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**Leadership and Social Norms: Evidence from the *Forty-Eighters* in the Civil War**

Abstract: A growing theoretical literature emphasizes the role that prominent individuals play in shaping beliefs and social norms. We provide empirical evidence for such ‘civic leadership.’ We focus on the *Forty-Eighters*, a group of political refugees from Germany’s failed 1848 revolutions, and their role in the struggle for the abolition of slavery in the U.S. Our primary outcome is volunteering for the Union Army. Given the enormously high death toll during the Civil War, this measure provides a powerful measure of social convictions against slavery. Using different empirical strategies, we show that towns where *Forty-Eighters* settled in the 1850s increased their Union Army enlistments by three per hundred adult males over the course of the war. Using machine learning techniques to infer soldiers’ ancestry, we find that the *Forty-Eighters* had the biggest impact on the enlistment of German Americans, a smaller effect on Native and Irish men, and yet a smaller effect on the other two large immigrant groups, Scandinavian and Italian. We also distinguish between *Forty-Eighters* who themselves enlisted in the war and those who did not. Those who did not themselves fight had an equally important influence on enlistment, the data suggesting a high involvement in their local communities. Those who did fight also had a discernible effect in the field of battle, lowering their soldiers’ likelihood of desertion.

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