

NEH Application Cover Sheet

Awards for Faculty

PROJECT DIRECTOR

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Field of Expertise: Political Science

INSTITUTION

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APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Justice and the Welfare State: A Non-Ideal Comparative Approach*

Grant Period: From 8/2011 to 7/2012

Field of Project: Political Science

Description of Project: Most philosophical accounts of welfare state justice are highly abstract and idealized. As a result, they often fail to yield clear and useful guidance for policy-makers and citizens concerned with supporting just welfare state policies in the real, non-ideal world. My project develops a non-ideal, comparative approach to welfare state justice that offers clear and concrete guidance on the best welfare policies for promoting human well-being. I first outline a normative account of the specific goals that welfare states should aim to achieve given human vulnerabilities and recent shifts in family life, work, and ageing. I then draw on empirical data from 20 or so Western industrialized countries to identify the welfare state policies that best promote these normative goals in the areas of child well-being, education, health care, and old age and disability support. The ultimate result will be a book that outlines a clearer and more useful theory of welfare state justice.

REFERENCE LETTERS

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Project Narrative

Justice and the Welfare State: A Non-Ideal Comparative Approach

Normative political philosophers have devoted considerable attention over the past four decades to discussing the justice of welfare state institutions and policies. Beginning with the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, philosophers have hotly debated whether or not redistributive institutions and policies are morally justifiable, and if so, which ones should be supported by a just society (See, for example, Barry 1995; Dworkin 2000; Nozick 1974; Rawls 1971; 1996). Despite sharp disagreements among philosophers over these questions, nearly all have adopted a similar methodology in outlining their arguments: "ideal theory." Following Rawls, most philosophers have posited a number of simplifying assumptions about human beings and society in developing their theories and described "what a perfectly just society would be like" under near optimal conditions (Rawls 1971). The general assumption is that a theory of welfare state justice can be best worked out by first imagining an ideal framework and then later adapting this ideal to the non-ideal circumstances of the real world.

In recent years, a number of political philosophers have criticized these ideal political theories for failing to provide meaningful guidance to actual welfare states (Farrelly 2007a; 2007b; Mills 2005; Robeyns 2008; Sen 2009; Simmons 2010; Stemplowska 2008; Valentini 2009). Because most contemporary justice theories (e.g., those of Rawls and Dworkin) are framed in highly abstract and ideal terms, critics charge that they are unable to yield any clear and workable policy proposals for existing societies. In an effort to make normative political theory more relevant to policy-making, several critics have called for the development of more empirically-grounded "non-ideal" political theories (Farrelly 2007a; 2007b; Robeyns 2008; Sen 2009; and Stemplowska 2008). While non-ideal theories still generate normative recommendations about the goals of welfare states, they incorporate human vulnerabilities, institutional failings, demographic and labor market conditions, and other empirical considerations directly into their accounts of justice. By avoiding most abstractions and simplifications, non-ideal theories aim to provide more immediate guidance for policy-making (Sen 2009; Stemplowska 2008). Thus far, however, very few political philosophers have developed non-ideal accounts of welfare justice, and those non-ideal theories that do exist are vague and indeterminate (Farrelly 2007a; Sen 2009).

I am seeking twelve month, full-time research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a non-ideal theory of welfare state justice. My research will result in a book entitled *Justice and the Welfare State: A Non-Ideal Comparative Approach*. My theory goes beyond existing welfare state theories in offering a clearer account of the normative goals of welfare states given a number of non-ideal considerations, including human vulnerability and dependency, institutional limitations, and recent demographic and labor market trends in advanced industrial societies. My project also draws on empirical data from 20 or so Western welfare states in order to identify the institutional and policy arrangements that most successfully promote normatively desirable outcomes in real-world settings. Altogether, my project combines normative theorizing and comparative political research in order to identify the best practices of actually existing welfare states. These best practices constitute a non-ideal comparative account of welfare state justice.

My manuscript consists of five substantive chapters. In the first chapter, I outline the main goals of the welfare state under non-ideal (i.e., actually existing) conditions. I root this theory in the political prescriptions of care ethics, suggesting that the welfare state should be primarily responsible for guaranteeing an adequate level of support to "inevitably dependent" individuals, including children, the sick, the disabled, and the frail elderly (Engster 2007; Fineman 2004; Kittay 1999; Tronto 1993). I defend this normative position by highlighting human beings' necessary dependency on one another for care and the profound changes that have occurred in the family, work, and living arrangements of industrialized societies over the last 50 years. Given this combination of factors, I argue that it is increasingly incumbent upon welfare states to make provisions for the care of inevitably dependent individuals. My argument in this chapter draws not only on the philosophical literature of care ethics but also on recent comparative welfare state studies. Gøsta Esping-Andersen (2002; 2009), for example, has recently argued that welfare states must adapt to "women's new roles" and the new caregiving challenges associated with changing

gender roles in order to sustain the well-being of individuals. My argument melds together Esping-Andersen's empirical analyses with the theoretical arguments of care theorists to outline a non-ideal account of welfare state justice.

Each of the following chapters focuses on a particular domain of human care and welfare policy. Chapter two looks at children's well-being. A great deal has been written in recent years about the effects of different family policies (e.g., parenting leaves, public child care) on women's equality, but relatively little attention has been given to the effects of different family policy arrangements on children's well-being (e.g., Gornick and Meyers 2003; Sainsbury 1999). Drawing on data from North America, Europe, and Australia, I compare the effectiveness of different family policies in achieving good outcomes for children in the areas of poverty, mortality, and high educational attainment and achievement. The goal here is to identify in practical and comparative terms how welfare states can best promote good care for children.

Chapter three focuses more specifically on education. Holding constant for parents' education, socioeconomic status, and children's home circumstances, I examine the general features of national educational systems that best support the development of children's basic capabilities. I draw here on the extensive body of data generated by the PISA international tests of student achievement. By identifying the common characteristics of national educational systems that generate the highest student achievement on PISA tests (Finland, Canada, New Zealand) and other outcomes (high graduation rates), I will demonstrate the important steps that governments can take at a national level to facilitate children's development through education policy.

In my fourth chapter, I explore the justice of different health care systems across Western welfare states. There has been a great deal of normative theoretical debate among political theorists and ethicists about the nature of the best health care system (single payer, market-based), but relatively little attention has been given to empirical comparisons of the actual performance of different health care systems (Daniels 2008; Powers and Faden 2006; Shapiro 2007). While the OECD and other groups have gathered a great deal of data on the characteristics and outcomes of different health systems (population coverage, waiting times, early mortality rates), in turn, they generally have not subjected this data to careful normative analysis. In this chapter, I first identify the normative goals of a just health care system and then rank the different health care systems of different countries based upon their success in meeting these outcome-based goals. The result will be a normative non-ideal argument for the best practical health care system among existing alternatives.

The fifth and final substantive chapter addresses two dimensions of elder and disability care: income support and home care services. Building upon a typology originally developed by Walter Korpi and Joakim Palme (1998), I first explore which national pension scheme (means-tested, voluntary-state-subsidized, corporatist, basic security, or encompassing) best protects elderly and disabled individuals against relative income poverty. In the second half of the chapter, I examine which national home-care service programs most affordably and flexibly support the independent living arrangements of elderly and disabled individuals.

The value of my project is twofold: 1) I outline a theory of welfare state justice that brings together normative analysis and comparative social science data in order to generate a set of realistic policy prescriptions that can guide political practice. As distinct from ideal political theories, my argument goes beyond vague normative prescriptions – e.g., that government should attempt to benefit the least advantaged (Rawls) - and indicates in concrete terms the policies that governments can enact to promote justice here and now. In this regard, I offer a clearer account of welfare state justice. 2) My study also contributes to discussions about new directions and best practices for the welfare state. A great deal has been written in recent years about new challenges to industrial welfare states (Esping-Andersen 2002; 2009). These challenges have forced states to reconsider the nature and levels of support they provide for a range of different services. My study starts out from non-ideal premises, defines what states should aim to do given existing challenges and constraints, and then identifies how they can best achieve these goals. As such, my project outlines one possible positive vision of a future direction for welfare states.

My comparative approach to welfare state justice is made possible by the vast increase in statistical data on government policies and social outcomes over the last decade. The OECD, Luxembourg Income Study, Eurostat database, World Health Organization, and other groups now have huge collections of information on policy and demographic variables for numerous countries available on-line. These sources will serve as the basis for my empirical comparisons. My comparative methodology will vary by chapter, sometimes employing OLS regression but mostly relying on comparative rankings and league tables to determine the best policy arrangements.

My project builds upon and extends my previous research on care ethics. My previous book, *The Heart of Justice: Care Ethics and Political Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), outlined an ideal account of the political, economic, and cultural institutions associated with care theory. In my new project, I aim to bring the admittedly lofty ideas outlined in the *Heart of Justice* down to earth (so to speak), indicating in more practical terms the realistic policies of a caring welfare state. I also intend to give more precision to the policy prescriptions set forth in my earlier work. In the *Heart of Justice*, for example, I argued that a caring society would support health care and elder and disability pensions, but refrained from specifying the exact nature and design of these programs. In my new book, I will identify more precisely the programs and policies that best support the goals of a caring state.

My project also builds upon the comparative research that I began in 2008 during a Fulbright Fellowship at Göthenburg University in Sweden. My Fulbright research focused on the family, elder, and health care policies of the Swedish welfare state. While in Sweden, I undertook a research collaboration on comparative family policies and child outcomes. I subsequently carried out my own research on the effectiveness of different family and welfare state policies in reducing child poverty. My proposed project expands upon this preliminary research by comparing the effectiveness of diverse welfare state arrangements in a variety of domains of human care.

My research finally overlaps to a great extent with my teaching interests. I am currently teaching a senior seminar class on Justice and the Family that incorporates my preliminary articles on child well-being and child poverty. In the fall 2010, I will offer a graduate seminar on the Theory and Practice of the Welfare State. Almost every year, I further offer an upper-level undergraduate course on Contemporary Normative Political Theory. My research for this project is thus intimately connected to my teaching. As my project develops, I hope to bring my findings to bear more closely on my teaching and to be able to guide my students in developing their own non-ideal studies of welfare state justice.

At present (April 2010), I have completed two articles (“Do Family Policy Regimes Matter for Children’s Well-being?” and “The Relative Importance of Active and Passive Welfare State Policies in Reducing Child Poverty”) that will form the basis of my second chapter on welfare policies and child well-being. I am currently working on my first chapter on a non-ideal theory of welfare state justice, and plan to complete this chapter during the summer. Over the summer, I will begin work on my fourth chapter on justice and health care, and plan to begin work on the final chapter on elder and disability care next winter and spring. By the time I would begin my NEH fellowship (August 2011), I therefore expect to have completed the background research for and written preliminary drafts of four of my five substantive chapters. Since my proposed project is nonetheless fairly ambitious, I am requesting a 12 month full-time fellowship to complete my research and writing, update and revise my draft chapters, and pull together the project as a whole into a coherent manuscript.

My research will ultimately result in a book that should have broad appeal among normative political theorists, care theorists, comparative political scientists, and others interested in justice and welfare state policy. The book will be pitched to upper-level undergraduate and graduate students, but will also be accessible to the non-academic public policy community. Since my current project builds upon my previous book, which was published by Oxford University Press, I plan to approach Oxford once again about publishing my new work. Oxford University Press is also a good fit for my proposed book because it publishes quite a bit on welfare state policy. Additionally, I plan to publish parts of my chapters as journal articles, will present drafts of my chapters at academic conferences, and will look for other academic and non-academic opportunities (public talks) to disseminate my ideas.

Bibliography

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- Simmons, A. John. 2010. "Ideal and Nonideal Theory." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 38, 1:5-36.
- Stemplowska, Zofia. 2008. "What's Ideal about Ideal Theory?" *Social Theory and Practice*, 34, 3 (July): 319-40.
- Tronto, Joan. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge.
- Valentini, Laura. 2009. "On the Apparent Paradox of Ideal Theory." *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 17, 3: 332-55.

Curriculum Vitae

Daniel Engster

Associate Professor

Department of Political Science and Geography
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Ph.D., Political Science, December 1996
Dissertation Title: "Politics and Time"
M.A., Political Science, May, 1991

THE COLORADO COLLEGE
B.A., Political Science, 1988, Magna Cum Laude

Professional Positions

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
Associate Professor, Political Science, 2003-present.
Assistant Professor, Political Science, 1998-2003

TULANE UNIVERSITY
Visiting Assistant Professor, Political Science, 1997-1998.

Books

The Heart of Justice: Care Ethics and Political Theory, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Paperback edition published in 2009.

Divine Sovereignty: The Origins of Modern State Power, (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001). Awarded Honorable Mention (First runner up) for Best First Book in Political Theory, American Political Science Association's Foundations of Political Theory Section.

Refereed Journal Articles

"The Private Parenting Model, Parental Licenses, or Public Parenting Support? The Place of Parenting within a Liberal Theory of Justice." *Social Theory and Practice*, 36, 2, (April 2010).

"Strategies for Developing and Sustaining a Care Movement," *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy*, (forthcoming).

"Care Ethics and Animal Welfare," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 37, 4, (2006): 521-536.

"Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Duty to Care," *Hypatia*, 20, 3, (Summer 2005): 50-74.

"Care Ethics and Natural Law Theory: Toward an Institutional

Political Theory of Caring,” *Journal of Politics*, 66, 1, (February, 2004): 113-135.

“Mary Wollstonecraft’s Nurturing Liberalism: Between an Ethic of Justice and Care,” *The American Political Science Review*, 95, (September, 2001): 577-588.

“The Montaignian Moment,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59, (1998): 625-650.

“Democracy in the Balance: The Role of Statist, Liberal and Republican Institutions in Tocqueville’s Theory of Liberty,” *Polity*, 30, (Spring, 1998): 489-511.

“Jean Bodin, Skepticism and Absolute Sovereignty,” *History of Political Thought*, 17, (Winter, 1996).

Book Chapters

“Care Ethics and Stakeholder Theory,” in Maurice Hamington and Maureen Sander-Staudt (eds.), *Applying Care Ethics to Business*, (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

“Rozwazania na temat teorii opieki: praktyka i obowiazek opieki,” translated into Polish by Malgorzata Maciejewska and Marcin Marszalek, in Ewy Charkiewicz and Anny Zachorowskiej Mazurkiewicz (eds.), *Gender i ekonomia opieki*, (Warsaw: Norway Grants, 2009).

Works in Progress

“Do Family Policy Regimes Matter for Child Well-Being?” (under review).

“The Relative Importance of Active and Passive Welfare State Policies in Reducing Child Poverty Among Rich Industrialized Countries” (under review).

Academic Honors/ Research Awards

Appointed to the U.S. Peer Review Fulbright Committee for Scandinavian Countries, 2009-2011.

Fulbright Research Award: Sweden. Gothenburg University, Fall 2008.

National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Research Grant, Fall, 2004. [Grant resulted in publication of “Rethinking Care Theory” (2005) and *The Heart of Justice* (2007) listed above]

President’s Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching Excellence, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2002.

June 1, 2010

To: NEH Selection Committee for NEH Awards for Faculty Program

Subject: Dr. Daniel Engster's Nomination for an NEH Award

It gives me great pleasure to nominate Dr. Daniel Engster, Associate professor of Political Science for a NEH Faculty Research Award.

Professor Engster's research proposal, *Justice and the Welfare State*, builds on his previous theoretical work on care ethics, *The Heart of Justice: Care Ethics and Political Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2007). In his previous work, Professor Engster outlined in theoretical terms the political, economic, and cultural institutions and policies of society oriented around the normative goal of providing decent care to all its members. In his new research, Engster focuses more specifically on the welfare state policies necessary for supporting human care, specifically in the areas of family support, education, health care, and elder and disability care.

He frames his argument as a general challenge to existing normative political theories, which he notes mostly discuss welfare state justice in highly abstract and ideal terms. Instead of following Rawls and other ideal philosophers, Engster intends to develop a non-ideal theory of welfare state justice that is rooted in empirical data about human beings and current social conditions and can yield clear and useful policy advice. In each of the domains of family policy, education, health care, and elder and disability support, Engster plans to combine normative analysis and comparative empirical data in order to identify the best practical policies for achieving normatively desirable social outcomes (e.g., low child poverty; affordable, effective, and flexible health care). Engster's project is unique in bridging the gap between normative theory and political practice and also between political philosophy and the empirical social sciences. Ultimately, his book will outline a more concrete and grounded account of the institutions and policies of a just welfare state than one usually finds in the field of contemporary normative political theory.

Professor Engster's previous work has garnered a fair amount of positive national and international attention. A recent review of his latest book in the *European Journal of Philosophy* calls it "the most fully developed application of an ethics of care to politics to date." His proposed project strikes me as not only interesting but also necessary to understanding a slew of social and political issues in the field. I can say with certainty that his current publications are interesting, challenging, and relevant and based on this record I firmly believe the new research will follow along the same lines He has never failed to impress. Furthermore looking at the proposal I believe it charts a new approach to understanding the concept of justice as well as the welfare state.

The Fulbright award he received last year took him to Sweden and other parts of Europe where it provided him with a deeper understanding of the differences in the application of the welfare state

and consequently the differing application of justice. To complete this project I estimate mid 2012. And should he receive the award I will provide him with the necessary time to complete it and finish a manuscript by the above date. I gather from him that he has already finished drafts of the first two chapters, and will complete a draft of the third chapter by November 1, 2010. Furthermore he has gathered extensive research materials on all the other chapters. Thus, I think July 2012 is a realistic goal to complete and prepare a manuscript for publication.

Another important reason leads me to support Dr. Engster is that he is a phenomenal scholar. He is proving to be a first class philosopher, teacher and mentor. Thanks to his research the quality of his teaching is unparalleled. Among the awards he received for his teaching are the *UTSA President's Distinguished Teaching Award for Undergraduate Teaching*, and the *Honor's Alliance Recognition for Excellence in Teaching*. Also, he has been invited on more than one occasion to speak at Teaching conferences at the University of Chicago. Additionally he has been listed on *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* since 2002.

I have received unsolicited student reviews raving about of his teaching and concern for their intellectual wellbeing. His quiet and gentle manner is conducive to learning, and students appreciate the time he takes to explain difficult theoretical concepts about ethics, education, life, politics, philosophy, morality, and human rights, as well as facilitate difficult concepts of the ancient and modern master of philosophical thought.

Dr. Engster is such an excellent teacher because he is an excellent researcher and scholar. He has the ability to bring to his student fresh ideas, and concepts that enable them to think, theorize, empathize, and develop into truly wonderful humans. He is a serious scholar who spends time reading thinking and writing. His book *Divine Sovereignty* received the American Political Science Association's Best First Book Award in Political Theory. And, *The Heart of Justice* with Oxford University Press drew as much if not more praise as his first book.

Again, it gives me great pleasure to nominate Dr. Engster for such a prestigious award. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need further information. In the meantime I remain

Sincerely Yours

Dr. Mansour O. El-Kikhia, Chair
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