ECON 4270 Distributive Justice
Lecture 10: Children and women in theories of justice

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Some data

Children
  Welfarism
  Merits
  Rawls

Women
WHY?

3
Why a special lecture on women and children
Are they not covered by existing theories and concepts?
Women’s share of income, Norway 2009
Some data

5

Source: Statistics Norway and Bojer’s computations
1: Gross income
2: Wage income
3: Capital income
5: Transfers
Some data

Women’s relative income Norway 1970–2009

Kvinners relative inntekt 1970 -2009

Kvinners relative inntekt 1970 -2009

[Graph showing the relative income of women in Norway from 1970 to 2009, with data points for all, employed, and pensioners.]
Some data

7

Source: Statistics Norway income surveys, and Bojer’s computations
Relative income: Women’s average income as percent of men’s average income
Top two curves: Employees and pensioners
Bottom curve: All women
Some data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Luxembourg Income Studies
Some data

Child poverty

9

Percentage of children living in poor households

- Australia 7
- Denmark 1.5
- France 4
- Germany 5
- Netherlands 5
- Norway 2
- Sweden 2
- UK 7
- US 15

Poverty defined as relative poverty; income lower than 40 percent of median income

Income defined as disposable household income equivalised to correct for size of household

Source: Luxembourg Income Studies
All the theories we have discussed implicitly or explicitly concern adults.

NB Children are not a special group, but a stage of life all human beings go through.
Welfarism

11
Respectful welfarism:
1. The preferences of the individual define the good of the individual
2. A benevolent government derives the good of society only from these individual preferences
Example:

\[ W = U_1 + U_2 + \ldots + U_n \]
Welfarism

Preferences are assumed to be consistent, stable, exogenously given. May apply to adults, but certainly not to children.
Welfarism

13
Children’s preferences cannot (always) be respected consistent preferences? non self-contradictory parents?
parents opinions cannot DEFINE the good of the children parents may (in most cases) know the good of their children and act on the knowledge
But we know this is not always the case empirical investigation necessary
14
Who decides what is the good of the child?
The fundamental issue
Important distinction:
Rights of children
Rights of parents
See quote from Locke in my book
cf also choice of schools
An important distinction:
  ▶ Free choice on your own behalf
  ▶ Free choice on behalf of others
Children

Merits

Rewarding according to merits or effort or contribution to production cannot apply to children Libertarianism is out Theory of exploitation is out
NB: Most marxists and libertarians would acknowledge some rights of children but this does not follow logically from their premisses. Nozick completely ignores children.
Specifically excludes children from his social contract
A contract for adults as citizens
Extending Rawls’s contract

From behind the thick veil of ignorance: the souls would surely choose a contract that covered their childhood
The good of children

19
My suggestion: capabilities
present and future
So what is special about women?
Why should not the same rights apply to women and men?
Answer: women bear and nurse children
Standard assertion:
Children belong to private life
Particularly the making of children
The importance of children

Children are of importance to society
Both quantity and quality
Until recently: scare of overpopulation
Women

Fertility

22
In order for a population to be stable:
Women must bear on average 2.1 children each
rate of fertility
In Europe, at present, only Iceland and Ireland have fertility
rates over 2
Norway: 1.9 Italy: 1.35 Germany: 1.37
numbers refer to 2007. Source: Eurostat
Women

Disaster?
Not necessarily
But it does mean a declining future labour force
Both population growth and population decline have serious social and economic consequences
Another problem: ‘missing women’ in parts of South East Asia
Male/female ratios at birth:

- Norway: 1.05
- India: 1.12
- Pakistan: 1.10
- China: 1.13 — 1.19

(Source: Wikipedia)
25

Our most intimate, private and personal concerns are also important social concerns
Pre-school care

26
Recent Norwegian research presented inter alia in the report from the government commission on economic equality: (Fordelingsutvalget)
Universal child care significantly increases the life prospects of children and their productivity as adults
My conclusion:
Rearing and education of children is (also) a societal concern
Therefore:
the just society must make provision for
the bearing, nurturing and education of children
with obvious consequences for the rights of women
during pregnancy and nursing
and for women’s position in the labour market
Women and the labour market

28
Discrimination?
Responsibility for child care weakens women’s position in the labour market
The loss is larger than temporary loss of income
Loss of experience
For almost all man-woman couples it pays to have her care for the children while he has the paid work. Because her wages are in most cases lower than his. In Norway: couples with small children have less leisure than other groups. He has more paid work.
Women

30

Circular connection between division of labour in the home and position in the labour market

Background for proposals of compulsory paternity leave