AMERICAN ECONOMIC ANXIETY AND THE KNOW-NOTHING PARTY[1]

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Abstract

We study the contribution of economic conditions to the success of the first avowedly nativist political party in the United States. The Know-Nothing Party gained control of a number of state governments in the 1854-1856 elections running on a staunchly anti-Catholic and anti-Irish platform. Our analysis focuses on the case of Massachusetts, which had experienced a wave of Irish Famine immigration and was at the forefront of industrialization in the United States. Voters in towns with more exposure to Irish labor market crowdout and deskilling in manufacturing were more likely to vote for Know-Nothing candidates in state elections. These economic shocks have both explanatory and outcome significance. These two forces played a decisive role in the 1855, and accounted for 19-30% of Know-Nothing votes in the 1854-56 elections. We find evidence of reduced wealth accumulation for native workers most exposed to labor market crowdout and deskilling, though this was tempered by occupational upgrading. The Know-Nothings lost power in 1857 to the abolitionist Republicans as the crisis over slavery came to a head, culminating in the Civil War.

I Introduction

Many countries around the world, including the United States and in Europe, have experienced an upswing in support for nationalist and xenophobic parties over the past two decades (Guriev & Papaioannou 2020). These patterns have historical antecedents which may help shed light on their formation, evolution, and longevity. We study the Know-Nothings, also known as the American Party, the first nativist party to achieve electoral success in the United States. In the mid-1800s, the party won over one hundred congressional seats (including the speakership of the House of Representatives), eight governorships, the mayoralties of Boston,

Philadelphia, Chicago, and Washington D.C., and thousands of local offices. In the wake of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Whig party demise, the Know-Nothings emerged as the leading party to challenge the Democrats in the 1854 election cycle (see Figure 1), before being overtaken by the Republicans as the country descended into civil war.

Figure 1: House of Representatives Popular Vote Share by Party, 1848-60
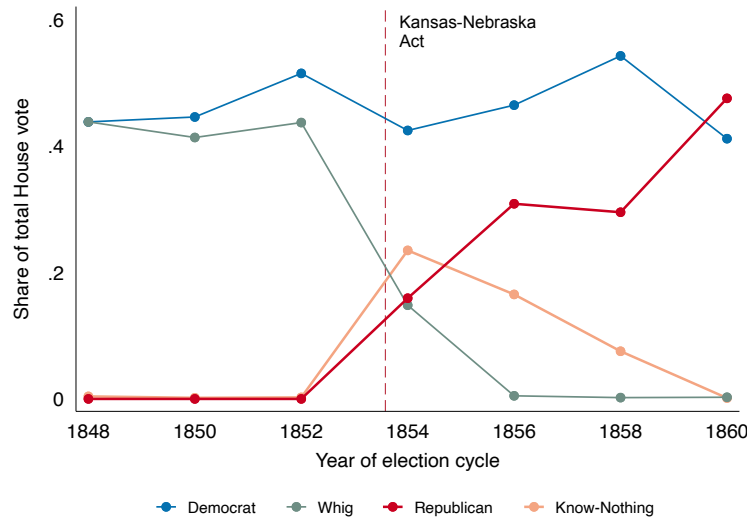
Notes: Data from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

The Know-Nothings' success came on the heels of a massive influx of Irish famine and German political refugees. At 15 per thousand Americans a year, the rate of immigration was unprecedented in United States history up to that point and rivaled future waves during the Age of Mass Migration. Economic historians, most notably Robert Fogel, have emphasized the consequence of this influx on native labor, with Fogel stating that "it is unlikely that the nativist political movement would have come close to the northern successes it obtained in 1853-1855 without the pressures on labor markets generated by the massive immigration of 1848-1854 (Fogel 1992, 6). At the same time, the movement towards factory production was growing and by 1849 was the fourth largest sector of the US economy, up from seventh fifty years earlier (U.S. Census Bureau 1949, 14). By the 1850s, the movement to factory production led to the hollowing out of the skill distribution in manufacturing as skilled mechanics and artisans were replaced with less skilled factory operatives (Field 1980; Atack *et al.* 2005; Katz & Margo 2014). Industrialization was concentrated in New England and is postulated to have contributed to nativist support (Mulkern (1990, 5), Bleakley *et al.* (2015, 277)).

This paper investigates whether labor market crowdout associated with low-skill immigration and industrialization-induced deskilling contributed to Know-Nothing success. Our study complements other scholarship exploring the causal effect of immigration and struc-

tural change (i.e. automation and trade) on far-right electoral support. Notably, both trade shocks (that affect manufacturing) and automation (affecting routine tasks) tend to affect low-skill workers. In our setting, we identify two different sources of "economic anxiety" that affected different parts of the skill distribution: labor market competition affected low-skill workers and deskilling affected semi-skill manufacturers. One advantage of the historical lens is that we can trace out how native-born workers adapted to crowdout and deskilling using linked census data.

We first provide a descriptive overview of antebellum nativism at the national level, using the share of congressional House race votes for the Know-Nothing candidate as the outcome of interest. The Know-Nothings were widely known as the major nativist party, and placed anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic grievances and policies at the center of the party's identity. Thus, votes for the Know-Nothing Party may be viewed as a proxy for nativist sentiment. Building off the work of Goldin & Sokoloff (1982), we proxy for deskilling using female share of manufacturing and low-skill labor market crowdout by Irish share of the non-agricultural workforce. Our results demonstrate that both factors explain about 15% of the peak county-level Know-Nothing vote share during 1854-58.

Nearly all of the Irish and half of the German immigrants were Catholic, in sharp contrast to the largely Protestant citizenry of the US (Finke & Stark 2005, 121). Thus several historians highlight religious intolerance as the main motivation for the Know-Nothing's ascendancy (Foner 1970; Anbinder 1992). Although many Germans shared a religion with the Irish, they came to the United States under vastly different circumstances. An estimated one million Irish women and men fled their homeland during the Great Famine of 1846. Irish immigrants competed with low-skill native-born workers mainly as laborers, as factory operatives, and in fishing (Ferrie 1997). The German immigration wave was similarly impressive in scale but driven by political persecution from the 1848 revolutions and included higher skilled and less desperate refugees (Dippel & Heblich 2021). The differences in resources allowed Germans to migrate farther inland (particularly to the upper Midwest) than the Irish - who often settled closer to the coastal New England cities where they disembarked. We leverage the shared religious beliefs but different skill sets of the two major immigrant groups to test the importance of anti-Catholic fervor. Our estimates for Irish (Catholic) crowdout are significantly different from the German Catholic crowdout measure, suggesting that our measure captures skill distribution as opposed to religious animus.

We next turn to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a state with early and excellent data collection that allows us to make progress on causal estimation. The Know-Nothings enjoyed their most striking victory in the Commonwealth and the state was at the leading edge of the two processes we are trying to capture: Irish immigration and the attendant low skill labor market competition and industrialization which was accompanied by deskilling.

In 1854, the Know-Nothing party secured all but three seats in the Massachusetts legislature and won the governorship with over 60% of the popular vote.

Our primary outcome is town-level gubernatorial vote counts for the Know-Nothing candidate digitized from the *The Massachusetts Register* yearly from 1854 to 1857. Following Autor *et al.* (2020), we create measures of exposure to immigrant labor market competition and deskilling in manufacturing. This required digitizing the 1837, 1845 and 1855 Census of Manufacturers from Massachusetts and approximately 300,000 individual hand-written occupations from the 1855 Population Census of Massachusetts. Our measure of exposure to deskilling is constructed at the town level by weighting the net of town (i.e. leave-one-out) state-level shift in average establishment size between 1837 and 1855 with the town-specific specialization in a given industry in 1837. A negative wage-establishment-size gradient has been documented in the 19th and 20th centuries, by Atack *et al.* (2004) and Goldin & Katz (1998), respectively.[1] The exposure of native workers to immigrant labor market competition is constructed similarly, though there is an important difference. The leave-one-out state-level 1850 to 1855 occupation-specific shift in Irish-born employment relative to initial employment in that occupation is multiplied by the initial 1850 town-specific *native-born* occupational shares.[2]

Recent research has improved our understanding of identification in shift-share designs. In particular, identification comes from either the quasi-randomness of the shares (Goldsmith-Pinkham *et al.* 2020) or the quasi-randomness of the shifts (Borusyak *et al.* 2020). We take the view that identification comes from the quasi-randomness of the shares in our application. There is a common national or state-level shock to which towns are differentially exposed based on the lagged local occupation or industry distribution. Note the shares are not the typical chain migration shares that are used to determine the placement of migrants. Instead, we rely on the lagged distributions of native born individuals across occupations and across manufacturing industries in 1840 – a decade before the Famine shock. We interact these shares with leave-one-out shifts. In addition, we condition on share Irish in a given location. For the lagged occupational native-born shares to affect nativist political outcomes prior to the Irish shock, it must be that they have predictive power on pre-1850 political outcomes. We fail to find evidence of such an effect. Although our shares are important for identification, they are not deterministic of the outcome by themselves. Conditional on the Irish shift-share crowdout measure, a German shift-share and English shift-share do not have explanatory power – a sensible result in our context given their very different occupational distributions. Our preferred specification conditions on proxies for cultural assimilation, fiscal burden, ur-

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[1]Atack *et al.* (2004, 174) note this correlation is "broadly consistent with the deskilling hypothesis."

[2]Given data constraints during this early period, we use the earliest high quality data to construct the exposure measures.

banization, pre-famine political and economic structure, the size of the immigrant population shock, and county fixed-effects.

We find that direct labor market competition from low-skill Irish immigration had a positive and significant effect on voter support for the Know-Nothing party: a one standard deviation increase in crowdout is associated with about a 3.0 percentage point increase in the Know-Nothing vote share in 1854. Deskilling associated with industrialization also played a prominent role, with a one standard deviation increase associated with approximately a 1.3 percentage point increase in Know-Nothing vote share. Taken together, labor market competition and deskilling account for 19-30% of Know-Nothing votes and 9-15% of all votes in the 1854-56 gubernatorial elections. In addition, we find negative impacts on wealth accumulation over the medium-term (between 1850 and 1860) for native-born workers more exposed to crowdout and deskilling. As postulated by Haynes (1897), however, these effects were partially offset by occupational upgrading.

The effects on voting margins are modest, but were decisive in the 1855 election cycle and consistent with Margalit (2019) who distinguishes between the *outcome* and *explanatory* significance of economic factors in the rise of populism throughout history. Margalit notes that economic factors tend to be decisive for the *outcome* of electoral success for populist leaders but are dwarfed in explanatory significance by non-economic factors (e.g. culture). Of course, highly persistent and/or near ubiquitous cultural factors can be challenging to identify. In our context, an Irish assimilation index does not predict vote shares; however, the role of non-economic factors is hinted at by the fact that deskilling and crowdout do not predict Know-Nothing vote shares in stronghold locations.[3] Indeed, anti-Catholic and xenophobic sentiment had percolated for decades prior to the 1850s, leading to short bursts of violence, such as the burning of nunneries (Billington 1938).

The demise of the Whig party over compromises made on the extension of slavery to new territories opened the door for the nativist Know-Nothings to gain power. In the end, however, Know-Nothing success in Massachusetts was brief. Two years after their overwhelming success in 1854 they lost control of the legislature, and by 1857 lost the governorship. Their main rival for support, the anti-slavery Republicans, won the contest to replace the Whigs as the second party in the North. By this time, deskilling and crowdout had ceased to be predictive of electoral outcomes. The singular plank of nativism failed to reflect the electorate's increasing concerns regarding imminent civil war.[4]

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[3]A possible interpretation of our findings is that these economic factors are set against a backdrop of (somewhat universal) animus towards Irish Catholics by the primarily Protestant native-born population of New England. We thank William J. Collins for this suggestion.

[4]Our results are consistent with the narratives told by historians for the disappearance of the Know-Nothings: first and foremost, that voters placed increasing priority on issues related to slavery (Foner 1970), but also that Massachusetts Republicans absorbed pieces of the nativist agenda (Mulkern 1990), and perhaps living standards improved for native-born New Englanders in the late 1850s (Fogel 1989).

II Descriptive Evidence from National House Votes Shares

We begin by describing correlates of nativism at the national level. Table 1 presents descriptive evidence of the role immigrant labor crowdout and deskilling may have had in shaping Know-Nothing success nationwide measured by vote shares for Know-Nothing candidates in congressional races in 1854-56. We proxy for Irish labor market crowdout using the share Irish of the non-farm male labor force as reported by the 1860 census. Building on (Goldin & Sokoloff 1982, 755), who detail that "the diffusion of new, large-scale technologies was associated with the substitution of women and children for men," we measure deskilling using the 1860 female share of the manufacturing workforce. These national-level proxies are positively correlated with the crowdout and deskilling indices we use in our later analysis of Massachusetts (Figure A.5).

We include a vector of controls accounting for other factors that influenced political outcomes, such as the share of the population that was enslaved in 1860, historical support for the Whig party, urbanization, religious composition, and changes in demand for labor from 1850 to 1860.

Using county-level House of Representatives election returns, we find that a one standard deviation increase in the fraction Irish of the non-farm labor force in 1860 is associated with a 6.1 percentage point increase in peak Know-Nothing vote share, a result statistically significant at the one percent level. Similarly, a one standard deviation increase in the share female of the manufacturing workforce in 1860 is associated with a significant 6.2 percentage point increase in Know-Nothing support. These results are robust to the inclusion of region and state fixed effects. Moreover, the share of the non-farm workforce that is German does not display a similar positive association with Know-Nothing support to the Irish share of the non-farm workforce. Absent more granular data on demographics and occupational characteristics, however, causal identification is difficult in a national setting.

III Historical Background

In this section, we describe the Know-Nothing as a party and their platform. Next, we discuss key economic factors postulated to have contributed to the rise of the Know-Nothing party.

III.A Know-Nothing Origins, Principles and Platform

The Know-Nothing party grew from the union of oath-bound secret societies that merged into the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner in 1852.[5] Party structure centered around lodges established in each town, with membership requirements including being a native-born cit-

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[5]Because lodge members were sworn to secrecy, they were instructed to say that they "knew nothing" about the party if queried.

Table 1: National Correlates of Know-Nothing Congressional Election Vote Share 1854-56

	(1) National	(2) Add Germans	(3) Region FEs	(4) State FEs	(5) German Inter
Crowdout proxy (Irish non-farm)	0.061***	0.060***	0.058***	0.026**	0.030**
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Deskilling proxy (Female mfg)	0.062***	0.053***	0.024**	0.014**	0.014**
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Catholic church pews	-0.036**	-0.022	0.003	-0.010	-0.016
	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Share urban	-0.063	-0.014	-0.161**	-0.022	-0.016
	(0.096)	(0.106)	(0.075)	(0.058)	(0.059)
Share pop enslaved	0.731***	0.706***	-0.010	0.092*	0.113**
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.040)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Labor demand	-0.067***	-0.061***	-0.092***	-0.058**	-0.062***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Whig party indicator (1848-52)	0.087***	0.081***	0.083***	0.052***	0.055***
	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.014)
German non-farm		-0.034**	0.004	0.011	0.004
		(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.007)
German protestant					0.016**
					(0.007)
German non-farm X German protestant					-0.160***
					(0.061)
Constant	0.141***	0.143***	0.436***	0.465***	0.458***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.041)	(0.034)	(0.035)
R-Sq	0.414	0.427	0.677	0.803	0.805
Observations	1160	1160	1160	1160	1160
p-value (Irish vs. German)		0.000	0.004	0.290	0.056
p-value (German Cath vs. Prot)					0.011

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by county in parentheses. Regressions weighted by free native population. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$. The sample is a cross-section of counties with congressional race vote data. The outcome is the maximum vote share for the Know-Nothing congressional candidate over the 1854 and 1856 elections. The crowdout proxy is the share of non-farm laborers that are Irish in the county from the 1860 U.S. Decennial Census. The deskilling proxy is the share of female employment in manufacturing in the 1860 U.S. Census of Manufactures. Labor demand is an index constructed at the county level (i) meant to capture fast growing areas that could better absorb an Irish labor supply shock: $D_i = \frac{L_i^{1860} - L_i^{1850}}{L_i^{1850}}$, using data from the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Population Censuses. Catholic church pews is the count of accommodations listed for the Roman Catholic denomination from the 1850 Census of Social Statistics. German protestant is an indicator if accommodations for German Protestant denominations (e.g. Lutheran, German Reformed, etc...) are greater than the accommodations listed for the Roman Catholic denomination in a county. German non-farm is the share of non-farm laborers in the county that are German. Share urban and Share pop enslaved are the counts of urban and enslaved population over total county population in 1860. Whig party indicator is equal to one if the Whig candidate won at least two out of the last three elections.

izen, a Protestant, born of Protestant parents, and not married to a Roman Catholic.[6]

According to Desmond (1904, 52), the Know-Nothings were unique from other secret orders such as the Free Masons in that they were dedicated to political advancement. The oath used to induct members required them to *"not vote or give your influence for any man for any office in the gift of the people, unless he be an American-born citizen in favor of Americans ruling America, nor if he a Roman Catholic."* Only native-born Protestants could be supported for public office and political appointments (Massachusetts Constitution of the State Council, 1854; Connecticut Constitution of the State Council, 1854).

Less than two years after its formation, the party had branches in every state and claimed over 1 million members (Gienapp 1985). Nationally, the Know-Nothings captured nine gubernatorial seats, dozens of national legislative seats and mayorships in major cities along the Eastern Seaboard. Nowhere did the party enjoy such unparalleled success as in Massachusetts, as described by Mulkern (1990, 76):

> *...the American party had managed the greatest election upset in the history of the state. Every constitutional state officer, the entire congressional delegation, all forty state senators, and all but 3 of the 379 representatives bore the Know-Nothing stamp. Henry Gardner's 63% majority and his 81,500 vote total for governor were the largest ever. He carried every city and all but twenty of the state's more than three hundred towns.*

Once in power the Know-Nothings pursued a platform outlined in Gardner's inaugural speech, including circumscribing foreign enfranchisement. The party pushed for a state constitutional amendment for a literacy test for new voters, which was ultimately successful, but was not able to push through an amendment that immigrants must wait 21 years from entry before gaining suffrage. Other legislation targeting Catholics included convent inspections, a ban on (Irish) militias, and the required reading of the King James Bible in public schools. The Know-Nothings of Massachusetts also absorbed progressive elements of the Whig and Democratic party – and under their leadership, funding for schools and hospitals was increased, while anti-corruption reforms were enacted and taxes raised.[7]

The Know-Nothings' emergence filled a power vacuum left by the Whig party after it had been weakened considerably by the deaths of key leaders (Daniel Webster and Henry Clay), the admission of California into the U.S., and subsequent compromises by the Whigs on the expansion of slavery (Foner 1970).

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[6]Strictness on native-born parentage varied across states. Connecticut required that a member's parents also be native-born Protestants. Massachusetts initially required one set of grandparents to be native-born. Indiana chapters did not even require the member to be native-born as these chapters recruited from a population whose ancestry's only recently arrived in the U.S. (Massachusetts Register, 1853-1862)

[7]Many of the campaign promises for labor reform went unfulfilled. These included a secret ballot for laborers and 10-hour workdays.

The timing has been linked to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May 1854, which allowed for the extension of slavery into newly organized territories on the basis of a popular vote. The act effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise that had limited slavery to south of latitude 36°30′ North since 1820. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act required the support of the Southern Whigs, causing the large block of anti-slavery Northern Whigs to abandon the party.

Adding to the political upheaval in Massachusetts, anti-corruption and pro-democracy reform efforts failed in a popular vote to amend the Massachusetts Constitution in 1853 (Mulkern 1990). Fed up with elite control of both the Whig and Democrat political machinery, Massachusetts voters were attracted by the popular reform aspects of the Know-Nothings in 1854. Table A.1 reports state-wide vote shares by party for the annual gubernatorial elections, where the Know-Nothings' overwhelming success and the Whig's demise can be seen in the 1854 totals.

III.B Irish Immigration and Labor Market Crowdout

The Know-Nothing party's success followed a sharp increase in the numbers of immigrants entering the state fleeing the Great Famine and the German revolutions. At the national level, immigration totaled 1.5 million in the decade prior to the Know-Nothing victory, a vast increase over the approximately 100,000 for the twenty year period between 1790 to 1810, the 200,000 between 1820 and 1830, and nearly 800,000 between 1830 and 1840 (Gardner 1855).

Irish immigration flows accounted for much of that surge, picking up in 1845, but slowing after 1855. In Massachusetts, immigrants moved to Boston, but also to manufacturing hubs and mill towns which stretched across the state (Figure 2). Over 40 percent of the working-age male population of Boston was foreign-born by 1850, growing to 48 percent by 1860.[8]

The threat the Irish influx might pose to native workers was frequently cited by Know-Nothing newspapers. The party platform listed reducing the immigrant threat to native workers as a primary political goal, a view espoused by their most prominent member in Massachusetts. As stated by Henry Gardner in his acceptance speech for Governor in 1855, "The present European immigration is deeply prejudicial to the fair remuneration of American labor. The mechanic, the artisan, the agriculturist, daily suffer from its influence" (Gardner 1855).

Despite contemporary concern about negative wage effects from immigration, economic historians debated their importance. As described by Haynes (1897), "The fear of the immigrant as a wage earner...the rank and file of the laboring class proved themselves devoted believers in the wage fund theory." Haynes' view was that the antebellum economy could

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[8]The port of Boston recorded 5,560 immigrants in 1840, rising to nearly 30,000 by 1849 (Shattuck (1845) quoted in Meckel (1985, 400)).

Figure 2: Percent Irish (1855)
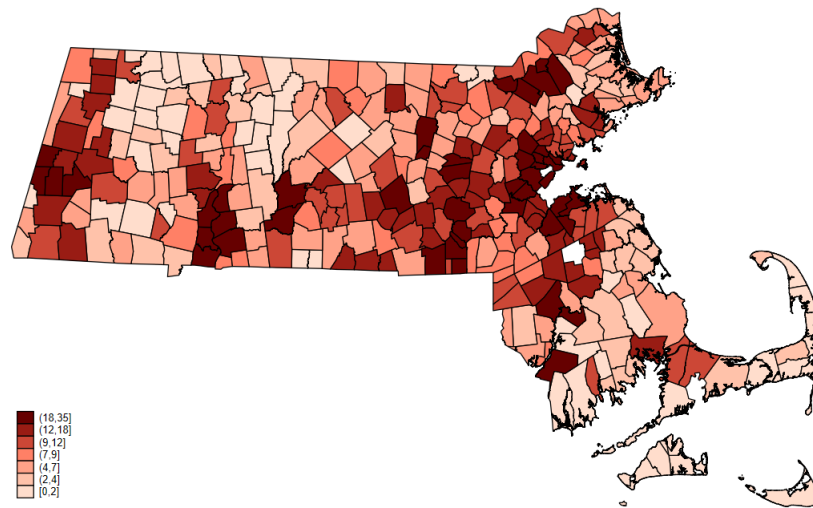
Source: 1855 Massachusetts Census.

absorb the migrants, while opening up better opportunities for native workers as supervisors. Haynes (1897, 75) defended his position quoting Edward Everett Hale from *Letters on Irish Immigration* (1852), who states: "They (the Irish) do the manual labor. It does not follow that natives who must otherwise have performed it, do nothing or starve. They are simply pushed up into foremen of factories, superintendents of farms, railroad agents, machinists, inventors, etc."[9]

A century later, the question of whether direct competition for jobs between Irish and native-born workers contributed to the wave of support for the Know-Nothing party remained unsettled. Fogel (1992, 17) writes that "[T]he timing of immigration and the distribution of immigrants over space are very important for understanding the economic distress suffered by native northern labor during the last two decades of the antebellum era." Fogel went on to argue that "It is unlikely that the nativist political movement would have come close to the northern successes it obtained in 1853-1855 without the pressures on labor markets generated by the massive immigration of 1848-1854" (Fogel 1992, 6).

III.C Industrialization and Deskilling in Antebellum Massachusetts

As early as the mid-1820s, manufacturing had grown to be the largest sector of the Massachusetts economy. Industrial statistics taken in 1845 and 1855 showed the value of manufacturing output increased from $83 million to $215 million 10 years later (nominal dollars). The 1850 U.S. Manufacturing Census showed Massachusetts as the undisputed leader of textile and boot and shoe manufacturing, the first and third largest industries in the country. At

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[9]Haynes also cites lectures by Carroll D. Wright at Johns Hopkins as corroborating his stance.

the same time, the share of labor force in agriculture in the Commonwealth fell from 0.57 in 1820 to 0.15 by 1850 with 65 percent of the decline occurring between 1840 and 1850 (Field 1978, 153). Field (1978; 1980) attributes the rapid sectoral shift to competition from Midwestern agricultural products with increased East-West trade from improved transportation networks (see also Atack *et al.* (2010)). Although some of this labor was absorbed via an exodus to the frontier, credit and information constraints coupled with opportunities in cities slowed adjustment along this margin and aided urbanization.[10]

Field, in a series of papers, describes the sectoral shift from agriculture to industry in antebellum Massachusetts, finding that the process overall was deskilling.[11] Production shifted to factories and increased the demand for less skilled labor (Atack *et al.* 2005). The factory and putting out systems primarily displaced semi-skilled (i.e. artisan) labor (Katz & Margo 2014).[12] Other well-documented factors that contributed to the growth in establishment size in manufacturing, included the development of financial markets (Rousseau & Sylla 2005), and legal changes in business organization (Lamoreaux 2006; Hilt 2008). Although this process was occurring in many Northern states at the time (see Temin (1999)), the Commonwealth was at the leading edge.

The rise of manufacturing meant population growth in cities. By 1840, Massachusetts was the most densely populated state in the nation at 127 inhabitants per square mile.[13] The proportion of the population living in towns of 2,500 residents or more increased from 11 percent in 1790 to 23 percent in 1820, to 50 percent in 1850 (see Appendix Figure A.4). With the exception of Rhode Island, Massachusetts was the most urbanized state, and faced the most rapid increase in urbanization.[14]

III.D Conceptual Framework: Crowdout, Deskilling and Native-born Living Standards

Our framework for understanding this time period is a model in which deskilling and immigration create differential shocks to high-skill and low-skill labor markets, thereby affecting their equilibrium wages. Deskilling would have reduced demand for semi-skilled workers thus depressing their wages. This would have been exacerbated by competition from immigration, though Irish were generally involved in low-skill jobs. On the other hand, deskilling

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[10]According to Field (1978), such constraints explain why the overall "land abundant" U.S. industrialized at all.

[11]Field (1980, 165) writes: *"[A] very large share of manufacturing employment in the period of early industrialization in Massachusetts was in industries which, because of the nature of the materials being processed, were then, and are today, relatively unskilled industries. Second, a relatively small share – perhaps 5 percent of the manufacturing labor force, ...was employed in the relatively high-skill machine-building industry."*

[12]Field (1978) argues that Massachusetts farming involved expertise and thus any movement out of the agriculture sector furthered overall deskilling.

[13]See Table XII in DeBow (1853, 40).

[14]Indeed, although by 1850 Massachusetts had the largest percent Irish, it was not very different from New York or Rhode Island in that regard (they were all around 12% - see Figure A.2 Panel (A)). Mulkern (1990) points out these other states did not overwhelmingly elect nativist leaders.

was complementary to low-skill workers at the time, pushing out the demand for factory workers. Although this alone might have increased equilibrium low-skill wages, an increase in supply of Irish workers could still lead to a lower overall equilibrium wage.

We lack high-quality, high-frequency wage data during this time period which would allow us to fully interrogate these hypotheses. In general, the wage data for this time period has been criticized for not accurately capturing the living standards of ordinary workingmen (Fogel 1992, 482-84). One notable exception is the series created by Margo & Villaflor (1987) using wages paid to civilian workers by the U.S. Army. Based on these data, wages of artisans and laborers fell by 18% and 10%, in the Northeast over the 1848 to 1855 period. Fogel remarks these are likely underestimates as they are not adjusted for unemployment. Moreover this figure neglects other margins of adjustment – such as migration and occupational upgrading by the native-born. Apart from this series, the Census of Social Statistics, reported at the town level, includes average wages for four occupations: farm laborers, day laborers, carpenters, and domestic servants. We digitized these data and explored their potential use. However, as Appendix Figure A.6 demonstrates, significant heaping is noted both across towns and over time. The wage data does not provide useful variation, nor does it distinguish between wages for foreign- and native-born workers.

Ferrie (1999) examines the specific question of whether immigration depressed native incomes in the antebellum period.[15] Using a sample of approximately 3,000 adult native-born men linked across the 1850 and 1860 decennial censuses, Ferrie finds a positive effect of foreign-born on occupational upgrading of native-born low-skill workers but a negative effect for skilled workers. We conduct a similar exercise looking at the effect of labor market crowdout and deskilling on wealth accumulation for native-born men between 1850 and 1860 in Section VI.C.

## IV Data and Measurement

IV.A Election Returns Data

Our primary outcome is town-level gubernatorial race vote counts for the Know-Nothing candidate published in the *The Massachusetts Register* (*1853-1862*). We digitized votes using hand-double-entry, and verified the data with original hand-written returns for the 1854 and 1857 elections held at the Massachusetts State Archives. The finest geographic detail for election returns during the period is town which corresponds to a meaningful political unit (see Figure A.7). Summary statistics for election returns are reported in Appendix Table A.2.

Massachusetts towns were meaningful political and economic units with local elections conducted at this level. Know-Nothing vote share is calculated as the number of votes for the

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[15]Goldin (1994) and Hatton & Williamson (1998) find that mass immigration at the turn of the 20th century had a negative effect on native wages.

Figure 3: Know-Nothing Gubernatorial Votes 1854 (Percent)
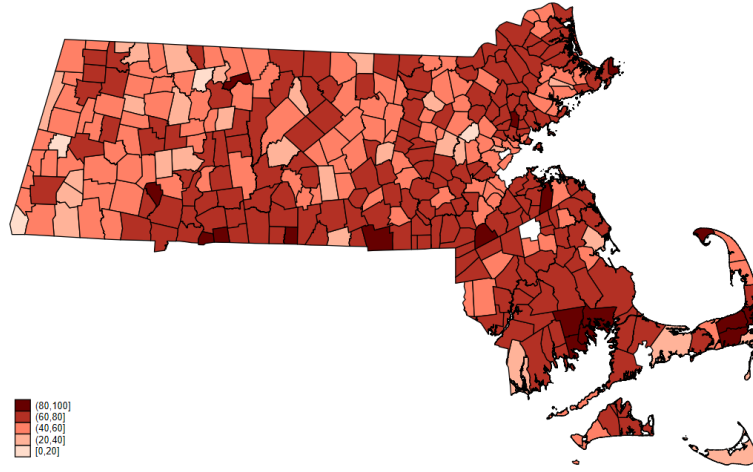
Notes: Breakpoints at 0, 20, 40, 60, 80 and 100. *Sources*: Various years of the *Massachusetts Register*.

Know-Nothing candidate divided by the total votes in the town. The benefit of election data is that it measures actual behavior as opposed to self-reported perceptions, since the latter can be contaminated with demand bias.[16] One drawback of using vote data as a proxy for anti-immigrant sentiment is that voters select a candidate based on a bundle of attributes such as valence and policy positions. However, the core of the platform for the Know-Nothing party was anti-immigrant. As another measure of nativist policy and sentiment, we digitize town-level state legislature representatives' votes for the 1857 literacy amendment which aimed to disenfranchise immigrant voters.

IV.B Exposure to Immigrant Labor Market Competition:

Town-level exposure to Irish labor market competition is measured as the change in the number of Irish-born workers in each occupational group j between 1850 and 1855 normalized by total employment in occupational group j in 1850. This shift is then weighted by the share of native-born workers in town i in occupational group j:[17]

$$(1) \qquad crowdout_i = \sum_j \frac{L^{1850,i}_{Native,j}}{L^{1850,i}_{TotNative}} \cdot \frac{(L^{1855,Mass}_{Irish,j} - L^{1850,Mass}_{Irish,j})}{L^{1850,Mass}_{Total,j}} \quad ,$$

[16]Opinion polls provide another measure of the extent of nativist views and are commonly used in the modern literature (Hainmueller & Hopkins 2014; Inglehart & Norris 2016)

[17]We follow the construction of the exposure index from Autor *et al.* (2013), and used in Autor *et al.* (2020) to link import competition from China to electoral outcomes. Acemoglu & Restrepo (2020) and Collins & Niemesh (2019) use a similar construction of local *exposure* to a labor market shock, industrial robots in manufacturing and labor unions, respectively. See also Card & Peri (2016) for the link to theory.

and the time step is between the 1850 Federal Census and the 1855 Massachusetts Census. In practice, we use a leave-one-out estimator where the shift is constructed using employment counts from the remainder of the state after subtracting out town i.

Variation in $crowdout_i$ across local labor markets comes from variation in the local occupation-structure of employment during the initial period, prior to the Irish immigration. Towns where native employment was concentrated in occupations with large shifts were more *exposed* to Irish labor market crowdout.

Occupation groups are defined as broad categories, comparable across datasets: agriculturalists, boot and shoe makers, factory operatives, laborers, manufacturers, mariners, low-skill mechanics, high-skill mechanics, merchants, professionals, and miscellaneous. The eleven broad categories correspond to those used in the published aggregate statistics of the 1855 Massachusetts census. We use this to verify our digitization of the microdata aligns closely with the published aggregates.[18] We restrict the sample to men of 16 years of age and older. Female employment during this period was heavily concentrated in the cottage industries (the boot and shoe industry as well as straw hat making) as well as in textile mills. We include cottage employment (the sum of employment in boot and shoe and hat making) as a control variable.[19]

State-level shifts in Irish workers for each occupation group are constructed from a combination of the 1850 complete count census provided by IPUMS, and the 1855 Massachusetts Population Census microdata provided by FamilySearch.org (Ruggles *et al.* 2018; FamilySearch 2016). The latter required digitizing the 1855 Massachusetts microdata, hand-entering occupations for 300,000 working age men.[20]

Figure 4 plots the share of state-level native employment in each occupation in 1850 and the occupation-specific Irish employment shift, the first and second terms of Equation 1, respectively. Although we use town-level shares in our empirical exercise, the figure provides a visualization of the variation in the shift and a summary of the native occupational distribution. The largest shifts occurred in factory operatives, boot and shoe makers, and laborers. Native-born employment, on the other hand, was concentrated in farming, mechanics of all type, boot and shoe making, and laborers.[21]

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[18]Card (2001) and Friedberg (2001) used occupations as a measure of skill when estimating the impact of immigration in the modern United States.

[19]Employment was only asked of men ages 15 and older in the 1850 census, not for women. Moreover, women could not vote in state and presidential elections in Massachusetts at this time. The voting data does not include the political views of women, except to the extent that men took them, or the economic effects of immigration on women's labor market outcomes, into account.

[20]First, occupation strings were coded into the 1880 specific IPUMS occupation codes (OCC). The 1850 IPUMS complete count census microdata contains OCC codes. For both the 1850 and 1855 data, we then counted up employment of Irish-born men in each of the 11 broad occupation categories. In robustness checks, we do the same for British and German immigrants.

[21]The mechanics category includes carpenters, blacksmiths, and all jobs ending in "maker" such as paper-

Figure 4: Irish Shift (1850 to 1855) and Baseline (1850) Share Native in Occupational Categories
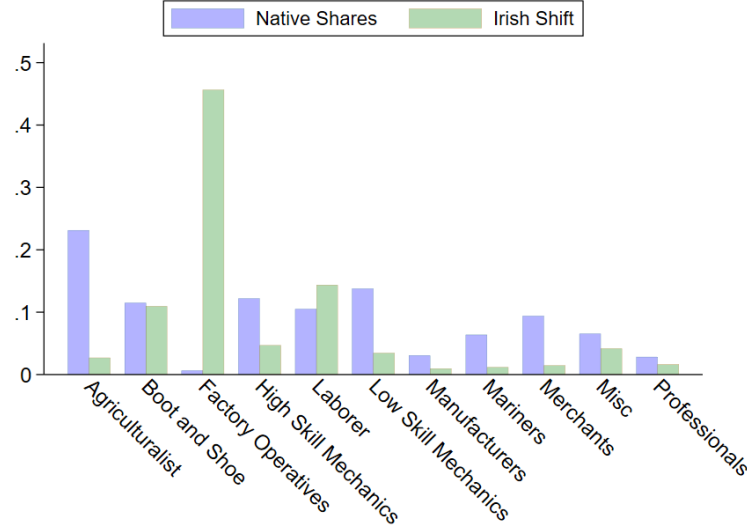
Notes: Figure depicts the state-level Irish shift across 11 occupational categories used as the second term in Equation 1. Baseline native employment shares in 1850 (males 16+ years of age) average across state used as the first term in Equation 1. The actual crowdout measure uses town-level variation in native shares. *Source: Massachusetts and Federal Population Censuses*, 1850 and 1855.

IV.C Exposure to Deskilling

Exposure to deskilling in manufacturing follows the general setup of Equation 1 – industry-specific changes in average establishment size are interacted with lagged local industry employment shares:

$$(2) \qquad deskilling_i = \sum_k \frac{L_k^{1837,i}}{L_{Tot}^{1840,i}} \cdot \left(\frac{L_k^{1855,Mass}}{N_k^{1855,Mass}} - \frac{L_k^{1837,Mass}}{N_k^{1837,Mass}} \right) \quad ,$$

where i denotes town, k denotes industry, L denotes employment and N represents the number of establishments. Again, in practice we use a leave-one-out estimator where the establishment size shift is constructed after subtracting the manufacturing data from town i from the state totals. The initial industry shares by town are constructed from town-level reports in the 1837 Massachusetts Manufacturing Census, which were hand-entered (Bigelow 1838). Note that the denominator for the share of employed is taken from the 1840 census. This is so we could normalize by all employment in a town, not just manufacturing employment as

maker, etc., except for boot and shoe makers, which we place in its own category. Boot and shoe making was the second largest manufacturing industry in the state by output value after textiles. Production occurred primarily through the putting-out system of home production, not in factories.

reported in the 1837 Manufacturing Census.

We focus on average establishment size since it is often viewed as a signpost of industrialization and deskilling. New England underwent a transition from the small artisanal shop to factories from 1820 to 1860. Sokoloff (1984) documents a sharp increase in establishment size over this period, in both mechanized and non-mechanized industries. High-skilled artisans were replaced by capital and machines, but also by moving to a minute division of labor in non-mechanized factories. Goldin & Sokoloff (1984) show that employment of women and children, two groups that arguably represent a less skilled workforce, increased with establishment size. Atack *et al.* (2004) demonstrate that the average wage declines with establishment size consistent with deskilling.

To construct this measure, we digitized town-level aggregate reports from the 1837, 1845, and 1855 Massachusetts Censuses of Manufacturing (Bigelow 1838; Palfrey 1846; DeWitt 1856). The average establishment size increased from 20 in 1837 to 35 in 1855. Our preferred specification uses the shares available from 1837, and shifts from 1837 to 1855, as this specification takes initial shares from the earliest period available.

V   Empirical Framework

To test the contribution of labor market crowdout and deskilling to the Know-Nothing electoral success in Massachusetts, we estimate:

$$(3) \qquad KnowNothingShare_i = \alpha + \tau crowdout_i + \gamma deskilling_i + X_i\beta' + \delta_{county} + \varepsilon_i$$

where X includes the elements described above, and δ_{county} is a set of county indicators. We first estimate the effect of crowdout and deskilling on Know-Nothing vote share in 1854, their first election on the ballot and in which they won a resounding victory (Figure A.7 Panel (A)), before turning to subsequent gubernatorial races.

Identification of τ and γ, the coefficients of interest, comes from within-county variation in the exposure to direct Irish labor market competition and deskilling, conditional on X_i. Regressions are weighted by eligible voters by town from the registration reports (i.e. ratable polls). Because the governor was elected by state-wide popular vote, weighting provides a more natural estimate of the treatment effect. Additionally, since some of the towns are small, weighting helps reduce noise in our estimates. We reduce concerns of one major outlier driving the results by dropping Boston from the main analysis. We provide results without weighting and with Boston in robustness checks (Table 3). Note both the deskilling and crowdout measures are standardized.

A causal interpretation of the labor market crowdout and deskilling variables relies on a shift-share approach and the conditional independence assumption. In particular, our empirical strategy is an *exposure* design, where the exogenous initial shares predict differential

exposure to a common shock. In papers that seek to identify the effects of immigration on economic outcomes using shift-share instruments, the identification concern is that historical immigration patterns are endogenous to economic growth. In our context, we use native occupation shares, thus that specific concern is less applicable, though there is still a possibility of an omitted factor affecting both the native-born town-level occupational distribution and the evolution of nativist sentiment. We follow the guidance of Goldsmith-Pinkham *et al.* (2020) and include lagged industry sector shares as a control in robustness checks below. We also demonstrate that neither exposure index has positive explanatory power for historical voting patterns prior to the Irish famine shock.

VI   Results

VI.A   Main Results

Results from estimating Equation (3) are in Table 2, where the outcome is the share of votes for the Know-Nothing candidate for Massachusetts governor in 1854, Henry J. Gardner. We add controls moving across columns. In Column (1) we include only the main variables of interest – the deskilling and crowdout indices, and in column (2) we add county fixed effects. We find that a one standard deviation increase in labor market crowdout increases the Know-Nothing vote share by 1.4 percentage points, and 2.5 percentage points after including county fixed effects. Similarly, a one standard deviation increase in the deskilling index increases the vote share by 1.2 and 1.3 percentage points.

Column (3) adds the controls for urbanization discussed above, an indicator for towns with greater than 2,500 people in 1850; the employment in cottage industries in 1845; and manufacturing establishments per capita at the town level in 1855. Column (4) adds the percent Irish in 1855; column (5) adds the controls for culture and fiscal burden. Finally, column (6) adds share of employment in manufacturing and in agriculture as recorded in the 1840 U.S. census. The results across all columns are fairly consistent and column (6) is our preferred specification. The magnitude of the crowdout effect, 3.0 percentage points, is roughly double the effect of deskilling, 1.3 percentage points for a one standard deviation increase in the variables, respectively. However, the p-value of the Wald test that the coefficients between crowdout and deskilling is only marginally statistically significant when the full controls are included.

As a benchmark, we conduct two counterfactual exercises where we set deskilling to its sample minimum and then set crowdout to its sample minimum, holding all else constant. In the case of deskilling the predicted Know-Nothing vote share drops 4%, and it falls approximately 15% for crowdout, for a combined total of 19%. We find that these factors were not decisive in 1854, when the Know-Nothing party victory was overwhelming - but as support began to wane in subsequent years, reshuffling Know-Nothing votes due to economic fac-

Table 2: Main Findings – Know-Nothing Rise, 1854 Vote Share

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Irish Labor Crowdout	0.014*	0.025***	0.028***	0.027***	0.027***	0.029***
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Deskilling Index	0.012**	0.013***	0.012**	0.016**	0.015**	0.013**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)
County FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanization	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pct Irish 1855	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Culture & Fiscal Burden	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Share Mfg & Ag 1840	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
No. of Observations	307	307	307	307	307	307
R-squared	0.023	0.175	0.184	0.187	0.182	0.179
P-value	0.821	0.158	0.083	0.277	0.254	0.153
Mean of Dept. Var	0.628	0.628	0.628	0.628	0.628	0.628

Notes: Table reports OLS estimates from Equation (3). The outcome across all specifications is the Share of Know-Voting Vote for Governor in Massachusetts in 1854. See Section IV.B for the definitions of crowdout and deskilling. Urbanization controls refer to an urban indicator (population > 2500 in 1855), number employed in cottage industries (1837), the share of native working age males in 1850 with an empty occupation string, and manufacturing establishments per capita (1855). Culture and Fiscal Burden control include an indicator for housing a foreign-born pauper in a given town and the assimilation index based on names of children of Irish-born parents. Share manufacturing and share agriculture are based on the 1840 census which asked employment at the household level. Regressions are weighted by ratable polls (similar to a measure of potential voters). The p-value from a Wald test of equality between the crowdout and deskilling coefficients is reported for each column. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *, **, *** refer to statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively.
Sources: See Data Appendix in Section B in Section B for a detailed list of data sources.

tors would have changed the electoral outcome. The combined effects in the counterfactual account for 30% of Know-Nothing voters in the 1855 and 1856 elections.

VI.B   Robustness and Falsification Checks

In Table 3 column (1) we add the vote share from the constitution of 1853 as a proxy for perceived Irish enfranchisement. In column (2) we add the historical vote for the Whigs in 1844. Neither change the results significantly. Columns (3) and (4) expand the control set for urbanization by adding an indicator for a mill town and the log of 1855 population. Column (5) controls for native labor demand by using the change in employment of natives between 1850 and 1855 across all industries in town i normalized by their initial value. Column (6) accounts for early industrial development by including local employment shares of all categories reported in the 1840 Population Census: Manufacturing, Commerce, Pro-

fessional, River Transportation, Ocean Transportation, Mining, and Agriculture.Column (7) includes Boston in the sample. The results are fairly consistent across all these changes. Finally in column (8), we drop weighting by eligible voters. The standard errors increase and the magnitudes do decline, but not substantially.

Tables 2 and 3 convey a robust association between the Know-Nothing vote share and Irish labor market crowdout and deskilling. In addition, we permute the actual exposures with randomly chosen crowdout and deskilling indices. Appendix Figure A.8 presents the distribution of permutation coefficients on deskilling and crowdout. Our main results are in the tails of the distribution: the actual effect of crowdout is greater than the 99th percentile of the placebo distribution, and the actual effect of deskilling is greater than the 94th percentile. Finally, we show that spatial correlation in the data does not artificially inflate the p-values for our main findings (Kelly 2019; Conley 1999). See Appendix Table A.4 for these results.

An additional test of the identification assumption is to assess whether the shift-share exposure predicts pre-trends in the outcome (Goldsmith-Pinkham *et al.* 2020). The Know-Nothings first competed in an election in 1854, thus we test whether crowdout and deskilling predict political outcomes prior to the Irish Famine migration. Table 4 repeats our main specification from Table 2 with Democratic Governor vote share in 1844 and Whig vote share in 1844 as the outcome (columns (1) and (2), respectively). We fail to find consistent evidence that either factor predicts pre-Irish Famine political outcomes, conditional on the control variables.

VI.C Short- and Medium-term Effects on Industrialization and Native-born Living Standards

Following Ferrie (1997), we construct a linked sample of 50,587 native-born Massachusetts men from the 1850 to the 1860 Census.[22] The individual-level data on economic outcomes and occupation enables us perform an analysis using a crowdout measure specific to the individuals' occupational group as defined in 1850. Such an analysis is not possible with aggregate town-level voting outcome data. Specifically, we define state-level crowdout as the 1850 to 1855 growth of Irish-born into the native individual's 1850 occupational group, essentially the occupation-specific "shift" portion of our crowdout measure.[23]

We use the town-level deskilling exposure from the main analysis, because unlike for crowdout, a person-specific measure for deskilling is impossible to construct. The 1850 census reports occupation, not industry. Thus, industry-level changes in average establishment

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[22]We follow the standard iterative method of Abramitzky *et al.* (2014). These links are available on the CensusLinkingProject.org website. In Appendix Table B.10, we show that linked individuals have higher wealth and more prestigious occupations than those who were not matched, consistent with other matching literature. Our results are unchanged if we reweight the matched sample to match the population

[23]This is the state-level change in Irish-born individuals in occupational group j between 1855 to 1850 divided by the total employed in occupational group j in 1850.

Table 3: Robustness Checks

	(1)	(2)	(3) Added Controls	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Irish Enfran-chisement	Share Whig 1844	Mill Town Indicator	Log Popu-lation 1855	Native Labor Demand	All Sector Shares 1840	Add Boston	No Weights
Irish Labor Crowdout	0.028*** (0.008)	0.028*** (0.008)	0.027*** (0.009)	0.028*** (0.008)	0.029*** (0.009)	0.022*** (0.008)	0.026*** (0.008)	0.017* (0.009)
Deskilling Index	0.013* (0.007)	0.015** (0.007)	0.012* (0.006)	0.013** (0.007)	0.014** (0.007)	0.010 (0.006)	0.011* (0.007)	0.010 (0.007)
Const. Vote 1853	0.031 (0.070)							
Share Whig 1844		-0.088 (0.076)						
Mill			0.019 (0.020)					
Log Population 1855				-0.006 (0.016)				
Native Labor Demand					0.009 (0.024)			
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanization	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pct Irish 1855	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Culture & Fiscal Burden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Share Mfg & Ag 1840	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
All Sector Shares	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
No. of Observations	307	307	307	307	307	307	308	307
R-squared	0.176	0.182	0.178	0.176	0.176	0.209	0.192	0.149
P-value	0.163	0.214	0.178	0.165	0.153	0.284	0.163	0.558

Notes: Table reports OLS estimates from Equation (3). The outcome across all specifications is the Share of Know-Voting Vote for Governor in Massachusetts in 1854. See Section IV.B for the definitions of crowdout and deskilling. Urbanization controls refer to an urban indicator (population > 2500 in 1855), number employed in cottage industries (1845), the share of native working age males in 1850 with an empty occupation string, and manufacturing establishments per capita (1855). Culture and Fiscal Burden control include an indicator for housing a foreign-born pauper in a given town and the assimilation index based on names of children of Irish-born parents. Share manufacturing and share agriculture are based on the 1840 census which asked employment at the household level. Each column is a slightly different specification indicated by the column heading. Column (1) includes a proxy for Irish enfranchisement – the constitutional vote of 1853. Column (2) includes the Share Whig vote in 1844 as a control for historical voting patterns. Column (3) includes an indicator for mill town. Column (4) includes log population 1855. Column (5) includes a proxy for native labor demand - the shift in native men in manufacturing between 1850 and 1855. Column (6) includes employment shares that span all categories in the 1840 census. Column (7) adds Boston to the sample. Regressions are weighted by ratable polls (similar to a measure of potential voters) except in column (8). Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *, **, *** refer to statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively. *Sources*: See Data Appendix in Section B for a detailed list of data sources.

Table 4: Pre-Famine Political Outcomes

	(1)	(2)
	Placebo Outcomes	
Irish Labor Crowdout	0.004	-0.008
	(0.008)	(0.008)
Deskilling Index	-0.004	0.007
	(0.008)	(0.008)
County FE	Yes	Yes
Urbanization	Yes	Yes
Pct Irish 1855	Yes	Yes
Culture & Fiscal Burden	Yes	Yes
Share Mfg & Ag 1840	Yes	Yes
No. of Observations	307	307
R-squared	0.180	0.165

Notes: Table reports OLS estimates from Equation (3). The outcome varies across the first two columns and is listed in the column heading. Regressions are weighted by ratable polls. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *, **, *** refer to statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively.
Sources: See Data Appendix in Section B for a detailed list of data sources.

size cannot be linked to individual workers. Instead, we include town-level exposure to deskilling as a proxy. Deskilling is interacted with an indicator for mechanics to capture the likely heterogeneity of effects across occupations.[24]

The outcomes of interest include property wealth in 1860 (dollar value of personal and real estate property), occupational upgrading (an increase in the wealth score of the occupation between 1850 and 1860) and migration. Migration is an indicator for any individual who has changed towns between the two censuses. Approximately 60% of the movers in the sample migrate within state. All regressions condition on county and age group fixed effects as well as 1850 real estate wealth and an indicator for any positive amount of property in 1850.

The results are gathered in Table 5. In column (1), a one standard deviation increase in crowdout reduces wealth by approximately 22%. The effect of deskilling is concentrated in native mechanics, with a one standard deviation increase associated with an 8% decrease in wealth. In column (2), we add an indicator for whether the individual moved and the

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[24]Using the individual matched sample, we could recover the town-level Irish crowdout exposure measure used in the main analysis. Collapsing the occupational frequencies in the individual data to the town level would provide the weights for a weighted sum of the state-level occupation specific shifts. Doing so results in noisy estimates of negative impacts on property wealth from both Irish crowdout and deskilling.

interaction between crowdout and migration. We find that the negative effects of crowdout on wealth are mitigated to some extent by migration. Similarly, in column (3) the negative effects of crowdout on wealth are offset by occupational grading.[25] Column (4) to (6) replicate the results from columns (1) to (3) for the outcome of any positive wealth in 1860. Results are consistent with crowdout decreasing property wealth on the extensive margin, and deskilling having no effect. Column (7) demonstrates that a one standard deviation increase in deskilling increases the propensity to move by 1.4 percentage points (5% of the mean), but is not concentrated solely in mechanics. Crowdout is not associated with increased migration. Finally in column (8), a one-standard deviation increase in Irish crowdout (deskilling) is associated with a 13.7 percentage point (1.7 percentage point) increase in occupational upgrading, respectively. Taken together, these results suggest that more exposure to Irish labor market crowdout and deskilling in manufacturing led to decreased wealth accumulation for native-born men over the medium term.

VI.D Results in Broader Context: the Dynamics of Realignment

Here, we place our results in the broader context of the realignment leading up to the Civil War. In the 1850s, it became increasingly difficult for a national party to straddle the North and South of the United States (Foner 1970; Holt 1992; Howe 1976). The Whig party dissolved after its capitulation on the expansion of slavery caused many Northerners to abandon it (Holt 1973). The Whig collapse coupled with changing views on slavery, immigration, and labor reform created an opportunity for new parties to emerge: including the Free Soilers, Know-Nothings, and (later) the Republicans (Anbinder 1992). In Massachusetts, the platforms of all three parties overlapped to some extent. For instance, before the emergence of the Know-Nothing party, the anti-slavery Free Soilers embraced pro-labor reforms and provided the workingman with an alternative to the feckless Democratic party (Mulkern 1990).[26]

Table A.1 reports vote shares for gubernatorial elections between 1852 and 1858 with bold font denoting winners. The table reveals the fluidity that characterized this time period. The Whigs were the dominant party prior to 1854, but the Free Soil party began to gain momentum with over 20 percent of the vote share in the early 1850s. Free Soil momentum stalled with the entrance of the Know-Nothings in 1854, who held the Governor's office for three years. In 1857, the Republicans gained control of all branches of power in the state, which they then held for decades.

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[25]There are differences between the two adaptations to economic pressures, whereby the main effect of moving is negative but of occupational upgrading is positive on wealth. Though these must be interpreted with caution as they do not take into account the interaction, plausibly capture selection into migration and upgrading, and we do not have instruments for either.

[26]According to Mulkern (1990), the Whigs were the party of Boston capital, they were against the 10-hour workday and land redistribution in the West, and in favor of the Tariff. The Free Soilers, on the other hand, ran on pro-labor and anti-corruption platform in Massachusetts.

Table 5: Effects of State-level Irish Crowdout on Native Wealth, Migration and Occupational Upgrading

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Ln(Total Wealth, 1860)			Any Wealth in 1860 (=1)			Moved (=1)	Occupational Upgrade
Irish Labor State Crowdout	-0.221***	-0.311***	-0.504***	-0.012***	-0.016***	-0.034***	0.004	0.137***
	(0.026)	(0.033)	(0.040)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.007)
Deskilling Exposure (Town)	-0.001	0.003	-0.022	-0.002	-0.001	-0.003	0.014**	0.017***
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Deskill X Mechanic	-0.080*	-0.075*	-0.062	-0.007	-0.007	-0.006	0.000	-0.012
	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.042)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.008)
Mechanic (=1)	-0.109**	-0.087	-0.150***	0.004	0.006	0.001	0.043***	0.100***
	(0.051)	(0.053)	(0.046)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.018)
Crowdout X Moved (=1)		0.268***			0.013**			
		(0.037)			(0.006)			
Moved (=1)		-0.508***			-0.053***			
		(0.067)			(0.010)			
Crowdout X Occ. Upgrade			0.313***			0.024***		
			(0.045)			(0.006)		
Occ. Upgrade			0.740***			0.057***		
			(0.041)			(0.006)		
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ln(Real Property, 1850)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Any Real Property, 1850 (=1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of Observations	50587	50587	50587	50587	50587	50587	50587	50587
Mean of Dept. Var	5.862	5.862	5.862	0.796	0.796	0.796	0.266	0.282

Notes: Observations represent native-born Massachusetts men linked in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. Crowdout is the state-level shift of Irish into the occupation of the native-born individual in 1850. All regressions include county fixed effects, age group fixed effects, and controls for real property in 1850. Standard errors are clustered at the town level are in parentheses. *, **, *** refer to statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively.
Sources: See Data Appendix in Section B for a detailed list of data sources.

How did the economic forces described above affect voters over time? Figure A.10 plots the estimated coefficients and confidence intervals for crowdout and deskilling for the Know-Nothing party. The results demonstrate that economic factors were important for the years in which they were in power (1854 to 1857, see Panels (A) and (B)). Once they lost power, however, economic factors cease to be predictive of vote share. In sharp contrast, Panel (C) demonstrates that the non-economic factors pauperism and assimilation, as we measure them, were never important predictors in *any* year.

The estimated effects of crowdout and deskilling remain consistent for the three election years in which Gardner was victorious, 1854 to 1856. In 1857, the Know-Nothings lost the governorship to the Republicans. In that year and after, the effect of crowdout and deskilling on Know-Nothing vote share declines, and remains essentially zero for *all* parties. Irish labor market crowdout and deskilling in manufacturing had lost their influence on election outcomes in the state. After the 1856 election, the Know-Nothings played only a minimal role in Massachusetts politics.

VII   Conclusion

We investigate a long-standing question in economic history regarding the causes of the success of the Know-Nothing Party. Using newly digitized population and manufacturing censuses for Massachusetts, we construct local measures of exposure to both Irish labor market crowdout and deskilling in manufacturing. Consistent with Fogel's hypothesis, we find support for the notion that labor market competition among low-skill workers was an important factor accounting for approximately 19-30% of Know-Nothing votes in Massachusetts. However, the process of industrialization and deskilling in manufacturing that started at least two decades before the great waves of Irish immigration also played a key role (Mulkern 1990). We find evidence of direct economic harm on native-born men more exposed to crowdout and deskilling, but also find evidence of adjustment by occupational upgrading.

Our findings on when and where economic factors matter are also instructive. Economic factors predict vote shares for the Know-Nothing candidate for governor in years in which they win, were decisive overall in the 1855 election but unimportant among stronghold locations. These results suggest economic factors may tip marginal communities towards a nativist platform. The electoral impact of deskilling and crowdout evaporated as the crisis over slavery and the existential threat to the Union posed by civil war sidelined other concerns. This shift in emphasis was foreshadowed by Abraham Lincoln, writing in 1855: *"I am not a Know-Nothing…how could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes, be in favor of degrading classes of white people?"* The differences between native-born and Irish-born exploited by the Know-Nothing party were overshadowed, at least temporarily, by the divide between North and South.

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