

The MACOS debacle has weighed heavily on every subsequent proposal to federally support educational research. Think again of Whitehurst's 2003 address at AERA: it plays all the hits. Educational research should methodologically approximate the natural sciences to the greatest possible extent; doing otherwise risks undermining the unity of the sciences and exposing our findings to claims of ideological bias. Educational research should also defer to the practical needs of school leaders and policymakers when it comes to deciding which questions to pursue. In light of Solovey's work, we can see that this move offloads the risk involved in formulating a research agenda, and that Whitehurst's shortlist of addressable needs represents only the most nonthreatening, instrumental avenues researchers might pursue. In order to win monetary support, then, from IES and many private funders alike, educational researchers have to take pains to assuage the same kind of anxieties that have dogged the NSF's social science programs since the agency's founding. They have to claim to be no different from the natural sciences in either their ability to represent reality or their ideological neutrality. Solovey's excellent book reminds us that educational research is not alone in this. For social scientists, this has always, and literally, been the price of the ticket.

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Natalie G. Adams and James H. Adams. *Just Trying to Have School: The Struggle for Desegregation in Mississippi*

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Desegregation as a means of attaining equivalent education has received significant attention in the literature since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The historical development of the desegregation process has been, and still is, an essential issue affecting Black people and Black education in the South. In *Just Trying to Have School: The Struggle for Desegregation in Mississippi*, Natalie G. Adams and James H. Adams explore the multifaceted story of racial desegregation in Mississippi public schools during the late 1960s through the early 1970s. Adams and Adams make a critical contribution to the history of American education by exploring how parents, students, teachers, superintendents, coaches, and other community actors assisted in desegregating public schools in Mississippi. Adams and Adams's perceptive text brings readers into some of the most intimate accounts of local Mississippians who were in school around or during the time between *Brown* and *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (1969) through riveting narratives about this unobserved aspect of the civil rights movement.

Their analysis demonstrates that reconstructing the voice of everyday, behind-the-scenes persons sheds light on the authentic struggle from a bottom-up approach.

Focusing on the long conflict of racial desegregation of public schools in Mississippi, most historians and readers would agree that school desegregation did not commence with *Brown*. Actually, “No state fought more fiercely to preserve segregated public schools than Mississippi” (p. 5). As the authors note, fully enacting desegregation would not become a realization in Mississippi until after *Alexander*, which forcefully required Mississippi to adhere to the law of the land and finally desegregate its public schools. This manuscript fosters and enhances our understanding of the desegregation process, as it gives light to what was happening at the granular level.

The most impressive aspect of *Just Trying to Have School* is how the authors convey the power of the local people in assisting with the process of desegregation. In the ten chapters of rigorous historical research and more than a hundred conducted interviews, Adams and Adams provide the reader with a thematic historical manuscript that incorporates multiple viewpoints. Those viewpoints consist of narratives from parents, students, teachers, superintendents, coaches, and other school personnel and their contributions to the desegregation process.

After two all-encompassing historical background chapters explaining the resistance and road to *Alexander*, both Adamses critically explore the role of the district’s school employees in the desegregation process, as they were and are central to the implementation of desegregation. As the authors highlight, these employees’ role is key, as they had to convey the information to the communities and take the brunt of the resistance. For example, one of those narratives depicts Tom Dulin, the Attendance Center superintendent of J. Z. George High School, as he visits Carroll County in 1964 to explain the district’s plan to desegregate the public schools. The idea of this plan did not sit well with the White parents facing the possibility of their children attending desegregated schools with Black children. As the authors detail, one White parent during a community meeting threatened Dulin’s life: “If you do not take care of my child – if anything happens to my child, I will kill you” (p. 63). These open intimidation tactics school-system employees faced placed them in grave danger, depending on the outlook they shared. As the authors note, “Every superintendent faced with school desegregation did so under great pressure, often with little positive guidance from his board and surrounded by a cacophony of conflicting voices demanding their needs be met first” (p.74).

Another important moment in the quest for desegregation the authors highlight is the impact on extracurricular activities such as sports, bands, proms, pep rallies, cheerleading, and student government. The authors shift their emphasis to these informal spaces “where students have some autonomy, power, and control” (p. 8). These spaces would be contested battlegrounds, as students could determine the level of racial socialization they would encounter. Adams and Adams further explain that the “micropolitics embedded in extracurricular activities both helped and impeded the loftier goal of reducing prejudice through social integration” (p. 9). The chronicling of this interesting, unobserved aspect of the desegregation process broadens the scope of desegregation scholarship.

Just Trying to Have School is a must-read for scholars interested in the difficulties of desegregating American public schools and in increasing their understanding of the desegregation process at the granular level. This study adds nuances and

historiographical comprehensions to the growing body of knowledge on the struggle for desegregation in the American South during a time of great conflict.

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Eric Adler. *The Battle of the Classics: How a Nineteenth-Century Debate Can Save the Humanities Today*

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Eric Adler argues that the late nineteenth-century “battle of the classics”—primarily over the value of learning ancient languages—has “much to teach prospective defenders of the contemporary humanities” (p. 6). The failure of earlier defenses can illuminate the “historical and definitional missteps” (p. 30) that will result—indeed are resulting—in the failure of similar efforts to defend the humanities today. Adler’s primary claim is that “humanities apologetics that avoid vouching for *specific humanities content* are doomed to failure” (p. 7). Adler is not seeking to defend the Western canon. Instead, he concludes, students need to be introduced to the best from cultures around the world.

Today, Adler points out, most prominent defenders of the humanities rely on the humanities’ ability to produce transferable skills and gains in critical thinking. To Adler, there are two problems with these arguments. First, there is no reason that *any subject*, if taught in a demanding way, cannot make the same claims—a point that opponents of ancient languages made clear in the battle of the classics. Second, justifying the value of the humanities based on skills measured by social scientists (such as the widely cited 2011 study *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* by sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa) “subordinates the humanistic disciplines to the social sciences” (p. 26). “If the humanities must live by the social sciences,” Adler writes, “they will die by them too” (p. 27).

Adler is not just dissatisfied with skills-based defenses of the humanities. He is also a critic of the modern humanities themselves. After a critical survey of contemporary defenses of the humanities in chapter 1, Adler offers an overview of the humanistic tradition in chapter 2. He argues that the original function of the humanities was to develop human beings. It was about virtue and wisdom. The study of humanistic writings, it was believed, would serve “as conduits for students to ponder life’s great questions and ultimately to lead more fulfilling lives” (p. 11).

The modern humanities, in contrast, emerged as part and parcel of the transformation of American colleges into research universities. While there are still traces of