



School of Economics and Finance
Cover Sheet for Summatively Assessed Work

Student Matriculation No.: 210036104 & 230029435

Module Code: EC4428

Module Title: Topics in Economic History

Assignment Title:

Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight: Disparate Impact of the 1863 Enrollment Act in the U.S. Civil War

Did the Enrollment Act of 1863, which allowed drafted men to avoid service through substitution or financial commutation, disproportionately affect foreign-born Americans in the U.S. Civil War?

Word Count: 984

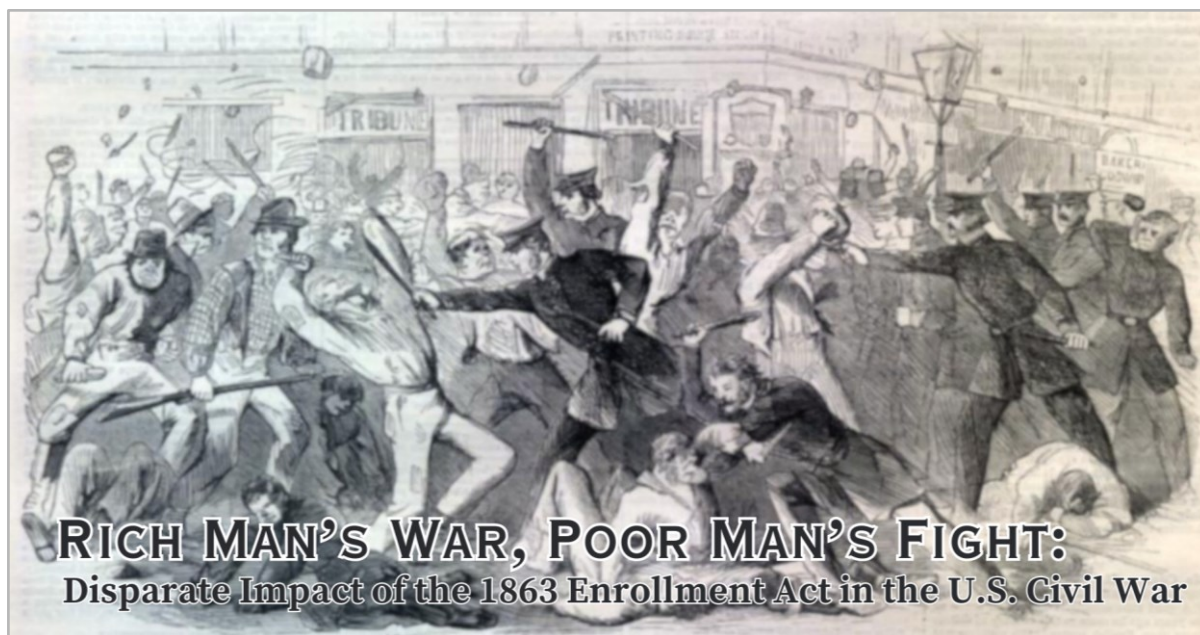
Citation Style Used: In-text links and Harvard

Due date for assignment: 17 November 2023

Date assignment submitted: 16 November 2023

Declaration:

In submitting this work and completing this form, you confirm that you have read and understand the University's policies and regulations concerning assessment and academic misconduct.



Rioters and police during the New York City Draft Riots, 1 August 1863

Image: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

*"We're coming, ancient Abraham, several hundred strong
We hadn't no 300 dollars and so we come along
We hadn't no rich parents to pony up the tin
So we went unto the provost and there were mustered in."*
—[Irish-American folk song](#), 1863

Amidst the ravages of the Civil War, President Lincoln desperately needed to bolster forces to save the Union war effort. The initially-optimistic army of volunteers was being quickly depleted by casualty and disease, forcing Congress to pass the [Enrollment Act of 1863](#), requiring all men—citizen or immigrant—aged 20–45 to enroll in a military draft, with very limited [exceptions](#). However, the law provided two ways to [evade conscription](#): find a suitable substitution or pay a commutation fee of \$300 (roughly \$7,100 in 2022). Many wealthier native-born citizens were able to raise the sum or assign a family member to serve instead, causing the conflict to be known as a ["rich man's war, poor man's fight."](#) The backlash was severe; the bloody [New York draft riots](#) remain the largest instance of civil unrest in American history to this day. Thus, the variation introduced through the Act's exceptions provides the opportunity for an excellent "natural experiment" to address the

following question: did the Enrollment Act of 1863 disproportionately affect foreign-born Americans?

Data Sources

Our [first dataset](#) consists of extensive military participation records of 35,570 randomly selected recruits to the Union Army from every non-Confederate state, sourced from archives of the Veterans Affairs Department. We then expanded our search to [another dataset](#) including gender and birthplace of citizens in all 2,102 counties in the nation according to the 1860 census. The [final dataset](#) contains geospatial coordinates for counties as of 1990. While our analysis focuses on the late 19th century, the novelty of the geospatial data did not substantially impact the analysis as nearly all county borders have remained intact since 1860.

Empirical Strategy

The dependent variable of interest is the proportion of soldiers drafted in the Union army who were foreign-born. With an ideal dataset,¹ including data from draft boards in each county, we would conduct the following Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression of draftees contributed by a county or sub-county against the proportion of foreign-born men (eligible for the draft) residing in the county, controlling for county fixed effects to reduce the risk of endogeneity:

$$y_c = \alpha + \chi'_c \beta + \gamma(propForBorn) + \varepsilon_c$$

where y_c is the variable of interest, draftees provided by county c , χ_c is a vector of county fixed-effects to control for covariates correlated with immigration levels (e.g., income, geographic suitability, connection to railways), $propForBorn$ is the proportion of county c 's population who were foreign-born males, and ε_c is a random error term.

Merging our demographic data with county geospatial information, we were able to leverage GIS tools to display valuable information relating to our research question. In Figure 1a, a heatmap illustrates the percentage of free foreign-born males in each county, revealing high concentrations in specific counties in several Union states. Figure 1b complementarily analyzes the total foreign-born male population in each county. Although the *proportion* of free foreign-born males is relatively smaller in the northeast, the *absolute* number of

¹ A suitable dataset for future research may exist in the Provost Marshal General's report to the Secretary of War, held in sixteen volumes in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., but has never been commercially published.

immigrants in that region utterly dwarfs the rest of the nation. Thus, in the Union states of New England, immigrants suffered from a lack of financial and political capital necessary to avoid conscription. A low concentration but high total population of immigrants could be key indicators of where disproportionate drafting took place, as native-born draftees had more opportunities to pass their military requirements onto the foreign-born.

Examining the second dataset provides robust evidence that the draft conscripted a disproportionate number of immigrants, despite theoretically giving every man (regardless of birthplace) an equal chance of conscription. Of the 35,570 randomly selected Union soldiers, at least² 9,114 were born outside of the United States, 25.62 percent (Figure 2c). Meanwhile, census data indicate that, in the states subject to the draft, only 18.58 percent were foreign-born (Figure 2b). If the law was applied without exception, we would never expect such a discrepancy, which is statistically significant at all conventional levels.

$$P_{foreign} = proportion(Union\ soldiers\ born\ outside\ U.S.)$$

$$H_0: P_{foreign} = 0.1858$$

$$H_a: P_{foreign} > 0.1858$$

$$n = 35,570; \sigma = 0.002315; P(P_{foreign} < 0.1858) = 0.0000$$

Moreover, in the ten most-common birthplaces in our sample, four foreign nations appear individually, while the category of immigrant, generally, would be the most common (Figure 2a). Thus, we overwhelmingly reject the hypothesis that variation alone caused the higher proportion of immigrants in our sample and must explore the historical channels through which the draft disproportionately conscripted immigrants. In our survey of the historical literature, the only conceivable mechanism is the draft's provisions for commutation.

Potential Contributions

By identifying the disparity of foreign-born free males enlisted in the army among other shares of the U.S. population, we can see the ramifications brought about by the Enrollment Act of 1863. Immigrants representing a significantly higher number of soldiers than their demographic makeup of the entire country leads us to believe that they were

² For the few observations without birthplace data, we assumed it to be native, a “worst-case” for our hypothesis.

assigned the military enlistment of elite natives, whether through coercion or necessity. The economic incentives of immigrants when faced with conscription demonstrate how the labor market and wages may have impacted the demographics of the Union Army. It also raises a further question: if foreign-born men knew that they would likely be forced to serve in the military, would they have immigrated in the first place? Immigration data from before and after the implementation of the Enrollment Act could be analyzed (against a counterfactual) and further natural experiments could be conducted. Our analysis provides a framework for future studies to be conducted on the role of ethnicity and culture in military service.

Figure 1a: Free Males Who are Foreign-Born (%)

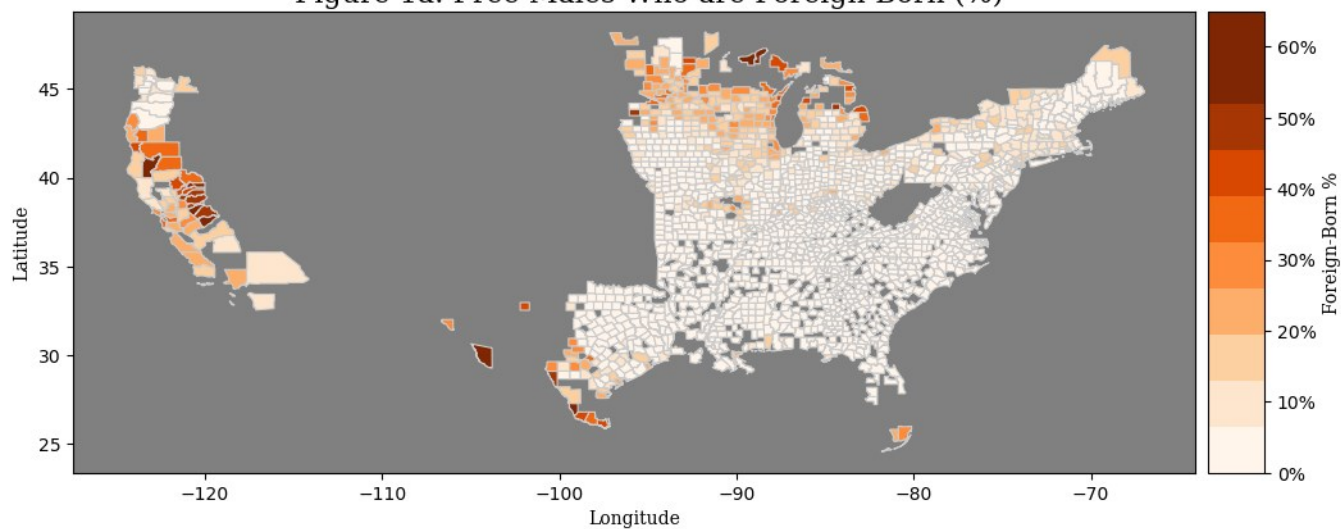
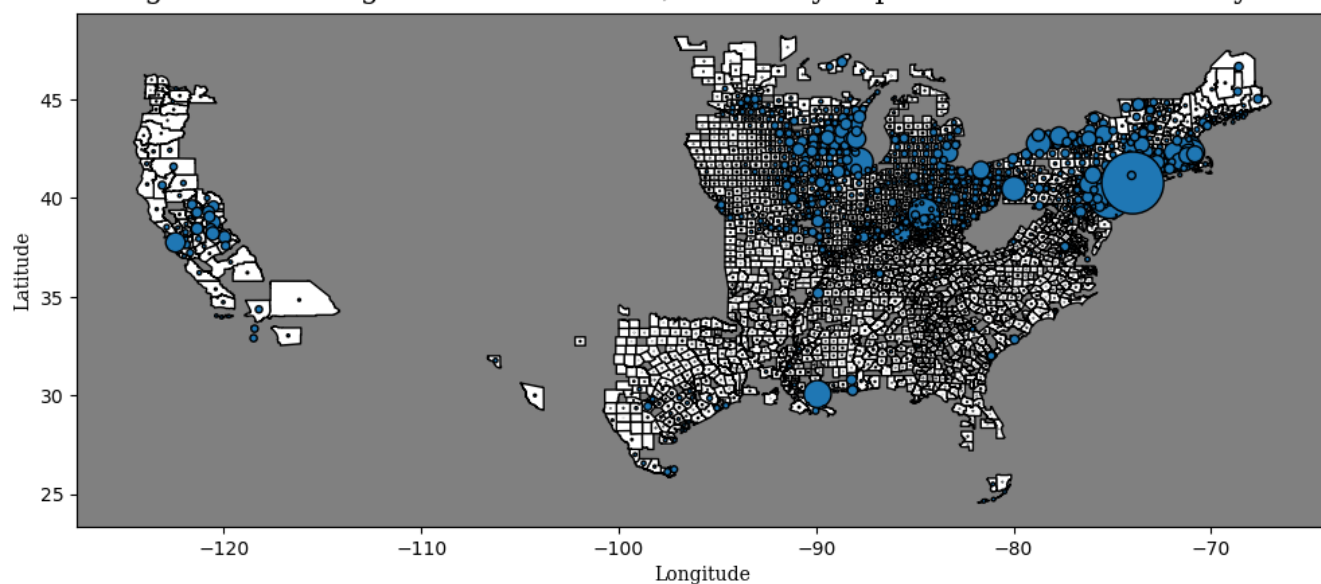


Figure 1b: Foreign-Born Free Males, Scaled by Population Size Per County



Source: [IPUMS NHGIS \(1860 Census\)](#) and [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Figure 2a: 10 Most Common Birthplaces of 35,570 Randomly Selected Union Soldiers

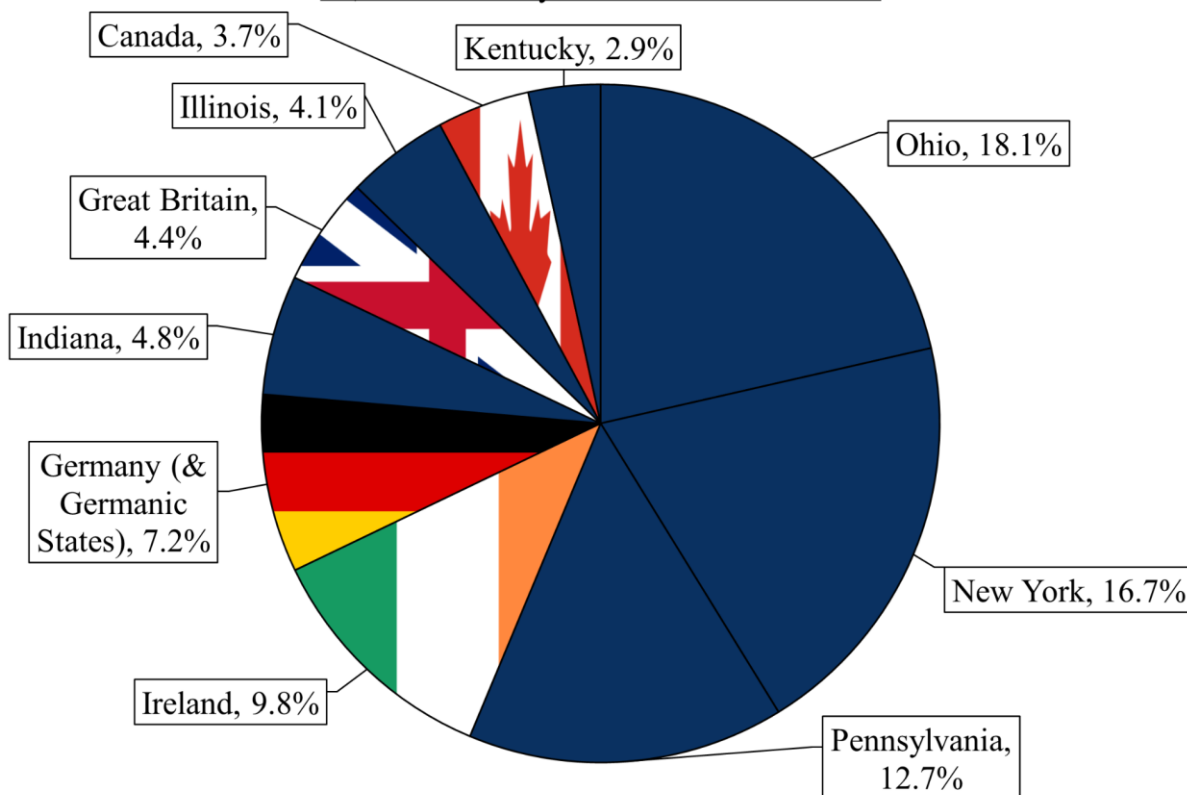


Figure 2b: U.S. Population of Free Men, Excluding Confederate States (1860 Census)

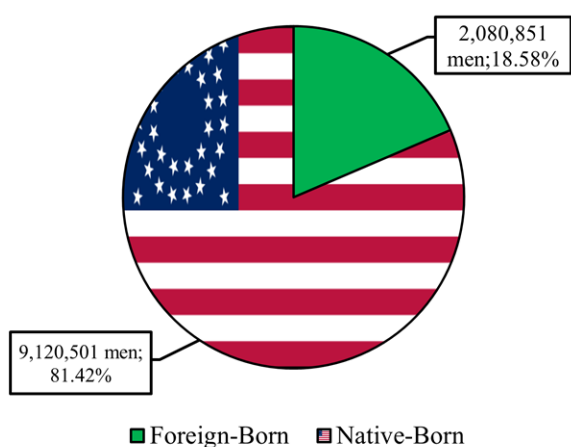
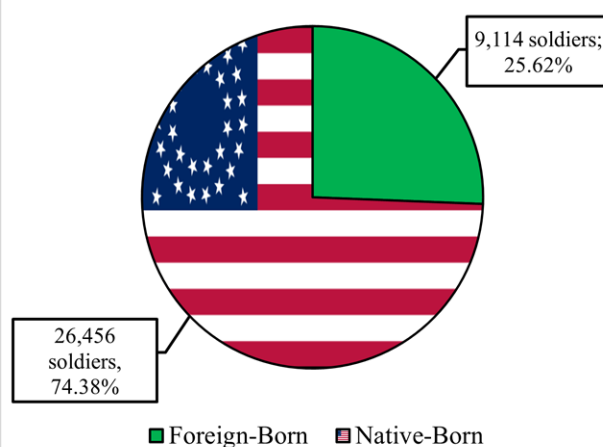


Figure 2c: Birthplaces of 35,570 Randomly Selected Union Soldiers



Source: Fogel, et al. (2006), [ICPSR 6837](#)

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EC4428 Peer Assessment Form

Group assignment: Blog Entry

Your matriculation number: 230029435

Peer Contribution Assessment

	Share of Task	
	You	Your Partner
Context	50%	50%
Argument	50%	50%
Analysis	50%	50%
Exhibit 1	50%	50%
Exhibit 2	50%	50%
Data/Identification strategy	50%	50%

Note: Each row must sum to 100%.**Meeting Log**

Week #	Date	Main agenda items	Absences
1	2 Nov	Introductions, brainstorming.	
2	6 Nov	Decide on topic, formulate question	
3	9 Nov	Gather data sets, decide on empirical strategy	
4	13 Nov	Data analysis, drawing conclusions	
5	14 Nov	Crafting Exhibits, begin drafting report	
6	16 Nov	Finish blog entry and submit	
7			
8			