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*CURRICULUM VITAE*

**JANE C. COOLEY**

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**EDUCATION**

Ph.D. in Economics (expected May 2006), Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

B.A. in Economics (2000) with High Honors, Magna Cum Laude, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

**AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

Primary Field: Economics of Education, Public Economics

Secondary Field: Econometrics

**DISSERTATION**

Title: Desegregation and the Achievement Gap: Do Diverse Peers Help?

Committee: Thomas Nechyba (chair), Patrick Bajari, Han Hong, Charles Clotfelter, Jacob Vigdor

## **PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

- 2005~2002      Department of Economics, Duke University, Durham, NC
- Research Assistant for Thomas Nechyba, Jacob Vigdor (Summer 2003 to Spring 2005)
  - Research Assistant for Charles Clotfelter (Summer 2002, 2003)
  - Teaching Assistant, Intermediate Microeconomics (Spring 2003)
  - Teaching Assistant, History of Globalization (Fall 2002)
- 2001~2000      Financial Markets, International Division, Federal Reserve Board of Governors
- Research Assistant
- 1998              Department of Economics, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA
- Research Assistant for Yana V. Rodgers (Summer)

## **PUBLICATIONS AND WORKING PAPERS**

1. "Desegregation and the Achievement Gap: Do Diverse Peers Help?" Fall 2005, Job Market Paper
2. "Returns to Schooling: Results when the Counterfactual is Observed" with Peter Arcidiacono and Andrew Hussey, 2004, revise and resubmit at International Economic Review
3. "Socially Optimal Classroom Grouping: A Theoretical Investigation of German and U.S. Education Systems in the Context of Other Social Policies" Summer 2004
4. "Outstanding Female Economists in the Analysis and Practice of Development Economics," with Yana V. Rodgers, World Development 27(8), August 1999, 1397-1411

## **ACADEMIC HONORS AND AWARDS**

Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship for Research in Education: 2005–2006

Undergraduate Thesis, "Gender Inequality and Economic Growth", Accepted for High Honors, The College of William and Mary: Spring 2000

Phi Beta Kappa, The College of William and Mary, 2000

Robert A. Barry Economics Award, The College of William and Mary, 2000

## **SKILLS AND OTHER INFORMATION**

Computer Skills: STATA, MATLAB, LaTeX

## **REFERENCES**

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## **JOB MARKET PAPER SYNOPSIS**

More than fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education* brought to a close the era of de jure segregation in the South, public schools in the United States remain considerably segregated. As of 2000, about 70% of black students still attended predominately nonwhite schools (See Clotfelter (2004)). At the same time, the achievement gap between white and nonwhite students persists at a sizable magnitude. The 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress reports that by the end of fourth grade, black and Hispanic students are already two years behind their white peers. Given marked disparities in the schools white and nonwhite children attend, desegregation is largely advocated as a means of raising nonwhite achievement and closing the gap. The channels through which desegregation could narrow the gap might include the redistribution of resources (for instance if it leads to nonwhites being exposed to better teachers) or the creation of "better" peer groups (if the achievement of lower performing nonwhite students increases as a result of placement with higher achieving white peers.) I focus on the latter mechanism, quantifying the equity and efficiency of diverse classroom peer groups using a unique panel data set of North Carolina Public Elementary School students.

A deeper understanding of peer effects is critical to assessing the impact of desegregating peer groups on the achievement of white and nonwhite students. The challenge lies in separating the effect of peer characteristics from the effect of peer actions and the overall effect of peers from unobserved group effects, i.e. Manski (1993)'s *reflection problem*. Previous literature on peer effects in education production simplifies the problem by minimizing the importance of spillovers from peer actions. Modeling achievement production in the context of a game clarifies the different sources of peer spillovers and motivates the instrumental variables strategy developed in this paper to separately identify the effect of peer actions from the effect of peer characteristics and unobserved group effects. In particular, North Carolina's student accountability policies, which require that a student perform at a certain level in order to be promoted to the next grade, raise the costs of low achievement for the students for whom the policy is binding, those "in danger of failing." This policy provides an arguably exogenous shift in the actions of a subset of peers that enables me to trace out the achievement best response function.

Given anecdotal and empirical evidence that black students face very different peer pressures than whites, a critical aspect of the analysis is allowing for peers spillovers to vary across races and for the formation of different race-based reference groups within the same classroom. Furthermore, given that recent education policies, most notably the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, aim specifically to raise the achievement of low performers, the distributional effects of any alternative classroom assignment policy are of paramount importance. Applying a quantile estimator to capture distributional effects enables me to assess both the equity and efficiency implications of desegregating peer groups.

The results suggest that desegregating peer groups helps to narrow the achievement gap, though only marginally. I find evidence of stronger peer influences within races than across races, the magnitude of which varies substantially across the percentiles of the achievement distribution. I apply my results to evaluate the efficiency and distributional effects of alternative classroom assignment policies. Diversifying peer groups leads to small but fairly uniform improvements in the achievement gap across the achievement distribution.