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*Review Essay*

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## **Thinking About Deservingness**

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*One of the main things for me was whether I deserved it, deserved to win.*

—A recent state lottery winner

From lottery winners to preschoolers arguing for a later bedtime, deservingness is a central theme. It is the frequency with which we invoke deserving judgments that make the model presented in Norman Feather's book *Values, Achievement, and Justice* (Feather, 1999) so important. According to Feather's model, for individuals or groups to be judged as deserving, two requirements must be met. First, the target must be seen as personally responsible for the actions that lead to particular outcomes. Second, actions and outcomes must be evaluatively consistent. Positive actions deserve positive outcomes, and negative actions deserve negative outcomes. The valance of particular actions and outcomes depends upon the values the judge holds and the degree to which those values are engaged in a particular situation.

Feather's model is anchored in Heider's balance theory (Heider, 1958), and he uses visual representations of balanced and unbalanced relationships to illustrate how the perceived likability, morality, and group membership of a person can influence perceptions of a target's deservingness. As in other consistency theories, Feather suggests that judges will achieve psychological balance by reevaluating different relationships among the target, action, and outcomes depending upon reality constraints (one cannot "undo" a murder) and the relative importance of the particular values evoked by the situation.

Feather sets the stage for his model by reviewing a broad range of social justice theories and then grounds his model in an extensive literature review of Heider's balance theory and psychological and legal discussions of responsibility.

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He supports his model using evidence from fifteen different studies that involve positive and negative outcomes, achievement, and retributive contexts. Research participants include university undergraduates, high school students, people in shopping malls, and members of the Australian general population. As Darley (2001) argues in his review of commonsense justice, asking ordinary people to judge scenarios that vary along important theoretical dimensions is one of the best methods for tracing people's reasoning about justice issues.

Of course, the risk (and the benefit) in proposing such a broad model as Feather has is that it may raise more questions than it answers. Still, as Leon Festinger said (quoted in Aronson, 1997), it is not whether a theory (or model, in this case) is true or false that matters, but "how much of the empirical realm can it handle" (1997, p. 226). By this standard, Feather's model is an important contribution to current social justice research. First, Feather's careful conceptual distinctions between deserving and other concepts suggest that commonsense thinking about justice can be more complex than researchers typically assume. These conceptual distinctions also suggest ways in which our understanding of accounts for norm violations might be expanded. Second, Feather's model allows us to move from the simple situation of neutral judges observing other people's behavior to a consideration of the numerous ways in which the judge and the target may be connected to each other.

## CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Feather argues that personal responsibility, deserving, and entitlement can and should be treated as distinct theoretical constructs. For example, people do not necessarily deserve the outcomes for which they are responsible. A business person who earns his/her money using shady business practices may be responsible for his/her wealth, but we may not feel he/she deserves it (Feather, 1999). In this example, a person is responsible for a positive outcome that he/she is judged not to deserve. The argument also can be reversed—a person might be responsible for a negative outcome, but not deserve the consequences. Parents of a disabled child may be personally responsible for the child's birth, but few people would argue that they "deserved" the situation. Feather reviews a variety of research studies that consistently show that deserving judgments are more closely related to people's affective reactions and punishment decisions than are personal responsibility judgments.

Feather also carefully distinguishes between entitlement to outcomes based on a person's rights and determined by shared rules and justice principles, and deserving as a judgment of outcomes produced by a person's behavior or based on a person's personal characteristics. Wealthy playboys may be entitled to the family inheritance, but that does not mean they deserve the money. In a more recent paper, Feather and Johnstone (2001) acknowledge that entitlement and deserving often are interchangeable, but it is possible to posit conflicts between the two.

For example, Feather and Johnstone (2001) describe how psychiatric nurses might view a hospital patient who acts aggressively as deserving a negative reaction from nurses based on her behavior, but entitled (based on the norms and rights of hospital patients) to positive treatment.

Feather's conceptual distinctions suggest one way we might expand our thinking about excuses and other accounts for norm violations. Excuses, one type of account, are viewed as attempts to mitigate personal responsibility for particular actions and outcomes, the first part of Feather's model (Lerner, 1981; Schlenker, Pontari, and Christopher, 2001; Weiner et al., 1991). However, accounts also might be designed as justifications to weaken the perceived relationship between a particular outcome and action, the second part of Feather's model (see Shultz and Darley, 1991). For example, one could argue that foreseeability, a variable traditionally explored in the context of excuses, does not influence judgments of personal responsibility as much as it weakens the link between a particular action and a particular outcome, the goal of justifications (Gonzalez, 1992; Schonbach, 1990).

People also might use accounts in which they acknowledge their personal responsibility, and even the link between an action and an outcome, but argue that the context for understanding the event unexpectedly changed. For example, what might be perceived as unconscionable behavior during peacetime could be framed as reasonable behavior during war. Defense attorneys used this strategy during the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials when they argued that the international community defined their clients' behavior as crimes after the war, not during the war (Minow, 1998). We might define this type of account as a refusal (Gonzalez, 1992; Schonbach, 1990). Some refusals focus on denying personal responsibility or shifting the blame to another person (undermining the first part of Feather's model), but other refusals focus on denying the right of another person or institution to reproach the person (thereby eliminating the relationship between judge and target).

Accounts designed to weaken the link between particular actions and outcomes, or to change the value of particular outcomes and behavior, avoid one difficulty created by excuses designed to diminish personal responsibility (Schlenker et al., 2001). As Schlenker and his colleagues describe, excuses that mitigate personal responsibility for an outcome may provide immediate protection of a person's self-esteem but diminish other people's long-term assessment of the person's competence or morality. In contrast, accounts that attempt to change the valance of a particular outcome or behavior shift the focus away from the perpetrator to group or societal values and processes. The issue is no longer whether a soldier committed a particular atrocity, but whether an international court has the right to judge his/her behavior. Linking Feather's model to research on accounts reminds us of the larger context in which deserving judgments are made—who is the audience for a particular judgment, and how do people's deserving judgments relate to their actual behavior.

Clear conceptual definitions are not just relevant to careful academic research but can be immensely important to jurors' understanding of court judges'

instructions in criminal and civil court cases (see Finkel, 2001). Research evidence suggests that, if asked, even nonexperts can make careful distinctions among a defendant's culpability, blame, and contributory negligence. Participants presented with detailed legal cases provided sophisticated and detailed analyses of the defendant's personal responsibility that were very similar to the arguments used by lawyers and judges involved in the original court cases (Finkel, 2001). However, communicating these distinctions can be difficult. For example, the U.S. Court of Appeals recently ordered a retrial for a mentally disabled defendant sentenced to death, because the justices concluded that the judge's jury instructions were not sufficiently clear as to how mental capacity should be considered as a mitigating factor in sentencing (Egelko, 2000).

However, theoretical clarity is not the same as psychological reality. For example, Feather and Johnstone (2001) argue that the tendency of psychiatric nurses to view an aggressive schizophrenic patient as less responsible for his/her behavior compared with an aggressive personality disorder patient should be interpreted as a difference in deserving judgments. But they define the same nurses' disapproval of a fellow nurse's negative reaction to the aggressive behavior of either type of patient as a recognition that patients, regardless of diagnosis, are entitled to fair treatment. However, without direct questions or ratings of entitlement and deserving, it is hard to argue that a clear theoretical distinction is experienced as psychologically real. One might argue that in the first case, the nurses focused on the patient's behavior, whereas in the second case, they focused on the nurse's behavior.

The distinction between deservingness and entitlement might help academic researchers separate role attributions from attributions to personal characteristics, but it may mislead us into thinking that people also make the same distinction. Instead, as social science research consistently demonstrates, we often confuse the two types of attributions. We assume people are poor because they are lazy or do not work hard enough (Kluegel and Smith, 1986). We attribute power and influence to small group members on the basis of their demographic characteristics (rather than any relevant expertise; Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, and Rosenholtz, 1986). And we make assumptions about people's personalities on the basis of their social category memberships (Kahneman and Tversky, 1983). Clearly defined theoretical definitions sharpen our thinking about deserving judgments, but I think it remains an open question as to whether people use these distinctions when they make everyday judgments about deserving.

### **EXTENDING THE MODEL**

The beauty of Feather's research is the inclusiveness of his approach. He shows how judgments of deserving are linked to evaluations of achievement as well as punishment, the more traditional focus of social justice research. He also

considers a variety of emotional reactions to deserving judgments, including envy, sympathy, pleasure, and anger. However, the focus of the empirical research that he presents is on third party observers of other people's behavior. Yet, I think one reason why this model is so appealing is that it is anchored in balance theory principles of consistency. As Aronson and his colleagues (1997) argue in their reformulation of cognitive dissonance theory, consistency is most important when it implicates the self-concept. If there is no self-involvement, there is little reason to expect inconsistencies among various target–action–outcome relationships to motivate emotional and behavioral reactions (Schlenker et al., 2001). In the next two sections, I will link Feather's model to a more broad discussion of people's reactions to norm violations.

### **Self-Judgments**

The most obvious way a deserving judgment is self-relevant is when the self is the judgment target. In his discussion of this possibility, Feather proposes that high and low personal self-esteem might be represented as positive and negative sentiment relationships between the self as the judge and the self as the target. There is evidence that people with higher personal self-esteem believe they deserve more respectful treatment from other people than people with lower personal self-esteem (Heuer, Blumenthal, Douglas, and Weinblatt, 1999). Feather's suggestion that one's general feelings about oneself can color deserving judgments is very similar to Janoff-Bulman's concept of characterological self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1979), blaming an unlucky event on who one is. She distinguishes characterological self-blame from behavioral self-blame, blaming an unlucky event on something one did (or did not) do (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Janoff-Bulman shows that behavioral self-blame can be a useful coping strategy for rape victims because it offers strategies for (re)establishing personal control, whereas characterological self-blame can lead to greater feelings of helplessness and depression. What is intriguing about this distinction is that the degree of behavioral self-blame can be as great as the level of characterological self-blame, but the consequences are qualitatively different—even though both types of self-blame are rooted in personal responsibility for the behavior.

### **Victim and Perpetrator Judgments**

Including the self as the judgment target makes self-involvement obvious, but other role relationships such as victim and perpetrator also implicate the self. However, when we introduce role differences, we also introduce attributional differences (Mikula, 1994). Deserving judgments are likely to be vulnerable to an egocentric bias in which one's own behavior, or reactions to another's behavior, is

seen as more reasonable and better than the other person's reactions and behavior (e.g., DeRidder and Tripathi, 1992; Mummendey and Otten, 1993). For example, victims attribute more responsibility and blame to perpetrators, and they generate more alternatives to the actions the perpetrator could control than do perpetrators (Catellani and Milesi, 2001). Interestingly, perpetrators do not generate more alternatives to the controllable behavior of victims than do victims themselves, supporting a general stereotype of victims as more passive than perpetrators (Catellani and Milesi, 2001). Finally, the victims of interpersonal transgressions perceive the transgression as more serious, more undeserved, and more unjust than do the perpetrators of the same transgressions (Mikula, 1994).

Not only does the victim or perpetrator role shape attributional judgments, these roles also shape emotional reactions and behavior. As a victim, we may feel angry and seek revenge, we may feel empathy and offer forgiveness, or both. Feather's model shows how emotional reactions are the products of cognitive judgments of deservingness. However, one problem with any model that uses balance theory principles is the natural link to issues of equity and retaliation. A negative action deserves a negative outcome. However, recent events in South Africa and elsewhere remind us that sometimes we respond to harm doing with reconciliation and forgiveness. Furthermore, forgiveness (of interpersonal transgressions) is linked to more positive health outcomes for victims than is retaliation (van Oyen Wivliet, Ludwig, and Vander Laan, 2001).

When will we forgive? Attributional analyses suggest that forgiveness is linked to changes in the attributions victims make about the perpetrator's responsibility (Weiner, Graham, Peter, and Zmuidinas, 1991). More recently, McCullough and his colleagues argue that forgiveness is linked to feelings of empathy (McCullough et al., 1997). According to this argument, forgiveness does not mean the person condones or minimizes the act or the actor's responsibility. Just as Feather argues is the case for punishment, this focus on empathy suggests that forgiveness is not uniquely dependent on attributions about personal responsibility.

The crucial variable in McCullough's model of forgiveness is the ability of the victim to understand the perspective of the perpetrator (see also Batson, Sager, Garst, and Kang, 1997). In contrast, the desire for revenge is related to the victim's concerns over face-saving (Baumeister, 1998) and increased rumination about the personal effects of the violation (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, and Johnson, 2001). In other words, emotional reactions to harm doing depend upon whether people focus on themselves or others (Leach, Snyder, and Iyer, 2001). However, the choice to forgive rarely occurs in a vacuum. The majority of social psychological research explores interpersonal transgressions within ongoing close relationships between equals. Even in this context, the choice to forgive may be influenced by audiences other than the perpetrator, or inequities in power and resources.

More important, can we translate the conclusions of this research to the horrific transgressions that occurred in Rwanda, South Africa, or Bosnia? What does

it mean for a victim to forgive in these circumstances? Is a victim's forgiveness the product of social pressures "to move on," or does it reflect a philosophical or religious conclusion about the impossibility of undoing events or the fallibility of human nature (Minow, 1998)? Understanding the other person's perspective may be possible within a close relationship but may be nearly impossible when the perpetrator represents an out-group responsible for horrific atrocities.

Perpetrators also can react to a transgression in a variety of ways. They might do nothing, try to justify the violation, apologize, and/or attempt to compensate the victim. If perpetrators feel guilty or fearful, both self-focused emotions, they might try to restore equity through compensation (but only if equity can be fully restored; Iyer, Crosby, and Leach, 2001). One difficult barrier to compensation is determining an adequate amount. How much should companies compensate the survivors of forced slave labor in Germany during World War II? How much should the American government compensate African American descendants of slaves or Native Americans for their losses? If people can only partially compensate the person harmed, they are acknowledging doing the harm, but they can't restore equity. Therefore, their preference is not to compensate at all (Berscheid and Walster, 1967; de Carufel, 1986).

However, perpetrators who experience sympathy or empathy, both other-focused emotions, are more likely to support broad-based forms of compensation that are not rooted in exact equity (Iyer, Crosby, and Leach, 2001). In fact, people who report moral outrage, empathy, or feeling deprived on the behalf of another group are most likely to support programs that mean broad, long-lasting changes in relationships among people and groups (Iyer, Crosby, and Leach, 2001; Montada and Schneider, 1989; Veilleux and Tougas, 1989).

Perpetrators who focus on the victim also are more likely to apologize. However, successful apologies are tricky. The perpetrator must clearly accept personal responsibility and give victims the power to accept, refuse, or ignore the apology (Minow, 1998; Weiner et al., 1991). Apologies and confessions are probably most successful when it is clear that something wrong occurred, the attributions for the outcome are ambiguous, and the outcome is not the only criterion for changing the situation (Weiner et al., 1991). Moreover, as Blumstein and his colleagues (1974) argue, apologies are a potential paradox; they acknowledge a momentary moral lapse by a group member who remains aware and responsible to his or her status and responsibilities. If the victim and perpetrator don't share a valued group membership, why should the perpetrator apologize? If the behavior is more than a momentary moral lapse or likely to occur again, what value does an apology carry? This unique aspect of apologies might help us understand why they often seem so hollow in the face of mass atrocities and other awful crimes, and how easy it is for an apology to sound insincere, particularly when there is incomplete acknowledgment of the wrongdoing and no clear commitment to change (Minow, 1998). During his 1998 tour of Africa, President Bill Clinton apologized for the

slave trade while visiting Uganda (Ryle, 1998). Yet, rather than soothe feelings, the apology inflamed political opinions. Some critics felt that Clinton ignored any African responsibility for slave trading, and other critics felt that the true apology was due to African Americans, but this choice was avoided because it would set the stage for reparations (Ryle, 1998). Similar concerns about the link between apologetic language and requests for reparation were raised at the recent U.N. racism summit in Durban, South Africa (Itano, 2001). Western governments were reluctant to include language that recognized discrimination against indigenous people because of the legal effects it might have on ongoing land disputes between indigenous people and governments (Itano, 2001). As Ryle (1998) writes, public apologies by world leaders are problematic because "It is not quite clear who is saying sorry to whom. Or on whose behalf. Or how sorry they really are" (p. T007).

### **Bystander Judgments**

The self-involvement of victims and perpetrators is obvious, but the self-concepts of bystanders also are implicated in judgments of deserving. As Beattie and Doherty (1995) eloquently describe in their analyses of an eyewitness account of an attempted murder in Northern Ireland, bystanders are rarely neutral observers. Yet how they describe an event constructs the reality for others in their community. For example, if an ostensibly factual account represents the victim as completely blameless and by contrast, the perpetrator as ruthless and amoral, the stage is set for justified revenge (Beattie and Doherty, 1995). As their discursive analysis reminds us, judgments of perpetrators and victims are rarely made in isolation but are intertwined with each other.

A key question is whether bystanders view the judgment target (victim or perpetrator) as a fellow in-group member or an out-group member. In his book, Feather (1999) argues that when judgments of group membership are inconsistent with the valance of actions and outcomes, judgments of personal responsibility and deservingness are attenuated. Out-group members who work hard for good outcomes will be viewed as less responsible and less deserving than in-group members who work hard, just as in-group members who act badly are viewed as less responsible and deserving of punishment than are out-group members who act badly (the same logic is applied to judgments of morality and likability). However, sometimes we may react more harshly to fellow in-group members who violate a norm than to out-group members who violate the same norm (e.g., the black sheep hypothesis; Marques and Paez, 1995). At first blush, the black sheep hypothesis appears to contradict the consistency principles outlined in Feather's model. However, Feather suggests that people viewed as moral, as fellow in-group members, or as having high status may be viewed as more responsible for their behavior than people viewed as immoral, as out-group members, or as having low status,

and therefore, they are judged to be more deserving of the consequences of their actions.

Feather's model suggests two variables that might influence whether in-group members are judged more or less harshly than out-group members. First, if values more central to the person's group identity are violated, we might expect in-group members to be judged more harshly than out-group members. In this case, it might be easier to reframe the relative inclusion or status of the target than to reevaluate important values. If a person who shares our religious affiliation is responsible for a bomb explosion that kills innocent children, we might relabel the person as a religious zealot operating outside our faith and judge him/her more harshly than members of other religious faiths might. Alternatively, if the unit relationship between the actor and the observer is particularly strong or close (e.g., the actor is included within the observer's self-category; Smith, 1993; Turner, 1999), we might expect in-group members to be judged less harshly than an out-group member. In this case, it might be easier to reevaluate the valance of particular outcomes and actions than to change group boundaries. Because it is difficult to change one's nationality, people might view their own country's behavior as more justified and less negative than members of other nationalities view the same behavior.

Two other factors not included in Feather's current model also can help sort out differences in judgments of in-group and out-group members. Not only might the influence of group membership on deserving judgments depend upon group identification or categorization, it also may depend upon the group membership of the audience (Barreto et al., 1999; Reicher and Levine, 1994). It might be easier to acknowledge a "black sheep" to a fellow in-group member than to an out-group member. Further, we might be more likely to acknowledge in-group variability when the intergroup context is less salient (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead, 1998; Simon, 1999). Second, it is important to consider how deeply people are willing to think about deserving judgments (Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 1998). In a recent experiment, when a videoclip increased participants' general anger, they punished the perpetrators in unrelated vignettes more harshly, particularly if the perpetrator in the first videotape was not punished (Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock, 1999). However, a separate experiment showed that if participants believed that they would be accountable for their decision (Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 1998), they were no less angry, but they paid more attention to mitigating factors when deciding how to punish perpetrators. It is possible that people feel more accountable when the target shares an important group membership than when the target does not (Boeckmann, 1993).

Not only does a shared group membership have implications for how we might view a judgment target, but it also carries implications for our own self-concept. It may not be that we believe in a just world (Lerner, 1981) so much as that we believe that our groups are just groups (Finkel, 2001). For example, we know that a preference for equality consistently tempers judgments of in-group favoritism

within minimal group experiments (Tajfel, 1970), and that if a norm of fairness is made salient, the tendency to favor the in-group can be completely undermined (Hertel and Kerr, 2001; Jetten, Spears, and Manstead, 1996). What if the person is a member of a group or nation responsible for horrific harm to another group? Even if they could not possibly be personally responsible for the harm (perhaps they were born after the massacres occurred), could they experience collective guilt? To investigate this question, Doosje and his colleagues (1998) manipulated the perceived discriminatory behavior of participants and their respective groups. Even participants who learned that although they had not discriminated against an out-group, their group did, felt guilty about their group's behavior and recommended compensation for the out-group members. A second study confirmed that feelings of collective guilt shaped support for compensation for an out-group beyond feelings of personal guilt.

The possibility of collective guilt poses an interesting problem for current social categorization research on justice (Wenzel, 2000). The assumption is that group memberships are unit relationships fairly resistant to change, and that when confronted with inconsistencies, people simply redefine the meaning of merit and equity on the basis of salient shared group membership (Wenzel, 2000). But imagine a situation in which a person discovers a member of their family has participated in the lynching of blacks in the American South. On the one hand, the person might reframe the situation so that lynching fits with in-group norms about the treatment of out-group members (see Wenzel, 2000). On the other hand, it might be difficult to reframe lynching as reasonable, and instead, they may rethink their attachment to the family. In other words, attachments to particular groups may not always shape people's interpretations of deserving and fairness. Sometimes people's interpretations of deserving and fairness might shape their attachment to particular groups. As this group boundary example illustrates, and as Feather acknowledges, judgments of deserving may not always progress in the way his model describes. For example, when we evaluate whether a political terrorist guilty of sabotage deserves the death penalty, we may evaluate his or her morality on the basis of our opinion of the action, rather than treat his or her morality as an independent contribution to our judgment.

### **Societal Institutions**

Earlier I have suggested that people can respond to harm doing as unique individuals or as group representatives. Similarly, Feather and his colleagues (2001) show that the focus of deserving judgments can be a single person or an entire corporation. However, the focus to this point had been on microjustice issues, about the deservingness of particular actors, as opposed to macrojustice issues such as how societal institutions should respond to norm violations (Tyler et al., 1997). In

other words, often we are not just witnesses (or perpetrators or victims), but we are part of an institutional response. When we consider larger institutional responses to harm doing, we are not limited to forgiveness and demands for compensation, but we can sanction, rehabilitate, or even give amnesty to perpetrators (Bazemore, 1998; Minow, 1998).

How societal institutions respond to harm doing may be particularly important when the process is more salient than a particular outcome. When a particular unfairness was viewed as differences in outcomes, people focused on the victim, but when the same unfairness was viewed as a problem with the process, people focused on the authorities and the larger society (Finkel, 2001). A similar pattern might occur with perpetrators. As Boeckmann (1993, 1999) shows, when an in-group member violates an important norm, people want more careful and protective procedures than when an out-group member violates the same norm. However, they also punish a guilty in-group perpetrator more harshly than an out-group perpetrator guilty of the same crime. Procedural issues implicate the group's values, whereas distributive issues implicate the target.

Minow (1998) proposes three questions societies must confront when responding to harm doing: (1) whether and how to punish, (2) how much to acknowledge what has happened (or bearing witness to crimes), and (3) how to recover. If we consider these three questions together, we might begin to integrate three fairly independent strands of psychological research. Feather's research is part of a long tradition in social psychological research investigations of how ordinary people determine responsibility, blame, deserving, and punishment. This focus on apportioning blame and setting punishment is also the hallmark of the adversarial process in U.S. courtrooms (Bazemore, 1998). A second tradition is represented by procedural justice research that shows clear evidence for the psychological benefits of "voice" within judicial and other organizational contexts. Further, there is evidence that often people's first response to injustice is to turn to peers to verify or support their interpretation (Bies and Tripp, 1996; Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, and Russo, 1994), suggesting how critical simply acknowledging injustice can be. Finally, clinical research represents a third comparatively new tradition in which the focus is on the therapeutic benefits of forgiveness (van Oyen Wivliet, Ludwig, and Vander Laan, 2001). However, research in each of these three areas tends to focus on a single role; how people might judge a perpetrator, or how forgiveness or the opportunity for voice might benefit victims. The challenge is to address each of the three questions posed by Minow from all three perspectives. Perhaps equally importantly, almost all the psychological research to this point treats these issues as interpersonal issues. Yet as Minow describes, these questions may be even more potent at the intergroup level. It is impossible to reduce recent events in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Indonesia to single acts of aggression between specific perpetrators and victims (although critics of international tribunals argue that this is exactly the problem with legal prosecutions; Minow, 1998).

## CONCLUSIONS

Feather's model reminds us how potent judgments of deserving are. His model offers insight into recent legal arguments that perpetrators of war crimes are not personally responsible for their actions because they were suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome (Does this mean they are responsible only for the first horrific act? Leach, personal communication). His model also offers insight into the emotional turmoil of returning soldiers confronted with the possibility that they killed innocent civilians. Feather describes a complex model able to incorporate personality variables, group memberships, positive and negative outcomes, emotional and behavioral reactions. In particular, Feather shows how the underlying values people hold influence their evaluative reactions to other people's actions and outcomes. By offering this complex model of deserving judgments, Feather opens the door for considering the negotiated and contextual nature of deservingness judgments. Neutral bystanders rarely judge the deservingness of perpetrators in isolation from the victims.

Unfortunately, once we recognize how intertwined and rhetorically driven deserving judgments can be, what are clear theoretical distinctions become overlapping and messy concepts in psychological reality. Understanding deserving is not just an academic issue. It is a central theme in both legal and commonsense thinking about justice.

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