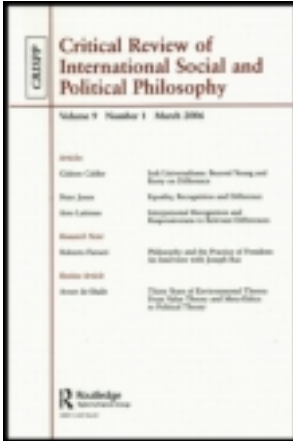


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Michael S. Merry^a

^a Department of History and Philosophy, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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Equality, self-respect and voluntary separation

Michael S. Merry*

Department of History and Philosophy, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

This paper argues that self-respect constitutes an important value, and further, an important basis for equality. It also argues that under conditions of inequality-producing segregation, voluntary separation in schooling may be more likely to provide the resources necessary for self-respect. A *prima facie* case of voluntary separation for stigmatized minorities when equality – as equal status and treatment – is not an option under either the terms of integration or involuntary segregation is defended.

Keywords: self-respect; equality; stigmatized minorities; voluntary separation

Introduction

In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing [...]. (Du Bois 1903, 30)

Whatever else it may denote or entail, equality involves both equal status and equal treatment, but today those things are persistently under threat in democratic societies owing to the profound effects of social and ethnic/racial stratification and segregation. One inescapable consequence of this is that persons of different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic background have limited interaction with, and understanding of, each other.¹ Such limited interaction, the argument runs, fortifies stereotypes and discrimination, undermines social trust, and restricts economic opportunities to those already in positions of social advantage. Integration, conversely, holds out the promise of a more fair distribution of goods and opportunities and consequently more democratic access to persons saddled with disadvantage. In other words, a democratic society will presumably function more fairly and effectively when persons or groups are not segregated from one another, but rather meaningfully interact across their respective differences.

Integrated schools are the crucible of this democratic dream. Indeed, schools continue to be places where policy discussions and initiatives to

*Email: m.s.merry@uva.nl

counter segregation most persistently occur. Attempts to correct segregation found in the workplace or the neighbourhood often begin with attempts to facilitate school integration. Integrated schools, the argument runs, augur a better future for disadvantaged minorities by curbing harmful stereotyping and discriminatory behaviours among their more advantaged peers. Further, integrated schools symbolize more equality by ensuring that the intrinsic and instrumental goods of education reach the disadvantaged. This assumes, of course, that the relevant resources are equally available and fairly distributed.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of these ideals, segregation in Western societies has continued to worsen (Jenkins *et al.* 2008, Orfield 2005). Especially for stigmatized minorities today, the promise of equality through integration increasingly rings hollow. Indeed, owing both to an absence of diversity in many neighbourhoods and the lack of commitment to integration from white and middle-class parents, *integration is not even an option*. Where we do find integrated settings, much of the time there continue to be forces at work that erode the social bases of self-respect among society's most vulnerable groups.

Given these realities, in this article I shall argue that self-respect constitutes a fundamental value, and further, an important basis for equality. First I will show that so-called integrated schools have largely failed to supply the social bases of self-respect for stigmatized minority groups. Stigmas will vary from one context to another² and the meanings attached to them will evolve over time. Stigma may attach to race, ethnicity, religion, speech patterns, economic standing, weight, disability or sexual orientation. However, for convenience it will be easier to focus here on minorities whose *visible* differences – and perhaps specifically their skin colour – unavoidably lends itself to stigma within a given context. I then argue that under conditions of inequality-producing segregation, voluntary³ separation may be more likely to provide the resources necessary for self-respect.⁴ I will defend the option of voluntary separation for stigmatized minorities when equality – meaning equal status and treatment – is not an option either under the terms of integration or involuntary segregation. But voluntary separation ought not to be pursued in the absence of other considerations. Therefore I defend a *prima facie* justification because while voluntary separation may be necessary it is not a *sufficient* condition of equality. Other conditions must obtain in order to meet a sufficient threshold. However, determining precisely what a sufficient threshold entails will require deliberation between relevant stakeholders on a case-by-case basis.

In pursuing this line of argument, I restrict myself to Western Europe and North America, in which (for the moment) whites are the numerical majority and continue to possess the most power both in terms of economic resources and political influence. I circumscribe the applicable context for two reasons. First, although racial, ethnic and socio-economic segregation can be found in virtually every society, I am more intimately familiar with its European and

North American varieties. Second, the white/non-white segregation problem is one with which most readers will be familiar; certainly most scholarship on segregation has the white/non-white binary in mind.⁵

I proceed as follows. I first define and defend the importance of equality, in particular educational equality, followed by the relationship of equality to self-respect. Next, I survey the familiar problems with school segregation, particularly how involuntary forms of segregation contribute to inequality. I then assess a number of integration-for-equality arguments. I devote considerable time to this because it is critical that I demonstrate that integration-for-equality arguments are flawed for concluding that integration will produce greater equality for stigmatized minorities. I then argue that voluntary separation may more effectively supply the bases for equality by cultivating self-respect but that separation must be attended by other relevant conditions that must be satisfied if equality is to be achieved. I close by considering three objections to my argument.

Equality

Few values in political theory – and certainly educational policy – receive as much attention as equality. In the formal sense equality denotes shared rights and responsibilities, as well as roughly equal opportunities conferred on all citizens fairly and equally. Equality under a system of natural liberty describes a fair starting point with respect to careers open to talents.⁶ That is, persons of similar aptitude and motivation enjoy roughly the same prospects. Meanwhile, liberal equality also takes seriously socially contingent background characteristics and therefore requires certain distributive arrangements that level the playing field for those whose genetic endowment or environmental hazards ensure fewer opportunities to pursue a life they consider worth living. So equality requires both that persons see one another as moral equals, but also that fellow citizens have roughly equal rights and opportunities. It entails both equal status in the moral sense as well as equal treatment in the political sense. Societies generally are more equitable when its major institutions are framed by these convictions.

As a political and moral value, equality will from time to time conflict with other values. In political philosophy conflicts between equality and personal liberty are well known. Consider, for instance, how many persons espouse equality as a value yet believe that charity, rather than state-managed (read, coercive) wealth distribution, is the best way to assist the poor. Or, more to the present topic, take the belief that integrated schools represent one of the best ways to promote equality despite the fact that many stigmatized minorities see integration pursued on terms set by the majority as an illegitimate policy, one that severely compromises their capacity for self-determination. Here is still another conflict: in order for persons to flourish they need the support of social networks; social networks nourish and sustain us and provide a sense

of belonging and attachment essential for personal happiness and well-being. But the more particular those networks are, i.e., the closer they come to meeting personal needs and preferences (and these are frequently related to identity), the more likely they are to be ranked over other kinds of interests, for example the comparatively remote attachments I may feel toward fellow citizens. Notice that the ranking of identities or attachments with specific social networks means that some will unavoidably be favoured over others, even if the favouritism is innocuous.⁷ From each of these examples the point is clear: the question is not whether equality is an important value but how it should be interpreted and implemented.

Equality of opportunity means that one's prospects should not be determined, or unduly influenced, by morally irrelevant traits such as ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and the like. Of course while anti-discrimination laws may succeed in restraining inequality, an absence of (overt forms of) discrimination in itself does not *constitute* equality; it is merely a formal condition. Practical policies needed to promote equality will not require equalization in the sense of levelling up or down to identical points of input or output, nor will these policies entail identical treatment. Liberal notions of equality allow for inequalities where these result from (presumably undeserved) talent and effort, and further recognizes that these are largely immune to equalization. Short of overhauling capitalist economies, the social and economic circumstances into which persons are born also are similarly impervious to equality. It is for this reason that critics label egalitarianism⁸ utopian.

Nevertheless, much can be done to mitigate the *undesirable effects* of inequality. For instance, any robust conception of equality will demand that economic inequalities do not spill over into non-economic areas such as political influence and educational opportunities. Both litigation and political campaigns, for example, will yield less unfair advantage for a few if allowable expenditures are fixed and enforced, or if a fairly designed lottery determines who receives what. Life as we know it, however, does indeed suggest that robust forms of social equality are utopian: even under regimes of progressive taxation and stiff government regulation the wealthy continue to enjoy more access to resources and power. We seem to do better approximating some weaker conception of equality, and these generally consist in compensating for various types of disadvantage.

Education plays a key role in the distribution of equality, for it entails access to different kinds of goods. It supplies intrinsic goods that enhance one's ability to flourish that include having a sense of dignity and self-respect necessary for a meaningful life. Learning to read or paint, for example, can be its own reward. But one's ability to flourish also depends crucially on the capacity for economic self-reliance. For this, persons must have information, choices, skills and opportunities for remunerated labour acquired through either apprenticeships or formal schooling. Educational equality thus

describes instrumental goods for one's qualifications, and achievements always stand in relation to others with whom one must compete for scarce resources. That is, the value of my education is at least partly determined by that which others have (Green 2007, Hirsch 1977). So a quality education will supply crucially important goods, and educational equality means that access to, and the quality of, my education should not hang on something as arbitrary as my school's postcode or the size of my parents' income.

Yet how best to achieve equality between persons with unequal starting points and talents remains an open question. In educational policy, conceptions of equality that compensate for disadvantage take various forms. These may include spending caps for wealthier districts, incentives to attract more talented teachers to high need schools, class size reduction, the rotation of effective school principals, means-tested vouchers and weighted student funding. Yet owing to the breadth of its application, educational equality is an ideal that consistently garners unanimous agreement but about which there continues to be no consensus concerning how best to implement it (Jencks 1988, Mason 2001). Notwithstanding these ambiguities and disagreements, what I will do next is argue that self-respect supplies an important basis for equality.

Self-respect as a basis for equality

While the content and requirements of self-respect are imprecise, suffice it to say that it is an important good describing a positive regard for oneself. The idea of self-respect is loosely associated with human dignity, the notion that persons have intrinsic worth as members of the human community (Pogge 1989). In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1998) Kant considered human dignity to be an unconditional good. It describes the basic value persons have irrespective of their individual characteristics. Indeed this is equality in the moral sense. The absence of a regard for human dignity – whether precipitated, say, through a denial of public recognition or conditions of social deprivation – not only dramatically lessens the possibilities of self-respect; the probability of humiliation also dramatically increases (Margalit 1996). It is therefore not misleading to say that dignity corresponds closely to self-respect.

Because self-respect entails the acknowledgement that persons qua persons have intrinsic value one of the best ways to promote this value is to ensure that individuals can take up and pursue those things that matter to them. It entails the ability, so far as it is within one's power, 'to advance [one's] ends with self confidence' (Rawls 2001, p. 59). This means that persons not only possess a conviction about their conception of the good but also that they are capable of successfully pursuing it. Here we see the connection between the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of self-respect, for self-respect is the psychological antecedent to self-reliance, and the more

equally distributed the notion of self-respect is, the more possible it is to speak of justice.⁹

So self-respect describes a sense of being in charge of one's destiny, i.e., having a reasonable sense of self-determination with respect to choices and the ability to act meaningfully upon those choices. But of course the psychological and social conditions that make self-respect possible vary widely, with genes and environment continually in interaction. A sense of self-respect may therefore fluctuate according to circumstance. For example, the experience of sudden (or chronic) failure or relational loss may induce a sense of crisis. But the fact that one is a member of a stigmatized minority group in itself presents special challenges to self-respect. Indeed, self-respect may have an inverse relationship to stigma.

Members of certain minority groups in particular experience greater chances of disaffection, exclusion and risk owing to stigma. Indeed, for members of stigmatized minority groups, visible differences are themselves risk factors, and when there is external pressure to conform to societal norms, and a cultural gap divides two dramatically different worlds, risk increases. Risk factors include economic instability, compromised family structure (e.g., through migration), poor health, exposure to violence, school failure, and negative media attention.

Despite these risk factors some youth of course show greater resilience; that is, they possess or acquire the tools necessary to rise above adversity and challenge, which is to say, the conditions that induce risk. In some instances resilience is attributable to personal characteristics such as temperament, IQ or coping strategies employed to offset the worst effects of stigma. Yet in most studies there appear to be important mediating effects attributable to other, protective, factors. These include teacher effects, peer relationships, parental intimacy, neighbourhood safety and community support. Indeed, social supports such as these are crucial to the cultivation and nourishment of well-being and self-respect, and for stigmatized minorities may be the only practical means of achieving self-determination.

Segregation as inequality

Segregation is a standard historical feature of multicultural and class-based societies. It is conspicuous in the housing market, the labour market and the education market. Reasons for segregation are not reducible to one cause, such as racism, class privilege or housing policy.

But despite its seeming inevitability and 'naturalness,' segregation in industrialized societies is seen as a problem to be solved, a societal ill whose time for a cure is long overdue.¹⁰ It is further believed to be inherently harmful: harmful to society generally, where concerns for social cohesion, integration and equal opportunity continue to have potent rhetorical appeal; but harmful especially to stigmatized minorities whose self-respect is

damaged and whose opportunities may be restricted when they are separated from more privileged children, their parents, and the social capital to which contact might ostensibly give access.

To address inequality of access to resources educational policies have moved in different directions, ranging from magnet schools and teacher incentives to transfer programmes and weighted student funding. This general class of policies is aimed at combating ills of segregation by encouraging integration. I will not examine these (or any other) attempts either to desegregate or to mitigate the effects of segregation. Whatever salutary effects they may have, the fact is that none of them manages to prevent segregation from occurring, and the quality of involuntarily segregated schools *on average* continues to lag far behind that of schools predominately populated by the white middle class irrespective of per-pupil spending amounts.¹¹ Proposals to counter segregation by equalizing funding are particularly tendentious. No doubt money supplies important resources, but these remain a red herring insofar as they fail to consider other variables that are difficult to evaluate purely in fiscal terms. Organizational features, school ethos, role modelling, consensus on academic goals and appropriate discipline have proven far more reliable resources in producing educational equality for stigmatized minorities, even under conditions of segregation (Newmann *et al.* 1989, Perez and Socias 2003, Strike 2010 Timar and Roza 2010, Williams *et al.* 2005).

Integration as a social good

Research has suggested time and again that schools which serve high concentrations of poor and minority children are inferior,¹² specifically that they are more likely to have teachers with less experience and fewer qualifications, high student mobility, teacher and principal attrition, less family support, lower literacy rates and test scores, and students with poorer health (Clotfelter *et al.* 2006, Scafidi *et al.* 2007). The response from many scholars has been to argue for a renewed commitment to integration. Integrated schools are championed as perhaps the best possibility for marginalized persons growing up in stratified societies to access equal treatment. For that reason, arguments for integration deserve careful consideration.

Arguments for integration assume different guises, and there are several that relate directly or indirectly to equality. Whatever form they take, the overriding goal is to promote equality by diminishing the harms that result from *involuntary* segregation. I will explore the argument for integration further by examining two prongs of the argument. One is to say that integration offers the resources of communally shared values and social cooperation, and that this focus on commonality supplies the basis for a healthier democratic society. I call this the social harmony argument. The social harmony argument is really a standard argument for the social good

of integration, rather than an argument for equality. Be that as it may, it implies modes of interaction on equal terms. I then turn my attention to a second argument, one that more explicitly addresses segregation as a source of inequality. Here the thrust of the argument is that integration combats social disadvantage by distributing resources more equitably to children in need.

Social harmony

It is frequently argued that persons cannot come to understand and respect others whose beliefs, cultural differences or other personal traits are manifestly different if there is an absence of interaction in the first place. On this argument integration is a resource because it offers persons of different backgrounds opportunities to learn from each other and interact respectfully. This translates into a plea for equality because of the distorting effects of stigma that lead to inequality through discrimination. Because persons normally interact with others who share *similar* cultural traits, schools present the best chance for children from different backgrounds to cross those seemingly naturally occurring divides. Encounters with ‘diversity’ are believed to be especially important for broadening the empathies of more advantaged children, whose lack of contact with marginalized citizens prevents them from seeing stigmatized minorities as equals. No doubt such interactions, under certain conditions, can be enormously positive and conducive to a reduction in prejudice, but also generally to a more civilized society. Of course, interactions need to be supplemented by accurate information (to combat stereotypes) as well as legislation (to combat discrimination).

In the realm of education, social harmony continues to be an important ideal but increasingly one that eludes reality. In the absence of draconian policies that override parental prerogatives, the sacred right to choose a school parents feel is appropriate for their own child makes segregation seemingly inevitable (Hochschild and Scovronick 2003, Holme 2002, Söderström and Uusitalo 2010). Structural features within schools, such as tracking systems and ability grouping, also contribute to segregation *within mixed schools* (Ireson and Hallam 2005, Lleras and Rangel 2009); finally, self-segregation is also the norm in mixed schools, thus significantly limiting meaningful interaction between children of different backgrounds (Denessen *et al.*, 2005, Ihlanfeldt and Scafidi 2002). That interactions in school between children of different ethnic, religious or social class backgrounds produce social harmony – i.e., trust, tolerance and mutual cooperation – reliably and across many contexts, is certainly an attractive hypothesis. But it is an hypothesis for which compelling evidence remains woefully deficient, not least because both the *conditions* as well as the *quality* of interactions generally dilute the significance of that contact.

Social disadvantage

The second, and more powerful, integration-for-equality argument is that integration will assist in combating social disadvantage. Here, integration offers less advantaged children the resources and social capital middle-class children and their parents bring to school. Those who have documented the harmful effects of involuntary segregation (Clotfelter 2004, Orfield 2007, Wells 2008) suggest that school integration will promote equality for disadvantaged students by providing access to better resources. These resources include better course offerings, more experienced teachers, and social networks that can open doors of opportunity. So more than simply a chance to interact with those of a different background, integrated schools are believed to supply crucial social and economic opportunities – through the availability of more resources – to the less advantaged.

A recent attempt to strengthen the integration-for-equality claim comes from Elizabeth Anderson. She argues that a diverse political elite is necessary in order to combat the social disadvantages caused by segregation. Integrated schools offer more fairly distributed opportunities that will lead to a larger pool of candidates who can more effectively do the bidding of those with whom they share a similar background. They can do this because they supposedly better understand their circumstances, needs and concerns. Anderson (2007) writes:

[D]iverse members [of society] must be educated together, so that they can develop competence in respectful intergroup interaction. A democratically qualified elite must be an elite that is integrated across all the major lines of social inequality and division that characterize it. [...] A just K-12 educational system must prepare students from all sectors of society, and especially those disadvantaged along any dimensions, with sufficient skills to be able to succeed in higher education and thereby join the elite. (p. 597)

Without developing her argument in full, I simply want to stress that her notion of ‘sufficient’ is pretty robust: her goal is to distribute opportunities more fairly to those who may be denied them simply by virtue of attending a ‘bad’ school. Hence, her call to integrate schools ‘at all levels’ (p. 598) is admirable for what it seeks to accomplish.

Even so, there are a number of conceptual and practical difficulties. Putting aside the fact that sufficientarian arguments do little to eliminate problems of vagueness about what a ‘sufficient’ education entails, there are unavoidable tensions between ‘sufficient’ and ‘equal’ that Anderson does not resolve.¹³ Even granting that a sufficient education is one that aims to provide everyone with the social capital necessary ‘to function as an equal in civil society’ (p. 618), Anderson leaves us with little choice but to accept ‘sufficient’ as equitable. But if that is the case, then *equality* appears to play no justificatory role in distributive arrangements. With respect to the practical difficulties of her argument, Anderson assumes that integrated schools are the

only type of educational institution capable of equality, by which she means institutions capable of supplying requisite forms of social and cultural capital necessary for living fruitful lives in a multicultural society. We can draw no other inference from her argument but that non-integrated schools do not, or worse, *cannot* supply these goods. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that all schools with high minority concentrations are ipso facto inferior.¹⁴

The issue seems not to be whether schools with high concentrations of stigmatized minorities have fewer material resources. Many schools in fact receive far more per pupil spending than others precisely *because* they have higher concentrations of poor children. The issue that matters, to critics like Anderson, is access to the resources of social capital that schools with larger percentages of white middle-class pupils ostensibly provide. Take transfer programmes. In theory they make it possible for disadvantaged (read poor, minority) youth to attend schools with more abundant social capital. Parents who have pursued this option believe that their children will be exposed to a more rigorous curriculum and be able to tap into social networks needed to gain access to better career opportunities. Transfer programmes have enjoyed modest success but beyond a vaguely defined tipping point, many white and middle-class parents express anxiety about the influx of disadvantaged youth; they argue that money which follows students to white schools should instead be used to improve urban schools or they complain that bussed-in children lower academic expectations and disrupt school norms. Schools respond to these parental concerns, finding ways (e.g., 'voluntary fees') to discourage lower class minorities from enrolling. Meanwhile, from minority communities the criticisms against transfer programmes are directed at the psychological costs children must bear, either to travel such long distances to receive a quality education or to join a school community in which their presence is not welcome. Even advocates of integration through transfer programmes (Wells and Crain 1997) admit that the obstacles to overcome with these programmes are immense. Unsurprisingly, many have by now ceased to operate.

It is important to stress here that I am not impugning the ideals of integration. Ideals serve an important purpose: they embody goals whose aim is to facilitate a pursuit of justice. Integrationist ideals reflect valid concerns about the many harmful effects of involuntary segregation on members of stigmatized minority groups by denying them access to both the intrinsic and instrumental goods that come from a quality education. Be that as it may, it is unclear whether under non-ideal circumstances integration is the only option stigmatized minorities can pursue for educational equality. When conditions that facilitate the realization of ideals do not exist, it may be time to reassess, as Lawrence Blum seems obliged to admit:

Under less than ideal conditions – including those currently obtaining in many classes, schools and districts – it may be reasonable to favour policies that do

not press toward racially mixed schools, or even that facilitate certain kinds of single-race (or single-race-dominated) schools. (Blum 2002, 384)

Belief in integration as a proxy for justice in the face of overwhelming counter evidence is, in Du Bois' (1935, 330) own words, 'a fatal surrender to principle'. Indeed, to endure bad schools simply because they are 'mixed' is a 'costly if not fatal mistake'.¹⁵

Voluntary separation

Today in many Western countries there is a sharp growth in educational experiments founded upon some articulation of voluntary separation. There is of course a long history to voluntary separation and the reasons are familiar. When basic access to equal opportunities was denied, or assimilation was the cost for having access, minority groups have opted out of integration on terms set by others in favour of strengthening their own networks and institutions. Women, Blacks, Jews, Roman Catholics and the Deaf had all established voluntarily separate schools as early as the mid-19th century. Most still exist today and many receive state support, though for some the harm of stigma has arguably diminished. Today, African-centred, Roma, Hindu, First Nations and Islamic schools, to take but a few examples, join their ranks.

Of course, integrated schools under conditions of equality are usually to be preferred over segregated ones. Du Bois (1935) certainly knew this. He wrote:

Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader, more natural basis for the education of all youth. It gives wider contacts; it inspires greater self-confidence; and suppresses the inferiority complex. (p. 335)

The problem, as Du Bois knew all too well, is that *other things are seldom equal*. What was true in his day continues to be the case in our own, namely, segregation is a fact of life and attempts to address inequality often must begin from a condition of separateness. The ranking of priorities may vary from one family to the next but what is valued about voluntary separation are the social networks that nourish and sustain a sense of belonging and attachment. Nurturing these attachments can prove decisive for one's capacity for self-respect and self-determination. The supposed benefits of exposure to cultural, racial or religious difference, and sustained contact with the 'other' are secondary concerns, if they are concerns at all. Rather, the priority is a quality education that certainly addresses pervasive academic deficiencies, but also strengthens individual well-being, cultural identity and group cohesion. These buttress self-respect as the basis of equality.

The question integration advocates inevitably ask here is why self-respect requires first concentrating on the needs and concerns of one's own group. Is it not imperative that persons who share a plural society come to understand

one another through early and consistent exchanges? Why the need to separate? To be sure there are different ways of approaching self-respect, and not all stigmatized minority groups or advocates of separation agree on the method. But one thing on which all advocates of voluntary separation agree is that equality set on terms by others may actually serve to undermine self-respect rather than nurture it.

Equality on one's own terms

Equality under terms of integration is a comparatively effortless affair for persons whose first language, religion, ethnicity, ability or other identity markers correspond to the mainstream.¹⁶ Obstacles, where they exist, include making new friends, mastering a new skill, navigating unfamiliar territory, etc. But establishing educational equality for stigmatized minorities under terms of involuntary segregation is not so simple.

For advocates of voluntary separation, a quality education entails establishing equality on one's own terms. Equality on one's own terms means fostering self-respect through other means. The means for fostering self-respect will differ according to the school philosophy and personalities of each school, but in nearly every case it will involve building a positive organizational climate and school ethos. Whatever the specifics of each case the aim is to control and determine, within limitations set by the state (e.g., teacher certification, graduation requirements, etc), the staff, values, curricula and instructional design of the school with a view to promoting equality. As Du Bois (1935) put it:

[I]nstead of our schools being simply separate schools, forced on us by grim necessity, they can become centres of a new and beautiful effort at human education, which may easily lead and guide the world in many important and valuable aspects. It is for this reason that when our schools are separate, the control of the teaching force, the expenditure of money, the choice of textbooks, the discipline and other administrative matters of this sort ought also, to come into our hands, and be incessantly demanded and guarded. (p. 334–335)

Equality entails, first, becoming an equal member within one's 'own' community. But it is important here to notice the terms under which this equality for poor and stigmatized minorities must be procured. The social bases of self-respect first need to be arranged in ways that are conducive to its actualization. Attempts to address inequality in education cannot be done in isolation from other considerations; decent housing, affordable health care, nutrition, nurturing relationships, and economic opportunities are also needed to ensure desirable outcomes (Berliner 2006). Indeed, separation *per se* will not suffice as a *prima facie* justification; certainly not if equality is the overriding concern. It would be folly to reject inequality under terms of involuntary segregation only to embrace inequality on one's own terms. *Prima*

facie justification for voluntary separation at a minimum rests on attending to the conditions necessary for the cultivation of self-respect. Further, the possibilities for stigmatized minorities to acquire self-respect should be roughly equal to those more privileged children have. Without self-respect all talk of equality collapses.

In light of insistent segregation patterns, it will not suffice for a school with high needs simply to have a few good teachers. Other critical resources, often not in abundance for stigmatized minorities in so-called integrated schools, include teacher attentiveness, a caring ethos, shared values, cultural recognition and a sense of belonging. These can be further strengthened through a committed school leadership, positive role modelling, camaraderie among ethnic peers, parental intimacy and involvement, communal support and neighbourhood safety. Taken together these represent crucial resources with intrinsic benefits favourable to self-respect; these, in turn, are conducive to academic achievement and its instrumental benefits.

There is no question that access to social networks is both advantageous and desirable. But two things should be remembered. First, the argument assumes that resources from middle-class children and their parents are equally available and fairly distributed in so-called integrated schools; yet this is a claim for which there is a dearth of corroborating evidence. Second, access to social capital from others is not the only consideration, certainly not when it cannot compensate for an absence of self-respect. Indeed, so-called integrated settings may prove to be rather disruptive to the social networks stigmatized minorities need; voluntary separation, on the other hand, has the potential to restore them (Brooks 1996, Merry and New 2008, Samuels 2004). In any case, self-respect – as a clear indication of personal well-being – is an indispensable foundation without which other resources will fail to have an effect. Voluntary separation facilitates educational opportunities for equality by *rearranging the conditions* of existing segregation. Thus insofar as voluntary separation does a better job of supplying self-respect it is plausible to say that it also more effectively supplies equality.

Paradoxically, having these resources at one's disposal in a separate environment is of vital importance to functioning successfully in a multicultural society. In any case, the knowledge and dispositions needed to function in a multicultural society need not be *learned* in mixed settings (Short 2002, Spinner-Halev 2000). The requisite dispositions, knowledge and skills required for multicultural citizenship, including reasonableness and mutual good will, can be learned by attending first to the bases of self-respect. While it may be ideal to learn these skills in mixed environments, it is important to stress, again, that segregation is not a situation disadvantaged minorities have created themselves, nor have they invented the stigmas with which they are forced to live.

For how long will voluntarily separate schools be necessary? For Du Bois (1935, 328) they were needed 'just so far as it is necessary for the proper

education' of vulnerable minorities who are consistently denied a quality education. He describes the conditions of voluntary separation which facilitate equality:

The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil, knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils, and between teacher and pupil, on the basis of perfect social equality, as will increase this sympathy and knowledge. (p. 328)

So long as involuntary segregation, or so-called integration, fails to supply the conditions necessary for the cultivation and maintenance of self-respect, then perhaps for that long will voluntary separation be needed.¹⁷

For unrepentant integrationists, voluntary separation falters on two fronts. First, we do a disservice both to minority children by telling them that they can attain more equality by remaining separate. Rather than encouraging separation we ought to be discouraging it, certainly if we want persons to learn to respect not only themselves but *each other*. Second, voluntary separation harms everyone by setting a dangerous precedent for intolerant groups who might use separation to indoctrinate and propagate hate.

Taking the first concern, I have already argued why it is absurd to affix blame to stigmatized minorities for not seeking out 'diverse' learning environments. The everyday realities of stigma for some groups are not those of one's own choosing. These realities describe systems of institutionalized racism in virtually every European and North American city, where a majority of ethnic or racial minorities *already* live segregated lives but seldom on their own terms. Indeed, stigmatized minority groups cannot possibly be more separate than they already are and to suggest that equality is only available by sitting next to whites is a patronizing assumption. Voluntary separation is not an argument against integration; rather, it is a *response* to the daily experience of stigma and social exclusion.

To the second concern, the motivations for voluntary separation on my argument are nothing like those of intolerant groups such as racists or religious militants. Voluntary separation for stigmatized minorities is not driven by a sense of racial, cultural or religious *superiority*; rather the primary motivation is to fortify the fragile identities and limited opportunities of children, who, under conditions of involuntary segregation are far more likely to experience ambivalence toward a culture in which they commonly experience discrimination or exclusion (Fordham and Ogbu 1986, Villalpando 2003). Stigma can be greatly mitigated through affirming shared beliefs and practices not recognized in mainstream culture (Marks 2006, Regnerus 2003). Attending to equality under conditions of voluntary separation can enable students to defend themselves not only against the ignorance and prejudice of others, but also their own fears and uncertainties, through the fostering of

self-respect. Turning *inward* during the early stages of one's schooling can contribute to a child's capacity for self-respect, improved levels of well-being, higher academic achievement, and autonomous decision-making. Hence what is different about voluntary separation in education is not the fact that the school population is segregated but the *manner and terms* on which the separation occurs.

Three objections

I anticipate at least three additional objections to my argument. The first objection concerns resources. If voluntarily separate schools are poor in resources such as a rich curriculum or high quality teachers, then they cannot possibly make good on their promise of improving equality. Segregated schools, research tells us, are harmful to students owing to the absence of resources such as broader course offerings and the distribution of better teachers and more motivated peers. Further, we have already seen how integration provides access to social networks that are crucial for economic opportunities down the line. Those whose own upbringing is bereft of meaningful interactions with stigmatized minorities are even less likely, when the time comes, to select them for positions at hiring time. These social networks, the argument goes, are simply unavailable under conditions of segregation.

Given the relationship between a quality education and its intrinsic and instrumental benefits, it is absolutely right to worry about these things. Yet as I have argued, this is to take a very narrow view of resources. Take the distribution of teachers. Better teachers *on average* prefer to work in schools which have more privileged children, so equality may be denied pupils who have less access to the resources better teachers supply. Teacher incentives might attract better teachers to high need schools. But here it important to remember that higher salaries are not decisive in attracting better teachers; *environmental working conditions matter far more*. Teacher incentives to attract the more talented to high need schools have yielded very little (Clotfelter *et al.* 2006, Vanderberghe and Huberman 1999). Few want to deal with inflexible bureaucratic structures, high mobility rates, truancy, anti-academic peer pressure, limited parental involvement and regular bouts of low morale. But notice that these conditions describe *involuntarily* segregated schools.

Here voluntary separation may offer a real alternative. High quality teachers are far more likely to be attracted to schools which may have fewer material resources¹⁸ but which nevertheless have a core set of shared values reinforced by parental and administrative support (Elmore 2000, Timar and Roza 2010). Policies which aim to undo some of the effects of involuntary segregation, for instance transfer programmes or magnet schools, certainly represent one way to address inequality. But given the relatively small number of students such programmes serve (and the even smaller number of students who succeed in those programmes), it cannot possibly be the only

option. Anderson's (2010) provocative claim that black disadvantage is caused not only by fewer material resources but also by a 'lack of social and cultural capital, which can only be acquired through interracial interaction' (pp. 233–234) is an integration-for-equality argument that takes both a deficit view of education controlled by minorities as well as a curiously narrow view of what resources for self-respect really matter.¹⁹

A second objection is that the poor cannot be trusted to choose wisely among options available to them owing to lower levels of education or crude habits of preference satisfaction. Just as personal well-being cannot simply be determined by preference satisfaction, so must equality be assessed by criteria other than whether a particular group – or a parent – finds its actions acceptable. Is this worry a basis for rejecting voluntary separation? Here it is important to stress that while voluntary separation may be a necessary condition for fostering self-respect, it does not follow that separation can front for special group rights that jeopardize the interests of individual children. Accordingly, voluntary separation does not entail that state supervision is abandoned. Like any other form of school choice, voluntarily separate schools can be situated within a broad regulatory scheme. Irrespective of the school philosophy, organizational structure or funding mechanisms, schools can be held accountable for teacher certification, meeting state-sanctioned learning targets and even teaching basic democratic principles (Gutmann 1999, Saiger 1999).

Accordingly, reasonable forms of supervision and maintaining a school's distinctive autonomy need not be at odds. It would be a mistake to present a stark either/or choice: either bring schools under a regulatory regime or leave them to their own devices without accountability. *This is a false dilemma.* Voluntarily separate schools which cater to the needs of stigmatized minorities can organize themselves according to their unique aims (not unlike how Montessori or Deaf schools do) while also submitting themselves to periodic inspection. But of course state supervision must be legitimate. That is, policies which regulate citizens' share of these goods must not ignore the wishes of those whose lives are most affected by social inequality. A plurality of educational options that meet *relevant* standards is the best approach.

If the poor and disadvantaged are often not good choosers where the well-being of their children is concerned, that cannot be good. Given both the intrinsic and instrumental goods educational equality can supply, the risks associated with inequality through voluntary separation appear great. Voluntary separation in some cases (e.g., Islamic schools) may also serve to amplify the visibility of some groups – potentially *increasing* stigma or prejudice. But here it is important to remember, first, that the alternatives to voluntarily separate education are almost always schools which are already *involuntarily* segregated, and these too often fail to provide the bases of self-respect. Second, if concerns for equality govern how we think about things like self-respect, then the best way to proceed is not to restrict parental liberty but to

make sure that the social bases of self-respect inform the choices that citizens make. This would certainly include having access to reliable information, but also supplying real alternatives in seeking educational equality when the choices stigmatized minorities presently have are woefully inadequate. It will also be important for schools to be transparent to the public about their aims.

A final objection is this: a critic might say that voluntarily separate schools that become successful owe less to their being choice schools, being separate, or even to their organizational features but rather to a special x factor (e.g., a charismatic leader, unusually active parents) that is notoriously difficult to replicate elsewhere. There is something to this criticism, but notice that this will be true not only of voluntarily separate schools but of all kinds of schools. To the related worry that I idealize what voluntarily separate schools can accomplish, I can say two things. First, I no more idealize voluntarily separate schools than proponents of integration idealize the local (segregated) public school. At present, far too few *involuntarily* segregated schools supply the social bases for self-respect and equality members of stigmatized minority groups deserve. The result is predictably that involuntarily segregated schools are undesirable places to be much of the time. To the suggestion that my argument is a pitiful surrender to inequality I strongly disagree: what I am defending in fact represents a marked improvement in equality.

My second response is this: there will always be some cleavage between principles and their implementation. It also is important to remember that establishing an educational climate which can provide the relevant goods for self-respect takes time and it would be unfair to blame schools prematurely for failing to supply them when they must begin from a position of relative disadvantage. But voluntarily separate schools on my argument are not left to fend for themselves. As I suggested earlier, under the right regulatory scheme schools can still be expected to meet certain standards. States certainly ought to play an important supervisory role in seeing that children receive a quality education irrespective of the type of school they attend. But when the options available to parents are clearly unsatisfactory, other options should be available and preferably ones that do more to promote equality.

Conclusion

In this article I have defended a *prima facie* justification for voluntarily separate education for stigmatized minorities when conditions are more conducive to equality through the cultivation of self-respect. Stigmatized minorities, like other groups, do not demand integration so much as they demand equality in the form of a *quality education*, one that cultivates a sense of self-respect. I have attempted to ground my argument in a very specific notion of equality, one that accords high value to the role self-respect plays. It therefore requires that self-respect is fundamental to what it means

to experience equality and that the equalization of resources or opportunities alone cannot compensate for persons for whom self-respect is compromised or absent.

My argument has not been a defence of segregation per se. Nor have I argued against reasonable²⁰ efforts to desegregate schools, provided that they actually promote equality. Under ideal circumstances, one would not be forced to choose between equality and integration. Yet if forced to choose between them, I have argued that equality should *always* be prioritized over analogous claims for integration, especially when integration strategies in the main continue to be designed in ways that are far less likely to supply the social bases of self-respect.

Integrationist ideals need not lose any of their force as ideals. Real integration at all levels of society does indeed imply that equality is not determined by something as arbitrary as the colour of one's skin or the social class background of one's parents. But when segregation is worsening, as it is across Europe and North America, it cannot simply be left to the ideal of integrated schools to promote equality. We may lament segregation; indeed, we *should* lament it. Yet however lamentable school segregation may be, it is unwise to conflate equality with integration. Pursuing equality through integration may have a future, but stigmatized minority groups need not wait for others to have a moral epiphany. Indeed, they cannot afford to when this likely means another generation lost to a failed system.

Mine is not a counsel of despair. Rather, I have attempted to show that we can imagine other ways of pursuing equality that do not require an integrated school. I have argued, contrary to the conventional wisdom, that equality can be – indeed, should be – meaningfully pursued in schools that are not integrated. In light of the widespread phenomenon of segregation in Western industrialized societies, it is high time that we ought.

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Notes

1. Contact across difference during periods of political stability is rarely substantive, even in so-called mixed settings (Anderson 2007, Blokland and van Eijk 2010, Bonilla-Silva 2003, Moody 2001).
2. For example, darker-skinned persons will not be stigmatized equally or in the same way. Much depends on the context, immigration history, demographic concentration, social class, religion, tribal affiliation, etc. In some societies, many of these variables converge to multiply the harms stigma brings, while in others the opposite occurs.

3. Like liberty and autonomy, 'voluntariness' is exercised relative to various contextual constraints, including the very shaping of one's preferences by external circumstances.
4. I am sensitive to the fact that group membership and individual well-being/self-respect are closely connected. Nevertheless, my argument is primarily focused on the needs of the individual.
5. However, I agree with Blum (2002) that it would be a mistake to assume that racial segregation only concerns that which occurs between whites and non-whites.
6. Such a system would include formal prohibitions against discrimination. Political philosophers have dubbed this approach the 'natural aristocracy', but the possession of these talents is also undeserved. Hence, egalitarians also debate among themselves the extent to which talents and efforts are morally relevant.
7. Thus, while equality is an important societal value, it is certainly not the only value, nor will it always be the most important value, and when two or more values conflict we will need to have good reasons for ranking priorities.
8. I put aside disagreements among egalitarians.
9. Though Rawls concerns himself more with the social bases of self-respect rather than the attitude itself, there is no doubt that the fundamental worth of persons is a central feature to justice as fairness.
10. Integrationist aspirations continue to resonate particularly in Western societies, where centuries of ignominious colonization and de jure segregation have pervasive lingering effects.
11. This is a consistent finding among studies in the Netherlands where weighted student funding is the norm (Bolt and van Kempen 2010, Ladd and Fiske 2009, Musterd and Ostendorf 2009).
12. The unfortunate wording in the famous *Brown* decision (1954) was that segregated schools were 'inherently unequal'.
13. Educational policy in liberal democracies is already geared toward thresholds of sufficiency (or adequacy), even if assessed crudely in terms of test scores. It is therefore unclear how Anderson's argument, as stated, moves us beyond standard appeals for educational equality.
14. Also see Anderson (2010), in which she develops her argument further but with the same underlying message, namely, that integration is necessary in order to 'overcome unjust racial inequality in opportunities, undo racial stigmatization, and realize a fully democratic society of equal citizens' (p. 237). Anderson also assumes that better-placed minorities will be more responsive to constituents with whom they share similar traits. It seems intuitively correct that members of more 'diverse' backgrounds will be sensitive to the needs and concerns of constituents who share their cultural or ethnic background, but it is far from obvious that it will have that result.
15. For Du Bois, sympathetic teachers, knowledge of self and a quest for Truth were to be valued over simply mixing schools.
16. It is certainly not effortless for everyone. For example, gay and lesbian students – also victims of stigma – also may seek shelter away from the stresses of heteronorms, and like ethnic and racial minorities also can be overwhelmed with the pressure to 'be normal'. Yet unlike most gay and lesbian students, the visible differences of most ethnic and racial minorities are inassimilable.
17. But see Valls (2002) for an argument for voluntary separation even under *ideal* conditions given the way in which schools that address the needs of one group generally do a better job protecting and reproducing the culture, history and experience of stigmatized minority groups.

18. And many schools receive considerable additional resources to compensate for poverty effects.
19. It should also be remembered that voluntary separation has less to do with public versus private status and more to do with its organizational features. Further, whether there is a per-pupil figure below which it is impossible to provide a child with a quality education is unsettled. Evidence suggests that the problem with per-pupil spending is with how inefficiently it is used and not what the amount is in absolute terms. See, inter alia, Hill (2008).
20. By 'reasonable' I mean efforts that involve the knowledgeable and willing consent of those affected, and also efforts that do not place the burden of desegregation on those least advantaged. This would describe certain voluntary desegregation schemes.

Note on contributor

Michael S. Merry is Professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of *Culture, Identity and Islamic Schooling: A Philosophical Approach* (2007), and Editor of *Citizenship, Identity and Education in Muslim Communities: Essays on Attachment and Obligation* (2010), both of which are published by Palgrave. His philosophical and research interests include ethics and social and political philosophy, particularly as these bear upon educational equality.

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