"Examining the Effect of Economic Shocks on the Schooling Choices of Southern Farmers"

Abstract: Black men born in the Cotton South during the turn of the twentieth century attended school for three and half fewer years relative to their white counterparts. In this paper, I examine whether economic fluctuations contributed to blacks receiving fifty percent less schooling than whites. Using US Census data, I find a positive correlation between black school attendance and cotton production. The attendance rates of white children are unaffected by changes in cotton production. Using features of the Southern agricultural economy, I show credit constraints drive the positive correlation between school attendance and cotton production for black households.

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