



## Justice, Gender, and the Family

*Susan Moller Okin*

Download now

Read Online 

# Justice, Gender, and the Family

*Susan Moller Okin*

## **Justice, Gender, and the Family** Susan Moller Okin

In the first feminist critique of modern political theory, Okin shows how the failure to apply theories of justice to the family not only undermines our most cherished democratic values but has led to a major crisis over gender-related issues.

## **Justice, Gender, and the Family Details**

Date : Published January 30th 1991 by Basic Books (first published 1989)

ISBN : 9780465037032

Author : Susan Moller Okin

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Feminism, Politics, Nonfiction, Gender

 [Download Justice, Gender, and the Family ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Justice, Gender, and the Family ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Justice, Gender, and the Family Susan Moller Okin**

---

# From Reader Review Justice, Gender, and the Family for online ebook

**Alex Robertson says**

3.5

---

**Kurt says**

Great book. Rethinks classic theories of justice through the lens of the reality of gender-unequal societies and, most importantly, family structures. I can't really say it better than Matt Yglesias does in his brief recommendation of the book:

<http://thinkprogress.org/yglesias/201...>

Also, it provides a philosophic basis for equally shared parenting. But it doesn't stop there, it also provides larger policy prescriptions for remedying some of the lingering problems of inequality.

---

**Jennifer says**

A must read for any political philosopher. I should have read this a long time ago--don't make the same mistake.

---

**Mikie says**

A course book that's 30 yo and written from an american POV? Yeah, that doesn't work. Liberalism does NOT equal feminism. Liberal feminism is white feminism. Feminism needs to be red, it needs to be left-wing, intersectional, pro-labourers, at the very least it needs to be socialist. This book isn't. Also, it's tedious to read.

---

**C. says**

I love Susan Moller Okin!

---

**Ariane says**

All I can say about this book is that I absolutely loved it. Okin provides a broad, clear and insightful overlook of the role of gender in traditional political philosophy which helps understanding much better the role of

women in politics and society. Her focus on the family is a really helpful tool for understanding the private-public divide, and the way in which traditional gender roles within the private affect women in the public sphere. Finally, the conclusion chapter provides her own account of what a fair society which takes into account women could look like... and what's nice, the author also provides a series of recommendations for getting there. Once again: I absolutely loved it.

---

## **Lindsey says**

Life-changing.

---

## **Vaso says**

In her book Susan Okin wishes to eliminate gender and promote gender neutrality, in an attempt to end gender-based discrimination. She proposes that the most effective discourse would be through education. According to her, sexist education and social norms perpetuate sexism. Okin's concerns lie mostly in the private sphere; she takes issue with the lack of government consideration for the role of women in the family. She criticizes most political philosophies on the concept of justice for neglecting the "personal" from the "political". Essentially, Okin rejects the stereotypical role of women in the family and criticizes the division of labor in the private sphere, which in turn is reflected on the public sphere. More specifically, despite legislation that states otherwise, women do not have equal rights in the work place. The lack of transparency makes it virtually impossible for women to assess the fairness of their income and when there is transparency they can only view their male colleagues' pay through a glass ceiling. The private and public spheres are intertwined and because there are specific laws that are supposed to protect women, it does not signify that there is equality.

---

## **Bookshark says**

I part ways from Okin on a number of points (both with respect to assumptions and conclusions), but I nonetheless have to appreciate the strength of her argument and the importance of this book for bringing gender and family issues to the attention of theorists of justice (especially men, especially liberals and communitarians) who neglected or are neglecting these issues. She also has a biting wit that I deeply enjoyed throughout the book, perhaps the greatest height of which was her uproariously funny (yet logically valid) illustration of the incoherency of Nozick's theory of justice which showed how the inclusion of women into the entitlement theory would result in a bizarre matriarchy as women justly acquire full ownership rights to the fruits of their labor (children! human beings!) combined with justly acquired raw materials (freely given or easily purchase-able sperm). Throughout the book, she develops a critique of one of the most persistently frustrating aspects of Western political thought throughout most of history: the tendency to take as its subject the ageless adult man who somehow springs up out of the ground like a mushroom without beginning as a helpless infant or ending as an elderly person who is at least in most cases dependent on aid in some ways (though she does not really develop this latter point, mentioning it only in passing). If despite these points of agreement she still adheres to some ideas about justice, gender, and the family with which I disagree, well, I would be honored to engage in feminist debate with such a formidable interlocutor - one who is nearly able to save liberalism from itself. Liberals, neglect her at your peril.

---

## **Michael says**

As an undergrad I read this in conjunction with other texts in a class meant to inform the grounding of human rights. This was one of the easier texts to read we read. Okin writes clearly and the book is concise. It would seem necessary for those interested to first read Kymlicka as some of her most salient points are critiquing his views on multiculturalism.

---

## **Claire Haeg says**

A deep discursive critique (as well as an analytical framework for a critique) of liberal to communitarian theories of justice from a feminist standpoint. I don't think this is suitable for undergrads, however - they just don't have the background.

---

## **Paul Crider says**

In my review of Okin's *Women in Western Political Thought* I suggested that the book would be improved if it had more scope, if it discussed more philosophers. *Justice, Gender, and the Family* fulfills this wish, leaving me feeling a little silly. Okin here offers a similar feminist critique to a host of major recent philosophers from different ideologies (from conservatives through liberals) as she presented in *WWPT*. She asks "What would this theory of justice look like if it took women seriously as moral agents rather than just implicitly assuming all moral agents are male heads of households who are supported by the domestic services of a wife." The theories usually don't fare well under this analysis.

I think Okin treats the philosophers she studies fairly, but I think she is a little too quick to extend her judgments of their philosophical programs generally. Two examples. Okin rightly condemns Alasdair MacIntyre's Aristotelianism and Thomism for outright sexism and the privileging of an elite caste. Okin argues that MacIntyre offers little in the way of amendments to this aristocratic morality of domination, and in my experience with MacIntyre, I agree. But Okin seems to assume this must be true for all Aristotelians. But Okin must be aware of a number of neo-Aristotelians who take feminism very seriously indeed. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen spring to mind.

Likewise, her treatment of Robert Nozick, while in my view quite devastating, cannot easily be extended to cover all libertarians, and certainly not all classical liberals. Her critique turns on a *reductio ad absurdum* of strong or absolutist property rights. But this approach would scarcely faze a modern Hayekian, who justifies the liberal order by an appeal to the beneficial consequences for individuals of certain defeasible (rather than absolute) norms.

Okin concludes with a powerful case that even modern marriage, unless it is a marriage of equals, makes women vulnerable, whether the wives work outside the home or not. If a wife doesn't work outside the home, she is economically dependent on the husband, and this creates a real power imbalance. Especially if children are involved, divorce worsens the economic condition of the woman (since expensive custody will

typically go to her and her earning power has atrophied). But the situation is not much better if the woman works outside the home. In this case, the woman often works the "double day", continuing to do most of the domestic work while also working outside the home. Moreover, many workplaces (I think this has improved since Okin wrote in the late 80s, but likely only for some high skill/high status careers) still implicitly assume that there is "someone else at home" taking care of domestic duties. The woman's career and potential for advancement are thus hindered by needing to leave the job for childcare, domestic errands, family leave, etc. The exit option of divorce will still threaten a much worse economic position. This is exacerbated by the failure to fully take into account that the husband's earning power is typically by far the family's most valuable asset. Court divorce settlements do not reflect this asset as really belonging to the family, but to the male. Thus alimony payments are usually of shorter duration and of lower amount than a family asset model would recommend.

Okin carefully avoids the mistake of the radicals, and presents a positive picture of what the family can be. A marriage of equals - in power, economic means, and respect - supported by legal, economic, and cultural institutions that recognize the reality of human dependence and domestic \*labor\*, can provide a powerful foundation for society. Unlike the hierarchical family that is shielded from the considerations of justice, the egalitarian family in which justice is exemplified can more readily cultivate citizens capable of understanding and defending justice in the broader public world.

---

### **Lee says**

Persuasively argues that the major Anglo-American philosophical theories of justice (Nozick, McIntyre, Walzer, Rawls, etc.) have failed to take gender and the family into account in any meaningful way. (Her criticisms of Nozick and McIntyre in particular seemed fairly devastating.) According to Okin, principles of justice have to be applied to the family because it is a major source of inequality between the sexes and because it's the place where children first learn what it means to be just. I was more convinced by her critique of existing theories than by her efforts to deploy Rawls (and to a lesser extent Walzer) for gender-egalitarian ends. But that might have more to do with my general skepticism about Rawls' approach.

---

### **Ft. Sheridan says**

Backhanding everyone with feminist critique.

---