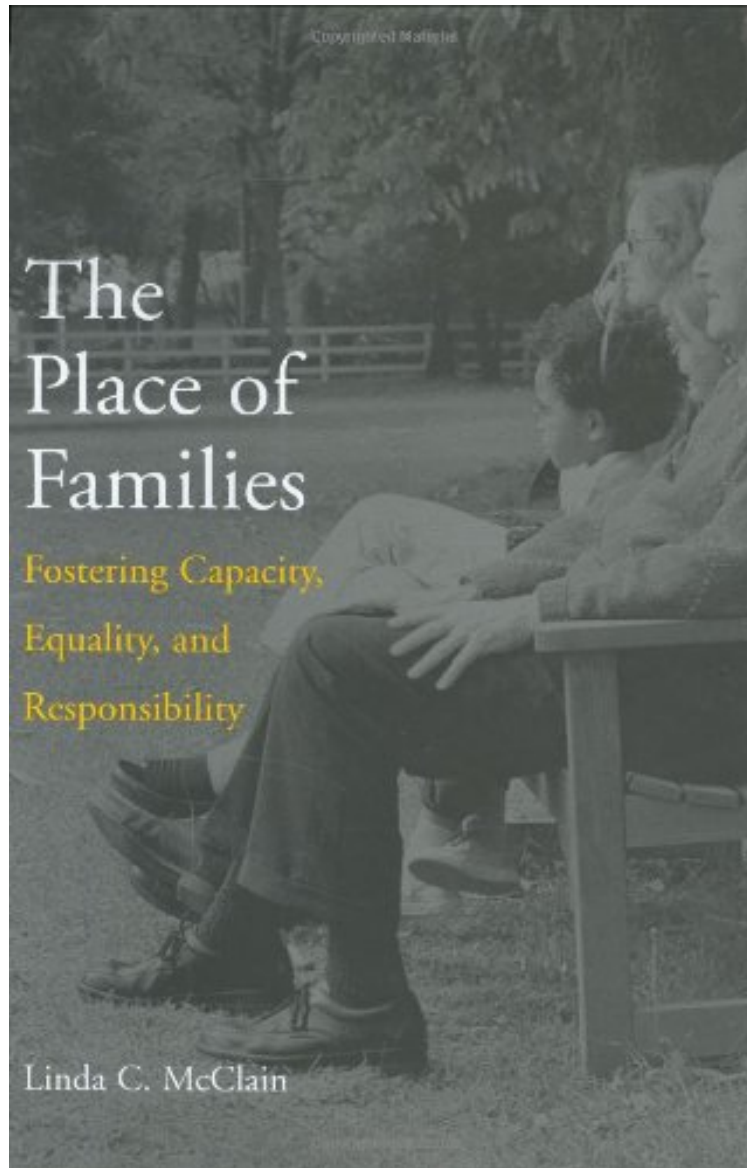


The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility

Linda C. McClain

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Linda C. McClain : The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Illuminating and engrossing bookBy D. K. CitronMcClain's

illuminating book offers a rich vision of family for the twenty-first century: one that is inclusive of many types of loving and critical family bonds, including same-sex relationships, traditional marriages, and grandparent guardians; one that makes us more responsible citizens; and one that earns the respect of government and in turn would give so much back to their communities. With so much political soundbites about family and marriage swirling about these days, this book joins the debate and offers a vision that shows how embarrassingly silly, and shortsighted, current debate is about marriage, sex education, and family. The book is philosophical and at the same time beautifully written and accessible. It really touched me and showed me how critically important our vision of family is to our democracy and society in this increasingly disconnected information age. I loved this book -- as a working mother, as a teacher, and as someone who wants to contribute more to those around me. Now, if I only could ensure that our country's leaders read it, we would be in much better shape!² of 2 people found the following review helpful. A much needed book

By CustomerWell-written, though-provoking survey of the social, legal and political terrain of "family" policy, and the competing theories and practices thereto. Hopefully this will lead to a more intellectually honest discussion of "the place of families" in American law.

In this bold new book, Linda McClain offers a liberal and feminist theory of the relationships between family life and politics--a topic dominated by conservative thinkers. McClain agrees that stable family lives are vital to forming persons into capable, responsible, self-governing citizens. But what are the public values at stake when we think about families, and what sorts of families should government recognize and promote?Arguing that family life helps create the virtues and character required for citizenship, McClain shows that the connection between family self-government and democratic self-government does not require the deep-laid gender inequality that has historically accompanied it. Examining controversial issues in family law and policy--among them, the governmental promotion of heterosexual marriage and the denial of marriage to same-sex couples, the regulation of family life through welfare policy, and constitutional rights to reproductive freedom--McClain argues for a political theory of the family that embraces equality, defends rights as facilitating responsibility, and supports families in ways that respect men's and women's capacities for self-government.

In this elegant and tightly reasoned book, Linda McClain argues that the family--though not necessarily traditional marriage--is central to the 'formative project' of fostering key civic virtues: capacity, equality, and responsibility. In a series of different situations she considers what might be an optimal balance among governmental, social, and family responsibilities for shaping good citizens. The Place of Families is sure to influence many heated debates, in courts and legislatures as well as journals, about the complex relationships between families and public life. (Martha Fineman, author of *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency*)The Place of Families is the most careful and comprehensive defense to date of the progressive liberal feminist position on the civic role of families. Those who agree with the thesis of this book will find powerful evidence for their case, and those who disagree will have to come to grips with it. (William A. Galston, Saul Stern Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland)Linda McClain has written an immensely valuable book that combines philosophical depth with up-to-the-moment policy analysis. Taking on many of the most difficult and contentious issues in family law and public policy today, including same-sex marriage, welfare reform, abortion, and sex education, McClain grounds her discussions in a commitment to both liberalism's respect for individual liberty and feminism's insistence on gender equality. Her meticulous scholarship, even-handed consideration of opposing viewpoints, and clear and accessible writing make *The Place of Families* a "must read" for anyone interested in the future of American families and family law. (Molly Shanley, Professor of Political Science, Vassar College)A most compelling and novel study of the rights and responsibilities of the family, the community of which it is a constitutive part, and the government. A joy for legal scholars and social scientists and many others. (Amitai Etzioni, author of *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*)For those who were wondering, liberal feminism is alive and well in the adept hands of legal and political theorist, Linda McClain. In this nuanced, persuasively argued, and utterly relevant work, McClain takes up where earlier liberal feminists such as Susan Moller Okin left off by addressing head-on the question of how, in a diverse, liberal polity the state should be involved in securing equality without curtailing individual freedom. In this, she is engaged in no less of a project than constructing the future of liberalism. In this, both the virtues and the potential vices of this future are evident...McClain crafts a liberal feminist framework that goes a long way in balancing these commitments. The power of her framework is evident as she considers an array of some of the most contentious issues in American politics today...The Place of Families is an impressive exercise in political philosophy, legal theory, and present-day politics. In it, McClain moves liberalism forward through critical engagement with the questions and concerns of feminism. The book is essential reading for anyone interested in the theory and practices of families and politics in contemporary liberal democracies. (Tamara Metz *Politics and Ethics*)McClains argument is a powerful one. Building on Susan Moller Okins pathbreaking (1989) insights on gender, justice, and the family, she argues that the good society, if it is to remain liberal, must promote gender equality within families and equality among children irrespective of the family form that brought them into existence...[McClain] seeks to enrich the liberal

account by adding a feminist sensibility at a time when conservatives identify feminism at the root of what they see as family decline. She admirably makes the case that the idea of feminist family values need not be either radical or an oxymoron. Instead, she argues that liberal democracies necessarily depend on fostering individual capacity, securing equality, and promoting the circumstances that make acceptance of individual responsibility possible. (June Carbone Law Social Inquiry 2007-07-01)About the AuthorLinda C. McClain is Professor of Law and Paul M. Siskind Research Scholar at Boston University School of Law.