

ECON 4270 Distributive Justice

Lecture 10: Children and women in theories of justice

Hilde Bojer
www.folk.uio.no/hbojer
hbojer@econ.uio.no

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Some data

Children

Welfarism

Merits

Rawls

Women

WHY?

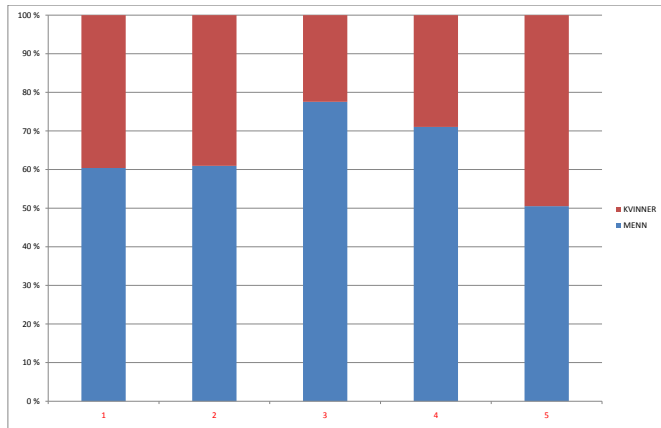
3

Why a special lecture on women and children

Are they not covered by existing theories and concepts?

Women's share of income, Norway 2009

4



└ Some data

5

Source: Statistics Norway and Bojer's computations

1: Gross income

2: Wage income

3: Capital income

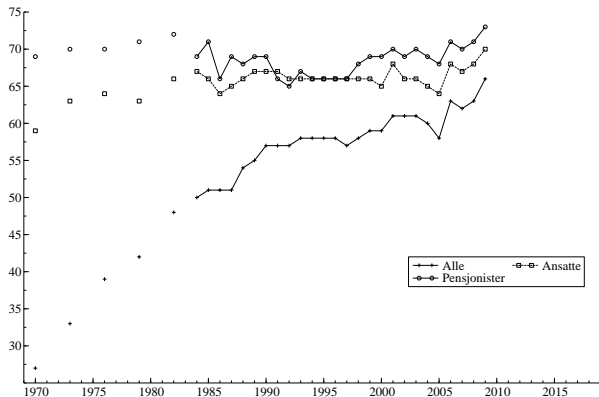
5: Transfers

Women's relative income Norway 1970–2009

6

Kvinners relative inntekt

Kvinners relative inntekt 1970 -2009



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

Poverty rates men and women

8

Country	Men	Women
Australia	8.6	10
Denmark	5.1	5,1
France	5.7	5.9
Germany	6.7	8.5
Norway	6.2	5.9
Sweden	5.2	6.1
UK	9.1	11.5
US	11.4	14.4

Source: Luxembourg Income Studies

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

Children

10

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:

$$W = U_1 + U_2 + \dots U_n$$

Welfarism

12

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

Merits

15

Rewarding according to merits
or effort

or contribution to production
cannot apply to children

Libertarianism is out

Theory of exploitation is out

└ Children

└ Merits

NB: Most marxists and libertarians would acknowledge some rights of children

but this does not follow logically from their premisses

Nozick completely ignores children

Rawls

17

Specifically excludes children from his social contract

A contract for adults as citizens

Extending Rawls's contract

18

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

Women

20

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

21

Children are of importance to society

Both quantity

and quality

Until recently: scare of overpopulation

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

23

Disaster?

Not necessarily

But it does mean a declining future labour force

Both population growth and population decline have serious social and economic consequences

24

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

27

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

29

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

30

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

Background for proposals of compulsory paternity leave