

***CRAFTING A SOLUTION:  
PROBLEMS WITH THE MOMENT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY***

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In her article “Each Outcome is another Opportunity: Problems with the Moment of Equal Opportunity,” author Clare Chambers presents a concept known as a “Moment of Equal Opportunity” or “MEO” (Chambers, 374).<sup>1</sup> The moment of equal opportunity (MEO) is defined as the specific moment contained within the course of an individual’s life where the equality of opportunity (EO) ought to be required for admission into institutions within society (378).<sup>2</sup> After this moment, equality of opportunity is no longer applicable (374). Chambers believes that current liberal egalitarian theories support the concept of a moment of equal opportunity as the time within an individual’s life where equal opportunity must be used by the institutions within society, in order to compensate for “unfair advantages or disadvantages” which impact the individual in some way (377). Chambers argues that the more egalitarian a conception of equality of opportunity appears to be, the higher the probability a “moment of equal opportunity” is used within the theory (374). In this article, Chambers approaches the problems associated with policies designed to support a

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<sup>1</sup> I have strong misgivings about Chambers use of this terminology which I will expound upon within this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Equality of Opportunity is considered within this argument by the author to be one component of an acceptable theory of justice, however the author does not elaborate as to exactly which theory of justice she supports (396). The working definition of Equality of Opportunity within Chambers argument appears to be the concept that all the members of a society have equal access to apply and equal consideration to institutions within society (i.e. institutions of higher learning, jobs and other “positions of privilege”) despite prior disadvantages or disadvantages in life (378). The author also concedes that another discussion must evaluate issues that may result in terms of the “efficiency” of such policies but she does not elaborate on such issues in this argument.

“moment of equal opportunity” within specific social structures in society, such as schools and the workplace (377-378). Chambers’ argument concludes that liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories that use a “moment of equal opportunity” are flawed because they are inconsistent when applied to real world scenarios (379). Thus, theories centered on a “moment of equal opportunity” cannot be considered as viable options for balancing inequalities in society (378-379). Moving forward, I will expound upon the issues Chambers highlights in her article, and introduce my own misgivings about Chambers use of a lifelong moment of equal opportunity (379).

Chambers also sees problems in the application of liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories that *eliminate* the use of a moment of equal opportunity (379). The author deems theories which are not centered on a moment of equal opportunity to be unrealistic; owing to the fact that such theories do not include a clear and applicable frame of reference to assist with policy implementation in the institutions of society to equalize inequality (379).<sup>3</sup> In the final evaluation of equality of opportunity and the aforementioned theories, Chambers concludes that “trade-offs” are the only option to ensure justice in regards to the equality of opportunity for citizens within a particular society (397).<sup>4</sup> However, the method that Chambers proposes to ensure equality of opportunity is problematic, particularly when we begin to assess the real world application of her concept of a lifelong moment of equal opportunity (378).<sup>5</sup> In essence, Chambers’ attempt to correct the shortcomings of liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories falls short of its goal. The solution Chambers proposes is a misuse of language, (a “moment” of equality of opportunity

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<sup>3</sup> The social institutions and “institutions of society” Chambers references are particularly focused on schools (i.e. institutions of higher learning) and the workplace in the argument (Chambers 378).

<sup>4</sup> Chambers states the components of the “*trade-off*” consist of “justice as secured by equality of opportunity, and meritocracy or efficiency” (396). However, the author appears to focus the article’s argument on the issues surrounding institutions and the negative ramifications which coincide with the use of liberal egalitarian theories of EO (378). The author outlines the issues of the “*trade-off*” and leaves the implementation of future alterations to theories of EO for subsequent arguments (396).

<sup>5</sup> Chambers advocates for a lifelong application of the MEO. In other words, as the individual’s life progresses we must continually assess whether or not the individual has received equality of opportunity (378).

extended throughout a lifetime) which cannot adequately correct the flaws within liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories.<sup>6</sup> As we contemplate the “lifetime” of an individual; we can hardly claim to consider the lifespan of any human being to be a mere moment. Thus, Chambers proposal of a “lifelong” moment of equal opportunity is a paradox. Chambers’ argument correctly identifies one point which contributes to equality of opportunity: we should think of a moment of equal opportunity as a continual evaluation of the individual and the balancing of opportunities within the institutions of society (378). However, I will argue that Chambers is wrong to begin the moment of equal opportunity at the point which the individual seeks to attend an institution of higher learning or obtain a position in a particular workplace (379). Furthermore, I will examine the author’s argument against the application of liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories within institutions (376-397). Within this essay, I will also propose a more effective solution to ensure equality of opportunity for individuals in the institutions of society.

### **THE CONCEPT OF THE MOMENT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

Chambers begins by introducing the concept of a moment of equal opportunity (374). This concept is a foundation for the article’s argument concerning the issues related to the equalization of opportunity (374). The moment of equal opportunity does not pertain solely to disadvantages; it attempts to equalize the benefits of advantage and the harms of disadvantage in order to ensure that individuals are not subjected to an unjust life in society (377).<sup>7</sup> The individual encounters both negative and positive ramifications during their life, and the designated task of the moment of equal

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<sup>6</sup> I would like to credit Christopher Dobbs for helping me to uncover my thoughts on Chambers’ “misuse” of the term “moment” in her essay.

<sup>7</sup> According to Chambers, the term *advantage* applies to both genetic predispositions and dispositions which are socially influenced (377).

opportunity is the equalization of any net benefits or deficits, particularly in relation to the opportunities given by those within the institutions of society (378).<sup>8</sup>

Chambers believes that most liberal egalitarian equality of opportunities use a moment of equal opportunity in order to provide social institutions with a frame of reference, i.e. a specific moment in time. At this point, equality of opportunity policies may be appropriately implements in an attempt to equalize opportunity (378). Chambers' argument deems the use of a moment of equal opportunity (within liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories) as problematic in nature, due to the limitations the theories place on the assessment of an individual's life (378). She believes the problem stems from the fact that "progress" made during the individual's lifespan is divided into two clear components; the time of life *before* the moment of equal opportunity, and the time *after* the moment of equal opportunity has occurred (378). Chambers moves on to criticize liberal egalitarian theories that support the use of a moment of equal opportunity, claiming that the theories create a *duality* when conceptualizing the life of the individual before and after the moment of equal opportunity (378). The duality is created when a theory of equality of opportunity supports the concept of two parts of life (377). The "first half of the individual's life" consists of certain factors in the past which allows the individual's life to develop in an unfair manner in relation to the lives of others (378). The "second half of the individual's life," is the point at which a theory of equality of opportunity is used by an institution to equalize the injustices contained within the "first half of the individual's life" prior to the interference of the equality of opportunity theory (377). The duality of a life is considered to be a challenge to the concept of equality of opportunity, largely because it

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<sup>8</sup> Chambers states the positive and negative ramifications stem from previous advantages and disadvantages throughout the individual's lifespan (Chambers 378).

results in an *end point* for the concept of balancing out inequality within the institutions of society (378).<sup>9</sup>

Chambers argues that once the individual's initial differences have been acknowledged by the institution, the inequality is deemed irrelevant to the rest of the individual's future endeavors; hence equality of opportunity has an end point where the institution need not rectify subsequent inequalities (378). Chambers believes that a theory of equality of opportunity which includes an assessment of the "final outcome and progress" of the individual's life more accurately pinpoints the necessity or lack thereof, of a moment of equal of opportunity (378). She concludes that the final result of a successful equality of opportunity theory must demonstrate a cohesive and consistent balance of "justice *and* . . . equality of opportunity" (378).

#### **THE STRUCTURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF LIBERAL EGALITARIAN "EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY" THEORIES**

Chambers begins to explore different liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories within social institutions in order to provide the reader with the general structure of each theory, and to further demonstrate the shortcomings of the practical application of the liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories within social institutions (382). The different liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories are:

1. *'Careers Open to Talents'*- The author attributes this concept of equality of opportunity to Rawls (379). The theory is considered by Chambers to be a "less minimal version" of an equality of

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<sup>9</sup> An example of an end point would be structured as follows: Interference with person X is required at point A in order to ensure EO. After point A, interference with X is permissible but presumed to be unnecessary; due to the fact EO has already occurred for person X and thus hypothetically rectified the inequalities present in the life of person X *before* the interference occurred. Therefore the institutions within society have no further requirements to follow up with subsequent EO policies to rectify future inequalities in the life of person X. The *requirements* for EO are fulfilled as soon as the *initial* interference with person X at point A takes place; therefore we have an *end point* of EO.

opportunity theory and it includes a “positive normative requirement that only academic merit may count” (379).

2. *Meritocracy*- The theory of equality of opportunity which Chambers attributes to David Miller, features similar “positive normative requirement[s]” as those contained within ‘careers open to talents’ (381). However, the theory involves the problem of interpreting exactly what constitutes “talent” (381). Rawls’ “careers open to talents” theory avoids this issue, as talents can only be “acquired talents at a given moment, not innate talent or natural endowments” (380).

Chambers identifies the “ambiguity in social endowments” to be an issue of contention when applying theory #2 as a means of acquiring equality of opportunity within society (379). This theory states that *only* “academic ability” and “talents” can be considered during the inclusionary process of a social institution (379). This approach appears to be problematic once we consider the practical application of such a theory within the bounds of social institutions (379).<sup>10</sup> The “meritocracy” theory, #2, faces similar challenges. Use of the theory in relation to equality of opportunity creates an imbalance within the comparison of talents, thus a distinction between innate talent and cultivated talent must be considered (381). Chambers believes the liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories presented within her argument insufficiently address the issue of the possibility of *future* inequalities in the individual’s life (396).

When we consider the relationship between justice, equality of opportunity theories and the idea of a moment of opportunity, Chambers believes “trade-offs” are the only way to resolve the conflict of interest contained within the relationship of a “moment of equal opportunity” and liberal

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<sup>10</sup> Chambers notes a potential problem in defining what the necessary and sufficient requirements to define “talent” or “merit” when translating the use of this theory into the procedures utilized by the institutions of society (Chambers 381). If one defines “talent” or “merit” as the innate characteristics and positive attributes of the individual, then one must also evaluate whether “talent” or “merit” can include characteristics enhanced by outside social forces (Chambers 381). Depending upon the method of evaluation, Chambers notes possible disagreement about the practicality of “real world” application and implementation of the definitions of “merit” and “talent” in the assessment of an applicant’s inclusion within the institutions in society (381).

egalitarian equality of opportunity theories (397). Chambers believes that justice can exist with the understanding that lifelong strategies must be in place to reapply equality of opportunity within social institutions, or that a moment of equal opportunity approach can exist with the understanding that as a *result*, justice may be lost for some individuals in society (397). Chambers attributes these issues to the time constraints of the initial implementation of a moment of equal opportunity in the individual's life; however her approach attempts to equalize opportunity too late in the individual's life (378). Moving forward, I will expound upon the issues Chambers continuous moment of equal opportunity theory presents, and I will explain my resolution to the problems Chambers has with liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories (378).

**EXPLORING AN ALTERNATIVE:  
IMPROVING LIBERAL EGALITARIAN “EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY” THEORIES**

Chambers states that the use of a moment of equal opportunity is ineffective when it is not applied consistently throughout the individual's life, although she also identifies problems with the implementation of such a concept within society (378). I will argue that a “moment of equal opportunity” should have several phases, which would begin at birth and continue until the point of brain maturation (Biggs 2009).<sup>11</sup> My argument is that a moment of equal opportunity should only be considered a “moment” in terms of the initial point of interference during the individual's birth, Afterwards the interference would extend beyond a “moment” (i.e. until the age of twenty-five) in order to guarantee the individual's equality of opportunity in life (Biggs 2009).<sup>12</sup> After brain maturation, the institutions of society would institute different checkpoints in order to ensure that

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<sup>11</sup> Within the scope of this forum I will not delve into the policy and legislation necessary to implement my approach to establish a MEO from birth. However, in subsequent works I will reveal how a society and a governing body could effectively implement my proposal. Also, I would like to credit the inspiration for this thesis to a fruitful conversation with Dr. Andrew Cohen about Chambers article and the concept of an MEO.

<sup>12</sup> We could move the age cut-off at the consensus of the scientific community and future empirical studies on the point of brain maturation. Relying on scientific empirical evidence grounds the initial limitations we set on the end of a MEO are grounded with empirical facts, as opposed to making an arbitrary distinction.

equality of opportunity remains a guiding factor in the individual's life.<sup>13</sup> The age cut off is specified by current scientific empirical evidence which states that maturation of the brain concludes at the age of twenty-five (Biggs 2009).

As stated previously, I have serious misgivings about the “moment of equal opportunity” terminology Chambers uses in her article. Chambers is wrong to use the term “moment” to describe a lifetime of interference by the institutions of society in the life of an individual (378). My proposal would call the initial interference directly after the birth of the child the *initial moment of equal opportunity phase* (consider this *phase one* of the equalization of opportunity). This interference would commence from at the moment of birth, ensuring every child has the same beginning of life care no matter the socio-economic status of the parents.<sup>14</sup> After the initial interference, the corrections made after the infant's basic hospital care in order to ensure equality until the age of twenty-five would be considered the *equalization of opportunity phase* (consider this *phase two* of the equalization of opportunity). This type of approach ensures that each individual receives a foundation of equality to build upon as they progress through life, thus solidifying equality of opportunity for all individuals within the institutions of society.

As a supplement to my proposal of the specific points of interference during two distinct phases of an individual's life (aimed at maximizing equality of opportunity), the parents in the society would have a requirement to obtain a parental license.<sup>15</sup> This parental requirement would ensure equal access to educational forums pertaining to child development. The parental license would include child-centered education requirements for the parents such as; proper nutrition and

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<sup>13</sup> Within this body of work, I will not address the development and enforcement of the checkpoints necessary to ensure equality of opportunity.

<sup>14</sup> This phase would ensure the equal opportunity of vital health care to both mother and child, in order to ensure that the parent's socio-economic status and ability to pay for basic or extraordinary measures for the newborn's birth do not interfere with the newborn's equal opportunity to survive the birthing process.

<sup>15</sup> I would like to credit Hugh Lafollette's essay, *Licensing Parents* for broadening my understanding of the moral relevance and theoretical practicality of a parental license.



dietary knowledge, conflict avoidance techniques, non-abusive parenting styles & skills, child health and safety, and an emphasis on the physiological, psychological and cognitive development of children.<sup>16</sup> This paper will only address the ideal, similar discussions must take place pertaining to the public policies that would institute and regulate the two phases of my equality of opportunity theory and the subsequent standards necessary for the parents living within a society.

**REVISING CHAMBERS' ARGUMENT:  
A MORE EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO EQUALIZE OPPORTUNITY**

Chambers identifies the “duality” of a life presented in liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories as an issue which counteracts the concept of equal opportunity for individuals (378). I agree with Chambers assessment of this conundrum within liberal egalitarian theories of equality of opportunity (379). According to Chambers, liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories attempt to address the *past* inequality of opportunities amongst individuals in society, in order to equalize advantages and disadvantages which *presently* exist in the lives of the individuals (376). However, this is an ineffective approach to balancing out and/or negating advantages and disadvantages within society. If an equality of opportunity theory focuses on a moment of equal opportunity in the individual’s life, (for example, let us say that a moment of equal opportunity only occurs during the admissions process to a university), the interference initiated as a response to inequality is timed incorrectly and is also less effective than the type of equalization of equality which I am proposing. In order to *maximize* the institutions of society’s ability to interfere with inequalities and also make the interference more *effective*, we should begin to equalize opportunity from the moment the individual is born and then continue with the next phase, the *equalization of opportunity* until the age of twenty-five. After this period of time, we could determine whether the individual’s

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<sup>16</sup> In future works outside of the scope of this essay, I will explore the depth and ranges of material presented in the parenting classes and expound upon on the secular approach the parenting classes will abide by.

opportunities are effectively equalized with the opportunities of others seeking admission into the institutions of society, and offer subsequent interference if necessary.<sup>17</sup> The institutions of society would formulate guidelines which could be laid out as to what constitutes “inequality” after the individual reaches the age of twenty-five where the second phase to equalize opportunity, the *equalization of opportunity* would officially end.<sup>18</sup> The twenty-five year mark is the suggested cessation of the *equalization of opportunity* based on current scientific empirical studies regarding the rate of brain maturation in human beings (Biggs 2009). This justification grounds the reasoning for the timeframe of the beginning and possible end of the equalization of equality in empirical facts, as opposed to a purely arbitrary distinction regarding the rational capabilities of the individual’s abilities and actions within the institutions of society. Moving forward, I would like to elaborate on the shortcomings of Chambers’ argument against liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories (374-397).

#### **ACKNOWLEDGING AND DISSECTING THE ISSUES: CHAMBERS’ FAULTY CONCLUSION**

I disagree with the reasons Chambers presents in regards to the ineffectiveness of liberal egalitarian approaches to equalize the opportunities of individuals (378). Chambers sites the use of a moment of equal opportunity in liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories as a fault (376-377). However, Chambers rectifies this fault by extending the “moment” throughout the lifetime of an individual (378). Chambers attempt to correct the faults of liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories falls short; due to the timeframe she has placed on equalizing opportunity. One aspect of Chambers’ argument is correct, in order to allow for the equality of opportunity in an

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<sup>17</sup> Future scientific findings on the maturation of the brain along with the legislative process for the creation of the public polices guiding the implementation of a MEO beginning at birth, would address and ground any reasons for interference beyond the cutoff point of the twenty-fifth year of the individual’s life.

<sup>18</sup> The twenty-five year mark is the suggested cessation of a MEO based on current scientific empirical studies. This cutoff mark grounds the reasoning behind the timeframe of the beginning and possible end of a MEO in my two phase approach to equalize opportunity for individuals summarized within this essay. The suggested age limitation could change depending on future scientific research and empirical evidence on the maturation of the brain (Biggs 2009).

individual's life, we cannot limit the equalization of opportunity to specific moments of intervention which would take place *after* inequalities have already manifested drastic differences in the individual's equality of opportunity (378). Allowing inequality to permeate the individual's existence from birth until we choose to equalize the inequality at a designated check point (i.e. the admissions process of a university or the application process for candidates vying for a vacant position in a company) is an arbitrary distinction of the time frame used to justify interference with inequality (376). The justification of the interference indicated in a liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theory is arbitrary in nature, because the principle of the timing of the interference is not grounded in reason. If we wish to equalize inequality in the lives of individuals (in order to ensure that everyone in the society has an equal opportunity to flourish), it does not follow that we would begin to equalize opportunity *after* inequality has already limited or advanced the amount of opportunity the individual has in the society. However Chambers' justification of a lifetime of interference in the hopes of equalizing opportunity is just as arbitrary (376).

An equality of opportunity theory could be more effective in the pursuit of equalizing opportunity, if the timeframe acknowledged the juncture *before* the inequalities began to infiltrate and shape the path of the individual's course in life, as opposed to trying to rectify these inequalities *after* they have begun to shape the individual's life. Therefore, the proposal I have put forth to equalize opportunity fares better in equalizing opportunity than the liberal egalitarian equality of opportunity theories or Chambers' attempt to modify said theories. Moving ahead, I will address the possible objections to my positioning on the issue of the most effective means of equalizing opportunity for individuals within the institutions of society.

### **POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS TO THE PARENTAL LICENSE PROPOSAL**

A possible argument against the justification my proposal offers would most likely center on

the reasoning behind my idea to use parental licenses as a tool to ensure equality of opportunity. In the next portion of this discussion, I will argue that parental licensing could be an effective tool to use in relation to the equalization of opportunity. In fact, the parental license could maximize the equalization of opportunity for the individuals living in society from birth. The beginning of life gives us a baseline from which we can begin to effectively limit inequality while simultaneously maximizing opportunity. Thus, I choose to ground my argument for the proposal of the birth to twenty-five year time frame for the equalization of opportunity, with the starting point of the parents living in a society.

There is a level of anticipated harm that ranges from physical harm, to psychological harm, to socioeconomic harm (i.e. poverty and homelessness) that parents may or may not inflict upon their children, which greatly impacts the opportunities the child has access to in society. As a society, we give parents complete authority in regards to the manner in which their children are reared. There remains a general consensus that parents have full authority over the child's health care, nutrition, education and psychological wellbeing unless others in the society have documented significant harms to the child. This leads to an imbalance of equality of opportunity within the society, due to the fact that some children are born into homes with parents who have a higher level of education, while other parents are addicted to controlled substances, while others have a predilection to physically abuse and/or neglect the child. The formidable years of the child's life and development are significantly influenced by the home environment in which the child is reared.

As Daniel Engster notes, "If the state treats parenting primarily as a private activity, some children will inevitably fail to receive the protection and resources necessary to survive and develop into competent liberal citizens" (Engster 233). This is one of the major goals of the parental license and the different equalization of opportunity phases, to identify parents who may subject the child to a household environment which may disadvantage the child's ability to perform and succeed in

relation to others within the institutions of society. The child's emotional health, ability to communicate effectively with others, the development of an ability to understand and relate to the world around them, and even future health outcomes are molded in significant ways during childhood. If we seek to maximize equality of opportunity in social institutions, the ability to equalize opportunity at the beginning of life would have a greater chance of leveling the playing field throughout the individual's life. Instead of attempting to rectify harms which could be the result of years (if not decades) of inequality, we choose to interfere with the rational persons who will provide the environment for the formidable years of the individual's development, the parents of the individual.<sup>19</sup>

The primary goal of this interference is to minimize harms while simultaneously ensuring that equality of opportunity exists during childhood.<sup>20</sup> The intention behind the concept of the parental license centers on one ideology, the minimization of harms and the equal access to opportunity which can encourage every individual in the society to flourish on a relatively equal playing field. Thus, we minimize the need for future interference with the life of individual. If every individual in the society has the same equality of opportunity, we can significantly decrease the amount of inequalities that lead us to interfere with the individual later on in life as we attempt to correct said inequalities. Chambers argues that previous inequalities result in unjust differences in the progression of the lives of individuals and thus justifies the need for a moment of equal opportunity throughout life (378). However, we can justify the need for an *initial moment of equal opportunity phase* at birth and the subsequent *equalization phase of opportunity*, on the same grounds but in reverse. We can justify interference at birth and throughout childhood and adolescence in order to *limit* the need for

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<sup>19</sup> I deem the Parental license requirement to be a form of "interference" during the length of this paper.

<sup>20</sup> Interference would be in the form of restrictions on childrearing, only parents who possess a parental license could raise children in the society. Individuals could opt out of this restriction to raising children, but as a result they would have to give up custody of the newborn infant until they chose to comply with the restriction.

interference throughout an entire lifetime. I argue that any attempt to equalize opportunity must be established at this extremely early point in an individual's life (i.e. birth), in order to maximize the equality of opportunity as the individual attempts to gain admittance into the various institutions of society.

### **A CHILD-CENTERED VIEW VS. THE VIOLATION OF PARENTAL AUTONOMY**

*Prima facie*, the implementation of parental licensing appears to be an obstruction of personal autonomy, forcing parents to forgo the personal freedom associated with being able to raise a child in the manner one wishes. In the essay *Licensing Parents*, Hugh LaFollette writes, "The belief is that parents own, or at least have natural sovereignty over, their children" (196). This belief appears to be one which the members of our society, our court systems and our cultural inclinations tend to support without question (LaFollette 196). The foundation and belief of such a concept however, is extremely parent-centered in nature (LaFollette 196). The autonomy of the parents and the inherent rights which result from said autonomy are held to be superior to the child's own ability to independently govern and choose which environment/behaviors they may be subjected to as a result of the parents' autonomous actions.<sup>21</sup>

One may argue that the child is not full capable of rational consent during most phases of childhood, which is a point that I would agree with. However, due to the vulnerable state of human beings during the early stages of life, we must deem it necessary to place the child's well-being ahead of the parents' feelings of personal autonomy. If we conclude that parents "reign supreme" in terms of the rearing of children, this places a much greater weight and significance upon the parents' ability to govern and regulate their own actions, as opposed to the repercussions which may befall the child

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<sup>21</sup> I am referring to the actions of the parent toward the child during the child's initial path in life toward full rational capabilities (i.e. childhood).

as a result of said actions (LaFollette 196). In turn, this standpoint negates the possible rights that the children hold *independent* of their parents, to grow up in a home conducive to adequate psychological and physical development. Such a view has severe repercussions, particularly in terms of the possible mistreatment of children, and the future development of the child into an adult (LaFollette 196).

The child learns to fulfill the role of a “child,” a role where personal autonomy is negated in the face of the value of the autonomy of others, i.e. the parents of the child. This hardly seems to be a path which would lead to the development of a healthy understanding of the freedom of personal choice in an individual. Such a dynamic could also lead to unequal treatment from child to child, and household to household, thus leading us back to the origins of unequal access to opportunity amongst the individuals who make up society, the childhood environment. The “child-centered view” places value on the vulnerable and more impressionable entity within the family unit, the child who will one day grow up to play a role within the institutions of society. A “child-centered” view also begins the process of the equalization of opportunity within every household in the society, as parents focus on the actions and experiences of the child as opposed to only cultivating and exercising their own personal autonomous actions and rights.<sup>22</sup>

#### **A FINAL ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY: CONCLUSIONS**

True equality of opportunity cannot exist if we attempt to rectify inequality *after* it has altered the opportunities and the life choices of the individual. If we can equalize the life of the individual from a fundamental starting point (i.e. birth), we have a much greater chance of truly minimizing the extent to which advantages and disadvantages unequally shift and divide the members of our society. Chambers is correct to argue for a moment of equal opportunity which takes into account the long

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<sup>22</sup> Within this particular body of work, I will not delve into what constitutes autonomy and which rights are inherent as a result of autonomy. In subsequent works I will have an opportunity to elaborate on the rights of parents and/or the rights of children.

term ramifications of prior instances of inequality in the life of the individual; however she fails to take into account the plausibility of intervening at birth (378).

If the goal of the moment of equal opportunity is as Chambers states, an attempt to maximize equality of opportunity we must work to equalize the opportunities the individual has from birth (375). Working from the starting point of birth and moving forward throughout the individual's life as opposed to working from an arbitrary point (i.e. admittance into a university) could maximize the effectiveness of an equality of opportunity theory. The initial moment of equal opportunity at birth, combined with the equalization of opportunity phase (which continues through the age of twenty-five) provide an effective equality of opportunity theory based on a well-defined starting point and empirically relevant conclusion to the equalization of opportunity for individuals within the institutions of society.



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