

WORKING DRAFT: COMMENTS WELCOME

July 9, 2019

The Radical Affirmation of Dignity:

Septima Clark, Ella Baker and Educating the Disenfranchised

Forthcoming in Decoteau Irby, Charity Anderson and Charles Payne, (eds.) *Somebodiness: A Call for Dignity-Affirming Education*, Teachers College Press.

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Paraphrasing Theresa Perry (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003), we can say that the task of intellectual development is often different for those who are stigmatized by skin color, police record, poverty, language, immigration status, or religion because they are growing up in environments where narratives of their intellectual and moral deficiencies are constantly being recycled. How, then, do we arm them against those narratives? One might think that those who want to make education work for members of stigmatized groups would be advocates for educational practices that affirmed the dignity of those who are systematically devalued. In fact, the idea of dignity is virtually absent from contemporary educational debates, or hidden behind

concepts that address it obliquely. Both the left and the right in educational debates often proceed as if social stigmas are irrelevant.

If we look at traditions of independent education thought in African American communities, we see very different thinking. One would be hard-pressed to find better exemplars of that tradition than Septima Clark and Ella Baker. Clark began her teaching career in the South Carolina Lowcountry just after World War I and went on to develop citizenship schools that were at the base of many civil rights campaigns in the '50s and '60 s. Baker's activist career included leadership stints in many civil rights organizations but she is best known for her work in developing the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and its distinctive emphasis on ensuring that people had a voice in the decisions that affected their lives. Myles Horton, who led the Highlander Center in Tennessee, thought she had so much more success than others doing similar work partly because her work was built on a "radical affirmation of the dignity" of her students (quoted in Payne and Strickland, 2008, p. 36). *Radical affirmation of dignity* is an apt phrase for thinking about what seems most powerful about both Clark's and Baker's work. Remembering the centrality of dignity in their thinking might help us better understand the contemporary challenges of educating children in environments that demean them. This chapter asks where among modern educational efforts we might find work that affirms the dignity of the marginalized. We focus here on three initiatives that we find particularly instructive – Freedom Schools, International Baccalaureate programs, and community schooling. They may seem very different from one another, but we think that if one thinks about them in terms of underlying principles, they are all dignity-based programs and collectively could go a long way toward giving youngsters the kind of preparation Ella Baker and Septima Clark fought for.

On her first job, Septima Clark was paid \$35 a week while the white teachers across the street were making \$85. Small wonder she became a leader in the fight for equalization of teacher pay and a vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). South Carolina, though, had declared membership in that organization illegal so in 1956 when Clark refused to resign from it, she was fired from her teaching job in Charleston. That put her in a position to join the staff of the Highlander Center, the training center for activists in Tennessee, where she became the driving force behind the Citizenship Schools (later the Citizenship Education Program) which began in the Sea Islands as a vehicle for teaching Blacks to read and write so that they could register to vote. With the help of Ella Baker, the program was eventually transferred to Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference where it grew into a South-wide program for supporting voter registration and developing community activists. The schools would train 10,000 teachers and there would be as many as 200 schools operating simultaneously "in people's kitchens, in beauty parlors, and under trees in the summertime" (Clark, 1990, p. 69). Graduates were expected to go on to other leadership roles in the movement or their communities. The schools' evaluation form asked whether the graduate has been successful in getting others to vote. Attended community meetings? Engaged in demonstrations? Rendered more help to his or her neighbors? Worked for any unselfish cause?

To say that the schools began among the Sea Islanders is to say they began among arguably the most despised segment of a despised people. Living largely in isolation from mainland Blacks and whites, Black Sea Islanders developed a distinctive culture, rich with elements of African culture. Not surprisingly, Blacks and whites who were not from the islands looked down on "Geechees" – the traditional pejorative – with their funny speech, superstitious

beliefs, countryfied ways and lack of education, even by the poor standards of that region. In response, Islanders were often suspicious of outsiders and their attitudes. Mrs. Clark was thinking about these dynamics when she recruited her cousin, a beautician, to be the first Citizenship School teacher. Mrs. Clark just ignored her cousin's protests that she had never taught anybody anything; she was confident that her cousin knew how to convey respect. As the schools expanded, Mrs. Clark continued to avoid traditional teachers when she could; she preferred folk who were immersed in their communities and trusted: "We were trying to make teachers out of these people who could barely read or write, but they could teach" (Clark, 1990, pp. 63-64). Traditional teachers would likely bring traditional snobberies. Guarding against that was one sign of Clark's respect for her students; another was the ways the schools built a curriculum shaped around the lives and interests of students. If someone had spent the day planting butterbeans and repairing cast nets, that evening's reading lesson would be about planting butterbeans and repairing cast nets. Rather along the lines of some of today's community schools, to be discussed below, the school signaled that whatever was important to the students was important to the school.

Clark's profound respect for the ability of ordinary people to develop and grow was equally central to Ella Baker's thinking. The young people who were the cutting edge of the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South in the 1960s, and who became the most important models for youth activism in that decade, held her in the most profound respect, notwithstanding the fact that she, like Clark, never became widely known outside of the movement (Charron, 2009; Payne, 2007; Ransby, 2003). Renowned as a teacher of activists, for much of her long career Ella Baker was playing important roles in whatever organization or activity was then at the forefront of the Black struggle – organizing coops during the Depression, Director of

Branches for the NAACP in the 1940s, effectively the first executive director of Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1950s, and founder and advisor to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s. She worked in enough traditional organizations to be acutely aware of their shortcomings, including their disregard for the people they claimed to be leading, part of the reason she emphasized group-centered leadership over leader-centered groups. There would be times in the course of struggle when top-down leadership would be absolutely necessary, she acknowledged, but it was too treacherous and limited to be relied on exclusively. Rather, the movement needed to spend far more time building its base, developing the capacities of ordinary people to analyze and to lead. "Strong people," she said, "don't need strong leaders," stressing that "people have to be made to understand that they cannot look for salvation anywhere but to themselves" and "I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others" (as cited in Payne, 2007, p. 93). "Developing leadership in others" would become a defining principle for SNCC, which made teaching, the development of others, a central tenet of its work, which was possible only because they had an expansive sense of what "ordinary" people might become.

Bob Moses was one of the young people most deeply affected by Ella Baker and an iconic movement figure in his own right. When I asked him during an interview for an example of empowering leadership at the grassroots level, he gave me the name of Mrs. Hazel Palmer:

She really came to symbolize for me this sort of empowerment of the grass-roots people, this leadership phenomenon that Ella [Baker] pointed us to and she never became a media person. She always worked behind the scenes in the Freedom Democratic Party. She had been the janitor at one of the local schools and then her children got involved in the

Freedom Rides in '61 and then she began to work with Medgar [Evers] and then when Medgar was assassinated in '63, she came over to the COFO (Council of Federated Organizations, the umbrella organization for civil rights groups in Mississippi) office and started working with us and then she got involved in the Freedom Democratic Party and became sort of the chief networking person out of the Jackson office on the Watts line, so she really would do a whole lot of the calling and networking with groups across the country and really became very sophisticated in her understanding of the Movement and the organizing, what the Movement was trying to do with poor people like her.

Organizing in the spirit of Ella, organizing with a dignity-based vision, means having confidence in the capacity of people to grow beyond the limitations imposed on them, to see potential where the dominant narratives would see only deficiencies. Where do we now find people working as if the affirmation of human dignity was central to the task of developing healthy adults? What initiatives help us think differently about educating children growing up in environments where narratives of their deficiencies are constantly recycled?

I. Freedom Schooling: “An Expanding Sense of Self”

The Freedom Schools that developed in Mississippi during the momentous summer of 1964 are a direct legacy of Ella Baker and Septima Clark. SNCC’s Charlie Cobb, a Howard University student who had been in Mississippi for 2 years working on voter registration, was the essential architect of the schools. He has said that he was trying to do for the young people of Mississippi what Miss Baker and Mrs. Clark had done for the young people of SNCC. He wanted an educational experience that would:

...fill an intellectual and creative vacuum in the lives of young Negro Mississippians, and to get them to articulate their own desires, demands and questions ... to stand up in classrooms around the state and ask their teachers a real question, [to] make it possible for them *to challenge the myths of our society*, to perceive more clearly its realities and to find alternatives and ultimately, new directions for action. (Cobb, 1991, p. 36)

He saw the schools partly as a response to the miserable education Mississippi offered all of its young people, Black or white, and partly as a way to groom the next generation of activists.

Over 40 schools were established around the state, serving over 2,500 students, twice what had been planned for. Schools took place in churches, community centers, and under trees. The style of teaching was supposed to be interactive, with teachers asking questions that built on the life experiences of students, reminiscent of the pedagogy in Septima Clark's Citizenship Schools. Also reminiscent of the Citizenship School experience, professionally trained teachers often had the most difficulty learning how to function in the Freedom School environment.

Part of the curriculum consisted of traditional academic subjects. Black schools in Mississippi seldom offered academic subjects like typing, foreign languages, art, drama or algebra, so they symbolized equality to young people, who welcomed them in the summer curriculum. The distinctive part of the curriculum was the citizenship curriculum, built around a set of core questions that still resonate:

1. What does the majority culture have that we want?
2. What does the majority culture have that we don't want?
3. What do we have that we want to keep?

Those questions led to discussions about Black history and the movement, discussions about Black language and white language, about poor whites and how they were being manipulated

into hatred, discussions of how young people felt about their parents and why, discussions of the position of Blacks in Mississippi compared to that of Jews in World War II Germany.

Classes in voter registration work and political play-acting were a success everywhere. With innate sophistication about their own plight, the kids pretended to be a Congressional Committee discussing the pro's and con's of a bill to raise Negro wages and "the con's" would discover neat parliamentary tricks for tabling it. Or they'd act out Senator Stennis and his wife having cocktails with Senator and Mrs. Eastland, all talking about their "uppity niggers." Sometimes they played white cops at the courthouse, clobbering applicants with rolled-up newspapers. (Sutherland, 1965, p. 102)

Some youngsters understood the temporizing of Northern liberals as well. One Greenwood boy in a role play got President Kennedy to a T, down to the Boston accent: "The Federal government is not empowahed to act" (Belfrage, 1965, p. 90).

After 1965, the SNCC Freedom Schools pretty much faded from the scene as the movement moved in other directions, but they have inspired many similar projects. Best-known are the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools. (CDF's executive director, Marion Wright Edelman, served as a volunteer lawyer in Mississippi during the summer of '64.) The CDF Freedom Schools typically offer six weeks of instruction in the summer for children. In 2018, CDF supported 183 program sites across the country, serving more than 11,000 students in 87 localities (CDF, 2018). Program costs come to about \$600 per child, within the range of many other summer programs. They have an award-winning literacy component featuring minority authors and books about children of color and social issues. It has a very good record of preventing summer learning loss, with the students who start farthest behind showing the best

improvement. The idea of education for activism survives in a curriculum organized around the principle that “You can make a difference in your family, your class, your school, your neighborhood, your world,” with each area receiving concentrated attention for one week during the summer. Each summer there is an action campaign around some social issue – voting rights, gun control, violence – culminating in a national day of action – petitions, marches, letter-writing campaigns – around that issue. We would argue that any form of education that teaches students to understand the structures that shape their lives and to challenge them is likely to strengthen their sense of dignity. The idea of a powerful sense of self is captured by the school’s theme song, “Something Inside So Strong”:

The higher you build your barriers,
The taller I become
The further you take my rights away
The faster I will run
You can deny me, you can decide
To turn your face away
No matter 'cause there's
Something inside so strong
I know that I can make it
Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone, oh no
There's something inside so strong
Oh, something inside so strong

The more you refuse to hear my voice (ooh-weh ooh-weh ooh-weh ooh-weh)
The louder I will sing
You hide behind walls of Jericho (ooh-weh ooh-weh ooh-weh ooh-weh)
Your lies will come tumbling
Deny my place in time, you squander wealth that's mine
My light will shine so brightly it will blind you
Because there's
Something inside so strong, strong
I know that I can make it
Though...

As with many of the other cheers and chants that make Freedom School feel different from school-school, students act out the words while that are singing. When they say “So strong,” they flex their biceps like weightlifters showing off; when they say “Oh, no,” they wave their hands, palms forward, as if warding trouble away. The song is wonderfully ambitious.

Whatever the basis for the stigmas a young person may be trying to face down – race, poverty, obesity, sexual identity, sexual harassment, religion, domestic violence – the song can be understood as speaking to it, a catechism against the fears of childhood. Education ordinarily proceeds as if stigmatized populations can be taught the same way as anyone else. Freedom Schools take the opposite tack, directly challenging the demeaning messages in their lives.

There are cheers and chants for virtually everything, making Freedom Schools a high-energy, kinetic experience. There are cheers and chants for virtually every part of the school day – for saying thanks, for saying “good morning,” for proffering a compliment – and staff and students make new ones up as need or inspiration strikes. Although it has received little

attention from observers, we are particularly struck by the fact that there is a cheers that students use to pay compliments to one another.

You know you did a good job, so say you did a god job.

You know you did a good job, so say you did a good job.

Good job – good job! (clap 4X)

Good job – good job! (clap 4X)

Or you could just tell someone else how cool they are:

*Hey **(name)** you're a real cool cat!*

You've got a lot of this and a lot of that!

Strut your stuff, cha-cha-cha, cha-cha-cha, cha-cha!

Strut your stuff, cha-cha-cha, cha-cha-cha, cha-cha!

The cheers and chants are culturally appropriate catechisms supporting both individual self-confidence and collective affirmation. Peer affirmation is hardly a part of traditional school reform efforts – to say nothing of traditional schools. We suspect it belongs high up on a list of the important principles underlying these schools:

- The idea that education should prepare the individual to contribute to “healing the world,” to social struggle, e.g, through the “I Can Make a Difference” initiatives, which tell children they are bigger than the challenges they face. The Day of Action activities are intended to put children on an early path to civic engagement.
- Positive racial/ethnic socialization. The reading materials students are exposed to, the discussions they have, the multicultural staff they are exposed to, all send positive messages about their identity. This is consistent with a very large research literature attesting to the tendency of youth with stronger ethnic identities showing better social and

academic adjustments, with especially strong effects for Black and Latino youth (Hughes et al., 2006; Yasui et al., 2004).

- Respect for the expressive culture of local communities. This can take one form in an urban ghetto and another on a Native American reservation, but a day in a Freedom School is full of music, dance and chanting, reflecting the cultural heritage of whatever children are being served by that school.¹
- Urban children can react to their own marginalization by putting one another down. Freedom schools teach, as one chant puts it, “ If I don’t lift [my brother] up, I will fall down.”
- Safe space. Students are encouraged to talk about anything that concerns them, which may mean the violence and sexual harassment in their environments, or bullying or family issues or body image, problems that children may not get to voice elsewhere.
- Cross-generational friendships. Strong relationships often grow between the scholars and the Servant Leader Interns who staff the program. Many of the SLI’s are minority college students and many of them return to the program for multiple summers.

In the most comprehensive study of the CDF Freedom Schools, parents in Kansas City reported that their children demonstrated greater love of learning, greater appreciation of their culture, better conflict resolution skills within the family, and greater acceptance of responsibility (Philliber Research Associates, 2008). Freedom School students also showed significantly more improvement in reading than the comparisons, with middle school African American boys showing the greatest improvement. The quality of implementation mattered, with the best results

¹ A number of videos capture the music-dance culture of Freedom Schools, including https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1ffOIRJB9U
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0eCEpJ9mLg>

coming from those programs that most faithfully implemented the model. Overall, research on the CDF models tends to be limited by small sample sizes, inconsistency of measures and terminology, research designs that don't support causal inference, and too much research coming from a handful of locations (which may be among the better-implementing localities). Still, the overall patterns seem to be very consistent with the Kansas City Freedom Schools study.

Positive Findings from Studies of CDF Freedom Schools.

Reading skills/ attitudes	Dunkerly (2011); Green (2014); Gozali-Lee & Petersen (2013); Philliber Research Associates (2008); Portwood et al. (2009); Roehrig et al. (2018); Smith (2010); Taylor et al. (2010-2017); Uman et al. (2013)
Self Esteem	Clemons et al. (2017); Gozali-Lee & Petersen (2013); McKay (2009; 2011); Roehrig et al. (2018); Uman et al. (2013)
Social Skills	Bethea (2012); Gozali-Lee & Petersen (2013); Green (2014); Knight et al. (2011); McKay (2009; 2011); McKay-Jackson (2014); Philliber Research Associates (2008); Roehrig et al. (2018); Uman et al. (2013)
Critical Consciousness	Bethea (2012); Clemons et al. (2017); Dunkerly (2011); Gozali-Lee & Petersen (2013); Green (2014); McKay (2009; 2011); McKay-Jackson (2014); Philliber Research Associates (2008); Roehrig et al. (2018); Smith (2010); Uman et al. (2013)

Under “critical consciousness,” we included findings that suggested positive impacts on social action in any form, or attitudes toward African Americans or African American culture, or self-confidence about being able to make a difference, or greater willingness to refrain from “street behavior.” Some observers, including some members of the Black Student Leadership Network, the young people who led the revival of the Freedom School model in the 1980s, feel the idea has been coopted, becoming another apolitical academic enrichment program (Payne & Strickland, 2008). We respect that concern but this scan of the research literature suggests that contemporary Freedom Schools are affecting students in ways that speak to their conceptions of self and their understandings of how they can connect to the larger society. In educational

circles, some of these ideas are sometimes cast under the label of social and emotional learning. We see the growing calls for more social-emotional learning as potentially positive but we fear, that from the viewpoint of children in our most disenfranchised communities, many of these efforts will seem bland and disconnected from their lives. We see Freedom Schools, or rather the principles underlying Freedom Schools, as a way to package social and emotional learning that feels right to people from marginalized communities, partly because by confronting stigma and building affirming cultures, they underscore the dignity of those from whom dignified treatment is most often withheld.

II. International Baccalaureate: “As If They Were Rich...”

We see the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme as another dignity-affirming response to the low expectations surrounding historically marginalized children. Initially founded to ensure that the children of diplomats could receive a high-quality education no matter where their parents were stationed, IB is literally education for rich kids, and stresses what rich kids are thought to “deserve” – higher order thinking skills (i.e., epistemology), writing and research skills, global citizenship, and service to one’s community. Many oppressed students experience “chronic malrecognition” at school and in the world, which undermines their dignity (Fuller, 2006, p. 151). The concept of dignity is not static but instead requires building and protecting, and education represents an opportunity for the nurturance of students’ dignity. We know that inadequate academic preparation is one of the primary forces limiting postsecondary access and degree attainment for Black, Latino, and low-income students (Perna, 2005). By acting as if poor kids deserve what privileged kids take for granted, the IB pathway may help restore what bell hooks (1990) calls “the dignity denied [them] on the outside in the public world” (p. 42).

Founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1968, IB sought to offer a challenging education program that would ultimately “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” (IBO, 2018b, n.p.) – what Irby (DATE) calls “stewards.” IB’s flagship program, known as the Diploma Programme (DP), was originally offered to high school-aged youth in a handful of private schools but has since spread around the world and is one of the fastest-growing curricular innovations in US public schools (Hallinger, Lee, & Walker, 2011; Saavedra, 2014; Siskin, 2016). IB’s focus on global citizenship is at odds with the increase in isolationist and nationalistic rhetoric across the world (Arnold, 2016; Barrow, 2017; Huggler & Holehouse, 2016; Kingsley, 2015; Taub, 2016). Not surprisingly, given its history, IB encourages students to think of themselves as global citizens, knowledgeable about and connected to developments around the world.

The DP has been lauded as a “‘gold standard’ in college admissions” (Siskin, 2016, p. 4) and “the ‘Cadillac’ of college-prep programs” (Gehring, 2001, p. 19). IB’s two-year high school diploma program differs from Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment college credit models where students choose courses “à la carte.” To earn an IB diploma, students must devote their entire junior and senior years to the highly structured program, which requires English and another language, math, science, social science, and art, plus a course on the theory of knowledge, a 4,000-word research paper, oral presentations, and community service (Siskin, 2016). Performance is both externally and internally assessed, and students must earn a particular score to pass individual classes and earn enough total points on each assessment to receive an IB diploma. The DP emphasizes critical thinking and research across the disciplines and embraces

approaches to instruction that lead to independent learning, application of knowledge, and civic engagement.

An education rooted in internationalism, critical thinking, dialogue, and rigor is dignity-affirming. Racial/ethnic minority, low-income, and otherwise marginalized students too often live in a world and attend schools that rarely affirm their dignity and worth. Far too often, these students are thought to be unfit for rigorous academics and are steered toward less challenging courses “for their own good.” Research demonstrates a positive relationship between rigorous course-taking in high school – through programs like AP, dual credit, and IB – and subsequent academic success in college (Caspary, 2011; Conley et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014; Howell, 2011; McGee, 2013; Musoba, 2011; Perna et al., 2015; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). To be prepared for post-high school life generally and college specifically, students need access to high-level courses with quality instruction so they can increase their content knowledge, cultivate higher order thinking skills, and experience what Kurt Hahn, who founded the United World College movement where the IB is taught almost exclusively, termed “the dignity of achievement” (as cited in Fox, 1985, p. 55).

For students with stigmatized identities, internationalism may also be thought of as dignity-affirming. The conditions of life for many such students emphasize how they are different from and inferior to other people. All students in ghettos and barrios and rural backwaters have to do is turn on the television to see how the “better” people live, and school often reinforces those feelings of difference and inadequacy. Stressing their membership in the international family may help send the message that their social exclusion is temporary, that they are ultimately expected to grow into citizens of the world, not the slums.

In recent years, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) in the US has grown in two particular ways. First, it has *scaled out* by encouraging program adoption among traditionally underserved schools and thus expanding access to traditionally underserved students. Second, IB has also *scaled down* by extending its offerings to the earlier grades and creating a potential pipeline for students to ultimately earn an IB diploma (Siskin, 2016). This continuum includes the Middle Years Programme (MYP), established in 1994 for children aged 11 to 16, and the Primary Years (PYP) Programme, introduced in 1997 for youth aged 3 to 12. Both programs aim to reach students and change educational practices *school-wide*, unlike the DP, which is often implemented as a small, selective track within a larger high school (Saavedra, 2014). Taken together, the PYP, MYP, DP, and the relatively new Career-Related Programme (CP) – which combines academic work with a hands-on, individualized curriculum – could be used as a curricular plan from elementary through high school, but few schools choose, or are financially able, to implement all three (Bunnell, 2011).²

Today, IB programs are offered in more than 4,900 schools worldwide, over 1,800 of which are in the US (IBO, 2018a). Detractors argue that IB programs are elitist because they educate disproportionate numbers of wealthy, high-achieving, white, and Asian students and, to some degree, this criticism is accurate. In a study of IB access for diverse groups, Perna et al. (2015) found only a slight increase in the proportion of non-white students enrolling in IB from 2006 to 2009, and most of the growth was due to an increase in the proportion of Latino students. Nevertheless, since the IB's founding fifty years ago, the typical profile of an IB World School

² IB courses cannot be offered unless the school implements the entire program (Byrd, 2007). To “be IB” is a considerable expense for public schools, which may limit the programs’ adoption or expansion. The candidacy fee, for example, is \$4,000. Once authorized by the IBO, schools pay an annual fee for each program they offer, as well as assessment and other one-off fees. The yearly participation cost for an authorized school ranges from to \$8,520 for the PYP to \$11,650 for the DP for the 2018-2019 school year (IBO, 2018a).

has changed considerably. Among American schools offering the DP, nearly all (88 percent) are public schools (Gordon, VanderKamp, & Halic, 2015). Based on the most recent data available from 2012-2013, 60 percent of all public schools that offered IB programs received targeted or school-wide Title I funding (Gordon, VanderKamp, & Halic, 2015).

Experiments with making IB education available to children from non-elite backgrounds are only about a decade old. Despite the fact that urban, high-poverty schools face myriad issues which can make school-wide reform implementation challenging (Holme & Rangel, 2011), qualitative research suggests that such schools *can* implement IB with fidelity (Mayer, 2010; 2008). The growth of IB in urban contexts is relatively new but, in general, research indicates a strong, positive relationship between IB participation and educational achievement and attainment (Coca et al., 2011; Coca et al., 2012; Cortes, Moussa, & Weinstein, 2013; Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2007; Roderick et al., 2009; Saavedra, 2014) and data also indicate that low-income students in particular may benefit (Caspary et al., 2015).

Chicago was one of the earliest cities to try IB as a way to build rigor into neighborhood schools. In 1997, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) introduced the DP into 13 struggling high schools (Steiner & Berner, 2015). Coca et al.'s (2012) important study of the work there found that, as compared to a matched comparison group, students who went to an IB school were 40 percent more likely to attend a four-year college and 50 percent more likely to attend a more selective college, felt well-prepared for college when they got there, and were significantly more likely to persist. Additionally, in-depth interviews revealed that IB not only strengthened students' academic orientation, but also bolstered their self-confidence and self-efficacy – essentially, students' dignity (Coca et al., 2012). What was it about the IB program that produced such strong effects among historically marginalized students? Coca et al. (2012) point to four

contributing factors: the prescribed, challenging curriculum for all students, the regular assessments tied to the curriculum, the strong community of peers and teachers, and the extensive training that teachers receive through the IBO.

Today, CPS has the largest IB network in the country with 56 schools (22 high schools and 34 elementary schools) offering IB curriculum to more than 16,000 students (CPS, 2018). Some of those schools are “wall-to-wall” IB high schools with open enrollment, which means *every* incoming freshman is enrolled in courses taught using the IB Middle Years Programme framework. Students may choose to enroll in the DP at the end of their sophomore year or, among other possible routes, may opt to complete an IB career-related certificate. This wall-to-wall model is important to note because at many schools across the country, even if an IB program is available, not all qualified or interested students can, or do, participate. The DP in particular tends to enroll high achieving students from families who are aware of the program and its potential benefits for college readiness (Bailey & Karp, 2003), as well as students from higher income families and better educated parents (Chen, Wu, & Tasoff, 2010).

The wall-to-wall model eliminates teachers and guidance counselors acting as “gatekeepers” to rigorous coursework, a practice that often results in racial minority and/or low-income students being under-referred to intellectually ambitious programs. Requirements for recommendation letters and standardized test scores, combined with institutional inequities and lowered expectations for Black, brown, and poor students, have created a system in which interested students may be dissuaded from applying, and students with academic potential may be overlooked (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008; Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005). The number of students taking IB exams in Chicago, however, has nearly tripled since 2011, the number of IB exams taken has grown by more than 168 percent, and the

success rate on IB exams – scores of “4” or above, which lead to college credit – has increased from 45.9 percent in 2010 to 54.6 percent in 2017 (CPS, 2018).

As for the limitations of IB, the Chicago work also raises some red flags. In the Coca et al study, only 62 percent of the students in the sample who began IB persisted. (The workload may have been part of what discouraged the others.) There were no effects, positive or negative, of IB participation for the 38 percent of students who didn’t complete the program. While IB prepared students in the sample for the academic rigor of college, many students faced challenges related to college choice, campus life, and registration and advising. Many IB students moved from high school environments that provided them little college guidance to postsecondary environments that similarly provided them little support (Coca et al., 2012). Overall, IB has struggled to influence the “social capital gap” among its historically marginalized students.

The quality and fidelity of program implementation across schools may also be an area for concern. Schools that wish to become IB-approved “World Schools,” which is a respected certification, must undergo an extensive candidacy period during which they demonstrate alignment with the IBO’s philosophical, curricular, assessment, and administrative support requirements (IBO, 2016). Although every IB-accredited school undergoes rigorous audits every five years, IB schools vary across numerous dimensions including course offerings, program size, and access to historically under-represented students (IBO, 2016). Despite the various mechanisms IBO has in place to ensure program quality – including training for IBDP administrators, internal and external assessments, supervision of instructors, and detailed teacher guides for each course – Corcoran and Gerry (2011) found variation in teachers’ willingness to implement new curricular and assessment tools to improve students’ preparation for IBDP across

eight high schools implementing the DP in Florida, Maryland, and Tennessee. In their case study of DP implementations in two large and diverse high schools with high IB participation rates, Bland and Woolworth (2011) found that varying admissions processes led to different levels of student preparation, which required different mechanisms to support student success. Research is particularly limited on the ways IB programs are implemented in schools receiving Title I funding (Resnik, 2015). There is plenty of additional anecdotal evidence to suggest wide variation in the quality of IB implementation across the board, but actual research on this subject is limited, and we know little about the variation in IB program implementation on the ground and its effects on student outcomes (Steiner & Berner, 2015).

Although growing, the percentage of American high schools that offer IB programs is still quite small and more can be done to reach our most vulnerable students. Perna et al.'s (2015) descriptive analyses of individual-level data of more than 400,000 IBDP students from 1995–2009 indicates that the total number of students participating in the program at high schools in the US increased drastically – by 477 percent – but the proportion of non-white students (i.e., Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other) has seen a more modest increase, from 39 percent in 2006 to 43 percent in 2009. The proportion of free or reduced price lunch-eligible students increased 4 percent from 2006–2009, despite the concurrent increase in the availability of IBDP at schools with high percentages of low-income students (Perna et al., 2015). These results indicate that although IB is being offered in more diverse schools, it is experiencing less success enrolling Black, Hispanic, and low-income students. This results in more advantaged students continuing to dominate these educational spaces – a classic example of the reproduction of social inequality through “opportunity hoarding” (Bourdieu, 1977).

Most of the research on IB has been done on high school implementations. As the wall-to-wall model does, we advocate exposing children to rigor as soon as possible so that, in most cases, students would start with the PYP, followed by the MYP. At the high school level, we are interested in both the traditional IB diploma program, aimed at preparing students for rigorous college work, and the relatively new Career-Related Programme (CP) which can lead directly to apprenticeship, work in technical fields, or college. In the last two years of high school, CP students take at least two DP courses and complete courses associated with their selected career pathway. Some CP students see the program as a way to add workplace skills to their academic qualifications; others are more focused on the workplace learning but nevertheless benefit from the academic qualifications they gain through the program. Mack, Halic, and Burd (2018) found that graduates of CP programs in the US had higher rates of postsecondary enrollment and one-year persistence than high school graduates nationally and career and technical education concentrators specifically, suggesting that students who engage in vocational education alongside rigorous college preparatory coursework within the CP are well-prepared to succeed in higher education.

We know that in order to preserve their dignity, people often reframe their actions as choices rather than necessities. Not pursuing college, for example, is a way some students protect themselves from being denied something they want but believe they cannot achieve (Bloom, 2005). Rather than force vulnerable students into such a position, we can offer them the same preparation and rigorous coursework afforded their more privileged peers. We may need to provide them with extra academic and dispositional support to succeed; broadly, that means creating a school environment that provides a *community* of support, with counselors, teachers, and parents who are informed advocates for youth and classrooms where instructors are given

the time and space to teach and *re-teach* material and to assess and *re-assess* student growth, and it also means providing students discrete resources like academic tutoring and access to technology. With its comprehensive, structured, and demanding curriculum, the IB offers a promising pathway to improving students' academic achievement and college-related outcomes, as well as their sense of self-worth and global citizenship (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Conley & Ward, 2009; Foust et al., 2009; Hertberg-Davis & Callahan, 2008; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Venezia, Kirst & Antonio, 2003).

III. Community Schools: Seeing Over Ghetto Walls

Education reform discourse often proceeds as if the main thing is to save poor children from their communities. Schools in disenfranchised neighborhoods can function like fortresses in hostile territory, isolated from the communities they serve just as the children in them are isolated from the broader society. This flies in the face of the work of Septima Clark and Ella Baker who believed that important strengths lay in every community, awaiting only discovery and development. Social action grounded on community strength, on “the wisdom of the pinched toe and the empty belly,” as SNCC’s Charles Sherrod put it (quoted in Jackson, 2007, p. 144) may be more likely to last than work done top-down. That would imply a different, more reciprocal relationship between school and community. The community schools movement, which in its current form might be dated to the mid –nineties, tries to build that reciprocity while simultaneously exposing youth to worlds beyond their imposed communities. At their best, these schools tell youth they are somebody, that they come from communities of inherent value, but the communities they come from don’t define their horizons.

More than half of the school children in the US – about 25 million – are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch, the highest proportion of low-income students since the statistic became available in the 1960s (Maier et al., 2017; Suitts, 2015). School-aged children increasingly live in communities of concentrated disadvantage and, as a result, often don't have access to the high-quality curriculum, facilities, instruction, and wraparound supports available to their more affluent peers (Maier et al, 2017). More well-to-do communities have strong local tax bases to finance high-quality schools, and families in those communities often have the resources to supplement what schools provide. Privileged youth benefit from a variety of in- and out-of-school experiences that poor children are often denied. Community schools are one way to provide disadvantaged youth with both basic supports and enrichments that are taken for granted elsewhere.

Community schools emerged from the tradition of using schools to promote democracy and equity developed by Jane Addams and John Dewey, among others. While there is not a single definition for a community school, most share four common elements: 1) Integrated student supports, 2) Expanded learning time and opportunities, 3) Family and community engagement, and 4) Collaborative leadership and practices (Maier et al., 2017). Joy Dryfoos (2003) described a community school as one that

is open most of the time; houses an array of supportive child and family health and social services provided through partnerships with community agencies; integrates quality classroom teaching with activities in extended hours; involves parents in significant ways; has a full-time coordinator; and serves as the hub of the community. (p. 203)

Community schools are not a “program” that can be replicated across sites but, rather, are a “strategy,” meaning they evolve according to the needs and resources of the students, their

families, and the surrounding community (Dryfoos, 2005). While community schools' holistic approach is appropriate for students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, many community schools are located in urban areas where poverty and racism act as barriers to education, and where families have few resources to supplement what typical schools provide (Maier et al., 2017). Services provided by community schools vary but can include after-school and summer programming, food and housing assistance, and on-site dental and medical care for students and their families (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003).

To some extent, the growing popularity of community schools is a reaction to decades of single-minded emphasis on test scores for poor children. The community schools movement is concerned with the kind of cognitive development test scores purport to measure, but also with the social, moral, emotional and civic growth of young people (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017). Again, well-to-do parents take it for granted that their children will have many well-financed pathways to development. In constant dollars, between 1972 and 2006, the amount of money typically spent on enrichment by higher-income families increased almost 2.5 times, from about \$3,500 to almost \$8,900 per year (Kaushal, Magnuson, & Waldfogel, 2011). We can be sure that not all of this is ensuring good test scores; some of it makes it possible for young people to experience new things, test themselves against real world standards, discover things in themselves that wouldn't be brought out in a classroom. Community schools, notwithstanding enormous gaps in resources, try to make some of these experiences available to "other" kids.

Research demonstrates the efficacy of integrated student supports, expanded learning opportunities, and family and community engagement as intervention strategies, and additional evidence supports the positive impact of the kind of collaborative leadership and practice found

in community schools (though most research on the topic has not been conducted *in* community schools) (Maier et al., 2017). When community schools are implemented well, they can be effective in improving student-level outcomes, such as academic achievement (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000; Adams, 2010; Cook et al., 1999; Cook et al., 2000; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Oppenheim, 1999; Walker & Hackman, 1999; Warren et al., 2009), especially for disadvantaged students (Moore et al., 2014); attendance (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011, Oppenheim, 1999; 75-77); high school graduation (Walker & Hackman, 1999); prosocial behavior (Cook et al, 1999; Cook et al., 2000); and have been associated with increased family engagement (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000; Oppenheim, 1999; Warren et al., 2009) and lower family stress (Arimura & Corter, 2010; Hancock, Cooper, & Bahn, 2009; Olson, 2014; Zetlin, Ramos, & Chee, 2001).

Some of the transformative potential of community schools is linked to their attempts to expose youngsters to activities they might not otherwise encounter or be able to afford. Extracurricular activities provide students opportunities to develop academically, socially, emotionally, and physically in ways that complement activities in the regular school day. They are intended to expand students' interests and contribute to positive development. The research suggests that such extended learning opportunities may be particularly beneficial to disadvantaged youth but also that such youth have the least access to them (Heath et al., 2018).

Findings:

- The benefits for poor children are greater than those for the more well-to-do, and this extends across a range of outcomes: educational, psychological, social, and behavioral.

- Lower-income youth participate at lower rates, however, and evidence suggests that the participation gap has been growing over several decades, though this may vary by activity type.
- Latinx youth, and especially Latino boys, continue to have significantly lower rates of overall participation.
- Latinas and Black girls have particularly low rates of participation in physical activities.
- Extracurricular participation can support the integration of immigrant youth, influencing language development, academic engagement, social competence, and behavioral issues.
- Heterosexual girls and sexual minority males participate in sports at lower rates than heterosexual males, and the gender gap appears to have increased over time, despite efforts like Title IX.
- Youth prefer activities that are congruent with their gender, but there may be greater benefits when they try activities that are gender atypical.

DeLuca, Clamkpet-Lundquist, and Edin's book, *Coming of Age in the Other America* (2016), is a decade-long exploration into how some of Baltimore's most vulnerable youth escape poverty. In 2010, the authors interviewed 150 Black young adults who were born in the late 1980s and early 1990s to parents in public housing. In 2012, the authors followed up with 20 of those young men and women. The young adults in the study who found something that they were passionate about – like basketball, car customization, or the arts – were more likely to avoid guns, drugs, and other illegal activity than youth who grew up in similar circumstances but were not dedicated to a hobby. More than 90% of

those in the study with a “passion project” avoided criminal activity, compared to about 70% of those without an intense interest in a hobby:

The strongest identity projects connect kids to institutions that are supported by caring adults who help nurture those interests. We learned that youth who found a passion through one of these identity projects were able to distance themselves from neighborhood influences that threatened to bring them down. The projects helped to keep young people going and gave them dignity when they had little else to prop them up (Susan Clampet-Lundquist as quoted in Ofori-Atta, 2016, para. 9).

A broad web of formal and informal mentors is key to successfully serving vulnerable youth. Privileged youth are two to three times more likely to have an informal mentor outside of their family (Putnam, 2015). Disadvantaged students often lack access to the range of role models available to their more privileged peers – such as coaches, clergy, neighbors, and family friends. Absent these mentors, underprivileged students may go without the kinds of information and connections necessary for navigating and thriving in institutions like colleges and for exercising what Putnam described as “savvy.” Disadvantaged students may have fewer opportunities to benefit from the kinds of social networks associated with upward mobility (Cattell, 2001; Shelton, Taylor, Bonner, & van den Bree, 2009). From this perspective, service integration in community schools can provide a way to support historically marginalized students – and their parents – in building social capital (Mohnen, Völker, Flap, Subramanian, & Groenewegen, 2015).

A note of caution: The growing consensus about the value of community schools might be cause for worry. Given past performance, whenever too many voices begin advocating a particular reform for disadvantaged children, we are well advised to wonder if some chicanery is

afoot. What do people avoid by talking about community schools? It might be, for example, that teachers unions support the idea partly because it avoids discussions about accountability. Politicians may embrace the idea because it skirts fundamental questions of resource distribution, including the distribution of the best teachers and principals. Community schools don't replace investments in job training, housing and social safety net infrastructures, and other poverty mitigation efforts. When done with fidelity, however, they can help young people see over the real and symbolic walls of the ghettos and barrios and trailer parks. In part, we are arguing, this is because they are a dignity-based reform, premised on the idea that children from even the poorest communities have potentials they may never get a chance to discover unless we make a conscious effort to give them greater breadth and variety of experience, approximating what we take for granted with privileged children.

No education, no matter how progressive and effective, eradicates all the differences between the children who are socially valued and children who are not. Our contention has been that dignity-centered education helps us understand how to give youngsters tools to analyze and navigate some of the barriers in their lives. We can arm them against narratives that demean, surround them with instruction and programming premised on an expansive sense of their possibilities. If one looks separately at the evidence base for Freedom Schooling, International Baccalaureate and community schooling, each of them is clearly associated with a range of positive outcomes from youth, sometimes very strongly so. What might we expect if youth could experience all three? We can only ask. There is no empirical example that we know of. Projects that see them as victims or problems abound, but work predicated on a profound sense of their "somebodiness" remains regrettably rare, decades after Ella Baker and Septima Clark and many others showed us what that work can look like.

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