

Statement of Research Interests

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My current research interests lie at the intersections of political philosophy and applied ethics. I am particularly concerned with two ethical issues, which are connected through the concept of citizenship: immigration and urban environmental ethics. More prospective immigrants presently seek admission to affluent Western societies than ever before, and many states have become home to large populations of long-term noncitizen residents. Urbanization is also increasing rapidly, as are the significant environmental pressures it involves. These phenomena raise vexing normative questions: Do affluent societies have unacknowledged moral duties to admit immigrants? How should ethnically diverse immigrants be integrated into liberal societies? What are the rights of noncitizen residents? Do citizens have obligations to protect the urban environments in which they live? How are these responsibilities best articulated? Yet despite the theoretical significance and practical urgency of these questions, moral and political philosophers have largely ignored them. Although much has been written about citizenship—understood as the relationship between a state and its citizens—questions about who should be admitted and on what terms are rarely discussed. While a small number of environmental philosophers have begun to explore the relationship between citizenship and environmentalism, a comprehensive urban environmental ethic has yet to be developed.

I seek to remedy these theoretical gaps in two lines of research. First, I am writing a series of papers on the ethics of immigration. The few philosophers who have addressed this issue focus on the question of who should be admitted into the state. Adopting an idealized approach, they typically argue that states should admit anyone who wishes to enter on the grounds that individuals have a basic right to freedom of international movement. This open borders perspective is an attractive cosmopolitan ideal, but it has difficulty accounting for the ways in which unjust background conditions may provide certain prospective immigrants with particularly strong moral claims to admission. My articles develop a distinctive non-ideal theory of immigrant admissions that is sensitive to these background conditions. I argue that four categories of prospective immigrants should receive admissions priority in cases in which overall limitations on immigration can be justified. In such cases, societies have a duty to admit prospective immigrants who stand to be seriously harmed by their foreign policies (“Immigrant Admissions and Global Relations of Harm”). Societies have humanitarian duties to admit the immediate family of citizens as well as a fair share of global refugees (“Do We Have Humanitarian Obligations to Admit Immigrants?”). Finally, within the current context of global economic restructuring, certain categories of labor migrants, such as domestic workers, also should receive admissions priority (“Who Pays for Gender De-Institutionalization?”).

I also seek to expand the philosophical debate about immigration to include a number of additional under-theorized issues. I am particularly interested in the naturalization process, which establishes the conditions under which ethnically diverse immigrants are formally integrated into liberal societies. Many commentators believe that the maintenance of fundamental liberal values, including autonomy, tolerance, and social justice, depends upon a certain degree of immigrant assimilation. It follows, they argue, that immigrants who wish to become naturalized citizens should be required either to assimilate to the national culture of the receiving society or to adopt its civic national identity, while presumably retaining their native cultural practices. I contend that liberal democratic citizenship can be developed in the absence of a common culture or shared civic

national identity, provided that immigrants are encouraged to participate in the major socioeconomic and political institutions of their new societies. Thus, I argue that civil, social, and political rights should be extended to all legal permanent residents and citizenship should be granted upon request to those who fulfill modest residency and language requirements (“Culture, National Identity, and Admission to Citizenship”). I further argue on feminist grounds that liberal societies should extend social rights to all long-term noncitizen residents, including undocumented immigrants (“American Neo-Nativism and Gendered Immigrant Exclusions”).

My second major research project is a book manuscript that develops an original theory of urban environmental ethics (*Citizenship and the Urban Environment*). While most environmental philosophers have ignored or explicitly denigrated cities, I argue that a new environmental ethic is urgently needed to articulate our moral obligations concerning urban environments and to guide our practical responses to issues such as blight, environmental racism, sprawl, lack of green space, pollution, and the overpopulation of feral animals. However, since traditional appeals to the intrinsic value of nature cannot ground our duties to protect urban environments, alternative justifications must be developed. My manuscript draws upon the traditions of liberal and civic republican citizenship, feminist ethics, and environmental aesthetics to develop a pluralist theory of urban environmental ethics. In the first part, I defend a right to a safe urban environment and develop a theory of environmental justice that ensures an equitable distribution of urban environmental benefits, such as access to green and aesthetically valuable spaces, and environmental burdens, such as pollution and hazardous waste. In the second part, I argue that urbanites have participatory duties to preserve and enhance many elements of the cities in which they live, both natural and human-built, including urban forests and riverbanks, parks, community gardens, public art, and historic architecture. Such duties are justified on the grounds that urban environmental spaces and artifacts are either liberal goods or preconditions of participatory citizenship. I also give an account of the moral emotions and ecological virtues that may be necessary to motivate people to meet these urban environmental responsibilities. In the final part of my book, I develop an account of our responsibilities to urban animals that acknowledges the complex nature of urban environments and the diversity of human-animal relationships within cities and the surrounding areas.