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The Long-Term Effects of American Indian Boarding SchoolsMatthew T. Gregg¹mgregg@rwu.edu

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Abstract

This paper explores some long-standing questions of the legacy of American Indian boarding schools by comparing contemporary Indian reservations that experienced differing impacts in the past from boarding schools. Combining recent reservation-level census data and school enrollment data from 1911 to 1932, I find that reservations that sent a larger share of students to off-reservation boarding schools have higher high school graduation rates, higher per capita income, lower poverty rates, a greater proportion of exclusively English speakers, and smaller family sizes. These results are supported when distance to the nearest off-reservation boarding school that subsequently closed is used as an instrument for the proportion of past boarding school students. I conclude with a discussion of the possible reasons for this link.

Keywords: Education; Development; Assimilation; American Indians.

JEL Codes: I25, J15, N30, O15, Z10

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