

# Equal Deeds, Different Needs

## Need, Accountability, and Resource Availability in Third-Party Distribution Decisions

Alexander Max Bauer<sup>1</sup> and Jan Romann<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, University of Oldenburg,

Corresponding Author, E-Mail: alexander.max.bauer@uni-oldenburg.de

<sup>2</sup> SOCIUM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy, University of Bremen

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**Abstract:** In a vignette study with a quota sample of the German population ( $n = 400$ ), subjects had to redistribute a good between two hypothetical persons who contributed equally to the available amount but differed in quantity needed and the reason for their neediness. Within subjects, it was tested for the effects of need, accountability, and resource availability. Between subjects, kinds of needs were varied: Persons needed the good to survive, to live a decent life, to participate in society, or to be autonomous. Despite equal productivity, the mean share allocated to the needier person was significantly higher than an equal share. However, this share turned out significantly smaller when the needier person was accountable for needing more. Nonetheless, even if accountable, the needier person still got a share larger than their contribution. When there was a surplus of resources, the needier person got a higher share than when resources were scarce.

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