

**Session 12. 11/20/03. Reading Interrogations. Sociology 929.**  
**Envisioning real Utopias. *Education: session with Harry Brighouse***

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**1. Linda M. Zech**

**Small Schools: Tit-for-Tat**

Brighouse argues that cooperation between students and teachers is likely to be enhanced in a small school setting, if only out of self interest. While I do not doubt that small schools will result in greater cooperation, I wonder whether the Tit-for-Tat strategy is fully applicable to explain this phenomenon from a self-interest maximization perspective.

Students may well consider their time in high school to be the equivalent of time spent in the WWII trenches of Northern France. But they know their time in any institution of higher learning is limited – and expect to spend no more than a few years in high school. Especially near the end of the senior year, a troubled student's perceived self interest in cooperating with teaching staff may diminish - even if the first few years appear to last forever. The number of times any student interacts with a teacher will be limited – and both parties to the interactions will know there is end to their relationship. The uncertain number of iterations necessary to make the tit-for-tat strategy a best strategy for both parties does not seem to apply. There are no doubt other game theories (evolutionary theories?) that can explain why there is greater cooperation in small schools – but I am not familiar enough with them to suggest an alternative.

In contrast teachers and administrators are likely to be present in a particular school for an uncertain duration. Their interactions with one another (and with a school board or other governing body), and with students as a group, rather than individuals, will be iterated as required by the Tit-for-Tat strategy.

**[I think you are right to be skeptical that tit-for-tat is the main dynamic at work in generating greater cooperation within smaller schools. I personally think it is more likely that smaller schools with more intense face-to-face interaction and deeper knowledge of individuals as persons makes it easier for more humane, reciprocal norms to operate – both among kids and between kids and adults. But the tit-for-tat mechanism for generating cooperation amongst purely selfish rational actors seems an implausible model for cooperative schooling.]**

**Home Schooling: A mode of Parental Choice?**

I have heard a great deal about home schooling lately – and assume that this is commensurate with an increase in the practice. I wonder if Mr. Brighouse would consider this an aspect of Parental Choice and how it would match up with his theory of Justice in Education. I would expect it would not fare well.

I assume that home schooling would be deemed an impermissible interference with the just distribution of education and would be viewed as inconsistent with a child's ability to

become an autonomous person. It would almost certainly be inefficient – given the small economies of scale – even if it might be the only alternative a parent finds acceptable for a troubled child or where the only other affordable alternative is a failing or unreasonably unsafe public school. Depending on the parent’s own view of justice and education, a child is likely to have difficulty in learning about other ways of life and whether to endorse them. There would be no exposure to students with different backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> This would multiply the problem of parents who merely send children to private schools which reflect the parents’ own religious or philosophical beliefs.

A parent educating a child at home would be able to pour resources, limited only by his or her own wealth, into the child’s education. For example, teach history by taking the child to Europe. In addition, those with greater wealth could afford to spend more time and energy than those who must also work outside the home as well at educating her children. While it is possible that some children would be more autonomous as a result of home schooling, there would be no regulation that could guarantee such an outcome. And there would be so support from those who can afford there own home schooling to increase the quality for education in the public schools where the rest of our youth will be learning. It appears that equality of opportunity for a good education would not be furthered by home schooling.

**[In fact most home schooling is not done by extremely affluent parents, but by parents who have some strong normative objection to schools – either on religious grounds or, sometimes, on more countercultural grounds. This is not a typical strategy for pouring lots of wealth-dependent parental resources into the child’s education, so it may not have big implications for the distributive justice problem. As for autonomy, one of the reasons for home schooling is the fear that schools violate autonomy – this is the typical countercultural argument for it.]**

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## 2. Matías

*Education, “good ways of life” and labor markets*

In the preliminary draft of his “Justice in Education: Principles and Institutional Reform”, Harry Brighouse acknowledges that the egalitarian argument according to which material inequalities are justified when opportunities are equal “makes sense only if is reasonable to hold people [adults] **responsible for the consequences of their choices** about **whether** and **how** to **exert their effort**” (p. 6). Brighouse stresses that the egalitarian justification of material inequality “makes no sense for children” because “they are in the process of learning how to negotiate with the world and to act responsibly” (ibid.), and that “it only makes sense with adults under the assumption that

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<sup>1</sup> I understand that some home school students do join with others for joint field trips and events and even participate in some public school academic and extra-curricular activities. However, the parents would be more tightly in control of what a child sees, hears and learns than even in a private boarding school.

they have all had **reasonable opportunities** in childhood to become **self-disciplined responsible persons**" (ibid.). This is one of the evidences Brighouse associates with the little effort "egalitarian liberalism" had devoted "in developing a correlative theory of justice for education" (p.5).

Throughout the manuscript we found no evidence that Brighouse treats individuals in no other way than "**workers**", in the case of adult individuals, or **future "workers"**, in the case of "infants and young children". (By "**workers**" we mean the individuals who sell their labor power in the labor market and those who own and use the means of production and sell the product of their labor, i.e. *petty bourgeois*) If my interpretation is correct: Does the author uses this model as a preliminary analytical device, considering, for instance, the future incorporation of capitalists, or concludes that this model fairly depicts his interpretation of contemporary capitalist societies?

Let us assume that my interpretation is correct and all individuals in Brighouse model are "workers" or future "workers". According to Brighouse description of the principles of Personal Autonomy and of Educational Equality, the ideal adult individual would be one who achieves **personal autonomy** through an ideal system of education that assures "**equally good education**" (here we are just summarizing Brighouse account of the Principle of Educational Equality). The personal autonomy mediated by an egalitarian access to **good education** is, in turn, the necessary (and sufficient?) condition for the individual's rational reflection that allows her to rationally compare "alternative good ways of life", given the available information.

If I understand the argument correctly, Brighouse ideal world would be composed of autonomous **well-educated** individuals that rationally choose what they individually consider a good way of life. Of course they *must* work in order to materially achieve the chosen way of life, but, according to the school of thought endorsed by Brighouse, the individuals *can* choose whether and how to exert their effort, so individuals are responsible for the consequences of their choices (let us remember that this is the alleged justification for material inequalities). Does the latter statement mean that, for Brighouse, relatively **poor** (rich) individuals are relatively **lazy** (industrious) individuals, and that they are so because they rationally decide it?

To illustrate our main preoccupation in this interrogation, let us assume that most of the individuals sell their labor power to **capitalist firms**. With the incorporation of the firm and, therefore, of the **market**, it is really hard to reconcile the alleged power of decision of the individual with any account of capitalist societies, no matter how high is the level of abstraction. If we look at the capitalist system *as a whole*, it is clear that the individuals do not freely choose their jobs, neither the conditions nor the level of effort of their laboring activity. In this sense, how would the labor market assures that every well-educated and rational individual gets the **specific job** in which she can **freely decide** the level of effort that is compatible with her chosen "good way of life"? It is not a way of arguing that the labor markets, and therefore capitalism, should adapt to the *desires* of our well-educated and rational individuals? (This conclusion can be easily extended to workers in the public sector and *petty bourgeoisie*)

[You raise an interesting set of issues that, needless to say, affects most of the egalitarian liberal thinking about “equality of opportunity”. Of course, in the non-educational form of this discussion it is perfectly reasonable to say that private property in the means of production generate dynamics that inherently violate deep equality of opportunity, and thus to argue that capitalism is incompatible with justice. But Harry has decided that the specific question about justice in education should be posed as how can this specific institution move in the direction of justice even within an unjust society, which I am sure he believes capitalism to be. Perhaps, then, this is about justice *among* workers rather than justice *for* workers. A capitalism within which education generates justice among workers is, under this construction, more just than a capitalism in which there is injustice both against workers and among workers. Still, it is a good question to ask: does generating greater justice within a subgroup which is being unjustly treated increase the justice of the system overall? This seems plausible, but I am not completely sure.]

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### 3. Stuart Meland

General thoughts, in brief.

I felt a disconnect between the first and second sections of the paper. How can we address the very philosophical issue of justice in education through the very coarse institutional proposals provided? The first section describes the nature and function of education very broadly while the second section is almost entirely focused on a few organizational alternatives to traditional public education. How do privatization or parental choice in any way promote autonomy? Wouldn't a more relevant discussion involve specific curricula, teaching methods, active learning as opposed to passive learning, etc.? **[I think the parental choice issue is supposed to bear on the problem of justice more than autonomy – i.e. this could be a way of improving the distribution of education resources by giving parents more control over where their kids go to school. ]**

I think the issue of parental vs. state control is worth discussing in some detail. Brighthouse states on page 8, “So to guarantee that all children have the opportunity to live well the State must ensure that all children have a real opportunity to enter good ways of life other than those into which their parents seek to induct them.” This statement is reminiscent of the logic behind the forced education of Native Americans as a means of promoting assimilation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Does the state have a legitimate right to promote certain values, even autonomy, against the wishes of parents? Are there any circumstances where we can make this argument? **[The liberal egalitarian would say that the state does have the right of promoting some values – but not every value – over the objections of parents. Autonomy values are supposed to be a special case since this is merely promoting the value of enabling people to decide on values – it is a kind of meta-value in that sense. Liberal egalitarians would have strong objections**

**to the Native American case since the values being promoted here were not autonomy values but assimilation, which is a different matter. I myself am skeptical that it is ever really possible to be value-neutral and only promote autonomous capacity without promoting specific substantive values as well. ]**

The institutional proposals are specific to metropolitan school districts. They chiefly address the issues of resource allocation and student population diversity within a district. How do principles of justice in education apply to small towns and cities? School choice is of no use when there's only one school to choose from. If the only school in town is failing, then closing the school is never a viable option. Children cannot realistically be bussed from one district to another without a considerable waste of time and resources.

I wonder how justice in education applies to home schooling. I assume children who are home schooled tend to be from higher socioeconomic backgrounds than public school students and their parents obviously more involved in their education. **[The parents are more involved, but I don't think it is the case that the median household income of home schoolers is particularly high.]** Should the state object to home schooling on the grounds that it provides some children with an unfair educational advantage? What about tutoring or educational activities like Future Problem Solvers or Odyssey of the Mind? Can the state regulate learning that takes place outside of a school setting or only that which takes place during school hours on school property? Is there a difference between justice in education and justice in learning? **[This is a nice turn of phrase to highlight these issues. I think some of these issues are particularly knotty when the justice-in-education problem occurs against a background of unjust material inequalities. If everyone had the same income more or less and some people chose to devote more time and resources to enriching their children's education/learning because this is what they valued, but this enrichment would not have a big pay-off in higher standards of living for their kids, then it would pose fewer problems. A deeper education would be more like a cultural taste and wouldn't necessarily pose any social justice issue, any more than devoting lots of time to cultivating sports interests and abilities one's kids would. The problem – I think – comes when educational enrichment → greater cultural capital → greater earnings capacity. This is one reason why the justice-in-education problem cannot be disengaged from the justice in background conditions issue.]**

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#### 4. Adam Jacobs

I would be curious to hear Brighouse's opinions on authors who see education within the rubric of social control – I am thinking in particular of Ivan Illich, a critic of the fundamental precepts of the education of minors. The crux of the argument as I understand it is that school as it exists is a method of stratifying society: it necessarily separates winners and losers and orders people in a hierarchy. Rather than advocate reform, Illich suggests essentially a destruction of education as we know it. The resulting system would be anarchy in the positive sense – without a central authority and

curriculum, people would pursue an education more suited to their preferences, be they literature or auto repair. The result has no place for paternalism; Etzioni is critical of this stance in 'The New Golden Rule' because he sees people generally and children particularly as at least equally likely to pursue depravity as independent learning. **[But also wouldn't this just massively reproduce the cultural capital of the intellectual elite and block possible mobility channels for children of uneducated people and the poor? So long as we have labor markets and competitive processes of skill acquisition, how would abolishing schools in any way be emancipatory for the disadvantaged?]**

I suspect the liberal egalitarian response would get back to the issue of autonomy. Radical critiques purport to increase autonomy for youth; but this may be true in the short term. While autonomy for teenagers is increased, their autonomy later in life could be sharply reduced due to choices made in youth. Also, one could imagine that Illich's method would allow parents to guide their children towards, say, farming, even though the child might prefer other work. Paternalism is thus justified on a philosophical level, to balance the temporal problems of choice for minors. The argument for paternalism is well done, especially in pointing out that 'there is no guarantee that democratic procedures will deliver on the independent principles of justice' (14).

I found the application of game theory to secondary education interesting. Presuming that tit-for-tat is the dominant strategy for actors (as Axelrod has shown theoretically, if not empirically) small schools will increase the iterations of the game, and increase cooperation. I wonder if social psychology would also suggest that smaller schools are more able to remove anti-social behavior. As groups become larger, would differentiation through anti-social behavior become more common? If this is true, then smaller schools may be better *ceteris paribus* (even assuming identical class sizes as Brighthouse does). **[As I explain in my notes at the end, I think the pivotal issue in small schools is likely to be a strengthening of community and a normative shift towards cooperation rather than a more effective tit-for-tat form of social control and selfish cooperation]**

I am less sure about the concluding argument about diversity. The argument states that small schools could be superior in mingling different groups and exposing students to different religions/nationalities/ways of life firsthand. Can these be achieved simply by changing the composition of students with government intervention removing the effects of neighborhood segregation? Will students pursue more diversity in a small setting rather than less? Wouldn't bigger schools allow just as much of more 'social space' for this sort of mingling? **[There are all sorts of nonlinearities and threshold effects in play when size is a variable. A Big school is likely to allow for more self-selection and segregation, but also greater opportunity for chance encounters with people different from oneself, depending upon how the heterogeneity is structured.]**

How much would addressing housing stratification address inegalitarian education? If neighborhoods were less segregated, and student bodies more diverse, how many of the goals of liberal egalitarian education would be achieved? I am not suggesting that

addressing housing stratification is an easier project than a radical reform of schools; I am only wondering the degree to which these are bound up. Or to ask the converse, could Brighouse's principles of autonomy could rectify problems in education through government control, without changing segregation in housing?

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## 5. César Rodríguez

I found Brighouse's treatment of the "jarring consequences" of educational egalitarian liberalism quite illuminating. By exploring the practical implications of the liberal notion of autonomy, they indeed go counter – as he argues — to views and proposals that are important elements of the agenda of what he calls the "educational left."

There are two ways to engage critically the two jarring consequences – the questioning of the value of democracy and bilingual education — that the author discusses. One is to draw on values other than autonomy –e.g., a multicultural society, the democratization of the polity, etc — that would trump the latter and thus point to the need to foster the democratic governance of schools and promote bilingual education. A second, more promising avenue for discussing those consequences would be to engage the proposal in its own terms, i.e., to explore whether they in fact foster or undermine autonomy.

My question for discussion follows the latter approach as it pertains to bilingual education. Does bilingual education advance or undermine individual autonomy? To my mind, the answer depends not so much on whether autonomy trumps other values (e.g., the preservation of a culture) as on what type of autonomous individual we have in mind. For Brighouse, bilingual education undermines individual autonomy because "how far the child remains in the culture of origin should be a matter for her judgment against an array of opportunities available to her, and the array of opportunities available to her should not be artificially restricted by educators" (16). This claim rests on two assumptions. First, monolingual education – and the assimilation into the dominant culture — multiplies opportunities and bilingual education limits them. Second, monolingual education is identity-neutral, in that "it does not aim at a self-consciously cosmopolitan identity, any more than it does a deeply religious identity or national identity" (16).

I am not convinced that these two assumptions hold up to theoretical and empirical scrutiny. As for the first claim, unless bilingual education can be proven to necessarily limit children's ability to learn the dominant language – which is a disputed fact that, in any case, depends on the quality and characteristics of the bilingual educational program —, bilingual education is likely to expand, rather than limit, individual autonomy. Think of those enviable individuals among us who are perfectly bilingual (e.g., Canadians) because they grew up in an environment that was supportive of this alternative. Being literate in – not just being able to speak — another language would entail, I think, a tremendous expansion of one's opportunities. When the beneficiaries of this type of education are children who have been exposed to another language and culture at home and thus have better chances of succeeding at it, the

potential is even greater, as long as schools develop that potential while not hindering bilingual children's capacity to learn the dominant language. But this is a matter of institutional design, not of incompatibility of values. As for the second claim, I would argue that monolingual education is not identity-neutral. For it does reinforce one among different identities, i.e., the one dominant in the society in which the child grows up. In doing so, it also hinders the development of another identity that a bicultural child could have –i.e., that of her family. Assimilation results not only from an amorphous pressure from the social environment, but also from specific institutional arrangements –e.g., monolingual education— that contribute to close off opportunities for the cultivation of other types of identities, thus limiting also individual autonomy. **[I think your empirical claims here are quite compelling, but of course they are empirical claims, and thus may be quite dependent upon the specific context in which different educational projects take place. Thus, if students live in full-blown minority language communities – not just nondominant language in the home, but in a whole community, then it could be the case that they will learn the dominant language less well if classroom instruction is bilingual than if it is dominant monolingual (since one language will be strongly reinforced in all contexts outside of class and the other will be only reinforced inside of class). So, the specific policy and institutional strategy may be quite context dependent.]**

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## 6. Patrizia Aurich

For me the striking question when reading Brighouse's piece on justice in education seemed to be the question of choice and the legitimacy of the state to restrict a parent's choice. With the main goal of distributing educational resources in order to avoid background differences the individual cannot be held accountable for Brighouse explores different approaches to the dispersion of pupils onto different schools. The assumption seems to be that the more different students come together on a local, i. e. close, level the less the differences cause an unequal access to education (Brighouse 23/38). I think that two issues get mixed up here: academic and social aspects of education.

First the academic quality of a specific school is not only related to its student population, but more by the teachers who run it. Therefore devices for measuring quality need to be developed, which is one reason why for-profit schools were established. Brighouse discusses the use of these in relation to quality preservation pointing out the difficulties in contracts, which because of the public good character of schools just cannot be left completely open to competition, and the inability of these schools to provide information about the vast majority of schools (Brighouse: 32). The question therefore needs to be how the state can evaluate schools without using market methods or reliance on parent's choice, which Brighouse doesn't see as competent enough (Brighouse: 27). Small schools seem to offer such possibilities just because according to their size information is more readily available (Brighouse: 36/37). **[The issue here, I think, is not just information but the mechanism of accountability, even for the small school: who gets the information and how does it get used to sanction poor performance. This is a major problem since I think Brighouse is right that market mechanisms will generate all**



sorts of perverse incentives, state bureaucratic centralized mechanisms chronically fail, and parents acting as individual choosers often lack competence. This leaves, in a way, the deepened democratic alternative – some form of empowered participatory governance as providing the best hope for accountability with quality. This is not individual parental choice, but collective parental/community monitoring and decisionmaking.]

Second the composition of students in a school should be seen as a matter of social education rather than a tool to achieve academic standards, although these of course are interrelated. Thinking about the legitimacy of the state to constrict the parents choice, this understanding opens up new opportunities: education is not only a public good, because everybody should have the opportunity to achieve an equal standard of education, but also because it is directly related to the question of social coherence and solidarity in a society. This establishes a different position of the state in regulating education. [The diversity issue is a crucial one and generally it does seem like a sound sociological thesis that *broader social solidarity is likely to come out of an educational context with more rather than less diversity. But there are contexts where this might run up against some other solidarity issue – like the cohesiveness of an embattled community, which might be undermined by diversity. I am not sure that I agree with this, but sometimes people in the African-American community argue in favor of predominantly black schools on the grounds that the community cohesion of such schools is good for the students.*]

So apart from all the comprehensible mechanisms Brighouse shows I think this distinction of academic and social education should be made.

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## 7. Chang

How can I comment on “Justice in education”? I have no idea. Harry Brighouse’s draft consists of two parts; principles & institutional reform. My concern is how to connect two parts. Before going to that problem, I want to raise one general question, “why ‘justice in education’ should be the real issue? How about humanizing education?” [The issue, I think, is what precisely is being packaged under the rubric “humanizing education”. If this refers to a specific moral normative content to education, the some egalitarian liberal would complain that this implies imposing one particular kind of identity and values on students. I am not sure if Harry really accepts this ideal of neutrality with respect to ways of life, but I am sure he sees this as a difficult issue. So, if “humanizing” means infusing education with a set of noncompetitive, humane values about cooperation and respect, then some people would object that this is imposing a specific way of life on students. I am not sure this is really avoidable. The idea of education being neutral across alternative identities and ways of life and merely fostering some sort of abstract autonomy – a capacity to reflectively choose and evaluate ways of life – seems pretty implausible to me, since the means by which autonomy is fostered would themselves bias the product of such

**means towards certain ways of life against others. Or, to put it another way, while I do think there is something to reasoned autonomy and choice, schools also avoidably socialize people and the issue is what sorts of values are embodied in that socialization process.]**

Below is the framework to evaluate the alternatives.

Principles	School choice (parental choice)	Privatization	Deliberative democracy	Small school
Personal autonomy				
Educational equality				
Liberal legitimacy				

In terms of educational equality, privatization should be excluded from the alternatives. And we have three alternatives. The first question. Are three alternatives exclusive? I think small school alternative could be combined with school choice or deliberative democracy. **[I don't think these are meant to be alternatives – they are just different dimensions of reform]**

According to Brighouse (p.7), the principle of personal autonomy “says that each individual child should have a substantive opportunity to become an autonomous person.” Question 2. Which alternative improves or maximizes personal autonomy? The third question is the clarification question. “Why does Brighouse incorporate the principle of liberal legitimacy?” I think personal autonomy & educational equality principles are both related to the children. But, I am not sure the principle of liberal legitimacy targets the students (or children). What’s the consistency of the principles? The last one. “Do the institutional reforms really matter?” Brighouse explains, “European egalitarians have no choice but to endorse parental choice, and find ways to harness it to egalitarian ends (p.29)” What does it mean? In terms of feasibility, are there any ways to solve the educational inequality problem instead of institutional reforms?

**8. Richard Thomson**

1. The analysis did not incorporate the all major “stakeholders” – Brighouse did an excellent job of analyzing the role of students, family, schools and community financing in education; but he left out important other “stakeholders” in the analysis – teachers (working conditions and desire to teach), administrators (working conditions and administration stability), community (as an entity with interests, values and purpose for schools), community (taxpayers of school financing), local government (common good interest, administration stability), local businesses (future employers), etc. Brighouse seems to take the role of these

- other stakeholders for granted, and does not incorporate them into the analysis. **[Very good point, and it raises important questions about how to balance the interests that these various actors have in education with the interests of the children. Brighthouse treats the social justice issue and autonomy issue as relevant because of their relevance for the products of education (educated adults), but he doesn't address justice issues involved in the process of education (eg resources going into education rather than elder care) nor, except in passing, the interests third parties might have in the products themselves. This should be discussed]**
2. Latent unintended effects - Brighthouse did not explore how some of the reforms in education he proposes could lead to less public financing available for public schools which could lead to less justice in education, especially in poorer school districts. Brighthouse has to do a better job detailing and dealing with the reasons why teacher groups and others on the left oppose many of these educational reforms, and how these educational reforms can be re-formulated to take into account the concerns of teacher groups and others on the left. **[I think the premise of Harry's approach is to assume that the objective is justice, and if this requires more funding, then this would be forthcoming. There may be "unintended effects" that could undermine the project, but this would not really be one, I think, under the conditions of the proposal. The proposals would be for well-funded generous vouchers with no topping up, not vouchers of the sort that would lead to a decline in funding for poor kids schooling.]**
  3. How to operationalize, measure, and evaluate the concept of student "autonomy"? – In Brighthouse's analysis, student autonomy has a central role – how can it be operationalized, measured, and evaluated. If a parent or student was interested in finding the school nearest to himself/herself that did the best job at maximizing student autonomy – how would he/she (or an educational researcher) go about doing it?
  4. Understated the disadvantages of a small school for the poor and working classes – Brighthouse contends that the disadvantages of a small school is not significant because "... these losses impact the most advantaged most ... (38)" The problem with this line of thinking is that since the poor and working classes are less likely to go to college (more or less an elite University), it is crucial for these students to have an opportunity to learn as many skills as possible in high schools; especially electives, languages, drama and art facilities, sports facilities, etc. **[I think the issue is that more esoteric languages won't be taught in a smaller HS, not that languages wouldn't be talked. There would be drama, but not a fancy high tech theater. I doubt if there are really many losses in substantive quality in a small school because of the economy of scale issue.]**
  5. Devalued the positive role of athletics on student autonomy and academics – Brighthouse contends that "... good sports facilities and coaching do not confer

academic or autonomy benefits on those who participate ... (38).” Athletics has the same role in education as does “arts, music, drama, tech ed”, teaching students the skills and values to prepare them for the “real world jobs.” There can be a mutually-reinforcing symbiotic relationship between athletics and academics (although this does not always occur). For example, one way athletics can aid academics is by increasing school name recognition and school desirability, which can lead to increases in school attendance and academic financing which will benefit students. An argument could easily be formed to dispute Brighthouse’s assertion; since a sizeable number of high school athletes either; participate in college or recreational athletics, participate later in life in coaching or the administration an athletic team (from youngsters and above), go on to have business relationships with an athletic organization, or are more likely to donate money to the school as an alumni. **[But isn’t the issue here how lavish the sports facilities are, not whether sports will be part of school life. Big Schools often have very fancy sports facilities, but is the real value of athletics contingent upon that?]**

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## **EOW comments on Brighthouse Manuscript**

### **1. Autonomy and community as foundational goals**

You stress the fundamental importance of children having “the opportunity to learn the skills associated with autonomy” (p9) and that this is crucial for a capacity for children to choose their way of life as adults. It isn’t clear why this is more important than, for example, having the opportunity to learn the skills associated with community. This is as important for adult functioning, indeed for adult autonomy (in the sense that a fully capable autonomy is much harder if a person cannot function effectively in social interaction with others). The communitarians stress this issue, of course: that the moral order embodied in the idea of community is as essential for individuals as is freedom/liberty/autonomy. The philosophical question, then, is why autonomy-capability has such priority and why community-capability or sociability-capability isn’t as important.

### **2. The Democracy argument.**

In the discussion of democracy the interesting point is made that since children are not the moral equals of adults and therefore it is impossible to include children as political equals in the determination of educational governance. Our obligation to them is to provide children with the conditions that enable them to become moral equals and this implies that “we should select the method of governance which is most liable to achieve this end.” You then add “Democracy may be this method, but it may not. It is certainly the case that the content of our obligations towards children place severe limits on democratic discretion.” I don’t really follow this argument. Isn’t it always true that there are severe limits on democratic discretion implied by various kinds of rights? You state

that democratic decision that compromised the prospective autonomy of children would be illegitimate, but so are democratic decisions that compromise the autonomy of minorities or gay people or others. There is never a guarantee that democratic governance will “deliver on independent principles of justice”, but this does not imply that we generally feel that undemocratic systems of governance might be better and that it is merely a contingent question whether we should be pro- or anti-democracy. In any case, adults genuinely do have real interests in education, both because they care about their children and because education is consequential for adults, and this – it seems to me – does create a presumptive case for democratic governance (but of course: democratic governance with constraints on respecting the rights of children).

### **3. public goods and rights**

You draw a fairly sharp contrast between public goods defenses of education and rights arguments. But can't we think of individuals having rights in the production of some of these public goods. If people have autonomy-rights than don't they have a right to the kind of civil society within which they can exercise autonomy, and education may play a pivotal role in creating that kind of civil society – a civil society of rational/reasonable citizens sharing a set of core values around sociability. I think children have a right to grow to live in such a society, and that means that some public goods aspects of education have a moral standing close to the autonomy rights you discuss.

### **4. The multiculturalism discussion**

At the bottom of p15 (in our copy) you critically discuss some multicultural writers who you feel “commit the error of seeing children through the prism of the culture of their parents”. You then discuss Geneva Gays claims about “culturally responsive teaching” and James Banks assertions about primordial cultural identity. Now, these do seem wrong-headed, but suppose that the empirical claims Banks makes are right – not the primordial characterization of culture, but simply the claim that kids of different ethnic backgrounds in fact learn better under different forms of teaching and learning. *If* this were empirically true, then would there be any problem with insisting that the teaching methods reflect these cultural learning styles? Indeed, wouldn't this be a requirement of an egalitarian position that strives for equal opportunity for autonomy and learning?

### **5. Privatisation discussion**

I am not sure that this discussion really belongs in a paper on real utopian educational ideas, since the privatization proposal is not really suggested as part of an emancipatory project. It is, at best, an efficiency/cost saving question. The voucher proposals and increasing competitiveness of schools can be thought of as justice-relevant, but the privatization schemes are really about a different kind of issue. I think this should be dropped.

### **6. Small schools**

I find it very implausible that tit-for-tat has much to do with the advantages of small schools. It is much more likely that the issue here is anomie and community – the kinds of moral order and norms which can be stably constructed and reproduced in a small intimate setting in contrast to a large one. Tit-for-tat might be one small piece of this, but it is not the main issue and it is, I think, misleading to see the problem this way. In effect you are saying people are equally selfish and rational in both big and small schools, but small schools provide for better social control via iterated prisoner dilemmas. I would, in contrast, see the ways in which small schools make it easier to create norms of trust and reciprocity, respect for individuality and tolerance for certain kinds of difference, etc.

### **7. Some missing discussions**

There is almost no discussion of the content of curricula or the principles by which it is shaped, or of pedagogical practices. These are some of the issues that animate progressive discussions of schooling and anti-schooling. This would include things like student empowerment; the importance of learning some common cultural cannon to create a shared culture/community vs multicultural education; learning bodies of knowledge – math, science, history, etc. – vs a stress on critical thinking; relatively authoritarian monologic education vs dialogic. There are loads of issues here – loaded with cans of worms and Pandora's boxes! Still, I think some discussion of this kind of thing is needed.