Human Capital and Growth in the Post-Bellum South:
A Separate but Unequal Story *

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Abstract:

This paper tests the importance of human capital in explaining convergence across states of the United States from 1880 to 1950. Human capital levels matter not only to a state’s income level but also to its growth rate through technological diffusion. There is a unique pattern in the South, whose overwhelmingly agricultural society relied more heavily on work experience than formal education, and whose racial discrimination in school resource allocation played a crucial role in lowering human capital accumulation of both blacks and whites. The South’s low overall human capital levels immediately after the Civil War, combined with its active resistance in the Post-Bellum period to educating its population, played an important role in reducing the speed of Southern conditional convergence toward the rest of the nation after the Civil War.

JEL Classification: I20, N11, N12, N31, N32, O11, O15, O18, O47, R11

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