of the foundational documents of this country are outdated. (reversed)"). As such we ran the analyses with these items removed from the critical ($\alpha = .825$) and glorifying ($\alpha = .911$) narrative measures, and all results remained the same as presented in the main results with all items included.

Table S4

Results for Exploratory Factor Analysis (Study 2)

Item	Factor Loading 1	Factor Loading 2	Factor Loading 3
Though America is not perfect, it is a nation that continually strives to be better.	0.595	**0.6**	
America has proven that positive social change can be achieved through a nation's hard work and sacrifice.	0.515	**0.637**	
America has continued to move in a positive direction by learning from the past.		**0.78**	
American society is headed for decline. (reversed)		**0.787**	
Despite setbacks, America has made a lot of progress throughout its history as a nation.	0.485	**0.603**	
America has come a long way towards achieving a fair and equal society.	0.413	**0.645**	
It is important for Americans to honor their constitutional values.	**0.809**		
America is a country built upon great and enduring ideals.	**0.813**		
America was founded as 'Land of the Free'.	**0.72**		
Throughout much of its history, America has set a positive example for the rest of the world.	**0.707**		
Some of the foundational documents of this country are outdated. (reversed)	0.49		**0.565**
Throughout history, America has protected freedom and democracy around the world.	**0.61**	0.46	
Since its foundation as a nation, America has been looked on as a beacon of hope by many people around the world.	**0.717**		
America often struggles to learn from its own mistakes.		0.494	**0.547**
It is important to remember the historical injustices and wrongdoings committed by our own country.			**0.762**
America has historically done more wrong than right.	0.456		**0.518**
Generally speaking, American military interventions abroad have reaped more benefits than costs (reversed)		**0.41**	
Throughout its history as a nation, America has invaded other countries too often.			**0.547**
America has committed many human rights violations in the past and in the present.			**0.74**
Racial injustice is central to the history of America.			**0.784**

Table S5

Multiple Regressions with all Participants in the Foundational Condition Included (Study 1)

	Progress			**Glorifying**			**Critical**			**Progress + Glorifying**		
Predictor	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Age	.006	.003	.035	.022	.002	.000	-.009	.002	.000	.015	.002	.000
Gender	-.084	.086	.327	.08	.072	.27	.063	.073	.388	.003	.07	.96
Political Orientation	.211	.022	.000	.362	.019	.000	-.395	.019	.000	.292	.018	.000
Education	.016	.051	.752	-.041	.043	.344	.014	.043	.755	-.014	.042	.729
Subjective SES	.099	.026	.000	.042	.022	.059	-.064	.022	.004	.068	.021	.002
Current Events (Russian invasion)	-.04	.107	.708	-.161	.09	.075	.035	.091	.702	-.105	-.105	.228
Control	**-.224**	**.1**	**.026**	**-.233**	**.085**	**.006**	.099	.085	.244	**-.228**	**-.228**	**.005**
R^2	.206			.501			.498			.409		

Table S6

Multiple Regressions with all Participants in the Foundational Condition Included (Study 2)

	Progress			**Glorifying**			**Critical**			**Progress + Glorifying**		
Predictor	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Age	.01	.003	.001	.024	.003	.000	-.014	.003	.000	.018	.003	.000
Gender	-.115	.091	.207	-.146	.077	.059	.125	.075	.096	-.132	.075	.081
Political Orientation	.122	.023	.000	.313	.02	.000	-.28	.019	.000	.225	.019	.000
Education	-.023	.054	.665	-.006	.046	.888	-.014	.045	.749	-.014	.045	.75
Subjective SES	.12	.028	.000	.059	.024	.016	-.088	.024	.000	.087	.024	.000
Current Events (Russian invasion)	**-.344**	**.116**	**.003**	-.17	.099	.088	-.01	.097	.918	**-.25**	**.097**	**.01**
Control	**-.223**	**.104**	**.033**	-.12	.089	.177	-.027	.086	.753	**-.168**	**.086**	**.053**
R^2	.125			.396			.339			.293		

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