

# Distributing Care Work Under a Social Contract

## Design of an Economic Lab Experiment

\*Clem Davies<sup>1,2</sup>, Tobias Jäger<sup>2</sup> and Emine Özge Yurdakurban<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Götz Werner Chair of Economic Policy and Constitutional Economic Theory, University of Freiburg <sup>2</sup>Freiburg Institute for Basic Income Studies, University of Freiburg <sup>3</sup>Istanbul Technical University

\*Corresponding Author: clem.davies@vwl.uni-freiburg.de



universität freiburg

In Short

### Abstract

This poster presents the **experimental design** for a **controlled laboratory experiment** on household-level decision-making regarding the distribution of **care work**, using a **social contracting** framework.

### Research Questions

- Do people identify a dominant *just* rule (as defined by a social contracting, unanimous agreement procedure) for allocating unpaid and paid labour in a common output, where players have random endowments?
- Do ex-ante and ex-post distribution decisions differ in the presence of an explicit agreement?

### Methodology

- Partners must agree upon a social contract on how to share care work, behind a 'veil of ignorance'.
- Then, they play a public choice game with a redistributive option, to test their adherence to the agreed-upon social contract.

## Experiment Design – Player Perspective

### Instructions

You are about to play a game with **one other player**. In this game, you will make choices about working to earn money, which at the end of the game will be converted into **real currency and paid out**.

You will each have a set amount of time (10 units) and have to choose how to allocate your time between **paid work** and **unpaid work**.

Between you and your partner, a **minimum amount of unpaid work** (10 units) must be completed, or you will incur a **caretaker fee**.

When the game starts, you will each be told your own salary as well as that of your partners. One player will have a higher salary than the other. At the end of the game, you can transfer money to each other.

Before you begin the game, you and your partner have to choose from three given rules and agree on a **non-binding** rule with regards to:

- Production:** how will you share unpaid and paid work?
- Distribution:** how you will share the money made between you?

When you begin the game, you and your partner will **simultaneously, independently** choose how much time you allocate to each task (paid /unpaid). You have 3 strategies to choose from:

10 Paid 0 Unpaid	5 Paid 5 Unpaid	0 Paid 10 Unpaid
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When you have both decided, each partner will see both players' payoffs, and you can each decide if you want to transfer any of your income to your partner.

Your earnings in the game will determine how much you are paid out in real currency. Payoffs are organized as follows:

- Paid work:** You keep all the money you earn doing paid work
- Unpaid work:** The value from doing unpaid work will be randomly generated. You get half the value of all the unpaid work done in your household, even if you didn't do it yourself.
- Caretaker fee:** The cost of the caretaker fee will be randomly generated. If incurred, you have to pay half the caretaker fee.

Before deciding on a rule, you will now have a chance to play with the choices and see possible outcomes.

## Experiment Design – Justifications

### Context

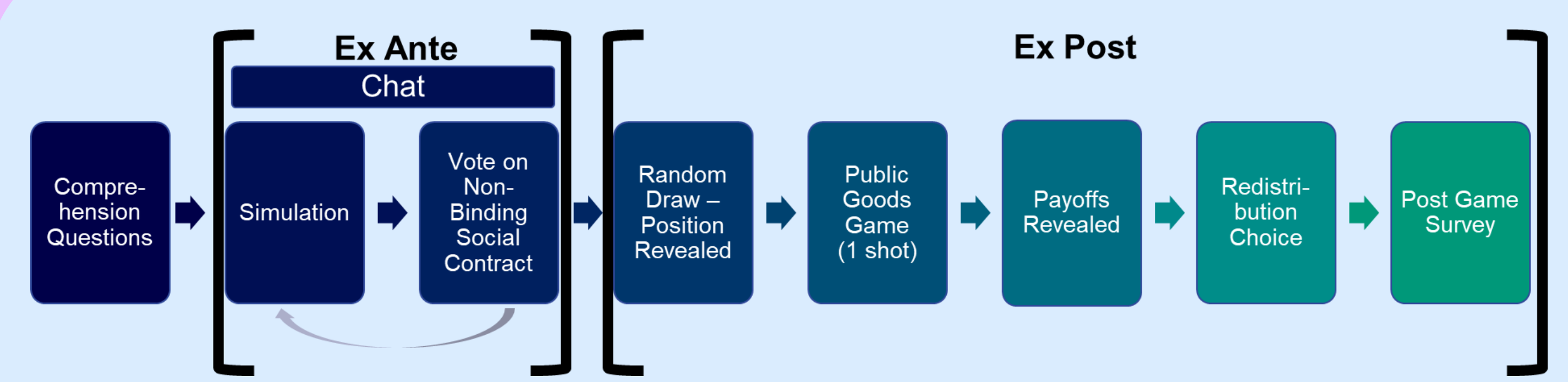
**Care Work and Economic Outcomes**  
"Gender inequality in unpaid care work is the missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes, such as labour force participation, wages and job quality."

Ferrant et al 2014  
(OECD Development Centre Report)

**The Social Contract and Veil of Ignorance**  
"The social contract is a hypothetical agreement reached by individuals behind a 'veil of ignorance,' where they do not know their own position in society, to design principles of justice and fairness for the distribution of societal benefits and burdens."

John Rawls 1971

### Overview



Design adapted from Degli et al 2016

### Treatments

- Social contracting stage, followed by a public goods game
- Only public goods game, no social contracting stage.

These treatments will be applied *between* groups.

### Theoretical Basis

#### Rule 1: Nuclear Family

A traditional family model where each partner specialises, one in care work, one in paid work.

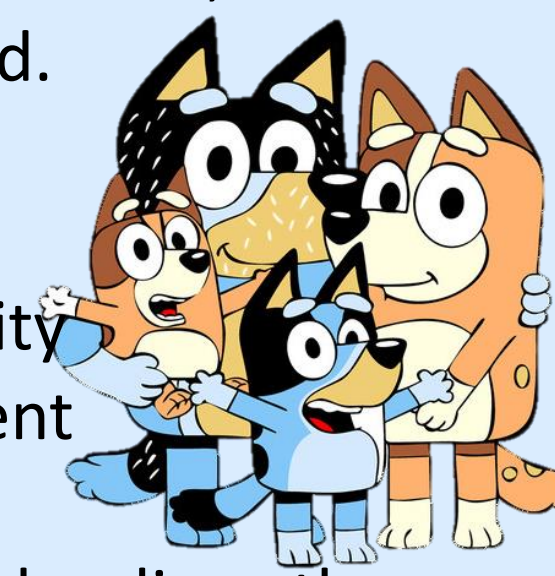
The partner doing unpaid work is dependent on the generosity of the partner doing paid work. Benevolent dictator. Model for traditional welfare system.



#### Rule 2: Universal Caregiver

Care work is divided evenly among partners. The benefits and costs of care work, which can differ over time, are evenly spread.

Requires more flexibility in employment and public services which relieve the care burden.



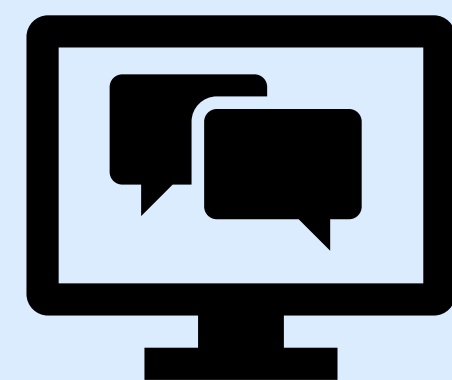
#### Rule 3: Universal Breadwinner

"...seeks to achieve gender equality through the incorporation of women into the public sphere" and "enable [women] to participate in the market on an equal footing with men" (Anarte, 2020, p. 18). Androcentric.

Based on Fraser 2004

### Playing the Game

Please use the chat box to discuss with your partner and choose a non-binding rule for both production and redistribution



#### Production Rule

##### Rule 1

Players should increase the total payoff by each specialising in a task. To maximise total payoff, the player with the higher starting wage should do paid labour, while the other player does unpaid work.

##### Rule 2

Players should equally share the paid and unpaid work. Lack of specialisation means lack of gains from specialisation, so the total payoff will be less than under Rule 1

##### Rule 3

Players should both work full time in labour, and outsource their unpaid labour. You will have to pay a randomised caretaker fee for every hour of unpaid labour <10.

Vote Here

#### Redistribution Rule

##### Rule X

The higher earning player should *even out* the income differences by transferring income by to the lower earning player.

##### Rule Y

The higher earning player should *reduce* the income differences by transferring income by to the lower earning player.

##### Rule Z

No money transfer is necessary.

Vote Here

### (Veil is Lifted)

#### Choosing Hours

Your wage : X  
Your partner's wage: Y

How will you allocate your time?

10 Paid 0 Unpaid	5 Paid 5 Unpaid	0 Paid 10 Unpaid
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#### Your Payoffs

	You	Partner
Units Paid		
Income		
Units Unpaid		
Utility (Care)		
Caretaker fee		
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		

Would you like to transfer any income to your partner?

Yes No

#### Final Payoff

Your partner has transferred you \_\_\_\_\_  
Your final income: \_\_\_\_\_  
The exchange rate (x), means you have earned € \_\_\_\_\_.

Please wait for the experimenters to indicate you can collect your payment.

### Hypothesis

H1: Subjects will generally comply ex-post with the rules selected ex-ante as a product of the agreement itself.

H2: In the no contract treatments, players will self-optimize, leading to a Nash bargaining solution which favours the universal breadwinner model.

H3: In the ex ante agreement, subjects choose the universal caregiver model more than the other options of division.

### Applications and Relevance

Application of impartiality to identify 'just' rules in the context of care work and gender roles. Behavioural approach to distributive justice within the "black box" of household decision making (Lund and Pollak 1996).

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