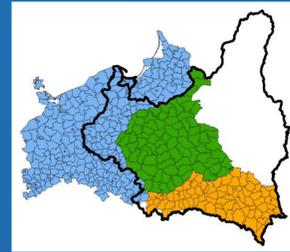


# Fading Legacies: Human Capital in the Aftermath of the Partitions of Poland

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## Research question:

- How persistent is history? What is the role of institutions in this?
- Large natural experiment: Partitions of Poland
- Austria, Prussia and Russia ruled over Poland from 1792 to 1918
- Imperial institutions caused large differences in human capital
- Polish independence 1918: Harmonization of educational institutions
- Sample spans 1911-1961 to observe impact of institutional change
- Decompression of Polish educational history across (former) Partitions



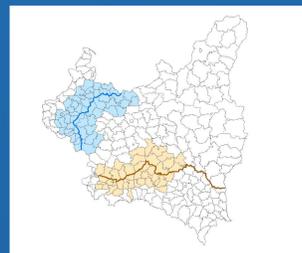
1911-1939



1948 onwards

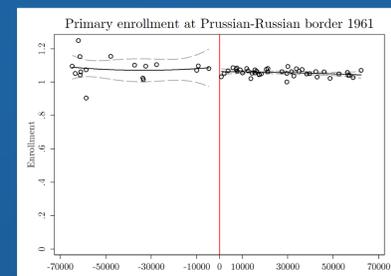
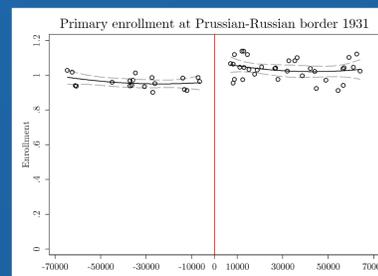
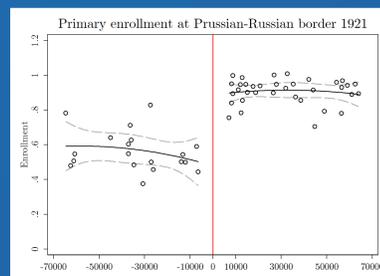
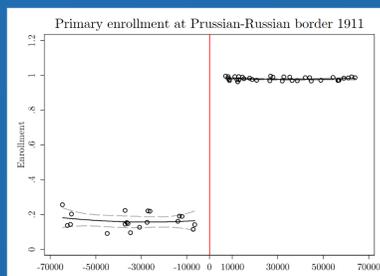
## Empirical strategy:

- Spatial RDD at Partition borders
- Grosfeld & Zhuravskaya, 2015: Randomness of borders
- This paper adds: No discontinuities in population prior to Partitions
- $y_{it} = \alpha \cdot Empire_i + f(X_i, Y_i) + \delta \cdot C_i + \varepsilon_{it}$
- $Empire_i = 1$  if county is in Prussian or Austrian Partition
- $f(X_i, Y_i)$ : Second-order polynomial in longitude and latitude

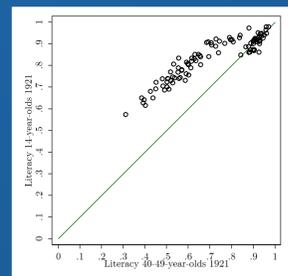
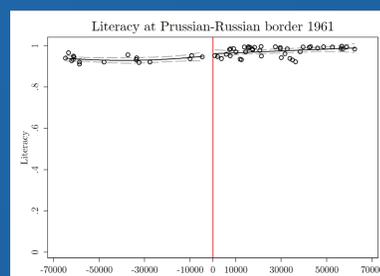
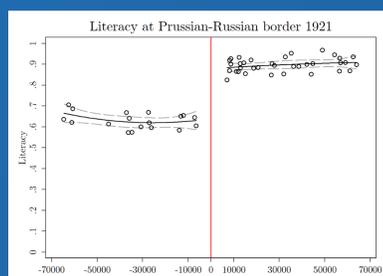


## Results:

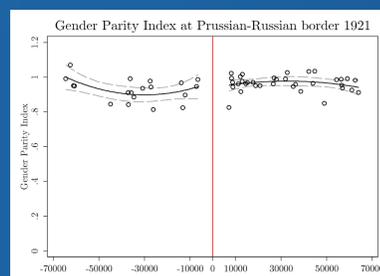
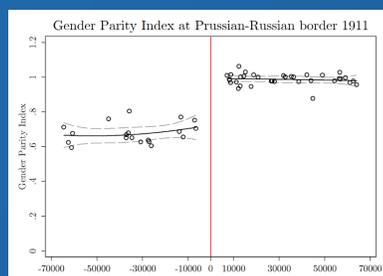
- Large differences in enrollment due to the Partitions in 1911 – 80 percentage points gap between Russian and Prussian Partition
- But both former Partitions are close to full enrollment in 1931 – only 13 years after harmonization of educational institutions



- Russian legacy is embodied in human capital of older cohorts - literacy is equalized after WWII due to intergenerational mobility



- Gender access to schooling was highly unequal in the Russian Partition, but is quickly equalized by Polish institutions



- High share of informally or self-taught population in former Russian Partition in 1921, but formalization till 1961
- No differences in educational attainment between the former Partitions at medium and high levels of education
- Growth of publications but lower utilization of postal services in former Russian Partition between WWI and WWII
- Robustness to placebo borders, smaller RDD bandwidth and population controls

## Conclusion:

- Wittenberg (2015): History is both persistence and change
- This paper shows that institutional change rapidly reshapes human capital in post-WWI Poland
- This paper shows how “legacy” effects turn into “zero” effects, no long-run associations (Voth, 2020)
- Control over institutions allows Poland to change trajectory of former Russian Partition (Acemoglu et al., 2020)
- History – from the persistence perspective – still matters!
  - Bukowski (2019): Positive norms towards schooling in former Austrian Partition today → Limit to non-persistence
  - Persistence of “good” schooling systems in the former Austrian and Prussian Partitions → Adopted by Poles after WWI

