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Educational Justice and Socio-Economic Segregation in Schools

HARRY BRIGHOUSE

Sociologists exploring educational injustice often focus on socio-economic segregation as a central measure of injustice. The comprehensive ideal, furthermore, has the idea of socio-economic integration built into it. The current paper argues that socio-economic segregation is valuable only insofar as it serves other, more fundamental values. This matters because sometimes policy-makers will find themselves facing trade-offs between increasing integration and promoting the other, more fundamental values that underpin the value of integration.

Jonathan Kozol's *The Shame of the Nation* contains an appendix demonstrating the unequal levels of funding in 5 metropolitan areas of the United States and, also, the socio-economic segregation between school districts (and therefore among schools) in those areas. The results are stark. School districts with very high levels of child poverty have relatively low funding. Districts with low levels of child poverty have high per-student funding. Take the Chicago area: per-pupil spending is $17,291 in Highland Park and Deerfield that have 8% of their pupils on free and reduced school lunch. It is $14,909 in New Trier, in which only 1% of pupils are low income. In the urban Chicago district, with 85% on free and reduced school lunch, spending is just $8,482 (2002–3 figures). Similar figures are presented for Philadelphia, Milwaukee, New York City, Detroit and Boston (Kozol, 2005, pp. 321–326). Teachers' salaries are considerably higher in the higher spending districts but, because metropolitan areas are considered, the schools compete with each other in the same regional labour markets.

In the UK socioeconomic segregation between schools is also serious, although it is not compounded by, but compensated for, by funding inequalities (funding targets disadvantage, rather than advantage).[1] Not only political activists like Kozol, but sociologists and economists of education too focus a good deal on the degree to which schools are segregated by socio-economic class. Think of studies of school choice in the UK: one of the central debates around choice is the extent to which it causes segregation among schools. Sharon Gewirtz, Stephen Ball and Richard Bowe, in their extensive study of the ways in which different parents choose among schools, suggest that the introduction of choice should trigger further segregation, because different modes of choice are

utilised by parents from different social classes (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995). They say: 'Furthermore, the exercise of choice as a process of maintaining social distinctions and educational differentiations, as related to social class and the class composition of schools, is likely to exaggerate social segregation' (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz, 1996, p. 91). Stephen Gorard, Chris Taylor and John Fitz (2003) contest the conjecture, showing that, in fact, the introduction of the choice reforms in 1988 reduced, rather than increasing, the degree of socio-economic segregation. The empirical scholars look at the mechanisms that produce segregation, the extent of segregation and its consequences. Although they typically refrain from overt normative commentary on segregation they frequently evince the sense that it is a prima facie bad: something to be avoided if it can be without doing damage to other important values.

My argument in this paper is that socio-economic segregation of schools is not fundamentally normatively interesting. By this I mean that it is only interesting in so far as it points us to violations of social justice in education, where social justice is understood solely in terms that are independent of whether there is socio-economic segregation. I do not mean to dampen the interest of empirical researchers in socio-economic segregation, and its causes. But I do mean to encourage them to look, in addition, for its effects in particular contexts. Finding socio-economic segregation of schools tips us off to the possibility of social injustice, but it does not constitute social injustice. More importantly, while socio-economic integration of schools is usually one useful, if partial, instrument for ameliorating social injustice in education I will argue that it is not always part of the most efficient strategy for attacking educational injustice.

Because different mechanisms produce socio-economic segregation in different countries, and because the degree of segregation varies, there is no reason to expect a single policy or set of policies will deal with segregation in all contexts. But we can give an account of why segregation is wrong that applies across contexts. In section I, I shall give an account of the goals and principles that constitute social justice in education (in my view). In section II I contrast this account of justice with the comprehensive ideal, which sees segregation as bad in itself, and suggest that the injustice account is better. I then, in section III, identify the central mechanisms by which segregation can be expected to produce educational injustice, in particular educational inequality. In section IV I elaborate and consider the best principled objection to integrating schools—that doing so violates the liberty of students or parents. I argue that integrationists should heed that objection, but that it will not, when understood properly, stand in the way of most of the policies integrationists would advocate. In section V I argue against the view that, in the UK and the US at least, educational injustice can fully be countered without structural change that includes efforts to integrate schools. But I argue in the conclusion that there may be circumstances in which the fact of segregation can be exploited better to target resources at the least advantaged, and thus to address educational inequality at least.

I JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

What are the right normative grounds for evaluating education policy? I want to propose, briefly, four proper goals of education, and one distributive principle. The goals are as follows:

- Education should prepare children to become autonomous, self-governing individuals, capable of making good judgments about how to live their own lives, and to negotiate for themselves the complexity of modern life.
- Education should equip children with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to be effective participants in the economy, so that they can have a good range of options in the labour market, and have access to the income necessary to flourish in a market economy
- Education should play a role in preparing children to be flourishing adults independently of their participation in the economy (this is the justification for teaching such subjects as Personal Social and Health Education but also, in my (possibly eccentric) view much of the traditional academic curriculum).
- Education should prepare children to be responsible and effective participants in political life—good citizens. It should do this both for their sakes, because a flourishing life is more secure if one is capable of making use of the rights of citizenship; and for the sake of others, because a flourishing life is more secure if others are capable of abiding by the duties of good citizenship.[2]

The distributive principle is the principle of educational equality: The simple version says that every child should have an equally good education. But what this means is obviously contested. When you compare children with similar talents, and similar levels of willingness to exert effort, it is pretty intuitive to say that educational equality is satisfied when they receive a similar level of educational resources. But consider Hattie, who is blind, and Sid, who is equally talented and hardworking, but sighted. In their case it seems intuitive that equality requires that more resources should be devoted to Hattie in particular, resources devoted to correcting fully for her disability. Consider an even more difficult case: Kenneth, who is highly talented, and Hugh, who has a serious cognitive disability. Again, it seems that Hugh should be granted more resources, but this time it is hard to see that they could correct for the disability, unless we were willing to disable Kenneth.

I shall not resolve these difficulties here.[3] The principle of educational equality has two straightforward implications. First, children with similar levels of ability and willingness to exert effort should face similar educational prospects, regardless of their social background, race, ethnicity, or sex. Second, that children with lower levels of ability should receive at least as many educational resources as those who are more able.

Since most of the ensuing discussion focuses on the principle of educational equality rather than the goals of education, I want to emphasise the importance of *equality* rather than improving the prospects

of the least advantaged. The egalitarian theory within which my own view of educational justice is nested in fact emphasises not equality, per se, but *benefiting the least advantaged*, and gives that principle priority over equality—so that when we have a choice between an equal distribution of a smaller pie and an unequal distribution of a larger pie in which all get more than under the equal distribution of the smaller pie, we choose inequality. If a tax proposal, for example, were to inhibit growth so that the worst off were even worse off, although more equally well off with others, that would be a bad thing for them, and for everyone else. But this general rule does not apply to all areas of life. The quality of someone's education has a real influence on their expected lifetime income, but its influence is dependent on the quality of her competitors' education. Getting Sharon from only 2 up to 3 grade C's does not do much good for her if we simultaneously get her nearest competitor Linda up from 3 to 4 grade Cs. The employer will still prefer Linda to Sharon. So merely raising the floor of achievement in education does not help the less advantaged in the pursuit of earnings in the labour market unless we simultaneously diminish the achievement gap. The size of the gap matters because of the particular connection education has to other, unequally distributed, goods. When I refer to 'benefiting the least (or less) advantaged' in the context of education, then, I should be understood as being concerned with benefiting the least advantaged *relative to others*.[4]

II THE COMPREHENSIVE IDEAL

Many educational policy debates in Britain have focused only indirectly on the values and principles I outlined in the previous section. The central debates have been about something else—the practice and ideal of comprehensive schooling. Whereas the above values and principles are only indirectly concerned with socio-economic segregation, the comprehensive ideal seems to incorporate directly the idea that socio-economic segregation is condemnable and that integration should be pursued. The comprehensive ideal, as it is normally understood, demands that children attend common schools, in part so that they can forge a common culture. Richard Pring quotes first Tawney:

> . . . inspite of their varying character and capacities, men possess in their common humanity a quality which is worth cultivating and . . . a community is most likely to make the most of that quality if it takes it into account in planning its economic organisation and social institutions—if it stresses lightly differences of wealth and birth and social position, and establishes on firm foundations institutions [schools] which meet common needs, and are a source of common enlightenment and common enjoyment (Tawney, 1938, pp. 55–56).

Then Halsey: 'We have still to provide a common experience of citizenship in childhood and old age, in work and play, and in health and sickness. We have still in short, to develop a common culture to replace

the divided culture of class and status' (Halsey, 1978). Pring himself continues:

> In understanding, therefore, the arguments for the common school, one needs to address the principles of equality, including equal respect for persons, and the preparation for living in a community which requires a common culture to overcome divisions arising from 'wealth and birth and social position'—and, one might add, religion.
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> Britain, in comparison with the USA, had woken up relatively late to these principles—at least to their significance to educational provision. The United States had supported from its earliest days the common school to serve the local community, whatever the ethnic and religious background of the members of that community (Pring, 2007, p. 505).

Tim Brighouse, a life-long defender of the comprehensive ideal, characterises it as follows:

> For some—mainly in the suburbs, market towns and countryside—the motive has been the social desirability of all youngsters, whatever their background, in a local and settled community attending the same school. For others—especially in urban areas—the ideal can be realized only if schools have the full range of ability as measured by standardized intelligence tests taken at the age of 11 (T. Brighouse, 2004).

The comprehensive ideal calls for socio-economically mixed schools because it takes it to be valuable, for various reasons, that children from different social backgrounds mix in schools.[5] Advocates of this principle typically do not *reject* the goals and principle I have outlined, and they sometimes, as in Pring's case above, refer to ideals of equality in justifying the ideal. But the ideal itself is usually interpreted as consisting in the demand that children who come from different social locations and are bound for different social destinations to have a point of contact in their school years, and it is the ideal, rather than the principles that might be appealed to in its defence, that is the focus of public debate.

The comprehensive ideal may appeal for other reasons, which have no direct point of contact with the goals and principle I've offered. For example cross-class contact during school might facilitate a sense of connection between the advantaged and disadvantaged, and thus a more cohesive social fabric, which might have no noticeable impact on the goals I've elaborated. It might even work against some of them; for example, by undermining class loyalties among the disadvantaged without undermining them amongst the more advantaged. It might be desirable because it interferes with the process of maintaining and renewing social networks that impede the meritocratic allocation of candidates to jobs: because those who control the jobs did not attend school exclusively with others from advantaged backgrounds, there will be fewer opportunities for children who are well born but academically unsuccessful to exploit these networks.

I do not want to argue against the comprehensive ideal as an ideal. But I do want to claim that it is secondary in importance to the considerations I have elaborated in the first section. It is hard to argue for this in a way that would convince someone who did not already share my view. The best I can do is review a small number of situations in which there would be trade-offs between the comprehensive ideal and one or another of the goals and principle I have elaborated, and show what regarding the comprehensive ideal as more important has what seem to me to be counterintuitive consequences.

1. Suppose that full socio-economic integration can be achieved only at the cost of significantly lower achievement for the lowest-achieving 20% of children (comprehensive ideal versus equality).
2. Suppose that full socio-economic integration can be achieved only at the cost of a significant loss in terms of the quality of citizenship exhibited by pupils across the socio-economic range (comprehensive ideal versus citizenship goals).
3. Suppose that full socio-economic integration can be achieved only at the cost of a significant loss for the goal of achieving personal autonomy, again throughout the socio-economic spectrum (comprehensive ideal versus autonomy).

The reader does not have to believe that these scenarios would ever arise in practice in order to be forced to make a judgment. What we are trying to establish is just which values are more important. My own view is that in each case the comprehensive ideal should yield, because the conflicting goals are fundamentally important, and the comprehensive ideal is not. I can only invite the reader to agree.

For the reader to think that the judgment I am trying to force her to make *matters in practice*, she *does* have to be persuaded that these trade-offs are, or might be, forced on us in some situations. So why might these trade-offs turn out to be unavoidable sometimes? Consider the first. Here's a possible story: achieving full socio-economic integration in some particular situation results in advantaged children flooding into schools the cultures of which have to change radically to accommodate them and, perhaps more plausibly, their parents. Whereas those parents had previously sent their children to elite private schools, now, denied the freedom to do so, they set to work ensuring that the schools their children attend are maximally designed to benefit their children rather than others. Because they have a great deal of social capital and personal energy, they succeed, to the detriment of the least advantaged pupils. Consider the second case. Suppose that contact between more and less advantaged children actually *decreases* their willingness to respect one another across class lines; either because teachers do not know how to manage the new contact between them, or because, regardless of the teachers, the background culture promotes snobbery in the more advantaged and inverted snobbery in the less advantaged and contact between them actually feeds those tendencies.

We can, in fact, tell a *true* story, in which the trade-offs look real. Consider the case of children or Moroccan and Turkish origin in contemporary Amsterdam. There is some evidence that children from those particular countries do better, academically, when concentrated into racially segregated schools (which, under the Dutch progressive funding system, have more resources than white schools) than when in racially mixed schools. Suppose this result were robust and that there were good reasons (as I think there are) for retaining the progressive funding formula. Again, my judgment is that in circumstances like this it would be appropriate to ditch the ambition for integration, at least as long as some threshold of social cohesion is secure. It is better to have less mutual understanding but fairer chances, than better mutual understanding and less fairness.[6]

III SOCIOECONOMIC SEGREGATION AND EDUCATIONAL INJUSTICE

Segregation can inhibit justice by undermining any of the goals and principles elaborated in section I. Very crudely, I suspect that religious, ethnic and cultural segregation are most relevant to the goals of autonomy and flourishing; whereas socio-economic segregation, which is my focus here, pertains most naturally to economic self reliance, citizenship and the principle of equality. As I said, different mechanisms work in different contexts: here are four commonly cited mechanisms.

First, resourceful and well-educated parents provide resources to the schools in which their children are educated. They raise funds through parent associations and private donations: at the limit, in the US, these resources can pay for additional teachers. So the higher the concentration of advantaged children a school has, the more resources it has, other things being equal. If disadvantaged children are mixed with advantaged children in schools they are more likely to benefit from these additional resources. Wealthy parents are also more likely to vote, organise, and lobby for more public spending; which is a reason that fear of elite defection into private schooling (in the UK) and into separate funding-bases (in the US) acts as a constraint on progressive policymakers.

Second, disadvantaged children are more difficult to teach or, more precisely, more input is needed from teachers to raise them to the same level of achievement as more advantaged children. So, at any fixed level of per-student resource allocation, a school with a high concentration of disadvantaged children will achieve at a lower level than one with a more mixed population. That is, the disadvantaged children in the more mixed school should do better, other things being equal, because they have fewer competitors for the limited resources. The problem here, note, is not with socio-economic segregation per se, but with segregation unmitigated by appropriate changes in resource allocation.

Third, children are resources for each other. Peers affect each other's aspirations and each others learning habits; and they learn from one

another. Any given child has better prospects sharing a classroom with other children who are bright, well-behaved and hard-working than with other children who are ill-behaved, lazy and dull. This is true, even discounting for the effects of the other children on the teacher. So when advantaged children congregate they are resources for each other. They are not available as resources for the disadvantaged. Now, whether this effect kicks in depends on how the desegregated school is organised. In particular, a school with a good socio-economic mix in which children are either formally tracked by achievement-level or, as in many progressive US high schools, informally tracked by class (through a system of electives) will not be very different *in this respect* from two schools into which the advantaged and disadvantaged are segregated.

The final mechanism concerns the magnetic effect of advantage on talented teachers. It is, ironically, highly rewarding to teach the student whom it is easy to teach. Presumably it is hard for the reflective person to award themselves a great deal of credit for the achievements of very high achievers, but it is rewarding to be in the presence of that achievement. High concentrations of advantaged students will attract talented teachers, and high concentrations of disadvantaged students will repel them (other things being equal). When a school is socio-economically mixed it can deploy the talents of those teachers attracted by the advantaged children to the benefit of the less advantaged children, and it can do so even if it practices some form of tracking. (It need not, of course—because teachers, like students, can be tracked—but it *can*.) This final mechanism depends for its effectiveness on particular kinds of motivation among teachers. If there were a large pool of talented teachers motivated (say for ideological or moral reasons) to teach the least advantaged, then segregation would not be a serious problem. If the pool of talented teachers were deeply elitist in their motivations, and would leave teaching (or leave the state sector) if they were not able to teach exclusively advantaged children, then de-segregation would not help with the problem. But if there is a substantial pool of talented teachers who would prefer to teach a good proportion of advantaged students, but will be willing to teach a significant proportion of disadvantaged children, then desegregation helps with this problem. If this pool can be motivated by financial incentives, or incentives regarding other aspects of their compensation package, note, desegregation is not the only solution to the problem—it should be possible to redistribute talented teachers into high concentration disadvantaged schools by providing them with large financial incentives; or perhaps by providing longer vacations, shorter working days, better professional development opportunities, or smaller class sizes.

IV LIBERTY, FAMILY VALUES AND JUSTICE

Socioeconomic segregation within and across schools might cause educational inequality, and yet be entirely permissible and morally unproblematic. In fact, in the philosophical and popular literature on educational inequality

this is a standard position. The argument goes as follows. Educational equality may indeed matter, and may matter for the reasons that I have given in section I. But other values matter more, and the measures needed to desegregate schools would violate these more important values. Here is Nathan Glazer, in a review of Kozol's *Shame of the Nation*:

> To be sure, the case for both [racial] integration and equality of expenditure is powerful. But the chief obstacle to achieving these goals does not seem to be the indifference of white and the nonpoor to the education of white and the poor. . . . Rather, other values, which are not simply shields for racism, stand in the way: the value of the neighbourhood school; the value of local control of education and, above all, the value of freedom from state imposition when it affects matters so personal as the future of one's children (Glazer, 2005, p. 13).

Prohibiting private schools, bussing, and enforcing neighbourhood diversity all limit parental freedom. This is the parental liberty argument against implementing educational equality.[7]

The parental liberty argument has more power than advocates of educational equality usually think, and less than those who press it against educational equality usually think. Consider the liberty argument against prohibiting elite private schools. It would, indeed, be a limitation on individual freedom to block people from spending their money the way they wanted to, and in particular to prevent them from spending their money on their children's education. Blocking that kind of gift inhibits their freedom; and it does so in a very peculiar-seeming way, because it singles out the provision of something widely recognised to be intrinsically valuable to be blocked, but allows for the provision of more frivolous goods (expensive cars are fine, expensive educations are not).

If freedom consists in being permitted to do what one wants then the wealthy parent has her freedom restricted by being prohibited from spending money on sending her child to a private school. The interesting question is whether she has *a right* to remain un-coerced. Many measures infringe freedom, and are none the worse for that. We are barred from bribing trial judges even on behalf of our own children; candidates for political office in most countries are restricted as to how much of their own money they can contribute to their own campaigns; taxation is, famously, a restriction of freedom. Simply observing that some measure restricts someone's freedom does not show that it is wrong. To the question 'Why shouldn't I be allowed to spend my money on trying to save my child from being convicted of a crime she committed?' the answer is that in order for it to be fair the criminal justice system must be insulated from background inequalities of wealth. In this arena, fairness trumps freedom. Similarly, the answer to the question 'Why shouldn't I be allowed to spend my money buying my child a superior education to that which others get?' is that in order for it to be fair the competition for socially licensed benefits must be insulated. The burden of proof is on the opponent of the measure supporting equality.

It may seem that I am being ungenerous to the opponent here. But I am just shifting the burden of proof. The objector must show that the measure violates some basic liberty: some freedom to which we are entitled as a matter of justice. To show that we are entitled to some freedom we need to show that it is necessary for facilitating the fulfilment of some basic human interest. This is what the best version of the liberty argument does.

Before exploring this version, notice that this kind of argument cannot object to socio-economic desegregation or educational equality per se, but only to *particular measures designed to enforce them*. The liberty objection, even on the version of it that I have rejected, counts against prohibiting private schools but not against equalising state school funding, even though the latter might do as much to promote educational equality in the US as the former would do in the UK. Similarly, the freedom objection does not support allowing state schools discretion over the selection of students in a system of school choice. Admissions officials do not themselves have a freedom interest in connection with their role as a state agent. When they select one child over another they are granting one parent what she wants and denying it to another—so, whatever method of allocation is used the successful parent gets freedom and the unsuccessful parent has freedom denied.

How does the liberty-invoking opponent of socio-economic desegregation to promote educational equality meet the burden of proof I have shifted onto her? The second strategy is to posit an interest in maintaining the value of the family, and claim that mechanisms designed to equalise, or desegregate, violate that interest. How powerful this move is depends on what we want to include in the value of the family. A plausible account will allow parents to spend a good deal of time with their children, and to express partiality toward their children in a range of ways. To use Adam Swift's example, we surely think that reading bedtime stories to one's own (and not, if one does not want to, to other people's) children is something one must have a right to do, even at some cost to equality of opportunity (Swift, 2005). Why? If we were prevented from doing *that sort of thing* with our children we would be deprived of the opportunity to create and maintain a valuable familial and loving relationship with them. Similarly, it seems obvious that parents must have distinctive rights to share their values and enthusiasms with their children—they have the right to take their child to their church, and to serve them food that reflects their cultural background, as long as they are not thereby harming their children (e.g., by indoctrinating or poisoning them), and no-one else has that right. Both parent and child get something distinctively valuable from being able to share themselves with each other, and for this the parent needs a space of prerogatives with respect to her child.

If measures to promote educational equality, or desegregation, violated this interest, they would be impermissible. It is easy to think of equality-promoting measures that would violate this interest. It would be wrong to force all children into day-care centres for 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, 50 weeks of the year; doing so would simply prevent the establishment of intimate parent-child relationships. Similarly requiring parents to live

apart from their school-age children for 10 months of every school year would be wrong, even if it facilitated equality. Whatever we do to promote educational equality must leave sufficient space for the creation and maintenance of valuable familial relationship. This does indeed rule out some strategies.

But it is possible to devise equalising and desegregating measures that are entirely consistent with leaving that space available. Abolishing elite private schools, for example, leaves parents with ample opportunity to create and maintain valuable relationships with their children; just as people who now cannot afford to send their children to elite private schools can have valuable family relationships, so would parents who were prevented from spending their wealth that way. Measures forcing schools, or giving them incentives, to find an intake with a socio-economic mix that reflected that of the society by which they were surrounded would similarly leave plenty of space. There is no reason to believe that de-segregating classrooms to harness the peer effect to the benefit of the least advantaged would undermine valuable family relationships.

Before moving on I want to deflect another possible objection to using the peer effect to the benefit of the least advantaged. The effects of ability and class mixing in the classroom are much disputed. Egalitarians like to believe that mixing benefits the least advantaged without harming the more advantaged much. The fiercest opponents of mixing like to claim that it harms the more advantaged without bringing any benefit to the least advantaged. Obviously, if either of them were proved right mixing need not be very controversial. But let us imagine the case most awkward for the egalitarian; that a desegregated classroom benefits the low achievers, bringing up their achievement; but harms high achievers, bringing their achievement down (relative to segregated classrooms). If this were so it would look as if a policy of mixing simply uses the more advantaged for the benefit of the least advantaged, without yielding any reciprocal benefits for them. Surely, the objection goes, this is unjust?

In fact, it is not. Whoever the advantaged child is placed with, she will be used to their benefit. In the advantaged-only classroom all the children are being used to the benefit of each other, while in the disadvantaged-only classroom all children are being used to each other's detriment. In a mixed classroom the advantaged children are being used to each others benefit and to the benefit of the least advantaged, while the damage the disadvantaged inflict on each other is being limited through dilution. Neither arrangement has a justice advantage.

V JUSTICE WITHOUT STRUCTURAL REFORM?

Recent government policy in the UK has assumed that it is possible to address educational inequality without desegregating schools or over-hauling the school financing system. Some schools in disadvantaged circumstances succeed with their students, and do so with no extra financial resources, and with student populations relevantly like those of

less successful schools. So we should be able to shift the performance of others without altering funding or admissions arrangements. The policy focus shifts to what is going on in the school and the classroom.[8]

This challenge to the significance of socio-economic segregation is strongly informed by the academic literature on school effectiveness and school improvement. This literature repeatedly emphasises two explanatory factors in successful schools—leadership and ethos—that are hard to operationalise and even harder to replicate. It may also be that appearances of similar disadvantage are deceiving. Two schools may be set in similarly deprived urban environments, have similar socio-economic compositions in their pupil mix with, say, high levels of free school lunches, and similar teaching staff, but face dissimilar circumstances. Why? Because if, as the school effectiveness and improvement literature often claims, ethos is a key to success, the feasibility of a 'learning ethos' may vary by the cultural outlooks of the communities from which the otherwise similarly deprived children are drawn. We know that equally poor urban and rural children perform differently, and some suspect that this may be attributable partly to background culture—if so, there may be unmeasured differences in the otherwise similar school populations. Free school lunch eligibility in particular is a crude measure.[9]

Suppose, now, that teacher-quality is crucial to a school's achievement. At any given salary level there may be a fixed supply of high quality teachers willing to work in disadvantaged schools. Once a school has 'turned the corner' it may become very successful in retaining, and then attracting, more than its 'fair' share of those teachers. Schools in disadvantaged circumstances may be competing for a fixed supply of a vitally important input—high quality teachers. They may also be competing for a fixed number of charismatic high quality leaders, the kinds of people whose leadership is needed to steer a school in disadvantaged circumstances.

Suppose, for a moment, that schools really can be improved without desegregation. Strangely enough, improvements in teaching and learning might have bad effects on educational equality. Geoff Whitty and Peter Mortimore:

> A large scale longitudinal study of primary schools carried out by one of us (Mortimore) found that no school reversed the usual 'in school' pattern of advantaged pupils performing better than the disadvantaged. However, some of the disadvantaged pupils in the most effective schools made more progress than their advantaged peers in the least effective schools and did even better in absolute terms. Yet . . . it would appear that, if all primary schools were to improve so that they performed at the level of the most effective, the difference between the overall achievement of the most advantaged social groups and that of the disadvantaged might increase (Whitty and Mortimore, 1997, p. 17).

For the principle of *educational equality* as I have elaborated it the *gap* is what matters. Maybe improved performance among the very most disadvantaged would help them enter more stable employment, but for

those who would have that anyway it is their relative performance, and not their absolute performance, that matters.

VI JUSTICE WITHOUT DE-SEGREGATION?

Let us suppose that some system of schooling suffers from serious socio-economic segregation, and consequently from serious educational inequality. What should a government do? If we embraced the comprehensive ideal as I described it in section II we would find it urgent to desegregate. But desegregation can be politically extremely difficult. In both the countries on which I have focused the major mechanisms for maintaining segregation are very secure. In the UK private schooling is widely regarded as protected by the *Human Rights Act*, and the political pressure against it is minimal. Discretionary selection by state schools in the choice system is on the increase, at least in the sense that the government is encouraging the establishment of more schools that are permitted to select; though this mechanism is certainly less secure than private schooling. The current government, though, seems to regard selection within the state system as a bulwark against strengthening the private sector: if parents who can afford to go private believe their children can get good enough state schooling via selection they will be less likely to defect; and there presence in the state sector, even a segregated state sector, is highly valued. The government may well be right about this. Many US States have experienced some pressure against the highly unequal school funding, but movement has been slow. Wealthier school districts strongly oppose the shift to more equal funding and especially resist the local revenue and spending caps needed to enforce the measures. Teachers' unions, which are, themselves, highly decentralised (as a rational response to the decentralised administration), and within which relatively highly-paid teachers in wealthy suburban districts have more power, strongly oppose measures that would lead to slower wage growth among their most well-paid members. Furthermore, the measures do nothing to challenge desegregation. One would expect the increased use of school choice to have led to a slight desegregation in the US, but it will be very slight and will have occurred only in those few places where more radical choice schemes have been adopted. Neighbourhood schooling and highly segregated school districting are politically quite secure.

I am not proposing that desegregation efforts be *abandoned* in these contexts. But they are hard to achieve. In the UK context in particular, there may be more efficient ways than integration to make modest progress toward educational equality. Suppose policymakers want to ameliorate educational inequality, but have reasons to fear that the available integration measures will provoke middle class and wealthy parents into going private or moving to the suburbs; and have no levers for addressing residential segregation. In fact, because most direct integration measures are transparent policymakers will often have reason to worry

about this; because wealthier parents can observe the operation of the policy they are better positioned to act strategically to avoid its intended consequences. Accepting the *de facto* segregation and using it to target resources to the least advantaged may be a feasible alternative, at least under some conditions. Because targeting can often be done via non-statutory adjustments to funding formulae, or by devising innovative programs to be implemented via particular local authorities, it can be pursued more opaquely, and when it is done opaquely it is less likely to provoke political opposition. Here is the single benefit of segregation: egalitarians believe that more resources should be spent on the least advantaged than on the more advantaged; but governments can only efficiently give money to schools. Once the resources are in the school it is both difficult and costly to monitor how they are used. One of the difficulties that egalitarians face in desegregated schools is ensuring that the schools devote extra resources to the less advantaged students; and middle class parents can be pretty efficient at absorbing resources for their children. But if a school has almost exclusively low-income children one can simply give extra resources to that school and be moderately confident that many of those resources will go to the less advantaged. If advantaged parents recognise the availability of the extra resources and have some formal ability to select among schools, the additional resources give them an incentive to move their children into the school; thus diluting the effect of the resources, but simultaneously improving the school's socio-economic mix presumably to the benefit of the other children. In order to capture these resources middle class parents have to send their children to the disadvantaged schools, thus contributing their own children as resources for the disadvantaged children; if they do not, then the resources go directly to the disadvantaged.

Earlier I described some mechanisms whereby integration might promote equality. The suggestion here replicates most but not all of those mechanisms: the idea is that additional resources can be used to give teachers incentives to teach in schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged children (say, by increasing their salaries, or by enabling them to work shorter hours for the same salary), and can compensate for the absence of more advantaged children. Schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged children can have longer opening hours, Saturday school, and more holiday school for those children, without triggering protests from middle class parents who want to be able to take their children on foreign holidays, or send them to Saturday music lessons; and can do so without stigmatising them relative to middle class children who do not participate in the lengthened school life. What this suggestion cannot do is harness the human capital of more advantaged parents to the benefit of the least advantaged children, at least not directly by having them in the same school. But even here there might be a small benefit, if allowing state schools to retain high concentrations of advantaged children helps stem the flow of such children into the private sector, and thus keeps their parents in the business of lobbying for resources to go to state schools, rather than abandoning that cause as they send their children into the private sector.

VII CONCLUDING COMMENT

Nothing I have said here is supposed to impugn the comprehensive ideal as an ideal. But socioeconomic segregation of schools matters for a number of reasons; how much it matters (and for which reasons) depends on the institutional context in which it is found, and researchers who are interested in how unjust segregation is in any particular context need to look at its effects, in that context, on educational equality and children's prospects for autonomy. Policymakers should be guided primarily be a concern of justice; and their policies should aim to undermine segregation in those circumstances where doing so is the best feasible strategy for addressing injustice; but should also look to other devices for ameliorating injustice, especially when desegregation cannot be achieved in a manner that promotes equality.

Correspondence: Department of Philosophy and Department of Education Policy Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 600 N Park St, Madison WI 53706, USA.
E-mail: mhbrigho@wisc.edu

NOTES

1. Stephen Twigg MP, then of the Department for Education and Skills, said in evidence to the Select Committee on Public Administration investigation into Voice and Choice in Public Services, 'Whilst there is certainly not a 300% uplift, there is a very significant difference between the per-pupil funding of Tower Hamlets, in the deprived East End of London, which has the highest per-pupil funding in the country, and per-pupil funding in some parts of the country. It is almost double . . .' Response to Question 488, in the minutes available at http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmpubadm/49/5012705.htm (accessed 13/10/05).
2. I cannot argue for these aims in so short a paper but have done so elsewhere; see my *On Education* (Brighouse, 2007).
3. I have addressed these complications in 'The Moral and Political Aspects of Education' (Brighouse, forthcoming). See also Terzi, 2005.
4. The obvious inspiration for a focus on benefiting the least advantaged is Rawls's difference principle (Rawls, 1971). But it is not, in fact, Rawls's focus. Rawls makes fair equality of opportunity to be lexically prior to the difference principle, suggesting a more strictly egalitarian approach to educational opportunities than I would endorse.
5. Pring is right, I think, to incorporate religious and cultural mingling as part of the comprehensive ideal, but those aspects of the ideal are orthogonal for my present purposes.
6. See Jan Van Damme, 'Class and School Composition and its Effects on Achievement and Wellbeing: Illustration of the Effects and a Preliminary Explanation', draft on file with author.
7. In the rest of this section I draw on ideas I have developed with Adam Swift in a number of papers. See especially Brighouse and Swift, 2006 as well as 'Legitimate Parental Partiality' (unpublished, on file with author).
8. This is a central theme of UK Education Secretary Charles Clarke's recent speech to the Specialist Schools Trust, 'Pupil-Centered Learning: Using Data to Improve Performance'; and also of Schools Minister David Miliband's IPPR pamphlet 'Opportunity for All: Are We Nearly There Yet?'.
9. For compelling documentation of some of these concerns see Martin Thrupp (2001a, 2001b).

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