

# Why Study School Integration?

## The Evolution of Segregation and Education

**Due Date: Monday, January 29 at 6pm**

5% of final grade

EC 970: Sophomore Tutorial  
Harvard University Department of  
Economics

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Rucker Johnson, an economist at U.C. Berkeley, writes in his 2019 book *Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works*:

“Contrary to popular wisdom, integration has benefited– and continues to benefit– African Americans, whether that benefit is translated into educational attainment, earnings, social stability, or incarceration rates. Whites, meanwhile, lose nothing. . . overall, society benefits from a decrease in the kind of prejudice that . . . has threatened to tear us apart . . . integration works, but only if we give it a chance”

*Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works*, pg. 3

But in “Does the Negro Need Separate Schools? A Retrospective Analysis of the Racial Composition of Schools and Black Adult Academic and Economic Success”<sup>1</sup> (Diette et. al 2021) the authors (also economists) argue that “it is not unambiguously the case that black students gain from attending schools with white peers.”

In this assignment, you will respond to the arguments made by both sets of authors. Are their viewpoints necessarily in conflict with each other? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each argument? How do the authors cite data and economic methods to back up their findings?

What do the authors list as the benefits and weaknesses of school integration? When does it fail? When does it succeed? What does it mean for school integration to succeed or fail? What do *you* think matters when studying school integration?

This should be 3-4 pages in length (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1-inch margins).

**Please submit your papers** to canvas as a word or PDF document by **5pm on Monday, January 29**. Please name your file lastname\_a1.

## Assignment structure

You will write a 3-4 page paper responding to the following:

- Diette, Timothy M.; Hamilton, Darrick; Goldsmith, Arthur H.; Darity, William A. 2021. “Does the Negro Need Separate Schools? A Retrospective Analysis of the Racial Composition of Schools and Black Adult Academic and Economic Success”. RSF : Russell Sage Foundation journal of the social sciences, 2021, 7(1): 166-186 [link](#)
- “Rucker Johnson: Why School Integration Works.” [link](#)  
*This is a Youtube video summarizing his 265 page book. It runs 1:15*

My goal is to familiarize and engage you with these arguments before we dive into the extensive literature on school integration. I’m not looking for a rigid paragraph-by-paragraph structure.

Think of this as a warm up for the class—a long-form response paper. In future papers, I will ask you to incorporate citations to back up your points, but there’s no requirement to include citations to other sources for this paper.

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<sup>1</sup>Named for the 1935 essay by W.E.B. Du Bois

## Rubric.....

You will be graded on the thoroughness of your response.

- Demonstrates understanding of concepts in readings and main findings, including benefits and weaknesses of school integration ..... 50%
- Compares and contrasts strengths and weaknesses of papers, including economic methods and use of data ..... 20%
- Thoughtful discussion on definition of success for school integration ..... 30%

## References

Diette, Timothy M.; Hamilton, Darrick; Goldsmith, Arthur H.; Darity, William A. 2021. "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools? A Retrospective Analysis of the Racial Composition of Schools and Black Adult Academic and Economic Success". RSF : Russell Sage Foundation journal of the social sciences, 2021, 7(1): 166-186

Johnson, R. C., & Nazaryan, A. (2019). *Children of the dream: why school integration works (First edition.)*. Basic Books.