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The Talent Paradox: Why Is It Fair to Reward Talent but Not Luck?

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The talent paradox: Why is it fair to reward talent but not luck?*

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Abstract

This paper investigates how people differentiate between inequality caused by talent and inequality caused by luck in a large-scale study of the US population. We establish that people distinguish significantly between inequality due to luck and inequality due to talent, even when controlling for their beliefs about the extent to which these factors are within individual control. We refer to this as the "talent paradox." In a novel experiment, we provide evidence suggesting that individuals are more accepting of inequality caused by talent than by luck because the benefits of talent are only realized if one acts upon it. In contrast, manipulating the extent to which talent is perceived as a personal characteristic has no effect on inequality acceptance. Our findings provide new evidence on the nature of people's fairness views that sheds light on the political debate on the acceptability of inequality in society.

JEL Codes: C9, D63 *Keywords:* talent, luck, effort, fairness, inequality

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1 Introduction

Inequality is one of the most pressing social issues in the modern world (Atkinson, 2015), with individual talent being an important source of inequality in education and the labor market (Lise and Postel-Vinay, 2020). A key yet underexplored question is whether inequalities due to talent should be viewed as fair or unfair.

We design a study that offers novel empirical evidence contrasting how people view the acceptability of luck and talent as sources of inequality. Equal opportunity theories of justice argue that people should be rewarded for factors within individual control but not for those beyond (e.g., Dworkin, 1981). A possible explanation for talent being regarded as a more fair source of inequality than luck may thus be that people perceive luck as beyond individual control and talent as within individual control. However, if people have fairness views that distinguish between talent and luck in ways not fully explained by beliefs about individual control, we encounter what we refer to as the talent paradox. To illustrate, consider the idea that talent reflects a lucky draw in the "genetic lottery" Harden (2021), and that people regard both luck in the genetic lottery and other types of luck as entirely outside individual control. In this case, the talent paradox manifests if people are more accepting of inequality caused by talent than by other types of luck.

We explore the talent paradox using a survey and an economic experiment. In the survey, we ask the participants to what extent they view different sources of economic inequality—talent, luck, and effort—as fair determinants of income, and to what extent they believe these factors to be under individual control. In the experiment, we explore two mechanisms that might explain why people view inequality caused by talent as more fair than inequality caused by luck, even when accounting for differences in the extent to which these two sources are perceived to be within individual control: the inherent personal nature of talent, and the need for individuals to act on their talent for it to be valuable. The two mechanisms may each provide a basis for justifying individual's ownership of their talent. In the genetic-lottery example, people may find luck in the genetic lottery more acceptable than other sources of luck because they view genetic talent as inherently personal and recognize that the benefits of this talent are only realized if one acts upon it.

In the experiment, we study the extent to which these two mechanisms affect people's acceptance of inequality using a two-by-two between-subjects design. Participants, in the role of third-party spectators, determine how much to redistribute between two workers. We randomly manipulate whether a worker's productivity is determined by a personal characteristic outside individual control (date of birth) or by impersonal luck (randomly assigned number), and whether the worker has had the opportunity to act on their productivity or not. In all worker pairs, both workers chose to do the task, which implies that the workers' earnings only differ due to the random assignment of low or high productivity. This experimental design allows us to examine whether people are more accepting of inequality between the two workers when the random assignment of productivity is based on a personal characteristic and when the workers have had the opportunity to act on their productivity (capturing the two dimensions of talent), compared to when it is based on an impersonal factor and the workers have not had the opportunity to act on their productivity (capturing impersonal luck).

The survey provides strong evidence for the talent paradox being prevalent in society. We demonstrate that people are much more accepting of inequality caused by talent than by luck, and this difference cannot be fully explained by people believing that talent is more under individual control than luck. Interestingly, we find that inequality caused by talent is treated almost in the same way as inequality caused by effort, even when accounting for beliefs about control.

The experiment provides evidence suggesting that the acceptance of inequality due to talent may partly reflect that people consider individuals to have ownership of the fruits of their talent because they have to act on their talent for it to be valuable. Specifically, we find that workers who know about their lucky productivity draw, the experimental equivalent of drawing high talent in the genetic lottery, before they start working on a task are allowed to retain more earnings than individuals who learn about their lucky draw after completing the task. We do not find support for the idea that people find an inequality due to luck more fair if it is linked to personal characteristics.

Our study contributes to the growing literature on what people view as a fair distribution and the role of fairness considerations in shaping individual behavior (Fehr and Schmidt, 1999; Konow, 2000; Cherry, Frykblom, and Shogren, 2002; Falk, Fehr, and Fischbacher, 2003; Tyran and Sausgruber, 2006; Cappelen, Drange Hole, Sørensen, and Tungodden, 2007; Konow, Saijo, and Akai, 2009; Almås, Cappelen, Sørensen, and Tungodden, 2010; Cabrales, Miniaci, Piovesan, and Ponti, 2010; Rodriguez-Lara and Moreno-Garrido, 2012; Cappelen, Moene, Sørensen, and Tungodden, 2013b; Cappelen, Konow, Sørensen, and Tungodden, 2013a; Durante, Putterman, and Weele, 2014; Bartling, Weber, and Yao, 2015; Jakiela, 2015; Cappelen, Cappelen, and Tungodden, 2023). Importantly, this literature has documented that inequality resulting from factors outside individual control, such as luck, is commonly considered unfair, while inequality reflecting factors within individual control, such as effort, is commonly considered fair (Almås, Cappelen, and Tungodden, 2020). We contribute to this literature by showing that people differentiate between different types of luck, exhibiting greater acceptance of inequality caused by talent-even when it is considered beyond individual control-compared to inequality caused by impersonal luck.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the design of the survey and the experiment, Section 3 presents evidence from the survey on how people's fairness concerns relates to beliefs about individual control, Section 4 presents the results from the experiment and Section 5 concludes. Supplementary results and the complete experimental instructions are provided in the Online Appendix.

2 Study Design

We recruited a sample of 2,001 participants from the United States to take part in the study using the infrastructure provided by the data-collection agency Research Now.¹ Participants first reported background characteristics (gender, age, geographical location, household income, and educational attainment) and were then randomly assigned to one of four experimental treatments, in which they made distribution decisions as spectators for a group of independently recruited individuals (referred to as "workers"). The workers were recruited to make the decisions of the participants consequential. After the experiment, the participants completed a short survey in which we elicited their fairness views, beliefs about factors under individual control, and policy attitudes.

2.1 The sample

In this subsection, we provide an overview of the data collection process and the sample. To obtain a sample of participants broadly representative of the United States population, we employed quota sampling based on basic demographics: gender, age, and geographical location. This approach ensured that the marginal distribution of the sample closely matches the best available estimates of the population distribution on these variables. In Figure 1, we illustrate the flow of participants through the main data collection. Among the 3,797 people who responded to the invitation from the survey provider, 97 either did not consent or failed to complete the demographics form.

In column (1) in Table 1, we show the baseline characteristics of the participants who responded to the study invitation. In this group, 1,605 were excluded because the participation quotas were filled. 94 out the 2,095 individuals who were admitted into the study did not complete it, resulting in 2,001 participants in the final estimation sample. Comparing columns (2) and (3) in Table 1, we observe that attrition was fairly uniform across the baseline characteristics.

[Table 1 about here]

[Figure 1 about here]

¹The study is registered in the AEA RCT Registry, AEARCTR-0002597. The data are available at Harvard Dataverse (Bartling, Cappelen, Skarpeid, Sørensen, and Tungodden, 2024).

Comparing the averages for the unweighted estimation sample in column (3) with the population averages reported in column (5), we observe that, for the age categories used for quota sampling, the participants in the estimation sample tend to be slightly younger than the population sample. They are also somewhat more educated than the population sample, but have a lower household income. Our quota sampling focused on the marginal distributions, and thus we construct population weights on the full product of gender, age categories and Census regions. From column (4), we observe that the population weighted estimation sample is more aligned with the Census data in terms of age and gender, while the population weighting has almost no effect on the representativeness in terms of education and household income. In the analysis, we adjust all estimates using the constructed population weights.

2.2 The survey

In the survey, the participants stated whether they considered it fair that luck, talent, and effort determine a person's income. For each of these three factors, they responded on a scale from 0 (fair) to 10 (unfair). We also asked the participants whether they believe that these factors are under individual control, on a scale from 0 (beyond individual control) to 10 (within individual control). On policy attitudes, we asked them about the extent to which they agree with the statement that society should aim to equalize incomes, on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and where they place themselves politically, on a five-point scale from very left-wing to very right-wing.

2.3 The experiment

In the experiment, the participants acted as spectators and were asked to decide whether to redistribute earnings between two workers who had both chosen to complete the same task, but had different earnings due to a randomly assigned productivity. We randomly selected and implemented the decisions of ten present of the spectators.

In a between-subject design, spectators were randomly assigned to one of four treatments that differed with respect to whether the workers had been able to act on their assigned productivity (ex ante vs. ex post), and with respect to whether the assignment of productivity was linked to a personal characteristic (personal vs. impersonal). In the ex ante treatments, productivity was revealed before the worker made the decision about whether to do the task, while in the ex post treatments productivity was revealed after the workers had done the task. In the personal treatments, productivity was based on worker's birth date, while in the impersonal treatments productivity was assigned based on random numbers. These two dimensions (ex-ante vs ex-post and personal vs. impersonal), capture two ways in which people can be perceived to have ownership of their talent, in this case productivity, even if it is beyond individual control. First, they may be seen to have ownership to their talent because they decide whether or not to use their talent. Second, they may be seen to have ownership of their talent because the talent is an inherently personal trait.

Across all treatments, the distribution of earnings was always the same: one worker had completed the task and earned 8 USD due to randomly assigned high productivity; the other worker had also completed the task and earned 2 USD due to randomly assigned low productivity. The spectators had to decide whether to redistribute some of the earnings from the worker with 8 USD to the worker with 2 USD. The spectators could choose not to redistribute at all, or to redistribute up to 6 USD in increments of 1 USD.

In the base treatment, the Ex Post Impersonal treatment, the intent was to create a situation in which the workers had no ownership of their assigned productivity. We explained to the spectators that the workers had not been informed whether they had been assigned a high or a low productivity before they chose to do the task. The workers were only told that they would earn either 8 USD or 2 USD for doing the task, with both outcomes being equally likely. Since their productivity was revealed only after they had completed the task, i.e., ex post, it was impossible for the workers to base their decision on their assigned productivity. The assignment of the workers' productivity was impersonal in the sense that it is was not linked to any personal characteristics of the participants. We informed the spectators that the assignment of the workers' productivity was based on a random draw of their participation number which we take to be an impersonal characteristic. In the other treatments, we manipulated whether the worker had the opportunity to act on their productivity or not and whether a worker's productivity was determined by a personal characteristic outside individual control (date of birth) or by pure impersonal luck. The Ex Ante Impersonal treatment was identical to the Ex Post Impersonal treatment, except that the workers were informed about their randomly assigned productivity before they decided whether to do the task.

In the Ex Post Personal and the Ex Ante Personal treatments, the assignment of productivity was based on a personal characteristic. In these treatments, the spectators were informed that both workers had been asked to report their date of birth, and that the random draw had selected the date of birth of one of them to qualify for the high earnings. The worker whose date of birth was not drawn, would earn the low earnings. This procedure made the assignment of productivity personal since the date of birth is an inherently personal trait. Importantly, however, an individual's date of birth is a personal trait that is outside the worker's control. The procedure also ensured that being assigned the high earnings would not be correlated with any other personal characteristics that might be considered morally relevant.

[Table 2 about here]

In Table 2, we present background characteristics of the spectators by treatment. We control for these characteristics in the regression analysis.

2.4 The workers

The workers in the experiment were recruited from the international online labor market Amazon Mechanical Turk, used by companies and researchers to hire workers to do small tasks. We recruited 400 workers to obtain 200 unique pairs of workers. The workers signed up for the experiment online and were asked to complete a short task. They were informed that upon completing the task, they would be matched with another worker who had also completed the task. They received a fixed payment for accepting to participate in the experiment. In addition, they were assigned either a high or low earning for completing the task, based on a random draw (depending on treatment assignment). However, the workers were informed that the final payment would be determined by a third party. All recruited workers chose to do the task, even those who were assigned low productivity and informed of this before deciding whether to exert effort.

3 The talent paradox: survey evidence

We here provide an overview of the results from the survey. The left panel in Figure 2 reports the average response to the fairness question for luck, talent and effort, where we observe a large difference in how people view the different determinants of income. Luck is seen as the least fair determinant of income, with an average response of 6.9, on a scale from 0 (fair) to 10 (unfair). In contrast, talent is viewed as much fairer, with an average response of 3.2, and it is rated almost as fair as effort, with an average response of $2.9.^2$

[Figure 2 about here]

A possible explanation for why inequality due to talent is considered more fair than inequality due to luck may be that people view talent as more under individual control than luck. We can shed light on this possible explanation by examining people's beliefs about individual control. From the right panel in Figure 2, we

²See Figure A1 in the Online Appendix for the distribution of the fairness and belief responses. Figures A2 and A3 show that the patterns are quite similar across the demographic subgroups.

observe that there are large differences in participants' beliefs about the extent to which the different factors are under individual control, reported on a scale from 0 (beyond individual control) to 10 (within individual control). Most importantly, we observe that people believe that talent, with an average response of 6.3, is much more under individual control than luck, with an average response of 3.5. At the same time, talent is seen as less under individual control than effort, with an average response of 7.4.

[Table 3 about here]

To study the relationship between fairness considerations and beliefs about control, we estimate the following linear regression:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha_j + \beta_C C_{ij} + \sum_k \gamma_k C_{ij} \times I_{j=k} + \delta X_i + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

$$i \in \{1, \dots, N\}, j \in \{\text{Talent}, \text{Effort}, \text{Luck}\}, k \in \{\text{Talent}, \text{Effort}\}, (1)$$

 Y_{ij} is the expressed unfairness of person *i* about determinant *j*, C_{ij} is the belief that person *i* has that determinant *j* is under individual control, *j* and *k* index the different determinants of income, and I_x is the indicator function.

Table 3 reports the regression estimates. We observe that beliefs about the extent to which a determinant is under people's control have a significant effect on the extent to which this determinant is considered fair. An increase in the belief that a factor is under individual control is associated with a reduction in the perceived unfairness of that factor determining an individual's income (p < 0.001). However, the fact that people believe that talent is more under individual control than luck is not sufficient to explain the difference in fairness considerations. We observe that when we include beliefs about control, the estimated effect on the fairness consideration of considering talent rather than luck is reduced from 3.73 to 3.37. Hence, our data manifest the talent paradox.

Interestingly, when controlling for all background characteristics in column (4), talent is considered equivalent to effort, which means that the difference in how people consider these two sources of inequality is entirely driven by differences in the extent to which people think that effort is more under individual control than talent.³ Finally, we observe that the estimates are not very sensitive to including the background characteristics.⁴

In Figure 3, we report the estimated coefficient for talent when controlling for beliefs about control separately for subgroups defined by a set of background

³The analysis shows that the difference between luck and effort in the fairness considerations also cannot be fully explained by beliefs about individual control.

⁴Table A1 in the Online Appendix shows that the estimates are robust to including indicators for each of the experimental treatments.

characteristics. We observe that the coefficient is large and highly significant for all subgroups, which shows that the talent paradox is present throughout society.

[Figure 3 about here]

We summarize these findings in our first main result:

Result 1: We find strong evidence of the talent paradox: people distinguish significantly between inequality due to luck and inequality due to talent in their fairness considerations, even when controlling for their beliefs about the extent to which these factors are within individual control.

We now turn to the experiment, which studies two potential mechanisms that may shed light on why people perceive individuals to have ownership of their talent, even if it is not under their control.

4 The talent paradox and ownership: experimental evidence

We first provide an overview of the redistributive decisions of the spectators, before reporting the regression analysis. Figure 4 presents histograms of the average dollar amount transferred from the lucky to the unlucky worker in each treatment. Across all treatments we observe significant redistribution, with an average amount transferred from the high-earning worker to the low-earning worker of about two dollars, which implies that the low-earning worker receives, on average, 40 percent of the total payments. This shows that inequalities due to a randomly assigned productivity, irrespective of treatment condition, are viewed as unfair by a large fraction of the spectators. Pooled across treatments, complete equalization is the mode (43 percent). However, there is considerable heterogeneity, with no redistribution being the second most common choice (34 percent).

[Figure 4 about here]

We observe some interesting differences across the treatments in Figure 4. In particular, we observe that the share of spectators choosing to completely equalize is higher in the two ex post treatments—49 percent in the Ex Post Impersonal treatment and 48 percent in the Ex Post Personal treatment—than in the two ex ante treatments—37 percent in the Ex Ante Impersonal treatment and 39 percent in the Ex Ante Personal treatment.

To study how the two dimensions of ownership, ex ante vs. ex post and personal vs. impersonal, affect the level of inequality implemented by the spectators, we introduce the following measure of inequality between the two workers,

$$\operatorname{Gini}_{i} = \left| \frac{\operatorname{Payment Worker A}_{i} - \operatorname{Payment Worker B}_{i}}{\operatorname{Total Income}} \right| \in [0, 0.6]$$

This inequality measure is equivalent to the Gini coefficient for the distribution of income between the two workers. It takes a value of 0.6 if the spectator decides not to transfer anything to the low earner, and a value of zero if the spectator equalizes incomes by transferring 3 USD.

In the regression analysis, we estimate the effects of the treatment variations on implemented inequality based on the following specification:

$$Y_{i} = \alpha + \sum_{k} \beta_{k} T_{k(i)} + \delta X_{i} + \epsilon_{i},$$

$$k \in \{\text{Ex Ante Impersonal, Ex Ante Personal, Ex Post Personal}\}, (2)$$

with Y_i being the outcome (Gini or a dummy for not redistributing, $T_{k(i)}$ being an indicator for individual *i* being assigned treatment *k*, and X_i a vector of basckground characteristics as controls. The Ex Post Impersonal treatment(capturing the situation where impersonal luck determines productivity) is the base treatment.

Table 4 reports the regression analysis with and without controls. In column (1), we observe that manipulating whether the workers can act on their productivity has a significant effect on implemented Gini, independent of whether luck is personal or impersonal. The estimated increase in implemented Gini is about 35% when considering the impersonal treatments (0.244 vs. 0.327, p < 0.001), and about 25% when considering the personal treatments (0.244 vs. 0.39, p<0.001). In contrast, we observe that there is no significant effect on implemented Gini from manipulating whether the luck is personal or impersonal.

In column (2), we show that these findings are robust to including background characteristics, and in columns (3)–(4) that we find the same patterns if we focus on the share of spectators that do not redistribute any income to the worker with low earnings. Finally, the estimated interaction effect between the two manipulations is not significant (Gini:p = 0.413, No Redistribution: p = 0.517).⁵

[Table 4 about here]

We can summarize this analysis as follows:

⁵Based on equation (2), the estimated interaction effect is given by $(\beta_{EAP} - \beta_{EAI}) - \beta_{EPP}$; where EAP stands for Ex Ante Personal, EAI for Ex Ante Impersonal, and EPP for Ex Post Personal.

Result 2: People are more accepting of an inequality caused by luck when workers have had the opportunity to act on it. There is no effect on inequality acceptance from manipulating whether luck is based on a personal or impersonal characteristic.

The evidence aligns with the interpretation that the talent paradox arises partly from people treating talent differently from luck because they consider individuals to have ownership of the fruits of talent when they have acted on it. At the same time, the result shows that the fact that talent was based on personal characteristics does not seem to affect the fairness considerations.

The experiment provides us with a heterogeneous sample of spectators from the general population in the U.S., and we observe from Table 4 that spectator behavior is associated with some of the background characteristics. In particular, left-leaning spectators implement a lower Gini (p < 0.001) and are less likely not to redistribute at all (p < 0.001), and we see a similar pattern for higher educated spectators. In contrast, we observe that spectators with higher income tend to implement more inequality for both outcomes, and we also find some evidence of males and older spectators being more inequality accepting.

[Figure 5 about here]

In Figure 5, we report the estimated effect of manipulating whether the workers can act on their productivity, pooled across the personal dimension. We observe that, across all subgroups and for both outcome measures, inequality acceptance increases when the workers can act on their productivity. This aligns with our finding of the talent paradox being present in all subgroups in the survey (see Figure 3). Interestingly, we find the smallest estimated effect of the ex ante vs. ex post manipulation among young spectators, which is consistent with the this group exhibiting the smallest estimated talent paradox. In Figure A4 in the Online Appendix, we provide the corresponding analysis for the manipulation of the personal dimensions, We show that, across most subgroups and for both outcome measures, manipulating whether the assignment of productivity is based on a personal characteristic has no effect on inequality acceptance. However, for left-wing spectators, we find a significant increase in inequality acceptance when productivity is assigned based on a personal characteristic, which may contribute to explain why they exhibit a larger talent paradox than right-wing spectators see (Figure 3).

5 Conclusion

The extent to which inequality reflecting differences in talent or luck is considered fair is fundamental to many heated policy debates on social welfare programs and other redistributive policies. Understanding people's fairness views and beliefs on these issues is particularly relevant in the current political climate, with increased focus on meritocratic ideology (Frank, 2016; Sandel, 2020).

In a large-scale study, we establish the talent paradox: people distinguish significantly between inequality due to luck and inequality due to talent, even when controlling for their beliefs about the extent to which these factors are within individual control. Our evidence suggests that individuals are more accepting of inequality caused by talent than by luck because the benefits of talent are only realized if one acts upon it. However, manipulating the extent to which talent is perceived as a personal characteristic has no effect on inequality acceptance.

In Table 5, we demonstrate the relevance of our findings for the policy debate on redistribution. Columns (1)–(7) show how survey responses and spectator behavior in the experiment are associated with support for redistribution, while column (8) presents the estimated associations from a joint regression. We observe that the associations between fairness responses and support for redistribution, as well as beliefs about control and redistribution, align with expectations—except for beliefs about control of luck, which are not significant in the joint regression. Finally, we find that spectator behavior is strongly associated with support for redistribution: spectators who implement more inequality in the experiment are less likely to support redistribution in society. Taken together, this analysis suggests that the fairness views and beliefs elicited in our study capture key motivations shaping support for redistribution in society.

[Table 5 about here]

The present study suggests that people hold preferences that are in conflict with established notions from theories of justice on equality of opportunity. However, inequality acceptance from talent aligns with meritocratic ideals, which justify differences in income based on differences in contributions, even when these differences in contribution reflect the interaction of talent and effort. Notably, in our experiment, participants appear willing to subject worker participants to what Sandel (2020) terms the "tyranny of merit." One possible explanation of the behavior of the participants in our experiment is that they accept a notion of moral luck, which ". . . occurs when an agent can be correctly treated as an object of moral judgment, despite the fact that a significant aspect of what he is assessed for depends on factors beyond his control" (Nelkin, 2023).

The paper opens up several interesting avenues for future research. It is of great importance to study whether other manipulations of the personal dimension may affect people's fairness considerations. It would also be interesting to study how people's beliefs about which factors are under individual control and the relevance of the ownership mechanisms vary across different cultures and interact with social institutions in society. A fundamental characteristic of any human society is the significant variation in talent across individuals, and we need a better understanding of how people handle this heterogeneity and how it shapes our political debate.

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Figure 1: CONSORT diagram of recruitment and attrition



Figure 2: Fairness views and beliefs about control: luck, talent and effort

Note: The figure reports the average responses for a US representative sample answering on a scale from 0–10 how fair or unfair they believe it is that luck, talent and effort determines incomes (left panel) and the extent (also on a 0–10 scale) that they believe luck, talent, and effort is under individual control (right panel). In the left panel, 0 represented completely agreeing with the statement "It is fair if {Luck, Talent, Effort} determines a person's income" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "It is unfair if {Luck, Talent, Effort} determines a person's income". In the right panel, 0 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors within individual control". Standard errors indicated on the graph.



Figure 3: The talent paradox—heterogeneity analysis

Note: The figure reports the estimated coefficient on "Talent" in specification (2) of Table 3, by subgroups defined by a set of background characteristics, using the same definitions as in Table 3.





Note: The figure shows the distributions of the dollar amount transferred from the lucky to the unlucky worker by treatment.



Figure 5: Heterogeneity in the treatment effect of ex ante vs. ex post

Note: The figure reports the estimated treatment effect of manipulating whether productivity is revealed ex ante vs. ex post for different subgroups. Each estimate is from a regression where the dependent variable is implemented inequality, measured by the Gini in Panel a and by a dummy for whether the spectator did not redistribute in Panel b, and the independent variable is an indicator for whether the spectator was in one of the ex ante treatments. The subgroups are defined by background characteristics, using the same definitions as in Table 4. Table A2 reports the corresponding regressions (with background control variables added).

			Estimation	sample	
	Available	Attrition	(unweighted)	(weighted)	Census
Panel A: Variables used in qu	lota samplin	g and for w	eights:		
Female (d)	0.383	0.649	0.506	0.513	0.513
Age (years)	44.0	47.3	43.1	46.5	47.4
Census region:					
Northeast	0.194	0.181	0.174	0.177	0.177
Midwest	0.211	0.170	0.210	0.209	0.209
South	0.334	0.394	0.378	0.377	0.377
West	0.259	0.255	0.237	0.236	0.236
Panel B: Not used in quota sa	ampling or v	veight cons	truction:		
Education category:					
No high school	0.036	0.096	0.037	0.031	0.110
High School/GED	0.218	0.234	0.235	0.230	0.289
Some college/ass. degree	0.318	0.298	0.317	0.336	0.286
Bachelor (4 years)	0.254	0.170	0.256	0.248	0.200
Graduate degree	0.175	0.202	0.154	0.155	0.114
Gross household income (Y)	category:				
Y < 30'	0.223	0.266	0.242	0.249	0.166
$30' \le Y < 60'$	0.302	0.255	0.305	0.298	0.226
$60' \leq Y100'$	0.263	0.234	0.255	0.264	0.238
$100' \le Y < 150'$	0.142	0.213	0.132	0.127	0.174
$Y \ge 150'$	0.069	0.032	0.066	0.062	0.196
Number of observations	3,700	94	2,001	2,001	

Table 1: Descriptive statistics (averages) compared to census reference

Note: The table shows the average outcomes for the available, attrition, and estimation samples (unweighted and weighted), and the 2017 estimates from the US Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017, 2018b,a) used to calculate weights. The sample in the first column is all participants that responded to the study invitation, regardless of whether a free quota was available for their demographic group. The sample in the second column is participants that started but did not complete the study. The sample in the third column (unweighted) and fourth column (weighted) is all participants that completed the survey. The fifth column reports the corresponding averages from the US Census Bureau. The study was quota sampled on gender, age, and census region, but with restrictions only at the margins, using the most current Census data available at the time of the study. Population weights are calculated based on the 2017 distributions of gender, age-group, and census region.

	Ex A	nte	Ex P	ost
Outcome	Impersonal	Personal	Impersonal	Personal
Age	46.9 45.2		46.9	47.0
Female	0.554	0.466	0.517	0.515
Left	0.248	0.240	0.235	0.244
High education	0.366	0.454	0.417	0.376
High income	0.423	0.447	0.494	0.445
Number of observations	497	501	497	506

Table 2: Balance on background characteristics by treatment

Note: The table reports background characteristics by treatment. "Left" is defined as self reporting being either "Very" or "Somewhat" left wing. "High education," and "High income" are defined as above sample median education and household incomes.

	How unfair	is it that {Tal	ent, Effort, L	uck } determin	nes income?
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Talent (d)	-3.731***	-3.376***	-3.373***	-3.467***	-3.391***
	(0.107)	(0.109)	(0.206)	(0.210)	(0.109)
Effort (d)	-4.076***	-3.582***	-3.267***	-3.430***	-3.602***
	(0.111)	(0.121)	(0.225)	(0.231)	(0.122)
Belief about control (0-10)		-0.126***	-0.104***	-0.115***	-0.121***
		(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.019)
Talent \times Belief about control			-0.010	0.010	
			(0.035)	(0.036)	
Effort \times Belief about control			-0.054	-0.026	
			(0.033)	(0.034)	
High age (d)				-0.432***	-0.438***
				(0.105)	(0.102)
Left (d)				0.119	0.116
				(0.114)	(0.115)
High income (d)				-0.147	-0.148
				(0.108)	(0.108)
High education (d)				-0.195*	-0.197*
				(0.110)	(0.110)
Male (d)				0.175*	0.178*
				(0.101)	(0.101)
(Intercept)	6.944***	7.381***	7.306***	7.793***	7.820***
	(0.075)	(0.102)	(0.121)	(0.168)	(0.141)
Num.Obs.	6,003	6,003	6,003	6,003	6,003
R^2	0.277	0.288	0.288	0.294	0.294

Table 3: Fairness views and Beliefs about individual control

Note: The table reports regressions using equation (1), where the dependent variable is the fairness response (luck, talent, effort) and luck is base. "Beliefs about control)" reports the belief about the extent to which the corresponding factor is within individual control, "Talent x Beliefs about control)" and "Effort x Beliefs about control)" are interaction variables. All background variables are indicator variables: "Left" is defined as self reporting being either "Very" or "Somewhat" left wing. "High" means above the median in the sample on the respective variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) are corrected for clustering on individuals (*: p < 0.1, **: p < 0.05, ***: p < 0.01).

	G	ini	No Redi	stribution
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ex Ante Impersonal (d)	0.083***	0.085***	0.131***	0.133***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Ex Ante Personal (d)	0.063***	0.064***	0.094***	0.100***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Ex Post Personal (d)	0.000	0.001	-0.009	-0.007
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.030)	(0.030)
High age (d)		-0.011		0.055**
		(0.012)		(0.022)
Left (d)		-0.049***		-0.093***
		(0.014)		(0.025)
High income (d)		0.024*		0.045*
		(0.013)		(0.023)
High education (d)		-0.024*		-0.054**
		(0.014)		(0.024)
Male (d)		0.023*		0.017
		(0.012)		(0.022)
(Intercept)	0.244***	0.249***	0.331***	0.313***
-	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.022)	(0.030)
Num.Obs.	2,001	2,001	2,001	2,001
R^2	0.018	0.029	0.015	0.030

Table 4: Implemented inequality regressed on treatments

Note: The table reports regression estimates based on equation (2). The dependent variable is implemented Gini in columns 1–2 and a dummy for not redistributing in columns 3–4. Ex Ante Impersonal, Ex Ante Personal, and Ex Post Personal are indicator variables for which treatment the spectator is assigned to. All background variables are indicator variables: "Left" is defined as self reporting being either "Very" or "Somewhat" left wing. "High" means above the median in the sample on the respective variable. Estimated with least squares and post-stratification weights, standard errors in parentheses (*: p < 0.1, **: p < 0.05, ***: p < 0.01).

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5:
Table

		'Society sl	hould aim to	equalise in	comes' (agre	ement, 1–5)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(9)	(2)	(8)
Luck is unfair cause (0–10)	0.039^{***}							0.046^{***}
	(0.010)							(0.010)
Talent is unfair cause (0–10)		0.079^{***}						0.062^{***}
		(0.010)						(0.012)
Effort is unfair cause (0–10)			0.049^{***}					0.007
			(0.010)					(0.013)
Luck is under control (0–10)				0.033^{***}				0.010
				(0.010)				(0.010)
Talent is under control (0–10)					-0.064***			-0.030***
					(0.010)			(0.012)
Effort is under control (0–10)						-0.078***		-0.064***
						(0.010)		(0.012)
Implemented inequality (Gini): 0–0.6)							-0.707***	-0.728***
							(0.106)	(0.106)
Num.Obs.	2,001	2,001	2,001	2,001	2,001	2,001	2,001	2,001
R^2	0.008	0.033	0.012	0.006	0.020	0.031	0.022	0.096

Note: The table reports regressions where the dependent variable is agreement with the statement that 'society should aim to equalise incomes' and the independent variables are the fairness responses, belief about individual control responses, and implemented inequality (Gini) in the experiment. The dependent variable was originally coded in terms of disagreement, but we have reversed the coding to scale it in the same way as for the independent variables. Estimated with least squares and post-stratification weights, standard errors in parentheses (*: p < 0.1, **: p < 0.05, ***: p < 0.01).

Online appendix The talent paradox: Why is it fair to reward talent but not luck?

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December 16, 2024

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1 Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Histograms of fairness attitudes and control belief towards luck, talent, and effort in a US representative sample.

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 0–10 to what extent they agreed with two opposing statements. To capture fairness attitudes, 0 represented completely agreeing with the statement "It is fair if {Luck, Talent, Effort} determines a person's income" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "It is unfair if {Luck, Talent, Effort} determines a person's income". To capture control beliefs, 0 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors beyond individual control" and 10 represented completely agreeing with the statement "{Luck, Talent, Effort} mainly reflects factors within individual control".



Figure A2: Average fairness attitudes and beliefs about control in subgroups *Note:* The data are split into two by group. The "young" are defined as being younger than the median participant (42 years) and the "old" are the converse.



Figure A3: Average fairness attitudes and beliefs about control in subgroups

Note: The data are split into $2^5 = 32$ different groups. The "young" are defined as being younger than the median participant (42 years) and the "old" are the converse.

a Effects on Gini



Figure A4: Heterogeneity in the treatment effect of personal vs. impersonal

Note: The figure reports the estimated treatment effect of manipulating whether productivity is assigned based on a personal vs. an impersonal characteristic for different subgroups. Each estimate is from a regression where the dependent variable is implemented inequality, measured by the Gini in Panel a and by a dummy for whether the spectator implemented maximal inequality in Panel b, and the independent variable is an indicator for whether the spectator was in one of the personal treatments. The subgroups are defined by background characteristics, using the same definitions as in Table 4 in the main paper. Table A3 reports the corresponding regressions (with background control variables added).

	How fair is	it that {Tale	nt, Effort, Lu	ck } determin	es income?
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Talent (d)	-3.731***	-3.380***	-3.393***	-3.487***	-3.394***
	(0.107)	(0.109)	(0.207)	(0.210)	(0.109)
Effort (d)	-4.076***	-3.587***	-3.269***	-3.432***	-3.607***
	(0.111)	(0.121)	(0.226)	(0.231)	(0.121)
Belief about control (0-10)		-0.125***	-0.104***	-0.115***	-0.120***
		(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.019)
Talent x Belief about control			-0.007	0.013	
			(0.035)	(0.036)	
Effort x Belief about control			-0.054	-0.026	
			(0.033)	(0.034)	
High age (d)				-0.434***	-0.440***
				(0.105)	(0.102)
Left (d)				0.115	0.112
				(0.115)	(0.115)
High income (d)				-0.151	-0.151
				(0.108)	(0.108)
High education (d)				-0.178	-0.181*
				(0.109)	(0.110)
Male (d)				0.179*	0.182*
				(0.101)	(0.101)
Treatment: Ex Ante Personal (d)	-0.077	-0.064	-0.067	-0.092	-0.090
	(0.139)	(0.141)	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.140)
Treatment: Ex Ante Impersonal (d)	0.068	0.066	0.066	0.055	0.054
	(0.137)	(0.139)	(0.139)	(0.138)	(0.138)
Treatment: Ex Post Personal (d)	0.345**	0.331**	0.331**	0.310**	0.308**
	(0.141)	(0.143)	(0.143)	(0.144)	(0.144)
(Intercept)	6.858***	7.291***	7.220***	7.543***	7.562***
	(0.111)	(0.133)	(0.148)	(0.173)	(0.155)
Num.Obs.	6003	6003	6003	6003	6003
R2	0.279	0.290	0.290	0.296	0.296
Joint <i>p</i> -value on treatment dummies:	0.020	0.038	0.036	0.038	0.040

Table A1: Attitudes regressed on control beliefs-with controls for treatment

Note: The table reports regressions using equation (1), where the fairness response on luck is the base, corresponding to Table 3 in the main paper but including controls for treatment. Standard errors (in parentheses) are corrected for clustering on individuals (*: p < 0.1, **: p < 0.05, ***: p < 0.01). See Table 4 for definitions of variables.

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$ \begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	(0.016) (0.017)	0.046	0.134^{***}	0.150^{***}	0.128^{***}	0.144^{***}
$ \begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$		(0.033)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.030)
$ \begin{array}{ccccc} \text{Ex Ante \times Left} & -0.021 & -0.021 & \\ & 0.028 & \\ \text{Ex Ante \times High education} & -0.042 & \\ \text{Ex Ante \times High income} & -0.042 & \\ \text{Ex Ante \times High income} & & -0.025 & \\ \text{Ex Ante \times male} & & & 0.000 & \\ \text{Ex Ante \times male} & & & 0.000 & \\ \text{Ex Ante \times male} & & & & 0.001 & 0.011 & 0.011 & \\ \text{High age (d)} & -0.033 & -0.011 & -0.011 & -0.010 & \\ & 0.017 & 0.012 & 0.012 & 0.012 & 0.012 & \\ \text{High income (d)} & -0.024 & -0.048 & & -0.048 & & & -0.048 & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & &$		0.130***				
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High age (d) $-0.033*$ -0.011 -0.011 -0.011 -0.010 Left (d) (0.017) (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) Left (d) $-0.048***$ $-0.048***$ $-0.048***$ $-0.048***$ $-0.048***$ High income (d) (0.014) (0.020) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) High education (d) $0.024*$ $0.024*$ $0.024*$ $0.024*$ $0.024*$ Male (d) $0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ Male (d) $0.014)$ (0.013) (0.013) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) Male (d) $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ Male (d) $0.012)$ (0.012) (0.012) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) Male (d) $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ Male (d) $0.012)$ (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (Intercept) $0.263***$ $0.247***$ $0.247***$ $0.245***$ (0.015) (0.016) (0.014) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015)	-0.020 (0.024)					-0.050 (0.043)
$ \begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$	-0.011 -0.010	-0.00	0.056^{**}	0.055^{**}	0.056^{**}	0.056^{**}
$ \begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$	(0.012) (0.012)	(0.030)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
$ \begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$	-0.048*** -0.048***	-0.093***	-0.063*	-0.091***	-0.093***	-0.093***
High income (d) $0.024*$ $0.024*$ $0.024*$ $0.024*$ High income (d) (0.013) (0.013) (0.013) (0.013) (0.013) High education (d) $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ $-0.025*$ Male (d) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) Male (d) $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.032*$ Male (d) $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.012)$ (0.017) (Intercept) $0.263***$ $0.247***$ $0.241***$ $0.256***$ $0.017)$ (0.015) (0.014) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015)	(0.014) (0.014)	(0.025)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
$ \begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$	0.024 0.024^{*}	0.045^{*}	0.045^{*}	0.044^{*}	0.054^{*}	0.045^{*}
High education (d) -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.025^* -0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (0.017) (0.015) <	(0.018) (0.013)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.023)
Male (d) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) (0.014) Male (d) $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.022*$ $0.032*$ (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (0.012) (0.017) $(1ntercept)$ $0.263***$ $0.247***$ $0.241***$ $0.245***$ (0.015) (0.016) (0.014) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015)	-0.025* -0.025*	-0.055**	-0.054**	-0.018	-0.055**	-0.054**
$ \begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$	(0.014) (0.014)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.024)
$ \begin{array}{cccccc} (0.012) & (0.012) & (0.012) & (0.012) & (0.017) \\ (1 tercept) & 0.263^{***} & 0.247^{***} & 0.241^{***} & 0.250^{***} & 0.245^{***} & 0.\\ & (0.016) & (0.014) & (0.015) & (0.015) & (0.015) \\ \end{array} $	0.022^{*} 0.032^{*}	0.015	0.015	0.017	0.016	0.040
(Intercept) $0.263*** 0.247*** 0.241*** 0.250*** 0.245*** 0.015)$ (0.015) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015)	(0.012) (0.017)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.030)
(0.016) (0.014) (0.015) (0.015) (0.015)	0.250^{***} 0.245^{***}	0.347^{***}	0.303^{***}	0.295^{***}	0.306^{***}	0.298^{***}
	(0.015) (0.015)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Num.Obs. 2001 2001 2001 2001 2001 2001	2001 2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001
R^2 0.030 0.028 0.030 0.028 0.028 0.029	0.028 0.029	0.033	0.030	0.030	0.029	0.030

Table A2: Heterogeneity in treatment effects on implemented inequality (ex ante)

the dependent variable is the implemented Gini; in columns (6)–(10), the dependent variable is an indicator for whether the spectator implemented no redistribution. "Ex ante" is an indicator for whether the spectator is assigned to one of the ex ante treatments, "Ex ante x Note: The table reports the corresponding regressions for the estimates reported in Figure 5 in the main paper. In columns (1)–(5), " is an interaction variable between "Ex ante" and the respective background variable (defined in Table 4). Standard errors in parentheses (*: p < 0.1, **: p < 0.05, ***: p < 0.01).

			Gini				Ž	o Redistributi	ion	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(9)	(7)	(8)	(6)	(10)
Personal (d)	-0.019	0.003	-0.011	-0.019	-0.001	-0.035	0.005	-0.022	-0.032	0.002
	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.033)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Personal × High age	0.014 (0.025)					0.025 (0.044)				
Personal × Left	~	-0.059** (0.029)				~	-0.110** (0.051)			
Personal \times High education			-0.001 (0.025)					0.002 (0.044)		
Personal \times High income				0.018 (0.025)					0.025 (0.043)	
Personal × male					-0.020 (0.025)					-0.048 (0.043)
High age (d)	-0.018	-0.011	-0.011	-0.011	-0.011	0.042	0.055**	0.054^{**}	0.054^{**}	0.054**
	(0.018)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Left (d)	-0.048***	-0.018	-0.048***	-0.048***	-0.048***	-0.092***	-0.037	-0.092***	-0.092***	-0.093***
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
High income (d)	0.020	0.019	0.020	0.011	0.020	0.039	0.037	0.039*	0.026	0.038
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.032)	(0.024)
High education (d)	-0.022	-0.021	-0.022	-0.022	-0.022	-0.051**	-0.048**	-0.052	-0.051**	-0.050**
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.033)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Male (d)	0.023*	0.022*	0.023*	0.023^{*}	0.033^{*}	0.018	0.016	0.017	0.017	0.041
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.031)
(Intercept)	0.296^{***}	0.285^{***}	0.292^{***}	0.296^{***}	0.288^{***}	0.388^{***}	0.368^{***}	0.381^{***}	0.386^{***}	0.370^{***}
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Num.Obs.	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001
R^2	0.010	0.012	0.010	0.011	0.011	0.014	0.017	0.014	0.014	0.015
<i>Note:</i> The table reports the	correspondi	ng regressic	ons for the es	timates repo	orted in Figu	re A4. In co	lumns (1)–(5), the deper	ndent variab	e

is the implemented Gini; in columns (6)–(10), the dependent variable is an indicator for whether the spectator implemented no redistri-

bution. "Personal" is an indicator for whether the spectator is assigned to one of the personal treatments, "Personal x" is an interaction variable between "Personal" and the respective background variable (defined in Table 3). Standard errors in parentheses (*: p < 0.1,

: p < 0.05, *: p < 0.01).

Table A3: Heterogeneity in treatment effects on implemented inequality (personal)

S8

2 Experimental instructions

2.1 HIT Instructions Amazon Mechanical Turk

	HIT Preview		
we are consuming an experiment, where you others, you will earn additional money during to start the experiment. It will only be used to in this study before. When you have finished a few days. The additional earnings you make below in order to start. Make sure to leave this window open as paste the code into the box.	win be asked to do vol Worker ID will be retrief. Dep the experiment. Your Worker ID will be retrief a assigning payment to the right account and i the experiment, come back here and submit it e during the experiment will be ddeposted within you complete the survey. When you are fini	erang on you actions and the red automatically when you cli o control that you have not pa e HTT. We will approve payme n three weeks. Please click on shed, you will return to this pa	eccons or tricipated nts within the link ge to
Participation link:	Click here to go to the task		

2.2 Worker Instructions

Talent workers instructions

Please read the instructions below carefully General instructions:

The results from this experiment will be used in a research project. It is therefore important that you carefully read and follow all instructions. Note that you will remain anonymous throughout the experiment. Your Worker ID has been automatically registered as \${e://Field/WorkerId} but we will only use your Worker ID to assign payments and check that you participate in the experiment only once. You will be paid a fixed participation fee of 1 USD and you will, depending on the actions you and others take, carn additional money. If you have any questions regarding this experiment, you may contact the choicelab@nhh.no.

Please fill out the details below before starting the experiment :

What day of the month were you born?

▼ 1 (1) ... 31 (31)

Q1 Your randomly generated participation number is: \${e://Field/RN}

You will now be asked to do a short assignment. We will randomly match you with another individual who has been recruited to do the same assignment. [Since you are born on an even(odd) day you will be matched with an individual who is born on an odd(even) day. The earnings to you and the other individual have already been determined as follows: A lottery has randomly selected one of you to earn 8 USD and the other to earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. The lottery was based on your dates of birth (participation number). Your date of birth (participation number) was drawn for the high(low) earnings. The date of birth (participation number) of the individual you are matched with, was drawn for the low (high) earnings.

After you have completed the assignment, a randomly selected third person will be given the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other individual. This person will not know the identity of you or the other individual, but will be informed about how the earnings were determined. You will receive the payments determined by the third person within three

Page 1 of 4

weeks. Separately, you will be paid the participation fee of 1 USD within a few days.

I have read and understood the above

◯ Yes

 \bigcirc No

You will now be asked to do a short assignment. We will randomly match you with another individual who has been recruited to do the same assignment. The earnings to you and the other individual have already been determined as follows:

A lottery has randomly selected one of you to earn 8 USD and the other to earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. The lottery was based on your participation number. Your participation number was drawn for the high(low) earnings. The participation number of the individual you are matched with, was drawn for the low (high) earnings.

After you have completed the assignment, a randomly selected third person will be given the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other individual. This person will not know the identity of you or the other individual, but will be informed about how the earnings were determined. You will receive the payments determined by the third person within three weeks. Separately, you will be paid the participation fee of 1 USD within a few days.

I have read and understood the above

O Yes

○ No

Ex Post Personal Treatment

You will now be asked to complete a short assignment. We will randomly match you with another individual who has been recruited to complete the same assignment. Since you are born on an even(odd) day you will be matched with an individual who is born on an (even)odd day.

The earnings to you and the other individual will be determined as follows: A lottery will randomly select one of you to earn 8 USD and the other to earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. The lottery will be based on your dates of birth. You will be informed of the outcome of the lottery after you complete the assignment.

After you have completed the assignment, a randomly selected third person will be given the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other individual. This person will not know the identity of you or the other individual, but will be informed about how the earnings were determined.

You will receive the payments determined by the third person within three weeks. Separately, you will be paid the participation fee of 1 USD within a few days.

I have read and understood the above

◯ Yes

◯ No

Ex post Impersonal Treatment

You will now be asked to complete a short assignment. We will randomly match you with another individual who has been recruited to complete the same assignment. The earnings to you and the other individual will be determined as follows:

A lottery will randomly select one of you to earn 8 USD and the other to earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. The lottery will be based on your participation number. You will be informed of the outcome of the lottery after you complete the assignment.

After you have completed the assignment, a randomly selected third person will be given the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other individual. This person will not know the identity of you or the other individual, but will be informed about how the earnings were determined.

You will receive the payments determined by the third person within three weeks. Separately, you will be paid the participation fee of 1 USD within a few days.

Page 3 of 4

I have read and understood the ab	ove	
○ Yes		
○ No		
Slider task		
Please move all the sliders to 50.		
Please move all the sliders to 50.	Slider 1 (1)	
Please move all the sliders to 50.	Slider 1 (1) Slider 2 (2)	

Ex Post Treatments Loser/Winner

Thank you for completing the assignment. Your date of birth was drawn for the low(high) earnings. You have earned 2(8) USD. The date of birth (participation number) of the individual you are matched with, was drawn for the high(low) earnings. He/she has thus earned 8(2) USD.

To finish the experiment and receive your completion code, click on the arrows below.

End of Survey All Treatments

Thanks for your participation! Recall that a randomly selected third person will be given the opportunity to redistribute the earnings between you and the other individual. We will calculate and distribute your payments as soon as this full batch of HITs is finished.

It generally takes us a few days to match the data and distribute the payments.

Your completion code is: xxxxxxx

Copy and paste the code above into the survey code field on the AMT web page that directed you here at the beginning.

2.3 Spectator instructions and questionnaire

11/1/2017

Qualtrics Survey Software

Introduction

Please read the instructions below carefully

General instructions:

The results from this survey will be used in a research project. It is therefore important that you carefully read and follow all instructions. Note that you will remain anonymous throughout the survey. If you have any questions regarding this survey, you may contact thechoicelab@nhh.no.

I understand and I want to participate:

O Yes

Demographic randomization for RN

What is your sex?

MaleFemale

How old are you?

-

In which state do you currently reside?

\$

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

*

https://eu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/Ajax.php?action=GetSurveyPrintPreview

11/1/2017

Qualtrics Survey Software

What is your household's combined yearly income (gross income before taxes are deducted)?

*

Ex Ante Personal

In contrast to a typical survey question, you will now make a choice that may have real consequences for two other individuals. We will randomly select and implement the decision of every tenth respondent.

Some days ago, two individuals, let us call them A and B, were recruited to do an assignment. They did not know the identity of each other, and they were to work independently on the assignment. Before A and B decided whether to do the assignment, they learned how their earnings would be determined. They also learned that a third person would have the opportunity to redistribute earnings between them.

You are the third person. We will therefore explain to you how A's and B's earnings were determined:

When A and B were recruited, they were asked to report their date of birth. One of their dates of birth was randomly drawn and the individual with this birth date would earn 8 USD for doing the assignment. The individual whose date of birth was not drawn would earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. If an individual did not do the assignment, that individual would earn nothing.

The random draw selected the date of birth of A for the high earnings. A and B were informed about this before they decided whether to do the assignment. Both chose to do the assignment. A thus earned 8 USD and B earned 2 USD.

We now ask you to choose whether to redistribute earnings between the two individuals. A and B will receive the payments within a few days.

Please state which of the following alternatives you choose:

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Qualtrics Survey Software

O I choose not to redistribute. A is paid 8 USD and B is paid 2 USD

O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 7 USD and B is paid 3 USD

- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 6 USD and B is paid 4 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 5 USD and B is paid 5 USD
- $\bigcirc\,$ I choose to redistribute. A is paid 4 USD and B is paid 6 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 3 USD and B is paid 7 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 2 USD and B is paid 8 USD

Ex Ante Impersonal

11/1/2017

In contrast to a typical survey question, you will now make a choice that may have real consequences for two other individuals. We will randomly select and implement the decision of every tenth respondent.

Some days ago, two individuals, let us call them A and B, were recruited to do an assignment. They did not know the identity of each other, and they were to work independently on the assignment. Before A and B decided whether to do the assignment, they learned how their earnings would be determined. They also learned that a third person would have the opportunity to redistribute earnings between them.

You are the third person. We will therefore explain to you how A's and B's earnings were determined:

When A and B were recruited, they were assigned a participation number. One of their participation numbers was randomly drawn and the individual with this participation number would earn 8 USD for doing the assignment. The individual whose participation number was not drawn would earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. If an individual did not do the assignment, that individual would earn nothing.

The random draw selected the participation number of A for the high earnings. A and B were informed about this before they decided whether to do the assignment. Both chose to do the assignment. A thus earned 8 USD and B earned 2 USD.

We now ask you to choose whether to redistribute earnings between the two individuals. A and B will receive the payments within a few days.

https://eu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/Ajax.php?action=GetSurveyPrintPreview

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11/1/2017

Qualtrics Survey Software

Please state which of the following alternatives you choose:

 $\bigcirc\,$ I choose not to redistribute. A is paid 8 USD and B is paid 2 USD

- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 7 USD and B is paid 3 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 6 USD and B is paid 4 USD
- $\bigcirc\,$ I choose to redistribute. A is paid 5 USD and B is paid 5 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 4 USD and B is paid 6 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 3 USD and B is paid 7 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 2 USD and B is paid 8 USD

Ex Post Personal

In contrast to a typical survey question, you will now make a choice that may have real consequences for two other individuals. We will randomly select and implement the decision of every tenth respondent.

Some days ago, two individuals, let us call them A and B, were recruited to do an assignment. They did not know the identity of each other, and they were to work independently on the assignment. Before A and B decided whether to do the assignment, they learned how their earnings would be determined. They also learned that a third person would have the opportunity to redistribute earnings between them.

You are the third person. We will therefore explain to you how A's and B's earnings were determined:

When A and B were recruited, they were asked to report their date of birth. One of their dates of birth was randomly drawn and the individual with this birth date would earn 8 USD for doing the assignment. The individual whose date of birth was not drawn would earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. If an individual did not do the assignment, that individual would earn nothing.

The random draw selected the date of birth of A for the high earnings, but A and B were not informed about this before they decided whether to do the assignment. Both chose to do the assignment. A thus earned 8 USD and B earned 2 USD. They were informed about this after they had completed the assignment.

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Qualtrics Survey Software

We now ask you to choose whether to redistribute earnings between the two individuals. A and B will receive the payments within a few days.

Please state which of the following alternatives you choose:

- O I choose not to redistribute. A is paid 8 USD and B is paid 2 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 7 USD and B is paid 3 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 6 USD and B is paid 4 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 5 USD and B is paid 5 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 4 USD and B is paid 6 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 3 USD and B is paid 7 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 2 USD and B is paid 8 USD

Ex Post Impersonal

In contrast to a typical survey question, you will now make a choice that may have real consequences for two other individuals. We will randomly select and implement the decision of every tenth respondent.

Some days ago, two individuals, let us call them A and B, were recruited to do an assignment. They did not know the identity of each other, and they were to work independently on the assignment. Before A and B decided whether to do the assignment, they learned how their earnings would be determined. They also learned that a third person would have the opportunity to redistribute earnings between them.

You are the third person. We will therefore explain to you how A's and B's earnings were determined:

When A and B were recruited, they were assigned a participation number. One of their participation numbers was randomly drawn and the individual with this participation number would earn 8 USD for doing the assignment. The individual whose participation number was not drawn would earn 2 USD for doing the assignment. If an individual did not do the assignment, that individual would earn nothing.

The random draw selected the participation number of A for the high earnings, but A and B were not informed about this before they decided whether to do the https://eu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/Ajax.php?action=GetSurveyPrintPreview

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Qualtrics Survey Software assignment. Both chose to do the assignment. A thus earned 8 USD and B earned 2 USD. They were informed about this after they had completed the assignment.

We now ask you to choose whether to redistribute earnings between the two individuals. A and B will receive the payments within a few days.

Please state which of the following alternatives you choose:

O I choose not to redistribute. A is paid 8 USD and B is paid 2 USD

- I choose to redistribute. A is paid 7 USD and B is paid 3 USD
- $\bigcirc\,$ I choose to redistribute. A is paid 6 USD and B is paid 4 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 5 USD and B is paid 5 USD
- I choose to redistribute. A is paid 4 USD and B is paid 6 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 3 USD and B is paid 7 USD
- O I choose to redistribute. A is paid 2 USD and B is paid 8 USD

Fairness talent/luck/effort

11/1/2017

We would now like you to indicate to what extent you find it fair that the following factors determine a person's income. 0 means that you agree completely with the statement on the left, 10 means that you agree completely with the statement on the right, and the numbers in between indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

It is fair if luck determines a person's income 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	It is unfair if luck determines a person's income 10
0										0

11/1/2017					Qualtrics Su	rvey Software	•			
It is fair if talent determines a person's income 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	It is unfair if talent determines a person's income 10
It is fair if effort determines a person's income 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	It is unfair if effort determines a person's income 10

Control beyond/within block

We now would like you to indicate to what extent you believe that the following factors are *beyond or within individual control*? 0 means that you agree completely with the statement on the left, 10 means that you agree completely with the statement on the right, and the numbers in between indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

Luck mainly reflects factors beyond individual control 0	1	2	3	4	5	6 ()	7	8	9	Luck mainly reflects factors within individual control 10
Talent mainly reflects	1	2	3	4	5	6 ()	7	8	9	Talent mainly reflects
https://eu.qualtrics.cor	n/ControlPar	nel/Ajax.php?	action=GetSu	rveyPrintPrev	iew					7/9
factors beyond individual control 0					Qualtrics Sur	rvey Software				factors within individual control 10
Effort mainly reflects factors beyond individual control 0	1	2	3	4	5	6 ()	7	8	9	Effort mainly reflects factors within individual control 10

Redistributive preference block

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement: "Society should aim to equalise incomes"

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor	Somewhat	Strongly disagree
\bigcirc	\bigcirc	disagree	disagree	\bigcirc
Ŭ	Ŭ	0	0	Ŭ

Political preference block

Would you describe yourself as politically on the 'left-wing' or the 'right-wing'?

Very left-wing	Somewhat left-	Neutral	Somewhat right-	Very right-wing
\bigcirc	wing	\cap	wing	\bigcirc
\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\cap	\bigcirc

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