Church, State, and Education: School Funding and the Assimilation of Catholic Immigrants in the U.S.*

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Abstract

This paper studies the consequences of Blaine Amendments—constitutional provisions barring public funding for sectarian schools—on Catholic education and immigrant assimilation in the U.S. during the Age of Mass Migration (1850-1920). We combine full-count census data with newly digitized records of Catholic parishes and schools from the *Official Catholic Directory*. Exploiting staggered adoption across states and variation in Catholic population across counties, we show that Blaine Amendments triggered a substantial reduction in Catholic schools and enrollment, particularly in counties with larger Catholic populations, where maintaining schooling systems may have been especially costly. Using individual-level census data, we then examine the downstream effects on assimilation. Catholic immigrants exposed to Blaine during school age were more likely to intermarry, speak English, and naturalize, while those first exposed as adults were more likely to naturalize but less likely to intermarry. However, these effects are muted in larger Catholic communities, consistent with models in which enclaves reduce incentives to assimilate. Our findings highlight how state restrictions on religious schooling reshaped the educational landscape and influenced immigrant integration, offering new evidence on the interplay between schooling, religion, and nation-building.

Keywords: Schooling, economics of religion, immigrant assimilation.
JEL codes: J15, N31, Z12.

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1 Introduction

The modern state has long been understood as a project of unification. From Locke and Rousseau to John Stuart Mill, theorists of liberal democracy viewed public institutions, especially education, as central tools for cultivating civic identity, fostering social cohesion, and legitimizing political authority (Locke, 1690; Rousseau, 1762; Mill, 1861). In pluralistic societies, however, this integrative role can clash with religious, cultural, or linguistic diversity. The state's ambition to forge a shared civic order may conflict with the desire of minority groups to preserve distinct traditions and transmit them across generations. This tension is particularly salient in education, where the state's interest in shaping future citizens directly intersects with family and community control over moral and cultural formation.

This tension raises a foundational question in the design of liberal polities: should the state fund religious schools to accommodate pluralism, or should public support be limited to secular institutions to promote civic unity? In the United States, this debate has been a persistent source of political and legal controversy. It first emerged in the late 19th century, when mass immigration from Catholic-majority countries met a public school system infused with Protestant values (Higham, 1955). In response, Catholic communities—concerned about religious instruction in public schools and the use of the King James Bible—began to establish their own parish-based schools. These Catholic schools aimed to provide religious education, preserve cultural identity, and insulate children from what many viewed as a Protestant moral curriculum.

The growing presence of Catholic schools soon became a focal point of political and cultural tension (Green, 2012). In 1875, Republican Representative James G. Blaine introduced a federal constitutional amendment that would prohibit the allocation of public funds to sectarian schools. While the amendment passed in the House of Representatives, it failed in the Senate. Nonetheless, the proposal catalyzed a wave of state-level reforms. Over the following decades, more than thirty states adopted so-called Blaine Amendments—constitutional provisions that barred public funding for religious schools and codified a stricter separation between church and state (Hamburger, 2002; Green, 2003).

Many of these provisions remain in force. As of 2024, thirty-seven states still include Blaine-type amendments in their constitutions (McCarley, 2023). In recent years, the U.S. Supreme Court has reconsidered the constitutionality of these restrictions in a series of high-profile cases, including *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue (2020)* and *Carson v. Makin (2022)*.[1] Despite the renewed legal and political attention, the consequences of these

[1] In *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, 591 U.S. (2020), the Supreme Court held that excluding religious schools from a publicly funded scholarship program solely on the basis of their religious affiliation violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. In *Carson v. Makin*, 596 U.S. (2022), the Supreme Court held that Maine's exclusion of religious schools from a tuition assistance program for students in districts without public high schools violated the Free Exercise Clause

laws remain poorly understood. Did the exclusion of public funding lead to a contraction in the Catholic school system, or did it prompt religious communities to expand their private efforts? And how did these institutional changes affect the economic and cultural assimilation of Catholic immigrants?

This paper addresses these questions in the historical context in which Blaine Amendments were first enacted. The effects of these laws are *ex ante* ambiguous. On the one hand, prohibiting public funds for religious schools may constrain their finances, leading to closures or reduced enrollment. Immigrant families, in turn, may shift their children into public schools, increasing exposure to the common curriculum and hastening cultural assimilation. On the other hand, restrictions on public support may galvanize local communities to expand private efforts, sustain parish-based schooling, and reinforce cultural identity. The net effect on assimilation depends not only on the direct consequences for schooling but also on how families and communities respond. In models of cultural transmission, parents may substitute direct intergenerational efforts for institutional mechanisms (Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Carvalho et al., 2024). Ultimately, how Blaine-type amendments affected the provision of Catholic education and the downstream assimilation of immigrants is an empirical question.

We assemble a new panel dataset combining full-count U.S. Census microdata from 1880 to 1920 with newly digitized records on the presence of Catholic parishes and schools, drawn from annual volumes of the Official Catholic Directory, published between 1872 and 1925. These directories provide consistent information on the location of Catholic churches, affiliated parochial schools, and related institutions—including enrollment figures, teaching staff, and, in many cases, ethnic or national designations—at the city level. We digitize and georeference these records, and link them to counties using historical boundary maps. The result is a high-resolution panel of Catholic school presence and size across more than 2,000 counties over five decades.

We exploit the staggered adoption of Blaine Amendments across U.S. states between 1872 and 1920, combined with within-state variation in the size of Catholic communities prior to adoption. The empirical strategy builds on the idea that the impact of Blaine laws likely depended on the size of local Catholic population. Larger enclaves may have faced tighter financial constraints given the scale of their school systems, yet they also possessed greater organizational and political capacity to sustain segregation. Smaller communities, by contrast, were more exposed to the withdrawal of public funds and more likely to perceive sharp cultural threats. For these reasons, we focus on the absolute size of Catholic communities, rather than their population share, and use this heterogeneity to capture variation in

of the First Amendment.

the intensity of treatment across counties.

We estimate a county-level generalized difference-in-differences model that compares changes in Catholic school presence and size across counties within the same state with different levels of baseline Catholic presence, before and after Blaine adoption. Our baseline specification includes county fixed effects and state-by-year fixed effects to account for permanent differences across counties and for time-varying state-level factors that may influence both the adoption of Blaine Amendments and Catholic school provision. We also allow for county-specific trends by interacting baseline characteristics with year indicators. To ensure we exploit only variation in the timing of adoption—rather than differences between adopters and non-adopters—we restrict the sample to states that enacted a Blaine Amendment between 1872 and 1920.

We find that the adoption of Blaine Amendments led to a significant contraction in Catholic schooling, especially for counties with a larger Catholic population. Comparing counties at the 75th percentile of the Catholic population distribution to those at the 25th percentile, the number of Catholic schools declined by approximately 10%. School closures may reflect consolidation—smaller schools shutting down while larger ones expanded—so that total enrollment remained stable. In contrast with this possibility, we find that enrollment also fell sharply—by roughly 30%—indicating that school contraction reflected a broader decline in the capacity of the Catholic school system, not just a reallocation across institutions.

Exploring the dynamics of these patterns reveals two important features. First, we find no evidence of differential pre-trends in either the number of Catholic schools or enrollment across counties with different Catholic population shares. This is important for identification: it supports the parallel trends assumption underlying our difference-in-differences strategy and suggests that the results are unlikely to be driven by differential pre-existing trajectories in Catholic schooling. Second, we find that the effects emerge quickly—already within the first year after Blaine adoption—and remain persistent over time. The immediacy of the response suggests that Catholic institutions were financially or operationally constrained and could not easily substitute for lost public support. The persistence of the effects indicates that these were not temporary adjustments, but instead reflected long-term institutional changes in the Catholic educational system.

These results are robust to a range of alternative specifications. First, we include county-specific linear trends to account for the possibility that counties with larger Catholic populations were already on differential trajectories in Catholic school growth prior to Blaine adoption. This addresses concerns that our estimated effects could be driven by ongoing expansion or contraction in Catholic schooling that happened to coincide with state-level

policy changes. Second, we drop counties with the largest Catholic populations within each state to ensure that results are not driven by a small number of counties that may also have influenced state-level legislative decisions. Third, we estimate a stacked-by-event specification following Cengiz et al. (2019), which allows for a flexible event-study style identification strategy without imposing strong assumptions about the functional form of treatment effects across event time. In all cases, results are unchanged.

We further confirm the robustness of our findings along ethnic and demographic dimensions. Leveraging the richness of the data we digitized, we estimate ethnicity-specific regressions that control for ethnicity-by-county and ethnicity-by-year fixed effects. The results are consistent with those from the baseline analysis, and remain stable when excluding German immigrants—a group for whom we cannot reliably distinguish religious affiliation in U.S. Census data.[2] Finally, we show that results hold when extending the sample to include second-generation immigrants.

Next, we turn to the implications of Blaine Amendments for nation building and social cohesion. A central pillar of nation-building projects—explicitly emphasized by reformers who championed Blaine provisions—was the assimilation of immigrants into a common civic culture. Blaine could affect immigrant assimilation through multiple channels. One is the schooling environment, as documented earlier in the paper: children exposed to Blaine during their formative years were more likely to attend public schools and less likely to enroll in Catholic schools. A second channel operates through the family or the broader community. Blaine Amendments may have influenced cultural transmission within the household—from parents or older siblings—or altered norms and behaviors through peer effects, social networks, or changes in local identity salience. Individuals who were of school age when Blaine was adopted could be affected by both mechanisms. In contrast, those who had aged out of schooling by the time of adoption would not be directly exposed to changes in school composition or curriculum, but could still be influenced through indirect channels—especially community-based or horizontal transmission.

To investigate these mechanisms, we compare assimilation outcomes for two groups of Catholic immigrants: those who were of school age when Blaine was adopted in their state, and those who were older at the time. We focus on Catholic immigrants who were between ages 18 and 35 at the time of the census and who had arrived in the U.S. at least three years before the law was introduced in their state of residence.

We begin by estimating a specification that includes indicators for exposure to Blaine during school age and after school age. We find that exposure to Blaine—particularly during

[2]Since German Americans were split between Catholic and Protestant faiths, and religious identity is not directly observable in the census, their inclusion introduces measurement error in treatment intensity.

school age—is associated with higher levels of assimilation. Individuals exposed during school age are more likely to intermarry with natives, to speak English, and to be naturalized; those exposed after school age show higher rates of naturalization and labor force participation, but lower propensity to intermarry. Intermarriage depends on choices by both immigrants and natives, whereas English and naturalization reflect primarily immigrant decisions. The rise in intermarriage for school-age cohorts is consistent with beneficial intergroup contact in schools; the negative intermarriage effect for older cohorts, alongside positive effects on English and naturalization, suggests heightened native resistance outside the school environment or different immigrant trade-offs between private cultural choices (marriage) and investments with civic or economic returns (language, citizenship).

We then interact both exposure indicators with the pre-Blaine Catholic population in the county. We find consistent evidence that community size matters. The school-age intermarriage gain is weaker where the Catholic community is larger, while the post-school-age intermarriage decline is stronger in larger Catholic areas. For English and naturalization, effects of post-school-age exposure are also smaller in larger communities. These patterns line up with models in which larger enclaves reduce returns to assimilation by providing thicker co-ethnic markets and stronger within-group institutions (Lazear, 1999).

This paper contributes to different strands of the literature. First, it contributes to the political economy literature that has examined the role of education in nation-building and ideological formation, often emphasizing the centralizing aims of public school systems in diverse societies (Rohner and Zhuravskaya, 2023). Closely related to our setting, Bandiera et al. (2019) show that U.S. states were more likely to adopt compulsory schooling laws when they had more immigrants from countries with limited exposure to mass education. We complement these papers by focusing on the withdrawal of public support for religious schooling—rather than on the expansion of state education. Our findings also relate to Bazzi et al. (2020), who document how religious schools in Indonesia responded to state entry by adapting their curriculum and structure. While Bazzi et al. (2020) emphasize the supply-side adaptation of religious institutions, we study the downstream effects of institutional change on individual behavior—linking the contraction of Catholic schooling to long-run assimilation outcomes.

Second, by focusing on the impact of withdrawal of public support for Catholic schools, our analysis complements recent work that has studied the role of Catholic institutions in shaping immigrant assimilation during the Age of Mass Migration (Gagliarducci and Tabellini, 2025; Abramitzky et al., 2025). Rather than studying the expansion of religious infrastructure, we examine how constraining it—through state-level restrictions on public funding—reshaped the educational landscape for Catholic immigrants. More broadly, our

findings contribute to the economics of religion literature, which has emphasized how religious institutions shape human capital investment, labor market outcomes, and the intergenerational transmission of norms (Iannaccone, 1992; Barro and McCleary, 2003; Valencia Caicedo, 2019; Squicciarini, 2020).

Third, our results speak to the literature on the development of public education in the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Goldin and Katz, 2008). A long-standing tradition in this literature emphasizes the inclusive features of the American system—local control, public funding, open access, and secularism—as key drivers of broad educational expansion and rising attainment (Goldin and Katz, 2003; Black and Sokoloff, 2006). These accounts highlight how political and institutional design shaped the spread of common schools and, later, the high school movement. Our study complements this work by focusing on a central but contested dimension of that system: the boundary between public and religious education. Because Blaine-type provisions codified the exclusion of sectarian schools from public support at the very moment when the American school system was taking shape, they influenced not only opportunities for religious minorities but also the long-run trajectory of U.S. education. In doing so, we shed new light on how debates over secularism and funding shaped both the expansion of public schooling and patterns of immigrant assimilation.

Finally, we contribute to the literature on immigrant assimilation in the U.S. during the Age of Mass Migration (Lleras-Muney and Shertzer, 2015; Fouka, 2019, 2020; Fouka et al., 2022; Abramitzky and Boustan, 2022; Collins and Zimran, 2023). The school-age findings—higher intermarriage and English acquisition—are consistent with evidence that intergroup contact in schools improves majority–minority relations and accelerates integration (Boisjoly et al., 2006; Rao, 2019; Alan et al., 2021). By contrast, several policy settings show immigrant backlash when the state overtly polices culture or religion (Fouka, 2020; Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020; Dahl et al., 2022; Sakalli, 2019; Wheaton, 2022). We find little backlash of that kind, closer to Fouka (2019) who documents greater assimilation following anti-German sentiment: Blaine constrained religious schooling via funding withdrawal rather than coercing cultural practices, which may have muted defensive responses. The community-size gradients we document dovetail with Lazear (1999): larger enclaves weaken incentives to assimilate by lowering the costs of within-group exchange and reinforcing norm enforcement.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The Age of Mass Migration

Between 1850 and 1920, during the Age of Mass Migration, more than 30 million Europeans migrated to the United States (Abramitzky et al., 2020). Until around 1890, most immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe. After 1890, advances in transportation technology significantly reduced the cost of transatlantic travel (Keeling, 1999), increasing migration volumes and shifting the composition of arrivals toward Southern and Eastern Europe (Abramitzky and Boustan, 2017). In 1870, only 5% of foreign-born residents in the U.S. came from Southern and Eastern Europe; by 1920, this share had grown to 40% (Tabellini, 2020). Immigrants in 1880 were concentrated in the Northeast, parts of the Midwest, and pockets of California (Figure A.1, Panel A). By 1920, immigrant settlement had spread more broadly across the country, though the South continued to host relatively few immigrants (Figure A.1, Panel B).

In 1850, the overwhelming majority of the U.S.-born population was Protestant, and so were most immigrants from "old" sending countries. In contrast, many of the immigrants from the "new" sending regions from Southern and Eastern Europe were Catholic (Fisher, 2002).[3] The influx of Catholic immigrants contributed to a rise in the share of Catholics in the U.S. population—from about 10% in 1850 to almost 20% by 1920 (Carey, 2004). As for overall immigration, also immigrants originating from Catholic majority countries were heavily represented in the Northeast and the industrial Midwest in 1880, with relatively little presence in the South (Figure A.2, Panel A). Yet, Catholic immigrants were clustered in urban centers such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and Milwaukee. By 1920, as overall immigration spread westward, Catholic immigrants also expanded their presence, most visibly along the Pacific coast, with California emerging as a major destination (Figure A.2, Panel B). Catholic immigrants remained comparatively underrepresented in the rural Plains and Mountain West, where Protestant Scandinavian and other non-Catholic immigrant groups predominated.

The change in the size and composition of the immigrant population sparked increasing hostility among native-born Americans, driven not only by labor market concerns but also by cultural and religious anxieties (Higham, 1955; Tabellini, 2020). These tensions culminated in the passage of the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924, which imposed strict national-origin quotas designed to curtail immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. These

[3]The Irish and the Italian were the largest Catholic groups, followed by the Germans and the Poles. Religious affiliation among German immigrants varied by region: those from Bavaria and the Rhineland were typically Catholic, while those from Saxony and Hannover were predominantly Protestant. Immigrants from France, Spain, and Portugal were also overwhelmingly Catholic and contributed to the expansion of the Catholic population in the U.S.

quotas remained in effect until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (King, 2000).

2.2 The Expansion of Catholic Schooling

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a pivotal period in the development of the American school system. Building on the foundations of the Common School Movement, states expanded tax-supported elementary education, introduced compulsory schooling laws, and, by the early 20th century, launched the "high school movement" that made secondary education widely accessible (Kaestle, 1983; Goldin and Katz, 2003, 2008). These reforms reflected a broader push to use education as a nation-building tool, standardizing curricula and extending schooling to ever larger shares of the population. By 1920, the United States had established one of the most extensive public school systems in the world, characterized by local control, secular funding, and near-universal enrollment (Black and Sokoloff, 2006). The Blaine controversies thus unfolded precisely as the institutional architecture of American public education was being consolidated, making debates over the place of religious schools especially consequential for the trajectory of U.S. education.

At the onset of the Age of Mass Migration, however, the common school system reflected a distinctly Protestant character. Public schools sought to integrate diverse populations into a unified national culture through a standardized curriculum, but Catholic traditions and practices were often marginalized. Recently arrived Catholic immigrants challenged elements of public education—including the recitation of Protestant prayers, the singing of hymns, and the use of the King James Bible—as incompatible with their faith (Tyack, 1974). In response, Catholic immigrants began establishing parochial schools to preserve their religious and cultural identity (Moreau, 1997). These schools soon became a cornerstone of Catholic community life.

In Chicago, for example, the number of foreign-language parishes rose from 9 out of 25 in 1869 to 38 out of 80 in 1889, and to 62 out of 117 by the late 1890s. By 1902, 55% of Catholic schoolchildren in Chicago attended ethnically designated schools, underscoring the close link between ethnic identity and Catholic education (Lazerson, 1977). Similar developments occurred in Milwaukee, where large German and Polish Catholic populations supported dozens of parish schools offering instruction in their native languages. By the early 20th century, many of these schools regularly conducted classes in German or Polish—reinforcing ethnic and religious identity through education (Dolan, 1985)

Unlike public schools, which emphasized Protestant-informed biblical instruction, Catholic schools centered their curriculum around Church doctrine, sacramental preparation, and religious obedience. Instruction in Catholic schools also included catechism, Latin prayers, and

church history, often taught by clergy or members of religious orders, reinforcing both theological orthodoxy and deference to ecclesiastical authority (Walch, 1996). These curricular and organizational differences reflected deeper contrasts in institutional aims: public schools emphasized civic assimilation and Protestant moral instruction, while parochial schools were structured to preserve Catholic identity, foster religious formation, and shield children from the perceived cultural risks of mainstream schooling (Tyack, 1974; Kaestle, 1983; Green, 2022).

Initially, the creation of parochial schools was driven by grassroots efforts of local immigrant communities. Over time, however, the Catholic Church assumed a more active role. In 1866, the American Church hierarchy formally declared it the responsibility of each parish to establish a school, signaling a broader institutional commitment to religious education. The 1884 Third Plenary Council of Baltimore further emphasized the need for centralized planning and discipline within the parochial system (Cassidy, 1949). Still, centralization progressed unevenly across regions. In Chicago, Catholic schools before World War I operated as a decentralized network of ethnic parishes, religious orders, and lay institutions, loosely overseen by the bishop. In contrast, the Church in New York developed a more centralized and coordinated structure earlier on (Sanders, 1977). It was not until the 1920s that a more systematic movement toward centralization and standardization took hold nationwide (Walch, 1996).

2.3 The Blaine Amendment

As the Catholic population in the United States expanded in the mid-19th century, so too did its demands for public funding to support Catholic schools. These efforts met fierce opposition from Protestant communities, who feared the growing influence of Catholicism in public life and sought to restrict government support for what they deemed "sectarian" institutions. In many cities and states, local school boards permitted public funds to be allocated to religious schools—including Catholic ones—particularly where no alternative existed. Catholic schools in places like New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore received public appropriations, such as funding for textbooks, teacher salaries, or building maintenance. These arrangements were often informal, ad hoc, or channeled through local political patronage networks. But as Catholic demands for parity grew, they provoked a backlash among Protestant elites who increasingly viewed any public funding of religious schools as a threat to the common school ideal and to Protestant cultural dominance (Tyack, 1974; Green, 2012).

In 1875, Republican Congressman James G. Blaine proposed an amendment to the U.S.

Constitution that would prohibit public funds raised through taxation from being controlled by any religious sect or divided among denominations.[4] While the amendment was formally neutral, it was widely understood to target Catholic institutions specifically. At the same time, it would have allowed Protestant-inflected public schools to continue including religious content, aligning with the nativist and anti-Catholic sentiments that were widespread in the era (Green, 2003).

Although the Blaine Amendment was framed in religiously neutral terms, its practical implications were not. By the late 19th century, few Protestant groups operated separate elementary schools, as their religious values were already embedded in the public school system through Bible readings, hymn singing, and moral instruction. Some denominations—such as Lutherans and Dutch Reformed congregations—did maintain parochial schools, often for linguistic reasons, and earlier in the century a range of Protestant schools had received public funds. But by the 1870s, Catholic schools stood alone in their scale, growth, and explicit request for state support. As a result, Blaine-type provisions—though formally universal—were understood by contemporaries as targeting Catholic institutions specifically (Tyack, 1974; Kaestle, 1983; Green, 2022).

The Blaine Amendment enjoyed broad support from the public and from many Protestant political leaders, and initially passed the House with a comfortable margin. But it faced strong opposition in the Senate. Democratic lawmakers, including Senator Lewis Bogy of Missouri and Senator John Stevenson of Kentucky, argued that the proposal was a partisan maneuver intended to inflame anti-Catholic prejudice (Green, 2012). Southern Democrats, in particular, feared that the amendment would open the door to greater federal involvement in education, long considered a matter of state and local control. Ultimately, the measure failed in the Senate in 1876—just one vote short of the required two-thirds majority.

Despite its defeat at the federal level, the Blaine Amendment had a profound legacy at the state level. Even before 1875, at least fifteen states had enacted laws or constitutional provisions restricting public funding for religious schools (Viteritti, 1998). Some states, such as Michigan, incorporated such clauses at the time of statehood (Green, 2003), while others—like Massachusetts—amended their constitutions in response to shifting public sentiment (Green, 2012). In the decades following the failed federal amendment, many more states adopted similar provisions (Figure A.3).

The motivations behind these laws varied: in some cases, they were driven by explicit anti-Catholic sentiment; in others, they reflected broader commitments to secularism or state-led educational reform. As legal historian Philip Hamburger notes, the 19th-century

[4]Congress had previously debated similar restrictions in 1871 and 1872, but earlier amendment proposals had failed (Viteritti, 1998).

push for church–state separation evolved into a distinctively American principle, deeply influenced by both liberal and nativist currents in the politics of religious liberty (Goldenziel, 2005). Institutional diffusion also played a role, as states like Wisconsin borrowed constitutional language from earlier models in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. Moreover, the nine new states admitted to the Union between 1889 and 1910 were required by Congress to include Blaine-like provisions in their constitutions as a condition of statehood, reflecting the continued dominance of Republican anti-Catholic sentiment in federal policy during that period.

The financial consequences of Blaine-type provisions were substantial. Before their adoption, Catholic schools often relied on a patchwork of public support—land grants, subsidies for services, or direct appropriations—that could cover 10–20% of their budgets.[5] Once these funds were cut off, parochial schools were left to depend almost entirely on private resources. Diocesan or parish transfers accounted for roughly 30% of revenues, tuition fees covered about 60%, and the remaining gap was closed through donations and the unpaid labor of religious orders such as teaching nuns. The withdrawal of public funding therefore forced Catholic schools either to sharply raise contributions from families and parishes or to contract their operations. In this sense, Blaine Amendments amounted to a large and sudden fiscal shock: whether they led to closures or instead spurred communities to mobilize new resources depended critically on local capacity and resilience.

Anecdotal and historical accounts suggest that local reactions to Blaine Amendments were highly heterogeneous (Tyack, 1974; Walch, 1996). In some communities—particularly those with financially fragile Catholic schools—the withdrawal of public support posed an immediate threat to the viability of religious education. Parish leaders feared that Catholic institutions would be forced to close, accelerating assimilation on Protestant terms. In Faribault, Minnesota, for example, a parochial school on the brink of collapse informed the public school board in August 1891 that it would send its students to public schools unless assistance could be secured (O'Connell, 1988).

Elsewhere, however, Blaine-like provisions galvanized Catholic communities. In cities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, and New York, dioceses ramped up fundraising, lay participation expanded, and ethnic parishes accelerated school construction in defense of religious and cultural autonomy. In Massachusetts, where a state constitutional amendment had long restricted support for sectarian education, the Church responded by consolidating diocesan authority and professionalizing school administration (Walch, 1996; Green, 2012). In Philadelphia, the parochial system expanded significantly under Archbishop Ryan in the

[5]According to the *Report of the Commissioner of Education* of 1901, the amount of public funding accruing to private schools in never-adopting states (reporting private schools) was: AK 26.69%, ME 20.73%, TE 14.40%, CT 13.90%, NC 11.84%, NJ 9.49%, NH 6.21%, VT 1.51% (see Figure A.6).

1890s, who saw self-reliant Catholic schools as both a bulwark against Protestant assimilation and a means of affirming communal identity.

At the national level, the Church also moved toward greater institutional coherence. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore (1884) formally founded the Catholic University of America as a flagship institution for Catholic higher education. This was part of a broader push to coordinate religious schooling across the country—from parish schools and academies to colleges and seminaries. In the years that followed, Catholic teachers formed their own associations, and in 1904 these efforts culminated in the creation of the Catholic Educational Association, which was renamed the National Catholic Educational Association in 1927 (O'Gorman and O'Keefe, 2013).

These contrasting responses underscore the dual effect of Blaine-era restrictions: they constrained Catholic education in some settings but also served as a catalyst for institutional consolidation and cultural mobilization in others. Our empirical analysis below will capture the net of these opposing effects.

3 Data

We construct a novel panel dataset at the county level by merging information from three main sources: digitized records of Catholic institutions, historical U.S. Census data, and newly compiled data on the timing of Blaine Amendments across states. This section describes the three core components of the dataset. Additional details and a comprehensive variable list are available in an online appendix.

Catholic schools. We digitize historical editions of the *Official Catholic Directory* (OCD), published annually between 1872 and 1925, to document the presence and characteristics of Catholic institutions across the United States. These volumes report the location, affiliation, and activity of Catholic churches and their associated organizations—including schools, hospitals, orphanages, and seminaries—at the city and parish level.[6] A subset of this digitized material is also used in Gagliarducci and Tabellini (2025); in this paper, we expand on that work by systematically extracting information on parish-affiliated schools, including enrollment, number of teachers, and, when available, the ethnic denomination of the parish. We georeferenced these institutions using historical boundary maps and assign them to counties, harmonizing geographic units to 1930 boundaries following (Perlman, 2016). The result is a county-level panel that tracks Catholic school presence and size in more than 2,000 counties from 1872 to 1920.

Figure 1 maps the distribution of Catholic schools across U.S. counties in 1872 (Panel A)

[6] See Figure A.4 and Figure A.5 for samples from the original documents.

and 1925 (Panel B), illustrating the substantial expansion of Catholic education over this period. Catholic schools were initially concentrated in Northeastern and Midwestern urban centers with large Irish and German populations, but gradually spread westward and into parts of the South as migration from Southern and Eastern Europe intensified. Figure 2 further documents this expansion, showing a marked increase in the number of schools throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The growth was especially pronounced in counties with high Catholic immigrant presence, reflecting both demographic demand and institutional investment by the Church.

Census data. We use full-count microdata from the U.S. Census (1870–1920) to construct measures of Catholic presence, immigrant characteristics, and other variables. Our analysis focuses on first-generation immigrants from Catholic-majority countries, whom we identify using country of birth. We classify immigrants from the following countries as Catholic: Italy, Ireland, Poland, France, Spain, and Portugal. A special case is Germany, where religious affiliation varied substantially by region of origin. Because religion is not directly observed in our data, we follow the methodology of Abramitzky et al. (2020), who infer individuals' religious affiliation based on their names. We compute a Catholic score for each last name (first name, if the last name is missing), ranging from 0 to 100, based on the average share of individuals with that name who self-reported as Catholic in a representative 5% sample of the Canadian Censuses of 1881, 1911, and 1921, in which respondents were classified as either Catholic or Protestant. This score provides a probabilistic measure of Catholic affiliation. We then use this score to approximate the religious background of German-origin individuals, assigning greater weight to those whose names are more strongly associated with Catholicism when computing the size of the Catholic immigrant population.

We use the census data in two ways. First, we aggregate individual records to the county level to construct baseline (1870) characteristics and to measure local exposure to Blaine Amendments, proxied by the size of the Catholic immigrant population prior to adoption. Second, we use the individual-level data to analyze the impact of Blaine Amendments on immigrant assimilation between 1880 and 1920.[7] Our primary indicator of social assimilation is intermarriage: a binary variable equal to one if the respondent is married to a U.S.-born spouse of U.S.-born parents. This is a standard measure in the literature (Fouka et al., 2022; Gagliarducci and Tabellini, 2025) and has been described as "the final stage of assimilation" (Gordon, 1964). We complement this with information on ability to speak English and naturalization status.[8] As indicators of economic assimilation, we use a dummy for labor force

[7]We begin measuring immigrant assimilation outcomes in 1880, because this is the first census year in which most variables are consistently available.

[8]Naturalization is defined for male immigrants aged 21 and older who have resided in the U.S. for at least five years. Historical evidence suggests that rejection rates were negligible at the time, so naturalization primarily reflects the immigrant's willingness to acquire citizenship, rather than selective screening by native-born officials (Biavaschi et al., 2017; Gagliarducci

participation and a continuous occupational income score derived from historical earnings data.[9] Detailed variable definitions are provided in Table **??**. Table A.2 shows summary statistics of county (Panel A) and individual (Panel B) variables.

Blaine Amendment legislation. To track restrictions on public funding for religious schools, we compile data on the adoption of Blaine Amendments across U.S. states between 1870 and 1920, drawing on historical records provided by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (CCR, 2007). These provisions—enacted as constitutional amendments or statutory clauses—barred the use of public funds for sectarian institutions, often with language explicitly excluding schools controlled by any religious sect. We construct a binary indicator equal to one if a Blaine-type provision is active in a given state-year. In our preferred specification, so as to only exploit variation in the timing of adoption, we restrict the analysis to the 26 states that enacted such provisions between 1872 and 1920 (Table A.1).

4 Conceptual Framework

The effects of Blaine Amendments on Catholic schooling, nation building, and immigrant assimilation are *ex ante* ambiguous. These laws revoked public funding for sectarian schools, thereby altering both the supply of Catholic education and the broader institutional environment faced by Catholic immigrant communities. The consequences of this policy shift may depend critically on the size and resilience of the local Catholic population.

On the schooling side, the withdrawal of public support imposed financial pressure on parochial schools, potentially forcing closures or contraction. Yet, the extent of the decline may vary by community size. On the one hand, larger Catholic communities might be better equipped to withstand fiscal shocks—through enhanced fundraising capacity, economies of scale in operations, and stronger lay mobilization. On the other hand, these communities faced greater demand for schooling, and public subsidies may have been especially critical to sustain the institutional infrastructure required to meet that demand. Thus, whether Blaine Amendments led to the collapse or adaptation of Catholic schooling institutions likely depended on the balance between financial need and organizational capacity—both of which are shaped by community size. A priori, it is ambiguous whether larger communities were more or less vulnerable than smaller ones: they may have been better positioned to compensate for lost funding, or alternatively, more exposed due to the scale of services they needed to maintain.

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and Tabellini, 2025).

[9] Following the literature (Abramitzky et al., 2014; Fouka et al., 2022), we restrict economic outcomes to men, given the low levels of female labor force participation in this period.

The implications for nation building, social cohesion, and immigrant assimilation are similarly nuanced. One mechanism runs through changes in schooling exposure. If Catholic schools closed and children transitioned into the public system, they may have encountered different curricula, more interactions with non-Catholics, and stronger incentives to conform to mainstream cultural norms. This could promote assimilation—both culturally and economically. However, parents may respond by withdrawing children from school altogether—either in protest or out of concern about the Protestant orientation of public education (Carvalho et al., 2024). These responses could lead to lower educational attainment and slower assimilation.

Beyond the school environment, Blaine Amendments could also trigger family and community responses, which might amplify or mitigate the direct institutional effects. For instance, in communities where school closures created perceived threats to religious identity, families might double down on cultural transmission within the household (Bisin and Verdier, 2001). Peer networks, parish organizations, and ethnic associations could also serve as vehicles for reinforcing Catholic identity in response to external pressure. Crucially, the strength and direction of these forces may depend on the size of the local Catholic population. In larger enclaves, dense networks and robust institutions may buffer the effects of Blaine and facilitate cultural resistance. Yet the opposite dynamic is also possible: in smaller, more isolated communities, the threat of cultural extinction may heighten identity salience and generate stronger informal pressures to preserve religious practices and social boundaries—discouraging assimilation and punishing deviation. In contrast, larger communities may offer more room for individual variation while still preserving collective identity, potentially softening internal pressures against integration.

Overall, the effects of Blaine Amendments reflect the interaction of multiple mechanisms—operating through schools, households, and communities. These mechanisms can work in opposing directions, and their strength likely varies with local demographics. Our empirical analysis captures the net effect of these forces.

5 Catholic Schools and Enrollment

This section examines the effects of Blaine Amendments on the presence and size of Catholic schools. Section 5.1 outlines the empirical strategy. Section 5.2 presents the main results, showing that Blaine Amendments led to a decline in both the number of Catholic schools and student enrollment, with larger effects in counties with greater Catholic presence. Section 5.3 extrapolates the total effect of Blaine Amendments on Catholic schools and enrollment at the state level. Section 5.4 demonstrates that these findings are robust to a range of

specifications and additional controls.

5.1 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the effect of Blaine Amendments, we combine the staggered adoption of the laws implemented between 1872 and 1920 across states with cross-sectional variation in the size of Catholic communities within states. The intuition is that Blaine-type restrictions targeted areas with larger Catholic communities, where a higher number of religious schools were in operation and reliant on indirect public support. We stack the data at the county-by-(calendar) year level from 1872 to 1920 and estimate a two-way fixed effects model:

$$y_{ct} = \gamma_c + \mu_{st} + \beta Blaine_{st} \times C_c + \theta X_{ct} + \epsilon_{ct} \tag{1}$$

where y_{ct} is either the log number of Catholic schools or the log number of pupils enrolled in Catholic schools in county c in state s in year t, $Blaine_{st}$ is a dummy variable equal to one if the Blaine Amendment was in place in state s in year t, and C_c denotes the size of the Catholic population in county c in the Census before Blaine adoption in state s. We measure Catholic presence as the number of first-generation immigrants from Catholic-majority countries (see Section 3), using either school-aged children (ages 5–15) or total population. The model also includes county fixed effects (γ_c), state-by-year fixed effects (μ_{st}), as well as interactions between time-invariant county-level characteristics and year fixed effects (X_{ct}). To ensure that identification comes only from the timing of adoption, the preferred specification restricts the sample to states that implemented a Blaine-type provision between 1872 and 1920.[10] Standard errors are clustered at the state level, and observations are weighted by the number of Catholic immigrants in the prior Census year.

Equation (1) exploits variation across counties in their baseline Catholic presence within the same state and year, thereby controlling flexibly for unobserved state-level shocks, including factors that may have influenced both the timing of Blaine adoption and trends in Catholic school expansion or enrollment. The identifying assumption is that, in the absence of Blaine adoption, the trajectory of Catholic schooling would have evolved similarly across counties with different levels of Catholic population within the same state. To relax this assumption, the baseline specification further allows counties to follow differential trends driven by broader shifts in local schooling environments. Specifically, we interact year dummies with the number of non-Catholic immigrant children aged 5–15 and the number

[10] In the baseline specification, we also exclude counties with fewer than ten Catholic immigrants before Blaine adoption. Results are robust to using alternative thresholds or removing the restriction entirely.

of non-Catholic teachers in 1870.[11] These reduce concerns that the estimated effects are not confounded by broader shifts in school demand or teacher availability. The preferred specification also interacts year dummies with a richer set of county-level characteristics measured in 1870—including total population, the Black population share, the urban population share, labor force participation, the manufacturing employment share, and years since the arrival of the railroad—to account for potential differences in local demographic and economic trajectories that could affect both Catholic schooling and responses to Blaine.

In Section 5.4 below, we perform several robustness checks that support the validity of the empirical strategy. First, we show that there are no differential pre-trends in Catholic school outcomes across counties with varying Catholic populations. Second, we include county-specific linear trends to account for the possibility that more Catholic counties were already on different growth trajectories prior to Blaine. Third, we exclude counties with the largest Catholic populations in each state to ensure that results are not driven by a few influential areas that may have affected state-level policy. Fourth, we estimate a stacked-by-event specification following Cengiz et al. (2019), which flexibly accounts for variation in treatment timing and relaxes the common-trends assumption.

Finally, we assess robustness across sub-samples defined by immigrant ethnicity and generation. We (i) exclude German immigrants, for whom religious affiliation cannot be reliably identified in the Census; (ii) estimate ethnicity-specific regressions that include ethnicity-by-county and ethnicity-by-year fixed effects; and (iii) extend the sample to include second-generation immigrants to verify that the patterns are not unique to the first generation. These and additional robustness checks are discussed in detail in Section 5.4 after presenting the results.

5.2 Results

Table 1 presents the results for the log of the number of schools, interacting Blaine adoption with the pre-Blaine number of Catholic children aged 5 to 15 in Panel A and total Catholic population in Panel B. Column 1 includes only county and year fixed effects. Column 2 adds state-by-year fixed effects to account for state-specific shocks in each year. Column 3 introduces interactions between baseline county characteristics (including the pre-Blaine Catholic population) and year dummies. Column 4 restricts the sample to states that even-

[11] The number of non-Catholic teachers is constructed as the difference between the number of individuals who reported to be a teacher in the Census and the number of Catholic teachers identified in the Catholic Directories. We tested the validity of this proxy using newly collected county-level data from the state *Superintendent of Public Instruction* reports available between 1880 and 1920 for California (1880-1910), Florida, Montana and North Dakota (1900-1920), Oregon (1900-1910 and 1920), Pennsylvania (1910), Vermont (1880-1900), Virginia (1880-1920 except for 1910), Washington (1920). For these states, we find a positive and statistically significant association between the number of public school teachers from the state reports and those obtained from the Censuses (Figure B.1), no matter if we include (left panel) or exclude (right panel) the Catholic teachers.

tually adopted a Blaine-type amendment by 1920, so that identification relies solely on within-state timing variation.

In all cases, the coefficient on the interaction between Blaine and Catholic presence is negative and statistically significant. Estimates are stable across specifications, indicating that the effect is not sensitive to changes in control structure or sample definition. The results show that Blaine adoption led to greater school contraction in counties with larger Catholic populations. In our preferred specification (column 4), a one standard deviation increase in pre-Blaine Catholic population predicts a 10% larger decline in the number of Catholic schools.

The reduction in the number of schools does not necessarily imply a proportional decline in enrollment—for example, if smaller schools were closed and larger ones expanded. To examine this, we turn to Table 2, which reports results for the log number of students enrolled in Catholic schools. The table follows the same structure as the previous one. Across all specifications, the coefficient on the interaction between Blaine adoption and Catholic population is again negative and statistically significant. This suggests that the observed school closures were not offset by consolidation, but instead led to a substantial reduction in Catholic school enrollment. According to our preferred estimate in column 4, a one standard deviation increase in pre-Blaine Catholic population corresponds to a 30% larger decline in enrollment.

To examine the dynamic effects of Blaine adoption, we estimate an event-study version of equation (1), replacing the post-Blaine indicator with a full set of event-time dummies interacted with the pre-Blaine Catholic population. Because we can only estimate ten coefficients out of eleven relative years, we normalize the coefficient in the year before adoption to zero.[12] We present results in Figure 4, plotting the estimated coefficients for both measures of Catholic presence—Catholic children aged 5 to 15 and total Catholic population. Panel A reports results for the log number of Catholic schools, while panel B shows the log number of enrolled pupils.

For both outcomes, the estimates display no evidence of differential trends prior to Blaine adoption, supporting the parallel trends assumption. Starting one year after Blaine adoption, we observe a sharp and persistent decline in both the number of schools and enrollment, concentrated in counties with larger Catholic populations. The effects are stable over time for enrollment, while for school counts the magnitude of the effect appears to taper slightly after five years. Estimates for school closures are somewhat less precise than those for

[12] As in equation (1), we include county fixed effects, state by year fixed effects, and interaction between baseline characteristics and year dummies. The model also includes two additional indicators—one for Blaine adoption occurring before $t-4$ and one for adoption after $t+6$—which absorb outlying event-time observations. These coefficients are omitted from the figure for clarity.

enrollment, but the pattern of institutional contraction remains clear in both panels. These findings are consistent with a sustained reduction in Catholic educational provision following the withdrawal of public support.

5.3 Implied Overall Effect of Blaine

As noted above, we cannot directly estimate the overall effect of Blaine Amendments at the state level once state-by-year fixed effects are included. However, we can approximate it by recovering the residual state-by-year fixed effects from equation (1) and regressing them on years relative to the standardized date of Blaine adoption. Under reasonable assumptions, these residuals capture the average state-level impact of Blaine after accounting for county fixed effects, county characteristics interacted with year effects, and—crucially—heterogeneity in the treatment effect arising from differences in county Catholic population size.

Figure A.8 reports the results. Red (blue) dots represent the estimated state-by-year effects before (after) the adoption of a Blaine Amendment. The estimates show a sharp and precise decline in Catholic schooling following adoption: the share of Catholic pupils falls by about 14%, while the number of schools declines by roughly 7%. These magnitudes underscore that Blaine Amendments had a substantial and systematic effect in weakening Catholic educational institutions at the state level.

5.4 Robustness Checks

In this section, we conduct a series of robustness checks to assess the validity of the baseline estimates presented in Section 5.2. First, we formally test for pre-trends using the approach proposed by Rambachan and Roth (2023), which constructs robust confidence intervals for event-study coefficients under bounded deviations from trend parallelism.[13] Figure A.7 presents the results. Each panel plots the treatment effect estimates for the number of Catholic schools (Panels A and B) and enrolled pupils (Panels C and D), using two alternative exposure measures—Catholic children aged 5 to 15 and total Catholic population, respectively. The x-axis reports values of M, which scale the size of the allowed deviation from parallel trends. For enrollment outcomes, the estimated effect remains statistically distinguishable from zero for moderate values of M, indicating that the decline in enrollment is unlikely to be driven by violations of the identifying assumption. In contrast, the results for the number of schools are more sensitive. The confidence intervals cross zero at relatively

[13]This approach allows the post-treatment effect to be contaminated by extrapolated pre-trends, subject to a constraint governed by the parameter M, which reflects the allowable magnitude of such deviations. The resulting confidence intervals help assess whether the estimated effects could plausibly be explained by pre-existing trends in the data.

small values of M, suggesting that the school count estimates are less robust to trend violations. This likely reflects the fact that the event-study coefficients for school counts are more variable and less precisely estimated than those for enrollment, as already visible in the confidence intervals of the underlying event-study plots.

Next, we add county-specific linear time trends to the baseline specification, allowing each county to follow its own trajectory in Catholic schooling independent of treatment status. This addresses concerns that counties with larger Catholic populations may have been on different growth paths prior to Blaine adoption. As shown in column 2 of Tables A.3 andA.4, the results remain stable and statistically indistinguishable from the baseline estimates (reported in column 1 for comparison). We then assess the influence of high-weight counties. In column 3, we exclude the county with the largest Catholic population in each state. In column 4, we exclude the top 5% of counties by Catholic population size. In both cases, the results remain consistent, alleviating concerns that our findings are driven by politically influential or demographically dominant counties.

In column 5, we implement a stacked difference-in-differences design following Cengiz et al. (2019). This approach estimates treatment effects relative to the year of Blaine adoption for each state cohort, without imposing strong assumptions about common trends across all units. Reassuringly, results are unchanged.

We also examine the robustness of our results to alternative constructions of Catholic population. In column 6, we expand the measure of Catholic presence to include second-generation Catholic children—defined as U.S.-born children of foreign-born parents from Catholic-majority countries. In column 7, we exclude German immigrants from the Catholic population measure. This addresses potential misclassification, as German Americans were religiously heterogeneous and their affiliation cannot be reliably identified in the Census. In both cases, the estimates remain stable, indicating that our findings are not driven by measurement error in the construction of Catholic exposure.

Finally, we replicate the analysis using a more granular dataset stacked at the ethnicity-by-county-by-year level. We estimate specifications that include ethnicity-by-county and ethnicity-by-year fixed effects, allowing for flexible controls over ethnic-specific trends in school outcomes across space and time. The results, shown in column 8, are consistent with our main findings, suggesting that the estimated effects are not driven by changes in ethnic composition or unobserved group-specific shocks.

6 Immigrant Assimilation

In this section, we examine how Blaine Amendments affected the assimilation of Catholic immigrants, using individual-level data from the full-count Censuses between 1880 and 1920. Section 6.1 outlines the empirical strategy. Section 6.2 presents the results, showing that Blaine Amendments increased immigrant assimilation, particularly among those exposed during school age, with weaker effects in areas with larger Catholic communities.

6.1 Empirical Strategy

To study the effects of Blaine Amendments on the assimilation of Catholic immigrants, we use individual-level data from the full-count U.S. Censuses between 1880 and 1920. The analysis relies on repeated cross-sections of first-generation Catholic immigrants residing in the 35 states that enacted a Blaine provision between 1872 and 1920. We restrict the sample to individuals aged 18–35 at the time of enumeration who had arrived in the United States at least three years before Blaine was enacted in their state of residence.[14] We also exclude German immigrants, for whom it is tricky to define the religious affiliation.

As discussed in Section 4, Blaine Amendments could shape assimilation through two main channels. The first operates via schooling: closures or contractions of Catholic schools altered the educational environment facing children. The second reflects family and community responses—parents, siblings, parish networks, and peers reinforcing or resisting cultural transmission in the face of institutional change. Immigrants who were already older than school age when Blaine was enacted could be affected only through this second channel, while those who were of schooling age at the time could be exposed to both. To disentangle these mechanisms, we estimate the following specification:

$$y_{ics\tau} = \gamma_c + \mu_{s\tau} + \beta_1 BlS_{is\tau} + \beta_2 BlNS_{is\tau} + \theta X_{ic\tau} + \epsilon_{ics\tau} \tag{2}$$

where $y_{ics\tau}$ denotes an assimilation outcome for individual i in county c, state s, and census year τ. The variable $BlS_{is\tau}$ equals one if the individual was aged 5–15 (and thus likely to be in school) when Blaine was in effect in their state, while $BlNS_{is\tau}$ equals one if Blaine was active between the individual's arrival and census year but after age 15 (and thus unlikely to be in school). The omitted category consists of individuals not exposed to Blaine during this window. The model always includes county fixed effects (γ_c), state-by-decade fixed effects ($\mu_{s\tau}$), and a vector of baseline county characteristics interacted with Census year dummies

[14] The arrival restriction ensures individuals were present in the U.S. at the time of exposure. Relaxing it does not affect the results.

as well as individual-level controls ($X_{ic\tau}$).[15] We cluster standard errors at the state level.

As shown in Section 5, the effects of Blaine were mediated by the size of the Catholic community: both the number of schools and enrollment declined more in counties with larger Catholic immigrant populations. This suggests that the schooling channel should be stronger in areas where Catholic presence was greater. At the same time, the community-based responses to Blaine may also vary with community size. For example, in larger enclaves dense networks and parish institutions could buffer the loss of schools and sustain cultural resistance, while in smaller, more dispersed communities parents may have faced stronger pressures to integrate into mainstream institutions. To capture these heterogeneous effects, we further interact the $BlS_{is\tau}$ and $BlNS_{is\tau}$ indicators with the size of the Catholic population in the county in the census decade preceding Blaine adoption:

$$y_{ics\tau} = \gamma_c + \mu_{s\tau} + \beta_1 BlS_{is\tau} + \beta_2 BlNS_{is\tau} + \beta_3 BlS_{is\tau} \times C_c + \beta_4 BlNS_{is\tau} \times C_c + \theta X_{ic\tau} + \epsilon_{ics\tau} \quad (3)$$

where everything is as in equation (2), and C_c denotes the size of the Catholic immigrant population in the county in the decade prior to Blaine adoption.

6.2 Results

The effects of Blaine Amendments. We present results from equation (2) in Table 3. Column 1 focuses on immigrants who report being married at the time of the census, using as the dependent variable an indicator equal to one if the respondent is married to a U.S.-born of U.S.-born parentage. The estimates reveal opposite effects depending on the age of exposure to Blaine. For those exposed while of school age, the coefficient is positive and precisely estimated: exposure increases the likelihood of intermarriage by 0.61 percentage points, or about 20.9% relative to the sample mean. By contrast, for those first exposed after school age, the coefficient is negative, though less precisely estimated: these individuals are 0.43 percentage points less likely to intermarry, corresponding to a 14.7% decline relative to the mean.

One interpretation is that exposure to Blaine during formative years altered schooling environments in ways that increased daily contact with natives, facilitating long-term cultural integration and making intermarriage more likely. In contrast, exposure only in adulthood may have had the opposite effect. Outside the school context, Blaine may have fostered segregation—either by triggering backlash reactions within Catholic communities or by signaling to natives that Catholics were a distinct outgroup. Such dynamics could have reinforced

[15] Baseline county characteristics are as in equation (1). Individual controls are gender, age, years in the U.S., and country of birth dummies.

social distance and reduced opportunities for intermarriage.

In column 2, we examine English proficiency. The dependent variable is an indicator equal to one if the individual reports being able to speak English. The coefficients are positive and statistically significant for both exposure groups, suggesting that Blaine increased incentives to acquire English skills among both those of school age and those older at the time of adoption. The magnitudes are sizable: exposure raises the likelihood of speaking English by 4.94 percentage points (7.5% relative to the mean) for those exposed while in school, and by 3.32 percentage points (5.1% relative to the mean) for those exposed after school. The larger effect for the school-age group is consistent with schooling as a direct channel of assimilation. More surprising is the positive effect for those first exposed as adults, especially in light of the negative effect on intermarriage documented in column 1.

One interpretation is that intermarriage reflects the joint decisions of both immigrants and natives, and the decline may have been driven partly by increased prejudice or social boundaries imposed by natives, rather than by immigrant choices alone. By contrast, learning English is more directly under immigrant control. Another interpretation is that backlash within Catholic communities may have been stronger around culturally charged behaviors like intermarriage, while the economic and social returns to English proficiency remained high—even rising as public schools became more central—encouraging investments in language acquisition regardless of community resistance.

In column 3, we turn to naturalization, restricting the sample to men aged 21 and older who had resided in the U.S. for at least five years. The coefficients are again positive and statistically significant, and notably larger for those exposed after school age. Individuals exposed while in school are 3.6 percentage points more likely to be naturalized (9.5% relative to the mean), while those first exposed as adults are 11.1 percentage points more likely (29% relative to the mean). These patterns contrast with the negative effects on intermarriage but align with the results for English proficiency.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the decline in intermarriage reflects discrimination and social barriers imposed by natives rather than immigrant backlash. For outcomes more directly under immigrant control—such as learning English or applying for citizenship—exposure to Blaine appears to have increased assimilation efforts. At the same time, it remains possible that immigrants responded differently across domains: intermarriage involves deeply cultural and social choices, while naturalization is a more explicitly political act.

Finally, we examine the effects of Blaine exposure on economic assimilation. Following the standard approach in the economic history literature, we restrict attention to men, given the very low levels of female labor force participation during this period (Abramitzky et al.,

2014; Gagliarducci and Tabellini, 2025). In column 4, the dependent variable is an indicator equal to one if the individual is in the labor force. Here the effects are smaller in magnitude and less precisely estimated. Exposure during school age yields a negative but small and statistically insignificant coefficient, while exposure after school age produces a positive and statistically significant effect, though quantitatively modest.

Heterogeneity by community size. In Table 4, we extend the analysis by estimating equation (3) to examine how the effects of Blaine exposure varied with the size of the local Catholic community. The table mirrors the structure of the previous one, but now includes interactions between Blaine exposure and pre-Blaine Catholic population. This allows us to test whether larger communities amplified or dampened assimilation responses, consistent with the mechanisms discussed in Section 4.

In all cases, the main effects remain similar to those reported earlier in Table 3. For intermarriage (column 1), the interaction terms are both negative. This pattern makes intuitive sense: in places with stronger Catholic enclaves, individuals had less incentive (or, fewer opportunities) to intermarry because large co-ethnic marriage markets and stronger communal norms lowered the "returns" to marrying outside the group. Put differently, the costs of crossing cultural boundaries were higher where the community could sustain endogamy.

Turning to ability to speak English (column 2), the interaction effect is positive (though not statistically significant) for those exposed during school age, but negative and statistically significant for those exposed afterward. This suggests that the incentives to learn English were strongest for children pushed into public schools by Blaine, regardless of enclave size, while for adults and older youth, living in larger Catholic communities reduced the need to acquire English. Peer networks and the availability of co-ethnic services could insulate older immigrants from the necessity of learning the majority language, dampening the assimilation effect.

The results for naturalization (column 3) show a similar pattern: the coefficient on the interaction term is negative for both exposure during school age and exposure after school age, with the effects being larger and statistically significant for exposure after school age. This again aligns with the view that larger communities reduced incentives for civic integration. When co-ethnic institutions were strong, naturalization may have been less necessary to access resources or political representation. Moreover, larger communities may have reinforced identity policing: when cultural institutions are dense, deviations from group norms—such as naturalizing or adopting majority practices—are more easily observed and sanctioned.

Results for economic assimilation are mixed: for labor force participation (column 4), coefficients on the interaction terms are quantitatively small and not statistically significant.

These findings are consistent with Lazear (1999), which predicts that assimilation incentives are weaker in larger enclaves because individuals can transact, socialize, and marry within their group at lower cost. In smaller communities, by contrast, interaction with the majority is unavoidable, raising the payoff to assimilation. Our results echo this logic: the assimilation-promoting effects of Blaine are attenuated in larger Catholic enclaves, highlighting the importance of local demographic context in shaping the consequences of institutional shocks.

7 Conclusions

Education has long stood at the center of debates over how liberal states should balance civic unity with cultural pluralism. The case of the Blaine Amendments—constitutional provisions barring public funding for sectarian schools—offers a unique historical lens into this tension. Adopted across more than thirty states during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these laws reshaped the educational opportunities of Catholic immigrants. We study this episode by combining newly digitized records of Catholic parishes and schools from the Official Catholic Directory with full-count U.S. Census microdata. Exploiting the staggered adoption of Blaine provisions and county-level differences in Catholic population, we estimate how these laws affected both the supply of Catholic schooling and the assimilation of immigrants.

Our analysis shows that Blaine Amendments led to a significant contraction in Catholic education. Counties with larger Catholic populations experienced sharper declines: compared to those at the 25th percentile, counties at the 75th percentile of Catholic presence saw roughly 10% fewer schools and 30% lower enrollment after adoption. These results suggest that restrictions on public support strained the capacity of parochial systems, and that closures were not merely offset by consolidation into fewer, larger institutions. The contraction was immediate and persistent, underscoring the financial and organizational vulnerability of Catholic schools once deprived of public resources.

We also document important downstream effects on immigrant assimilation. Catholic immigrants who were of school age when Blaine was introduced were more likely to intermarry with natives, speak English, and become naturalized. By contrast, those first exposed as adults were more likely to naturalize but less likely to intermarry. These heterogeneous effects highlight distinct mechanisms: exposure during school age reflects the influence of public schooling and intergroup contact, while exposure in adulthood captures community-level and civic responses. Moreover, the effects are muted in larger Catholic communities, consistent with models in which ethnic enclaves reduce incentives to assimilate by lowering the costs of within-group exchange and strengthening norm enforcement.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate how state policies toward religious education reshaped both institutional capacity and individual integration trajectories during one of the most important immigration waves in U.S. history. They also open the door to a broader set of questions. How did Blaine-type restrictions affect the attitudes of native Protestants and the broader fabric of social cohesion? What were the consequences for non-Catholic immigrant groups, who often faced different educational and cultural constraints? And what were the long-run effects on overall educational attainment and human capital formation in the United States?

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Figures

Figure 1. Number of Catholic Schools

(A) 1872 (B) 1925

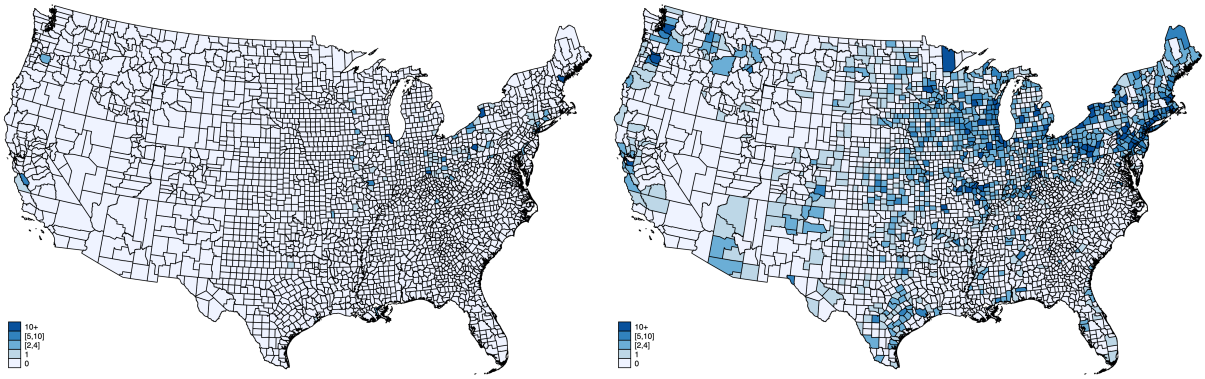


Figure 2. Number of Catholic Schools and Churches (1872-1925)

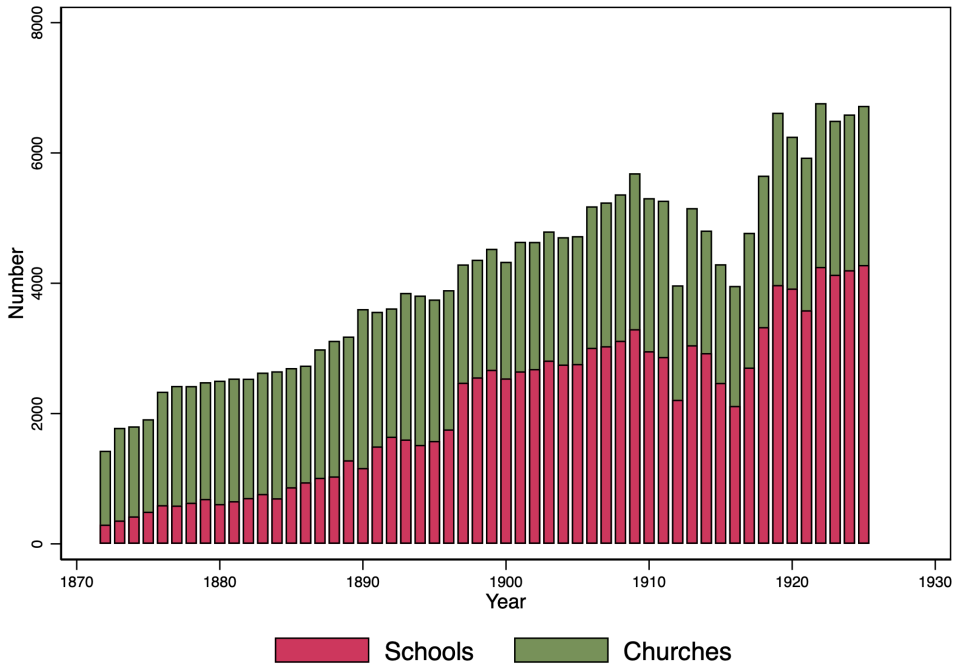


Figure 3. Catholic Population and Blaine Adoption

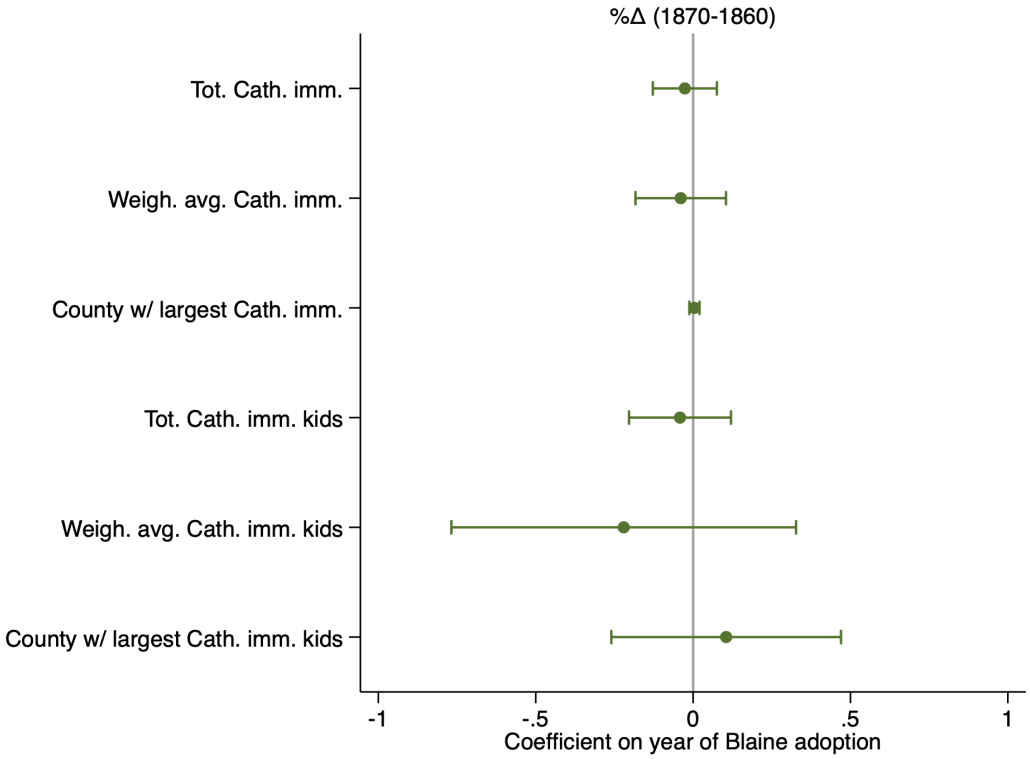
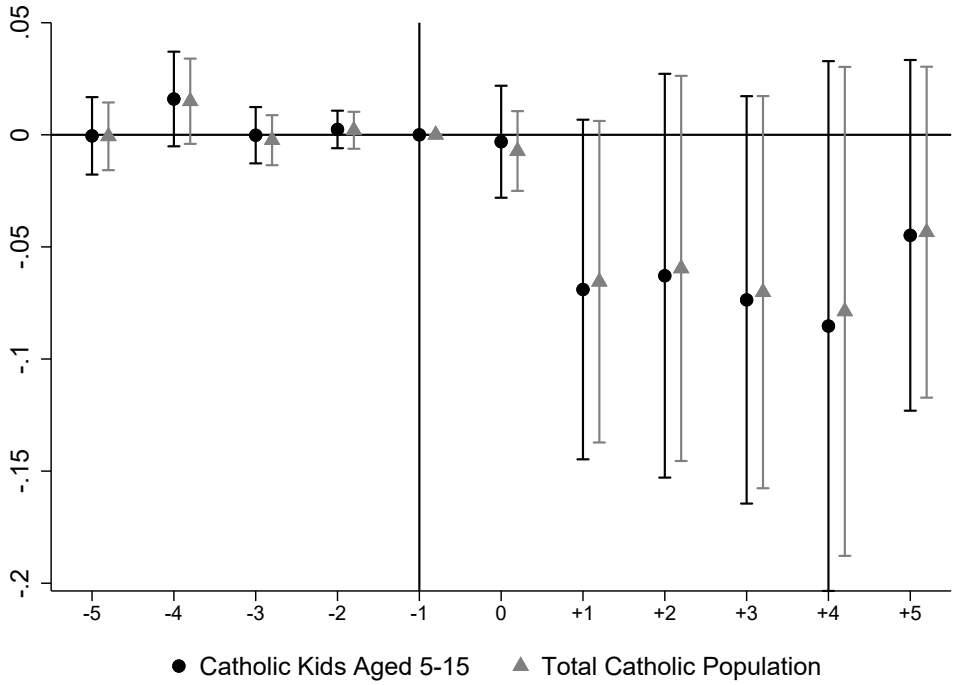
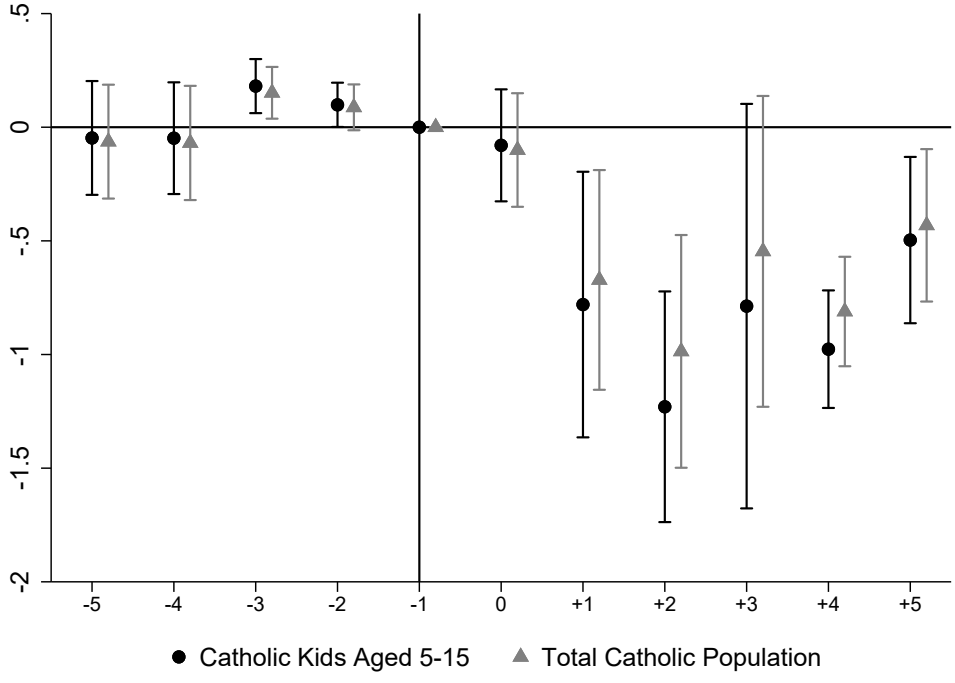


Figure 4. Blaine Amendments and Catholic Schools: Dynamic Estimates

(A) Number of Schools



(B) Number of Pupils



Tables

Table 1. The effect of Blaine on Catholic Schools

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. Catholic schools (log)			
Blaine on ×	-0.093***	-0.089***	-0.078**	-0.098***
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.011)	(0.004)	(0.030)	(0.033)
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×	-0.087***	-0.091***	-0.072***	-0.093***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.027)	(0.030)
Observations	92,414	92,365	92,365	71,099
Avg. Outcome (lev)	0.934	0.935	0.935	0.904
Avg. Cath. imm. kids	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.051
S.d. Cath. imm. kids	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.276
Avg. Cath. imm.	1.299	1.295	1.295	1.338
S.d. Cath. imm.	7.017	7.016	7.016	7.746
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs		✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs			✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)				✓

Table 2. The effect of Blaine on Catholic pupils

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. Catholic pupils (log)			
Blaine on ×	-0.199***	-0.279***	-0.226**	-0.307***
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.040)	(0.025)	(0.104)	(0.109)
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×	-0.177***	-0.247***	-0.234**	-0.316***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	(0.028)	(0.016)	(0.100)	(0.105)
Observations	85,975	85,925	85,925	66,224
Avg. Outcome (lev)	72.28	72.31	72.31	68.25
Avg. Cath. imm. kids	0.036	0.036	0.036	0.036
S.d. Cath. imm. kids	0.171	0.171	0.171	0.186
Avg. Cath. imm.	0.921	0.916	0.916	0.946
S.d. Cath. imm.	4.833	4.830	4.830	5.353
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs		✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs			✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)				✓

Table 3. The Effect of Blaine Amendments on Immigrant Assimilation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Intermarried	Speak English	Naturalized	Labor Force
Blaine on in school	0.611***	4.936***	3.632***	-0.372
	(0.139)	(0.249)	(0.689)	(0.247)
Blaine on after school	-0.432*	3.318***	11.11***	0.462**
	(0.199)	(0.683)	(0.848)	(0.161)
Observations	1,265,541	1,381,793	875,334	1,252,293
Avg. Outcome	2.912	65.57	38.27	82.74
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872–1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4. The Effect of Blaine Amendments on Immigrant Assimilation, by Community Size

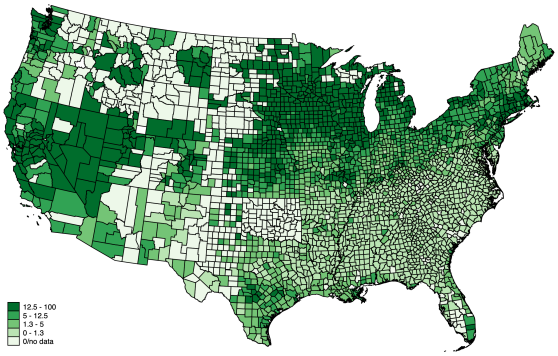
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Intermarried	Speak English	Naturalized	Labor Force
Blaine on in school	0.671***	4.720***	3.616***	-0.368
	(0.069)	(0.297)	(0.588)	(0.280)
Blaine on after school	-0.384**	4.017***	12.83***	0.500**
	(0.167)	(0.487)	(0.409)	(0.177)
Blaine on in school ×	-0.306*	1.020	-0.139	-0.031
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	(0.154)	(0.645)	(0.947)	(0.251)
Blaine on after school ×	-0.135**	-1.131**	-2.937***	-0.078
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	(0.052)	(0.387)	(0.659)	(0.074)
Observations	1,265,541	1,381,793	875,334	1,252,293
Avg. Outcome	2.912	65.57	38.27	82.74
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872–1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

A Appendix A

A.1 Figures

Figure A.1. Immigrant Population Share

(A) 1880



(B) 1920

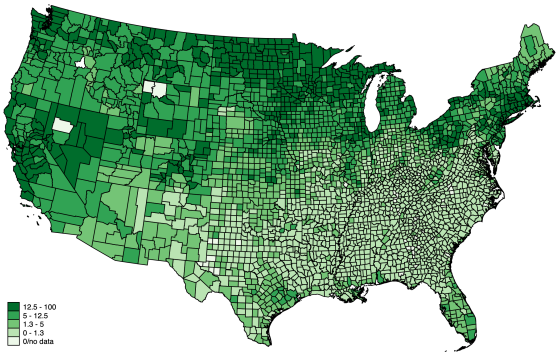
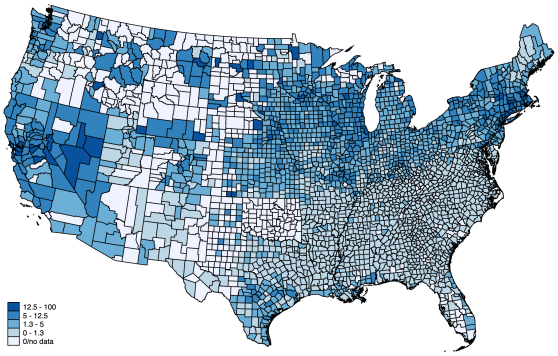


Figure A.2. Catholic Immigrant Population Share

(A) 1880



(B) 1920

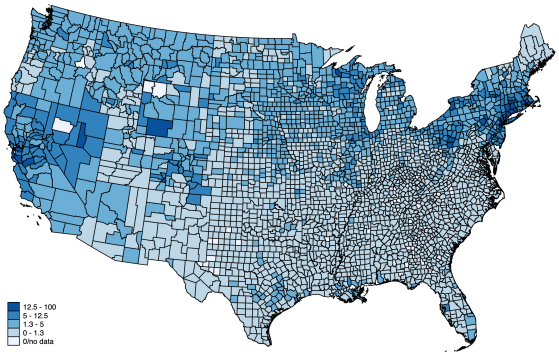


Figure A.3. Year of Blaine Amendments' Adoption

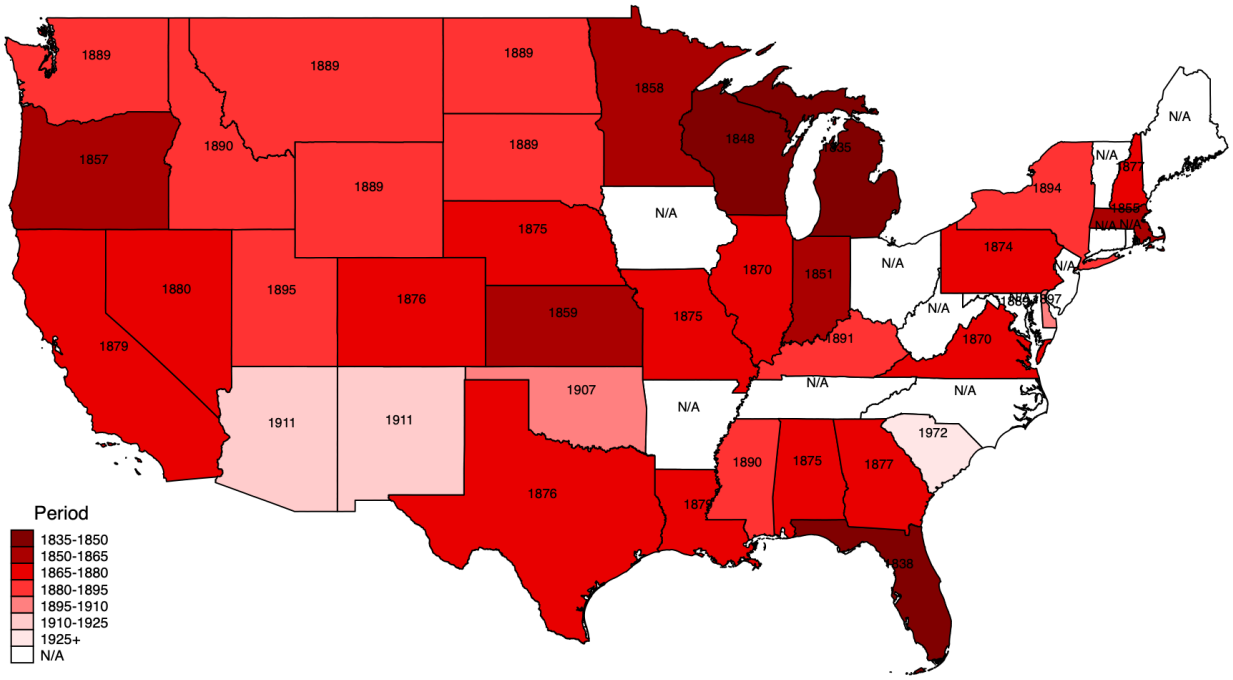
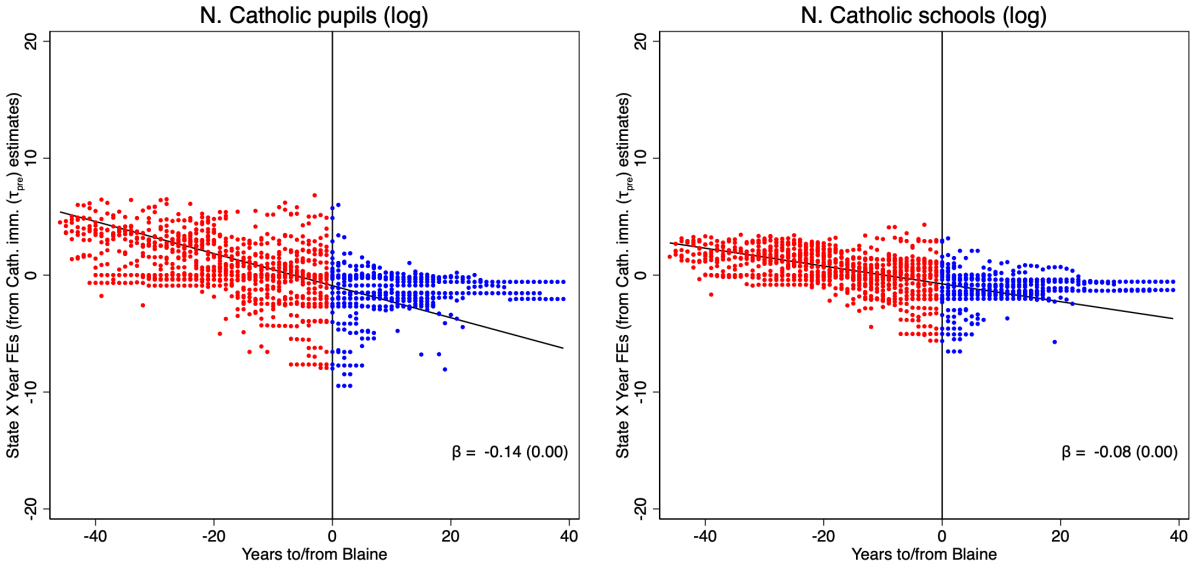


Figure A.8


N. Catholic pupils (log)
State X Year FEs (from Cath. imm. (τ_{pre}) estimates)
Years to/from Blaine
β = -0.14 (0.00)
N. Catholic schools (log)
State X Year FEs (from Cath. imm. (τ_{pre}) estimates)
Years to/from Blaine
β = -0.08 (0.00)

A.2 Tables

Table A.1. Blaine Amendment adoption (1870–1920)

State	Year of adoption
Alabama	1875
Arizona	1911
California	1879
Colorado	1876
Delaware	1897
District of Columbia	1889
Georgia	1877
Idaho	1890
Kentucky	1891
Louisiana	1879
Mississippi	1890
Missouri	1875
Montana	1889
Nebraska	1875
Nevada	1880
New Hampshire	1877
New Mexico	1911
New York	1894
North Dakota	1889
Oklahoma	1907
Pennsylvania	1874
South Dakota	1889
Texas	1876
Utah	1895
Washington	1889
Wyoming	1889

Table A.2. Summary statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min	Max	N
Panel A. *Catholic schools*						
N. schools	0.935	3.409	0	0	147	92,365
N. pupils	71.746	199.779	0	0	1749.000	85,753
Panel B. *Treatment*						
Years with Blaine	18.403	20.112	13	0	85	92,365
Blaine on	0.648	0.478	1	0	1	92,365
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	0.050	0.254	0.005	0	5.591	92,365
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	1.295	7.016	0.162	0	168.556	92,365
Share Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	0.012	0.037	0.003	0	1	92,022
Share Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	0.038	0.050	0.023	0	0.953	92,316
Panel C. *County (1870)*						
N. public teachers	164.610	364.509	93	0	11,936	90,967
Share black pop.	0.124	0.207	0.010	0	0.893	92,365
Share urban pop.	0.079	0.180	0	0	1	92,365
Share men in manuf. (15-64)	0.055	0.062	0.037	0	0.626	92,365
Share men in labor force (15-64)	0.816	0.221	0.874	0	1	92,365
Years with railroad	7.834	10.906	0	0	40	86,877
Population	19,522.801	35,415.546	12,597	20	657,979	87,367

Table A.3. Robustness checks – Catholic Schools

	(1) Baseline	(2) Cty trends	(3) Drop largest	(4) Drop top 5%	(5) Stacked DiD	(6) 2nd gen incl.	(7) Excl. Germans	(8) Ethnicity
Panel A.	N. Catholic schools (log)							
Blaine on ×	-0.098***	-0.032	-0.098***		-0.079**	-0.110*	-0.120***	-0.088***
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)		(0.035)	(0.058)	(0.035)	(0.032)
Panel B.								
Blaine on ×	-0.093***	-0.030	-0.093***		-0.072**	-0.095***	-0.118***	-0.104***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.030)		(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.028)
Observations	71,099	45,570	71,099		71,099	78,939	67,718	165,865
Avg. Outcome (lev)	0.904	0.762	0.904		0.904	0.827	0.835	0.372
Avg. Cath. imm. kids	0.051	0.043	0.051		0.051	0.090	0.044	0.022
S.d. Cath. imm. kids	0.276	0.292	0.276		0.276	0.369	0.247	0.124
Avg. Cath. imm.	1.338	1.365	1.338		1.338	3.272	1.159	0.574
S.d. Cath. imm.	7.746	8.952	7.746		7.746	17.99	6.727	4.017
County FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872–1920)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Table A.4. Robustness checks – Catholic Pupils

	(1) Baseline	(2) Cty trends	(3) Drop largest	(4) Drop top 5%	(5) Stacked DiD	(6) 2nd gen incl.	(7) Excl. Germans	(8) Ethnicity
Panel A.	N. Catholic pupils (log)							
Blaine on ×	-0.307***	-0.142**	-0.307***		-0.127*	0.009	-0.302**	-0.023
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.109)	(0.062)	(0.109)		(0.063)	(0.112)	(0.126)	(0.026)
Panel B.								
Blaine on ×	-0.316***	-0.162**	-0.316***		-0.122	-0.229**	-0.309**	-0.014
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})	(0.105)	(0.060)	(0.105)		(0.075)	(0.112)	(0.129)	(0.032)
Observations	66,224	42,587	66,224		66,224	73,940	62,893	155,314
Avg. Outcome (lev)	68.25	51.68	68.25		68.25	61.85	63.74	13.99
Avg. Cath. imm. kids	0.0360	0.0263	0.0360		0.0360	0.661	0.0310	0.0143
S.d. Cath. imm. kids	0.186	0.193	0.186		0.186	3.450	0.170	0.0772
Avg. Cath. imm.	0.946	0.853	0.946		0.946	2.366	0.818	0.358
S.d. Cath. imm.	5.353	5.780	5.353		5.353	12.53	4.698	2.365
County FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872–1920)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.1. Immigrants' top nationalities in the US (1870-1920)

	N.	Perc.	Cum.
	Census 1870		
Ireland	1,867,544	34.00	34.00
Germany	1,573,925	28.65	62.65
England	563,766	10.26	72.92
Canada	495,635	9.02	81.94
Scotland	141,216	2.57	84.51
Others	794,303	15,49	100.00
	Census 1880		
Germany	1,931,503	32.40	32.40
Ireland	1,854,181	31.10	63.49
England	664,622	11.15	74.64
Canada	214,526	3.60	78.24
Sweden	194,934	3.27	81.51
Others	1,054,227	18,49	100.00
	Census 1900		
Germany	2,671,484	28.71	28.71
Ireland	1,641,387	17.64	46.35
England	850,565	9.14	55.49
Sweden	585,871	6.30	61.78
Italy	490,883	5.28	67.06
Others	2,713,113	32.94	100.00
	Census 1910		
Germany	2,505,650	20.42	20.42
Russia	1,562,045	12.73	33.16
Ireland	1,355,741	11.05	44.21
Italy	1,351,055	11.01	55.22
Austria	1,158,321	9.44	64.66
Others	3,988,288	35.34	100.00
	Census 1920		
Germany	1,631,480	13.28	13.28
Italy	1,608,841	13.09	26.37
Russia	1,450,734	11.81	38.17
Poland	1,133,710	9.23	47.40
Ireland	1,049,330	8.54	55.94
Others	5,409,226	44.06	100.00

Table B.2. Parallel Trend Test

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A. Cath. Imm. kids (τ_{pre})	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Pre-trends test power				
50	0.033		0.013	
80	0.052		0.021	
90	0.062		0.025	
Panel B. Cath. Imm. (τ_{pre})				
Pre-trends test power				
50		0.029		0.011
80		0.046		0.017
90		0.054		0.020
Observations	34,012	34,012	36,445	36,445
Avg. Outcome	49.65	49.65	0.742	0.742
Avg. Treatment	0.027	0.84	0.042	1.33
S.d. Treatment	0.197	5.898	0.289	8.838
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓
County linear trends	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.3. Blaine on Catholic Pupils - County Linear Trends

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.142**		-0.032	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.062)		(0.033)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.162**		-0.030
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.060)		(0.032)
Observations	42,587	42,587	45,570	45,570
Avg. Outcome	51.68	51.68	0.762	0.762
Avg. Treatment	0.0263	0.853	0.0430	1.365
S.d. Treatment	0.193	5.78	0.292	8.952
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.4. Blain on Catholic Pupils - No largest counties

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.307***		-0.098***	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.109)		(0.033)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.316***		-0.093***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.105)		(0.030)
Observations	66,224	66,224	71,099	71,099
Avg. Outcome	68.25	68.25	0.904	0.904
Avg. Treatment	0.0360	0.946	0.0508	1.338
S.d. Treatment	0.186	5.353	0.276	7.746
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.5. Blaine on Catholic pupils - LHS Hyperbolic

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (ihs)		N. schools (ihs)	
Blaine on ×	-0.197***		-0.015	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.061)		(0.010)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.198***		-0.016
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.058)		(0.010)
Observations	66,224	66,224	71,099	71,099
Avg. Outcome	68.25	68.25	0.904	0.904
Avg. Treatment	0.0360	0.946	0.0508	1.338
S.d. Treatment	0.186	5.353	0.276	7.746
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.6. Blaine on Catholic pupils - Stacked by Event

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.127*		-0.079**	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.063)		(0.035)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.122		-0.072**
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.075)		(0.031)
Observations	66,224	66,224	71,099	71,099
Avg. Outcome	68.25	68.25	0.904	0.904
Avg. Treatment	0.0360	0.946	0.0508	1.338
S.d. Treatment	0.186	5.353	0.276	7.746
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓
County linear trends	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.7. Blaine on Catholic pupils - Ethnicity level

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.023		-0.088***	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids	(0.026)		(0.032)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.014		-0.104***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.032)		(0.028)
Observations	155,314	155,314	165,865	165,865
Avg. Outcome	13.99	13.99	0.372	0.372
Avg. Treatment	0.0143	0.358	0.0217	0.574
S.d. Treatment	0.0772	2.365	0.124	4.017
County × Ethnicity FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ethnicity × County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.8. Blaine on Catholic pupils- No Germans

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.302**		-0.120***	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.126)		(0.035)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.309**		-0.118***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.129)		(0.032)
Observations	62,893	62,893	67,718	67,718
Avg. Outcome	63.74	63.74	0.835	0.835
Avg. Treatment	0.0310	0.818	0.0441	1.159
S.d. Treatment	0.170	4.698	0.247	6.727
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.9. Blaine on Catholic pupils- 1^{st} and 2^{nd} gen. immigrants

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	0.009		-0.110*	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.112)		(0.058)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.229**		-0.095***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.112)		(0.031)
Observations	73,940	73,940	78,939	78,939
Avg. Outcome	61.85	61.85	0.827	0.827
Avg. Treatment	0.661	2.366	0.855	3.272
S.d. Treatment	3.450	12.53	4.369	17.99
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.10. Blaine on Catholic pupils/schools - RHS Share

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.000		-0.006	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.003)		(0.006)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		0.006*		-0.002
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.003)		(0.002)
Observations	42,428	42,721	45,227	45,521
Avg. Outcome	54.48	54.21	0.767	0.762
Avg. Treatment	0.0178	0.0355	0.0181	0.0367
S.d. Treatment	0.0511	0.0568	0.0516	0.0568
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.11. Blaine on other individual outcomes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Women			Men		
Panel A	Literacy (0-100)					
Exposed to Blaine	2.498***			4.968***		
	(0.43)			(0.446)		
Panel B	Married to Catholic (0-100)					
Exposed to Blaine		6.089***			1.728	
		(0.571)			(1.084)	
Panel C	Married to same ethnicity (0-100)					
Exposed to Blaine			5.62***			1.435
			(0.52)			(0.889)
Observations	947,439	588,802	588,802	1,248,254	542,807	542,807
Avg. Outcome	79.4	84.2	65.62	79.61	75.76	59.61
Avg. Treatment	0.753	0.806	0.806	0.767	0.858	0.858
S.d. Treatment	0.431	0.395	0.395	0.423	0.349	0.349
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.12. Blaine on other individual outcomes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Women			Men		
Panel A	Literacy (0-100)					
Blaine in school	-0.015			-0.102		
	(0.046)			(0.08)		
Blaine after school	0.075*			-0.022		
	(0.04)			(0.057)		
Panel B	Married to Catholic (0-100)					
Blaine in school		0.258***			0.254**	
		(0.036)			(0.122)	
Blaine after school		0.285***			0.117**	
		(0.026)			(0.049)	
Panel C	Married to same ethnicity (0-100)					
Blaine in school			0.24***			0.1
			(0.03)			(0.073)
Blaine after school			0.266***			0.083*
			(0.024)			(0.047)
Observations	932,951	578,823	578,823	1,215,702	533,854	533,854
Avg. Outcome	79.3	84.41	65.75	79.47	76.03	59.8
Avg. Treatment	7.228	6.268	6.268	5.569	6.14	6.14
S.d. Treatment	7.951	7.597	7.597	7.432	7.524	7.524
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.13. Blaine on Catholic pupils/schools - At least 100 Cath. imm.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.108***		-0.086***	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.03)		(0.038)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.136***		-0.081***
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.048)		(0.034)
Observations	20,701	20,701	22,883	22,883
Avg. Outcome	101.3	101.3	1.398	1.398
Avg. Treatment	0.0562	1.813	0.0848	2.679
S.d. Treatment	0.283	8.652	0.407	12.50
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B.14. Blaine on Catholic pupils/schools - At least 1 Church

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A.	N. pupils (log)		N. schools (log)	
Blaine on ×	-0.119*		-0.049	
Std. n. Cath. imm. kids (τ_{pre})	(0.058)		(0.046)	
Panel B.				
Blaine on ×		-0.149**		-0.048
Std. n. Cath. imm. (τ_{pre})		(0.058)		(0.043)
Observations	8,563	8,563	9,751	9,751
Avg. Outcome	169.9	169.9	2.435	2.435
Avg. Treatment	0.0810	2.275	0.145	4.691
S.d. Treatment	0.308	9.561	0.539	16.67
County FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
County chars (1870) × Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ever treated (1872-1920)	✓	✓	✓	✓