

Thinking About Need

A Vignette Experiment on Need-Based Distributive Justice

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Abstract: We examine the role of need satisfaction in non-comparative justice ratings of endowments with goods. As normative approaches, we discuss utilitarianism, prioritarianism, and three versions of sufficientarianism. Using a vignette experiment with 109 participants, we elicit the participants' justice ratings of endowments with living space and estimate their justice evaluation functions. We show that a need context increases the prevalence of prioritarianistic and sufficientarianistic justice ratings. Moreover, a need threshold also changes the utilitarians' justice evaluation functions significantly.

Keywords: Basic Needs, Justice Principles, Prioritarianism, Sufficientarianism, Utilitarianism, Vignette Experiment

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