Comrades and Cause: Peer Influence on West Point Cadets' Civil War Allegiances*

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Abstract

Do social networks and peer influence shape major life decisions in highly polarized settings? We explore this question by examining how peers influenced the allegiances of West Point cadets during the American Civil War. Leveraging quasi-random variations in the proportion of cadets from northern (low-slave) states, we analyze how these differences affected decisions about which army to join. We find that a higher proportion of classmates from low-slave states significantly increased the likelihood that cadets from high-slave states joined the Union Army, while almost all cadets from low-slave states joined the Union Army (if they decided to join the war). Additionally, the higher the fraction of the population that were slaves in a cadet's home state the lower the likelihood that the cadet joined the Union *and* the lower the peer influence. We also examine how cadets' decisions affected their military rank and career outcomes. Our findings highlight that peers still influence choices even when they are life-altering and occur during periods of extreme polarization.

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> "... for Civil War soldiers, the group cohesion and peer pressure that were powerful factors in combat motivation were not unrelated to the complex mixture of patriotism, ideology, concept of duty, honor and manhood, and community or peer pressure that prompted them to enlist in the first place."
>
> James M. McPherson, *For cause and comrades: Why men fought in the Civil War (1997)*

1 Introduction

In a highly polarized world, ideological divides not only reflect personal opinions but also actively shape critical decisions, from health choices like vaccination uptake to alignment in global conflicts. Because of these divides, individuals often grapple with challenging decisions and conflicting incentives. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, focus groups and surveys suggest that social expectations——sometimes at odds with personal preferences——played a significant role in vaccination decisions (Lin et al., 2022). Similarly, in politically polarized settings, it has been suggested that decisions about voting or expressing political views can be deeply influenced by social networks, as individuals may suppress their private preferences to conform to publicly dominant views (Kuran, 1998). Theory has long suggested that social networks play a critical role in shaping these decisions, not only through peer pressure for conformity or allegiance, but also by providing insight and information and sharing relevant experiences, and providing comradery (e.g., Bernheim, 1994, Jackson, 2008).

Although there is extensive evidence of peer effects in a variety of settings (Benhabib, Bisin and Jackson, 2010; Brechwald and Prinstein, 2011; Giletta et al., 2021; McGloin and Thomas, 2019), it is unclear whether peers still sway decisions when other economic and social forces become enormous and a single decision can be life-altering. Providing causal evidence on how social networks influence behavior in highly polarized and life-changing environments remains challenging because individuals tend to associate with like-minded peers, making it difficult to disentangle the influence of social networks from preexisting shared beliefs and communal forces.

In this paper, we address this challenge by examining the historical context of the American Civil War, one of the most polarized periods in U.S. history. Specifically, we investigate how West Point cadets——a group that later served as leaders in both the Union and Confederate armies——were influenced by their peers when deciding their allegiances. Leveraging quasi-random variations

in peer composition from year to year at West Point, we provide evidence of the significant role that peers played in shaping decisions during a moment of extreme polarization, and where other background communal and geographic forces might have seemed otherwise overwhelming.

The American Civil War was a pivotal event in U.S. history, notable not only for its significant political and social impacts but also for the personal conflicts it caused among individuals torn between nationalism and sectionalism. West Point cadets, who later became leaders of both the Union and Confederate armies, were among those who faced split allegiances. Although these cadets played vital roles in the war, there has been limited empirical investigation into the factors influencing their decision on which side to fight for.[1]

West Point, as the premier military training institution of the time, offered a unique environment where cadets from both northern (low-slave) and southern (high-slave) states lived, trained, and formed close-knit cohorts prior to the war. This setting makes peer influence a particularly relevant dynamic for study. There is research suggesting that peer influence and "group cohesion" played important roles in motivating people to enlist (and fight), but much of the evidence is anecdotal and drawn from letters and diaries (e.g., see McPherson (1997, 2003); Siebold (2007)). How interactions between cadets from these different regions influenced allegiance during the Civil War has yet to be explored with a careful statistical analysis. Did exposure to northern peers sway southern cadets toward the Union cause, or did the sociopolitical context of their home states dominate and insulate them from peer influence?

We study these questions by digitizing detailed biographical data on over 1,600 West Point cadets from 1820 to 1860 and leveraging quasi-random variations in peer composition. To categorize states flexibly, we use various thresholds based on the slave population share of a state in 1860, applying a 10% threshold as our baseline.[2] We demonstrate that the proportion of peers from low-slave states varied from year-to-year, without evident trends, supplying variation in peer exposure. Furthermore, this ratio is uncorrelated with individual factors and home state differences, whether we use all cadets or focus on those who participated in the war, indicating that peer composition can be considered quasi-random for individual cadets. The quasi-randomness of peer exposure enables us to address the endogeneity challenges of studying peer effects (e.g., Manski, 1993; Angrist, 2014).

[1]There exists a rich historical literature on West Pointers in the Civil War (e.g., Patterson, 2002). A recent political science study, White (2024) documents the importance of economic interest in influencing cadets' choices. See additional reference below.

[2]Not all states with slave populations seceded. Under the 10% threshold, two of the "border states" that did not secede end up categorized as high-slave, while the other two are classified as low-slave states. See Section 2 for a detailed discussion.

In the main text, our focus is on the decisions made by cadets who took part in the war. In the Supplementary Information, we include additional findings based on all cadets, showing that peer influence primarily influenced the decision to join either the Union or the Confederacy rather than the decision to engage in the war itself.

Our main finding is that a higher proportion of classmates from low-slave states significantly increased the likelihood that cadets from high-slave states joined the Union Army. The effect is sizable: a one-standard deviation increase in the proportion of peers from low-slave states raised the probability of joining the Union by 5.8 percentage points, or 19% of the mean. In contrast, nearly all cadets from low-slave states joined the Union regardless of cohort composition. The difference suggests a conflict between nationalism and sectionalism faced by cadets from high-slave states, who were more susceptible to peer influence. Furthermore, within the high-slave group, we find that the higher the percentage of slaves in the home state of a cadet, the less likely they were to join the Union and the weaker the peer effect, suggesting an interaction between peer influence and economic considerations rooted in the slave economy. Overall, the greatest sensitivity to peer influence was among cadets from border and mid-level slave states where support for secession was more divided.

Additionally, peer influence within the same cohort proved stronger than that from preceding groups, with this effect being similar for cadets graduating before and after 1850, a pivotal year in the political divides and legislation on slavery. Moreover, cadets who completed their training exerted a greater influence than those who did not. We also conduct a further analysis with varied thresholds to classify states and demonstrate that our conclusions regarding peer influence remain valid when considering non-war participants, analyzed through a multinominal logit model.

Because many West Point cadets in our study later emerged as significant military figures, we further examine how their wartime choices influenced their post-war trajectories. Employing both OLS and an instrumental variable strategy (where peer exposure predicts allegiance), we find that for those from high-slave states, those who sided with the Union experienced lower military ranks in 1865, a diminished chance of becoming Generals, and a decreased likelihood of wartime mortality.

Our study contributes to the broad social science literature on peer effects (see Benhabib, Bisin and Jackson (2010); Brechwald and Prinstein (2011); Giletta et al. (2021); McGloin and Thomas (2019) for some overviews), by demonstrating how peer influence can shape major life decisions, particularly during moments of extreme polarization. The experiences of West Point cadets during the American Civil War mirror other historical contexts where military academies produced leaders

for both sides of major conflicts in divided nations. For instance, the Whampoa Military Academy in the 1920s produced commanders who fought on opposing sides during the Chinese Civil War (e.g., Bai, Jia and Wang, 2023), and the Heroic Military Academy in Mexico trained leaders who both supported and opposed the regime during the Mexican Revolution.

As mentioned above, such decisions are not unique to military cadets; similar choices are faced by ordinary citizens in many divided societies. However, analyzing peer influence in these broader contexts is often more challenging. The distinctive setting of the American Civil War, where allegiances were closely tied to geography, provides a unique opportunity to examine peer influence with a level of identification that is difficult to achieve in other cases.

Our findings also add to the vast body of historical and social sciences literature that examines loyalty decisions during American Civil War. McPherson (1997) draws on soldiers' letters and diaries to investigate soldiers' motivations. Analyzing Union Army company data, Costa and Kahn (2003, 2008) emphasize the importance of loyalty to fellow soldiers, which sometimes surpassed commitment to the cause when considering decisions to fight, shirk duty, or desert. Our findings suggest that both cause (the allegiance to one's home state) and comrades (peer influence) matter and that they also interact with each other. Closely related, Hall, Huff and Kuriwaki (2019) document that slave ownership drove enlistment in the Confederacy, whereas White (2024) explores the allegiance of West Pointers, emphasizing economic interest by showing that the cash crop economy in one's home state is linked to the likelihood of West Pointers joining the Confederacy. Our observation regarding the influence of the slave economy corroborates these findings, though our primary focus remains on peer influence—a critical factor in loyalty decisions during pivotal historical moments.

Beyond this context, a large literature has examined the determinants of conflict participation, highlighting the importance of interests (as reviewed in Blattman and Miguel (2010)) and social forces (reviewed in Cantoni et al. (2024)).[3] We contribute to the previous literature in terms of the variation in peer composition that identifies peer influence, the differing ways that it works depending on background of a cadet's state, the decisions made by leaders, and the choice between competing ideologies.

Finally, our study contributes to the expanding literature on leaders and leadership (e.g., Jones and Olken, 2005; Acemoglu and Jackson, 2015; Dippel and Heblich, 2021; Cagé et al., 2023; Bai, Jia and Yang, 2023). Understanding how leaders develop their ideas and loyalties is central to

[3]There is also a long-standing literature in sociology recognizing the importance of personal networks in social and political movements (e.g., McAdam, 1986, Diani and McAdam, 2003).

grasping important political and economic outcomes. Our findings highlight the significance of peer influence in shaping future leaders' decisions during crises, demonstrating how peer influence can drive individual choices that may shape the course of history.

2 The Data

We briefly describe how the data are constructed and relegate the details to the Supplementary Information A.1.

2.1 The Cadets

We focus on cadets who graduated from West Point Military Academy between 1820 and 1860. We manually collected information from the *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy* (Cullum, 1891). The records provide details such as the year of graduation, birth year, home state, and academic rank. To ensure comparability of academic performance, we classify cadets into percentiles based on their graduation ranking. The top 10% were assigned a score of 100, the bottom 10% a score of 10, and so on. Additionally, the records include information on wars and battles one participated in and their military ranks, which we use to determine if one joined the Union or Confederate forces during the Civil War. We present examples of these records and our coding procedure in Appendix A.1.

Since the Biographical Register lacks detailed information on cadets who joined the Confederacy, we supplement our data with sources including *Rebels from West Point* (Patterson, 2002), *Southern Historical Society Papers* (Maury, 1876), and *Confederate Military History* (Evans, 1899). We also account for cadets who did not graduate from West Point during 1820-1860, using the *Register of Graduates and Former Cadets* (United States Military Academy, 1971). Additionally, we cross-reference our data with Wikipedia and epitaph data (Find a Grave, 2024) whenever information about a cadet is accessible.

Data on the economic conditions of cadets' home states are sourced from the 1860 Census (United States Census Bureau, 1860). Our primary focus is on one key variable that serves as a proxy for economic conditions closely tied to the Civil War: the share of the slave population in the total population. Additionally, we examine other economic proxies, including logged farmland value per capita, logged manufactured product value per capita, and the share of manufacturing employment. These variables are typically highly correlated with each other and are absorbed by

state fixed effects in our analysis. In the Supplementary Information, we present the correlations between these variables and war allegiance, confirming that the share of the slave population is the most robust economic predictor of war allegiance.

2.2 Geography and the Classification of States by High/Low Slave

We are interested in how cadets' decisions were shaped by the choices of their peers. To address the challenge of endogeneity in peer choices, we use cadets' home state as a source of exogenous variation. Specifically, we explore the impact of the proportion of cadets from northern (or low-slave) states on the allegiance decisions of cadets from both the south and the north (or from high-slave and low-slave states).[4]

There were 11 states that seceded and formed the Confederate States of America by 1861 (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia). There were four states (Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri) that were considered border states[5] and that had significant internal splits in their allegiance, and in some cases even parallel governments.

In the main text we categorize states existing at the beginning of the war[6] into low-slave and high-slave states using a 10% slave population share in 1860 as a threshold. Kentucky and Maryland, with slave population shares of 19.5% and 12.7%, are grouped with the 11 Confederate states as high-slave states, while Missouri, the District of Columbia, and Delaware, with slave population shares of 9.7% , 4.4%, and 1.6%, are classified with the Union states as low-slave states.

To ensure the robustness of classifying states, we present results using alternative ways of dividing border states between low-slave and high-slave states and results for cadets from heavy-slave southern states, mid-slave southern states, border states and northern states. Appendix Table S1 list the classification of states using different thresholds.

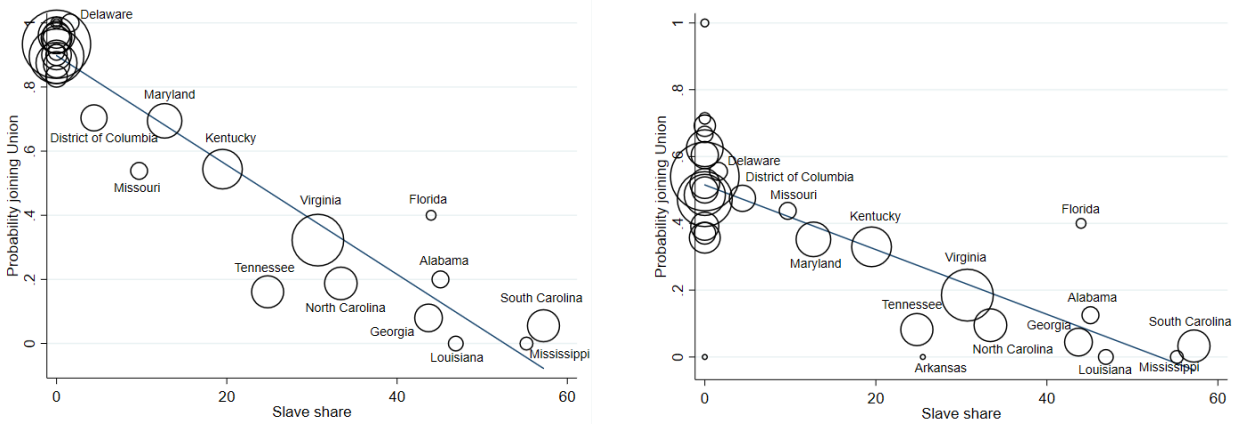
The territories that were not yet states were under Union government control and none could secede, and none had significant slave populations.[7] There is only one cadet in our sample

[4] Our approach is consistent with the recommendation in Angrist (2014), where "research designs that manipulate peer characteristics in a manner unrelated to individual characteristics provide the most compelling evidence on the nature of social spillovers."

[5] The District of Columbia is generally also added to the border category, although not a state.

[6] West Virginia was split off from Virginia in 1863, becoming part of the Union, but we treat it as part of Virginia as of 1860.

[7] A few had split allegiances, but overall the territories provided relatively small enlistments, and mostly for the Union.



A: Probability of joining the Union: war participants

B: Probability of joining the Union: all cadets

Figure 1: Home-state slave share and the probability of joining the Union

Note. This figure plots the relationship between the share of the slave population in a state and the likelihood that cadets from that state would join the Union. Panel A concentrates on the states that participated in the war, while Panel B uses all cadets, including those who did not participate in the war. The circle's size represents the number of West Point cadets hailing from each state.

from these territories, which we exclude from our analysis. We also exclude a few cadets whose hometowns are outside the U.S.

Using the 10% threshold, 1,038 and 600 cadets came from low-slave states and high-slave states, respectively. Among those from low-slave states, 590 joined the armies and 90.2% of them joined the Union. Among those from high-slave states, 339 joined the armies and 31% of them joined the Union. Appendix Table S2 presents the summary statistics of the key variables using the baseline threshold.

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive Evidence

Importance of Home State First, we establish that a cadet's home state serves as an effective representation of regional norms and preferences, as evidenced by the considerable impact of the state's slave population percentage on the cadets' loyalty. Figure 1 illustrates that the proportion of a state's slave population is strongly and negatively related to the likelihood of joining the Union, regardless of whether we focus on war participants or all cadets.

In Appendix Figure S2, we additionally display the patterns for joining the Union, joining the Confederacy, and not participating in the war. In general, the slave population serves as a strong predictor for joining the Union compared to the Confederacy, but it has no (significant) correlation with the decision to participate in the war. Given this finding, we focus on war participants in our

next set of descriptive evidence.

To define peers, we start with a 10%-threshold to define high- versus low-slave states, where Maryland and Kentucky are classified as high-slave states whereas Missouri, DC and Delaware are classified as low-salve states. We show that our results are robust to using 5% or 1% thresholds. This flexibility allows us to check robustness of our findings in dealing with border states.

Relevance of Peers In Figure 2, we illustrate the correlations between the proportion of low-slave (i.e., slave population lower than 10%) state peers in each cohort and the likelihood of Union affiliation for cadets from both high- and low-slave states. The figure reveals a distinctly positive relationship for cadets from high-slave states, suggesting peer influence when facing a conflict between nationalism and sectionalism. Conversely, nearly all cadets from low-slave states joined the Union, which aligns with their lower tendency to experience a conflict.

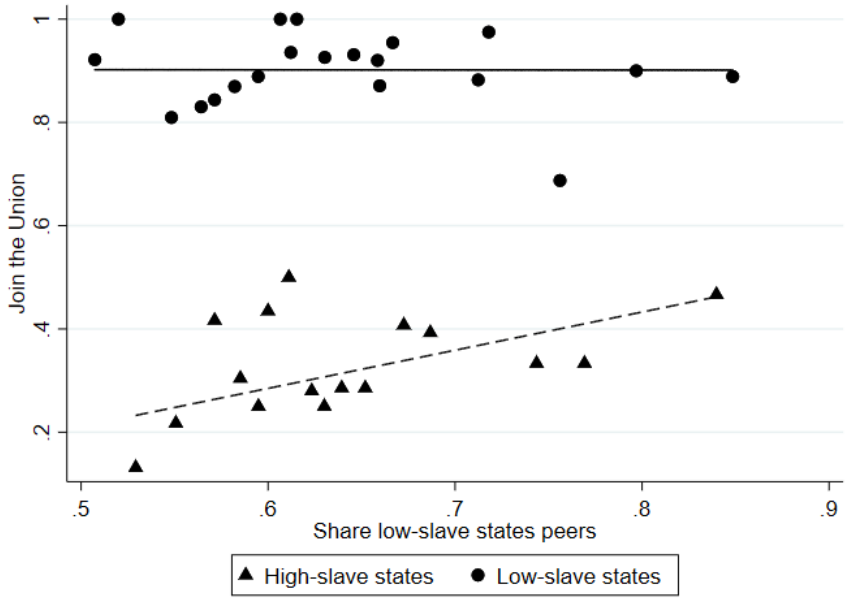


Figure 2: Low-slave state peers and allegiances

Note. This figure plots the relationship between low-slave state peers and probability of joining the Union, depicted for war-participating cadets from low-slave states (top observation) and high-slave states (bottom observations), indicating that peer influence was significant for those from the latter.

In Figure 3, we focus on data from high-slave states and display the time-series information on peer composition and their likelihood of joining the Union. Two notable patterns emerge. First, the peer composition fluctuates without showing a distinct trend, offering variation in peer exposure across cohorts. Second, for these cadets, the probability of joining the Union positively correlates with peer exposure (with a correlation coefficient of 0.213). Additionally, we observe a slight upward trend in Union affiliation over time, which we consider in our analysis.

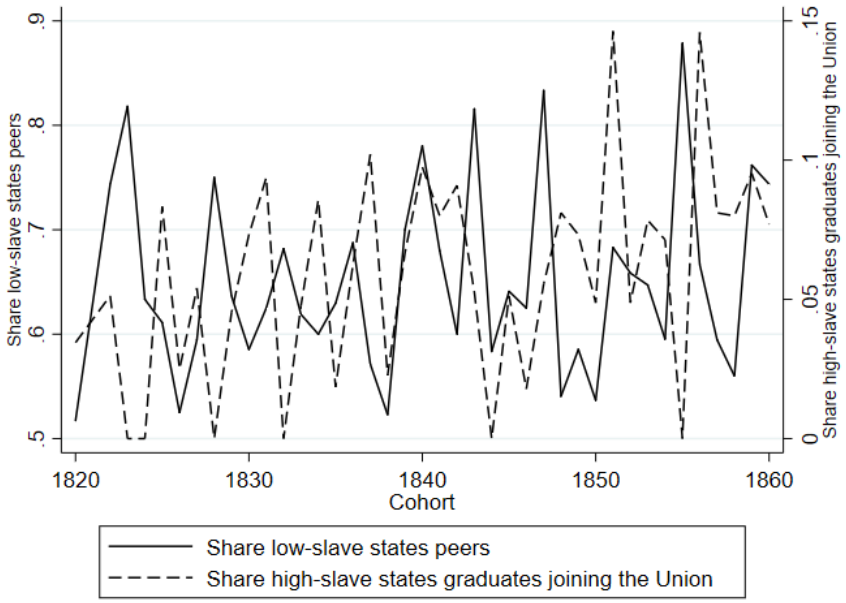


Figure 3: Cadets from high-slave states: Peers and prob. of joining the Union over time

Note. This figure plots the time-series relationship between low-slave state peers and probability of joining the Union, depicted for cadets from high-slave states who participated in the war. The correlational coefficient of these two series is 0.213.

3.2 Statistical Analysis

Motivated by the descriptive evidence, we estimate the impact of peer influence via the following OLS baseline specification:

$$Union_{i,s,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Peer_{i,t} + \gamma X_{i,s} + \alpha_s + t + \epsilon_{i,s,t}, \tag{1}$$

where $Union_{i,s,t}$ denotes whether cadet i from state s and cohort t joined the Union. $Peer_{i,t}$ represents the proportion of peers from low-slave states. α_s represents state fixed effects, whereas $X_{i,s}$ includes a range of personal and state characteristics such as the cadet's age in 1860, their academic rank at West Point and the proportion of the slave population in their home state. Naturally, state characteristics are absorbed once home state fixed effects are accounted for. We incorporate a linear time trend t to account for potential temporal trends in Union enlistment. To account for potential serial correlations, we employ bootstrapped standard errors with 400 resampling iterations.

As mentioned, we focus on those who joined the armies in our baseline analyse, which is the main margin of peer influence. In addition, we also employ a multinomial logit specification where we consider three outcomes: joining the Union, joining the Confederacy, and not joining the war.

Our identification assumption is that peer composition in West Point was not influenced by

individual choices of which army to join and was quasi-random. To check whether this assumption holds, we examine the correlations between $Peer_{i,t}$ and $X_{i,s}$. As shown in Table 1, once the time trend is accounted for, there is no apparent relationship between personal characteristics and peer composition (once the time trend is accounted for, age is uncorrelated), supporting our identification assumption. Moreover, the balanced tests hold whether we restrict our sample to those who joined the war or all cadets, which again confirms that joining the war or not is a major margin shaped by peer influence in this data.

Table 1: Correlations between peers and personal characteristics

Dependent var (sd)	Share low-slave states peers:1820-1860							
	war participants				all			
	High-slave states		Low-slave states		High-slave states		Low-slave states	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Age in 1860	-0.010*	0.026	-0.012***	-0.006	-0.006	0.029	-0.009***	0.016
	(0.005)	(0.035)	(0.004)	(0.025)	(0.004)	(0.030)	(0.003)	(0.018)
Class rank	-0.002	-0.002	0.001	0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Slave pop. share (sd)	-0.036	-0.034	0.001	0.001	0.018	0.020	0.011	0.012
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.035)	(0.036)
Cohort (t)		0.036		0.007		0.035		0.024
		(0.034)		(0.024)		(0.030)		(0.017)
Observations	339	339	590	590	600	600	1,038	1,038
R-squared	0.014	0.017	0.016	0.016	0.007	0.009	0.009	0.011

Note. This table presents the correlations between peer composition and individual traits. High- and low- slave states are defined based on a 10% threshold. After adjusting for a linear time trend, these correlations are statistically undistinguished from zero. The standard errors presented in the parentheses are obtained through bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

3.3 The Impact of Peers on Cadets' Allegiance

Table 2 displays our main baseline results, indicating that peer influence is significant for individuals from high-slave states. Column (1) illustrates the raw correlation between the proportion of low-slave peers and the likelihood of joining the Union. Column (2) incorporates personal and state characteristics, while Column (3) further includes state fixed effects. To facilitate the interpretation of coefficients, we present the coefficient for a one standard deviation change in peer exposure. As shown, these estimates, approximately 0.058, are consistent across different models, confirming the quasi-randomness of peer composition. The effect is sizable, representing about 19% of the mean of the dependent variable (0.31).

Among the personal background variables, the share of the slave population in a cadet's home state is strongly and negatively associated with joining the Union, underscoring the role of economic factors in allegiance decisions. Appendix Table S3 presents correlations between the probability

Table 2: Peer composition and allegiance choice

Dependent var	Join the Union: war participants					
	high-slave states			low-slave states		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Share low-slave states peers (sd)	0.058**	0.059**	0.058**	-0.000	-0.002	-0.005
	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Age in 1860		-0.016	-0.006		0.007	0.007
		(0.017)	(0.017)		(0.007)	(0.007)
Class rank		0.001	0.001		-0.001*	-0.001*
		(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.000)	(0.000)
Slave pop. share (sd)		-0.177***			-0.070***	
		(0.021)			(0.019)	
Cohort		-0.017	-0.007		0.009	0.008
		(0.016)	(0.017)		(0.007)	(0.007)
State FEs	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
Dependent var. mean	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.902	0.902	0.902
Observations	339	339	339	590	590	590
R-squared	0.016	0.172	0.224	0.000	0.065	0.081

Note. This table presents the impact of the fraction of peers from low-slave states in a cadet's cohort on that cadet's decision to join the Union. Columns (1)-(3) focus on cadets from high-slave states and Columns (4)-(6) on those from low-slave states. The standard errors presented in the parentheses are obtained through bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

of joining the Union and additional state-level economic proxies, including logged farmland value per capita, logged manufactured product value per capita, and the share of manufacturing employment. Notably, incorporating these proxies does not alter our primary findings on peer effects. Furthermore, the share of the slave population emerges as the most robust economic predictor of war allegiance. All these economic variables are effectively accounted for when controlling for state fixed effects.

Additionally, consistent with Figure 2, we find that peer influence is not significant for cadets from low-slave states (Columns (4)-(6)). Based on these findings, our subsequent analysis focuses on cadets from high-slave states.

3.4 The Interplay between Peer Influence and Home State Economics

Our research indicates that having more peers from low-slave states increases the likelihood of joining the Union, whereas economic factors reflected by the slave population share in one's home state decrease this likelihood. Here, we explore the interplay between peer influence and home-state slave share. We categorize high-slave states into two groups (based on the median of slave share within these states): those with a slave population share exceeding 30.2% and those with a share between 12.7% and 30.2%. In Figure 4, we plot the correlation between peer exposure and the probability of joining the Union. As shown, peer influence is significantly stronger for the group

with a comparatively lower slave share. The slopes for these two groups are 1.726 and 0.248, respectively (the p-value of the difference is 0.020). Thus, individuals from states with a sizable slave population, yet not heavily reliant on a slave economy, are more susceptible to peer influence.

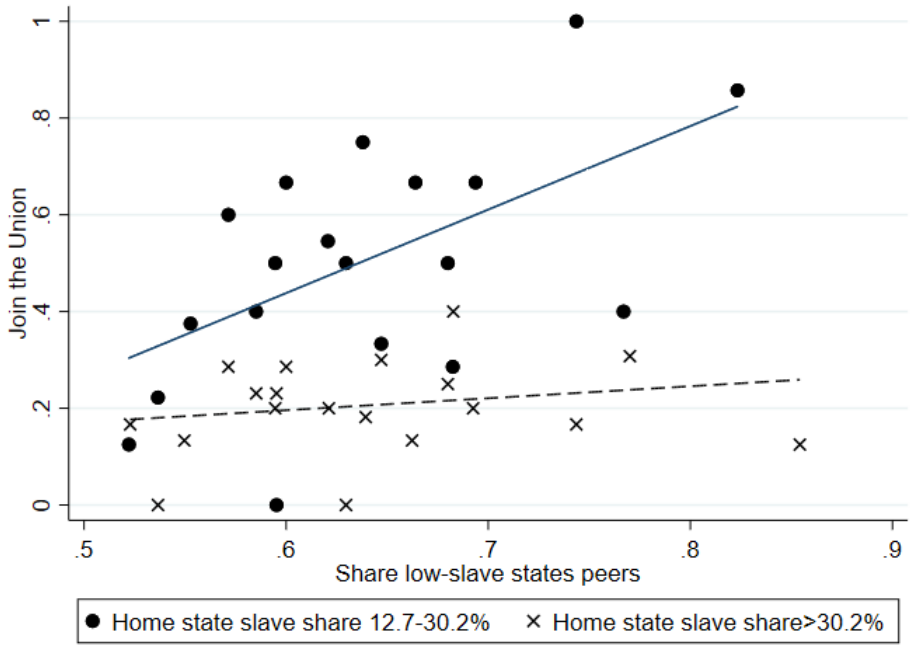


Figure 4: Peer influence and economic incentives

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of the war-participating cadets from high-slave states (i.e., with a slave population higher than 10%). We split them into two groups based on the median level of slave population share. The pattern suggests a larger slave economy mitigates peer influence.

In Appendix Table S4, we provide further results by dividing states into four groups: (1) southern states with a heavy slave share (exceeding 30.2%), (2) southern states with a moderate slave share (ranging from 20% to 30.2%), (3) border states (with a slave share between 1.6% and 19.5%), and (4) northern states with no slave share. Although these findings have lower levels of statistical significance due to the limited sample size in some groups, they reveal that it was mainly cadets from border and mid-slave states whose choices were responsive to peer composition, consistent with the pattern shown in Figure 4.

3.5 Additional Analyses

We conduct five supplementary analyses (see the Supplementary Information) to explore (1) whether peer influence within a shared cohort is of greatest significance (compared to adjacent cohorts), (2) how the effect of peers on cadets varied across different various time-frames, (3) potential differences between peers who graduated and those who dropped out, (4) the impact of how we

classify states on our results, and (5) how incorporating non-participants of the war affects our conclusions. We briefly describe the results from these analyses here:

Influence by Cohort We analyze peers by grouping them into cohorts and display the coefficients for peers within the same cohort, as well as for cohorts from t-1 to t-3 and t+1 to t+3, in Appendix Figure S3. The coefficients in the figure are obtained from a single regression that includes all controls from our baseline analysis. The result reveals that peer influence is most important within the same cohort. In contrast, although there is some degree of influence from earlier cohorts, future cohorts do not show comparable levels of influence.

Peer Influence pre-post 1850 In the 1850s, the issue of slavery nearly led to the collapse of the United States. Throughout this decade, intense debate over slavery permeated both political arenas and public forums. Congress introduced new slavery-related policies, while courts addressed legal cases on the matter. Abolitionists persisted in their campaign to eliminate slavery, and political parties, influenced by slavery issues, underwent shifts and reorganizations. Newspapers, novelists, activists, and reformers also weighed in on the discussions, either responding to or intensifying the crisis in various ways. These events played a crucial role in the period leading up to Abraham Lincoln's election and the onset of the Civil War. In an effort to avert civil war, Congress passed several laws collectively known as the *Compromise of 1850*, which included a more stringent *Fugitive Slave Law*. This law obligated law enforcement officials nationwide to assist in capturing alleged runaway slaves, sparking nationwide controversy as many in the north resisted its enforcement (McPherson, 2003). Against this backdrop, we use 1850 as a pivotal point to assess whether peer influence experienced notable changes before and after that year. As illustrated in Appendix Table S5, peer influence persisted over time, with a similar effect observed during the decade preceding the war.

Graduate vs. Dropout Peer Influence We focus on graduate peer influence in our main analysis as they spent four years together at West Point. In Appendix Table S6, we consider dropouts and calculate peer influence based on them as a comparison. Our estimates are robust to including dropouts in our calculation of peers. However, when separating graduating peers from dropout peers, we find that it is the graduating peers rather than the dropout peers that drives our the peer influence.

Classifying States in Alternative Ways We use a 10% slave share to define low and high slave states. Our findings are robust to using alternative thresholds such as 1% and 5%. These results are presented in Appendix Table S7.

Including Those Who Were Not in the Armies As discussed above, peer composition is not systematically correlated with one's choice of participating in the war or not. Thus, we have focused on joining the Union versus the Confederacy for simplicity. If we further employ a multinomial logit model to consider whether a cadet joined the Union, joined the Confederacy or did not participate in the war, we again find that peer composition is not predictive for whether a cadet participated in the war, while our main finding of peer influence on joining the Union vs Confederacy holds. These results are presented in Appendix Table S8. According to these estimates on the log of the odds ratios, a one-standard deviation increase in low-slave peers increased probability of joining the Union by approximately 7.7 percentage points, slightly higher than our baseline estimates.

3.6 Career Outcomes

We know the post-war outcomes of many who joined an army, allowing us to investigate how their decisions during this critical historical juncture influenced their life results, such as military rank and survival probability.

As indicated in Columns (1)-(2) of Table 3, joining the Union correlates with a lower military rank in 1865 and a reduced probability of attaining a rank of General-level positions. This aligns with the fact that the Confederate army, with fewer officers, provided quicker promotions and a higher likelihood of becoming a general. On the other hand, joining the Union is associated with a lower risk of dying in the Civil War, reflecting the higher fatality rate on the Confederacy side, as reported in Column (3).

Using peer exposure as an instrumental variable for joining the Union reveals similar patterns. The magnitudes of the coefficients resemble the OLS estimates; however, their significance diminishes due to increased standard errors, as shown in Columns (4)-(6). As previously mentioned, cadets from states with a large slave population (more than 30.2%) did not respond significantly to peer influence. Omitting those cadets allows for more precise estimates, despite the reduction in sample size, as seen in Panel B.

Moreover, in Appendix Table S9, we investigate the correlation between academic rank and military rank in both the Union and Confederate armies. We find that West Point performance was

more predictive of outcomes for the Union Army and less so for the Confederacy.

Table 3: Subsequent outcomes in 1865

	OLS			IV		
	Rank	General	Died	Rank	General	Died
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. High-slave cadets						
Joining the Union	-1.575***	-0.346***	-0.183***	-1.236	-0.801	-0.137
	(0.214)	(0.061)	(0.052)	(2.153)	(1.040)	(0.819)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
State FEs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	332	332	339	332	332	339
R-squared	0.286	0.164	0.085			
B. Excluding heavy-slave state cadets						
Joining the Union	-1.278***	-0.297***	-0.182**	-0.932	-0.763*	-0.557**
	(0.315)	(0.089)	(0.081)	(0.956)	(0.404)	(0.234)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
State FEs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	121	121	124	121	121	124
R-squared	0.286	0.200	0.044			

Note. The sample for Panel A consists of the war-participating cadets from high-slave states (i.e., with a slave population higher than 10%), and the sample for Panel B excludes those from the highest-slave states who were not significantly influenced by peers. Columns (1)-(3) use OLS estimation, while Columns (4)-(6) use an IV model, predicting Union membership based on peer percentages from low-slave states. Columns (1) and (4) feature the military rank as the dependent variable, classified into 11 levels, with General assigned 11 and Third Lieutenant assigned 1. General and Died are binary variables. The rank information on seven cadets is unknown. The standard errors reported in the tables are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

4 Discussion

Our study highlights the significant role of peer exposure in shaping West Point cadets' allegiance choices during the American Civil War, especially for those from slave states who faced a tension between nationalism and sectionalism among other tensions. Importantly, we find that the strength of peer influence was modulated by the economic interests of cadets' home states: in regions where the slave economy was overwhelmingly dominant, the influence of peers was less pronounced. This suggests that when economic stakes were particularly high and slavery more prevalent, cadets were less susceptible to peer-driven shifts in loyalty. This finding is also consistent with the fact that states with heavier slave shares were the first to secede and the level of debate in states was at least partly reflective of slave shares (Crofts, 2014). Thus, the places in which cadets could make choices without seeming disloyal were states with relatively lower slave population shares.

Although our analysis is a case study, it is a useful proof of concept. The decisions that West Point cadets made during the U.S. Civil War parallel those that arise in many divided societies,

where individuals must choose between between highly-polarized opposing sides during critical moments. We have shown that in such a context, peer interactions can still play a decisive and significant role.

Our study also provides a road map for identifying such peer effects in other high-stakes and high-polarization settings. This sort of peer influence is challenging to quantify and identify causally through anecdotal evidence alone. It is also not enough to identify correlation in people's behaviors, given that friendships are endogenous and people are subject to common (potentially unobserved) factors (Angrist, 2014). West Point's environment—characterized by structured, close-knit interactions among cadets from diverse geographic backgrounds—provided us an opportunity to analyze the influence of quasi-random peer exposure, and its interplay with background allegiances. By using variation in a cadet's peers' state-of-origin for identification, we have something that is exogenous to other key things influencing a given cadet's decision. Similar techniques can be used in other high-stakes contexts.

That said, our ability to definitively trace the mechanisms behind peer influence is limited by the nature of our historical data. Our specification that examines cadets' choices based on the composition of their cohort by the states of origin of their peers enables us to causally identify peer influence. Nonetheless, it does not provide insight into why peers influence cadets' decisions. One curious aspect is that the peer influence only affected cadets from states with slaves. This could be due to the fact that West Point was an institution in which cadets were being trained for the U.S. Army, and so only cadets from slave states faced a conflicting allegiance. We are still left with the fact that peer effects could have operated in at least three ways: (1) by fostering communication and persuasion, whereby cadets from high-slave states may have been convinced to support the Union cause through exposure to pro-Union peers, (2) by building friendship bonds that influenced cadets' decisions to fight alongside their peers, or (3) by shifting perceptions of the likely outcome of the war, where cadets from low-slave states could have led their peers to believe that the Union was more likely to prevail. Our data, however, do not allow us to disentangle these, or other mechanisms, and all could have operated together (which would be consistent with some evidence from personal letters and diaries (McPherson, 1997)). Further investigation of peer influence on allegiances in modern contexts, where additional data are more readily available, could offer additional insights into how such mechanisms operate.

Data Availability: all data will be made available upon publication.

Code Availability: all code will be made available upon publication.

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Supplementary Information for "Comrades and Cause: Peer Influence on West Point Cadets' Civil War Allegiances," by Guo, Jackson, Jia

A Data Construction and Description

A.1 Data Construction

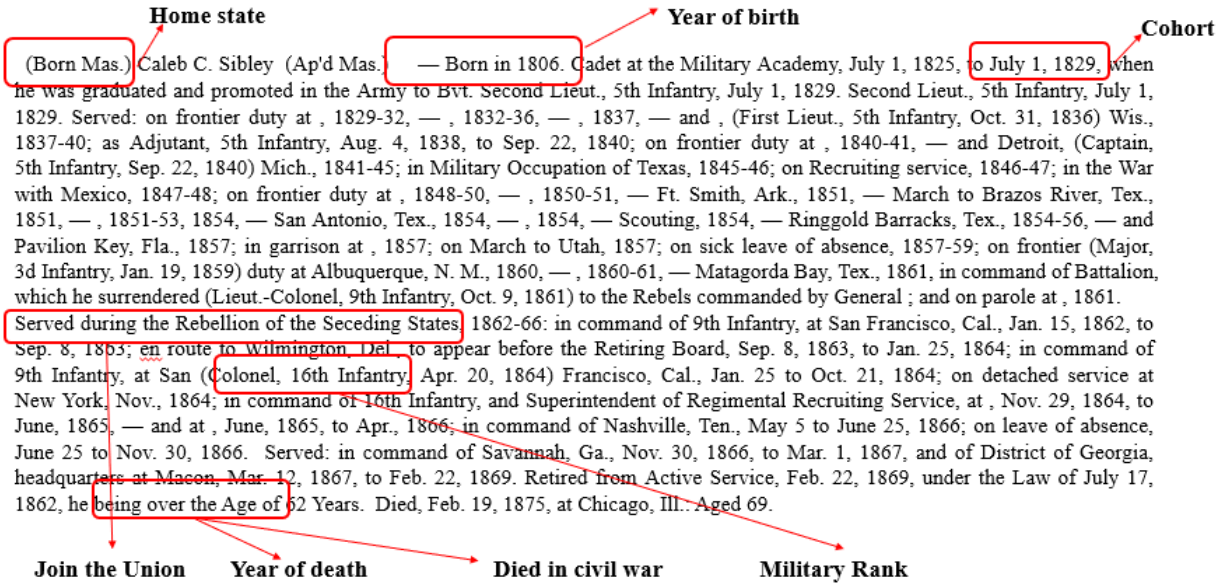
We construct a dataset of West Point cadets from 1820 to 1860. We manually collect and organize information on graduates, including their Union or Confederate affiliation during the Civil War, class ranking at graduation, place of birth, year of birth, and military rank in 1865, from the *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy* and other sources. We first present two examples of coding from main source in Figure S1.

Civil War Affiliation We determine military allegiance based on whether the individual served with the Union or the Confederacy during the Civil War. This is exemplified by statements such as "He took part in the Rebellion of 1861-66 against the United States" or "He served in the Rebellion of the Seceding States."

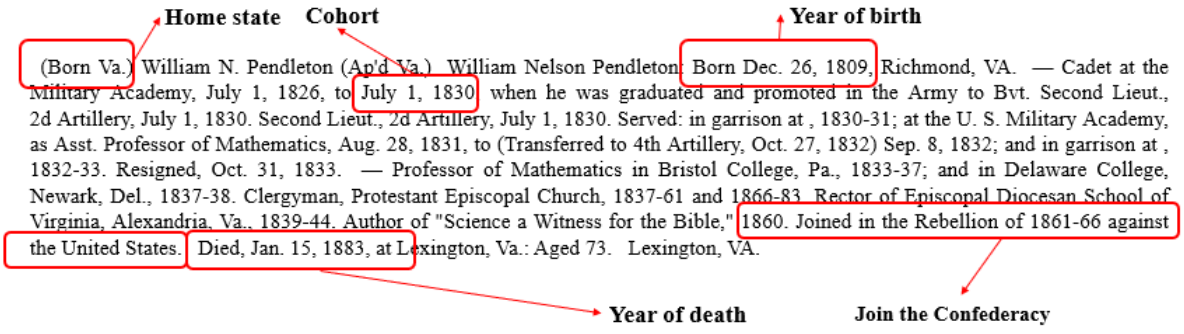
For those whose biographies do not clearly specify a side, we deduce their affiliation from the forces they served with during the war, including volunteer armies and local militias. For instance, service in the New York State Military during the Civil War categorizes them as Union members.

We cross reference our data with additional sources including *Find a Grave*, Wikipedia, *Rebels from West Point*, and *Southern Historical Society Papers*.

Class Rank at Graduation Since the number of cadets graduating in each West Point cohort varied, direct comparisons of class ranks across different cohorts are not meaningful. To ensure comparability, we classify cadets into percentiles based on their graduation ranking. The top 10%



A: Example of coding the the Union



B: Example of coding the Confederacy

Figure S1: Text examples

Note. This figure presents text examples from Cullum (14). We use these texts as our main data source and complement the data with information from additional sources

were assigned a score of 100, the bottom 10% a score of 10, and so on.

Year of Birth In a few cases where an individual's year of birth was unavailable in the *Biographical Register* , we supplement this information by using details from *Find a Grave*.

Military Rank in 1865 For cadets who joined the Union, we determine their official military rank in 1865 from personal biographies. For cadets who joined the Confederacy, we refer to sources including *Rebels from West Point*, *Southern Historical Society Papers*, *Confederate Military History*, and Wikipedia, for military rank descriptions.

If the personal information did not include a specific military rank in 1865, we approximated it based on the individual's military career trajectory. For example, if an individual's career record states: {'1846: Second Lieutenant', '1864: Major', '1870: Colonel'}, we assign the rank held closest to 1865, but no later than 1865. In this case, the individual's rank in 1865 would be Major. Since every change in a person's military rank is recorded, if there is no mention of a change, we assume the rank remained the same. Military ranks are grouped into 11 levels, with General ranked as 11 and Third Lieutenant ranked as 1.

A.2 Classification of States

Table S1: Classification of States

	Slave share (%)	10% threshold	5% threshold	1% threshold	4 groups
South Carolina	57.2	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Mississippi	55.2	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Louisiana	46.9	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Alabama	45.1	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Florida	44.0	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Georgia	43.7	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
North Carolina	33.7	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Virginia	30.7	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Heavy-slave southern state
Texas	30.2	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Mid-slave southern state
Arkansas	25.5	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Mid-slave southern state
Tennessee	24.8	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Mid-slave southern state
Kentucky	19.5	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Border state
Maryland	12.7	High-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Border state
Missouri	9.7	Low-slave	High-slave	High-slave	Border state
District of Columbia	4.4	Low-slave	Low-slave	High-slave	Border state
Delaware	1.6	Low-slave	Low-slave	High-slave	Border state
New Jersey	0.01	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
New York	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Pennsylvania	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Ohio	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Illinois	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Indiana	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Massachusetts	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Wisconsin	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Michigan	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Iowa	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Maine	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Connecticut	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
California	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
New Hampshire	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Vermont	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Rhode Island	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Minnesota	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state
Oregon	0.0	Low-slave	Low-slave	Low-slave	Northern state

Note. This table presents different ways we employ to classify home states of West Point cadets.

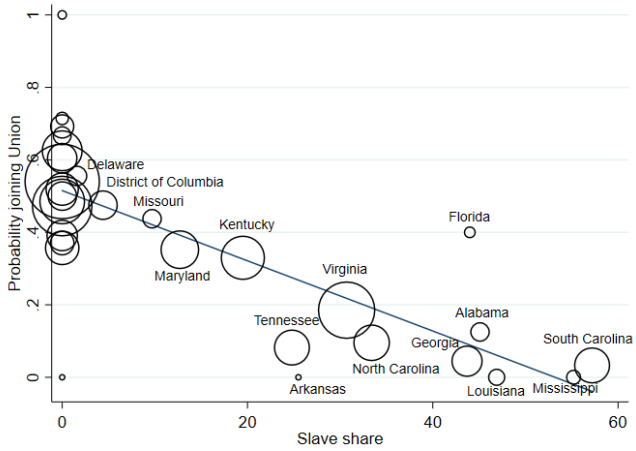
A.3 Summary Statistics

Table S2: Summary statistics

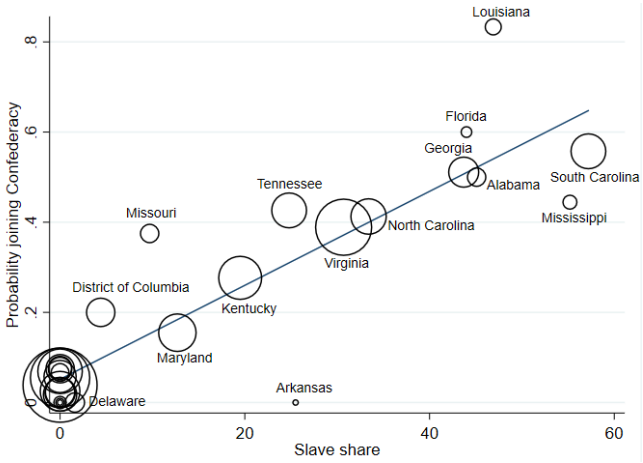
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Obs.
Panel A: High-slave states (slave share > 10%)					
Joining the Union (war participants)	0.310	0.463	0	1	339
Joining the Union (all)	0.175	0.380	0	1	600
Class rank	54.750	28.844	10	100	600
Age in 1860	41.632	10.782	22	65	600
Slave pop. share	31.346	12.943	12.7	57.2	600
Cohort	1840.1	11.147	1820	1860	600
1865 Career rank	5.440	2.509	1	11	593
1865 General	0.268	0.443	0	1	593
Died in civil war	0.146	0.353	0	1	597
Panel B: Low-slave states (slave share ≤ 10%)					
Joining the Union (war participants)	0.902	0.298	0	1	590
Joining the Union (all)	0.513	0.500	0	1	1038
Class rank	56.599	28.709	10	100	1038
Age in 1860	41.423	10.879	21	63	1038
Slave pop. share	0.347	1.457	0	9.7	1038
Cohort	1840.4	11.333	1820	1860	1038
1865 Career rank	4.742	2.133	2	10	1033
1865 General	0.139	0.347	0	1	1033
Died in civil war	0.089	0.285	0	1	1030

Note. This table presents summary statistics for the key variables used in our analysis.

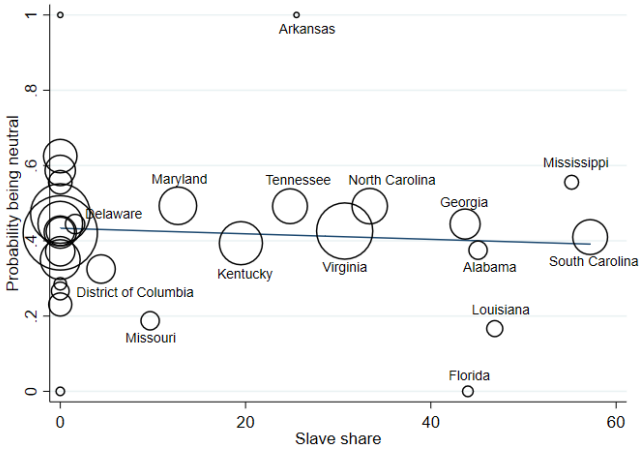
A.4 Correlations between Slave Share and Allegiances



A: Probability of joining the Union



B: Probability of joining the Confederacy



C: Probability of being neutral

Figure S2: Slave share and cadet's choices

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of all cadets, including those who did not participate in the war. This figure illustrates the correlations between the proportion of slaves in a state and the likelihood of a cadet from that state opting to join the Union (A), the Confederacy (B), or abstain from participating (C).

B Additional Results

B.1 Home State Economic Proxies and War Allegiances

Table S3: Home state economic proxies and war allegiance

Dependent var	Join the Union: war participants							
	high-slave states				low-slave states			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Share low-slave states peers (sd)	0.059**	0.058**	0.056**	0.057**	-0.002	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Age in 1860	-0.016	-0.016	-0.009	-0.009	0.007	0.007	0.006	0.007
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Class rank	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	-0.001*	-0.001*	-0.001*	-0.001*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Cohort	-0.017	-0.017	-0.010	-0.010	0.009	0.008	0.008	0.008
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Slave pop. share (sd)	-0.177***	-0.178***	-0.090***	-0.096***	-0.070***	-0.063***	-0.064***	-0.065***
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.024)
ln Farmland value per capita		-0.016	-0.087	-0.044		0.039	0.036	0.030
		(0.109)	(0.111)	(0.113)		(0.039)	(0.047)	(0.050)
ln Manufactured product per capita			0.231***	0.139			-0.006	0.031
			(0.080)	(0.159)			(0.032)	(0.056)
Manufacturing employment share (sd)				0.041				-0.021
				(0.067)				(0.033)
Dependent var. mean	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.902	0.902	0.902	0.902
Observations	339	339	339	339	590	590	590	590
R-squared	0.029	0.172	0.191	0.192	0.011	0.068	0.068	0.069

Note. This table shows the association between war allegiances and several home state economic proxies. The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

B.2 Peer influence by economic consideration

Table S4: Peer composition and allegiance choice: different groups of states

Dependent var	Join the Union: war participants			
Slave share	heavy-slave southern states >30.2%	mid-slave southern states 30.2%-20%	border states 20%-0%	northern states 0%
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Share northern-states peers (sd)	0.006	0.119	0.076*	-0.002
	(0.031)	(0.074)	(0.042)	(0.013)
Share border-states peers (sd)	-0.028	0.103	0.057	-0.019
	(0.032)	(0.109)	(0.040)	(0.016)
Age in 1860	-0.038*	0.040	0.033	0.008
	(0.021)	(0.055)	(0.027)	(0.008)
Class rank	0.002*	-0.006**	0.000	-0.001*
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Cohort	-0.039*	0.032	0.032	0.009
	(0.020)	(0.054)	(0.025)	(0.007)
State FEs	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dependent var.mean	0.205	0.161	0.675	0.921
Observations	215	31	166	517
R-squared	0.132	0.239	0.120	0.035

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of all war-participating cadets. The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

B.3 Peer influence by cohort

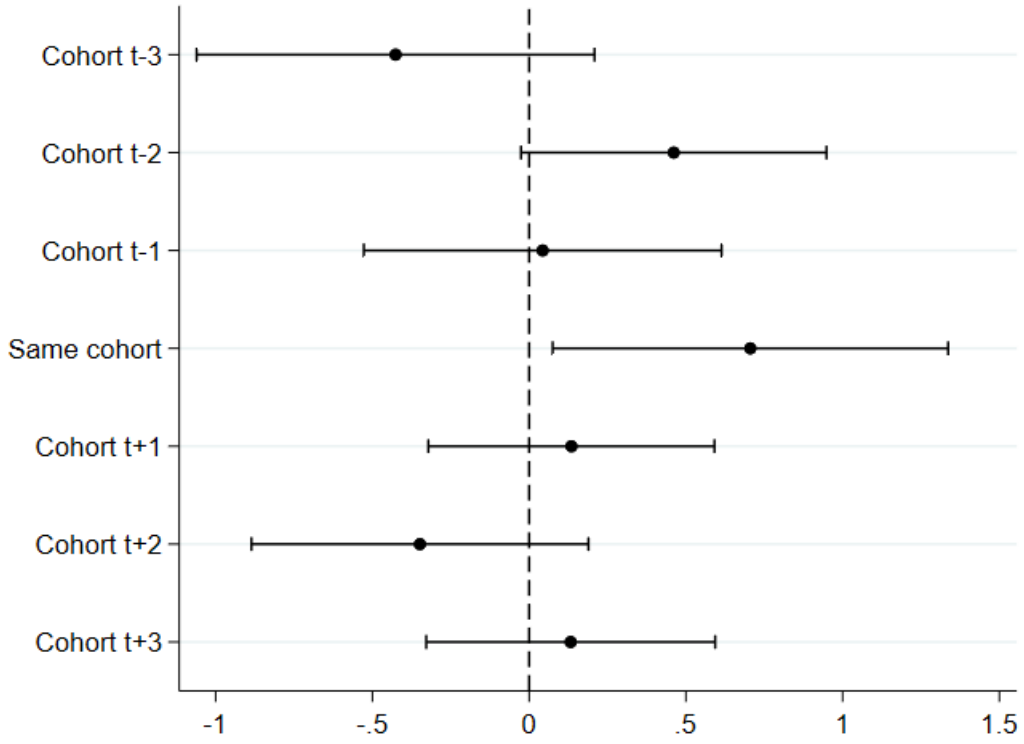


Figure S3: Peer influence by cohort

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of the war-participating cadets from high-slave states (i.e., with a slave population higher than 10%). This figure reports the coefficients of peers from the same cohort t and those from three cohorts before and after t. The coefficients are derived from a multiple regression that includes all controls from our baseline analysis. The bars represent 90% confidence intervals.

B.4 Peer Influence pre and post 1850

Table S5: Peer composition and allegiance choice before and after 1850

Dependent var	Join the Union: war participants			
	1820-1850		1851-1860	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Share low-slave states peers (sd)	0.060**	0.058*	0.045	0.065
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.038)	(0.041)
Age in 1860	0.003	0.021	-0.053*	-0.059*
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.033)
Class rank	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Slave pop. share (sd)	-0.178***		-0.185***	
	(0.025)		(0.039)	
Cohort	-0.000	0.016	-0.055*	-0.071**
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.033)
State FEs	N	Y	N	Y
Dependent var.mean	0.276	0.276	0.297	0.297
Observations	221	221	118	118
R-squared	0.181	0.230	0.181	0.323

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of the war-participating cadets from high-slave states (i.e., with a slave population higher than 10%). The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

B.5 Graduate Peers vs. Dropout Peers

Table S6: Considering dropout peers

Dependent var	Join the Union:war participants			
	High-slave states			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Share low-slave states total peers (sd)	0.060**	0.057**		
	(0.026)	(0.026)		
Share low-slave states graduates (sd)			0.064**	0.062**
			(0.025)	(0.025)
Share low-slave states dropouts (sd)			0.006	-0.000
			(0.024)	(0.023)
Age in 1860	-0.013	-0.003	-0.014	-0.004
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Class rank	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Slave pop. share (sd)	-0.176***		-0.177***	
	(0.019)		(0.019)	
Cohort	-0.017	-0.006	-0.017	-0.007
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
State FEs	N	Y	N	Y
Observations	339	339	339	339
R-squared	0.167	0.216	0.169	0.219

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of the war-participating cadets from high-slave states (i.e., with a slave population higher than 10%). Columns (1)-(2) consider all peers, including those who dropped out. Columns (3)-(4) compare the graduate peers with dropout peers. The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

B.6 Alternative Thresholds

Table S7: Peer composition and allegiance choice: different thresholds

Dependent var	Join the Union: war participants							
	thresholds: 1%				thresholds: 5%			
	high-slave states		low-slave states		high-slave states		low-slave states	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Share low-slave states peers (sd)	0.045**	0.040*	0.004	0.002	0.052**	0.053**	-0.000	-0.004
	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Age in 1860	-0.014	-0.002	0.007	0.005	-0.010	-0.001	0.006	0.005
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Class rank	0.001	0.001	-0.001*	-0.001*	0.001	0.001	-0.001*	-0.001*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Slave pop. share (sd)	-0.214***		-0.009		-0.179***		-0.039**	
	(0.018)		(0.015)		(0.019)		(0.019)	
Cohort	-0.014	-0.003	0.009	0.007	-0.012	-0.002	0.008	0.007
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.007)
State FEs	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Dependent var. mean	0.362	0.362	0.919	0.919	0.318	0.318	0.910	0.910
Observations	389	389	540	540	352	352	577	577
R-squared	0.220	0.268	0.015	0.028	0.168	0.219	0.035	0.053

Note. The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

B.7 Multinomial Logit Results

Table S8: Peer influence and allegiance choice: multinomial logit results

Reference group	Join the Confederacy		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Share low-slave states peers (sd): Join the Union	0.258**	0.318***	0.343***
	(0.111)	(0.121)	(0.130)
Share low-slave states peers (sd): Not in war	-0.010	0.056	0.071
	(0.095)	(0.111)	(0.116)
Controls	N	Y	Y
State FEs	N	N	Y
Observations	600	600	600
Pseudo R-squared	0.005	0.171	0.192

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of all cadets from high-slave states, including those who did not join either army. The results show that peer influence mainly affected whether to join the Union or Confederacy rather than whether to engage in the war. The controls are the same as in our previous analyses. The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

B.8 Correlation between Academic Rank and Military Rank in 1865

Table S9: Academic rank to military rank in 1865 (The Confederacy vs. The Union)

Dependent var	Rank in 1865: war participants					
	The Confederacy			The Union		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Class rank	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	0.006***	0.006***	0.006**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Age in 1860		-0.004	-0.017		-0.034	-0.039
		(0.063)	(0.068)		(0.043)	(0.045)
Slave pop. share (sd)		0.148*			0.029	
		(0.089)			(0.063)	
Cohort		-0.049	-0.065		-0.087**	-0.092**
		(0.061)	(0.066)		(0.042)	(0.044)
State FEs	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
Dependent var.mean	7.516	7.516	7.516	5.848	5.848	5.848
Observations	281	281	281	637	637	637
R-squared	0.000	0.085	0.156	0.010	0.108	0.127

Note. The sample for this analysis consists of individuals who served in the Confederate Army (Columns (1)-(3)) and those who served in the Union Army (Columns (4)-(6)). This table shows that the association between academic rank and military rank is clear in the Union but not in the Confederacy. The standard errors reported in the parentheses are derived from bootstrapping with 400 resampling iterations. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.