Dana 2007: Exploiting Moral Wiggle Room: Experiments demonstrating an illusory preference for fairness

* Does generosity in experiments really mean we care about desirable social outcomes?
  + Binary version of ‘dictator game’. Several treatments where subjects can ‘leave’ the relationship between their actions and the outcomes uncertain
    - Either to themselves or another subject influenced by these actions, thus providing the plausible deniability or ‘wiggle room’ to behave in self-interested ways.
* Finds significantly less generous behavior in these manipulations, relative to the baseline where how actions relate to outcomes is transparent.
* Conclusion is that ‘fair behavior’ is mostly because people intrinsically dislike appearing unfair, either to themselves or others

Fairness can be easily looked at in ‘dictator games’, where a dictator makes a 1-shot division of money between themselves and an anonymous recipient who has no recourse. A selfish person would keep the entire amount, but the majority of subjects give SOMETHING, and the average amount given is over 20%. Even when there is DOUBLE-blind anonymity!

“Social Preference” theories argue this is due to a preference for equitable outcomes or social welfare. People MAY share with each other because they have increasing utility in others’ payoffs, are averse to advantageous payout differences, or want to maximize TOTAL social payoffs or the lowest payoff to any one party. The common feature here is that the dictators’ preferences are characterized by only looking at final distribution of wealth.

THUS ‘Giving’ can be interpreted as being like any other consumption good, except that the dictator is ‘buying’ equity or social welfare!

It’s possible that you may want to give in some cases! Even when you are selfish, because you do not want to APPEAR selfish, either to themselves or others. The motivation driving this ‘fair’ behavior could be self-interest, and/or a desire to maintain the illusion of not being selfish. The same people who give in a context like the dictator game could prefer the unfair outcome, as long as there is an excuse to not have to give (or not know the consequences of their actions!), e.g.

* Person who would donate bone marrow if they had a match on the registry, removes themselves from the registry
* People who have STD who might stop having sex if they knew for sure, may avoid testing in order to keep having sex.
* Alternatively, other ‘dictators’, or those who COULD help, in order to not feel like they themselves have to help.
  + “I wont stop to help the stranded car b/c someone else will’
  + “This crime victim will be fine, someone else will help”
* Dictator can exploit (possibly asymmetric) uncertainty about what, precisely, causes unfair outcomes
  + Under plausible deniability, could act more in self-interest
  + E.g. a Manager would act in a manner beneficial to employees if it’s clear that the manager is solely responsible, but if that’s not the case… they can behave self-interestedly at their expense!

Rather than having a preference for a ‘fair outcome’, people may ‘conform’ to situational pressure to give in certain contexts. Conversely, some situations can be exploited for justification to behave selfishly.

* Test this w/ a nonstandard ‘dictator game’
  + Historically, ‘dictator game’ is transparent, there is common 1-to-1 mapping between the dictator’s actions and outcomes
* Series of manipulations, capitalizing on uncertainty to eliminate transparency.
* Most dictators ARE generous in a baseline transparent game
  + Selfishness increases SIGNIFICANTLY in the absence of transparency.
  + Are people aware of this happening, and is that part of why there is hesitation to trust/support something that is nontransparent (UHC service distribution?)
* This cannot be due to motivation to prefer some types of outcome, as transparency would be irrelevant there, the dictators can STILL force the outcomes they want.
* Additionally, reciprocity and perceptions of others’ intentions are important to determine utility in a social outcome.
  + This doesn’t matter here though, as the receiver is in a ‘passive’ position

Study

* Binary choice between equal and unequal (and welfare inefficient) wealth allocation
  + Baseline game was transparent
  + Three manipulations relax transparency assumption
* Subjects randomly assigned to one treatment
  + Undergraduates at University of Pittsburgh, volunteering in exchange for money
  + Drew cards to represent role (dictator or passive)
* Subjects were told that all members in the group would be paid according to the dictators (Player X in most treatments, X and Y in multiple dictator condition)
* Subjects were then given instructions and info on the actual payoffs.

Four main treatments

* Baseline (n = 38)
  + Dictators choose between A or B, with 60 seconds of time looking at the payoff matrix to force consideration of what they would do.
  + Relationship between actions and outcomes is transparent!
* Hidden Information (n = 64)
  + Dictator remained ignorant to the consequences for recipient, they got 6$ for A, and 5$ for B, but the amount the other person would get was unknown, told that they would either get 1 and 5, or 5 and 1 (where both parties are better for choosing A)
    - True payoffs were told that they could not be revealed publicly, but could be done by pressing a button. Informed that this choice would be private.
  + If giving money in the baseline = preference for equitable distribution, then % of dictators who give should be equal to proportion that reveals true payoffs, AND chooses the most equitable action.
    - Instead, if dictators are seeking an excuse to not feel compelled to give, then they might choose to remain uninformed and choose A under ignorance.
* Multiple Dictator (n = 30)
  + Second dictator added, thus no dictator is solely responsible, although the ‘fair’ outcome can be implemented unilaterally by either.
    - 2/3rd of subjects assigned to dictator X or Y, 1/3rd assigned to recipient.
    - Both dictators must choose A to get the inequitable outcome.
  + If the baseline reasoning holds, should have same proportion of B choices in the treatment as in the baseline.
  + Note that this treatment BREAKS transparency, the selfish choice A no longer guarantees the unfair outcome for the recipient.
* Plausible Deniability (n = 58)
  + Allow for the ‘unlikely’ possibility of the dictator losing agency, thus allowing outcomes to plausibly result from causes other than the dictator’s actions.
    - Adds a ‘cut-off’ feature, there is a 10s window to make choices, but if not made within a random cutoff time in the interval, it would choose between A and B with equal probability.
    - Only the dictator knows if a cutoff occurs.
  + Cutoff feature is largely irrelevant as most choices can be made within 2 seconds, and at most, 4 seconds (most cutoffs were at 5 and 6).
  + This relaxes the assumption of transparency, distinguishing between two types of mechanisms for moral ‘wiggling’
    - First, receivers can’t differentiate between dictators and nature, dictators choosing A more frequently would be an ‘other-deceptive’ motive. But the dictator still knows they were responsible for the inequity!
    - If ‘self-deception’ is responsible, dictators might ‘dither’ and let themselves be cutoff, with a 50% likelihood of getting the fair outcome they are compelled to choose, but with 50% likelihood of ‘winning’ with the selfish outcome.

Results

* Baseline game: Majority of dictators acted fairly, 74% chose the even split. All receivers chose B. This is consistent w/ previous evidence of sharing in dictator games, and is INTERPRETED as supporting the idea that people prefer the generous outcome.
  + Also consistent with the idea that dictators feel compelled to give in transparent situations.
* Hidden Payoff treatment: Of the 16 dictators looking at the original payoff, 63% chose the uneven split, even though revealing this information is no-cost.
  + Only 56% even chose to reveal the payoff!
  + Only 47% chose to reveal AND chose the ‘fair’ option, less than the proportion in the original game (even though revealing was ‘no-cost’ and happened!)
  + Hypothetical receiver choices mirror this, all receivers wanted the fair option in baseline, only 59% wanted it in the hidden payoff condition.
    - Suggests that several choices were NOT the result of dictators wanting to implement the ‘fair’ outcome
    - Many dictators appeared to exploit the payoff uncertainty as an excuse for self-interested behavior.
* Multiple Dictator treatment: only 35% of subjects chose fair choices in the two dictator solution. All receivers correctly predicted that ‘unfair’ would be the most popular choice.
  + Likely that a great deal of ‘generosity’ isn’t derived from socially desirable outcomes, but to be perceived as doing so
* Plausible deniability treatment: This treatment allows the researcher to examine whether or not decreased giving is due to self or other deception.
  + Amongst dictators not cut off, 55% chose the selfish action, A, higher than the proportion in the baseline
    - Receiver uncertainty on payoff types seems to be enough to promote increased self-interest
  + 24% of dictators were cutoff and did NOT make a choice.
    - Many subjects seemed willing to delay making a choice, with the hope of avoiding making a choice altogether.
  + Only 10 out of 29, 34% are consistent with the desire to be ‘fair’
  + Dictators engaged in moral wiggling are heterogeneous in how they obtain the selfish outcomes. Some directly choose A (exploiting receiver uncertainty), others allow themselves to be cutoff by the computer (exploiting their own lack of agency and uncertainty over outcomes)
    - 45% of receivers would implement the ‘fair’ outcome in this condition

Conclusions

* Historically, generosity in experiments is interpreted as a preference for a fair/efficient outcome.
* Giving is actually consistent with people feeling COMPELLED to give due to situational factors, while not really valuing the corresponding outcome.
  + Relaxation of the transparency standard allows for enough moral ‘wiggle room’ to behave selfishly while maintaining the illusion of fairness.
* In all three conditions relaxing transparency, support for fairness plunges from around 75%, to around half, 35%.
  + The differences in context matter, but this pattern is similar to other experiments measuring ‘moral wiggling’
* Some environments have STRONG prescriptions for fair behavior (e.g. fully transparent dictator games), but these norms or constraints are less binding/compete with other norms once transparency is eliminated!
  + E.g. the ‘mind your business’ norm to justify not acquiring information on the other party’s payoff.
* The lack of ‘certainty’ regarding the consequences of the other party allows much of the self-interested behavior to occur.
  + The proportion of dictators who choose with certainty to implement unfair outcomes is less than ½!
* Relating to other work on fair behavior, previous studies show that people capitalize on information asymmetry or uncertainty to behave more to self-interest
  + Mostly to avoid sanctions or keep others ignorant of whether or not an outcome is fair.

Dana 2012: Ethical Immunity: How People Violate Their Own Moral Standards Without Feeling They Are Doing So

* Ethics are important in modern economy/organization. There are tons of opportunities to leverage malfeasance into personal upside.
* When people begin acting unethically, do they recognize that they are doing so?
  + Literature shows that the desire to appeal ethical to oneself and others has strong influence on human behavior.
  + Even if incentives exist to behave selfishly, we see punishing unethical others with no benefit to self, honesty when lying is profitable and undetectable, and egalitarian distribution of wealth at the expense of oneself.
* Given this, how is it possible that bad things happen so often?

We wish to examine the study of Behavioral Ethics

* Similar to behavioral economics, explains when and why ethically minded individuals behave unethically.
  + E.g. Behavior Econ shows how people’s behavior falls short of fulfilling their own goals (dynamic inconsistencies, procrastination, etc.)
  + Similarly, evidence exists that different but consequentially equivalent frames in a decision lead to different choices, showing that there are some contradictions for people with only minor variations on the context.
* People can fail to ‘systematically’ live up to their own ethical standards.
  + People might not be as ethically as even they themselves wish!
  + Difference from normative or legal ethical study, we want to understand how EVEN WELL INTENTIONED people can sometimes behave unethically.
  + Going beyond the idea that bad people are just ‘a few bad apples’
* Current instruction shows how people can use ethical principles to discriminate between ethical and unethical behavior.
  + Assumes however, that that by highlighting the moral components of choices, the people will choose the moral path
  + Behavioral ethics can illuminate when and why people who know the rules, and want to follow them, end up breaking them
  + This allows for us to potentially avoid some ‘ethics traps’
    - Ideally, allows for us to design institutions to reduce those traps, and make it ‘easy and natural’ for people to behave in conformity with their own ethical standards.

Why do people violate their ethical standards? Biggest reason: People are able to persuade themselves that they are NOT doing so!

* People can rationalize unethical behavior or position themselves to achieve ‘ethical immunity’ (avoiding information, delegating unethical activities to others). Not facing up to consequences and obvious interpretations of their actions.
* Examines 3 main ‘tactics’ that people use to avoid holding themselves ethically accountable.
  + Each line demonstrates people behave more ethically when there is moral accountability (actions clearly/directly reflect their ethical standards)
  + If you can avoid this, people will do so, and behave less ethically.
  + ‘People avoid moral accountability, so they will not feel compelled to behave in accord with their own standard of ethics’

Brief Note: Are Lab experiments even good for looking at ethics?

* Lots of literature shows that some ‘fairness’ and ‘honesty’ are indeed gains.
  + Giving up some money so others can benefit, not lying for gain, etc.
* This is good to understand ethics in clear and simple positions/situations.
* While lab experiments show there is some propensity for ethical behavior, this does not provide evidence about how people are ethical or NOT in other related contexts.
  + No research can do so, as all research focuses by necessity on a limited set of circumstances, with a particular set of characteristics.

Diffusing Responsibility

* People can avoid accountability for difficult ethical choices when the responsibility for the choice itself is diffused. Other people existing allows for us to diffuse responsibility in a way that enables people to act self-interestedly.
* Two main types of diffusion, Vertical and Horizontal:
  + Vertical: Occurs when there is an intermediary between the decision maker and the stakeholders in the choice. The decision maker is less responsible for the outcome.
    - E.g. Company can use ‘firing consultants’ which don’t do much other than firing employees.
    - Firms can outsource to contractors that pay less than the standards of the firm itself
  + Horizontal: Decision makers rely on others to act in a stakeholder’s best interests rather than doing so themselves, essentially the ‘bystander effect’.
* Diffusion works even for external observers as well as those directly involved.
* The extent to which people hold *themselves* accountable for actions is mitigated when acting through intermediaries.
  + “Principles” decided which of several “agents” to hire, to decided how much money given to the principle would be shared by a third party.
  + Principles here tended to fire those who gave a lot, and hire those who gave a little. The “employed’ agents were those who gave almost none of the dictator’s money to third parties.
  + Motivated to be hired, the agent’s choices become more favorable to the dictator over time, leaving the other party almost nothing.
    - Relative to where the dictator makes the choice themselves, much less was shared. Even though the dictators hired the agents, they felt less responsible for low payoffs for third parties.
* Delegation makes selfish outcomes easier because you don’t feel as morally accountable when someone else (even someone you hired) is doing the dirty work.
* Another example: Production of two subjects, which has costs for a third party.
  + The subjects decide the amount of product, which leads to their own payoff and the payoff for the third party.
  + Alternative arrangements: decision is made vertically (one subj sets production, the other carries it out), or horizontally (both subjects jointly determine production, w/ consensus or reaching avg) and varying the amount of communication b/w subjects.
  + Less harm for a third party when both subjects under ‘avg’ responses, but even worse when it’s vertically diffused, or horizontally w/ forced consensus (b/c the consensus choice chosen is usually the less ethical)
    - When allowing lots of communication, the vertical structure had the best outcomes, giving subordinates voices and responsibility reduces the effects of vertical diffusion.
* Horizontal diffusion can be just as bad (e.g. bystander effect)
* However, the bystander effect can be seen as confounding two phenomena.
  + People might not care about what ethical choice is made if they don’t feel responsible
  + Consistent w/ a free rider problem, people may truly care about ethics, but would prefer not to incur the costs of taking the ethical action themselves if there is a good chance someone else will.
* Dana et al. finds the first effect in an economic game:
  + 2 choice makers choose between actions giving money for them and a 3rd party.
  + Each choice maker can ensure a fair outcome, and the unfair outcome only happens if both decision makers select it, thus, either choice maker can unilaterally guarantee a ‘fair’ outcome.
  + No free rider problem was present, there is no material advantage to letting someone else ensure equity.
  + This resulted in selfish choices more often, as this only happens if the other person is also selfish, which diffuses responsibility

Exploiting Uncertainty

* In binary dictator scenarios, when the other group didn’t realize that resources can be split fairly, was seen as maximizing the total amount of net payout is prioritized unless there is uncertainty/obscuration on the relation between payoff and action.
  + Hidden information treatments, the decision maker simply reveals the ‘true payoffs’ and selects the more generous option
    - Roughly half did not choose to reveal, allowing for their choices to be unfair. Not knowing how others are impacted, provides the decision maker w/ ethical immunity to pursue self-interest, regardless of whether or not it’s easy to find out how others are impacted.
* These experiments suggest people can sacrifice personal gain for others when information is known, but doesn’t hold under some uncertainty (mostly irrelevant uncertainty, even if it’s easy to resolve
  + People abuse this as an excuse to be unethical.
* Haisley et al shows another example: In their experiment, decision makers make binary choices, wit one being more equitable, but one more personally beneficial (selfish).
  + The payoff was contingent on a ‘lottery’, when the probability of winning could be anywhere between 0 and 1 (ambiguity) or 50% (known) condition.
  + When the payoff is known, the dictator cannot manipulate perception of likelihood
  + Under ambiguity, the subject could convince themselves that the lottery is favorable for the recipient, which allows the dictator to ask selfishly, while believing that they were not doing so!
    - This relies on ethical immunity provided by ‘ambiguity’ and what they’re doing is ‘not that bad’
* Generally, selfishness occurs more often under ambiguity as compared to ‘known risk’. Biasing the incentivized estimates of payoffs to third parties upward under ambiguity, showing that they convinced themselves that the lotteries would work out better for the third party.

Seeking Justifications

* People play ‘mind games’ with themselves, serving a function of not holding them to account, based on ignorance of information and situations.
* Van Avermaet et al: participants filled questionnaires until told to stop, and they left with money to pay themselves and another person who left, told one of four things.
  + The other person spent ½ time and ½ output
  + Other person put in ½ time and 2x output
  + Other person put in 2x time and 2x output
  + Other person put in 2x time and ½ output
* Almost no one kept all the money, but splitting was based on effort.
  + Those who worked twice as long and twice as output were given twice as much money.
  + The participants kept > ½ money in when the other worked twice and did less, worked less and did twice, which is based on ‘merit’ but systematically favors the subject.
  + Half as much and half as long resulted in half the money as well.
* ‘What is a fair allocation’ is malleable, towards judgements that favor the self
  + Most people want to be fair/ethical, but these systems of fairness can systematically be biased towards the self.
* Behavioral economists show that self-serving bias is caused by selective interpretation of information, in both labs and in field studies, to failures/impasses in negotiation.
* Lowenstien et al., Experiment on settling, defendants had money to finance settlement, division of the money was what they took home as pay, the longer it took to settle, the more both sides lost as the total money shrank.
  + Under no settling, the money was split by a neutral judge (and asked to predict how the judge would rule, and paid extra based on accuracy).
  + Estimates of ‘fair’ settlements were biased in self-serving manner. This was reflected in bad predictions of judge ruling, which were higher than those of the defendants (even tho the estimates were secret and didn’t effect the settlement)
  + Larger discrepancies between plaintiffs and defendants were associated with lower likelihood of settling.
  + Self-serving biases are unintentional, even when it’s best to not have them!
* Repeated but where the evidence is all read out first, and then sides are assigned.
  + This prevents motivation from interpreting evidence as favorable to one side or another, while researching. Perceptions and predictions of fairness, were more closely related to a ‘neutral’ third party, and this lead to drastically increased ‘settlement’ rates.
* One similar approach uses individual’s initial perception of ambiguity to constrain how much they can abuse it to act unethically.
  + Asked dictators their preference towards ambiguity versus risk before the choice. This mild intervention was sufficient to constrain later actions/judgements.
  + These dictators did not view ambiguity as favorable, resulting in less selfish behavior.
  + Obtaining the initial ‘unbiased’ judgements of what’s fair or ethical, can be very powerful at preventing deflection of responsibility.
* Rationalization for accepting gifts as a doctor:
  + Most doctors early in career were asked to see if getting gifts were good
  + Some were asked about sacrifices in med school first, others were asked the same question, but also the idea that hardship might make accepting gifts OK to do.
  + Control group were asked about getting gifts without priming questions.
* Reminding physicians of sacrifices made gifts seem more acceptable, even though most disagreed with the presented rationalization.
  + Thus, reminders of hardship lead physicians to conclude that they deserved gifts.
* “Die in Cup”: Subjects were asked to roll a dice under a cup, private see the result, and then get paid based on the # rolled.
  + The distribution of reports differed significantly from a fair dice roll, with only a modest amount of lying (37% claimed to roll a 6), which fit the distribution of reporting the best of three rolls, even though they only were supposed to report the first.
  + Done again with hiding the result from being seen, we saw that there was less lying, as the participants needed justification to be able to lie (having the opportunity to roll multiple times was the justification, they could roll until they saw a better #, then they felt that their report was ‘less of a lie’)

Conclusion

* Ethics is complex, with lots of context around right or wrong choices.
* There are a lot of opportunities to act unethically in business, as there is mass diffusion of responsibility.
  + Also lots of uncertainty
  + Also lots of room to make shitty justifications that are self-beneficial.
* We can attack ‘ethical immunity’ by creating greater self-accountability.
  + “choice architecture” can be used to help rational people make better choices.

Hansson 2020: Losing sense of fairness: How information about a level playing field reduces selfish behavioraH

* Inaccurate beliefs about procedural fairness can lead folks to act in selfish manners.
  + Does information about a ‘level playing field’ mitigate these behaviors?
  + Manipulate whether participants are informed about the fairness of a competition or not.
    - Following the competition, subjects (who won or lost) decided to distribute earnings for them and their opponent.
    - Informing participants about the fairness of the competition reduces selfish behavior for losers (not affecting winners), but losers who were not informed about the fairness incorrectly viewed it as being unfairly stacked against them.
  + Information about perceived ‘fairness’ reduces selfish behavior and is important for understanding when and why motivated reasoning about fairness helps people uphold positive self-image.

Winners don’t complain about fairness, but losers often do (for referees). Especially for academics, people at work, and in general folks want to see the world ‘as they want it to be’, which doesn’t work well in conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty.

* External attribution for failures
* Internal attribution for successes

Because this his hard asf, people generally search for info that bolsters their views/beliefs, which leads them to remembering good things and bad things that they were struggling through more than the equivalent for other people. Viewing lack of success as due to unfair processes can be problematic, and subjective beliefs on whether the outcomes were fair might have them act selfishly to ‘level the playing field’

Study

* Losers of a competition who get info that both were done fairly will be less selfish than losers with no info
  + When no info is given, losers will be more likely to believe (than winners) that the competition was unfair
  + Beliefs about fairness will be correlated to selfish behavior for losers in a competition
* N = 444, English speakers recruited online, done in Qualtrics
* Assigned to one of two conditions, information or no information.
  + Participants did competition against other people and given more earnings for doing well. 12 easy and 12 hard tasks were given
  + Afterwards, they were told that they won or lost, in the info condition, participants were told that the same tasks were equivalent, and in the no info condition, people had to guess for themselves to estimate how hard or easy it was for the opposition.
  + Then, people gave the ability to split rewards afterwards, losers were asked how many they wanted to ‘take’ from the winner, and winners were ask how many they wanted to ‘give’ to the losers.

Results

* Information reduces selfish behavior in losers, about 15% less selfish behavior. Winners have no main difference either way.
* Had scored performance objectively, for those told that they lost, and split losers into high and low performance.
  + For high performing losers, told that the competition was fair, took much less than those high performing losers in the no info condition.
  + No difference in selfish behavior between low performing losers, with or without information.
    - Losing a competition after doing well makes concerns about fairness more salient, and increases potential selfish behavior.
* Why are losers less selfish, but winners not more altruistic, when given information?
  + Belief was that the competition had less difficult tasks, or that they had more difficult tasks than the opponent. Losers believed that even more so than those who won.
  + No real difference between high or low performing losers however.
  + Estimation of number of difficult tasks were not robustly associated with selfish behavior in losers, or altruistic behavior for winners.

Conclusion

* People who form subjective beliefs on fairness act more self-serving and selfish, providing explicit information on fairness reduces this.
  + This has no effect on winners.
* This information about ‘fairness’ can reduce the “moral wiggle room” people use to justify selfish behavior.
* The absence of explicit information about the procedure of a competition may have similar effects on selfish behavior, especially to those who are ‘losing’
  + How can this be applied to distribution of healthcare goods? The ‘procedure’ by which individuals are selected to be able to get care?
  + Arranging fair procedures and practices is vital to justice/ethics, but INFORMING people of this procedural fairness is ALSO key!
* Many performance outcomes can be due to factors outside of control, which reasonably leads some to conclude that losing wasn’t their own fault, but by reinforcing how ‘fair’ the playing field is, we reduce selfish behavior.

Almas 2020: Cutthroat Capitalism versus Cuddly Socialism: Are Americans More Meritocratic and Efficiency-Seeking than Scandinavians?

* Both countries are massively different, and equality/resource distribution can and should be tracked by social preference.
  + Americans and Norwegians are asked to make distributive choices in identical environments.
* Online labor market and data collection shows that Americans and Norwegians differ significantly in fairness views, but not importance of efficiency.
  + Also, fairness considerations are more fundamental for inequality acceptance than efficiency considerations!

Historically, the US has the greatest income inequality amongst OECD countries, and redistribution policies are much more favorable in Scandinavia, with high taxes, more welfare, and more income mobility. This is seen as ‘cutthroat capitalism’ vs ‘cuddly socialism’.

* What are the difference between Americans and Scandinavians?
  + With regards to what inequalities are fair
  + The importance assigned to fairness vs efficiency
* Note that the social preferences in both countries heavily shape individual behavior.
  + What other reasons could explain the difference in equality?
  + Americans could differ from Scandinavians in what they believe to be the source of income inequality in society
    - US and Scandinavia may be in different social equilibrium, with self-sustained beliefs that inequality in US is due to differences in productivity rather than luck.
  + This is consistent w/ US and Scandinavian having the same meritocratic ‘fairness’ view.
    - Inequalities due to work are OK, those due to luck are unfair.
* Thus, Americans can accept more inequality and less redistribution, because they believe differently about the SOURCE of the inequality (people not working hard).
* Beliefs on the COST of redistribution can vary significantly as well
  + Scandinavian countries could be a ‘role model’ for how to run efficient and responsive government.
  + Americans might favor redistribution less because they don’t trust their government to do it efficiently.
    - Argument that it might cost more for US because they are the ‘vehicle for innovation and economic growth worldwide’ to be redistributive.

The Study

Had 2 types of participants, workers and spectators

* Spectators decided whether or not to redistribute earnings b/w a pair of workers who did the same assignment
  + N = 1000, recruited from Norstat and Research Now (Scandinavian and US companies), Representative sample, balanced on age, gender, and demographics otherwise, with higher education overrepresented for both countries.
  + US and Norway spectators had the same information on source of inequality and cost of redistribution, and faced identical distributive situations.
    - Randomly assigned to 1 of 3 treatments that only differed with respect to the source of inequality in earnings or cost of redistribution
    - The spectators were told that the workers didn’t know how much thye would make, and that they didn’t know who made the choices (and no information about nationality)
* Workers did the task in and of itself, recruited from Mechanical Turk, given a small participation fee and told they could make more money doing more actions in the experiment.
  + N = 1,334: Each worker completed 3 assignments, and matched in random pairs (2001 unique pairs of assignments/workers).
  + In each, they initially were randomly given 6 dollars, and the other 0 dollars.
* Treatments: In all of them, since the distribution was split, someone got 6 and another got 0 dollars. The goal was to distribute some of the money from the 6 to the person with 0. The main difference was the source of the inequality!
  + Luck: ‘Base’ treatment, the spectators were told that the initial distribution was determined at random, and they could choose to not split, or split in any way, with NO cost of redistribution (total output is always 6$)
  + Merit: Initial assignment of earnings was determined by productivity, the more productive person got 6, and the other 0, otherwise the same as luck condition.
  + Efficiency: Same as luck, but the cost of redistribution was 100% of the transferred amount. For each dollar redistributed, the person w/ earnings would be reduced by 2 dollars. Thus, 6-0, 4-1, 2-2, or 0-3 were the only choices.
* Mainly, differences in luck being the source, with and without redistribution cost, or the source changing, with no difference in redistribution cost.

Follow-Up

* 1340 spectators and another 2680 workers, repeating the same procedures as the main study
* This replication was to add robustness in results.
* Two luck conditions, the original condition, and one where workers were told about their initial earnings (luck + more info)
  + This allows to see whether information about initial earnings, affecting the worker expectations, had any influence on decisions!

Theory

* In theory, there were 3 main ‘fairness’ views that could be posited to exist
  + Egalitarian Fairness: It is fair that workers get the same income independently of their earnings
    - It’s fair to divide equally in both merit and luck treatment
  + Meritocratic Fairness: It is fair that he more productive worker gets more income than the less, but inequalities due to luck are NOT fair
    - Only this condition assigns importance to the source of inequality.
  + Libertarian Fairness: It is fair that the incomes of the workers are equal to their earnings.
    - It is fair that workers receive their earnings in all treatments
  + Note, a difference in behavior b/w the merit and luck treatment HAS to be driven by spectators with merit fairness ideal, differences in luck and efficiency has to be driven by meritocratic and egalitarian spectators.
    - Libertarian spectators don’t care or have a tradeoff between fairness and efficiency in the efficiency condition, because the original distribution is seen as both fair and efficient.
    - Effect of the ‘cost’ for redistribution depends on how many spectators are nonlibertarian and how much they care about efficiency.

Results

* 52.8% of spectators equalize completely between the two workers, and 23% didn’t redistribute at all. The worker with less gets on avg 34% of the income, and less than 1% of spectators give a higher income to the person with 0.
* Large difference between Americans and Norwegians!
  + Americans more likely to divide equally (43% vs 63%), more likely to not redistribute (32% vs 15%), and on avg give less to the worker with 0 initial money (29% vs 38,9%)
* There is generally more inequality acceptance when merit is the source of inequality instead of luck.
  + Efficiency considerations do not make spectators more willing to accept inequality, for both countries!
  + However, Norwegians have less inequality than Americans in all 3 treatments.
* In both countries, replacing luck with merit increase implemented inequality by .195 and .152 (us/Norway).
  + The estimated causal effect of introducing redistribution cost is small, and marginally significant for Norwegians, increased inequality by 0.011 and 0.049 (Norway/us).
* The share of libertarians in US is over twice that in norway (29% vs 13.8%), Egalitarians in Norway is over twice that in US (15.3% VS 35.6%). In both countries, meritocracy is the most common view, and roughly equal in both (37.5% vs 42.5%)
  + Thus, there are LARGE differences in fairness views between US and Norway!

Choshen-Hillel 2015: Waste Management: How Reducing Partiality Can Promote Efficient Resource Allocation

* How can we fairly engage in resource allocation? There are two main principles
  + Equity: e.g. Equal pay for equal work
  + Efficiency: Not wasting resources
* These two principles CAN conflict with each other, people will often waste resources to avoid inequity, but why?
  + We propose that avoiding inequity is NOT because they find it unfair, but because they want to avoid the appearance of bias
* Hypothesis: People will be more likely to favor efficient (but inequitable) allocation, if it puts them in a disadvantaged position, than if it puts OTHERS in a disadvantaged position.
  + Test by choosing to give extra resource to one person, and not giving it to anyone (inequity vs wasted resources)
  + Tested various paradigms, to see evidence of a ‘self-disadvantaging effect’
* Allocators were more likely to create inequity to avoid resource waste when the inequity puts them at disadvantage vs others, which helps them look more ‘fair’.
  + This puts the importance of impartiality even higher in distributive justice!

To avoid waste, people try to allocate resources efficiently, to maximize overall outcomes and ensure no benefit is being left on the table. However, efficient allocations are not always equal, 2 people splitting 3 tickets means that one should get two of them, an even split of 1/1 means a ticket is wasted.

When efficiency/equity are conflicting, people prefer equity over efficiency. Can we reduce this tendency, given certain circumstances? Unequal pay isn’t bad due to inequity, but because it creates ‘seeming bias’, where one person is getting preferential treatment.

Thus, hypothesize that people in 3rd party allocation problems, will prefer equitable/inefficient allocations, as inequity appears biased. In disadvantaged settings (where people could give less to themselves), would prefer efficiency but inequitable.

People really like equity! Living in a more egalitarian society, with equal pay, etc. People strive to distribute rewards with equity. Why do people like it so much? Concern for efficient social welfare, concerns over diminishing marginal utility. However, some have concerns that people do it not for pure upside, but to appear impartial and unbiased.

Impartiality:

* People prefer fairness, but why?
  + Motivated to avoid inequity, because it looks intrinsically unfair
* Unequal allocation will be seen as biased unless there is a culturally agreed upon justification (merit, need, talent, etc.)
  + E.g. giving more to people who work harder is NOT seen as partial.
* In some cases, inequitable distribution should be seen as fair.
  + Case in point, people favor inequitable but efficient allocation when the allocation is done in an impartial way (coin flip)
  + This is because each person had the same ‘chance’ to win, even if they actually won or didn’t win at random, they had the same expected value.
* Why would you give resources when you disadvantage yourself?
  + Giving people a sense of agency in the resource allocation reduces the negative response to getting less than others.

Studies

* Series of studies, where essentially one person chooses to give something b/w two people, or have the resources wasted.
  + Merit, need, and effort are held constant to align equality with equity.
* Main manipulation was whether or not the self would be relatively disadvantaged by the unequal resource allocation.
  + Basic paradigm had participants assigning resources between two deserving employees, and could choose efficient/inequality or equal/inefficient.
  + Main difference was whether or not the self was one of these parties.

Study 1

* Assigned to 3rd party or self-disadvantage condition.
  + Asked to see if Bill can use the new computer, vs James (3rd party) or yourself (self-disadvantage)
* N = 69, recruited from Mechanical Turk.
* Results
  + Participants were more likely to let bill use the new computer when the choice disadvantages the self vs a rando (94% vs 55%!)
  + This falls in line with the hypothesis, and the avg participant felt the unused computer would be wasteful.

Study 2

* Disadvantaging the self makes participants more likely to allocate efficiently/unequally because they are worried about appearing envious or ungenerous
* Study 2 tests this by looking at other motivation, allocating money instead of a computer, then asked how partial/envious/generous the decision appears when choosing between one or the other
* Asked who should get the extra 100$, when both are already given 200$, or neither gets the extra money, when it’s rando vs you.
  + Asked then to see how partial the rating was on various metrics
* Results
  + Participants were more likely to give the bonus to Allison when it disadvantages the self (55%) then when it disadvantages a rando (25%)
  + Participants thought that the choice to give the bonus to neither was impartial in the rando condition, but not in the self condition.
    - In the self condition, both choices were seen as roughly somewhat partial/impartial
    - Likely due to various reasons behind viewing such a choice positively or negatively.
  + Perceived envy was moderated by condition/decision
    - When self was not disadvantaged, the choice to give to neither was similar to giving the bonus to the other, when the self was disadvantaged, the choice to give to neither was seen as more envious than giving to the other!
    - Same w/ perceived generosity, Generosity is seen as greater in the self-disadvantage condition when giving to other vs neither.
  + Significant effect of mediation, where impartiality, generosity, and envy, were found to significantly mediate the perception of condition and decision
* People were more likely to disadvantage themselves for efficient inequality than others, which was moderated by the appearance of impartiality, generosity, and envy.

Study 3

* Same as study 1 and 2, but asked to rate 3 attributes (impartiality, envy, generosity) for someone who made the choice to give the bonus to person A, or to neither.
  + This allows to see if people’s prior decisions are what drives these ratings, or if they would feel this way when rating an irrelevant other person
* Gave allocators and additional choice, flipping a coin to give @ random
  + Allows for a choice without favoritism, allowing inequality to be favored in both conditions, b/c the ‘way’ of choosing is impartial!
* One additional scenario as well; The extra bonus to allocate was a gift card that was about to expire, and would be WASTED if not given to anyone.
  + Did participants think this was obviously wasteful?
* Another setting, where unequal allocation seems partial b/c people were forced to choose b/w two recipients, rather than having to decide whether to give something to a predetermined recipient, and thus, showing favoritism to ONE over the other.
  + Predicts inefficient inequality in these, b/c unequal would seem partial in both cases.
* Essentially, whether bias is high or low, the effect of self-disadvantage is limited, as it doesn’t have much potential to affect the appearance of bias!
* N = 230, recruited on Mechanical Turk
  + Assigned to 1/6 conditions, 2x3 design
    - 2x = Self disadvantage Y/N
    - 3x = Allocating setting (low bias, standard bias, high bias)
  + Normal bias condition is same as study 2, with the extra bonus being an expiring gift card
  + High bias condition was the same, but there were 3 choices, giving to person A, person B, or neither (an efficient choice can only happen with the appearance of bias, since there’s no 3rd person to give to.
  + Low bias condition was same as high bias, but instead of choosing person A/B or neither, they could choose to flip a coin explicitly, or give to neither.
* Results
  + Normal bias = people were more likely to give to other when it disadvantaged the self vs when it did not
  + Low bias = people were not more likely to give to an employee according to a coin flip when the choice is for self or other
  + High bias = people were not more likely to give the extra card to either when the choice disadvantage self vs not.
    - The level of partiality associated with the decision appears to moderate the self-disadvantage effect
  + For low/high bias, self-disadvantage was eliminated because there was no impact on the mediators, of fairness/bias.
    - Tested by comparing ratings of what others would think in these choices vs their own choices. When the self was not disadvantaged, giving the card to neither is seen as fairer than giving to person A.
    - For low bias, no interaction exists between condition and decision, same as for the high-bias condition. The two choices were rated differently, but self disadvantage did not affect the rating.
  + Experimental condition had an effect on splitting rates, as well as on measured appearance of fairness.
    - There was partial mediation for choice based on perception of fairness.
  + Giving the card to no one was considered VERY wasteful, which didn’t differ between conditions.

Study 4a

* Extension of studies 1-3 using ‘real’ decisions, with participants being actually paid (or not!)
  + Want to know whether allocation efficiency is due to self disadvantage, or because OTHERS are NOT disadvantaged! Large practical difference between them.
* N = 2000 recruited for another online survey.
  + Asked to vote on whether other participants should be paid the same amount, or higher, than previous participants
  + One group would be told that the participants did the same task as they did, and choosing more money for others puts them at relative disadvantage
  + The other group was told that it would be for a different task, thus, the amount they got did not affect their own outcome.
    - Essentially, comparing b/w putting others in disadvantage versus putting yourself in disadvantage!
* Results
  + Participants were more likely to vote to pay future participants more when they were doing the same survey (self disadvantage condition), 52% vs 44%
  + Generosity and envy were both greater for those who would ‘pay the same’
  + There was not a large perception of waste for not paying future people more, essentially seeming less wasteful than an average amount of wastefulness.
    - Ambiguity in wording could be causing this.
* Validates/evidence towards the self disadvantaging effect, vs not disadvantaging others.

Study 4b

* Naturalistic study asking recent participants that they could help decide how money was to be allocated.
  + Asked if future participants should be paid the same amount or more.
* Split again into self disadvantage (same tasks in future) or not (other tasks, not the one voting one).
  + N = 107, students in previous studies, done in a naturalistic way.
  + Choosing payment b/w 2 for everyone, or 2 for past people and 3 for the remainder
* Results
  + Participants were more likely to vote for more money in the self-disadvantaged condition, 68% vs 49%

Study 5

* Is the efficient/unequal only because self-disadvantaged condition helps them do so without looking biased?
  + Another interpretation: Can give out more resources because the recipients are seen as ‘in-group’, b/c they all did the same task, vs the other condition sees them as an ‘out-group’ who did a different task.
* Did a new study with explicit definition of in-group and out-group, manipulating whether the recipients were in the in or out group, as well as whether the allocator was a 3rd party or self-disadvantaged.
  + If effect relies on group status, the self-disadvantage effect should not be seen when giving to out-group members.
  + Otherwise, the self-disadvantage effect should hold in BOTH cases!
* N = 138, recruited on Mechanical Turk
  + Assigned to 1 of 4 conditions, 2x2 design
  + 2x = Self-disadvantage or Third Party
  + 2x = Recipient is ingroup/outgroup
* Results
  + Participants were as predicted, more likely to give to the in-group than outgroup ¾ bias
  + Allocation was marginally effected by in-group members (74% vs 62%), but there was significant effect of self-disadvantage (85% vs 48%)
  + Suggests that group membership alone does not drive the increased giving produced by self-disadvantage effect.

Study 6

* Looking at a new situation, not just extra resources to someone vs no one, but extra resources to themselves directly (the pull of self-interest!)
  + Is there an effect of agency? People should favor allocations disadvantaging them more when they are involved in setting up than when they are not.
    - E.g. Would prefer to give an extra resource to others when they are choosing, but would prefer to get another resource when someone else is choosing (agency vs no agency)
* Same gift-card scenario as study 3 and 5, but choosing from 3 options
  + Agency condition: Give to person A, give to prson B, or to Neither
  + Self disadvantage: Give to A, give to self, or to Neither.
    - Efficient inequality benefiting the self, vs efficient inequality that does not, self-disadvantage condition SHOULD have more people giving to the other employee than in the 3rd party condition.
  + No agency: Participants were asked to imagine that someone else was making the choice, and asked which option of the 3 they would find MOST SATISFYING, giving extra to A, to B, or neither. In the other condition to A, to Self, or neither.
* Results:
  + There was more agency when asked to choose allocation, significantly!
    - Also, giving no-one the about to expire gift card was seen as very wasteful.
  + Self-disadvantage had significant effect on preferences. For agency and no agency.
    - In the agency condition, self-disadvantage gives card to neither only 16%, whereas in the 3rd party we see neither at 67%
  + Participants were more likely to prefer nonselfish inequality when they were involved in creating the allocation than when they were not (43 vs 23%)
  + Significant interaction b/w self disadvantage and agency.
  + Participants were more likely to favor the option that benefited someone else in the agency/self dis vs the no agency/self dis condition (51% vs 13%!)
    - Agency is very important in observing the self-disadvantage effect!!
    - People aren’t just replying in line with social desirability, if so, we would expect the same answer in the no-agency condition!
  + More likely to give the gift card in agency condition to someone else when the choice disadvantages the self vs others.
    - When people are in the agentic role of allocation, they are more willing to create efficient inequality that favors others over themselves then they are willing to create inequalities as 3rd party arbitrators.

General Discussion

* People are reluctant to give to someone when there is the potential for appearing biased
* When they bias against themselves though, they obviously think that others would not judge them for distributing unfairly.
  + Especially compared to people in the 3rd party position!
* However, this uneven distribution is OK if it’s done in an impartial way
  + E.g. flipping a coin, when one was forced to choose one vs another.
* We find both mediators and moderators of the basic self-disadvantaging effect.

Impartiality Account of Fairness

* People do not waste resources to avoid inequity, but instead DISLIKE inequity because it is often a sign of partiality!
* People are willing to have unequal efficiency if it is done in away that appears impartial to others.
  + Can we have something about using services that are needed by some and not others????
* People regularly endorse inequality when it would disadvantage them
  + How do we quantify this w.r.t. trading off for healthcare????
* The inequity itself does not drive allocation decisions, but it’s what the inequity communicates about the allocator’s partiality that drives it!
  + However… people generally want to be seen as partial to their allies and friends, and there is a strong correlation/correspondence to being seen as impartial and ‘fair’.
  + We can even somewhat rule out an equity-based explanation, as that doesn’t seem to be the main concern?!
* “Using impartial procedures removes partiality and, therefore, makes people more tolerant of inequity, so people will favor efficient yet inequitable allocations if these are achieved in a manner that is clearly impartial”