#### EEA-ESEM 2023

State of the Art Session : Violence, Conflict and State Capacity

# RECONCILIATION OR PERSISTENCE OF HATRED: CONFLICTS AND THE ROLE OF NARRATIVES

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Introduction Movie Design Public Debate Military Enlistment Naming Patterns Discrimination Conclusio

#### Narratives and Conflicts



### Narratives in Economics: a Working Definition

# Simple stories that people use to explain and interpret complex phenomena

Shiller (2017), Akerlof and Snower (2016), Cantoni et al. (2017), Mukand and Rodrik (2018), Nyman et al. (2018), Benabou, Falk and Tirole (2018), Eliaz and Spiegler (2020), Bursztyn et al. (2023), Campante, Depetris-Chauvin and Durante (2023), Gehring ang Grigoletto (2023), Andre et al. (2023)...

## Narratives and Conflicts: Examples

- The **causes** of the conflict
- The deployment of violence
- The settlement of disputes



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## Narratives and Conflicts: Examples

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- The deployment of violence
- The settlement of disputes



#### Narratives and Conflicts: Open Questions

- i/ Do narratives about conflicts actually matter?
- ii/ Do they affect the reconciliation process?
- iii/ Can narratives change attitudes and behaviors?
- iv/ How do they work?
- v/ ..

## Narratives and Conflicts: Empirical Challenges

i/ Treatment : Measurement of the Narrative

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- i/ <u>Treatment</u>: Measurement of the Narrative
- ii/ Causality: Exogenous Exposure to the Narrative
- iii/ Impacts and Mechanisms: Measurement of the Effects

#### RECONCILIATION NARRATIVES

-"The Birth of a Nation" after the US Civil War-

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# This paper

Reconciliation Narrative after US Civil War

We study how the spread of the "Lost Cause" narrative eased reunification after American Civil War (1861-1865)

- Destructive war, left a deeply fractured society
  - ightarrow 2% of the population died in the line of duty
- Lost Cause: Revisionist record of the war, by southern elites who "sought
  justification for their cause and explanations for their defeat" (Blight 2002)
  - → Common Enemy logic
- Lost Cause was popularized after 1915 by the Hollywood blockbuster
   "The Birth of a Nation" [BOAN] by D.W. Griffith

#### What we do

- i/ Measurement of the Treatment: we map the screening of BON (= exposure to the Lost Cause narrative) and estimated the impacts of the movie on attitudes and behaviors
- ii/ Causality : We use exogenous variations in screening generated by the logistics of movie distribution
- i/ Measurement of the Impacts : we measure an array of attitudes (opinions & behavior) towards reconciliation and discrimination
  - 1910-1920, panel of US counties
  - Text from newspapers, archival records of enlistments, names from Census

# Main Findings

#### Finding #1 The movie eased reconciliation between former enemies

- → Rhetorics (opinions): Content analysis of newspapers' articles reveals less divisive/more conciliatory words
- → Patriotism (behaviors) : Increased enlistment rate in the US Navy
- ightarrow Shared culture (behaviors): Increased adoption of first names from former enemy's regional identity

#### Finding #2 Reconciliation came with racial discrimination

→ Movie increased segregation against African-Americans (public discourse, housing/labor market)

#### Finding #3 Nation-wide reconciliation

→ All the effects are detected both within former confederate and unionist states

#### The movie

- The Birth of a Nation [BON] premiered in February 1915
- 3 hours Civil War drama
- Part fiction and part history, complex plot appealing to a broad audience.
  - Tells the "true" story of the Civil War. The movie revolves around two families (the Camerons from SC and the Stonemans from PA)
- Most expensive and profitable movie then produced
  - Around \$50 million box office [\$1 billion PPP adjusted (Corliss, 2015)]
- National and international sensation. Controversy & Failed Ban & Riots

"It is like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true."

President Woodrow Wilson

The plot 1/3: the "True" story

- The "true" story of the Civil War and the Reconstruction
- Slavery not the true cause of the war
- Culprit: a greedy Northern Republican mulatto politician
- Northern abolitionists unwilling to respect Southern liberties



The plot 2/3: the Common Enemy

- Black men portrayed as unintelligent and sexually aggressive towards white women
- Enfranchised black a serious social and political threat
- Ku Klux Klan restorer of a just social order





The plot 3/3: the Reconciliation

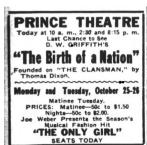
Reconciliation for securing the supremacy of the white man



# Measuring movie diffusion from historical newspaper data I

Historical local Newspapers : Newspapers.com. Largest online archive (+25 million pages, +3700 newspapers)

- 1/ Monthly coverage 1910-1920 :
- 1,070 counties (HQs location), one third of all US counties
- 2/ Automated text extraction for keywords *The Birth of a Nation*. 55,044 items
- 3/ Human Intelligence Task: 14,421 "true" ads; 442 counties
- 4/ Assign movie to county of newspaper HQ



 $\Rightarrow$  Build an Indicator of movie post-screening at county  $\times$  month level BON<sub>ct</sub> = 1 following months where screening proofs have been collected

# Baseline Specification

We start with a two-way fixed effects OLS estimation

$$\texttt{outcome}_{\textit{ct}} = \alpha + \beta \times \texttt{BON}_{\textit{ct}} + \sum_{\textit{c}} \texttt{FE}_{\textit{c}} + \sum_{\textit{t}} \texttt{FE}_{\textit{t}} + \epsilon_{\textit{ct}}$$

- Unit of observation : county c and year-month t (i.e. Jan 1920)
- Sample: 1070 counties, 1910-1920
- Outcome<sub>c.t.</sub>: type of rhetoric, enlistment, naming type, discrimination, ...
- BON<sub>ct</sub> codes for post-screening period
- FEc and FEt: county FE and time FE
- County-level clustered SE

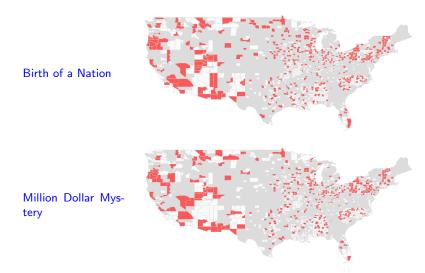
## Instrumental Variable: The Million Dollar Mystery

- Distribution of movies early 1900s : recurrent spatio-temporal patterns
- Because of logistical constraints :
  - -Supply shifters-
  - no theater in some areas
  - limited number of reels
  - pre-existing movie deals between theaters
- The Million Dollar Mystery [MDM] :
  - A radically different Plot! A secret society attempts to gain control of a lost million dollars
  - Released in June 1914 [231 days before BON].
- $\Rightarrow$  Instrument of BON $_{ct}$  is the post-screening indicator MDM $_{ct}$  transposed 231 days later



## Birth of a Nation and Million Dollar Mystery

The Instrument at work



# Measuring rhetoric in newspaper articles I

#### We measure opinions towards reconciliation using newspapers

- Local newspapers : key vehicle of communication covering many aspects of social life (news, public debate, ads).



#### Bags of words approach. In short:

- 1 mln articles from (1904-1914) from Chronicling America (text cleaning, identification of common bigrams...)
- 2 Co-occurrence analysis, Pointwise Mutual Information Index
  - Start from a list of seeds (from movie scripts, texts, and speeches)
  - [→] Expand the initial list with co-occurring words (or bigrams)
- 3 on MTurk, ask workers to assign each word to Patriotic, Divisive or N/A category
- 4 Download the top scoring words from Newspapers.com, use Top 20 lists as baseline

# Measuring rhetoric in newspaper articles II

- We obtain 2 imes 20 keywords related to
  - Patriotic rhetoric : US Flag, Stars and Stripes, Patriotic...
  - Divisive rhetoric : Secession, Civil War, Confederate...

▶ Bag of Words

• For a given keyword *i*, we compute

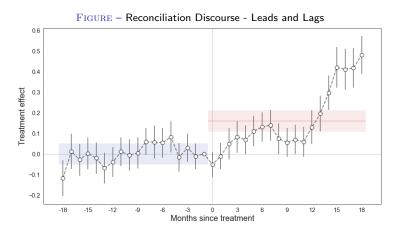
$$logFreq_{i,c,t} \equiv log \left[ \frac{1 + Page_{i,c,t}}{1 + TotPage_{c,t}} \right]$$
 (1)

- Finally, we take the 1st Principal Component :
  - Patriotic = PC1(log freq patriotic rhetoric list)
  - **Divisive** = PC1(log freq divisive rhetoric list)
  - Reconciliation = Patriotic Divisive





# **Event-Study**



NOTE Estimation based on De Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille (2020).

#### Baseline Results: Reconciliation rhetoric

LHS: PCA First component of keywords log freq for each bag of words (patriotic or divisive)

TABLE - Patriotic vs Divisive Discourse - Newspaper Analysis

	Reconciliation			Patriotic			Divisive		
	(1) OLS	(2) RF	(3) 2SLS	(4) OLS	(5) RF	(6) 2SLS	(7) OLS	(8) RF	(9) 2SLS
Birth of a Nation	0.400*** (0.0214)		1.092*** (0.0711)	0.345*** (0.0234)		0.849***	-0.0558*** (0.0166)		-0.243*** (0.0474)
Million Dollar Mystery	, ,	0.410*** (0.0250)	, ,	, ,	0.319*** (0.0265)	,	` ,	-0.0911*** (0.0172)	,
Observations	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325
F-stat	-	-	217.603	-	-	217.603	-	-	217.603
Sample SD	.928	.928	.928	3.741	3.741	3.741	4.121	4.121	4.121

NOTE: The table reports OLS (Columns 1, 4, and 7), reduced form (Columns 2, 5, and 8), and 2SLS (Columns 3, 6, and 9) estimates. All regressions control for county, month-year, and coverage percentile fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the county level. \* p < 0.10, \*\*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.

Robustness changing words

# Patriotism and US Navy Enlistment I

- We measure patriotism through army volunteering (Fouka 2019, Caprettini and Voth 2022)
- ullet Need for county-level monthly variations o Build our own dataset
- Casualties suffered by US Navy in WWI
  - Exhaustive and unexploited dataset collected by the Navy Department (1920)
  - 7,569 deceased sailors after April 1917
  - We observe the date of enrollment and address of closest relative
  - We observe enrollment between January 1913 and December 1918 (before /after BOAN) of individuals from all counties (i.e. no clustering along coasts)
- We build a time-varying proxy for enrollment at the county-level.

$$Enlistments_{c,t} \equiv [sailors_{c,t} > 0]$$
 (2)

roduction Movie Design Public Debate **Military Enlistment** Naming Patterns Discrimination Conclusion

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# Patriotism and US Navy Enlistment II

TABLE - BOAN Exposure and Volunteering

	Navy Enlistments							
	Jan	1913 - Nov 1	918	Jan 1913 - Mar 1917				
	(1) OLS	(2) RF	(3) 2SLS	(4) OLS	(5) RF	(6) 2SLS		
Birth of a Nation	0.037***			0.017*** (0.0046)		0.03***		
Million Dollar Mystery	,	0.0263*** (0.0046)	,	,	0.0093*** (0.0031)	,		
Observations	65,746	65,746	65,746	47,226	47,226	47,226		
1st stage F-Stat	-	-	335	-	-	281		
Dep. Var. Mean	.03	.03	.03	.01	.01	.01		
Dep. Var. Std. Dev.	.18	.18	.18	.1	.1	.1		

NOTE: The table reports OLS (Columns 1, and 4), reduced form (Columns 2, and 5), and 2SLS (Columns 3, and 6) estimates. All regressions control for county, and month-year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the county level. \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.

Magnitude (col. 6)- BOAN brings a 3% increase in likelihood of observing enlistments in a county



# Enemy-sounding Name Index

- Common identity = key driver of nation-building
- Parental decisions on babies' first names as cultural markers (Fouka 2019, Abramitzky et al. 2020, Algan et al. 2021)
- We explore the extent of "unionist-sounding" names among babies born in former confederate states (and vice-versa).
- Using Census data, we compute the **Enemy-sounding Name Index**

$$\mathtt{ENI}_i = \frac{\mathtt{FreqName}_{n(i),g_{-1}(i)}}{\mathtt{FreqName}_{n(i),g_{-1}(i)} + \mathtt{FreqName}_{n(i),g(i)}} \times 100 \tag{3}$$

- We estimate the baseline equation at the individual-level
- babies i born in [1910-1920] in  $g \in \{\text{confederate}, \text{union}\}\$ with a first name n
- FreqName are pre-1910 frequencies
- ENI  $\in$  [0, 100] gauges how relatively more popular is a name in former enemy's regional culture.

# **Enemy-sounding Name Index**

TABLE – Birth of a Nation and Naming Patterns

	Enemy Name Index							
		Continuous	•		Dummy			
	(1) OLS	(2) RF	(3) 2SLS	(4) OLS	(5) RF	(6) 2SLS		
Birth of a Nation	0.628*** (0.228)		1.731*** (0.476)	0.0166*** (0.00633)		0.0490*** (0.0132)		
Million Dollar Mystery	, ,	0.864*** (0.237)	, ,	,	0.0244*** (0.00642)	, ,		
1st stage F-Stat	-	-	90	-	- 1	90		
Dep. Var. Mean	44.16	44.16	44.16	.36	.36	.36		
Dep. Var. Std. Dev.	16.81	16.81	16.81	.48	.48	.48		
Observations	91,612	91,612	91,612	91,612	91,612	91,612		

Note: The table reports OLS (Columns 1, and 4), reduced form (Columns 2, and 5), and 2SLS (Columns 3, and 6) estimates. All regressions control for county, gender and (year of birth  $\times$  census year) fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the county level. \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.

Magnitude (col. 6)– BOAN increases likelihood that a baby receives a enemy popular name by 4.9 pp (sample mean 36 pp)

► Robustness Naming Patterns

# The common enemy logic at work: Discrimination of African-Americans I

- Did the movie push reconciliation by fostering discrimination?
  - For Racial Hate see also Ang (2020)
- Using local newspapers, we build two time-varying measures of discrimination observed both in South and North
  - Supremacism<sub>c,t</sub> = Indicator variable, "White Americans". Captures salience of race in public discourse on national identity
    - · Robustness : "True Americans", "Aryan(s)"
  - Discrimination<sub>c,t</sub> = Indicator variable, "White Only".
     Captures racial discrimination from job/housing ads
    - · Add filter "help" + "wanted" to select pages with job ads
    - · Robustness: "White Men Only", "White Only Wanted"

#### Discrimination of African-Americans II

Examples of racial discrimination in housing & Labor Market

FIGURE - Racial discrimination in the housing market and in the labor market



NOTE: Three ads documenting racial discrimination in the housing market and in the labor market. *Left Figure* The Cincinnati Enquirer, Ohio. *Top Right Figure* The Philadelphia Enquirer, Pennsylvania. *Bottom Right Figure* The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, New York. Source: newspapers.com.

#### Discrimination of African-Americans III

TABLE - BOAN and Discrimination of African Americans

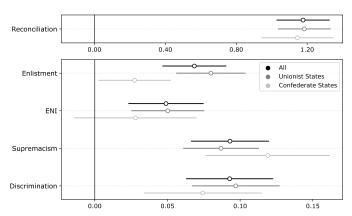
	S	upremacism		Discrimination			
	(1) OLS	(2) RF	(3) 2SLS	(4) OLS	(5) RF	(6) 2SLS	
Birth of a Nation	0.036*** (0.005)		0.093*** (0.014)	0.037*** (0.005)		0.093*** (0.015)	
Million Dollar Mystery		0.035*** (0.005)			0.035*** (0.006)		
1st Stage F-Stat	-	-	218	-	- 1	223	
Dep. Var. Mean	.11	.11	.11	.12	.12	.12	
Dep. Var. Std. Dev.	.31	.31	.31	.32	.32	.32	
Observations	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	89,325	

NOTE: The table reports OLS (Columns 1, and 4), reduced form (Columns 2, and 5), and 2SLS (Columns 3, and 6) estimates. All regressions control for county, month-year, and coverage percentile fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the county level. \* p < 0.10, \*\*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\*\* p < 0.05.

Magnitude – Exposure to BOAN increases by 8% the likelihood of references to "White Americans" and by 6% racial discrimination in ads.

#### A Nation-wide Phenomenon

#### FIGURE – A Nation-wide Phenomenon



 ${
m Note}$ : The figure summarizes regression estimates looking at the effects of exposure to BOAN on our outcome variables, standardized to have 0 mean and unitary standard deviation. See the text for further details.

# Alternative Specifications

- Alternative coding choices :
  - Alternative Rules to assign the movie to counties
- WWI :
  - Alternative time frame : before US entry, before US participation in fighting
    - Time-varying war-related controls
- 3 Alternative county coverage
  - Only Counties that Screened BOAN by 1920
  - Balanced panel of counties always covered by newspapers
- 4 Validation of the instrumental variable approach:
  - Alternative movies transposed :TRAFFIC IN SOULS (1913), WHAT HAPPENED TO MARY? (1912)
  - Presence of Theaters
- 6 Falsification exercises :
  - Compare the effect of MDM in counties with/without BON
  - Effect of MDM, before or after BON arrived
- 6 Alternative Specifications:
  - Flexible controls
  - County-specific time trends
  - State-month FEs
  - Word-based regressions
  - Spatial clustering of SE: acreg, state clusters
  - Spatial spillovers: 30km, 40km, 50km

#### Conclusion

- This paper provides evidence on the powerful role of Narratives in the aftermath of a civil conflict
- Looking at the Lost Cause narrative, as disseminated by the movie "The Birth of Nation" (1915)
- Results suggest that reconciliation was fostered by weakening the North/South cleavage while reinforcing the black/white cleavage

Appendix •00000000000

# **Appendix**

#### Literature I

#### Narrative Economics

"The field of economics should be expanded to include serious quantitative study of changing popular narratives" (Shiller 2017)

[Akerlof & Snower (2016), Mukand and Rodrik (2018); Cantoni et al. (2017)]

- Small literature on peace- and nation-building policies
   [Cilliers et al. 2016; Fearon et al. 2015, Depetris-Chauvin and Durante 2020]
- Conflict legacies on social capital

[Cilliers et al. (2016); Blattman and Annan (2011); Bauer et al. (2014); Rohner et al. (2013); Cassar et al. (2013)]

• Hatred narratives, propaganda and mass-media

[Yanagizawa-Drott (2014); Della Vigna et al. (2014); Adena et al. (2015); Voigtlander and Voth (2015); Durante, Pinotti and Tesei (2019); Blouin and Mukand (2019)]

• Parochial altruism and Group Identity Formation

[Henrich and Boyd, 2001; Richerson and Boyd, 2001; Bowles, 2006; Choi and Bowles, 2007]

### Literature II

History

- Literature on reactivation of history (Fouka and Voth 2016; Ochsner and Roesel, 2017)
- Rich literature on the role of memory in US history (Buck 1973, Foster 1988 and Blight 2009)
- Literature on the racist legacy of the movie BOAN (e.g. KKK revival)
  - → Compelling quantitative evidence by Ang (2020): Impact of BOAN on racial violence (lynchings, riots) + LR persistence
  - → Our contribution : Racist content of the movie was instrumentally exploited to foster reconciliation, in a common-enemy type of narrative
  - → Parallel work with Ang (2020): Similarities in data collection, different instrumentation strategy, radically different outcome variables.

## **Newspapers Archives**

### Newspapers.com

- + Best coverage for the period 1910-1920
  - 1070+ counties with at least one digitized newspaper
- Lack of API, slow

### Search algorithm:

- Words/combination of words (AND, OR, NOT)
- → Retrieve info on the **number of pages** containing the query

### Chronicling American (The Library of Congress)

- + Download full text
- Limited coverage (wrt to Newspapers.com)
- OCR to be improved



## Bag of Words Approach : Dictionaries

#### • Divisive Rhetoric :

Armed Conflict, Armed Intervention, Battle Flag, Carpetbaggers, Civil War, Confederacy, Confederate Flag, Confederates, General Lee, Negro Domination, Picket Line, Race Problem, Secede, Secession, Secession Flag, Secessionist, Sectionalism, Slavery, Southerners, Unpatriotic

#### • Patriotic Rhetoric :

American Flag, American people, Americans, Americans together, Liberty and Equality, Liberty and Freedom, National Hymn, National Salute, Our Flag, Patriotic, Patriotism, Reconciliation, Restoration of Peace, Salute Flag, Stars and Stripes, The Star-Spangled Banner, True Patriot, United Country, United States, U.S. flag

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## Bag of Words Approach : Selection

- 1 mln articles from the period 1904-1914 from *Chronicling America*, text cleaning, identification of common bigrams
- 2 Co-occurrence analysis, Pointwise Mutual Information Index
  - Start from a list of seeds
  - → Expand the initial list with co-occurring words (or bigrams)
- on MTurk, ask workers to assign each word to Patriotic, Divisive or N/A category
- Oownload the top scoring words from Newspapers.com, use Top 20 lists as baseline

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FIGURE - Reconciliation - Time Series Evolution



- In blue, date of release of BOAN
- In red, US involvement in WWI



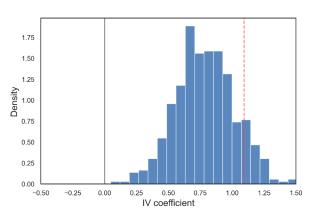
FIGURE - Reconciliation - Average by county



## Bag of Words - Validation Exercise

Random Subsets of topic-specific Keywords (0.5 binomial, 500 draws)

FIGURE - Patriotic and Divisive List- Subsets



## Military Enlistment - Robustness Exercises

### Alternative definitions of outcome variable :

- Log enlistments over population :

$$logList_{c,t} \equiv log \left[ \frac{1 + sailors_{c,t}}{1 + Pop_c} \right]$$
 (4)

- Outcome variable : log(x + 0.01) and log(x + 0.1) and sinh transformations; extensive margin (dummy)
- Alternative Movie: 1 ad; 5 ads.
- Enlistment measured with deaths of infectious disease

### Alternative county coverage :

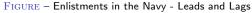
 Counties that have newspaper coverage for at least 25% of months in our sample

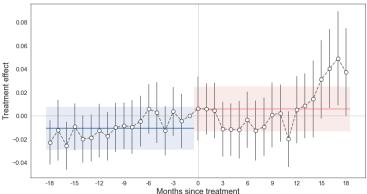
### Alternative Specifications :

- Spatial clustering of SE: acreg, state clusters



## Timing of the effect





NOTE Estimation based on De Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille (2020).



## Enemy-sounding Name Index - Robustness Exercises

- Alternative coding choices :
  - Alternative name-soundness
  - Alternative definitions of former enemies
  - Alternative Movie: 1 ad; 5 ads.
- Alternative county coverage :
  - Counties that have newspaper coverage for at least 25% of months in our sample
- 3 Alternative Specifications :
  - County-year level analysis
  - Accounting for migration flows
    - · FEs of the state of birth of the individual and of the head of her/his family
    - · Excludes families where the head of the family was born in the opposite group
    - Using individuals observed in the 1920 Census
  - Spatial clustering of SE : acreg
- Falsification Exercises :
  - Newborn black babies
  - Older cohorts



## Mediation Analysis Approach

• Black<sub>c</sub> = pre-1910 indicator of AA pop. share (> 33th pctile)

$$\texttt{Alienation}_{ct} = \beta_{\texttt{Ali}} \times \texttt{BOAN}_{ct} + \gamma_{\texttt{Ali}} \times \texttt{BOAN}_{ct} \times \texttt{Black}_{c} + \texttt{FE} + \epsilon_{ct}. \tag{5}$$

- Identifying Assumption : Conditional on alienation, the direct effect of the movie on reconciliation is orthogonal to Black<sub>c</sub>
- The true model is

$$Reconciliation_{ct} = \frac{\beta_d}{\epsilon} \times BOAN_{ct} + \frac{\beta_m}{\epsilon} \times Alienation_{ct} + FE + \epsilon_{ct}.$$

We estimate the empirical model

$$\texttt{Reconciliation}_{ct} = \left(\beta_d + \beta_m \beta_{\texttt{ALI}}\right) \times \texttt{BOAN}_{ct} + \beta_m \gamma_{\texttt{Ali}} \times \texttt{BOAN}_{ct} \times \texttt{Black}_c + \dots$$

 $\Rightarrow$  We can infer  $\beta_d$  and  $\beta_m$  out of the point estimates of the previous model and the estimation of (5)

