

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

Keywords: Human Capital, Economic Growth, Convergence, Regional Analysis, U.S. Economic History, Southern U.S. Economic History, Racial Discrimination

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