Home Front Experience and Women's Political Activism

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Abstract

The nineteenth century saw the first entry of American women into mass political activity. What originated this sudden influx of female political activists? I leverage novel, hand-collected archival data on women's volunteering during the American Civil War to demonstrate a connection between wartime and peacetime political capacity. Towns where women organized volunteer societies in support of the Union war effort were more likely to have women-led political movements to agitate for temperance, a key issue that mobilized women who previously had little political experience. This relationship is robust to adjusting for other measures of pre-war and wartime social and organizational capital, including male enlistment in the Civil War. I argue that wartime volunteer mobilization helped women gain organizing experience that was useful for mass politics, even in a social context that precluded them from the public sphere and did not involve women directly substituting for male roles (as they did during the first and second World Wars).

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1 Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, American women engaged in the first mass movements for political causes that benefited women as a specific political class. What precipitated the entry of American women into mass politics at this particular point in time? I focus on women's experiences during the American Civil War as a potential catalyst of political participation. Using novel, hand-collected archival data, I show that towns that participated in a nationwide program to recruit women volunteers for home production roles to support the Union Army were substantially more likely to hold women-led street protests against alcohol ten years later. I argue that wartime home front roles provided women with the opportunity to gain valuable social capital and practical organizing experience that could be redeployed to political activism.

In contrast to other studies that focus on the effects of female substitution for male wartime roles during the First (Ray 1918; Gay 2021) and Second (Acemoglu, Autor, and Lyle 2004; Fernandez, Fogli, and Olivetti 2004) world wars, or those that focus on the complementarities between men's combat experiences and their political capacity (Jha and Wilkinson 2012; Dippel and Heblich 2021), I focus on a setting in which women achieved political gains while operating in a social context that provided more limited opportunities for women in public life.[1] In the above-cited cases focused on women in the 20th century, the effect of war mobilization acts on participants by encouraging them to undertake traditionally male social roles. Men gain political capacity by participating in combat or domestic political uprisings, and women gain political (and economic) capacity by substituting for absent men in the formal labor force. In contrast, I examine a case where women got organizing experience while engaging in stereotypically *female* social roles during wartime. These volunteer roles performed by women involved the historically female tasks of home production (such as preserving food and sewing uniforms) to support the Union Army. Women who participated did so in the home, not the factory. I find that towns where women participated in these organizations were substantially more likely to hold "Temperance Crusades," street protests against the sale of alcohol, a decade later.

The volunteer organizations I examine were part of a nationwide umbrella organization, the United

[1]Women began substituting for men in the peacetime labor force in greater numbers after contraception became widely available; see Bailey (2006).

States Sanitary Commission (USSC), which served as a centralized hub for coordinating the donations of thousands of local soldiers' aid societies. The membership of these local societies was mostly female. Unusually for the time, the "middle management" of the USSC was also mostly made up of women, and the executive ranks of the organization were mixed-gender. I quantify the degree to which a causal interpretation of the relationship between wartime volunteer organizations and post-war temperance activism is vulnerable to unobserved variable bias and sample selection issues.

2 Historical Background

2.1 American Women's Rights Activism

The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention is typically considered the starting point of organized women's activism in the United States. However, Seneca Falls and subsequent conventions in New York and New England typically attracted no more than a thousand women, most of them educated members of socially elite circles. These women were usually from relatively wealthy families and had the benefit of unusually high education levels (Wellman 2004; McMillen, n.d.). Women's political activism as a mass movement with wide popular participation from non-elites is a distinctly post-Civil War phenomenon.

The postwar women's movements typically focused on two causes of particular interest to women, the anti-alcohol temperance movement and political suffrage for women, as well the less-gendered cause of civil rights and racial equality. These movements frequently overlapped and sometimes conflicted with one another; many prominent activists were involved in more than one of these three causes. Organizations were sometimes obligated to negotiate the competing preferences of members, and some women's organizations splintered over the question of whether to racially integrate. On the other hand, the temperance movement played an important role as an "on-ramp" to activism for more conservative women who were not necessarily willing to take the radical step of supporting suffrage. In its 19th-century incarnation, political mobilization against the sale of alcohol focused on the problem of alcoholism among men and its impacts on their wives and families, including domestic violence, lost earnings, and familial neglect.

The temperance movement initially took center stage. The Anti-alcohol movement predated the Civil War, but it gathered steam in the 1870s, beginning with a series of "Temperance Crusades" in 1873 and 1874 – spontaneous women-led demonstrations, sometimes lasting for days, against the sale of alcohol across 910 American towns (Blocker 1985). These marches combined radical tactics – street protests, the physical occupation of saloons, and the destruction of liquor stocks – with socially respectable marketing. Crusaders drew heavily on religious imagery and actively recruited clergy to their cause. Public marketing of the movement focused on alcohol's damaging effects on families and on the obligation of women to serve as guardians of the family. The first Crusade was organized in Hillsboro, Ohio, by fifty-seven-year-old Eliza Daniel ("Mother") Stewart, who wrote a memoir of her activist career in which she discussed alcohol's effects on women: "wretchedness, woe, misery, privation, neglect, want, pinching poverty, and disgrace for her and her children" (Stewart 1890).

The marches had some short-run successes, pressuring some local merchants to shut down sale of alcohol, but little long-run effect on the actual supply of alcohol in American towns (Blocker 1985). Their greater legacy was in the organizations that emerged from the protest movement. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded by Crusade participants in December 1873, became the leading American temperance organization and amassed considerable political influence. Its leader, Frances Willard, explicitly adhered to a political plan she called the "Do Everything Strategy," encouraging WCTU members to engage in other social movements, particularly suffrage, leading to considerable spillovers.

The goals and support base of the American temperance movement changed after Willard's unexpected death in 1898. Under 19th-century female leadership, the early temperance movement focused on campaigns of "moral suasion" to socially discourage the consumption and sale of alcohol rather than on legislative prohibition. (In contrast, Clemens 1997 recounts how women navigated institutional and party systems in the late 19th and early 20th centuries United States to achieve their political goals.) The leading 20th-century anti-alcohol organization, the Anti-Saloon League, had male leadership and pursued legislative approaches to banning alcohol, culminating in the successful Prohibition Movement. Unlike its 19th-century women-led predecessors, the Anti-Saloon League sought conservative, nationalist allies, particularly among anti-immigration nativists

(Okrent 2010). By this point, however, the attention of women activists was focused on obtaining the right to vote.

2.2 Women's Roles In the American Civil War

At the start of the American Civil War, the Union Army faced the challenge of organizing, staffing, and supplying medical facilities to cope with large numbers of casualties of battles and disease. In June 1861, a group of philanthropists and civic leaders founded the United States Sanitary Commission, a civilian organization that partnered with the U.S. Army's medical corps to provide money, supplies, and labor to army hospitals. Inspired by innovations in nursing and military medical science pioneered by the British during the Crimean War a few years earlier, the Sanitary Commission had a dual mission to recruit and train nurses for hospitals (both field and permanent) and to provide a centralized point of contact for local "soldiers' aid societies" across the Union. These aid societies organized fundraising campaigns (including large, multi-day "Sanitary Fairs" in major cities) and contributed supplies from the home front, such as clothing and preserved food, directly to the war effort. The very top leadership (the "Commission" leadership) was mostly male, with the exception of the Superintendent of Army Nurses, Dorothea Dix, who achieved national prominence. The leadership of twelve subsidiary branches – roles with considerable influence over strategic operations – was female, as were many of the agents who interfaced between branches and localities, local club leadership, and the bulk of town-level volunteers (Giesberg 2006).

The female management of the USSC saw outreach to local women across the Union as crucial to their mission. To boost contributions from town-level volunteer organization, they networked in person and via correspondence with interested female volunteers, many of whom had never previously encountered women in positions of public authority. Giesberg (2006), a social history of the USSC, writes that "Rural women invested branch women with their confidence and believed them to be agents of the United States government, and in return, branch women worked hard and were committed to sustaining and maintaining the autonomy of women's wartime relief work" (94). The USSC's female leadership also engaged with male policymakers, supervisors, and colleagues on a co-equal level, giving both men and women the "opportunity to experiment with various divisions of responsibility and authority outside the domestic setting" (88).

Giesberg (2006) argues that by forming a national network of women and teaching them organizational skills, the activities of the USSC introduced American women to mass politics, laying the groundwork for women's activism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A survey of the biographies of leadership of the Temperance Crusades or the WCTU reveals that many of the women at the helms of these movements participated in volunteer leadership roles during the Civil War. The WCTU's first president, Annie Turner Wittenmyer, spent the war as a "Sanitary Agent" coordinating aid societies in her home state of Iowa. Mary Livermore, who served as both a wartime nurse and an administrator for the Chicago branch of the USSC, became a prominent temperance and suffrage activist after the war. Eliza Daniel Stewart, the leader of the first Temperance Crusade in Hillsboro, Ohio, spent the war "busily engaged in procuring and sending supplies to the sick and wounded" (Daniels 1878, 278). Lesser-known women also got organizing experience during the war that served them well in the temperance and suffrage movements. The president of the Akron Soldiers Aid Society, Adeline Myers Coburn, "shifted her organizational and leadership skills to the temperance crusade" after the war (Endres 2006, 36).

Both the opportunities for female participation during the Civil War and the opportunities for post-war activism were deliberately couched in the cultural ideals of the nineteenth century. In sharp contrast to the "Rosie the Riveter" campaigns that encouraged women to join the war effort during the Second World War by emphasizing physical capabilities and qualifications to step into male roles, the USSC emphasized the feminine, motherly qualities of its associates and the social appropriateness of the volunteering opportunities it provided.

3 Theory

Przeworski (2009) finds that in contrast to episodes where rights such as suffrage were extended along lines of class or race, extensions of rights to women are typically better explained by strategic partisan considerations than by between-group solidarity, but it accepts the historical cases of the United States and Britain as exceptions where "women's protagonism truly mattered." My paper sheds light on the origins of this protagonism. A link between women's wartime social organizations and postwar activism could rest on several different potential mechanisms, none of which are mutually exclusive. In this section, I describe and explore each in turn.

3.1 Enclave theory

"Enclave theory" describes a mechanism wherein members of a socially or structurally disadvantaged group can more effectively develop skills that contradict assumptions or overcome barriers in an enclave of their own type. For instance, research demonstrates that while women and girls are less likely to be competitive in mixed-gender environments (Gneezy, Niederle, and Rustichini 2003) or environments governed by norms of male domination (Gneezy, Leonard, and List 2009), they are more likely to enter deliberative debate when men are not present (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2018) or in which men are in the minority (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012). Skills developed in a gender enclave can affect the behavior of women and girls once they return to a mixed-gender setting. Booth and Nolen (2012) finds that girls who attend single-sex schools are more competitive in a laboratory setting than girls who attend co-educational schools, even when assigned to co-educational experimental groups. Hampole, Truffa, and Wong (2021) finds that women MBA students randomly assigned to a class section with more women students were more likely to hold senior management jobs 15 years post-graduation.

Gender roles in the nineteenth century were heavily proscribed. Gneezy, Leonard, and List (2009) suggests that this is precisely the kind of setting in which a gendered enclave would be most useful for helping women develop new skills. The wartime need for soldiers mobilized over two million men across the course of the war, extracting them from their homes and communities, but this mobilization was concentrated among young men of fighting age - and unlike in industrialized 20th century wars, there was no specific mobilization of women to replace them in factory production roles. Thus, wartime mobilization by itself would have been unlikely to have produced a significant enclave effect.

The explicit goal of the USSC was to mobilize *women* for volunteer roles. Burns, Scholzman, and Verba (2001) the origins of women's political participation in "private roots" based in the community. By providing guidance on how to set up local organizations and, in some case, subsidizing the costs of volunteering (for instance, by defraying the costs of shipping the collected supplies to central collection depots), the USSC encouraged the formation of gender enclaves. The enclave theory suggests that the women who participated learned useful skills that were applicable to both volunteering and political organizing that could best be obtained in a single-sex setting. Theoretically,

this explanation echoes the work of Carpenter and Moore (2014), which examines how antislavery canvassing a functioned as a training ground for postwar women's rights organization. Skocpol, Liazos, and Ganz (2006) highlights the role of African-American fraternal clubs and societies as a different kind of enclave that proved useful in the fight for civil rights by "prepar[ing] citizens for wider participation by teaching organizational and leadership skills to millions of Americans" [5].

A variation on this theory is that the main role of the enclaves was *selection* instead of or in addition to *training.* In this version of the theory, the USSC helped women who were motivated to take part in social causes find one another and form social networks that could be redeployed to activism after the war. To put it another way, a pure selection effect gives interested women new social networks they can leverage for political activism, while a pure training effect gives women new skills that can be turned to political purposes. Neither are mutually exclusive, however, and without fine-grained data on the social and political trajectories of women who took part in wartime volunteering - data that cannot realistically be obtained in this historical setting - it is difficult to disentangle the selection and training components. Thus, I will use "enclave theory" or the "enclave effect" to refer to the development of both social and human capital.

3.2 Leadership training

Atypically for the nineteenth century, the USSC gave leadership roles to women at the national and regional level. The USSC also provided thousands more women with hands-on organizational experience within their local communities. Although my data shows that some men, particularly members of the clergy, headed local organizations, the vast majority of local club leadership was female. An alternate link between the USSC and post-war political activism runs through women who not only interacted with other women in an enclave but received leadership experience. A substantial body of literature demonstrates that female political leadership has outsized effects on women relative to men. For instance, female cabinet members in the UK House of Commons are more likely to boost the debate contributions of other female MPs (Blumenau 2021), and the election of a female mayor boosts support for other female candidates in lower municipal races in Germany (Baskaran and Hessami 2018). Other settings outside of gender provide supportive evidence that leadership matters in inspiring political participation. Dippel and Heblich (2021)

demonstrates that German immigrants who participated in unsuccessful German revolutions of the late 1840s were effective recruiters for the Union Army during the American Civil War. A theory that focuses on leadership suggests a similar role for particular women who did not have the chance to gain the necessary experience to be effective until they obtained national, regional, or local leadership rules via the USSC.

The national USSC leadership consisted of only a small handful of women. The two most prominent, Dorothea Dix and Louisa Lee Schuyler, were active after the war, but both focused on improving healthcare access rather than on temperance, suffrage, or civil rights. The middle leadership, on the other hand - women in charge of branches of the USSC - produced some famous women activists, such as Mary Livermore, who held prominent leadership roles in the USSC's Northwestern Branch and who spent her post-war years on temperance and suffrage activism. The USSC records that form the core of the analysis for this paper often include the names of club presidents and other prominent members. Most of this leadership was female; a minority was male. This provides the most obvious route to examine the role of leadership roles in promoting women's activism, an analysis I perform in Section **??**.

3.3 Legitimization of women as a political class

A third avenue by which women's wartime experiences could translate into increased political capital is by boosting their legitimacy as a political force, either in the eyes of the greater (male) public or in the eyes of women themselves. The USSC provided an avenue for women to "serve the nation" during wartime. Women may have felt emboldened to organize and lobby for women's issues on the basis of their contributions and sacrifices. The imagery of the Temperance Crusades and other women's movements was frequently militaristic in tone, underscoring the parallel experiences of men and women during the war. For example, a speech by Women's Christian Temperance Union president Frances Willard addressed the "Beloved Comrades of the White Ribbon Army" with the reminder that "In about seventy days from now, twenty years will have elapsed since the call of battle sounded its bugle note among the homes and hearts of Hillsboro, Ohio" (Willard 1895).

The legitimization theory is reminiscent of Skocpol (1995), which examines the origins of American welfare systems in programs to benefit two groups: Civil War veterans and their families and, later,

needy mothers and children. The former group drew on their considerable cultural clout in the postbellum United States to obtain pensions and disability compensation. The latter laid claim to resources on the basis of "values traditionally associated with the feminine domestic sphere" that enabled even poor women to access the social legitimacy afforded to women as a deserving social class (465). The women who transitioned from wartime volunteering to postwar activism were the female counterparts of the soldiers and the predecessors of 20th-century reformist women who spearheaded campaigns for mothers' pensions, and they potentially pioneered the cultural tactics that paved the way for these other groups to make political gains.

4 Data

4.1 Home front volunteering

My primary hypothesis is that the American Civil War provided women with opportunities to gain leadership and organizational experience on the home front that translated into political effectiveness after the war. To measure their participation in these opportunities, I draw on the records of the USSC, housed in the New York Metropolitan Archive. As a measure of town-level participation in USSC activities, I transcribe a list of towns that had a soldiers' aid society that coordinated with the USSC.[2] This list was created during a retrospective accounting of the Commission's activities undertaken after the war. Each entry lists the name, county, and state of the participating town as well as, for a large portion of the sample, one or more names of the groups' leadership.

The USSC was organized into twelve different branches, some of which spanned multiple states. The New York Metropolitan Archives contains retrospective records for the Albany, Buffalo, California, Cleveland, Central, Hartford, Michigan, New England, New Jersey, Northwestern, Rochester, and Wisconsin branches. Records for the Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Kentucky, and New Albany (Ohio) branches are absent. I reconstruct a list of Cincinnati branches are constructed using an alternate dataset, the 1863 shipments received from towns that were members of this branch. The New Albany branch appears to have been small; thus, Ohio is likely mostly covered by data from the

[2]The New York Public Library Humanities and Social Sciences Library Manuscripts and Archives Division, United States Sanitary Commission Records 1861-1878, MssCol 3101, Box 979. "Catalogue of the aid societies tributary to the U.S. Sanitary Commission, alphabetically arranged."

Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus branches.

The archive contains no coverage of the Western Sanitary Commission, a similar but separate organization that operated only in Western states, or any independent societies unaffiliated with the USSC. Accordingly, I restrict the sample to states for which the USSC data is sufficiently comprehensive: Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin.[3]

Because the USSC data was based on self-identified locations of societies, it is non-standardized in terms of geographic location, and societies' locations do not always cleanly map to locations in the 1860 US Census, to which I restrict my sample in order to obtain a consistent slate of control variables. For instance, many societies were located in communities too small to be captured as towns in the Census, or identified themselves with neighborhoods of larger cities. Some clubs were affiliated simultaneously with more than one branch, while others could potentially be mapped to more than one potential Census entry in cases where multiple locations within a state share a name and no county information is offered in the USSC dataset.[4] To handle situations in which the correct location of societies is ambiguous, I employ various robustness checks. For the main results in Section 5.1, I randomly assign the location of a society with an ambiguous location to a town that is a potential candidate. In the robustness check in Appendix C, I employ several other approaches, including probabilistic matching (creating a continuous variable that captures the probability that a town has a society), counting all potential matches as containing a society, and dropping all ambiguous place names from the sample.

On the other hand, some towns have multiple organizations affiliated with the USSC representing different neighborhoods or social groups (for instance, one for adult women and another for youths). However, I dichotomize a town's participation in the USSC (or, in the case of ambiguous matches, create a probabilistic variable) rather than measuring "societies per capita" variable due to inconsistencies across branch-level recordkeeping systems in whether and how multiple societies are recorded. Appendix A gives further details on the construction of the dataset.

[3] I omit California because, as the only Western state with USSC affiliates, it was fundamentally different politically and, uniquely, the bulk of its soldiers' aid societies were run by men. Indiana is omitted because aid activities were mostly run by the state-level Indiana Sanitary Commission (Thornbrough 1965). Aid society data is available for New Hampshire, but no known temperance marches occurred in that state.

[4] For instance, there are twenty-four communities with the name "Liberty" in Ohio captured in the 1860 Census.

The top panel of Figure 1 shows the locations of towns that did vs. did not have a soldiers' aid society affiliated with the USSC in states for which we have complete USSC data, and Figure 2 shows a balance table of pre-war demographic, economic, socio-political variables described in Section 4.3. In all, the sample contains 7862 towns that appear in the 1860 Census. Of these 2,470 are potentially matched to a town with a soldiers' aid society. Over ninety percent gap between these 6,404 entries and the 2,470 potential matches comes from societies in states outside the sample; the remainder (less than ten percent) is due to societies that could not be matched to any Census town (because these towns were too small to be captured by the Census, or are counted as subdivisions of larger cities).[5]

4.2 Women's postwar political activism

As the main outcome of interest, I use town-level data from Blocker (1985) on Temperance Crusades in 1873. To my knowledge, this data has been used in only one other quantitative study, García-Jimeno, Iglesias, and Yildirim (2021), which focuses on communication networks as proximate reasons for Crusades. The focus of this paper, on the other hand, is on the ultimate social mechanisms that enabled women to organize.

In total, 910 towns across the country held Crusades, 692 of which are located in states in the sample. Of these, 465 can be matched to a town that appears in the 1860 Census; the remainder are towns that were not yet incorporated by 1860 but were known population centers by the 1870s, and I omit these from the sample. The bottom panel of Figure 1 shows the locations of towns that did vs. did not have Temperance Crusades for the states for in the convenience sample drawn from states for which there is also complete aid society data.

4.3 Demographic, social, and economic variables

I use town- and county-level demographic, social, and economic covariates drawn from the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Censuses to adjust for pre-war town characteristics. The "baseline" controls are state fixed effects, log 1860 population, and linear and quadratic controls for latitude and longitude.

[5]Giesberg (2006) gives a total of 7,000 soldiers' aid societies. My hand-transcribed list from the USSC archive consists of 6,404 entries, a total that is reasonably comparable; the gap probably results from societies that I judge to be duplicates of the same location but which Giesberg (2006) counts separately. For further details, see Appendix A.

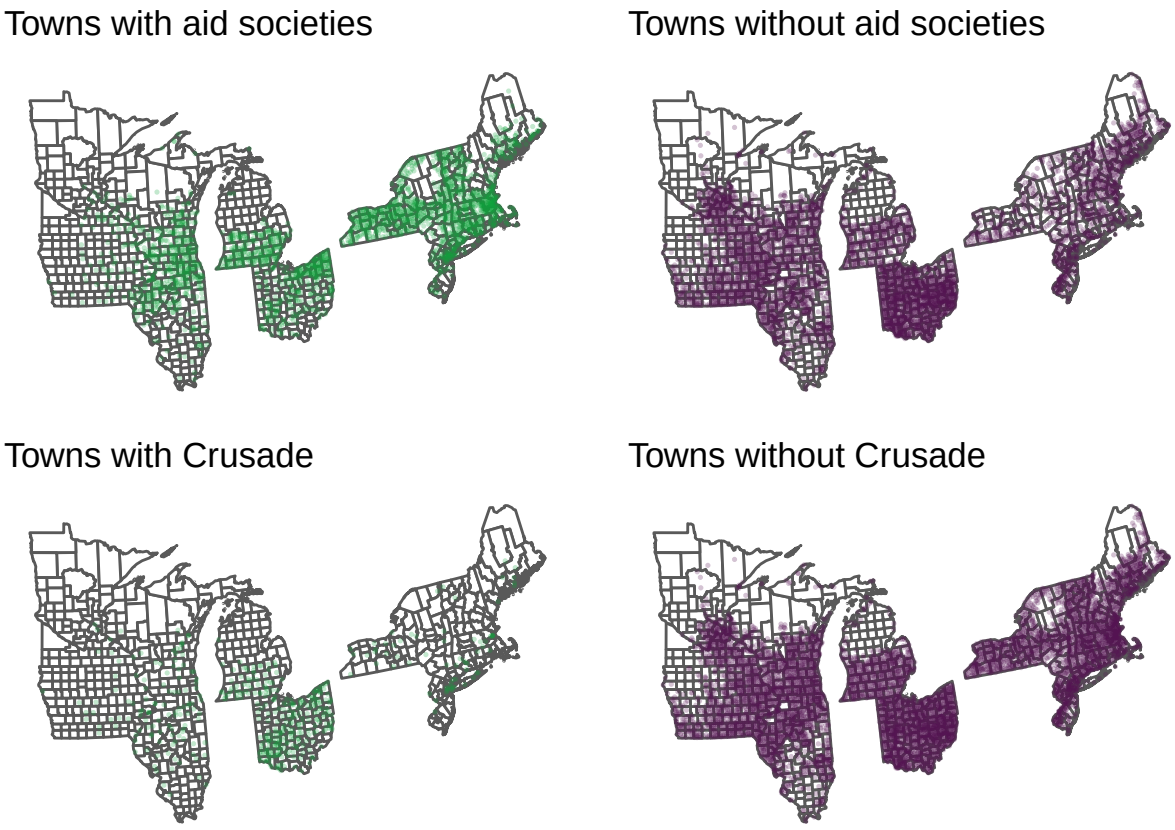

Figure 1: Top panel: Towns that did vs. did not have a local soldiers' aid society affiliated with the USSC (uncertain cases are counted as having a society; see text for details on treatment of these locations in analysis). Bottom panel: Towns that did vs. did not hold temperance crusades in 1873-1874 (Blocker 1985). County boundaries are from 1870.

Black, foreign-born, and German population shares (due to the association of German immigrants with beer halls, a potential target of temperance activists) are drawn from the 1860 Census. For economic controls, I include town-level distance from each town to the nearest railroad (in 1860, based on railroad shapefiles from Atack 2016) and county-level per-capita agricultural output value in 1860; manufacturing jobs per capita in 1860; and 1860 illiteracy rates. To capture the political leanings of a town, I include 1860 town-level Republican vote share.

Because a town's probability of having an aid society, or holding a Temperance Crusade, may be affected by general levels of social interconnectedness and pro-sociality, I endeavor to adjust for local levels of social capital, political engagement, and organizational capacity before and at the beginning of the war. I use the number of church "sittings" (seats) per capita in 1860, observed at the county level, and town-level Civil War enlistment from Dippel and Heblich (2021). Male wartime enlistment in the Union Army was almost entirely on a volunteer basis; thus, enlistment data captures town-level variation in civic volunteerism outside of women's political causes and volunteer opportunities.

I use two alternate sources of evidence about political capital to control for local pre-conditions that predate wartime volunteer clubs. Carpenter and Moore (2014) gives data on the number of petition signatures gathered by female abolitionist campaigners before the war geolocated to the county of signers. I use this as a measure of the relative political efficacy of women at the county level before the USSC societies were established.[6] Data from Blackhawk et al. (2021) gives information on individual petitions submitted by citizens and interest groups to Congress in the nineteenth century. Each petition is associated with its date of submission, the geographic location of origin (town, county, or congressional district), and substantive demands. Some issues mentioned in petitions to Congress are political in nature (for instance, petitions to legislate the closure of businesses on Sunday for religious reasons, or change the age of consent for marriage), while others draw attention to more prosaic requests (for instance, the approval of an individual's veteran pension). I link petitions to towns (as described in Appendix D) and construct measures of general and political protests per capita before the war (as additional controls for a town's level

[6]Obviously, the abolitionist cause would only have been championed by women with abolitionist political sentiments; thus, this cannot be construed as capturing women's *general* political capital, although many women participated in both civil rights causes and temperance or suffrage.

of political engagement).

Figure 2 shows the coefficients from individual linear regressions of the main predictive variable of interest, the presence of a soldiers' aid society, on each mean-standardized town-level pre-war variable with and without adjusting for baseline geographic variables (linear and quadratic terms for latitude and longitude and state fixed effects). Towns with soldiers' aid societies tend to be more populous, closer to railroads, more industrial (as measured by manufacturing jobs per capita), and more literate, with more church sittings per capita. They are more likely to vote Republican in the 1860 election, have levels of higher pre-war abolition activism among women, and have higher war enlistment. Appendix Tables A1 and A2 give summary statistics for town-level and county-level covariates respectively.

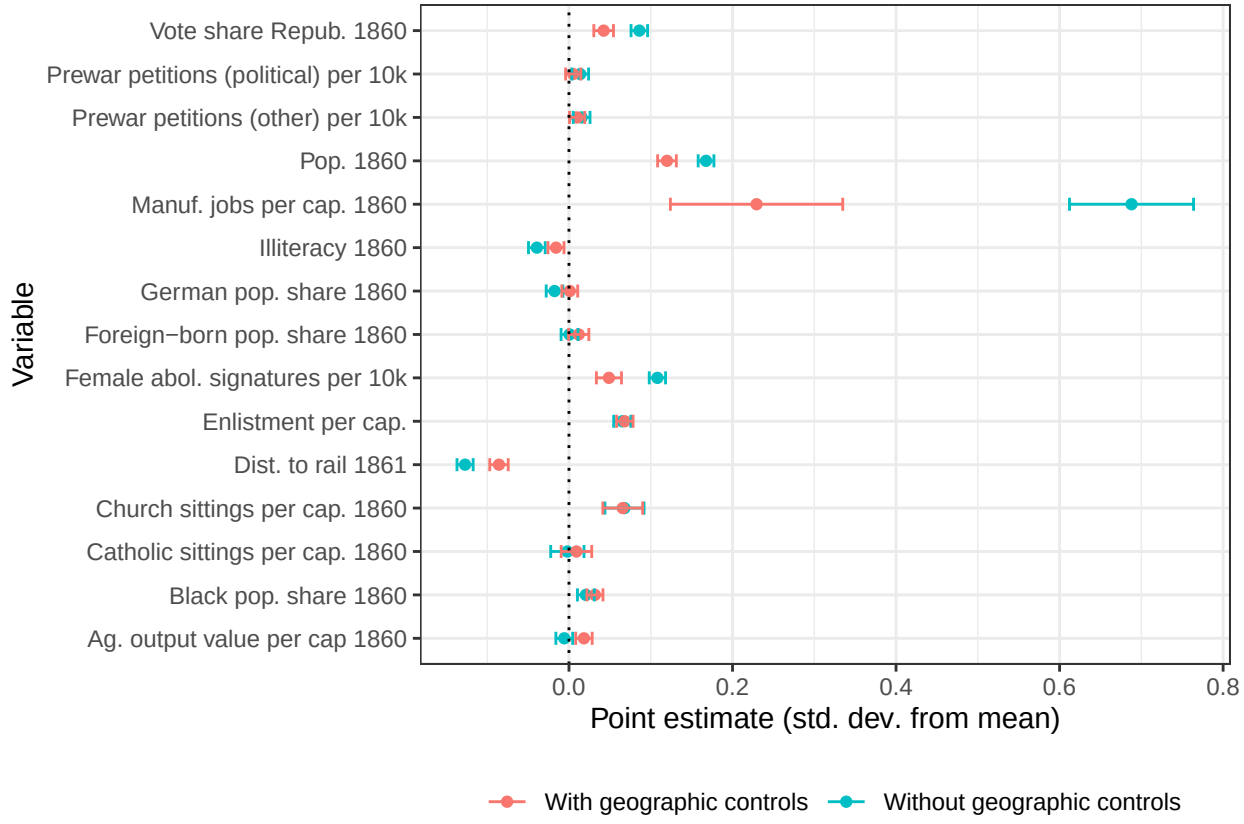

Figure 2: Post-match balance table comparing demographic, socio-economic, and political variables in towns that had a soldiers' aid society versus those that did not, with and without adjusting for state fixed effects and linear+quadratic latitude and longitude. Variables available only at county level are assigned to all towns within those counties. All variables are mean-standardized for easier comparisons.

5 Analysis

5.1 Main Results

The difference in the probability of holding a Crusade conditional on having vs. not having had a wartime aid society is stark. Of towns that did not have an aid society, 2.9% had a Temperance Crusade. Of towns that did have an aid society, 12.4% held a Crusade. Table 1 adjusts this baseline difference for pre-war covariates using variations on the following OLS regression:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta society_i + \mathbf{X}\gamma + \epsilon_\mathbf{i} \tag{1}$$

where Y_i is a variable capturing whether town i held a Temperance Crusade (either 0 or 1); α is an intercept term; $society_i$ is a variable representing whether town i had a soldiers' aid society during the Civil War; and γ is a vector of coefficients for control variables discussed in Section 4.3. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

Even after introducing a number of controls, towns with USSC-affiliated soldiers' aid society had a strikingly higher likelihood of hosting a Temperance Crusade. The point estimate remains statistically significant and fluxuates little after adjusting for geographic variables, economic and political characteristics, and measures of pre-war social capital (Columns 2-4). Appendix Table A3 shows other variations on the main specification: adjusting for population in the regression weights; dropping the smallest and largest cities; and using Conley standard errors rather than county-level clustering to account for spatial variation. Results are qualitatively similar across all variations.

One possible concern about the main results presented in Section 5.1 is that, despite the inclusion of covariates to adjust for observable differences between locations with and without societies, results may biased due to underlying (observable) differences between towns that did vs. did not have a USSC-affiliated aid society. To check and control for this bias, I use propensity score matching to build a more comparable sample using the *covariate balancing propensity score* method suggested by Imai and Ratkovic (2014). First, I estimate a logistic regression

Table 1: Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

	Dependent variable:			
	crusade			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
USSC society	0.094***	0.103***	0.090***	0.080***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Log pop. 1860		0.051***	0.037***	0.043***
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Dist. to rail 1861			−0.046***	−0.042***
			(0.005)	(0.005)
Illiteracy 1860			−0.012***	−0.011***
			(0.002)	(0.002)
Repub. vote share 1860			0.005	0.005
			(0.004)	(0.004)
Black pop. share 1860			0.034***	0.031***
			(0.006)	(0.006)
Foreign-born pop. share 1860			−0.002	−0.004
			(0.004)	(0.005)
German pop. share 1860			0.001	0.003
			(0.003)	(0.003)
Catholic sittings per cap. 1860				0.010**
				(0.005)
Ag. output per cap. 1860			0.004	−0.002
			(0.003)	(0.009)
Manuf. jobs. per cap. 1860			−0.018	−0.021
			(0.034)	(0.038)
Enlistment per cap.				0.036***
				(0.005)
Total church sittings per cap. 1860				−0.026
				(0.016)
Female abol. pet.				−0.005
				(0.003)
General Congress. pet.				0.006*
				(0.003)
Political Congress. pet.				0.007
				(0.006)
Geo. controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,862	7,862	7,787	7,429
R^2	0.035	0.110	0.151	0.173
Adjusted R^2	0.034	0.108	0.148	0.169
Residual Std. Error	0.232	0.223	0.219	0.217
F Statistic	280.893***	51.113***	51.083***	46.914***
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

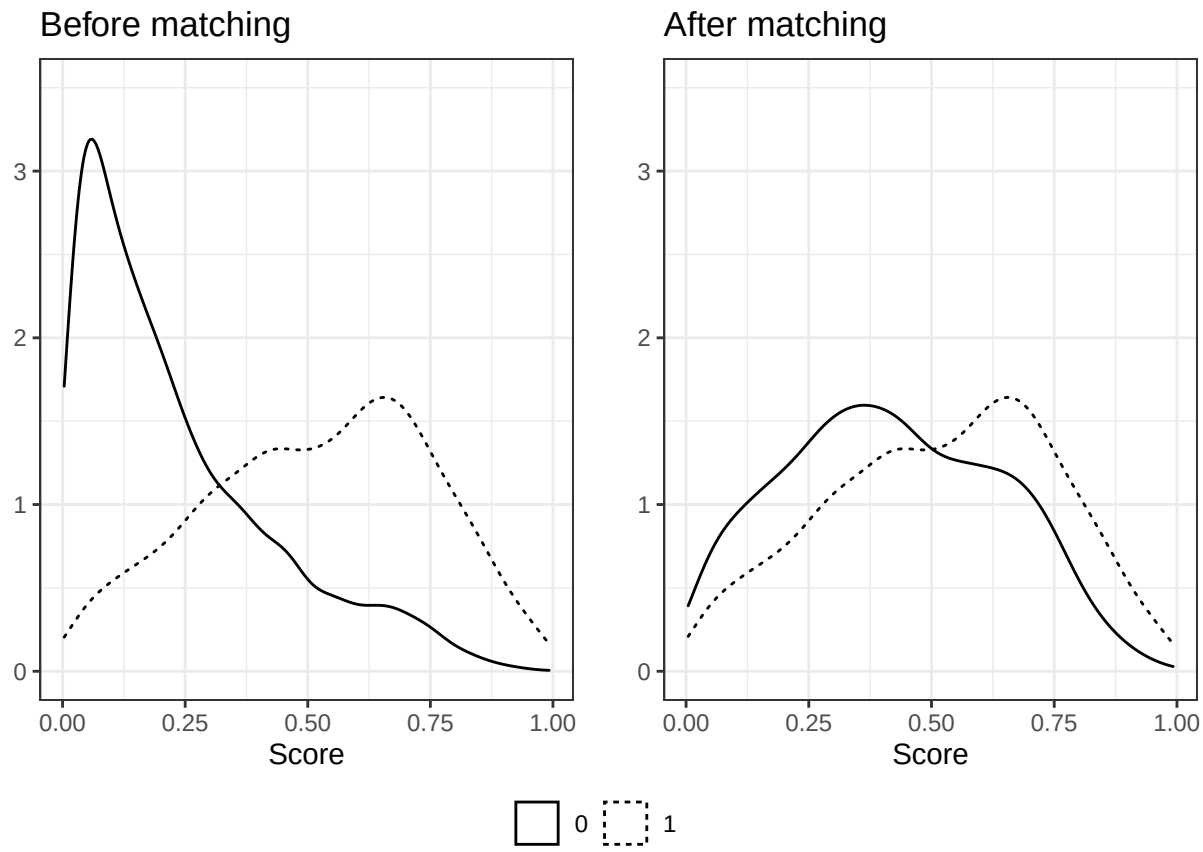

Figure 3: Distribution of propensity scores for unmatched (left) and matched (right) samples. The solid (dotted) lines denote propensity scores of towns without (with) an aid society.

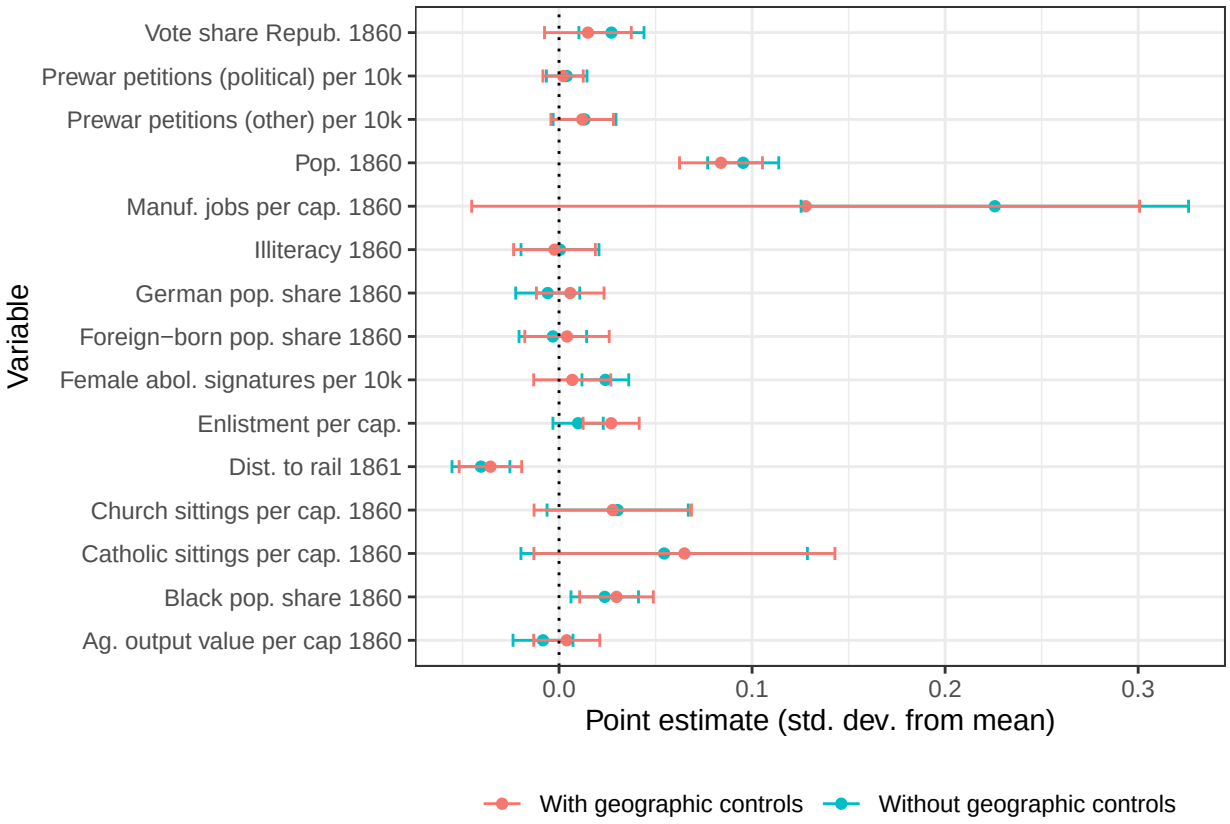

Figure 4: Balance table comparing demographic, socio-economic, and political variables in towns that had a soldiers' aid society versus those that did not, with and without adjusting for state fixed effects and linear+quadratic latitude and longitude. Variables available only at county level are assigned to all towns within those counties. All variables are mean-standardized for easier comparisons.

Table 2: This table replicates Table 1 using a sample matched on propensity scores. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

	Dependent variable:			
	crusade			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
USSC society	0.085***	0.077***	0.073***	0.069***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Log pop. 1860		0.120***	0.088***	0.088***
		(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Dist. to rail 1861			−0.047***	−0.041***
			(0.007)	(0.007)
Illiteracy 1860			−0.018***	−0.016***
			(0.006)	(0.006)
Repub. vote share 1860			−0.001	−0.001
			(0.007)	(0.007)
Black pop. share 1860			0.040***	0.037***
			(0.010)	(0.009)
Foreign-born pop. share 1860			−0.003	−0.001
			(0.008)	(0.009)
German pop. share 1860			0.002	0.005
			(0.005)	(0.005)
Catholic sittings per cap. 1860				0.006
				(0.030)
Ag. output per cap. 1860			0.003	−0.004
			(0.005)	(0.012)
Manuf. jobs. per cap. 1860			−0.063	−0.093*
			(0.053)	(0.052)
Enlistment per cap.				0.047***
				(0.007)
Total church sittings per cap. 1860				−0.040*
				(0.022)
Female abol. pet.				−0.003
				(0.004)
General Congress. pet.				0.009*
				(0.005)
Political Congress. pet.				0.006
				(0.005)
Geo. controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,695	3,695	3,695	3,695
R^2	0.019	0.186	0.218	0.245
Adjusted R^2	0.019	0.182	0.212	0.238
Residual Std. Error	0.291	0.266	0.261	0.256
F Statistic	71.630***	44.114***	37.863***	35.977***
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

$$Pr(society_i = 1|X_i) = \frac{exp(X_i^T)\beta}{1 + exp(X_i^T)\beta} \tag{2}$$

where X_i is a matrix of variables used to estimate the fourth column of the main results in Table 1 and β a vector of the associated coefficients. Maximizing the fit of Equation 2 yields propensity score predictors for each observation. I then use nearest-neighbor matching to construct a dataset matched on the calculated propensity scores. The matched dataset consists of 2,424 (*1,271*) observations with (*without*) an aid society.[7] Figure 3 shows the propensity score distribution of the unmatched vs. matched datasets. Figure 4 replicates Figure 2 with the matched sample, demonstrating the improved balance.

Table 2 shows the results of Equation 1 using the matched sample. The coefficients are only slightly smaller than those in Table 1, demonstrating the robustness of the results to the lack of balance in the dataset used in Section 5.1.

5.2 Sensitivity Analysis

To shed light on causal pathways between the main explanatory and outcome variables, I present a sensitivity analysis based on Cinelli and Hazlett (2020). The purpose of such an analysis is to demonstrate how large an effect from a hypothetical omitted variable would be necessary to explain all of the effect attributed to the explanatory variable of interest (in this case, the presence of USSC organizations). Suppose that there is some unobservable covariate U_i that is correlated both with the presence of an aid society and with the presence of a Temperance Crusade. The approach suggested by Cinelli and Hazlett (2020) is to measure how strong the relationships between U_i and the USSC variable, and U_i and the Crusade outcome, would have to be to completely explain the effect attributed to the presence of an aid society in the regressions actually run in Table 1.

Formally, following Cinelli and Hazlett (2020), I define the *partial* R^2 *of the unobserved confounding variable with the outcome* as

[7] For simplicity of interpretation, and because results varied minimally between the main results and the appropriate robustness check, I assign aid societies at random to plausible matches when ambiguous.

$$R^2_{Y_i \sim U_i | society_i, \boldsymbol{X}} = \frac{R^2_{Y_i \sim society_i + \boldsymbol{X} + U_i} - R^2_{Y_i \ society_i + \boldsymbol{X}}}{1 - R^2_{Y_i \sim society + \boldsymbol{X}}} \tag{3}$$

and the *partial* R^2 *of the unobserved confounding variable with the treatment* as

$$R^2_{society_i \sim U_i | \boldsymbol{X}} = \frac{R^2_{society_i \sim \boldsymbol{X} + U_i} - R^2_{society_i \ \boldsymbol{X}}}{1 - R^2_{society_i \sim \boldsymbol{X}}} \tag{4}$$

where Y_i and $society_i$ are defined as in Section 4 and $\boldsymbol{X}$ is a matrix of control variables. The intuition behind the sensitivity analysis is to measure how $\hat{\beta}$, the coefficient on $society_i$, would change in relation to a range of hypothetical non-zero values for $R^2_{Y_i \sim U_i | society_i, \boldsymbol{X}}$ and $R^2_{society_i \sim U_i | \boldsymbol{X}}$.

The curves on the graph shown in Figure 5 shows the change in $\hat{\beta}$, the coefficient on $society_i$, that would result from varying the partial R^2 of the unobserved confounder with the treatment $society_i$ under different assumed values for the partial R^2 of the unobserved confounder with the outcome $crusade_i$ (represented by different curves for values of 1, 0.5, 0.25, and 0.1).[8] Red markers on the x-axis benchmark the hypothetical sensitivity to an unobserved variable against one, two, and three times the strength of the relationship between the treatment ($society_i$) and the wartime enlistment variable (measured in mean-standardized per-capita enlistment, which I denote $enlistment_i$). This variable was chosen as the benchmark because it captures a town's pre-existing social capital and pro-social volunteerism in 1860, that is, it likely provides an imperfect measure of the unobservable that is the greatest threat to identification.

If one assumes that the partial R^2 with respect to the outcome is 1 - that is, that adding the hypothetical unobservable omitted variable explains all previously unexplained variation in the outcome - the relationship between such a variable and $society_i$ would need to be about one-and-a-half times as strong as the relationship between $enlistment_i$ and $society_i$. The explanatory power of such a hypothetical variable with respect to the outcome, however, is likely unrealistic. Assuming that U_i can explain half the unexplained variation ($R^2_{Y_I \sim U_i | society_i, \boldsymbol{X}} = 0.5$), the partial R^2 with respect to $society_i$ would need to be just shy of 0.05 (or about three times the strength of $enlistment_i$) to reduce β to 0. Assuming a weaker relationship between U_i and $crusade_i$ requires

[8] The methodologies from Cinelli and Hazlett (2020) can be implemented and visualized using the accompanying R package `sensemakr` (Cinelli, Ferwerda, and Hazlett 2020).

that U_i have a relationship with $society_i$ that is many times stronger than that of wartime enlistment to eliminate the positive coefficient β.

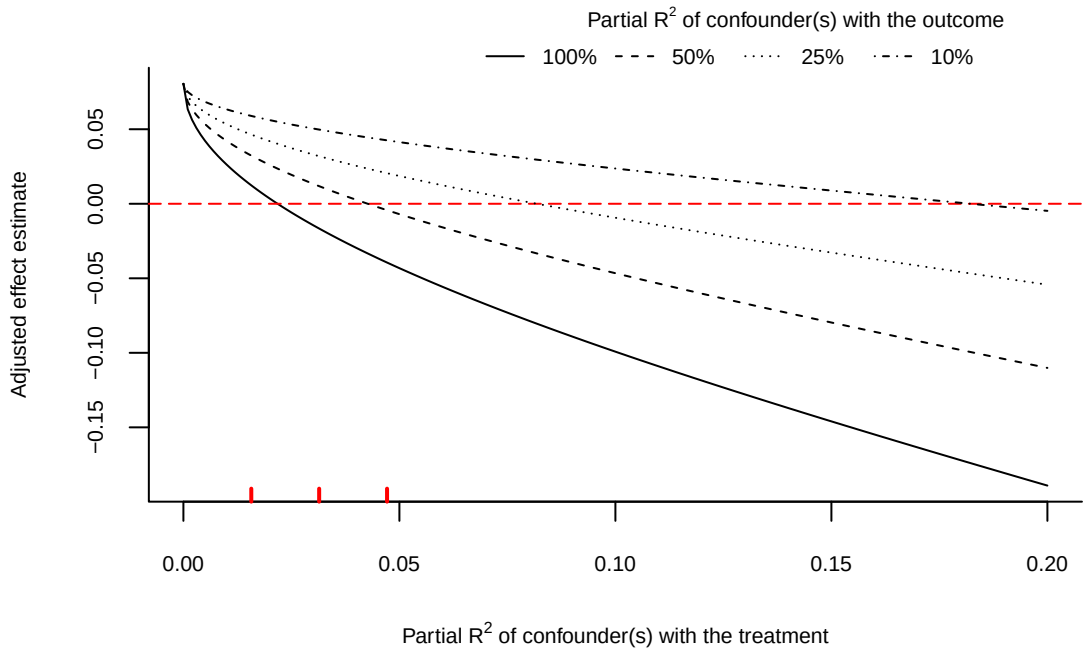

Figure 5: This plot shows the sensitivity of the main result to potential unobservable omitted variable bias. An unobservable variable's relationship with the outcome would need to be about 1.5 times as strong as that of wartime enlistment per capita (measured in standard deviations from the mean) to reduce the coefficient on β to 0 if that unobservable variable explained all remaining variance in the outcome.

6 Conclusions

In this paper, I examine the origins of American women's entry into mass politics. I collect novel data on local-level participation in wartime volunteering. I find that towns where women volunteered support for the Union Army through home production roles were substantially more likely to hold public rallies against the sale of alcohol a decade later. This effect persists after adjusting for pre-war and contemporaneous measures of local social and political capital and is not driven by observable differences in local geographic, economic, or political characteristics.

The association between women's home front activities and their subsequent entry into activism

points to the importance of social capital formation as a conduit to political influence. In contrast to the 20th century, when women's economic and political gains came from social shocks (the World Wars) and technological innovations (birth control) that enabled them to substitute into male roles, 19th-century women trained for politics by gaining organizing experience and legitimacy in a highly gendered environment.

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A USSC Data Construction Details

USSC data are hand-coded from handwritten directories held in the New York Metropolitan Archives (supplemented with 1863 contribution logs for the Cincinnati Branch). The amount of data available for each entry varies between and within branch but always includes a town name and state, with additional information on county and the names of one or more club officers also sometimes provided. Figure A1 gives an example of a register of societies from the area around Buffalo, NY.

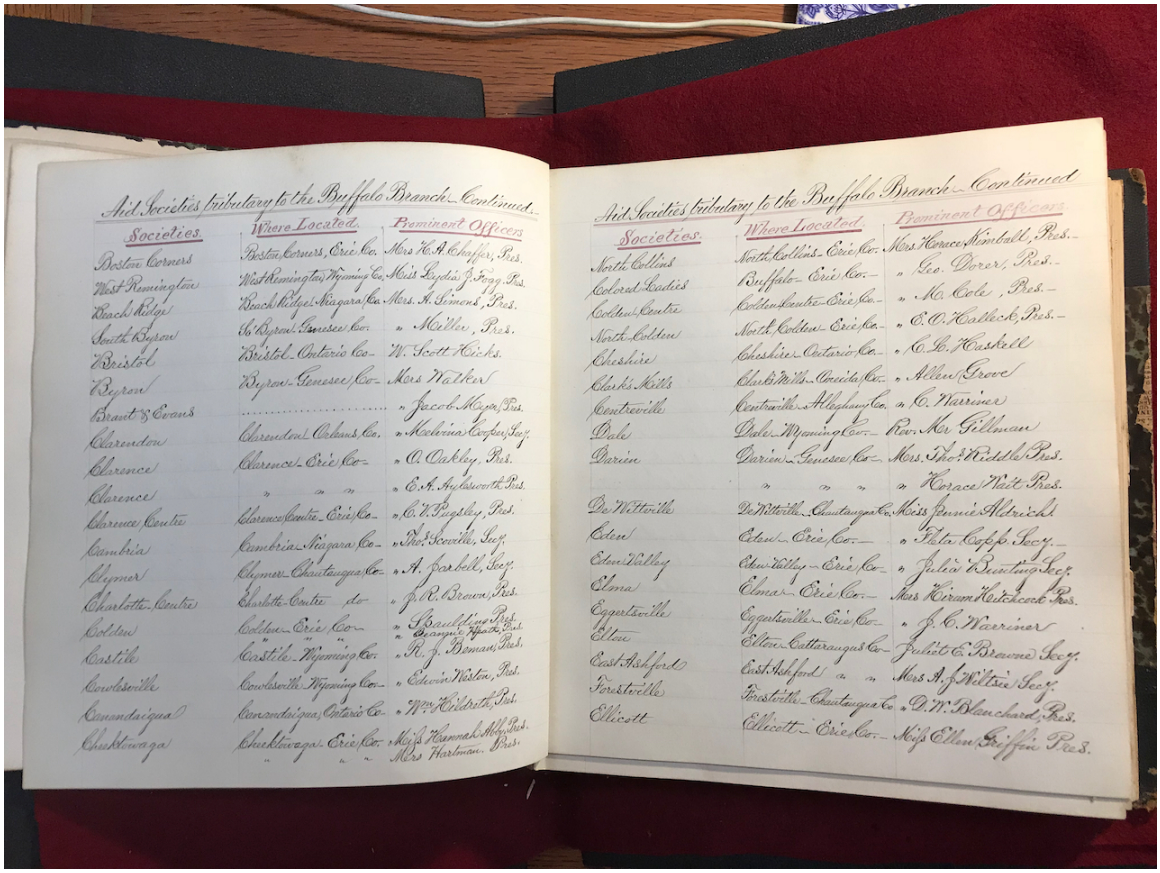

Figure A1: An example of a USSC society roster from the Buffalo (New York) branch.

When no county information is provided, the locations of societies can be ambiguous. Thus, if there are N possible matches for a society, I assign each potential a weighted value of $\frac{1}{N}$ for the $society_i$ variable. Figure A2 shows the distribution of these weights; the majority of societies can be located exactly.

Of the 6,404 entries listed in the USSC registers, 5,915 are in states not included in the sample, either because USSC data appears incomplete for that state or because the state held no Temperance Crusades: the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. The remaining discrepancy of 489 entries results from societies in towns that could not be linked to any place in the 1860 Census, usually because they were small, unincorporated communities.

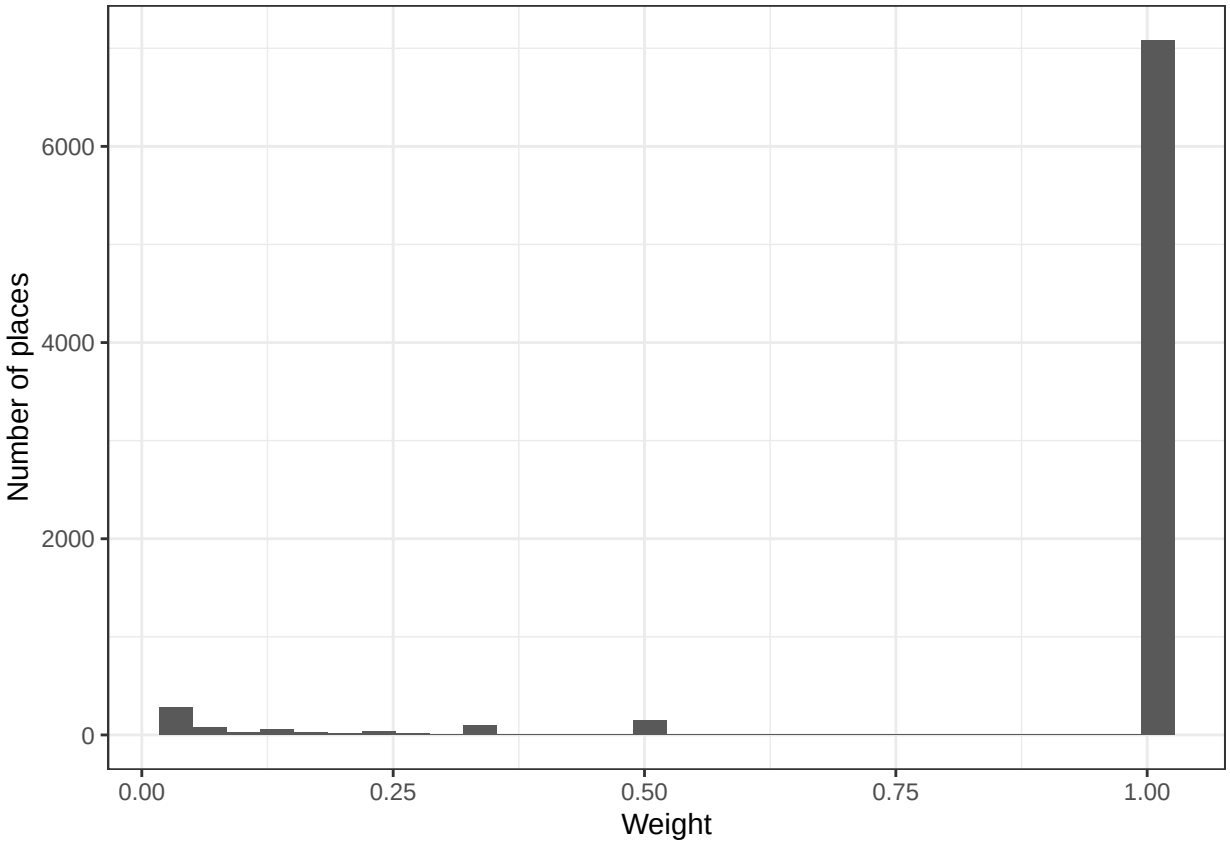

Figure A2: Distribution of weights used to adjust for uncertainty in exact location of soldiers' aid societies.

B Summary Statistics

Table A1

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Pop. 1860	7,862	1,588.501	4,944.853	2	579.2	1,675	266,661
Nearest rail 1861	7,862	28,546.970	52,620.500	0.005	3,200.379	24,099.710	471,691.400
Vote share Repub. 1860	7,796	0.574	0.109	0.025	0.506	0.646	1.000
Enlistment per cap.	7,493	0.074	0.071	0.0001	0.041	0.085	0.985
Prewar petitions (political) per 10k	7,861	0.002	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.376
Prewar petitions (other) per 10k	7,861	3.141	16.858	0.000	0.000	0.000	666.667
Female abol. signatures per 10k	7,862	225.634	488.807	0.000	0.000	183.620	3,251.641

Summary statistics for town-level data

Table A2

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Church sittings per cap. 1860	572	0.754	1.422	0.000	0.282	0.776	15.974
Catholic sittings per cap. 1860	572	0.072	0.344	0.000	0.000	0.064	6.927
Black pop. share 1860	575	0.001	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.0002	0.043
Manuf. jobs per cap. 1860	572	0.039	0.060	0.000	0.008	0.043	0.484
Illiteracy 1860	575	0.050	0.071	0.000	0.003	0.071	0.646
German pop. share 1860	575	0.028	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.030	0.402
Ag. output value per cap 1860	562	91.984	185.655	0.445	40.433	77.052	2,062.783
Foreign-born pop. share 1860	575	0.218	0.196	0.000	0.081	0.300	1.000

Summary statistics for county-level data

C Robustness Checks for Main Results

Table A3 shows robustness checks for Table 1 using different variations on population weights and assignments of aid societies to towns. The first column shows results for an OLS (linear probability model) regression with 1860 population weights; the second, for an OLS regression dropping the bottom and top 5 percent of cities by population. The third column assumes that all potential town name matches in the USSC catalogue should be treated, and the fourth drops all ambiguous name matches. The fifth column uses a probabilistic town-level variable to handle ambiguous society-to-town matches that takes a value of 0 if there is no possible match to an aid society for that town and 1 if there is a potential match. This value is then multiplied by the inverse of potential matches to a town name (so a certain match is a 1, while a society that could be matched to one of two towns results in both towns being "treated" with a society and receiving weights of $\frac{1}{2}$, etc.). Table A4 shows variations of the main results using a logistic specification rather than a linear probability model, and Figure A3 shows the robustness of the point estimates of the main linear specification (Column 4 of Table 1 in the main body of the paper) to using Conley standard errors of varying radii rather than clustering standard errors at the county level.

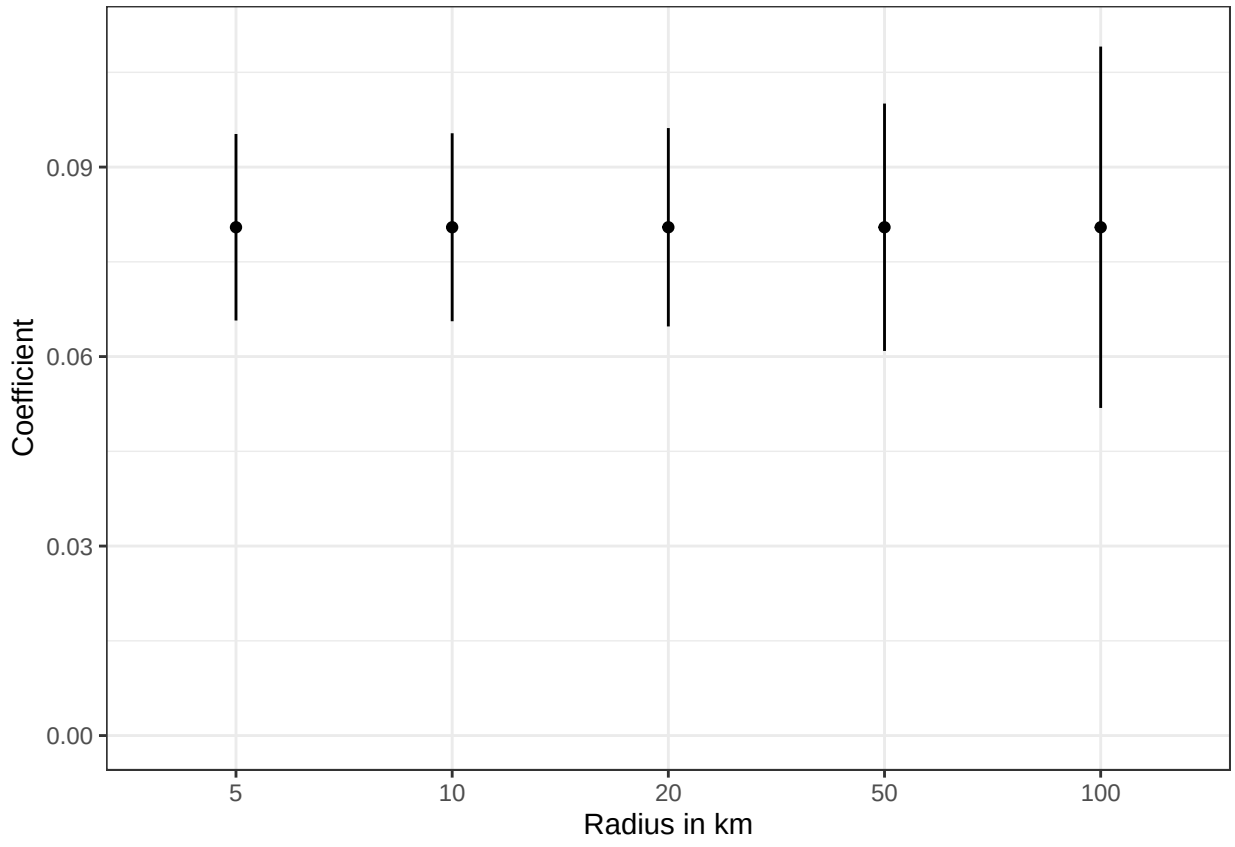

Figure A3: Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals for Conley standard errors with radii of 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 km.

Table A3

	Dependent variable:				
	crusade				
	Pop. weights	Drop smallest/largest	Treat all potential matches	Drop ambiguous towns	Probabilistic
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
USSC society	0.088***	0.070***	0.080***	0.077***	
	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	
USSC society (prob.)					0.081***
					(0.009)
Log pop. 1860	0.146***	0.026***	0.043***	0.043***	0.043***
	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Dist. to rail 1861	−0.021***	−0.039***	−0.042***	−0.039***	−0.041***
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Illiteracy 1860	−0.022***	−0.011***	−0.011***	−0.010***	−0.011***
	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Repub. vote share 1860	−0.006	0.006	0.005	0.002	0.006
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Black pop. share 1860	0.030***	0.016***	0.031***	0.032***	0.031***
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Foreign-born pop. share 1860	0.019	−0.006	−0.004	−0.005	−0.004
	(0.013)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
German pop. share 1860	0.010	−0.001	0.003	0.003	0.003
	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Catholic sittings per cap. 1860	−0.014	0.011**	0.010**	0.010*	0.010**
	(0.027)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Ag. output per cap. 1860	−0.026*	0.006	−0.002	−0.003	−0.002
	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Manuf. jobs. per cap. 1860	−0.367***	−0.012	−0.021	−0.029	−0.021
	(0.142)	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Enlistment per cap.	0.082***	0.033***	0.036***	0.036***	0.036***
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Total church sittings per cap. 1860	−0.022	−0.034**	−0.026	−0.023	−0.026
	(0.029)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.016)
Female abol. pet.	0.006	−0.004	−0.005	−0.005	−0.005
	(0.010)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
General Congress. pet.	0.017**	0.004	0.006*	0.006*	0.006*
	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Political Congress. pet.	0.014**	−0.0005	0.007	0.007	0.007
	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Geo. controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,429	6,752	7,429	6,712	7,429
R^2	0.566	0.127	0.173	0.184	0.173
Adjusted R^2	0.564	0.123	0.169	0.180	0.170
Residual Std. Error	10.787	0.204	0.217	0.216	0.217
F Statistic	292.487***	29.736***	46.914***	45.735***	46.996***

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A4

	Dependent variable:			
	crusade			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
USSC society	1.538***	1.918***	1.717***	1.613***
	(0.124)	(0.146)	(0.150)	(0.164)
USSC society (prob.)		1.220***	1.027***	1.153***
		(0.126)	(0.129)	(0.146)
Log pop. 1860			−0.664***	−0.596***
			(0.060)	(0.067)
Dist. to rail 1861			−0.334***	−0.314***
			(0.071)	(0.076)
Illiteracy 1860			0.048	0.095
			(0.081)	(0.092)
Repub. vote share 1860			0.217***	0.153***
			(0.047)	(0.053)
Black pop. 1860			−0.076	−0.044
			(0.093)	(0.119)
Foreign-born pop. share 1860			−0.066	−0.042
			(0.059)	(0.066)
German pop. share 1860				0.056
				(0.311)
Catholic sittings per cap. 1860			0.107**	0.072
			(0.044)	(0.152)
Ag. output per cap. 1860			−0.646	−1.136
			(1.017)	(1.222)
Manuf. jobs. per cap. 1860				0.460***
				(0.052)
Enlistment per cap.				−0.505
				(0.337)
Total church sittings per cap. 1860				−0.093
				(0.083)
Female abol. pet.				0.063**
				(0.032)
General Congress. pet.				0.052*
				(0.028)
Geo. controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,862	7,862	7,787	7,429
Log Likelihood	−1,642.168	−1,303.985	−1,209.361	−1,103.706
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,288.337	2,647.969	2,474.722	2,275.412
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

D Petitions Data Construction Details

Raw data on petitions to Congress (submitted by groups and individuals) are provided by Blackhawk et al. (2021). The full database, which is transcribed from the Congressional Record, contains data on over 500,000 individual petitions submitted by citizens and organizations to members of Congress between 1789 and 1948. Of these, 70,464 can be matched to a town of origin using fuzzy string matching. I focus on geolocated petitions submitted between 1850 and 1859, which yields 5,847 qualifying petitions. We exclude all petitions originating from New York City (and exclude New York City from any analysis involving the petitions) because of inconsistencies in the original data in assigning these petitions to "New York City" vs. smaller sub-jurisdictions.

I use topic codings provided by Blackhawk et al. (2021) (i.e., whether they were submitted by a particular interest group) and by frequent topic of interest (i.e., slavery, temperance, immigration, etc.). Petitions assigned a topic by Blackhawk et al. (2021). that is of general political interest but not specific to women (like immigration or slavery) we code as "political." All other petitions are coded as "general." These typically were intended to draw legislators' attention to constituents' or localities' particular problems or requests, such as pensions for individual veterans or the funding of local infrastructure. Only a small number of petitions ($N = 120$) can be linked to women's activist issues in particular (for instance, they were submitted by a women's organization or address an issue closely linked to women's rights, such as the regulation of age of consent for marriage). However, because there are so few of these and they are geographically unbalanced (only originating in Eastern states), we do not analyze them as a separate series but instead combine them with other political petitions. Figure A4 shows the total number of geolocated petitions by year.

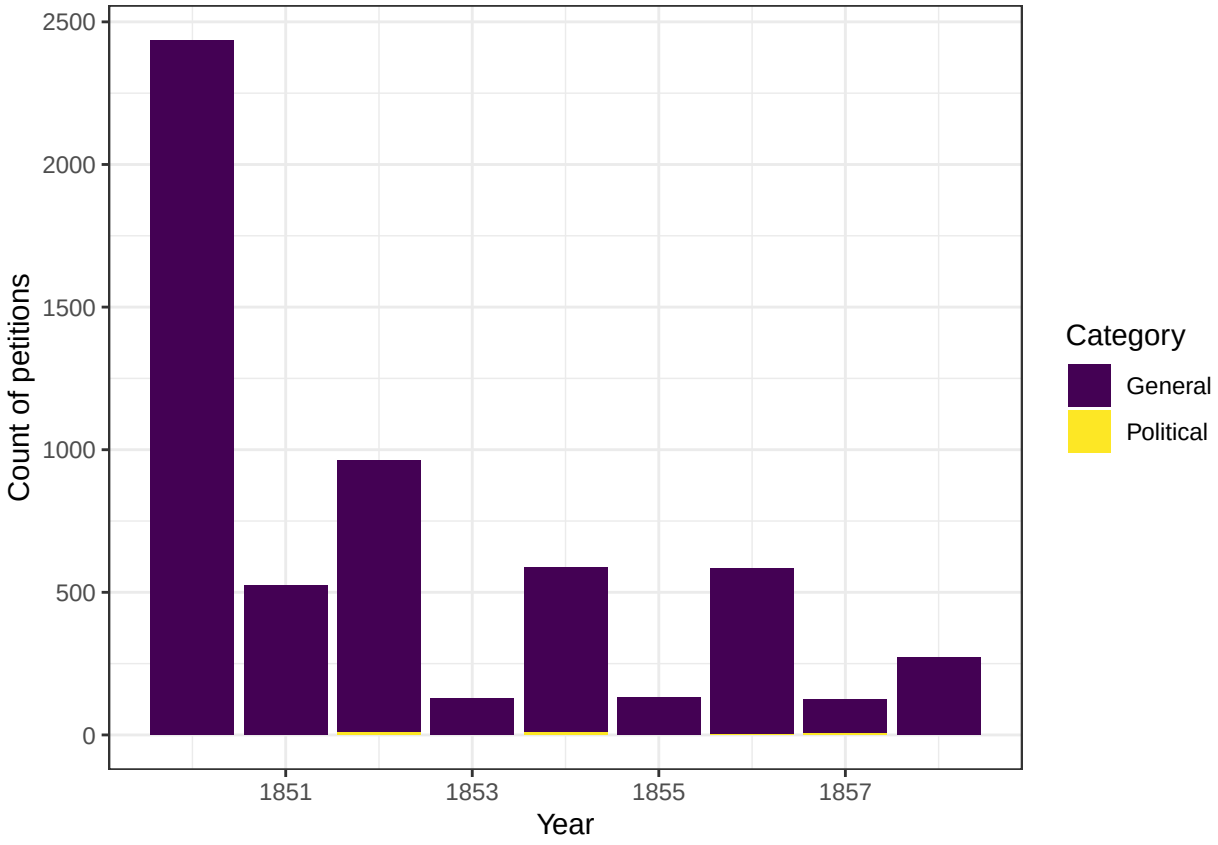
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
Count of petitions
1851
1853
1855
1857
Year
Category
General
Political

Figure A4