Draft-Dodging: Investigating the Relationship between Income and Vietnam War Draft Statistics

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ABSTRACT

In the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, the possibility for young, able-bodied men to be involuntarily drafted into the Vietnam War was non-trivial. Hundreds of thousands of young men across all fifty states and of all socioeconomic backgrounds attempted to evade the draft, so we investigated whether young men in wealthier states were more likely to successfully find exit options from the draft, using per capita personal income as a proxy for socioeconomic status. To investigate our two alternative hypotheses that per capita personal incomes are negatively correlated with induction risk and positively correlated with student deferment rates, we calculated the Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values for each dataset. We did not find a statistically significant negative correlation between per capita personal income and induction risk, but we did find a moderately positive, statistically significant correlation between per capita personal income and student deferment rates by state. This may indicate that young men from wealthier states and higher socioeconomic strata were more likely to achieve student deferments for college in order to avoid the Vietnam War draft, posing important implications for the socioeconomic dynamics of military conscription in the Postwar era.

Keywords: Vietnam War, draft, conscription, college deferment, labor markets, socioeconomics

OBJECTIVES

Purpose:

- To evaluate whether young men in wealthier states were more likely to successfully secure exit options from the Vietnam draft
  - Proxy for socioeconomic background: Per-capita personal income

Alternative Hypotheses:

- **H1**: Per-capita personal income is negatively correlated with induction risk
- **H2**: Per-capita personal income is positively correlated with college deferment rates

BACKGROUND

- Between 1964 and 1973, being drafted to serve in Vietnam was a likely occurrence for millions of American youths (Annual Report of the Director of Selective Service)
- Because young men from all fifty states and all socioeconomic strata were equally subject to the draft (Annual Report of the Director of Selective Service), our objective is to evaluate whether men from wealthier states were more successful in securing exits from the eligible draft pool using per-capita personal income as a proxy
- These correlations will reveal key clues about the socioeconomic trends of the War draft

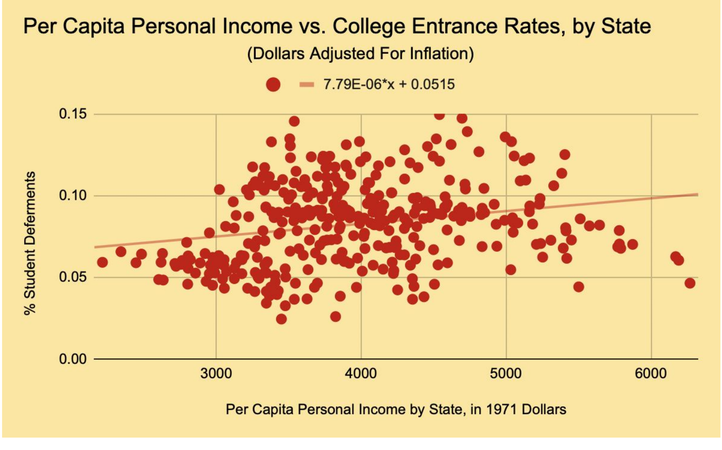
METHODS

- We compiled per-capita personal income by state from the Federal Reserve Economic Database (FRED)
  - We then derived induction risk and college deferment rates by state from statistics from Selective Service Reports from 1965-1971
  - We then calculated Pearson Product Correlation Coefficients and p-values for the datasets
- We adjusted per-capita personal income to 1971 dollars using CPI data

RESULTS

Raw Correlation Data

	Correlation Coefficient r	p-value	n=
Correlation between PCPI and Induction Risk	0.0386	0.4665	358
Correlation between PCPI and College Deferment Rate	0.2335	<0.00001	358



The equation for the trendline for PCPI vs. College Deferment is y=0.00000779x + 0.0515

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- **H1** correlation coefficient: 0.0386
  - p-value: 0.4665
  - Therefore, we do not have evidence to reject the null hypothesis that per capita personal income and induction risk are not correlated
- **H2** correlation coefficient: 0.2335
  - p-value of <0.00001
  - Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that per capita personal income and college deferment rates are positively correlated
- It is possible that an unknown variable unrelated to any attempt to dodge the draft caused the correlation between PCPI and college deferment rates
  - It is also possible that many men started families (Bailey and Chyn, 2020), and even committed felonies to avoid being drafted (Kuziemko, 2010), which would explain the lack of correlation between PCPI and induction risk

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