

Values, Achievement, and Justice

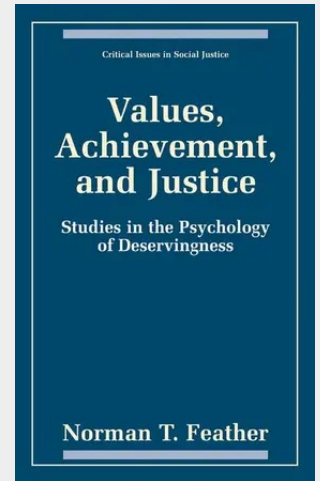
Studies in the Psychology of Deservingness

When we say that a person deserves a positive or negative outcome, we are making a judgment that is influenced by a number of variables. We would certainly take into account whether the person was responsible for the outcome or whether the outcome could be attributed to other sources. We would also consider whether the actions that led to the positive or negative outcome were actions that we would value or -

tion that would meet with our disapproval. We might also be influenced by the person's own positive or negative characteristics, by our knowledge of what kinds of groups or social categories the person belonged to, and by whether we like or dislike the person. Information about these different variables has to be considered and integrated in some way, and our judgment of deservingness follows that psychological process, a process that involves the cognitive-affective system. Values, Achievements, and Justice is about deservingness and about the variables that affect the judgments we make. I use the term "deservingness" although I could equally have referred to "deservedness" or "desert." The terms are all virtually equivalent in meaning, although dictionaries may separate them by using fine distinctions. I assume that the sorts of variables I have just described will affect our judgments of deservingness, and I further assume that a judgment of deservingness is most likely to occur when these variables fit together in a consistent, harmonious, and balanced way.

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