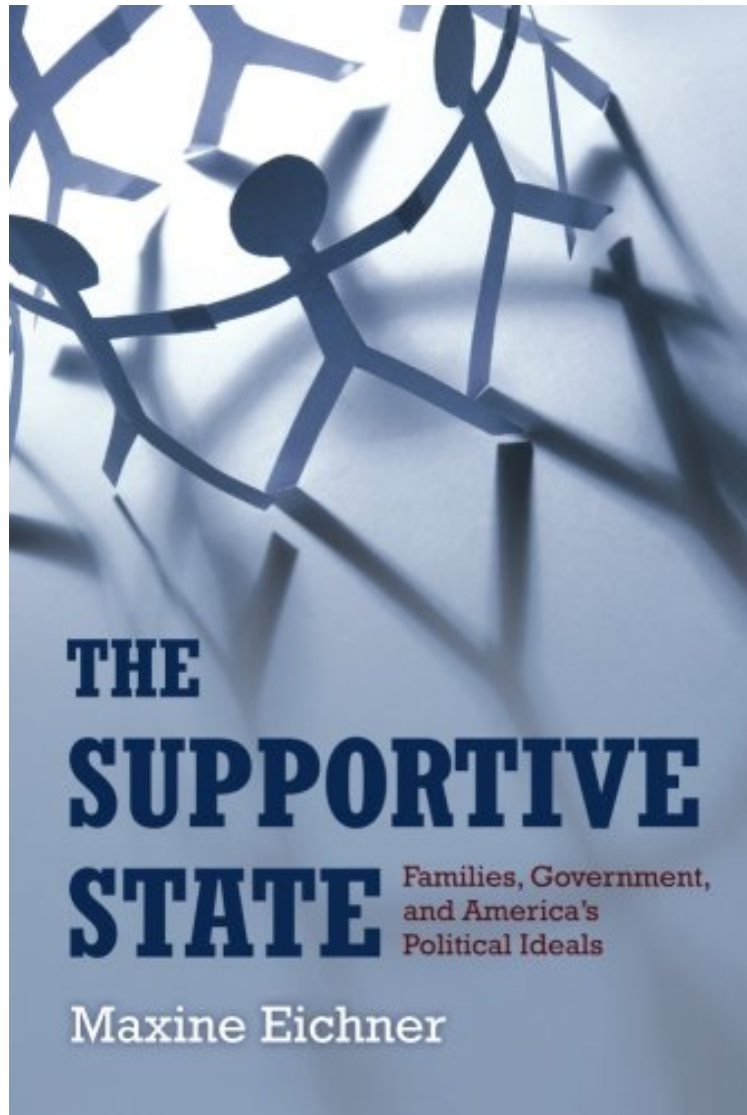


[Download] The Supportive State: Families, Government, and America's Political Ideals

The Supportive State: Families, Government, and America's Political Ideals

Maxine Eichner

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Maxine Eichner : The Supportive State: Families, Government, and America's Political Ideals before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Supportive State: Families, Government, and America's Political Ideals:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. an important book, one that helps us understand how families and the state should interactBy CivitasThis is an important book that provides a nuanced and persuasive view of the

relationship between the state and families. Eichner's starting point is to note that liberal political theory assumes people are autonomous; but in fact, people are not born autonomous citizens, but dependent beings. Moreover, we are not dependent only when we are young, but in many ways all throughout our lives. Eichner argues for amending liberal theory to account for dependency; her aim is to argue that the state should not only see its role as supporting citizens' freedom, as it largely does now, but to support freedom along with caretaking and human development. Eichner focuses on the family, and she shows how the state and family are inevitably intertwined in the modern world. The question is never, should the state have a policy toward the family, but what should its policy be? Eichner's argument aims to give families as much as autonomy and dignity as possible while still supporting caretaking. When the state intervenes in family life, it should be to help the family, not to take it over. The state should understand the importance of familial relationships and work toward supporting them. Her book discusses young children, adolescents, the elderly and the welfare system, making both theoretical and insightful policy suggestions throughout. Eichner's arguments are important, and deserve a wide audience. This book is exceptionally well-written, so non-academics will be able to read it easily. Eichner's command of the relevant theoretical, legal and policy literature is impressive. She seamlessly moves different kinds of arguments, giving it a wide appeal, with her own ideas containing many sensible policy suggestions that one can only hope our elected officials will listen to.

Broad agreement exists among politicians and policymakers that the family is a critical institution of American life. Yet the role that the state should play with respect to family ties among citizens remains deeply contested. This controversy over the state's role undergirds a broad range of public policy debates: Does the state have a responsibility to help resolve conflicts between work and family? Should same-sex marriage be permitted? Should parents who receive welfare benefits be required to work? Yet while these individual policy issues are endlessly debated, the underlying theoretical question of the stance that the state should take with families remains largely unexplored. In *The Supportive State*, Maxine Eichner argues that government must take an active role in supporting families. She contends that the respect for human dignity at the root of America's liberal democratic understanding of itself requires that the state not only support individual freedom and equality--the goods generally considered as grounds for state action in liberal accounts. It must also support families, because it is through families that the caretaking and human development needs which must be satisfied in any flourishing society are largely met. Families' capacity to satisfy these needs, she demonstrates, is critically affected by the framework of societal institutions in which they function. In the "supportive state" model she develops, the state bears the responsibility for structuring societal institutions to support families in performing their caretaking and human development functions. Although not all family forms will further the important functions that warrant state support, she argues that a broad range will. Eichner's vigorous defense of the state's responsibility to enhance families' capacity for caretaking and human development stands as a sharp rejoinder to the widespread conservative belief that the state's role in family life must be diminished in order for families to flourish.

"The Supportive State rethink[s] liberal theory from the ground up, incorporating dependence and families rather than pushing them aside. It is a careful, beautifully written renegotiation of the social contract on behalf of real people, rather than the idealized, autonomous-yet-isolated rights-bearers who are the subjects of traditional liberalism. The result is an important contribution both to liberalism and to feminist theory."--Jennifer Hendricks, Michigan Law "In this wonderful book, Maxine Eichner argues that the neglect of families under liberal democratic theory has contributed to laws and policies in this country that fail to support family dependency needs and perpetuate gender inequality. Eichner's theory of the supportive state provides a framework for analyzing the liberal state's obligations to families and promises to influence contemporary debates about issues as wide-ranging as same-sex marriage, teen age abortion, children's rights and the future of the child welfare system. This book is a must-read for family law scholars, policy makers and family advocates--and for anyone who seeks a deeper understanding of what society owes families."--Elizabeth Scott, Harold R. Medina Professor of Law, Columbia Law School "Finally--a broad structural blueprint for 'family values' designed to cross political and ideological divides, not inflame them."--Katharine T. Bartlett, A. Kenneth Pye Professor of Law, Duke University School of Law "In *The Supportive State*, Maxine Eichner provide[s] a stunningly original revisioning of the relationship between the family and the state. This is a transformative work that should be read by anyone who cares about the well-being of children and families and the future of democracy."--Shannon Minter, Legal Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights "Maxine Eichner takes seriously the liberal democratic commitment to individual responsibility and autonomy. In this worthwhile, nuanced and intelligent book, she shows that even these starting assumptions can justify some forms of state support for families." --Joan Tronto, Professor of Political Science, University of Minnesota "The Supportive State is a groundbreaking analysis of how to rethink the relationship between the state and the family. Maxine Eichner carefully examines a series of issues, ranging from marriage to foster care to teen abortion to children's rights, as she develops her theory of the supportive state. The book makes a significant contribution to liberal political theory and to our understandings of the family, while also offering concrete suggestions on how the state should promote family

flourishing."--Naomi Cahn, Professor of Law, The George Washington University Law School and co-author of *Red Families v. Blue Families*"The Supportive State makes a splendid contribution to contemporary discussions of families and public policy. She argues rigorously for state support of caregiving relationships (involving children, family members, the elderly, the disabled, and others). In the course of her discussion, Maxine Eichner offers stimulating reflections on same-sex marriage, welfare reform, parental and community control over school curricula, and other pressing concerns involving families and the state. Eichner's compelling vision and clear writing invite readers to examine their own views about public responsibility for the caregiving that sustains both families and civil society."--Mary Shanley, Professor of Political Science, Vassar College"Debates over marriage, the family, and family values have been a staple feature of political rhetoric for the last several decades, and show no sign of ceasing. As patterns of family life in the United States have undergone dramatic change, family law continues to undergo dramatic evolution. Legal and political theory--as well as public policy--are slowly beginning to address the family as a vital political and social institution. It is important that these debates and this evolution be informed by concern for the relevant political goods and principles that Maxine Eichner elaborates in *The Supportive State*."--Linda C. McClain, Professor of Law, Boston University School of Law

About the Author
Maxine Eichner is Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina School of Law. She earned B.A. and J.D. degrees from Yale University, and received a Ph.D. in Political Science from UNC while she was on the law school faculty. She writes on issues of liberal theory, feminist theory, family relationships, and social welfare.