

Econ 323--Economic History of the U.S.

Professor Eschker



## Economic History of the United States – Discussant Paper

### Question of the Article

This paper ~~declares its intent~~ <sup>intends</sup> to "...[explore] the effects of human capital on individual workers during the second Industrial Revolution by examining the specific case of the United States Navy of the late nineteenth century~~x~~". In more human terms, it is trying to analyze and evaluate how valuable human capital (skills, experiences, intelligence, training,) were to the officers of the United States Navy, <sup>value being</sup> measured as probability of promotions, pay rates, and other premia affiliated with skill or lack thereof.

### Means of Answering

The ~~chosen time, the~~ <sup>in progress</sup> end of the nineteenth century, is an interesting time ~~to focus on;~~ the second industrial revolution is ~~hitting~~, and the shift is being made from sailing ships to steam-powered ships, and then to ironclads. Factories are undergoing refinement and expansion, both in purpose and capabilities. Chemical refining, mechanical engineering, and electronics are all burgeoning fields, and all incredibly relevant to ~~as technological institution as a Navy.~~ <sup>the</sup> Vast bodies of salt water are ~~inherently inimical to human life, and being able to survive both the environment and other people trying to kill you in such an environment is has never been a particularly easy undertaking, and the fierce competition inherent in such a purpose is a strong impetus to be~~ <sup>technologically</sup> advanced.

~~The navy uses technology for shipbuilding and combat.~~

It is also useful for the purposes of research. The authors, Darrell J. Glaser and Ahmed S.

? Reword

Raham, effect theirs by examining the US Navy officer registries from the appropriate era, ~~being an~~  
~~ordered government institution~~, the US Navy did its best to preserve all documentation and recordings  
of the era. They <sup>authors</sup> use the registries to index and correlate pay, officer academy grades, promotions, <sup>and</sup> duty  
assignments. They also take into account the resizing of the navy in the postbellum period of America,  
by adding floors and ceilings to account for the limit of the era and study. Finally, this is all adjusted by  
and focused on the differing formats of enlistment for officers in the era.

### Conclusion <sup>for</sup>

Engineering officers, <sup>had</sup> ~~those with the~~ valuable skills <sup>they</sup> the Navy ~~was being forced to adopt~~, were in  
a separate grouping relative to regular line officers with respect to promotion, advancement, and pay.  
At enlistment, <sup>e</sup> Engineering officers were given significant advantages in pay and benefits, <sup>which encouraged</sup> ~~encouraging~~  
individuals with modern skills to view the Navy as a prospective career. Despite that, however, most of <sup>engineering officers</sup>  
~~them~~ were found to leave early. This was ~~determined to be~~ due to a tapering off of the benefits  
~~engineering officers~~ <sup>these</sup> received, compared both to the ~~relative~~ advancement of regular line officers, and  
~~compared~~ to the available opportunities beyond the navy, where engineering skills were in high  
demand. This practice effectively discouraged officers with engineering skills from becoming 'lifers' in  
the US Navy, and almost certainly slowed the US Navy's adaptation to the modern scene and technic <sup>?</sup> <sup>Reword</sup>  
environment. The authors state <sup>that</sup> such ill-advised policies might have lead competitive businesses to  
destruction, but in the case of a non-competitive enterprise like a nation's Navy, it probably lead to  
catastrophic stagnation, ~~the sort~~ that would last for decades.

### Criticism

The research and conclusions of the paper are ~~extremely~~ well explained and reasoned. The  
conclusion follows the research, and the research follows the question in obvious fashion. <sup>overall it's</sup>



Stop using semi colons

remarkably good at explaining what it does. However, the research is done in a bubble; <sup>there is</sup> no outside information beyond the focused study itself. What were other options for an ex-navy officer with extensive engineering experience? What were the details of the Navy's transition into the modern technological era? How was long-term retention among engineering officers more important than the short-term enlistment permia? How did the US Navy compare to other Navies, such as the Russian (recovering from the Crimean War) or the British? (current hegemon of the era, and dominant Naval power).

### Recommendations

Regarding improvement, my strongest recommendation is to provide context. Only physicists or astronomers can really do research in a vacuum. <sup>The authors</sup> They should give relative perspectives <sup>by</sup> comparing the resultant effects of the United States Navy's behaviors and protocols to other countries in the same period. In depth analysis of Britian, France, or the Ottoman Empire's policies and practices is not necessary, but a brief sentence or two on the topic, and then a mentioning of the USN's results relative <sup>be good There should also be</sup> to theirs would not be amiss. Neither would a brief analysis of the skills engineering officers were trained in, and a listing of applicable professions or employments beyond Navy service; <sup>information of</sup> what engineering officers were leaving for as well as leaving from would make the data more useful.

Listing

Overall, the greatest weakness of the paper is how self-contained it is. While it limits the purview of the paper to exactly what is being studied, information on adjacent and bordering topics to the essential study would not be amiss, and would be more edifying.

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The many grammar  
issues made it difficult  
to follow.  
OK overview & critique

$\frac{5}{7}$   $\frac{6}{5}$   $\frac{6}{7}$