Abstracts of papers presented at the 2022 Cliometrics Conference at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennesse

**The Counter-Reformation, Science, and Long-Term Growth: a Propaganda-Driven Myth?**

**Mattıas Cabello**

April 14, 2022 Abstract A popular but contested historiographical narrative tells that the Counter-Reformation, which imposed intellectual isolation in Catholic Europe as a shield against Protestantism, suffocated science and thereby depressed long-term economic growth. Is this true? This paper answers positively in three parts. The first studies the Counter-Reformation itself and finds that, across Europe, Catholic and Protestant cities shared comparable numbers of scientists per capita prior to the Counter-Reformation, but Catholic cities experienced a cataclysmic relative decline afterwards, both within and across countries. Moreover, within Catholic territory the decline occurred precisely when the Counter-Reformation was enforced and was more pronounced in locations with stronger enforcement (such as in cities hosting inquisitorial tribunals). The second part of the paper studies persistence of this shock, continuously until today, finding that scientific convergence was hindered in the conservative phases of the political cycle, especially during regimes reawakening dormant legacies of the Counter-Reformation. Until the recent past, conservatism and dictatorships have been much more detrimental to science in places once subject to a strong Counter-Reformation. Finally, since the shock explains residual science even today, the third part exploits proxies of the Counter-Reformation as instruments for current science indicators, finding an elasticity of income with respect to science oscillating around 0.5. The same result emerges using other large and enduring historical shocks to science, such as Ottoman rule or the Enlightenment.

**The Impact of Financial Inclusion on Minorities: Evidence from the Freedman’s Savings Bank**

**Claire Celerier, Purnoor Tak**

April 14, 2022 Abstract How can financial inclusion be harmful to minorities? What drives the uptake of financial services by discriminated populations? This paper investigates these questions through the lens of the Freedman’s Savings Bank, which was established in 1865 after the Civil War to collect deposits from recently freed African Americans. The bank enjoyed success in recruiting depositors over its almost decade-long tenure, in spite of extensive management and governance issues, as well as missed interest rate payments. By accessing the full text of newspapers during the 1965-1874 period, we show that the bank advertised itself extensively using false promises and moral exhortations. This included false claims about the bank’s safety and a government guarantee, in spite of the extensive funding of risky loans and no government oversight or support. In addition, the bank used language appealing to morals, virtues, and religion. We find that this advertising campaign stands out as being unique among other savings institutions at this time in magnitude and content, including banks marketing to other minority groups. In a panel analysis across bank branches, we also show that an increase in the number of advertisements in local and national newspapers is associated with an increase in the number of accounts opened. While over 90% of depositors were African Americans, we find that the bank largely made fraudulent loans to white businessmen. Many of these loans were not paid back, even after the Freedman’s Savings Bank collapsed in 1874. The unpaid loans coupled with the depositor losses, which have rarely been matched in the banking history of the United States, suggest a transfer of wealth from African Americans to white populations. JEL classification: D14, G21, G51, J15, N21 Keywords: Household Savings, Banking, Minorities, Economic History

**Cultural Inheritance and the European Marriage Pattern**

**Gregory Clark,∗ Neil Cummins,† Matthew Curtis‡**

April 16, 2022 Abstract Eric Turkheimer famously stated as a Law “All human behavioral traits are heritable.” But this poses a puzzle for pre-industrial demographic systems, such as the European Marriage Pattern, where individuals made behavioral choices that limited fertility. Why were these behaviors not replaced over time with those that generated higher fertility? Some have argued the solution to this puzzle is that limited fertility in the first generation was actually maximal fertility in subsequent generations. But we show that there was no fertility penalty to future generations from higher fertility in the initial generation in both England and Quebec. Here we argue instead that the European Marriage Pattern survived for more than 500 years because, for pre-industrial fertility behavior, Turkheimer’s Law does not hold. Even though at the social level fertility limiting behaviors transmitted strongly, there was scant familial inheritance of fertility behaviors. So fertility enhancing deviations did not get transmitted across generations, and the European Marriage Pattern could persist indefinitely.

**Coordinating Institutions and Adaptation: Agricultural Drainage in the United States 1850-1969**

**Eric C. Edwards and Walter N. Thurman North Carolina State University**

Abstract Tile drainage was first demonstrated in the United States in Upstate New York in 1835 as a method to adapt agriculture to excessive water in soils. Subsequently, innovations in coordinated drainage enterprises, engineering, and tile manufacture led to drainage over large portions of the U.S. Midwest and Southeast. Of the 215 million acres of wetlands estimated to have existed in the contiguous United States at colonization, 124 million have been drained today, 80-87% for agricultural purposes. In this paper we argue that a key institutional innovation, the drainage management district, facilitated local investment in drainage. States in our sample adopted drainage laws between 1857 and 1932, and after adoption each state saw an increase in improved agricultural land in counties with poorly drained soils relative to welldrained counties. We estimate artificial drainage increased the value of agricultural land in each of the worst-drained counties of the eastern United States by 13.5-30.3%, a total increase in these counties of $7-17B (2020 dollars).

**The Other Great Migration: Southern Whites and the New Right**

**Samuel Bazzi∗ Andreas Ferrara† Martin Fiszbein‡ Thomas Pearson§ Patrick A. Testa¶**

Abstract This paper shows how the migration of millions of Southern whites in the 20th century transformed the cultural and political landscape across America. Locations with a larger Southern white share by 1940 subsequently exhibited growing support for right-wing politics. They were more likely to oppose politically liberal legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and to object to the Electoral College count in 2021. Racial and religious conservatism among the Southern white diaspora hastened partisan realignment and helped catalyze and sustain the cross-cutting coalition behind the New Right movement. These migrants helped shape institutions that reinforced racial inequity and exclusion, they shared ideology through religious organizations and popular media, and they transmitted cultural norms to non-Southern populations. Together, our findings suggest that Southern white migrants may have forever changed the trajectory of American politics.

**Poor Man’s Castle? Debtor Protections, Land Ownership, and Inequality in Antebellum America**

**Andrew S. Garib, Rutgers University**

Spring 2022 Abstract: I study the effects of the introduction of homestead exemptions, a popular American policy innovation which protected real estate from debt collection (and is still on the books today). As first conceived during the economic convulsions of the Jacksonian Era, these laws were meant to attract settlers and help yeoman farmers maintain ownership of their land, two major themes in 19th century American politics. Using county-level data and the rollout of the law in the 1840’s, I find that the law drew migrants away from cities and towards the country, increasing populations per farm acre—but without increasing county population densities or farm counts. Counties subject to homestead exemptions had fewer young adults (especially men), less formal manufacturing and banking activity, and slower urbanization. In the South, the law increased slaveholding and slaves employed per farm acre. As of 1850, the law appears to have failed, and worse, its effects turn textbook development economics on its head. In 1860, however, in the wake of a major economic crisis, the law does appear to have protected small farms and drawn substantial numbers of migrants without harming manufacturing or urbanization. Homestead exemptions highlight the tension between policy to help individuals mitigate idiosyncratic risk and policy in the aftermath of a widespread crisis.

**Making a Police Officer: Police Quality After the Spoils System in the Urban U.S.**

**Rowena Gray and Raymond Kim**

This paper presents new data on the careers of men who became police officers in urban police forces across 34 medium and large cities in the United States between 1880 and 1940. This data is drawn from annual police report rosters and individuals are then matched forwards and backwards to their decennial Census records, where available. We then document the extent to which those police forces were representative of the populations that they served. We explore how the background and quality of police officers changed with the introduction of civil service systems across cities and years. We use information about their previous occupations and those of their fathers to inform the second question. Finally, we use arrest data from the annual police reports to test whether the new personnel policy improved the level of municipal policing and crime outcomes. We find that the police were more native and Irish than the population and had characteristics consistent with the idea that police is a stable job for people intending to have families and settle permanently in a particular city. Police were drawn from a slightly lower skill level than the average male worker, but this difference was not very large. This is reflected also in the likelihood that police were drawn from the lowest skilled occupations, roughly at the level of laborer. Interestingly, the impact of introducing the civil service system seems to perfectly offset this effect both on average occupation score and on the likelihood that the previous occupation was low skilled. The policy seems to have had a very small impact, but in the direction desired by progressive-era policymakers, that public worker quality was improved. The preliminary investigation of the impact of civil service laws on arrest outcomes suggests a negative effect on property crimes, but a positive impact on felonies which is driven by high-value thefts rather than by increased violent arrests. This research informs policy design, especially for developing countries today, in how to develop appropriate and effective public jobs hiring and public good provision, while also providing the historical context for how American policing has reached its current point.

**The Democratization of Opportunity: The Effects of the U.S. High School Movement**

**Ezra Karger and Peter Nencka**

The construction of public high schools across the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s transformed the economic opportunities of residents, particularly women, who outnumbered men as high school graduates until the 1940s. We estimate the effect of the “high school movement” on short- and long-run outcomes for both men and women using a novel, complete panel of high schools in towns and cities across the United States. This panel generates a place-level measure of high school access in the late 1800s and early 1900s. We link this panel to school enrollment information from complete-count censuses and the exact birthplaces of notable men and women using structured biographies of federal judges, congresspeople, scientists, businesspeople, and artists. We compare school attendance rates and the long-run outcomes of children who did and did not have access to a public high school, exploiting variation across otherwise similar towns and cities that expanded high schools at different times.

**Promoting to Opportunity: Evidence and Implications from the U.S. Submarine Service**

**Matthew Suandi University of California, Berkeley**

April 2022 Abstract What are the long-term consequences of an early career promotion? To answer this question with causal estimates, I study a natural experiment: the United States submarine force during the first half of the Second World War. When allocating promotions, the US Navy’s Bureau of Personnel endorsed enlisted men recommended by captains who had sunk enemy ships. Defects in the Mark 14 torpedo, however, meant that submarines were substantially less likely to sink ships, irrespective of crew quality, if the strength of the geomagnetic field in their patrol zone was too different than the historical field strength near Newport, Rhode Island. To identify exogenous variation in promotions, I construct a vector of instruments using quasi-random variation derived from submarine patrol locations. Leveraging a novel dataset linking enlisted men’s naval data to their later life outcomes, I find that conditional on surviving the war, promoted sailors lived 2.4 years longer than their non-promoted counterparts. Furthermore, exogenously promoted sailors lived in wealthier ZIP codes at the time of their deaths. These effects are pronounced for sailors who received submarine-success triggered promotions to the rate of chief petty officer, suggesting the importance of developing and exercising managerial ability for later life well-being.

**A Model of Economic Activity in San Francisco During the 1918 Influenza Epidemic**

**François R. Velde Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago**

April 18, 2022 Abstract I jointly use daily data on deaths and public transportation ridership in San Francisco in 1918–19 to estimate a model in which agents choose their level of economic activity based on perceived infection risk, modeled as a function of current and lagged infections or deaths. Agents’ choices in turn affect the dynamics of the epidemic by reducing contacts in an otherwise standard SEIR model. Non-pharmaceutical interventions restrict agents’ activity either as a tax or a bound. I estimate the parameters by maximum likelihood and use the best-fitting model to compute counterfactuals. San Francisco’s intervention reduced deaths by a few percent only, and it was away from the Pareto frontier: an earlier and milder intervention would have done better. The behavioral feedback narrows the room for intervention compared to a model with unresponsive agents, and ill-timed interventions can worsen outcomes. Masks also had an effect on transmission rates. Keywords: 1918 influenza epidemic, San Francisco, public transportation, non-pharmaceutical interventions, SIR macro model, policy evaluation, counterfactuals (JEL H12, I18, I19, N12, R40).