

Reading Interrogations for Equality Seminar
Week 6. Education
October 8, 2009

Eunhee Han

Saltz (2007) and Anderson (2007) argued that adequacy should be the sole principle in distributing educational resources and opportunities in the US rather than equality. In contrast, Brighthouse and Swift (2009) dispute their arguments and insisted that the justice of education demands both adequacy and equality since adequacy cannot be a complete principle in distributing educational resources in all circumstances.

I wonder how justice of education including adequacy and equality in distributing resources can be achieved. I am from South Korea where educational inequality is a big social problem. However, in South Korea, educational resources are mainly controlled and distributed by the central government. So educational resources seem to be relatively adequately and equally distributed in SK compared to the US where 12K school funding comes mainly from municipal property taxes. I think that the 12K education is similar to the universal health care that should be given to all citizens as a social right. As it has been difficult to reform the health care system in the US, it may be difficult for the federal government to intervene/reform the school funding structure.

The justice of education should demand not only demand equal and adequate distribution of resources and opportunities but also demand quality and contents in education to enhance social equality. Even though public educational resources and opportunities are equally distributed, children from wealthy and well-educated parent have more advantages in a meritocracy because they have more private resources including social and cultural capital. So I wonder what 12K school education should look like to enhance democratic equality and full citizenship.

David Calnitsky

In "Putting Educational Equality in its Place" I appreciated Brighthouse & Swift's commitment to educational equality above and beyond the adequacy view. I also think they are correct to potentially limit that equality given other values, especially the flourishing of the least advantaged. I'm a little unclear however on those other values. In the Abstract the authors write, "It would be wrong to, for the sake of educational equality, undermine the value of the family or economic growth in ways that damage the prospects for flourishing of the least advantaged" (444). In this statement it seems that the family/parental liberty and economic growth are only important insofar as they affect the real value with which we might limit educational equality: the flourishing of the least advantaged. In the piece (446) however the

family/parental liberty seems to be a value in itself, along with the flourishing of the least advantaged, while economic growth is only instrumental (to the latter).

The authors I think rightly are willing to violate meritocratic educational equality if the flourishing of the least advantaged increases. However they then, again I think rightly, seem to reject (at least in developed societies) the mechanism by which this might occur. To me, this mechanism seems somewhat implausible. It is a kind of trickle down theory of educational equality: 1) elite parents invest in their children, 2) this increases the stock of human capital in society, 3) this generates productivity gains, 4) those gains eventually trickle down. To me, there is reason to be skeptical of every claim after the first. (Also, productivity gains might be more likely with direct investments in the less advantaged.) While this mechanism might be worth abandoning, it doesn't seem that the principle of constraining educational equality by avoiding harm to the least advantaged needs to be thrown out, there just needs to be a more direct mechanism than the one given and rejected.

Actually, looking at the piece again, I'm not sure whether the principle is that we should implement merit-based educational equality up until but without harming the least advantaged or that we should violate educational equality if it enhances the flourishing of the least advantaged (both seem to be on p. 449).

Also, I like the point about the inexplicable silence of the meritocratic conception of educational equality with respect to arbitrary inequalities in talent (447). Jencks makes a similar point (523). I'm just not sure why, except for pragmatic reasons, Brighouse & Swift bracketed that point.

Alex Hyun

The question of how much freewill children have is very relevant to the issue of educational equality. This is clear in Jencks' paper, where he implies that our choice of conception of educational justice will be influenced by our views on the freewill of children (Jencks, 528). For instance, the moralistic understanding of educational justice requires us to "reward virtue and punish vice," which in the classroom setting means that we must reward those who make the most effort to learn. But if a child's work ethic is totally determined by her genetics and upbringing, it doesn't seem right to describe her degree of effort as virtuous or vicious, meriting praise or blame. This would rule out the moralistic conception of educational justice. Another example of the relevance of the freewill question: if children have a high degree of freewill, then Strong Humane Justice seems extremely hard to pursue in practice. This is because Ms. Higgins, in order to properly compensate students for their bad genes, would have to be able to discern how much of a child's failure is due to bad genes and how much of her failure is due to a misuse of freewill. That sounds like a really hard thing to do. One question I'd be interested in discussing is: do children have freewill? Are they responsible for their willingness to work, and if so, how responsible are they? I don't have any knowledge of the relevant psychological

data, nor do I have any direct experience with young children, so I'd be interested in hearing others' opinions about this. Though I am at least initially inclined to think that children's performance in school is greatly affected by freewill since my twin and I have performed very differently in school ever since the fourth grade – and this in spite of having quite similar genetics and upbringing. This question can be placed under the more general question that I have: which of the five ways of thinking about equal educational opportunity mentioned by Jencks do we find most plausible – which do we find to be morally best? This is something that I don't have clear intuitions about (except that the Utilitarian conception seems wrong to me).

Tatiana Alfonso

I found extremely interesting the discussion about equality and adequacy principles in the system of education and the alternatives about how to implement those principles in an effective public policy to pursue justice in education. However, those alternatives are not still clear, especially for the adequacy principle with regard to the indicators of disadvantage that are necessary to define the additional resources for the system.

The adequacy principle requires that the policy maker define which inequalities or disadvantages must be remediated and on that basis, set an array of alternatives to answer to them. The open question of course, is how could we define which disadvantages should be included? how to measure them effectively?

The adequacy principle also raises questions about what model of life the education is reinforcing. In a system guided for the equality principle, the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups seems evident, and then the adequacy principle looks like a good option to close the gap. However, the puzzle is not complete with that general answer because –like Brighouse and Swift (2008) assert¹– the desired outcome of the adequacy principle have different contents:

1. Education must be adequate for the economy –allocation in the labor market- (Tooley 1996)
2. Education must be adequate to participate as equal in political life (Gutmann 1987)
3. Education must be adequate to function as a peer in public and social interactions (Anderson 2007; Satz 2007)

The questions around the specific contents of the adequacy principle seems to be related to the cultural backgrounds of the group, the economic structure of the society and the structure of political participation. For those reasons, the main question here is if everyone should have the same education regardless the culture, the identity and the specific features of the labor market and political life. If you

¹ Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, "Putting Inequality in Its Place", American Education Finance Association, 2008, pp. 444 – 466

change the context, probably you have to consider another alternatives to define what is considered adequate. For example, how would the adequacy principle answer to context culturally diverse? Or how would this principle answer to the global labor market?

Benjamin Kilbarger

I am interested in both the theoretical and practical sides of the education issue.

On the theoretical side, the adequacy/equality discussion in our readings reminds me of the sufficiency/equality debate in respect to income and wealth, and of Bergmann's challenge to both basic income and stakeholder grants. What I have in mind here is the question of trading off between one and the other. Since many in the educational system are very badly off, we might adopt policies that aim toward overall adequacy until such time that a certain threshold is reached, and then work for equality more generally. This plan is motivated by the familiar idea that helping the worst off is not necessarily the best in terms of reducing overall inequality, but is the most pressing need, the thing we care about most. Which returns us to a familiar question: at what point have we done enough, reached adequacy/sufficiency, such that we might focus on other things like equality. In a previous class Gina proposed an interesting answer to this question in the context of the welfare state vs. BI/SG, suggesting that we should work primarily for a welfare state model until such time as individuals are sufficiently well off that they will be able to use their BI/SG effectively. I hope I'm getting that right. If so, I wonder if there's a similar point of trade off in the educational sense? More specifically, is it, as Satz suggests, when students are sufficiently prepared for full participation in a democratic society? Does that get us what we want?

And, on the really practical side: what are the best ways to get the kind of adequacy/equality we want, in the US, today? I'm woefully underinformed about this. Please help!

Justin Lonsbury

I enjoyed the sequence of articles this week, especially the core readings. Jencks had me convinced that my rotting mind and numb senses were the result of my affinity towards rhetoric extolling the virtues of equal educational opportunity, strong humane in particular. This left the door wide open to a sympathetic reading of Satz and Anderson, a sympathy that was extinguished most firmly by the Brighouse and Swift response. So, while I got to keep equality, albeit in its less comfy place, I was and am still left wondering about my mind and senses. [sigh]

What stuck out most for me in the readings were the arguments against leveling down. They seem identical to arguments for trickle-down economics. I'm going to go out on a limb and say that these policies haven't helped the least advantaged, and we should be

concerned about modeling our justifications for the distribution of educational resources on them.

I also think that advocating adequacy as a tactical move is not a good idea. First of all, this tactical compromise places “moderate” debates well to the right of center. Furthermore, within our educational climate of hyperaccountability and testing, adequacy (or proficiency related to standards) has been defined very narrowly in terms of easily testable outcomes. Richer versions of adequacy that resemble the pursuit of vertical equality or include subjective pleasures that contribute to a flourishing life are rarely, if ever, discussed by policy makers. We need to keep talking about equality, even if we probably won’t figure out what it actually means, so that our compromises and policies won’t continue to drift to the right.

Kelly Robbins

Jencks, in his discussion of whether we are responsible for compensating in educational practices for genetic misfortunes, suggests that we are bound to do so morally because we have chosen not to license parents. This strikes me as a poor argument, because it is clear that not choosing to stop something is not the same as choosing for that thing to happen. We recognize this difference in culpability when making moral judgments about parenting. We do not hold parents responsible somehow “giving” their children unfortunate genetic deformities that were not reasonably predictable, but we certainly do hold parents responsible for birth defects caused by their choices, say drug abuse during pregnancy.

Of course, I do think that we should provide specialized help for students whose struggles are due to genetic disadvantages. Many things can be done to improve the education of these students, and there is a benefit to society in doing so. But there must be a better argument for society’s *responsibility* to do this. My guess is that equality as a value can provide such an argument. Anything done in education that favors, shall we say, the genetic majority, is geared toward their inborn abilities or lack thereof. Can we make an argument that *this* is what we owe equally to students: that we arrange their education to be accessible given their talents and shortcomings?

Kevin Cunningham

I found Brighouse and Swift’s response to the educational sufficientarian most compelling because of its pluralism. The recognition of other values allows this kind of egalitarianism to pretty effortlessly dodge unpalatable consequences like “leveling down.” This pluralism also seems to give credit to the fact that the vast majority of people have egalitarian intuitions. Difference in political perspectives results when they give different priorities to different values. So, if we valued the best education for

everyone over equal composition of schools, we might side with the segregated schools in the Amsterdam example.

Give this framework of values, it seems to me that one could be an egalitarian pluralist, but of a very weak sort. So, for example, many people have the intuition that their children's welfare is qualitatively more valuable than anyone else's. So, they could be egalitarian pluralists, but deny that they should not be restricted from giving whatever sort of educational support they choose to their children. They might prioritize a principle of justice of something like "within reason, it is wrong to sacrifice the interests of your children for anyone else" over the principle "all children should have educational equality." I'm wondering how we sort these issues out. Is this the domain of ideal theory, non-ideal theory, or both? Given this sort of pluralism, how could, as political discourse in a democracy demands, we persuade interlocutors that some values *should* be prioritized? Such questions don't just belong to the egalitarian pluralist; indeed, one could ask Anderson and Satz "why should we care about educational sufficiency." But, I am curious, because whatever policies we decide to enact depends on the final ranking of values.

Miriam Thangara

Discourse, arguments and policy

I agree with the point made by several authors in this week's readings that hardly any philosophical "principle", untrammelled by other considerations, is justified, even by its own standards. Jencks makes this point rather well. What is required is not a 'perfectionist' stance in allocating resources, but finding arguments for ordering/prioritizing values in a specific way, depending on the resource being allocated and the context.

This means that the terms of the argument and the power-relations and discourses that bound what can be argued, who argues, what kinds of calculations are considered relevant to the context, are even more important than the basic allocation principles themselves. I want to say that this is what Jencks means when he says that the burden of proof for legitimate unequal distribution of resources is heavy in today's political context. Thus for instance, when Prof.s Brighthouse & Swift chose to structure their arguments around the *policy* statement rather than any underlying value, the terms of the debate have already been decided in the context of existing socio-political structures, which tends to prioritize those values that existing structures promote, rather than any alternate conceptions.

For instance, the priority given to parental rights is argued in terms (neighborhood school, local control of education, freedom from state imposition when it affects matters so personal as the future of one's children, from Nathan Glazer) relevant primarily to the white/middle class. It obscures, sets outside the terms of discussion, for instance the fact that "matters so personal as the future of one's children" fall into the family domain for only the advantaged sections of

society; the future of poor, black and Hispanic youths is hardly decided by freely by parents, given the much greater likelihood, of their ending up in jail, and the systemic causes that put them there.

On justifying meritocratic inequality on the basis of associated benefit to the least advantaged.

Given that our social order is characterized by hierarchies, most often organized by class, and educational spending is long class lines. The argument for unequal educational spending (couched in meritocratic terms) is maintained on the grounds of it improving society's stock of human capital, thus increasing productivity and productivity gains being to benefit of the less advantaged. That final link, between increased overall prospects and its subsequent impact on the lives of the less advantaged, does not appeal to me, perhaps because it reeks of the neoliberal, trickle-down effects, that have so often justified morally reprehensible disparity in developing countries.

For one, the argument relies on a social order that is unequal. Any rewards resulting from performing well within this order will be unequally distributed, with the least advantaged getting a proportionally minimal share – redistributive tax systems are unlikely, given that society's reward structure is meant to be unequal. Is one sure that this distributed share is larger than if resources had been distributed in a more egalitarian fashion in the first place? (To be fair, there is evidence of positive externalities from unequal distribution of education resources in developing countries; the presence of a few highly educated women in a community was found to have more to do with the provision of health services and adoption of healthy behaviors, than the presence of a larger number of women, with a more middling level of educational attainment (study in India). However, that finding may simply have been a result of higher SES than educational status per se.)

My other issue with this position is that there seems to be no way to ensure that those among the least advantaged who may bear the brunt of unequal educational spending are also the ones who benefit from it. It seems to me that an already disadvantaged section is subsidizing a program of general welfare which may or may not directly benefit them.

Noel Howlett

My own works centers on issues of educating for (Democratic) citizenship, so I was quite interested to read how Satz integrates egalitarian principles into the concept of educating to this end, as I have struggled to do so in this course so far. Effectively, I read Satz as trying to establish a floor for the education of a citizen. That is, with educational attainment below level X the person will struggle or fail to realize full benefits of citizenship. This is not a new argument as I read Satz, but it has interesting implications in the ways in which she writes on it.

Satz assumes a sort of democratic framework from the onset of the paper. She takes for granted that the reader will endorse the framework without clearly identifying its main principles. She goes on to argue that “citizenship requires a threshold level of knowledge and competence for exercising its associated rights and freedoms” (p636). Under her democratic framework this argument states that we must provide basic, or adequate, or equal education to all citizens. However, it is more interesting to me what happens to this argument without the democratic framework I see Satz as taking for granted.

Her argument could just as easily read: “we ought not extend citizenship to those who do not achieve at level X, as they will be unable to effectively participate”. The idea of citizenship tests, even for the naturally born populace, is not new and Satz speaks to it in profound ways, if accidentally. What’s more, the later parts and actual thrust of her argument (that we must educate people in such a way as to allow them full access to citizenship) remains intact even with a profound change in the intention of her argument. This is to say, the logic and examples she uses to argue her point remain usable to argue my amended point above. This feels like either a flaw in her conception of democracy or in her argument that this demand for education stems from democratic aims.

On a perhaps unrelated note, Satz makes claims at various points in the article that poor and minority children perform better or are significantly benefited from integrated schools. She seems to take this point as uncontested, which it certainly is not. There is a body of literature, which argues that certain groups of children are in fact benefited more by segregated schools than by integrated schools. Calling on her own use of Rawls, I would like to discuss how it is that she reconciles this undemocratic practice with its potentially increased democratic outcomes. She seems to take for granted the benefits of integration and count integration as democratic while endorsing a sort of maximin argument that may allow for undemocratic practices that benefit the least advantaged. I think I see room to fit both of these, but I wonder if the democratic principles are included in her conception of Rawls’ argument or if only resources can be unfairly distributed to benefit the least advantaged.

Paul Gibbons

Brighouse/ swift’s paper – ‘equality in its place’ – makes the point that in political philosophy and political discourse we must frequently arbitrate between values that seem to conflict. Equality, priority to the worst off, and freedom (individual and parental rights). We need a way to reconcile these.

Brig/ Swift, without referring to American political discourse, say that where philosophical and policy decisions break down is failure of each position to take into account the possible importance of the other value: producing the ping-pong type of debate we see: what about equality, no what about freedom, no what about equality,

no what about freedom, etc... It seems a good start to say – equality is important, and we respect the importance of family or efficiency arguments.

But although this gets us into the reconciliation game, I'm not sure if it gets us far enough. But Brig/ Swift propose a philosophical and policy solution...

- 1) Holding our commitment to equality as a goal, but also testing our policies to promote that against the other standards (priority to least well off and parental rights) – as side constraints – seems to be one philosophical answer.
 - a. Worry: How would we respond to the challenge that by making equality as the predominant goal and consigning the others as 'side constraints' we are pre-determining the sort of policy responses.
 - b. Put another way, if we placed parental/ individual freedoms as most important and allowed equality and 'priority to least well off' as side constraints – would we arrive at a different set of policies.
- 2) If other values might, in different groups or individuals, challenge the position of equality as the principal goal – how could we judge which to pursue and put first. Does this require a over-arching GOOD to which we'd all aspire and against which those values can be compared.
 - a. It seems to be, that one candidate GOOD is human flourishing – and that inequality means some people won't have the opportunity for that.
 - b. Even this doesn't work – as a parent might say 'what is most important to me, to flourish, is that I am able to have complete freedom to educate my child exactly as I'd like' (and there are cases when that can include non-education – the Amish, or education that could be injurious to society's interests –Madrassahs???)
 - c. One economist (might be Friedman boo hiss, or Berlin hooray) said 'in the sphere of values, we are doomed to fight' (or something like) – is that right? Without a standard (foundational value) against which values can be judged – is this the case?
- 3) This problem becomes a Gordian knot when into the sphere of competing values – one introduces trade-offs between groups and levels. A 'good' for a minority group (say Muslims) could be 'preservation of a way of life or a set of values' (in multiculturalism), however this can be injurious to members (individual rights as say women or children), or to society (for example, in education mixing of children from different classes, and ethnicities is one strategy for building a citizenry that has deep respect and concern for difference)...

The reconciliation of values and the worry about against what super-standard they might be evaluated and the reconciliation of the GOOD at different levels (individual, group, society) presents, to me, a problem that I'm not sure how to begin to think about.

So, in summary, my question is whether Brighthouse and Swift have moved us toward a solution for reconciling competing values vis a vis education. They've certainly given egalitarians a way to talk to efficientarians and parents, but what would non-egalitarians (folks who wouldn't put it first but might put it somewhere) think of their solution.

Gina Schouten

After reading the defenses of educational adequacy offered by Satz and Anderson, I thought they were susceptible to the same kind of challenge: Regardless of how plausible those conceptions of adequacy are when offered as identifications of urgent demands of justice, the arguments offered in support of those conceptions as *exhausting* the demands of justice in distribution of educational resources are unpersuasive. Thus, for example, I was unconvinced of Anderson's claim that her proposed standard of adequacy would "...provide no grounds for complaint on the part of the disadvantaged..." (622).

Brighthouse and Swift offer a helpful diagnosis of the problems with the Satz/Anderson critiques of educational equality: Those critiques of educational equality *either* fail to appropriately take note of the fact that Rawlsian fair equality of opportunity need not exhaust the demands of equality of educational opportunity generally, *or* they fail to take note of the fact that egalitarians can (and should) be pluralists about value.

I am interested in thinking more about the part of a comprehensive notion of educational equality that is not covered by Rawlsian fair equality of opportunity; that is, I want to think about what an educational egalitarian should say about inequalities about which the meritocratic principle of equality is silent: inequalities among individuals with *different* levels of talent.

Brighthouse and Swift suggest that the normative principle of benefiting the least advantaged can give some guidance in such cases (2008, 455-6), but I wonder what more can be said. The individual being educated derives both positional value and intrinsic value from her education. It seems that concerns about positional value might lead us to disproportionately favor the better endowed in distributing educational resources, if by favoring the better endowed we can optimize the position of the least well endowed. But do concerns about intrinsic value point in the opposite direction? If we want to ensure that the less well endowed have a source of flourishing in their lives akin to the intrinsic value that the better endowed derive from education, should we expend resources to provide the less well endowed with some suitable version of the educational experiences from which the well endowed derive intrinsic value?

Justin Horn

I'm interested talking more about the ways that sufficientarians (such as Anderson) see their normative framework as promoting the goods valued by egalitarians while avoiding the (perceived) problems of egalitarian theories. In particular, I hope we discuss the themes raised surrounding the issue of "leveling down."

Anderson's discussion of the leveling down problem is two-fold. First, she thinks that leveling down in the name of equality is a serious problem because it prevents the development of human talents, which are themselves a great intrinsic good. Second, she thinks that her sufficientarian theory avoids the problems that lead some egalitarians to call for leveling down; namely situations where the advantaged

are able to disproportionately claim the positional goods that come with higher education.

I'm particularly suspicious of this second claim. Anderson makes a strong case for the integration of elites, and compellingly argues that this calls for integration in schooling. But the fact remains that not everyone can be elites. Even if elites come from all across the spectrum of advantage, it seems likely that only the most talent within each cohort will actually attain elite status (and with good reason, if the elites will exercising some authority). When we consider the situation of those less advantaged who do not become elites, and compare it with the situation of those advantaged citizens who do not become elites, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that enhanced educational opportunities will grant the latter a positional good denied to the former, even if Anderson's baseline of adequacy is met. So rather than skirting the problem that raises the question of leveling down, it seems to me that Anderson is faced with the same conflict of values that egalitarians face. At some point, we are simply faced with the question: do we want to do more to achieve equality, or do more to maximize (other) intrinsic goods? The two are not always in conflict, of course, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they would sometimes be, even if we adopted Anderson's sufficiency standard.

Paul Hanselman

Three topics I'd like to raise:

Leveling Down— First, the leveling down objection was mentioned frequently in the readings but I'm not sure I understand. Can we clarify how specifically this objection might apply in the educational realm and how it relates to the various proposals?

Educational Priority— Whether we take the goal to be [one conception of] educational equality or the kind of citizenship adequacy advocated by Andersen or Satz, it seems unlikely that changes to the educational system alone will be sufficient. This is because schooling experiences make up only a fraction of systematically unfair childhood experiences, and schooling disparities are not the most fundamental. Take economic segregation as an example. Andersen and Satz both eventually mention the need for drastic changes in housing policy to reverse underlying patterns of segregation. However, shouldn't an egalitarian's interest in integrated living arrangements take higher priority than her interest in changes to educational institutions per se (including even policies aimed at integrated schooling which move students across currently existing administrative boundaries)? This question makes me uncomfortable, given my specific interests in educational institutions and policies. One [unsatisfying to me] response is pragmatic, if we think we are more likely to impact educational than housing policy. More generally, I'm directing attention to how educational equality fits with a broader theory of justice.

Teacher Quality— I take some issue with the implication from the readings that inequalities in schooling experiences primarily exist between schools (weighted funding,

the image of the poor inner-city school, calls for greater school autonomy to use funds). In fact, there is a strong case to be made that inequalities between classrooms within schools are important enough to care about. One reason is the practice and consequence of ability grouping or tracking, but another that interests me more is teacher quality. If we are willing to define teaching quality according to the gains made by students on standardized tests (and a burgeoning sub-field works in this paradigm), then we know that teachers matter a lot and that teacher quality varies quite a bit within schools (the strongest causal evidence comes from the random assignment study of class size reduction in Tennessee; it's harder to directly compare teachers in different schools). This means that the class a student is assigned to in early grades has a significant impact on a student's opportunity to learn. In turn, this suggests that within school processes are necessary to address for educational equality, which motivates some of my worry about some of the school market-based solutions mentioned in the readings. (Although they might address the teacher sorting issues, which are closely related).

Making a bit of a leap, wouldn't it be fairest to randomly assign students to classrooms all the time, and by extension to assign students randomly to schools within a feasible distance?

Jeffrey Grigg

"THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General."

Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron" in *Welcome to the Monkey House*, 1968

When I was about twelve years old I read Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron"; the story, as you may gather from the opening lines quoted above, presents a troubling vision of the future that vividly captures the "leveling down" objection. It kept coming back to me over the weekend as I kept wanting to support educational egalitarianism but felt that many versions of it required me to commit to something I wasn't willing to accept. This is why I found Brighthouse and Swift's (2008, 2009) introduction of pluralism gratifying; "monomaniacal educational egalitarianism is required to level down" (2009: 121), but pluralism allows one to support egalitarianism while maintaining principles that prevent inadvertently sliding into support for a world we clearly would not want.

I agree that the interests of parents is one such principle to be introduced to a pluralistic educational egalitarianism (although I would like to hear more about the time vs. money debate over reading to one's own child vs. hiring a tutor), but I wonder if there might be other principles to consider, even at the expense of making things even more complicated. For example, one thing that has always troubled me about how the educational system works (at least in the U.S.) is how efforts are

disproportionately rewarded. Anderson alludes to this in footnote 41 on page 618, but the fact that communities with bigger tax bases can yield bigger rewards with the same “effort” (tax rate) seems unfair. Similarly, a parent-teacher association can organize a fundraising event at one school and raise \$300, whereas a similar group on the other side of town can raise \$3000 for similar effort. I don’t know if the current principles being discussed in concert with egalitarianism cover this situation or if another principle needs to be introduced.

Finally, I’d like to echo Brighthouse and Swift’s (2008: 462) statement that adequacy—though perhaps merely politically expedient—would be a good place to start given the current state of things, at least in the U.S. I’m reminded of the time Gloria Ladson-Billings once said that the principle of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (separate but equal) would be better than the current one (separate and unequal).

Ed Connery

Satz and Anderson’s views on education draw a distinct and, for them, justified line between the purposes of K12 education and postsecondary education. In their arguments, K12 education more-or-less serves an adequacy or sufficiency aim of preparing young people for a minimal level of democratic citizenship and/or equal opportunity to succeed in later, voluntary postsecondary education. Postsecondary education, in turn, exists as a forum for personal growth/intellectual development for talented, motivated individuals who are highly likely to assume a leadership role in society.

Anderson’s argument specifically advocates a rethinking of the admissions standards and curricular goals of American higher education. Namely, access to and outcomes from higher education should not be limited to “academic” knowledge and success. Satz does not seem to make as radical of an argument. Perhaps this is largely due to her concession that her model is not concerned with (in)equality of outcomes beyond the point of adequacy. However appealing these positions might be – both appear to have genuinely just aims in mind – they present difficulties for analyzing or improving the actual educational, labor, and political markets in our contemporary society.

In short, both Anderson and Satz appear to accept (to some degree) a form compensatory equality for K12 education. To use Jenks’ descriptive models, they seem to be guided by a degree of humanitarian justice that requires K12 education to acknowledge and respond to the real inequalities the very young experience in and out of the classroom. Their framework, however, appears to shift to a far more utilitarian view of education beyond high school. Anderson specifically views higher education as a training ground of future elites who are charged with doing the best they can to raise overall social wellbeing. And Satz appears to share, at least, a similar view.

This raises significant questions in my view. Does American higher education come at all close to this goal? Is the break between humanitarian K12 education and utilitarian postsecondary education reasonable? And, in the actual context of our society – which places a heavy, labor-market oriented credentialing emphasis on higher education – would such a division be just?

If we seek ideal theory to guide higher education and presume a significantly higher level of equality in- and outside K12 education, then the answers to these questions would be mixed. No, American postsecondary education does not currently serve a primarily utilitarian philosophy of justice. Yes, we could reasonably justify this goal even if it departs from humanitarian K12 goals. And – well – the third question would be irrelevant for ideal theorizing. But, in our non-ideal context, the answers would all have to be negative. Higher education serves a significant gate-keeping function in (for example) the labor market through the development of various forms of capital. It also, in the least nuanced way, serves a strictly credentialing function. A college degree makes you eligible to apply for a vast array of interesting and upwardly mobile careers, often regardless of one's academic major. This places a prominent *Non-collegiates Need Not Apply* notice in store front windows across the country.

If we are interested in realizing some form of educational justice or equality in our non-ideal world, we must accept a few significant realities. Not only does higher education fail to focus on a social utilitarian goal of training tomorrow's elites to serve the greater good, it seems both unreasonable and unjust to suggest that it *should* focus on this goal while leaving compensatory, humanitarian equality solely in the realm of primary (especially) and secondary education. There was a time when higher education and K12 education were not two halves of an educational whole that prepared individuals for success and independence. There was a time when participation in the economic and social life of the community was separate from one's high school versus college completion. Local businessmen opened shop and ran for office without ever setting foot in a university. Young women became teachers and civic activists with their high school diplomas. And military service endowed veterans with skills and esteem that make a job as engineer or manager entirely possible. But that time is long past. Unless society undergoes a massive shift away from the collegiate credential model, denying the very real significance of higher education in American economic, labor, and political arenas would be anachronistic at best and willfully ignorant at worst.

How, then, can we better structure the K-16 model of education to promote equality and justice?
