

Understanding Public Support for Juneteenth as a Federal Holiday

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing public support of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday in the United States. Leveraging the Affect, Behavior, and Cognition (ABC) model, we uncover nuanced relationships that shape individual policy attitudes by adding family and community traditions to the model. Our findings show that positive beliefs, emotions, and preferences for celebrating with family or friends increase support, while negative perceptions, commercialization of the holiday, and conservatism decrease it. Polarization perceptions reduced support, but only for the general population. Interestingly, our findings reveal that family traditions of celebrating Juneteenth during childhood have varying effects across different racial groups, with a significant interaction between cognitive inputs and family traditions among African Americans. By considering cultural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, this study contributes to the understanding of public sentiment toward historical event recognition and provides guidance for promoting unity and appreciation of Juneteenth's significance. This pioneering research lays the foundation for future studies exploring the dynamics of public support for commemorating historical events and advancing social justice through public policy.

Introduction

Juneteenth, short for 'June Nineteenth,' commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. It marks the day federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, to free enslaved people, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. (Alvarez, 2022). The recognition of Juneteenth as a federal holiday symbolizes a broader societal acknowledgment of the historical injustices faced by African Americans and the ongoing struggle for racial equality (Jones and Allen, 2021). This move is seen as a step toward addressing historical omissions and promoting social justice through public policy (Jones and Allen, 2021). First celebrated in 1866 in Texas, Juneteenth was acknowledged as a federal holiday in 2021 after continued efforts of campaigning and increased awareness of racial justice triggered by police violence against African American people and subsequent protests (Gordon-Reed, 2021; Harjai, 2021; Taylor, 2020). Therefore, the official recognition of Juneteenth has sparked nationwide attention and controversy due to its socio-political significance. From supporters' perspective, President Biden's signing of the bill in 2021 marked a historic moment for African Americans, providing an opportunity for the country to celebrate human freedom, reflect on the legacy of slavery, and reaffirm its commitment to eradicating the systemic racism that persists in society (Biden, 2022). In contrast, some voices considered the holiday unnecessary, as it duplicated existing holidays like Independence Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Clark PhD, 2021). Others were concerned about the potential costs of granting federal employees another paid day off, or they feared that recognizing Juneteenth would perpetuate divisions among Americans along racial lines (Sprunt, 2021).

Against this backdrop, our study employs attitude formation theory to deepen the understanding of the factors that influence public support for recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday (Eagly et al., 1994; Jain, 2014; Myers and Twenge, 2019). We adopt the Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive (ABC) model, which posits that attitudes are shaped through affective (feelings and emotions), behavioral (actions),

and cognitive (beliefs and values) processes. Building upon this model, we extend our analysis to incorporate the influence of family and community traditions experienced during childhood. We acknowledge that these customs significantly shape personal values and perspectives and that childhood experiences profoundly impact adult attitudes and future behavior (Johnson, 1982; Kraus, 1995). We contend that community and family traditions play pivotal roles in social learning and identity formation, thereby influencing individuals' perceptions of the recognition of Juneteenth as a national holiday. Furthermore, we explore the impact of demographic variables such as race, age, gender, education, income, and political ideology on policy support.

The study reveals that support for a policy increases when individuals hold positive beliefs regarding its consequences, while it decreases with negative perceptions. Additionally, positive and mixed emotions contribute to increased support, particularly evident in the representative sample (white majority). However, behaviors, such as participation in family gatherings or learning about African American history and culture, play a more significant role in predicting policy support within the African American sample. Interestingly, contrary to expectations, reporting a family or community tradition of celebrating Juneteenth during childhood is associated with reduced support for the policy. After implementing a more sophisticated model, we discovered that family traditions served as a moderator for cognitive processes, influencing the relationship between beliefs regarding solidarity, recognition, and policy support. Notably, individuals whose families or communities celebrated Juneteenth during childhood and associated Juneteenth with the acknowledgment of African American history and culture demonstrated a higher likelihood of supporting the policy compared to those lacking such traditions from their childhood celebrations of Juneteenth.

This finding underscores the significant role of family traditions in shaping attitudes towards Juneteenth and its symbolic significance in recognizing African American heritage. It suggests that these traditions imbue individuals with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the historical and cultural significance of Juneteenth, thereby fostering greater support for policies aimed at its recognition. In addition to our previous findings, our analysis revealed intriguing dynamics regarding the interplay between individuals' beliefs in Juneteenth's capacity to bolster national solidarity and the presence of family traditions. Particularly, among those holding robust convictions regarding Juneteenth's potential to foster national unity, a notable divergence emerged based on the existence of family traditions.

On one hand, individuals without family traditions tied to Juneteenth demonstrated heightened support for the policy, suggesting that strong beliefs in Juneteenth's role in national solidarity drive increased policy endorsement. Conversely, individuals with family traditions associated with Juneteenth exhibited an unexpected trend: their support for the policy showed a decline. This divergence suggests that the presence of family traditions may introduce complexities that counteract the positive effects of strong beliefs in Juneteenth's contribution to national unity. This nuanced pattern underscores the intricate dynamics at play when considering both individual beliefs and cultural influences in shaping attitudes towards Juneteenth and its broader societal implications. Further exploration into the underlying

mechanisms driving these divergent responses could provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of attitudes towards Juneteenth and its significance in contemporary society.

Literature Review

Juneteenth is a historical and cultural celebration that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced that all enslaved people were free, more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Since then, Juneteenth has been observed as a day of freedom, resilience, and joy for African Americans (PBS, 2022). In 2021, Juneteenth became the 12th federal holiday in the United States after decades of advocacy and activism by grassroots organizations and political leaders (Yancey-Bragg, 2022). However, public opinion on Juneteenth's recognition as a national holiday recognition is not unanimous (Gallup, 2021). According to a Gallup poll conducted in June 2021, nearly 35% of U.S. adults supported the idea of making Juneteenth a federal holiday, while 25% opposed it, and 40% had no opinion (Gallup, 2021). Support was higher among African Americans (69%), Democrats (51%), and younger adults aged 18 to 34 (44%), while it was lower among whites (31%), Republicans (19%), and older adults aged 55 and over (28%). A YouGov poll corroborated Black Americans' 87% support versus only 54% among whites (Frankovic, 2020). These disparities underscore the importance of understanding demographic influences on public opinion and highlight the need for targeted communication strategies to build broader support.

The present study builds upon the rich literature on attitude formation and the factors influencing policy support within the field of political psychology. Previous research has highlighted the importance of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in shaping individuals' attitudes towards various social and political issues (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Katz, 1960). Moreover, scholars have emphasized the role of cultural values and traditions in molding policy preferences and political ideologies (Jost et al., 2009; Schwartz, 2012). By examining the case of Juneteenth and its recognition as a federal holiday, our study contributes to this growing body of knowledge, shedding light on the complex interplay between individual-level factors and broader socio-cultural influences in determining public support for historically significant events and policies. By applying the Affect, Behavior, and Cognition (ABC) model and incorporating family and community traditions as a moderating variable, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying policy attitudes and the role of cultural heritage in shaping public opinion.

To understand the contentious debate around establishing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, we first observed the reactions from politicians, activists, the public, and social media. Proponents argued it would finally acknowledge slavery's injustices and impacts. As President Biden stated, Juneteenth commemorates the "centuries of struggle" toward racial equality (Biden, 2022; Clark, 2021). Its designation recognizes African American history while underscoring the ongoing work needed to "deliver on the promise of equality" (Biden, 2022). Supporters saw it as fostering national unity by prompting an "honest" confrontation with past injustices of "slavery and discrimination" (Biden, 2022; Clark, 2021).

They also heralded it as an educational milestone for ensuring "racial justice" (Dillard, 2019; McCarthy, 2024). (Smith, 2020) argues that Juneteenth is a historical milestone and a crucial cultural event that symbolizes the ongoing fight for freedom and equality for African Americans. Furthermore, Williams (2019) highlights that emancipation celebrations like Juneteenth have historically served as powerful reminders of the struggles for freedom and equality. Recognizing such holidays at a federal level not only honors past sacrifices but also educates future generations about the importance of these events in shaping the nation's history (Williams, 2019). In addition, as some commentators and scholars argue, Juneteenth should be considered as equally important as July 4th, it fosters "American core values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all"(Monroe, 2021), and addresses "other forms of marginalization of oppression against all minorities" (Leachman, 2022).

Critics argue that while making Juneteenth a federal holiday is a symbolic acknowledgment, it falls drastically short of being a credible or effective response to America's enduring racial injustices (Finley, 2021; Lindsey, 2021). They contend that rather than creating a new holiday, more concrete policy actions and investments are urgently needed to truly combat systemic racism, inequity, and discrimination that manifests in issues like police brutality, housing disparities, education and health care access gaps, and other spheres (Lindsey, 2021). To these critics, there are also concerns that Juneteenth will become primarily viewed as just another paid day off work for federal employees (Clark, 2021; Olson, 2021) or co-opted as a commercialized shopping holiday by corporations minimizing its educational value (Blain, 2022; Collier, 2022; Garcia, 2022; Harper, 2023). Some worry it could even reinforce political polarization if commemorations devolve into narratives around contemporary racial grievances rather than thoughtful historical reflection (Clark, 2021). Conservative figures, such as Florida Congressman Anthony Sabatini, have critiqued Juneteenth as a 'woke holiday,' suggesting it serves as a political gesture advantageous to liberal Democrats (Graziosi, 2022).

In our study, we aimed to capture the subtle details revealed in examining the public conversation about Juneteenth. Specifically, we used the identified topics to inform our inquiries about participants' beliefs regarding the implications of the declaration of Juneteenth as a federal holiday. In the next section, we specify the theoretical framework of the study.

Theoretical Framework

To investigate the factors influencing public support for recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, this study employs the Affect, Behavior, and Cognition (ABC) model of attitude formation (Solomon, 2007). The ABC model posits that an individual's attitude toward an object or issue is shaped by three key components: affect (emotions/feelings), behavior (overt actions), and cognition (beliefs/thoughts). In the case of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday, the ABC model can be applied as follows:

- Affective component: This involves how one feels about Juneteenth and its significance as a celebration of the end of slavery in the United States.

- Behavioral component: This involves how one acts or intends to act in relation to Juneteenth and its recognition as a federal holiday.
- Cognitive component: This involves what one thinks or believes about Juneteenth and its importance as a symbol of freedom and justice.

Additionally, this study explores the role of family traditions and cultural transmission in shaping attitudes toward Juneteenth. Celebrations and practices passed down through generations within certain communities may foster emotional connections, socialize supportive viewpoints, and reinforce the personal and cultural significance of the holiday. Family values and traditions are known to influence political and policy preferences profoundly. They act as conserving forces, maintaining established social and political outlooks across generations. The intergenerational transmission of values through families supports the political system and can breed resistance to change (Johnson and Tamney, 1996; Wasby, 1966). By considering family traditions alongside the Affect, Behavior, and Cognition model, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to public support or opposition to recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday. The familial and communal influences embedded in certain cultural celebrations may play a key role in shaping emotional responses, behavioral expressions, and cognitive beliefs around this issue.

The inclusion of family and community traditions as a moderating variable in our augmented ABC model is grounded in the theoretical understanding that cultural heritage and socialization experiences play a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes, values, and political preferences (Jost et al., 2009; Schwartz, 2012). Family traditions and cultural practices serve as powerful transmitters of social norms, beliefs, and emotions, which can influence how individuals perceive and respond to political issues and policies (Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Jennings et al., 2009).

In the context of Juneteenth, we argue that the presence or absence of family and community traditions surrounding the celebration of this holiday during an individual's childhood may significantly impact their cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to its recognition as a federal holiday.

This theoretical justification aligns with existing literature on attitude formation and policy support, which emphasizes the importance of socialization experiences and cultural contexts in shaping political attitudes and behavior (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Schwartz, 2012). For instance, research has shown that early exposure to political discussions and participatory experiences within the family can significantly influence an individual's political identity and engagement later in life (Jennings et al., 2009; Verba et al., 2005). Similarly, studies have highlighted the role of cultural values and traditions in shaping public opinion on a wide range of policy issues, from immigration and welfare to environmental protection and social justice (Feather, 1996; Goren, 2005; Katz, 1960). By incorporating family and community traditions as a moderator in our model, we aim to capture how cultural heritage and socialization experiences intersect with cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors to shape public support for recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday.

Hypotheses:

Building on the preceding section, we seek to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Positive beliefs about Juneteenth (enhancing national solidarity, recognizing African American culture) are expected to positively correlate with supportive attitudes, whereas negative beliefs (perceiving it as just another shopping holiday or polarizing event) are anticipated to exhibit no such correlation.

H2: Emotions associated with Juneteenth are hypothesized to correlate with support for its federal recognition, with positive emotions increasing support and negative emotions decreasing it.

H3: Active participation in family gatherings related to Juneteenth is expected to positively correlate with support for it becoming a federal holiday, aligning with the behavioral component of the attitude formation model.

H4: Individuals with a family tradition of celebrating Juneteenth during childhood are expected to show increased support for it becoming a federal holiday due to the deeper personal connection and positive associations formed through shared experiences and cultural narratives.

H5: Individuals with a familial or communal tradition of commemorating Juneteenth during childhood are expected to exhibit greater support for recognizing it as a federal holiday, particularly when they perceive Juneteenth as embodying the acknowledgment of African American history and culture.

Survey Design and Sample Characteristics

To gauge public attitudes toward recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, two surveys were conducted among two independent samples: a representative sample of

800 individuals residing in the United States and a separate sample of 200 African Americans. To provide additional context, the representative sample of 800 individuals was intended to reflect the demographic composition of the United States based on the 2010 Census data. Participants were recruited to ensure that the proportions of race, gender, age, education, and income levels mirrored the Census proportions. As African Americans constituted a minority group within the representative sample, an independent sample of 200 African Americans was surveyed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their perspectives regarding the recognition of Juneteenth as a federal holiday. After excluding observations with missing variables, the final sample sizes were 781 for the representative group and 196 for the African American oversample. The representative sample consisted predominantly of white participants (77%), with a slight majority being female (51%). The average age of participants was 51 years or older (41%), and the majority held a bachelor's degree (36%). The majority also reported a household income between \$25,000-\$75,000 per year (46%). In contrast, the African American sample was predominantly male (51%), with the average participant age ranging from 36-50

years old (38%). The majority in this group also held a bachelor's degree (40%) and reported a household income within the same range of \$25,000-\$75,000 per year (49%). Table 3 in the Appendix summarizes the sample characteristics of both surveys, including race, gender, age, education, and income of the respondents.

Table 1 compares the level of support for recognizing Juneteenth among participants from both samples. The results reveal substantial support for the policy in both groups, with 52.11% of the "Representative sample" group and 56.12% of the "African American" group.

Factors contributing to Support/Opposition for federal holiday

Our study delved into the underlying reasons behind individuals' support or opposition to the federal recognition of Juneteenth as a national holiday within the African American sample. Detailed findings are presented in Table 5 in the Appendix, titled "Responses to Why Participants Support or Oppose Juneteenth as a Federal Holiday." The study uncovered compelling reasons behind the support for Juneteenth as a federal holiday, such as commemorating the end of slavery (14%), recognizing its historical importance (23%), acknowledging African American contributions (10%), raising awareness of injustices (16%), and providing a platform for Black individuals to celebrate their independence (21%), among other significant factors. Conversely, diverse expressions of dissent were identified, including indifference (34%), skepticism/disbelief (17%), perceptions of it as unnecessary or redundant (9%), economic or commercialization concerns (9%), viewing it as a political move (3%), or it could cause divisiveness (6%).

Key Variables

Dependent Variable: The level of individual support for Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday.

Independent Variables: To evaluate the cognitive aspects related to recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, we employed different questions. These questions encompassed inquiries about whether recognizing Juneteenth promotes the recognition of African American cultures (*recognition*), contributes to enhancing national solidarity (*national solidarity*), is perceived as merely a day off (*day off*), and whether Juneteenth is viewed primarily as a shopping holiday (*commercialization*). In addition, we included two additional variables to capture nuanced perspectives:

Polarization: This variable assesses individuals' perceptions regarding whether recognizing Juneteenth reinforces societal polarization.

Racial Inequality: This variable delves into whether individuals perceive recognizing Juneteenth as having a limited influence on raising awareness of racial inequality.

For the affective component of the ABC model, we mainly consider the following factors that reflect the respondents' emotions and feelings about Juneteenth and its recognition as a federal holiday. These factors are:

Positive emotions: Whether the respondents associated Juneteenth with positive emotions, such as joy, optimism, pride, gratitude, or hope.

Negative emotions: Whether the respondents associated Juneteenth with negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, guilt, or shame.

Mixed emotions: Whether the respondents experienced both positive and negative emotions about Juneteenth, indicating a complex and nuanced emotional response. To measure these factors, we asked the participants to indicate the emotions they felt when they thought about Juneteenth (anger, sadness, joy, optimism, etc.). From their responses, we constructed dummy variables to represent each emotion category (positive, negative, or mixed), based on whether they selected at least one emotion from that category.

Finally, we assessed behavioral factors by inquiring about participants' engagement in various activities during their Juneteenth celebrations. These activities included:

1. *Attending Family Gatherings:* Participating in gatherings with family members to commemorate Juneteenth and share in the celebration of African American heritage.
2. *Participating in Public Events:* Engaging in community events, such as parades, festivals, or ceremonies, organized to honor Juneteenth and promote unity and awareness.
3. *Sharing Thoughts on Social Media:* Utilizing social media platforms to share personal reflections, historical insights, or messages of solidarity related to Juneteenth.
4. *Learning African American History:* Taking the opportunity to deepen understanding and appreciation of African American history and culture through educational activities or discussions.
5. *Supporting Black Businesses:* Patronizing and supporting businesses owned and operated by Black entrepreneurs to contribute to economic empowerment within the community.
6. *Donating to Nonprofits:* Contributing financially or through volunteer efforts to organizations and initiatives dedicated to addressing social justice issues and advancing the well-being of African Americans.

Other Determinants: Expanding our analysis beyond the current independent variables, we've introduced additional factors to delve deeper into the determinants of support for recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday:

1. *Curriculum:* This variable measures individuals' perspectives on the inclusion of Juneteenth in school curricula.

2. *Belief in Achieving Racial Justice*: This variable explores individuals' beliefs regarding society's capacity to attain racial justice.
3. *Political Ideology*: This variable assesses individuals' political leanings and their potential impact on attitudes towards recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday.
4. The "*Biden administration legacy*" variable was included to explore whether support for Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday is associated with support for the current political leadership.

Controls: We included controls for age, education, gender, income, political ideology, and location to avoid confounding effects.

Empirical Model

We employed an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model to analyze the relationship between individuals' support for designating Juneteenth as a federal holiday (the dependent variable) and their cognitive beliefs, emotional associations, behavioral actions, other controls, and demographic characteristics (the independent variables).

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + \beta_6 X_{6i} + \epsilon_i$$

where:

Y_i represents the dependent variable, which is the level of individual support for Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday.

X_{1i} represents the independent variables measuring cognitive inputs.

X_{2i} represents the independent variables measuring emotional inputs, including positive emotions (joy, optimism), negative emotions (anger, sadness) and mixed emotions.

X_{3i} represents the independent variables measuring behavioral inputs.

X_{4i} represents the additional independent variables included in the model.

X_{5i} represents the control variables for age, education, gender, income, political ideology, and location.

β_0 represents the intercept. ϵ_i represents the error term for the i th observation.

Results

The information in tables 2, 3, and 4, present the results of a statistical analysis on two samples: a 'Rep sample,' which reflects a representative sample based on the general population's demographic distribution founded on the census, and an 'AA Sample,' which exclusively consists of African American individuals in the United States. The analysis examines the relationship between individuals' emotions

(affective variables), behaviors (behavioral variables), and beliefs (cognitive variables) related to Juneteenth and their support for its designation as a federal holiday. This analysis is extended with the inclusion of a moderator and interaction terms to disentangle further the attitude formation toward the support of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday.

Base ABC Model

The results from the base model following the literature are shown in table 2. This base analysis focuses on the relationship between individuals' affective, behavioral, and cognitive variables related to their support for Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday.

Table 2: ABC Model without Family/Community Tradition

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Affective Variables:

In the base ABC model, the analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between positive emotions and support for the policy in only the representative sample, with a statistically significant association at the $p < 0.01$ level and a coefficient of 0.544. Similarly, mixed emotions showed a positive association with support, contributing to an increase in support of 0.447 points within the representative sample at the p -value < 0.01 level. These findings support our a priori expectations relating to positive and mixed emotions, as stated in H3. However, it's worth noting that negative emotions did not exhibit a statistically significant correlation with support in either sample. From this, we can interpret that in the base ABC model, the support of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday in the US did not correlate with emotions for the African American sample.

Behavioral Variables:

In the behavioral variables related to Juneteenth, only one variable shows statistical significance in its correlation with support for Juneteenth becoming a national holiday, and this is the case for only the AA sample. This variable is 'Family Gathering,' representing those who attend family or friends' gatherings to celebrate Juneteenth versus those who don't. The AA sample shows a slightly statistically significant, with a p -value of 0.1, positive correlation between 'Family Gathering' and the support for Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday with a magnitude of 0.289. The relationship between 'Family Gatherings' and support for Juneteenth is a point of interest in our research and updates as we better refine the ABC model incorporating our research contribution, namely accounting for early childhood family/community traditions.

Cognitive Variables:

In the 'Rep. Sample,' individuals endorsing the belief that Juneteenth strengthens national solidarity exhibit a significant 0.136-unit (4.34% of its mean value as seen in table 7) boost in their support, with statistical significance at the $p < 0.01$ level. Conversely, within the 'AA Sample,' the corresponding increase is estimated at 0.104 units but is not statistically significant. These findings indicate a nuanced association between perceiving Juneteenth as a unifying force in the representative sample and, thus, the increased support for its recognition as a federal holiday versus in the African American sample.

The relationship between Juneteenth celebrated as a federal holiday and its representation as the 'Recognition of African American History and Culture' shows a slight statistically significant increase in support within the AA sample, with a magnitude of 0.122 (2.94% of its mean value as seen in table 8) and a p-value of < 0.1 . This relationship in recognition does not exist for the representative sample. Additionally, the relationship between support of Juneteenth as a national holiday and Juneteenth being identified mainly as a 'Work Holiday' did not exhibit statistical significance for either sample.

The perception of Juneteenth primarily as a shopping holiday demonstrates a notable negative association with the outcome variable in both sample groups. Within the representative sample, this belief is correlated with a substantial decrease in support, amounting to 0.061 (3.43 % of its mean), and achieves statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. Similarly, a comparable negative association is observed in the African American sample, albeit with a more pronounced impact, resulting in a support reduction of 0.154 (8.42% of mean). This effect also attains statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. These findings emphasize the potential negative impact of perceptions regarding the commercialization of Juneteenth on support for its federal recognition in both sample groups, with equal degrees of significance.

The notion that Juneteenth fosters polarization seems to exert a notable adverse effect on the endorsement of its federal recognition within the representative sample.

With each unit increase in this perception, support experiences a considerable decrease of 0.134 (5.06 percent of its mean), and this correlation reaches statistical significance at the $p < 0.01$ level. Interestingly, in the African American sample, this perception does not demonstrate statistical significance in relation to its impact on support for the federal recognition of Juneteenth. This implies that the belief in Juneteenth generating polarization appears to be a more influential factor in detracting support within the representative sample, which includes a higher proportion of white individuals, while its influence on support is statistically insignificant within the African American sample.

Other Controls and Demographics:

We see the perception that the designation of Juneteenth as a federal holiday is considered a part of President Biden's legacy demonstrated a strong positive correlation with support in the representative sample but not in the African American sample. Specifically, the analysis's coefficient value was 0.116 (3.79% of its mean). These results are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. This suggests that

individuals in the representative sample who view Juneteenth becoming a Federal Holiday as part of President Biden's legacy are more inclined to support its federal recognition.

In addition to the previously mentioned findings, it's noteworthy to mention that individuals who express a willingness to include Juneteenth in the curriculum show a positive association with support. More precisely, the observed coefficient values were 0.380 (9.22% of its mean) and 0.350 (7.81% of its mean) in the representative and AA samples, respectively. These suggest a notably strong positive correlation between advocating for the integration of Juneteenth into educational curricula and the extent of support for its federal recognition. These results are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. It is worth noting that this strong positive relationship between including Juneteenth in the educational curriculum and the support for it becoming a national holiday is robust to all versions of our ABC model for both samples. This shows the unified significance of and support of teaching ourselves and our children about the history of the enslavement of African Americans in the United States.

Helmstetter (2023) highlights that from the McCourtney Institute for Democracy's May 2023 Mood of the Nation Poll, nine in ten American adults think that the history of slavery (of which Juneteenth is a significant part) in the US should be included in the school curriculum. Specifically for Juneteenth, Gallop's 2021 survey also observes wide support McCarthy (2022): Nearly half (49%) of the representative sample supports teaching Juneteenth in schools, more than double the number of those opposed to this suggestion. Furthermore, the regression analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between 'High Racial Justice Confidence' and the support for recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday in the representative sample. Having a high level of confidence reduces support by 0.077 (approx. 3% percent of mean) at the $p < 0.1$ level. Therefore, if an individual is highly confident that society can achieve racial justice, then they are less likely to support Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday.

A possible explanation is that individuals highly confident in society achieving racial justice believe creating this federal holiday is unnecessary, either because no government intervention is needed or because they perceive a "post-racial" society has already been achieved. This aligns with a 2021 Pew Research Center poll showing nearly half (49%) of U.S. adults believe little (34%) or nothing at all (15%) remains to ensure racial equality. However, this negative correlation was not observed in the African American sample. This is like the racial divide found in Pew Research Center (2021): Whereas over half of White respondents (56%) believe the last 50 years have witnessed significant progress in racial equality, 80% black participants think that only a little progress, or none, has been made. This finding underscores the importance of understanding the nuances in how different communities perceive Juneteenth's historical and social significance and its implications for addressing racial inequality.

Moreover, our analysis illuminates the impact of political ideology on support for Juneteenth as a federal holiday. In the regression results, we observed a coefficient of

0.162 (percent of mean) at the $p < 0.05$ level, indicating a statistically significant negative correlation between an individual identifying as 'Conservative' and their support for Juneteenth's federal recognition

within the representative sample. This finding supports the results in Pew Research Center (2021). In this poll, most Republicans (71%) believe that the country has already made significant progress in the pursuit of racial justice over the past 50 years. Conversely, most Democrats (74%) hold the view that there is still much work to be done.

Within the African American sample, the coefficient value was 0.071 and not statistically significant, suggesting a negligible effect of conservatism on support for Juneteenth. Like the findings in Pew Research Center (2021), our results show that this belief among Black adults is consistent regardless of political identification. Additionally, we identify a negative correlation between age and support in the representative sample: as individuals age, their support for the federal recognition of Juneteenth as a holiday tends to decrease. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that the 'age' variable, while statistically significant, bears the smallest estimated coefficient (0.003, which is x% of the mean age) in the regression. The other control variables did not show statistical relevance. Collectively, these findings imply that a range of demographic and political factors may play a role in shaping individuals' support for the recognition of Juneteenth as a federal holiday.

Augmented ABC Model

Given the literature and history of Juneteenth, we incorporated family and community traditions into the base ABC model to enhance the comprehensiveness of our analysis. The results of this augmented model are presented in table 3, discussed in this section, revealing valuable insights into the interplay between individual perceptions, familial legacies, emotions, and behaviors in influencing attitudes towards Juneteenth.

Table 3: ABC Model with Family Traditions

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Affective Variables - Extended:

These variables remain consistent for the representative sample when compared to the previous model. However, in the African American sample, we observe a slight increase in the coefficients of the affective variables, with no alterations in the significance levels compared to the preceding model. This subtle shift in coefficients suggests a nuanced variation in the impact of affective variables on support within the African American sample, while the maintenance of significance levels underscores the stability of the observed relationships.

Behavioral Variables - Extended:

The coefficients associated with behavioral variables in the representative sample display some modifications. Particularly noteworthy is the emergence of statistical significance at the 95% confidence level for the variable "Family Gatherings" in the African American sample. This is accompanied by a

considerable increase in the magnitude of the coefficient to 0.433 points per unit (131.21% of its mean of 0.33), indicating a positive correlation between “Family Gatherings” and support for Juneteenth becoming a federally celebrated holiday. This large increase of the variable suggests that when the moderator variable, “Family/Community Tradition,” is included in the model, we can clearly see the significant positive role that the behavior of “Family Gatherings” plays on the African American individual’s support for Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday (this is true for those included in our sample). This result struck us as interesting and further supported the decision to augment the base ABC model by including the “Family Traditions” moderator.

Another variable in our behavioral category, “Learn about African American history,” gained slight statistical relevance for support in the African American sample. Conversely, all other behavioral variables lack statistical significance for the AA sample. Additionally, as with the base model, all the behavioral variables for the representative sample lack statistical significance.

Cognitive Variables - Extended:

The cognitive variables exhibit magnitude and statistical significance stability for the representative sample. However, for the African American sample, there is a slight decrease in the coefficients for these variables, and they maintain statistical significance when compared to the previous model. Notably, the variable “Recognition of African American History and Culture” maintains marginal significance, while the variable “Juneteenth is a shopping Holiday” remains significant at the 95% confidence level, showing up as a source of reduction in support for the policy by 0.143 points (7.81% of its mean) in the African American sample.

Moderator - Augmented ABC Contribution:

The findings in the updated model in table 3 reveal an unexpected result regarding the variable “Family/Community Tradition” in relation to celebrating Juneteenth during childhood when compared to the related hypothesis, H2. The African American sample’s “Family/Community Tradition” variable displays a surprising and statistically significant negative coefficient of -0.447 (103.95% of its mean). This result suggests that having a family or community tradition of celebrating Juneteenth during childhood is associated with a substantial reduction in support for the policy. This variable is significant at the 95% level. This result piqued our interest and led us to consider the pathways through which the negative support for the policy stems. Could it be because people with strong family traditions of celebrating from Childhood revere the holiday and do not want it to be misused/misrepresented in the broader societal sphere?

To investigate these intricate relationships further, we extended our augmented model to include interaction terms between the moderator and the cognitive variables. The model with the full interaction is shown in table 9. From this extended model, we were able to focus on the two main cognitive variables that showed statistically significant results in the interaction. We discuss this augmented ABC model with interaction in the next section titled “Augmented ABC Model with Moderator Interaction.” To

investigate how cognitive factors and family/community traditions jointly influence attitudes towards federal recognition of Juneteenth, we constructed an alternative model incorporating moderation and interaction effects. Specifically, we included interaction terms between:

- Perceptions of Juneteenth recognizing African American culture and having a family or community tradition of celebrating Juneteenth during childhood.
- Views on Juneteenth promoting national unity and having a family or community tradition of celebrating Juneteenth during childhood.

This alternative model exhibited an improved fit compared to the initial model without the moderation and interactions, as evidenced by a higher adjusted R-squared value (see table below). The improved explanatory power was particularly pronounced for the African American subsample. These results suggest that the interplay between cognitive beliefs about Juneteenth’s cultural/historical significance and lived experiences of celebrating the holiday within familial/community contexts plays a crucial role in explaining variations in support for federally commemorating Juneteenth, especially among African Americans. By accounting for these moderating and interaction effects, the alternative model provides richer insights into how cognitive attributions intersect with entrenched traditions to shape public attitudes towards officially recognizing Juneteenth nationally.

Table 4: Adjusted R-squared Values for Rep Sample and AA Sample

-Insert-

Expanded Version of the Augmented ABC Model

Given the negative association observed between the family tradition variable and support, we sought to delve deeper into the reasons behind this pattern. To better understand the dynamics, we further explored them by introducing interactions between the variables ‘Recognition’ and ‘Solidarity’ with the moderator variable ‘Family/Community Traditions’ from early childhood. This allowed us to disaggregate the relationship we were observing for the support of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday within the African American (AA) sample. The outcomes of this extended model are outlined in Table 4, providing valuable insights into how individual perceptions and familial legacies intertwine to shape attitudes toward Juneteenth.

Table 5: Model with Family Tradition and Interactions

-Insert-

Affective Variables - Further Extended:

The variables remain unchanged for the representative sample when compared to the previous model. However, in the African American sample, we observe slight changes in the magnitude of the affective

variable coefficients, with no alterations in the significance levels compared to the preceding model.

Behavioral Variables - Further Extended:

Similar stability is observed in the behavioral variables; however, a notable exception is found in the African American sample, where the variable “Family Gatherings” becomes significant at the 95% confidence level. This suggests that celebrating Juneteenth through family gatherings significantly enhances support for the commemoration of the federal holiday by 0.433 points.

Cognitive Variables - Further Extended:

The cognitive variables now exhibit a lack of statistical relevance, except for “Juneteenth is mainly a shopping holiday,” which maintains significance at the 95% confidence level in both samples.

Marginal Effects

A key method of identifying the intertwined relationship among three variables, one of which is a moderator, is the analysis of the marginal effects plot of the interaction terms in the estimated model. This subsection presents the marginal effects of the interaction between Family Traditions, “Solidarity” and “Recognition” and walks you through our findings.

National Solidarity

The following graph illustrates the marginal effect of the interaction between the variables ‘solidarity’ and ‘family tradition.’ Noteworthy discrepancies in trends become apparent at higher levels of the solidarity variable. Specifically, individuals who believe that Juneteenth enhances national solidarity and reported familial or communal celebration of Juneteenth during childhood exhibit a decrease in support for Juneteenth becoming a Federal holiday. In contrast, those without such a familial/community history witness a boost in support at the higher end. A likely explanation is that those with longstanding family traditions view Juneteenth as a holiday that mainly recognizes and celebrates the escaping of the past trauma of the Black community in the US. This interactive term helped tease out the divergent experiences with Juneteenth within the African American sample that was otherwise washed out in the simple version of the model. Our qualitative data supports this claim - individuals opposed to the holiday who have a history of family/community celebrations articulated the following reasons to oppose the holiday becoming federal:

- “It is a commemoration of the emancipation of Black people.”
- “Blacks built this country and need more recognition of our history.”
- “It’s a black holiday celebrating liberation.”
- “While it held deep personal significance for my family and our local community, it now feels like just another holiday.”

Recognition of African American History and Culture

In contrast, the subsequent graph illustrates the marginal effect stemming from the interaction between the variables 'recognition' and 'family or community tradition.' It reveals that individuals whose families or communities celebrated Juneteenth during their childhood exhibit a notable increase in support with each incremental rise in the perception that Juneteenth acknowledges African American history and culture, particularly within the African American demographic.

One plausible explanation for this trend is that these familial or communal traditions instill individuals with a deeper understanding and appreciation of Juneteenth's historical and cultural significance. By being actively involved in celebrations from a young age, individuals are likely to develop a more profound connection to the holiday's roots and its importance in commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. As a result, they are more inclined to support policies aimed at the formal recognition of Juneteenth and the historical struggles of African Americans.

Extended Model Analysis and Stability of Findings

Although our decision to further extend the model is based on the rational expectation that support for Juneteenth celebrated as a federal holiday will be bolstered via the framing of recognition and possibly via the framing of national solidarity for African Americans with an established family tradition of celebrating this holiday (Jones and Allen, 2021; Smith, 2020; Williams, 2019), we perform the empirical analysis to see how interacting the moderator of family celebration with all cognitive variables affects the outcomes. Table 10 shows that our findings are stable. The variables we reported in our main results are the only ones statistically significant. In addition, the adjusted r-square for the African American sample of the model with all the interaction terms is lower (0.445 vs. 0.452), indicating a worse fit and the inclusion of unnecessary variables.

Discussion

The findings of our study have significant practical implications for policymakers and advocacy groups seeking to promote Juneteenth and similar historically significant events, as explained below. By understanding the complex interplay of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and cultural factors that shape public support for such initiatives, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to build broader coalitions and drive policy change. Firstly, our results highlight the importance of fostering positive beliefs and emotions associated with Juneteenth and other historically significant events. Policymakers and advocates should focus on raising awareness about the historical and cultural significance of these occasions, emphasizing their role in promoting social justice, national unity, and the recognition of marginalized communities' struggles and contributions. By framing these events in a positive light and appealing to shared values of equality, freedom, and democracy, stakeholders can help build a stronger emotional connection and sense of ownership among the public.

Secondly, our findings underscore the need for inclusive engagement strategies that consider the diverse experiences and traditions surrounding these events within different communities. While some individuals may have grown up with a strong family or community tradition of celebrating Juneteenth, others may be less familiar with its significance. Policymakers and advocates should work closely with local organizations and community leaders to develop culturally sensitive outreach programs that resonate with different audiences. By acknowledging and leveraging the power of family and community traditions, stakeholders can help build grassroots support and mobilize individuals to take action in support for this policy change.

Moreover, the divergent effects of family and community traditions on support for Juneteenth's federal recognition across samples in our study suggest that policymakers and advocates may need to adopt tailored approaches when engaging with specific communities. For instance, within the African American community, where some individuals may view Juneteenth as a primarily community-centered celebration, stakeholders should focus on highlighting the complementary nature of local traditions and national recognition. By emphasizing how federal recognition can amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized communities while preserving the intimacy and cultural significance of local celebrations, policymakers and advocates can help build bridges and foster a sense of shared purpose.

The regression analysis unearthed several notable findings. Two-term interactions illuminated the substantial impact of family or community celebrations when coupled with heightened awareness of Juneteenth's historical significance. This suggests that communal engagement, alongside historical awareness, plays a pivotal role in fostering support among African Americans. Furthermore, the positive association between positive emotions and family or community celebrations underscores the uplifting influence of positive emotional experiences in shaping support. Our findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of cultural identity, historical awareness, and emotional resonance in influencing public support to recognize historical events. The positive correlations echo broader societal trends, highlighting the significance of communal celebrations and positive emotions in fostering support for cultural recognition.

Finally, our findings on the role of cognitive factors, such as beliefs about the potential outcomes of federal recognition, highlight the importance of understanding these perceptions in shaping public attitudes. Stakeholders could consider investing in research to evaluate the potential impacts of establishing federal holidays for historically significant events. This research could examine changes in voter turnout, economic effects on communities, and impacts on social cohesion. By presenting evidence and case studies examining outcomes of comparable initiatives, policymakers and advocates may be able to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the policy's benefits.

In essence, the study's results underscore the pivotal role of individuals' perceptions regarding the policy's outcomes in shaping their stance (Johnson et al., 2022). Our study contributes to the broader discourse on the recognition of historical events as federal holidays. It highlights the need for an approach that considers cultural, cognitive, and emotional factors. The convergence of both statistical

and qualitative analyses presents a picture of the diverse factors shaping public attitudes toward Juneteenth's federal recognition.

However, it is important to acknowledge some limitations of our study. First, the population recruited through online platforms tends to be significantly less politically diverse, younger, more educated, and less religious compared to the general U.S. population Goodman et al. (2013). This demographic skew could limit the generalizability of our results. Second, our study only included one wave of data collection following the federal recognition of Juneteenth, limiting our ability to examine the long-term effects of the policy on public attitudes and community engagement, as well as to establish a pre-policy baseline.

Future studies could also explore the role of other factors, such as media framing and elite discourse, in shaping public support for Juneteenth and similar initiatives. As Smith (2020) and Jones and Allen (2021) have illustrated, recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday can play a crucial role in fostering national unity and addressing historical injustices. Future research should build on these insights to explore how public policy can continue to support social justice initiatives and cultural recognition.

In conclusion, our study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted factors influencing support for Juneteenth as a federally recognized holiday. Understanding these factors can inform efforts to promote awareness and appreciation of Juneteenth's historical and cultural significance across different communities and political backgrounds. As society continues to grapple with issues of historical acknowledgment and cultural representation, understanding the multifaceted nature of public sentiment becomes paramount. Further research should continue to explore these dynamics to promote unity and recognition of Juneteenth as an important national holiday, offering insights that can inform policy decisions and public discourse surrounding the recognition of Juneteenth as a federal holiday.

Declarations

A statement of ethics approval This study was approved by the Georgia State University (GSU) Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP). All research procedures involving human subjects received appropriate ethics review and were conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines for the protection of human participants.

A statement on participant consent Written informed consent was obtained from all participants in this study. The consent procedure was approved by the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, the potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation. They were assured that their personal information would remain confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

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Footnotes

1. During the congressional discussions on making Juneteenth a federal holiday, Representative Matt Rosedale of Republican Montana opposed the idea, arguing that it would lead to identity politics rather than treating everyone equally, regardless of race. On the other hand, Representative Clay Higgins, a Republican from Louisiana, expressed his support but was upset that the holiday included the word "independence" instead of "emancipation" as the former co-opted the name of the sacred holiday of Independence Day. Despite the differing opinions, the House voted 415 – 14 in favor of making Juneteenth a federal holiday (Clark PhD, 2021).

Tables

Tables 1 to 5 are available in the Supplementary Files section

Figures

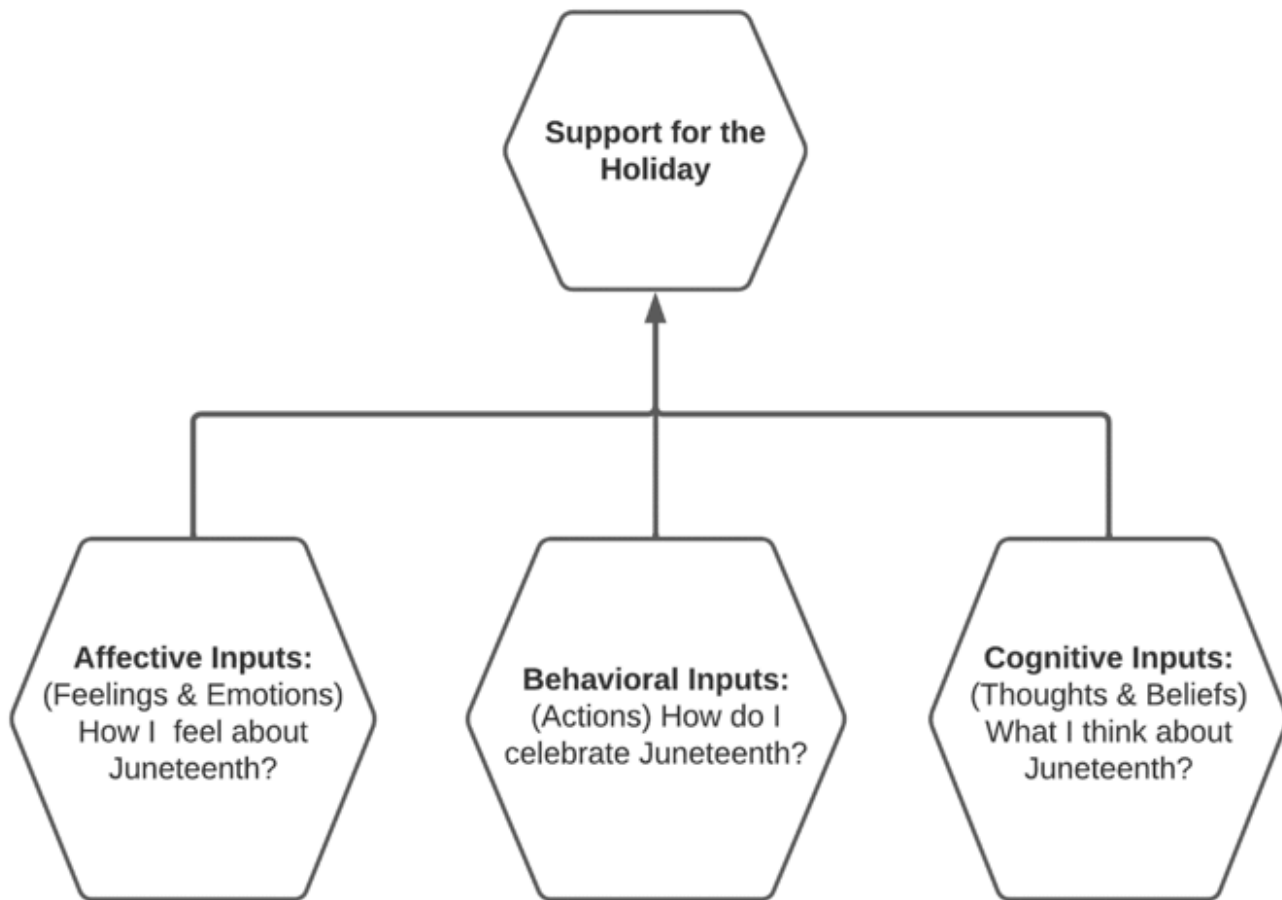


Figure 1

Variables of the ABC model

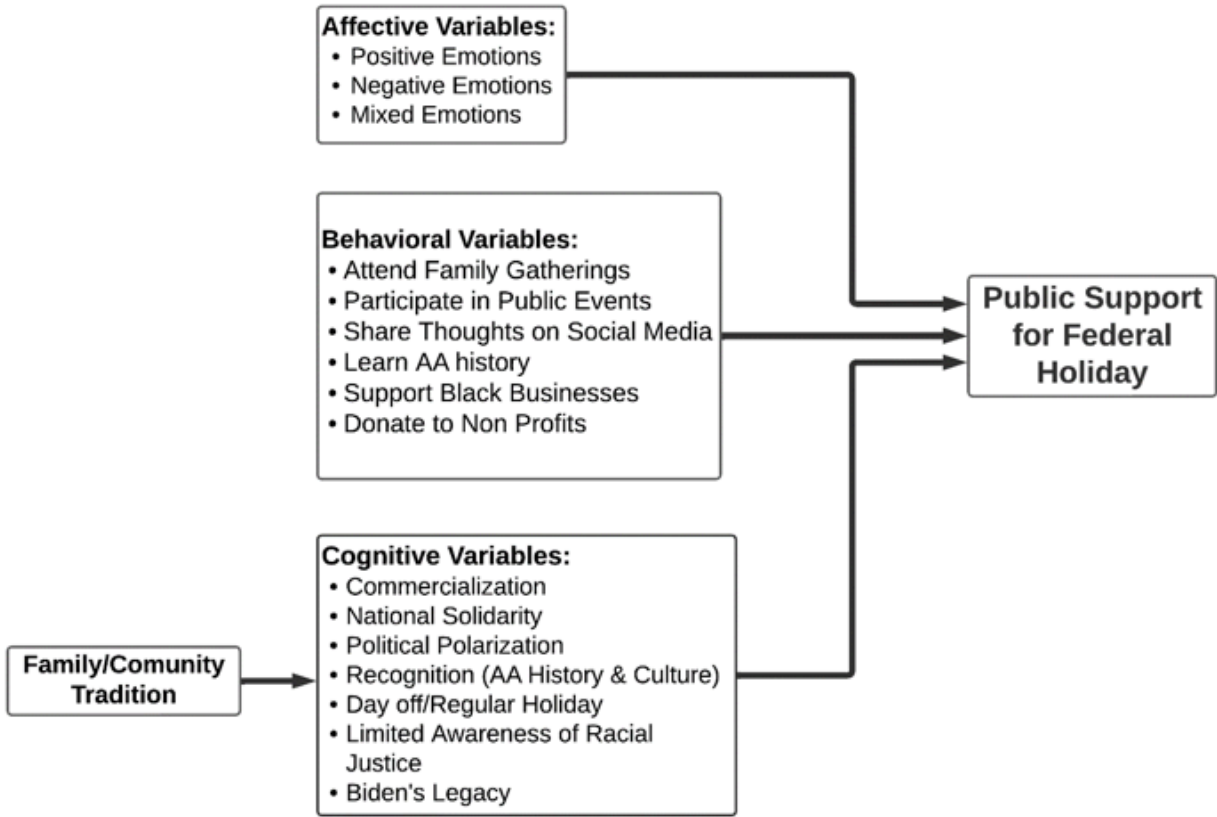


Figure 2

Variables of the augmented ABC model

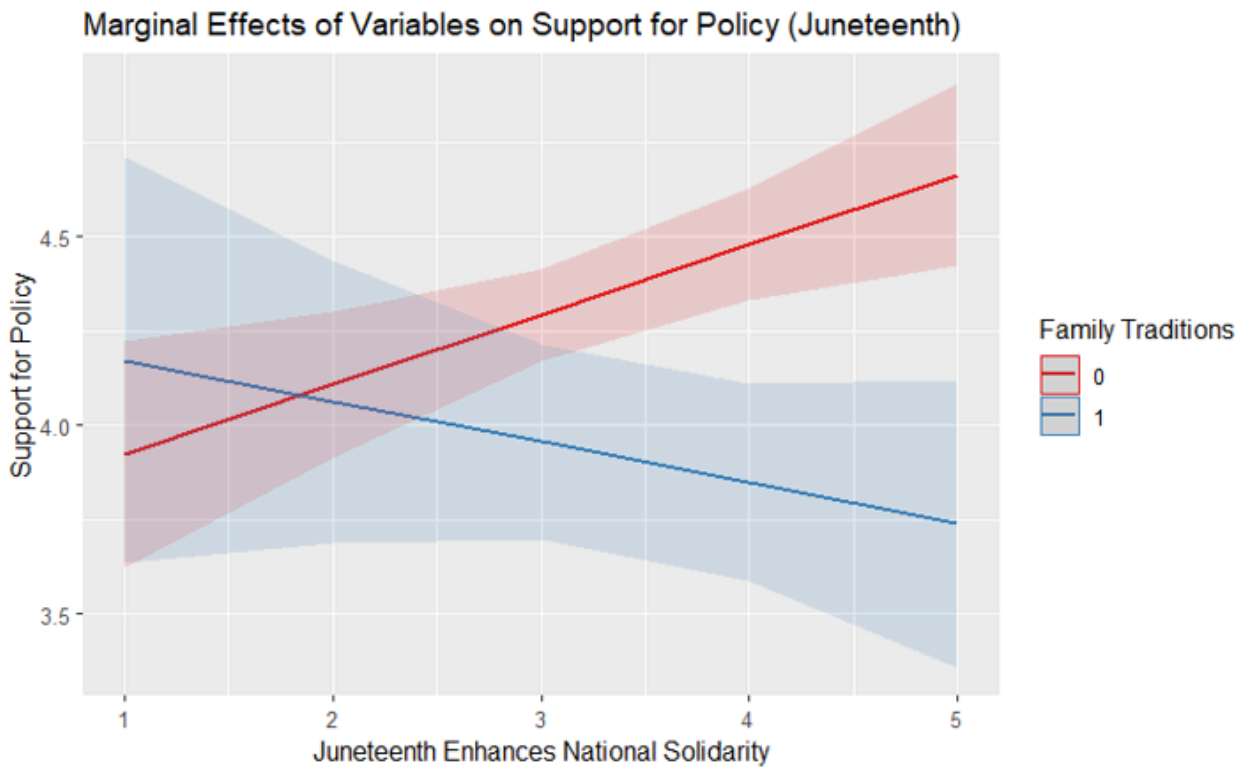


Figure 3

Marginal Effects for Solidarity and Support

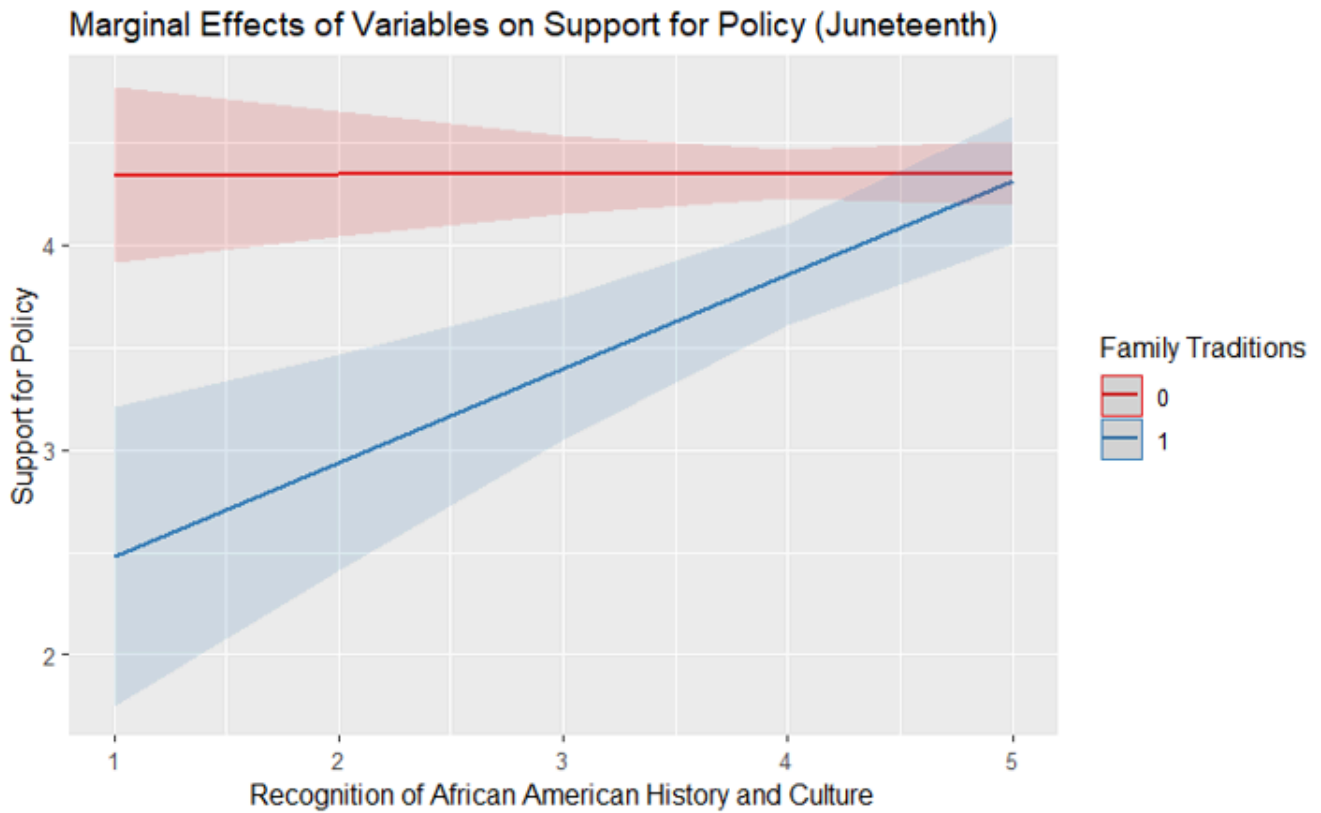


Figure 4

Marginal Effects for Recognition and Support

Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- [OnlineAppendix.docx](#)
- [Tables.docx](#)