

**Reading Interrogations for Equality Seminar**  
**Week 7. Childhood**  
October 15, 2009

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**Catherine Willis**

While a couple readings this week asked how we conceptualize justice or quality as it relates to children, Postman's piece discusses the creation of childhood itself as a category. *How should the recognition of the socially constructed nature of the category of childhood affect the way we think about childhood equality?* I have tried thinking through it a couple ways with limited success and would appreciate thoughts on it. Here are a couple thoughts on the matter:

A first question that we need to ask is the extent to which childhood (in certain countries, like the US), reinforces the inability of children to have moral powers and their inability to assume responsibility for their actions. As a society, even at the global level, we seem quite intent on preserving childhood for all young people. Doing this in many cases would take away responsibilities that children already have (and granted, some we would want to take away). For the most part, is this contrary to what we would want? Would we not prefer that younger adults be moral individuals (and treated as such) sooner.

Second, even if we leave the concept of childhood aside, we are still left with young people who are not capable of moral powers or of taking care of themselves. So the necessity to include this group (or other groups that may not be children but may lack moral powers and agency, like some elderly or the mentally ill) somehow in our theories of equality does not go away.

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**David Calnitsky**

It seems to me that the concept of family in "Legitimate Parental Partiality" by Brighouse and Swift was somewhat underspecified. It is claimed that it plays an "irreplaceable role in human flourishing," (80) though I'm not sure where its bounds are. On p. 53 there are a number of relationship goods that the family is said to potentially realize (three for children, one for parents), though as the authors acknowledge on the next page, alternative institutions may achieve them as well. The authors then seem to relax the claim: those goods must be connected to "family life, or to something very like it" (54). Is a kibbutz enough like a family?

To me the underspecification of the family makes it difficult to compare to alternate arrangements that might be functionally equivalent but do not undermine equality. I think the argument needs a comparison with some alternate institutions real or imagined. Of course, we don't necessarily know how imaginary alternatives would function, but I don't see why "nothing else can be an adequate substitute" (52). It seems plausible that relationship goods realizable within the family are only non-substitutable because it is hard to see past the bounds of contemporary kinship structures. But, kibbutzim that built strong internal kinship bonds might also generate new and seemingly irreplaceable communal relationship goods. This and other counterfactuals need to be discredited to strengthen the contention above.

I see the likely inadequacy of state-institutions combined with labor-contracts to meet the relationship goods outlined on p. 53, but I don't see why the family is privileged. Especially since it

often requires the clause “appropriately structured” (53) or “appropriately arranged” (52). This perhaps gets at an important aspect of the family, there are limits to the possibility that its arrangement can be intervened in and made more appropriate. If relationship good *outcomes* are important, it seems that replacements, like the kibbutz, might better realize—in contrast to allowing ample space for—things like bedtime stories (here, parents but not children would be deprived, though presumably their functional equivalent would benefit).

I think one of the stronger parts of the essay is when the authors argue that “If people could pursue their own well-being and could impartially act to promote the well-being of others, but were not allowed to pursue that of their loved ones in particular, they would indeed suffer a loss” (61). Next they argue that being free to further particular interests of one’s children allows expression of a distinctive kind of love. Would this really dissolve in alternate equality-enhancing institutions? Might not the kibbutz’s care-giving figures vigorously pursue the interests of the collectivity of children they are responsible for, especially given transformed kinship relations? It seems that here it would not be important to favor any particular child in much the same way that Brighouse and Swift would probably not be concerned with a given parent’s ability to pursue partiality *among* children within a family.

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### Eunhee Han

This week readings raise two different but related questions:

1. Brenna asks about the value of childhood. As she argues that childhood goods do not have merely instrumental value (for adult goods) but also have intrinsic value. I totally agree with her, but philosopher may offer an alternative question like “whether children are private or public goods?” since this question implies important social policy implications regarding the distribution of cares and resources. As I understand, Nancy Folbre (feminist economist, cited in Brenna, p. 1) said that children were not pets of parents in order to emphasize the public value or instrumental value of childhood (i.e., the children will become future labor force and tax payers, especially they will pay for the Social Security tax for the old generation). Society should be interested in investing for children and sharing care responsibility because children are not private property/goods like a pet but also public goods. Then, who should provide to children?
  2. Even in an ideal egalitarian society, we have to permit some parental partiality with considering special familiar relationship between parents and children (Brighouse and Swift, 2009). However, in the contemporary society with high divorce rate and prevalence of un-marital birth and single-parent families, many children do not receive appropriate care and nurturing from their both biological parents. Social scientists continuously alarm the significant (economical/psychological/developmental) disadvantages of children growing up in single-parent (mostly mothers) families. If a society distributes resources more equally, children with single parent may be less disadvantaged. However, even in the society with equal distribution, these children with single parent could be still disadvantaged than children with two parents. If so, should or to what extent state must require /enforce nonresident/noncustodial parent to provide financial and other forms of recourses (e.g. spending time together) to their children?
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**Jeffrey Grigg**

I accept that “familial relationships yield goods that are more valuable than the opportunity to compete on fair terms with the similarly talented and motivated” (Brighthouse and Swift 2009: 56), and that there are circumstances in which parents should be able to freely pursue these interests even if some people are left worse off than they might otherwise be. I also accept that there is an essential distinction to be made between parental strategies that pursue familial goods with competitive byproducts (e.g. bedtime stories) and parental strategies that pursue competition with little familial benefit (e.g. elite private schooling).

I wonder, however, about the bounds of these parental interests and their justification for partiality, namely whether there can be similar justifications made for adult or not-yet-conceived children. Do these justifications expire when children reach the age of maturity and become “independent”? Put in other words, as long as at least one of my parents remains alive, I will remain in a real sense someone’s child. Although I am now an adult, does Brighthouse and Swift’s framework grant license to one or both of my parents to assist me in ways that might come at the expense of others? If not, why?

Similarly, can I be justified in pursuing ends that might disadvantage others in the anticipation of some day having children? For example, can I justifiably compete for an interesting and rewarding job that allows me to have time available to read bedtime stories should the course of my life call for it, or are such actions only legitimate if I actually have children?

To put the two questions together, consider the case of a parent of adult children who works to accrue sufficient resources that he can comfortably retire a few years early in order to have the opportunity to read bedtime stories to his grandchildren. Is this action legitimate, or can the justification not skip generations? Does it matter if these grandchildren are born yet? A grandparent’s interest in his or her descendents offers a (potentially unfair) benefit to both the grandchild and the adult child (who can go out with her spouse or advance in his career while the grandparent provides care to the child); are these benefits legitimate?

I bring up these (to my mind tricky) examples and questions to ask whether Brighthouse and Swift’s framework relies on the rewards intrinsic to relationships between particular living people that expire when children reach maturity and cannot skip generations. My reading of the familial goods on page 53 seems to imply particular relationships with living people as well as attenuation—and even expiration—upon maturity; the generation question seems to be implicitly addressed in the term “parental” in the title. It seems to me that familial goods can be enjoyed beyond the bounds of particular relationships between immature children and their immediate forebears, but that allowing these more general forms of familial goods might have rather consequential implications as far as making new forms of partiality legitimate.

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**Piko Edwoodzie**

This week’s selections sought to understand how to include children into theories of equality and justice. One interesting part of these debates is the idea that childhood is socially constructed. The Postman reading provided an explanation on how this came about. I particularly appreciated the call made by Brenna and Macleod to understand the intrinsic good in childhood (I think if we made the same move as it relates to race, that is if we asked if there are any intrinsic goods, we might think more

carefully about what we should do with that social construction). I think recognizing this can help to deal with the argument about justified paternalism from parents to children. One could argue that the paternalistic treatment towards children is justified if it promotes the intrinsic goods of childhood (I am sure there are a whole lot of nuances here that I am not prepared to deal with). I was, however, not completely satisfied with the discussion on what entail childhood goods. I think our discussions should speak to some of the following questions: What are the distinctions between childhood goods and adult life goods? And must they really be exclusive? Can't childhood goods serve a primary purpose in childhood and a secondary purpose for adult life? I ask these questions because as much as there is some goods intrinsic in childhood, it is also true that childhood is a peculiar social construct because it is a stage to adulthood. Maybe Brenna is urging us to separate the two so as to gain some kind of specificity for what we mean by childhood goods, but I think even the good that are

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### **Sarah Bruch**

To what extent does the distinction made by Lareau between concerted cultivation and accomplished natural growth map onto the distinction in the other pieces between developing agency and intrinsic goods? Or is it more appropriately mapped onto the distinction between thinking of the child in terms of the future adult versus valuing the goods that may be intrinsic to childhood? For example, Macleod notes at the end of his article that he has implicitly assumed that agency development and the provision of intrinsic goods are harmonious and complementary (23). Lareau makes the case that parents either engage in concerted cultivation or accomplished natural growth and that these behaviors are driven by underlying conceptions of what children need. Is this distinction too clear cut? Do we agree that these distinctions that Lareau makes are social class differences?

The pieces that we read this week that discuss the justice concerns, rights, interests and principles concerning childhood each draw on specific understandings of what childhood is, and these understandings fundamentally shape how they argue about what is needed, necessary, etc. for children. However, I think that while most of the arguments are either implicitly or explicitly framed as relying on a child development based understanding of childhood (what children can do or are capable of, what is developmentally appropriate of a human at different ages/stages), I would argue that all are also relying on a socially constructed understanding of childhood that is specific to their worldview. One example of this is the child interest # 5 in the Brighthouse and Swift piece on children's interests. Defining what the intrinsic values are of childhood is inherently based on what one thinks is valuable about childhood. The examples given in the above mentioned text, innocence about sexuality, sense of being carefree, and capacities for spontaneous joy are culturally and contextually specific. While this is not necessarily a bad thing to have one's view of childhood incorporate both child developmental ideas and ideas that are socially constructed, this could have implications for the universality of the claims and arguments that are put forth in favor of different approaches to thinking about things like legitimate parental partiality

There were a couple of stories in the media this week that I think could be useful for us to think through in relation to what we have read this week about childhood. I offer these as potential points of discussion to keep us grounded in some ways to real life stories or things that are actually being debated as opposed to the more unusual or extreme cases or scenarios or thought experiments that are many times brought up to discuss issues (not to say that these hold no value). The first is the Polanski

case from the 1970's where a famous filmmaker had consensual sex with a 13 year old and then fled the country to escape the punishment. The headline of the story on the front page of the NYT on Sunday was, "In Polanski case '70s culture collides with newer realities." The gist of the article as it relates to our readings on childhood is that the idea of childhood has changed from the 1970's to now, where in the '70s they say that we were less appalled by an older man having sex with a 13 year old, whereas now we think this is more offensive and therefore treat it with a harsher punishment. This gets at both the social constructed nature of childhood both in the sense that it is an example of the idea of childhood changing over time, but also in how we think about the importance of sexual innocence. The second story in the paper this week (there have been several in fact) is about the parents who were charged with homicide because they allowed their child to die from diabetes related complications by not seeking medical treatment and instead relying on prayer. The debate is about whether or not it is right that Wisconsin state law exempts parents who rely on healing prayer from being accused and charged with child abuse and neglect. The gist of the article that relates to our class is the balance between parental interests and rights and child interests and rights, and the role of the state in determining these. Think about this issue in relation to the legitimate parental partiality article may lead to an interesting discussion.

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### **Tatiana Alfonso**

The inequality in childhood seems to be an important issue in an egalitarian reflection at least in one important way: the transmission of class advantages from parents and families to the children. The studies developed by Annette Lareau suggest that social class creates distinctive parental styles and the evidence seems to suggest that the creation of those styles is closely related to the material resources of the parents. This argument seems to create a perfect circle of inequality, which reproduces itself with symbolic resources in the family interaction and the access to material resources in childhood on one hand, and with the privileged access to external institutions as a high quality education system.

Inequality in childhood has a strong relation with the eventual role of the system of education to achieve an egalitarian society at least in the opportunities. Parental styles and access to education (with quality and adequacy) could be two sides of a cycle of reproduction of inequality or equality. If parental styles shape the attitude of children towards institutions and are closely related to the material resources of the parents, then the more privileged children have access to a privileged system of education, a privileged position in the labor market, and so on.

For that reason, I would like to propose a discussion about the relation between the private dimension of childrearing and the institutional aspects of it, that are mostly displayed in the education system. What is the relation between the transmission of class advantages through the parental styles and the access to other resources (material and symbolic) out of the family (i.e. education)?

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### **Paul Hanselman**

I'd like to discuss what it would mean if there were (or were not) intrinsic goods of childhood. In

particular, I don't understand what is at stake in the discussion of the intrinsic goods of childhood in Brennan's article. My understanding is that she is arguing a very modest position (that the goods of childhood are not merely those that contribute to goods of adult life) that only seems worth expressing in the context of a truly impoverished view of ethics regarding children (the kind of instrumental view that would urge beating a child if it would demonstrably improve adult life). If the philosophical tradition has literally "all but ignored children as bearers of moral and political significance," then perhaps the point must be made. However, her reasoning only establishes the existence of intrinsic goods of childhood along with instrumental goods. She clearly does not deny that there are instrumental goods to pursue in childhood, and I'm not sure she gives us much grounding to make a more ambitious argument about how intrinsic and instrumental goods should be weighted (even which to prioritize in one situation or another). If anything, her discussion seems to me to chip away at the usefulness of "childhood" as an important analytical distinction, since it surely must be a common feature of human flourishing throughout the life course that goods are a mixture of intrinsic (in the moment) and instrumental (directed towards future capabilities). Though clearly the priority for these two concerns trade-off through the life course— and there are relatively ideal cases in infancy (fully instrumental: there should definitely be a pill for that<sup>1</sup>) and hospice— this line of thinking lends itself to continuous view of human development (likely contingent in important respects on social construction). But maybe drawing "childhood" closer to "adulthood" is exactly point?

<sup>1</sup>Note: Bonus disciplinary question: what's the status in philosophy of the magic pill type hypotheticals that we've encountered at least twice so far in the semester? (see page 10 in Brennan this week) First of all, are they relatively common, or have I simply noticed them because they seem relatively flashy? Second, is this approach particularly useful to actual philosophers or does it just receive inordinate mental attention from outsiders like me, again owing to the flash? (by analogy, something like this is true of fMRI for cognitive scientists, or at least that's my impression from talking to actual learning psychology folks)

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### Gina Schouten

I am interested in thinking about whether and how a defender of something like the capabilities approach might respond to the child-related problems that Macleod identifies for that metric. The first problem Macleod discusses is the capability metric's "improper focus on opportunity" (18). The second problem is the "close association between the valuation of functionings and the development and exercise of mature agency" (17).

The first problem, I think, threatens to undermine all opportunities metrics, since it suggests that presenting children with an equal share of opportunities for valuable outcomes is inadequate if children lack the resources to choose well among them. In response, I wonder if a defender of an opportunities metric can argue that providing some people (say very young children) with an equal opportunity to attain some valuable outcome (say enjoying secure emotional attachments) *just requires* providing those people with those outcomes. If so, then we need not abandon the opportunities metric in the case of children. We can maintain that what we owe children is equal opportunities for valuable outcomes, while recognizing that children are unable to realize those outcomes from a set of raw materials that would be sufficient for *our* realization of those outcomes. Is this response open to the defender of an opportunities metric?

The second problem amounts to the claim that there are valuable outcomes to be attained during childhood that do not contribute to the child's development of mature agency. This may be problematic, says Macleod, because some capabilities theorists have proposed a mechanism for identifying valuable functionings based on the contribution those outcomes make to mature agency. Macleod notes that a capabilities theorist could simply adopt a different mechanism for identifying valuable functionings. This sounds alright to me. But I wonder whether there really are valuable outcomes *that are unique to childhood*, that are valuable independently of the contribution they make to the child's development of agency, and that are appropriate objects of egalitarian distribution. I'm not yet convinced that there are.

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### Justin Lonsbury

In this interrogation, I'm going to focus on arguments Brighouse and Swift make in "Legitimate Parental Partiality." It makes sense to me that family values should trump requirements to ensure an egalitarian distribution of opportunities only when they result in the formation of actual familial relationship goods. This seems like a helpful approach to go about weighting these potentially competing values. However, I wonder if the actual *content* of the familial relationships deserves more treatment than it was given. In a society worried about larger concerns such as meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged, it might be that such a consideration would require weighting how familial goods, even if they are innocent insofar as their containment within familial relationships, contribute to or undermine broader societal goals. I am willing to grant that reading bedtime stories and going to church with children elicit the benefits that Brighouse and Swift suggest. However, I can also imagine

bedtime stories and church teachings that would lead children to disregard or even hate others. What if the parent and child's developing intimacy and shared history are rooted in a hatred for particular races, sexual orientations, or religious beliefs, or otherwise lead to anti-social behavior of the type that could undermine efforts to achieve equal opportunity in society? I can imagine two flourishing families that both have a surplus of familial relationship goods, one full of malevolence and the other benevolence. Should the pursuits of these families, especially when they might lead to inequalities in the availability of opportunities for all, be judged in the same way? When one is evaluating whether or not an appeal to family goods should trump egalitarian goals, is there room for a consideration of whether or not particular *forms* of family values actually align with societal expectations? Should "good" parents be permitted more parental partiality than "bad" parents due to, perhaps, the potential that their efforts will be more likely to indirectly benefit the least advantaged? Is there any way to distinguish between "good" parents and "bad" parents from the "outside" without essentializing them, their communities, and their activities? In short, should the weight given to familial relationship goods depend on the family?

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### **Miriam Thangaraj**

The 'rights' discourse in international development typically differentiates between children's rights and human rights; a result of the Western liberal view, that typically assumes a dichotomy between childhood and adulthood, with childhood is seen as a time to be cared for by others, free for learning and leisure, without care or responsibility, outside the market forces of the adult world. This is the kind of thinking that calls for 'abolishing child labour', even when work may be normal to child development (because it contributes to establishing relationships, to learning, etc.) and in the interest of children who need an income (because of their material conditions).

I enjoyed the Prof. B.'s chapter on children's interests, including the distinction between agency and welfare rights and its link to a competency threshold. It helps to see the continuities between the stages of childhood and adulthood, and to analyze for the possibility of different conceptions of childhood that respond to different material and cultural conditions, like those in which parents are not or cannot be responsible for the interest of the child in the manner of Lareau's middle class parents.

This opens up a different space within the liberal tradition to discuss child work, but one that does not assume Western, middle-class, largely urban, perceptions of what childhood should involve as the norm (which is often the case with many anti-child labour campaigns). Despite being in extremely vulnerable situations, children may have resources to make informed decisions about their lives, and they are not passive victims of exploitation, or passive recipients of protection, only. This is not to argue away paternalism, however; only to emphasize that the extent of paternalism may be severely constrained for material and socio-cultural reasons. Thus, in order to secure the child's welfare interest, both in the present as well as in the future, his/her present agency interests may need to be supported by the state.

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### Noel Howlett

Like a lot of thinkers concerned with issues in education, I have spent some time previously considering how much agency a child should/must be granted in an educational setting. My primary concern has been with democratic participation in school; in order to call schooling democratic the power to act must include the student as well as the parent and larger community. This granting of agency however, is largely constrained to education and may not speak to children per se, but only children in the classroom.

In extending my thinking on the child I found the piece regarding childhood before and after the printing press difficult. I find the author's claims somewhat incompatible with my own. The author seems to be saying that childhood is something we as people have invented. Before the printing press the author says that:

“everyone shared the same information environment and therefore lived in the same social and intellectual world” (p36). But this is not true. The printing press may have shifted the notion of childhood, but I cannot endorse the idea that it invented it.

Surely the author would not claim that before the printing press babies were born and sent off to work. Based on our biological development, people require a period of growth before we can be active and equal participants in a society. It is possible that the author is right that the printing press marks a significant turning point after which that period of growth included more skills development than previous, but to say the printing press brought about childhood seems wrongheaded.

This is the lesson I would like to apply to several of this week's readings. The idea of childhood is not constant. Brenna argues that philosophy has ignored childhood throughout much of its history. This may be so, but is this a flaw in thinking, something philosophy has missed or, does the need to consider children and childhood mark another shift in the ways in which we conceive of children? Looking back at Rawls, Macleod claims the weights he places on material goods makes the place of children somewhat ambiguous. This may prove to be a strength rather than a weakness, if the place of children shifts over time.

Consider for example the freedom to act that children have now that they did not have around the invention of the printing press. Technology and our own ways of thinking have given (rather than illuminated or pointed out) the agency children can wield. The place of children then may not be as static as the place of adults in this society. If this is true, what sorts of weight can be given to any conclusions we draw about children and justice or intrinsic values of childhood or capabilities or custodial relationships? Must *children* be a static category in order to have truths about its condition and value assigned to it? Have philosophers been right to largely not think about children; does this work belong in social realms more explicitly?

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### Paul Gibbons

- 1) Do we require (in addition to vulnerability and dependency) to justify obligations to care for children? Is this sufficient? There are non-human animals, disabled people, adults (under a non-cosmopolitan interpretation).

- 2) Brighouse says that under our institutional arrangement, the family is best positioned to meet the interests in (1).
    - a. This does sound circular – we’ve assigned the family this responsibility – therefore they are best able to execute it – as a justification...
    - b. If there were a vulnerable, dependant older person living in my apartment building, would I, by virtue of proximity, awareness of her difficulties be under an obligation to care for her? To what extent?
  - 3) These questions (maybe good philosophical ones) seem heartless and brutal. The profound affection felt (in the average case) by parent for children is paralleled in at least primates and mammals (and some think much wider). If we allow this ‘biological specialness’, perhaps an adjunct of reproduction instincts, does this provide a sufficient justification for the family? This coincides with my intuitions (and affection for my kid) much more strongly than institutional arguments.
  - 4) Would this be sufficient? Would this shared biology confer entitlements to care for children or obligations to care-for on adults?
  - 5) Paternalism.
    - a. Where do social construction of child hood arguments – that justify greater agency and autonomy – begin and end? Is a paternalistic interpretation of infancy allowed – which might end at (6,8,10,12?).
  - 6) How can we begin to understand the limits on paternalism?
    - a. Would the justification for those be psychological (in terms of damage), or are there philosophical principles we could apply?
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### Justin Horn

I found the Postman fascinating. He makes a fairly compelling case for the thesis that childhood as we know it (or *knew* it; apparently later in the book he argues that it is disappearing) is a social construction made possible by technology (in particular, the printing press). My question: What relevance, if any, does this insight have to the central claim of Macleod and Brennan, namely that there are distinctive intrinsic goods that are particular to childhood?

Brennan and Macleod do a nice job of pointing out an oversight in the philosophical literature on theories of justice: children are almost always ignored, and when they are attended to, they are usually treated merely as potential adults. I'm generally sympathetic to their projects, though I'm not sure I think all of their criticisms of “mainstream” views are successful. For instance, Macleod presents a case in which two children attend schools which are identical in their narrowly academic programs, but only one of which has art, music, drama, and athletic programs. He argues that in such an example, the child attending the better school is advantaged, but in a way that Rawls's theory cannot capture within his framework of primary goods. But I wonder whether this is so; don't the additional opportunities provide the second child with enhanced opportunities to pursue her conception of the

good, however childish and uncertain this conception might be?

One final point: as I was reading Brennan and Mcloed I kept considering a challenge that I don't think I really believe, but which I think is interesting enough to mention. Could we sidestep Macleod's and Brennan's proposal to add a list of intrinsic childhood goods to our metric of justice by simply sticking with a metric of well-being (or perhaps opportunity for well-being)? Would merely being attentive to the well-being of children solve the problems that they are getting at, without further complicating our theories?

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## Ed Connery

There is a lot to think about this week – especially for a first-time parent with a three-month old at home. But, for the moment, I will focus on one article and try to give voice to a friendly challenge to Brighthouse and Swift's "legitimate parental partiality."

Brighthouse and Swift present a strong argument against using "family values" to justify converting material resources into improved wellbeing and/or competitive advantage of one's children. I cannot sign onto their position in its entirety just yet. But I will concede that the argument is attractive. Why should the kid whose parents can pay for SAT tutoring have more access to a UW-Madison degree than the equally talented, hardworking kid who has to make due with the outdated study guide in his local library? Brighthouse and Swift construct a consistent, high standard for what is a genuine family relationship good and what kinds of partiality, resource transmission, etc. would be legitimate from an egalitarian perspective. They even address the issue of advantages that come as a byproduct of genuine family relationship goods. One has a right to the relationship good but cannot assert a right to the parasitic advantage that happens to accompany it. Furthermore, policy could be used to "lessen the effect" of the advantage so that family values can be protected without harm to egalitarianism. (p73)

However, there is a non-material, advantageous resource that I suggest might make it past the Brighthouse-Swift screen: *cultural capital*. Cultural capital is a highly valuable resource that can, in no small way, considerably increase or restrict opportunity. And, if I have understood Brighthouse and Swift correctly, there seems to be significant leeway to transmit or cultivate cultural capital within children without leaving the realm of legitimate partiality. Of the four relationship goods that Brighthouse and Swift suggest, three of them seem reasonably to provide space for development of cultural capital: bonding with and adult (1) ; continuity with the past or belonging (2) ; and parental interest in cognitive, emotional, and moral development (4). (p53) Furthermore, a parent could easily be conveying cultural capital with no intention of providing advantage – simply the desire to realize family relationship goods. (Here, of course, LaReau's work can show how material advantage and class is tied to a lot of cultural capital. However, I believe we can put aside the problematic, inherited capital she describes and look at other forms that do not leave the field of legitimate family relationship goods.) Consider the parent who bonds with a child over conversation and hot coco at the kitchen table. If this is a regular occurrence the child is likely to learn behavioral norms of listening, responding, table manners, eye-contact, etc. Or consider the parent who looks after a child's moral development with an emphasis on effort, self-reliance, and delayed gratification. Any of these traits is likely to benefit a child in some way because they impact fitting in, forming relationships, and success in school or the workplace.

Does any of these examples violate legitimate parental partiality – implicitly or explicitly? Could the cultural capital (an undeserved by-product) ever really be divorced from the (deserved) family relationship good in these cases? And, finally, would it be reasonable or desirable for the state to lessen the advantageous effect of good communication, desire to work hard, and the ability to delay gratification?

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### Alex Hyun

I think Brighthouse/Swift's *Legitimate Parental Partiality* offers a very helpful way to think about partiality, and how to justify it. Reading through it, one question I had was about one of the cases they mention as a paradigm of acceptable parental partiality: taking one's children to one's church. This "involves similarly intimate interaction and produces similar mutual identification," and so it is a great familial good (Brighthouse and Swift, 57). But they also say that "These permissions are limited by the duty to facilitate the development of autonomy, and decrease in strength and scope as the child grows up and develops interests of her own," and it seemed to me that there is a tension between these two views (Brighthouse and Swift, 57). Raising a child in the tradition of one's faith confers a sort of indoctrination that many people find objectionable. For instance, a couple years ago there was an interesting petition that called to "'Make it illegal to indoctrinate or define children by religion before the age of 16" so as to encourage free-thinking (<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/freethinking/>). Since most people tend to stay in the religion they were raised with, it seems that the effects of this indoctrination are long-lasting, and might, in some significant sense, undermine a person's autonomy. I definitely do agree with Brighthouse/Swift that it is good for parents to the freedom to bring their children to their house of worship, but I was wondering what other people thought.

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### Kelly Robbins

Brennan discusses project parents as parents who get the childhood goods question wrong. I agree with her that project parenting is a concerning and probably harmful trend, but I am not sure that they necessarily get the question wrong. The reason they seem to, I would suggest, is that most project parents today see the project of doing well by their children as a success-oriented project. They view the good life as a life full of (career) success, and are overly paternalistic about directing their children and their children's choices so that the children do not ruin their chances of having this kind of success. Because this success generally occurs in adulthood, we are tempted to think of project parents as seeing childhood goods as instrumental. Notice, though, that the most frequently deplored kind of project parent is the one that micro-manages the career success of child actors, athletes, etc. So, while this brings up a host of issues about how to, and if you can, morally be paternalistic toward a child (as we discussed last week), it does not directly address the question of goods intrinsic to, or only in, childhood.

I would also like to suggest that a project parent could be specifically concerned with the intrinsic goods of childhood if the project was not success oriented, but instead oriented toward love and loving relationships. A parent could regard the project as teaching the child to focus his/her life on

loving relationships as an adult, but this is not necessarily the case. Imagine a parent is tragically told that his/her child will not live beyond childhood due to some disease. Will they be inclined to give up the loving relationship project? I think they would not. If anything, the dedication to filling the life of the child with love would be greater or more focused.

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