



A politico-normative model of parenthood and the concept of reproductive caring units



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How Parenthood is Modelled in Formal Institutional Contexts

- When a child appears – “who’s is it? – **legally**”
- When a child is cared for – “who is (legally) **responsible**”
- Deciding who has **legal authority** over the child **generally** (within set boundaries)
- Determining **access and rights** to/re children in/to social settings: pre-school, birthday parties, school, organised social activities/pasttimes (e.g. sports clubs)

Parenting and its goods are accessible only through meeting basic conditions set out by the state: e.g. requirements re. numbers, gender mix, age, intellectual function

Choice of conditions should be normatively well founded but in reality usually determined by chance, informal parenthood concepts, tradition etc. -->

Need for systematic normative conception of parenthood fit for the political context

The Politico-normative Model of Parenthood

FIRST: There is a formally regulated **primary** social role

- determining **Special rights and responsibilities** re. the caring of children
- Indirectly: access to the goods available through the exercise of these rights and responsibilities
- Official view of "good parenting"

SECOND: This role is formally designated to certain constellations of people

- **Eligibility criteria** for accessing this primary social role
- **Not about what good parenting is**, but what sort of people who are to be given the chance of exercising parenting in the first place (good or bad)
- This is a "**reproductive caring unit**":

(THIRD: Should certain RCUs be (des)incentivised?)

The Issue of Reproductive Caring Units

- Politico-normative parenthood concepts are easily (and often) unsystematically impregnated / influenced by informal parenthood modellings
(Percieved importance of genetic ties, heterosexual couple, etc.)
- Unreflectedly addressed by "rainbow" and ART positive/optimist activists
- It is often said: "there is no right to have children", but what does that mean?
 - Presumably not that all RCUs are illegitimate since children still have to be reared
- The question is: what is a good argument for / against that a social configuration should be allowed as an RCU by a state?
- We have so far only considered the best interests of children, assuming that this is one relevant consideration (Munthe & Hartvigsson 2012)

Some Initial Considerations and Candidates

- What's the role of **the good of parenthood** in a good society? An individual good? A central public good? Obviously **caring for children** – but beyond that?
- Individualist (more or less liberal) approach often taken for granted
- The **reproductive public health** perspective: what procreative patterns are beneficial for public health and other public goods should govern the assignment of RCUs
- Future strains due to environmental and migration pressures may motivate strict allotment of RCU-status and also which configurations that should receive this consideration
- What's the point for a state of having its population procreate? This should be decided on the basis of capacity to deliver all kinds of public goods!

To what extent is state authority and responsibility fitting for allocating this good at all?

- Strict control: only certain configurations should be accepted
- Adjustment to existing practices: accept sufficiently common RCUs
- Laissez-faire: the state shouldn't meddle in what social configurations may be RCUs, merely take actions when RCUs misbehave

In any case: how to assign RCU-status is more a question of political/societal ideals for allocating power over and access to central goods, than about the ethics of parenting or families.

