Universidade do Minho

Escola de Letras, Artes e Ciências Humanas

Catarina Neves

Acknowledging the Gift:
How an Unconditional Basic Income Encourages Reciprocity

Junho de 2024

Catarina Neves Acknowledging the Gift: How an Unconditional Basic Income Encourages Reciprocity

UMinho | 2024

FCT
Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E ENSINO SUPERIOR

POCH
PROGRAMA OPERACIONAL CAPITAL HUMANO

CEPS
CENTRO DE ÉTICA, POLÍTICA E SOCIEDADE

Universidade do Minho

Escola de Letras, Artes e Ciências Humanas

Catarina Neves

Acknowledging the Gift:
How an Unconditional Basic Income Encourages Reciprocity

Tese de Doutoramento

Filosofia

Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação do(a)

Professor Doutor Nathaniel Roberto Buil Merrill

Professor Doutor Stuart White

Junho de 2024

Copyright and terms of use of third party work

This is an academic work that can be used by third parties as long as internationally accepted rules and good practices regarding copyright and related rights are respected. Accordingly, this work may be used under the license provided below. If the user needs permission to make use of the work under conditions not provided for in the indicated licensing, they should contact the author through the RepositóriUM of the University of Minho.

Atribuição
CC BY

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Acknowledgements

I am deeply thankful to everyone who has been instrumental in helping me to write this dissertation. My advisors, both Roberto Merrill and Stuart White offered guidance and significant suggestions. This dissertation is also the result of their effort. I would not be doing a PhD if it was not for the encouragement of Roberto Merrill. I am very grateful for everything he has done for me in the past years. I am also lucky to have had the support of my mother, father, and brother – Rosário Neves, Mário Neves and Nuno Neves - who (almost) never doubted what seemed a very sudden and risky choice of quitting a stable job to pursue a PhD. To Henrique, I am thankful for his intelligence, his support and love. I couldn't do it without him.

I am also very lucky to have friends who were always willing to hear me talk about UBI and reciprocity, and who helped me to go through all the frustration that comes with doing a PhD. To Maria, Jojo, Tomás, Joana, Tita, Inês, Bia and Ziza – Thank you for your unconditional support.

I would also like to thank all the research centres and institutions who have supported my research project. Namely the Centre for Ethics, Politics and Society – and all their researchers, namely, Hugo Rajão, João Ribeiro, Stefano Calboli, Pedro Silva, Daniele Santoro and João Cardoso Rosas, and FCT who funded my research. I am also thankful to Amy Castro and Stacia West who granted me the opportunity to work at the Center for Guaranteed Income Research at the University of Pennsylvania, which was a pivotal moment in my research, but also an opportunity to meet bright and generous people like Shelly Ronen and Elizabeth DeYoung. I am thankful for Axel Gosseries' generosity in hosting me at the Hoover Chair, and for the many comments he provided on my work.

Lastly, I am thankful for the helpful comments I received from the reviewers and editors of the journals *Análise Social*, *Basic Income Studies*, *Res Publica*, *MAUSS International*, but also for the encouragement, reviews, and interesting discussions I had with several researchers along the way, namely: Philippe Van Parijs, Daniel Halliday, Yannick Vanderborght, Margaret Sommers, Alain Caillé and many others. Knowledge production is a collaborative work, and I have been fortunate and feel grateful to have benefited from the generosity many brilliant philosophers and researchers.

Financial support

Research Project support with an individual scholarship by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (reference SFRH/BD/144495/2019).

Statement of integrity

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

A Dádiva do Dinheiro: como o Rendimento Básico Incondicional Promove a Reciprocidade

Resumo:

A ideia do Rendimento Básico Incondicional (RBI) tem sido objeto de renovado interesse no espaço publico, devido à sua proposta radical de distribuição da chamada 'liberdade real'. Por essa razão, no centro do debate, constam os valores da liberdade, do não-paternalismo e do individualismo. No entanto, têm sido relegadas para segundo plano os valores da comunidade e interdependência, reforçando muitas vezes as preocupações daqueles que se opõem à ideia do RBI, argumentando que existe uma tensão entre a expansão da liberdade dos indivíduos e a promoção das obrigações de reciprocidade. A intenção dos seis artigos que, em conjunto, constituem esta dissertação é ajudar a resolver esta tensão. Esta dissertação analisa a objeção de reciprocidade ao RBI e explora as respostas mais comuns a essa objeção. Argumenta-se que todas elas são limitadas na forma como olham para a tensão entre liberdade e reciprocidade, uma vez que tendem a aceitá-la ou optam por ignorá-la. Propõe-se que reformulemos a nossa visão da reciprocidade e assumamos a sua natureza multifacetada. Para o projeto desta dissertação, é defendida uma forma de reciprocidade generalizada, que inclui a ideia de que devemos incentivar a reciprocidade cívica, com o objetivo de fomentar relações de amizade cívica, em que os retornos não têm de ser proporcionais, imediatos ou diretos. Esta perspetiva continua a exigir que um número significativo de pessoas contribua, de acordo com as suas capacidades e preferências, pelo que se defende ainda que, no que diz respeito à reciprocidade económica, se deve promover o valor da reciprocidade autónoma, como a possibilidade de participar na produção cooperativa evitando instâncias de dominação, e promovendo a igualdade entre cidadãos. O RBI é defendido como o melhor mecanismo para promover a reciprocidade cívica e incentivar o valor da reciprocidade (económica) autónoma, sendo argumentado que o RBI é experienciado como uma dádiva por quem o recebe, o que, por sua vez, gera uma obrigação moral de reciprocidade. Dois mecanismos explicam este resultado: a ideia de dívida e a de gratidão. A conclusão é que o RBI permite conciliar a tensão entre liberdade e reciprocidade, concedendo a cada um a liberdade, a capacidade, mas também o incentivo (e os motivos positivos) para cooperar.

Palavras-chave:

Emprego; Igualdade; Justiça Cooperativa; Reciprocidade; Rendimento Básico Incondicional; Trabalho.

Acknowledging the Gift: How an Unconditional Basic Income Encourages Reciprocity.

Abstract:

The idea of Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) has received widespread attention in the last decades, due to its radical proposal to distribute real freedom. Hence, central to the debate on UBI are the values of freedom, non-paternalism, and individualism. However, the debate has relegated discussions on community and interdependence, often reinforcing the concerns of those who oppose the idea of UBI on the grounds that there is a tension between enhancing individuals' freedom, and upholding obligations of reciprocity. The intention of the six articles that, together, constitute this dissertation, is to help solve this tension. This dissertation analyses the objection of reciprocity to UBI and explores the most common replies to the objection. It argues that all of them are limited in how they look at the tension between freedom and reciprocity, given that they either accept it, or disregard it. Hence, it is proposed that we reframe our view of reciprocity and assume its multifaceted nature. For the project of this dissertation, a form of generalized reciprocity is endorsed, which includes the idea that we should encourage civic reciprocity, aiming at fostering relationships of civic friendship, where returns do not have to be proportionate, immediate, or direct. Such a view still requires that a significant number of people ought to contribute, according to their abilities and preferences, and therefore it is further claimed that when it comes to economic reciprocity, we should promote the value of autonomous reciprocity, as the possibility to participate in cooperative production in a non-dominating way, and in equal standing with others. A UBI is argued to be the best mechanism to promote both civic reciprocity and encourage the value of autonomous reciprocity. It is claimed that UBI is experienced as a gift by those who receive it, which in turn generates a moral obligation to reciprocate. The mechanisms through which this happens are twofold: a sense of indebtedness and a felling of gratitude. The conclusion is that a UBI does not embody any tension between freedom and reciprocity, but rather allows us to reconcile it, by granting everyone the freedom, the capacity but also the incentive (and positive motives) to cooperate to the social product.

Key Words:

Cooperative Justice; Equality; Reciprocity; Unconditional Basic Income; Work.

Index

Copyright and terms of use of third party work ii

Acknowledgements iii

Financial support iv

Statement of integrity v

A Dádiva do Dinheiro: como o Rendimento Básico Incondicional Promove a Reciprocidade vi

  Resumo: vi

  Palavras-chave: vi

Acknowledging the Gift: How an Unconditional Basic Income Encourages Reciprocity. vii

  Abstract: vii

  Key Words: vii

Index viii

List of articles xi

Introduction 1

  The Idea of Unconditional Basic Income 2

  Reciprocity and UBI 3

  A Broader View of Reciprocity 6

  UBI as a Gift 9

  Article I: How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity: and what can experiments tell us. 10

  Article II: Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity 11

  Article III: Understanding Reciprocity and the importance of Civic Friendship 12

  Article IV: Promoting the Value of Autonomous Reciprocity: Unconditional Basic Income as a Pre-distributive Policy 13

  Article V: Gift Exchange and Reciprocity: evidence from a Guaranteed Income Experiment.... 14

  Article VI: Between Charity and Entitlement: Unconditional Basic Income as a Gift 15

References 17

Article I: How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity: and what can experiments tell us. 19

  Abstract: 19

  1. Introduction 20

  2. Unconditional Basic Income and Reciprocity 21

  3. Reciprocity and basic income experiments 25

  4. What do experiments tell us? 29

5. Conclusion: how UBI encourages reciprocity 36
References 38
Article II: Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity........ 42
Abstract:........ 42
Key Words........ 42
Introduction........ 43
UBI and Reciprocity: The Key Objection and Why is it Important........ 45
Why is the Reciprocity Debate Important?........ 46
Basic Income Experiments: How can They Help the Normative Debate on Reciprocity........ 51
Basic Income Experiments and Reciprocity........ 52
The obligations of the moral principle of reciprocity and UBI: 54
The perception of the moral principle of reciprocity and Basic Income:........ 55
Impact of How Basic Income is Funded........ 55
Shortcomings of Reciprocity or of Basic Income Experiments? 57
Conclusion 60
References 62
Article III: Understanding Reciprocity and the importance of Civic Friendship........ 64
Abstract:........ 64
(1) Introduction........ 65
(2) Reciprocity as a Relational Value........ 69
(3) Defining Civic Friendship 72
(4) Civic Reciprocity is Culturally Sensitive........ 78
(5) Conclusion 81
References 83
Article IV: Promoting the Value of Autonomous Reciprocity: Unconditional Basic Income as a Pre-distributive Policy........ 85
Abstract:........ 85
1. Introduction........ 86
2. Obligations of Economic Reciprocity........ 88
2.1 The burden(s) of economic reciprocity........ 91
2.2 The unfair burden of economic reciprocity........ 93
3. Moving Towards Autonomous Reciprocity: Pre-Distributing the Capacity to Reciprocate through a UBI........ 100
4. Conclusion 106

References 107

Article V: Gift Exchange and Reciprocity: evidence from a Guaranteed Income Experiment 111

Abstract: 111

Key words: 111

Introduction 112

Reciprocity, Deservingness and Guaranteed Income 113

Methodology 115

Setting 115

Sampling 115

Data collection and analysis 116

Findings 117

Guaranteed Income as a Gift 117

Obligation to reciprocate 120

Discussion 125

Conclusion 127

References 128

Article VI: Between Charity and Entitlement: Unconditional Basic Income as a Gift 132

Abstract 132

1. Introduction: Cooperative Justice and the Problem with Unconditional Transfers 133

2. UBI as a Payment System: Compensation, Entitlement and Charitable Donation 136

The gift like qualities of UBI 138

3. The Moral Obligation to Reciprocate 140

4. UBI to Encourage Reciprocity 146

5. Conclusion 149

References 150

Conclusion 155

References 167

List of articles

This dissertation consists of six articles, which will be referred to throughout this general introduction with the Roman numbers I-VII.

They will be presented in their original format, i.e., with the referencing and formatting rules used by the journals where they were published or where they are under review.

I. Neves, C. 2023. How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity: and what can experiments tell us. *Análise Social*, https://doi.org/10.31447/2021127

II. Neves, C. 2021. Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity. *Basic Income Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1515/bis-2021-0019

III. Neves, C. 2023. Understanding Reciprocity and the importance of Civic Friendship. *Res Publica*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-023-09614-2

IV. Neves, C. 2024. Promoting the Value of Autonomous Reciprocity: Unconditional Basic Income as a Pre-distributive Policy, Under Review at *Res Publica.*

V. Neves, C. Gift Exchange and Reciprocity: evidence from a Guaranteed Income Experiment[1].

VI. Neves, C. 2023. Between Charity and Entitlement: Unconditional Basic Income as a Gift. *MAUSS International*, https://www.maussinternational.org/copie-de-n-2-the-gift-in-movement-1

---

[1] To be submitted for publication.

Introduction

The thesis I am arguing for is simple:

> (1) An Unconditional Basic Income (hereinafter UBI or basic income, for simplicity) encourages reciprocity.

If one wishes to be more rigorous, my argument is that:

> **(1a) a UBI encourages behaviour in its recipients that is consistent with a certain reading of the norm of reciprocity.**

This simple argument requires elucidation. While some aspects of the thesis can be easier to explain, namely,

(a) what I consider to be a UBI, or (b) what reciprocating means, others took me longer to define, namely,

(c) what reading of the norm of reciprocity I am endorsing and why.

(d) why the emphasis should be put on recipients (instead of 'donors' or 'contributors') and,

(e) how a UBI is a fitting mechanism to promote the norm of reciprocity as defined in (b) and (c).

Hence, the purpose of this dissertation is to explain a-e, while trying to make the compelling, but perhaps provocative case of the possibility for an existing 'conditionality' of basic income[2]

Since the beginning of my PhD project that I had the intuition that we were collectively dismissing the potential that basic income[3] can have in promoting a sense and practice of 'community'. A lot has been written on UBI's potential as a safety net, as a tool for 'saying no', and in general as a mechanism that expands individuals' freedom (Van Parijs, 1995; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Standing, 2008). But in such discussions, the values of 'solidarity' or 'community' are often sidelined (Birnbaum, 2019), since it is deemed as something a UBI cannot accomplish.

---

[2] The first and only time I read this seemingly paradoxical sentence was in a small piece by Alain Caillé written in 1998 on basic income. My arguments are heavily inspired by Alin Caillé's piece, not only on UBI but also on the notion of gift (Caillé, 1996).

[3] I will be using UBI and Basic Income interchangeably throughout the thesis. Moreover, in certain chapters I discuss guaranteed income or unconditional cash alongside a basic income. Often, such differences are highlighted within the article (given that each of them is as a standalone paper).

Hence some claim we should consider the potential negative impacts of basic income as a standalone policy, namely in promoting alienation (Birnbaum, 2019).

But before taking on the answer to this question, it is important to understand the concept of Unconditional Basic Income (point a.).

The Idea of Unconditional Basic Income

UBI is an individual, universal, unconditional cash grant. This means, everyone in a given political community would be entitled to receive a monthly stipend, 'no strings attached': regardless of their income, household composition or occupation (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017).

I take that the monthly stipend can vary according to age and circumstance (i.e., children could receive less; people with impairments could receive more or receive another subsidy consistent with their needs)[4]. I also consider UBI as an important mechanism for current welfare states, but in no way a substitute for some of its most well-known and traditional provisions (at least in some countries in western Europe), namely: free healthcare and education, provisions for disabilities, impairments and old age, housing, and unemployment programs[5]. One of the first chapters of this dissertation offers such a definition (article I)

While my argument is about UBI as defined above, throughout the dissertation I discuss other forms of unconditional cash, that can be defined as 'close cousins' to a UBI. These include unconditional cash which is means-tested, like the idea of a Negative Income Tax (NIT) or a Guaranteed Income (GI). While both represent instances of unconditional cash grants, they include an income threshold, so that only people below a certain individual (or household) income, would be entitled to receive the stipend. Moreover, while a GI awards everyone below the income threshold the same amount, a NIT is a distinct mechanism. Below a certain threshold, the amount received will be proportional to individuals' income levels, so that the maximum amount will be given to those who earn the least. Above the determined threshold, individuals' will pay a certain amount, also proportional to their income, in a progressive way. At the threshold level, individuals won't receive anything, but will also not pay anything. Most experiments are testing a GI or a NIT, and it is therefore important to acknowledge the limitations in looking at their results, namely the difficulties in understanding community effects, or the possibility of having results that are not generalizable (i.e., do not reflect the experience of someone who is middle class and would also receive a UBI). However, given that these constitute the majority of experiments taking place, but also that all of them provide unconditional grants, which is they key distinctive feature of a UBI, I consider all of them as 'basic income experiments' when discussing the hypothesis and existing empirical evidence, namely on articles I, II, and in the empirical-oriented paper, article V.

---

[4] I take that the monthly stipend should be enough to cover some threshold of basic needs (i.e., often this implies something close or even slightly above to the poverty line), although I am much in favour of a higher threshold, like the one initially argued by Philippe Van Parijs (Van Parijs, 1995). However, the question on the stipend amount is often left open, to allow for different views, and avoid dismissing the possibility UBIs' that are closer to the poverty line, or slightly below it. Hence, I am not considering it in the main definition provided on the concept of UBI.

[5] I am excluding from this mix of 'essential policies' the so-called activation policies. These are policies aiming to encourage or enforce participation in the labour market. The most famous activation policies are minimum income schemes, namely across Europe, who are only entitled to those who promise and engage in job activation measures (i.e., sending out CVs, go to several interviews, attend training or even accepting offers provided by social services). Recipients agree to be monitored on their compliance, and if they are showed to be in non-compliance, they are sanctioned (i.e., cutting part or the full amount of the support).

As the definition above illustrates, a UBI is about expanding individuals' freedom. Its most distinctive feature – unconditionality – determines that everyone will be entitled to the benefit, regardless of what they want or decide to do with their lives, and what they wish to do with the money. It is therefore non-paternalistic and in compliance with liberal neutrality[6]. The 'radical' unconditional nature of UBI is both its most promising feature, but also the source for the objection of reciprocity. In fact, I believe one of the main reasons why a UBI is considered as a defective mechanism to accomplish the value of community, has to do with what I take to be a tension between freedom and reciprocity.

Reciprocity and UBI

Reciprocity is broadly defined as the norm that compels us to return benefits we receive. One of the most critical objections to UBI, argues that it is inconsistent with the norm of reciprocity. Put it simply, it says that individuals in a political community should contribute to the social product (view of cooperative justice). Not doing so jeopardizes the maintenance of the welfare state[7] but it can also lead to (i) exploitation of the efforts of those who contribute (a point credited to Gijs Van Donselaar (Van Donselaar, 2008)), while also being a (ii) rejection of mutual respect (White, 2003; Lister, 2011). By refusing to cooperate, I fail in considering other citizens my equals. This latter point is taken to be the 'friendly view of reciprocity', a term coined by Catriona McKinnon (McKinnon, 2003).

---

[6] Not all conditions attached to benefits need to violate liberal neutrality, or compromise a commitment to non-paternalism. However, the ones who currently are most common – under the umbrella of workfare policies – tend to impose conditions that favour certain conceptions of the good (i.e., full time employment; vocational training in certain areas), while also often including monitoring mechanisms or conditions on how the money should be spent. While it is possible to envision cash grants who have conditional mechanisms that are not so strongly paternalistic and/or do not favour certain conceptions of what a good life is, I would argue this is much more difficult to attain with conditional cash grants, and is contrary to what they often are trying to accomplish when implemented (i.e., encourage certain type of work participation). Whereas a UBI, by default, fits both criteria, by both respecting liberal neutrality and non-paternalism.

[7] John Rawls' well-known quote in *Justice as Fairness* claims that the obligation to contribute to the community (what he calls social cooperation) needs to be able to concur to the production of goods and services (hence we can claim it needs to have

Since UBI grants everyone the possibility to choose not to work, it encourages free riding, but also instances where citizens will fail to show each other a form of mutual respect, or democratic mutual regard in Stuart White's words (White, 2003). To put it briefly, a UBI allows citizens to evade their obligations to contribute to the community. Not surprisingly, those in favour of reciprocity have mostly argued against a UBI and in favour of conditional policies, which ascribe an obligation to work or participate in the community (Atkinson, 1996; White, 2003).

It is also important to consider that existing surveys on welfare attitudes such as the European Social Survey (Meuleman, van Oorschot, Sharon Baute, & Roosma, 2018), but also literature on welfare deservingness (Oorschot, 2000; Nielsen , Frederiksen, & Larsen, 2019), all point out to the centrality of reciprocity in people's perceptions and attitudes about who should be deserving of welfare assistance. In fact, when asked what should determine whether someone should be offered welfare assistance, people tend to name reciprocity on a par with the concept of 'need', arguing that for those who are not in dire situations (i.e., people with impairments, people in their old age, sometimes single mothers), a requirement to work should be implemented when it comes to deciding whether someone is eligible for welfare support or not.

Hence, I take the friendly view of reciprocity to be both normatively desirable but also empirically sound – a point I made quite explicitly in chapter IV. And therefore, I take it that we ought to dismiss proposals for relaxing the norm of reciprocity. However, by endorsing such a view, we are left with a UBI which embodies a tension between two goals: fulfilling individuals' freedom in the most radical sense and promoting the values of mutual respect and democratic mutual regard, both important for sustaining a political community, and both of which rest in a form of compliance with the norm of reciprocity. Such a tension is therefore present in the groundwork chapters of this dissertation.

---

some requirement to engage in productive work). Such an obligation described by Rawls seems to be able to be justified on instrumental grounds (as a requirement of our needs): "Social cooperation, we assume, is always productive, and without cooperation there would be nothing produced and so nothing to distribute" (Rawls, 2001, p. 61)

Beyond the desire to try to reconcile the tension between freedom and reciprocity, I also aimed to contribute to what have been the existing replies to the objection of reciprocity to UBI. In chapters I to III, I offer similar accounts of what I believe have been the three most common responses of those who believe that reciprocity is important, but also argue for a UBI.

Response one argues that a UBI should be financed through 'reciprocity-free resources' or 'unearned resources', such as natural resources, which no one has any prior right to (Van Parijs, 1997; Birnbaum, 2012). This is also consistent with views that claim that a UBI is a pre-distributive[8] mechanism (Birnbaum, 2019).

Response two argues that the problem is not UBI, but rather our conceptual definition of work. If we expand what work means, to include non-paid work such as care work, but also instances of civic and political contribution (i.e., volunteering), we will be left with a broad definition of what 'contributing to the community' means. It will therefore no longer make administrative sense to try to have conditional policies who select contributors from non-contributors, given that not only will it lead to a likely reduction in the pool of non-contributors, perhaps making it negligible, but most importantly, the line between 'contributing' and 'non-contributing', will be blurred, making it very hard to identify the latter. Moreover, as Simon Birnbaum further claims, expanding our view of work also implies acknowledging how much of our economic contribution rests on the required political contribution (i.e., voting) and hence we should not be prioritizing or disentangling one from the other (Birnbaum, 2012).

Finally, response three argues that while a UBI violates the norm of reciprocity, it is a superior policy for welfare assistance. Such a view claims that either existing conditional policies fail in their egalitarian purpose, given existing background conditions in society (White, 2017), or that the mechanisms to enforce conditionality are detrimental to the values of self-respect and freedom (namely freedom read in a neo-republican sense), and therefore, one should favour unconditional policies (Eleveld, 2020, 2018).

---

[8] Predistribution is a contested concept. As presented in article IV of this dissertation, predistribution has been hailed as s a promising mechanism to ensure the values of equality. Jacob Hacker's definitions argues that predistribution can be seen as "market reforms that encourage a more equal distribution of economic power and rewards even before government collects taxes or pays out benefits (Hacker, 2011, p. 35), while Gavin Kerr defines predistribution as a concept that draws attention to "policies that aim to generate a fair distribution of opportunities and benefits from the operation of the free market system, prior to any redistribution of these benefits through tax-and-transfer policies." (Kerr, 2016, p. 68). Martin O'Neill argues that such definitions suffer from conceptual problems, which make the distinction between predistribution and redistribution collapse analytically. Instead, he offers an account of predistribution that is pluralistic, in that it does not exclude certain policies because of their nature, but rather focuses on which aims these policies are trying to achieve: "The content of these policy aims [comes from] its potential twin roles in both reducing objectionable inequalities of power within market relationships and giving individuals a secure standing outside of the market transactions in which they may otherwise be potentially vulnerable to a troubling degree" (O'Neill, 2020, p. 85)

I take all these arguments to be sound. However, they also seem to be limited in the way they navigate the tension between freedom and reciprocity. Response three does not question the tension – it simply argues that we ought to disregard it in favour of other instrumental concerns (i.e., stigma and arbitrary power). Response one also does not deal with this tension. Instead, we should circle it, by choosing 'reciprocity free' resources to fund a UBI, and hence avoid tampering with reciprocity. But even doing so, the pool of such resources might be too limited, yielding a very small UBI, and hence fail in promoting the sort of policy UBI proponents tend to argue for. Finally, while response two offers a more promising account by expanding what reciprocity might demand as a return, and hence a better path towards discussing the tension on freedom and reciprocity, it still fails in telling us whether the threshold of political contribution is enough to fulfil the demands of reciprocity. Moreover, if technological advances allow us to quickly and in a non-stigmatizing way identify non-contributors, response two does not tell us whether we ought to do it or not.

Thus, I take all the solutions outlined above to be at least partially failing in offering a compelling argument to the concern that animates this dissertation. Hence, we can now move towards the main contribution of this dissertation, namely three main aspects, connected with points (c) to (e), to recall:

> (c) what reading of the norm of reciprocity I am endorsing and why.
>
> (d) why the emphasis should be put on recipients (instead of 'donors' or 'contributors') and,
>
> (e) how a UBI is a fitting mechanism to promote the norm of reciprocity as defined in (b) and (c).

Let's start off by discussing (c).

A Broader View of Reciprocity

The reading of reciprocity I am endorsing aims to enrich the existing accounts present in the political philosophy literature, by broadening our view of the norm in the following way:

One: I take it that the account of reciprocity that has been most used in the debates on UBI in political philosophy is a narrow account of the norm. I argue that we should broaden the scope of what reciprocity requires, and distinguish between civic reciprocity, as the general norm, and economic reciprocity, as one of the specific mutual obligations shared by citizens. While I take seriously Birnbaum's concern with disentangling economic from political contribution (Birnbaum, 2012), I believe we ought to consider the distinction between civic and economic reciprocity, to understand how much of the requirement for mutual productive contribution is both contextual, but also only one of the several requirements we impose on each other (i.e., follow the rules of courtesy, respect traffic signs, not being rude). Hence, in chapter III, I claim that both concepts share the fundamental notion of reciprocity as a commitment among parties to uphold and abide by certain rules or norms, provided that other parties will do the same, while showing how much they are distinct. Economic reciprocity is about the content of the norm (one should contribute productively if he is so able, provided others who are also able will do the same). Civic reciprocity is about the foundations of social cooperation – it is the 'norm itself' (one should cooperate by upholding the agreed upon standard rules and obligations, provided others do the same). As I further claim, the rules of the latter might or might not include contributing to the production of goods and services.

Two: Besides understanding that one might be an active contributor to civic reciprocity, while barely contributing to economic demands (i.e., simple example of someone who regularly contributes to voting booths, or someone who is an active comedian in the local coffee place), I am also claiming that the demands of reciprocity are multifaceted. This is one of the central claims of chapter III, but also IV. Existing sociological works - namely by Alvin Gouldner or Frank Adloff and Steffen Mau (Gouldner, 1960; Adloff & Mau, 2006), but also the extensive literature on gift and reciprocity (Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 2002; Sahlins, 1972; Godbout & Caillé, 1998) have pointed out the multifaceted nature of reciprocity. In the discussion on UBI, it is often assumed that the principle of reciprocity should be defined as a direct, proportional and timely return of a gift received. This is based on views that exchanges need to be 'balanced' to promote equality, as opposed to exploitation, or that 'fruitful relationships' (Becker, 1986), or relationships of equality, are those who tend to be balanced. But this is distinct from the plurality of anthropological accounts on reciprocity, which I think we should take seriously.

Finally, point three follows from two. If we agree that the demands of reciprocity are multifaceted, but also that the reason to assume a certain view of reciprocity is to ensure balanced and fruitful relationships, then we are implicitly considering reciprocity as a relational value. Articles III to VI all endorse such a view. Acknowledging reciprocity as a relational value implies considering it as a bonding mechanism, that contributes to social cohesion. Through reciprocal exchanges we sustain interpersonal relationships, whose nature determines the type of return we grant to gifts received. Hence, while we tend towards balance and proportional exchanges with those, we are initiating a relationship with, or whom we consider to be early or 'distant' acquaintances, we tend towards delayed and often non-proportionate returns with those we have a relationship of intimacy and trust. I accept that my brother might not pay me back the coffee I gave him last week, and he knows I'll help him out (or someone he cherish) in the future, even if he has not helped me out this week; but if I start in a new job today, and offer Joan a coffee, and she refuses to offer me one next week, I might be suspicious of her character or her intentions towards me (i.e., is she trying to exploit my kindness?).

These three components allow for a broad and multifaceted picture of reciprocity. For the project of this dissertation, I endorse this view, including the idea that we should encourage civic reciprocity, aiming at fostering relationships of civic friendship, where returns do not have to be proportionate, immediate, or direct. Nonetheless, I still acknowledge that such a view might require that a significant number of people ought to contribute with some form of work (not necessarily paid employment) according to their abilities and preferences.

Given what such a view of reciprocity might demand, I shift my attention to aspects (d) and (e), which mostly focuses on questioning the interpretation of the potential impact of UBI, and what does this imply when it comes to the norm of reciprocity. The first aspect of this argument is to question the emphasis that has been put in the 'donors' or 'contributors', when it comes to discussing UBI and reciprocity (point d.).

One of the reasons for why UBI is superior to other mechanisms of social assistance comes from its nature as an 'ex-post' mechanism. Because it is unconditional, a UBI emphasizes the 'giving part'. A UBI grants everyone the required means to be able to reciprocate or to be able to determine how they ought to reciprocate, given their constrains and preferences. This reasoning has often been argued in the UBI debate when discussing the policy's potential in reducing the inactivity trap, but also in granting the means for people to take on education or to be able to look for an occupation in an autonomous manner, free of all the bureaucracy hurdles which are typical of social assistance mechanisms.

But in chapter IV I argue that it is not only about reducing barriers to work and occupation, but rather about promoting the value of ‘autonomous reciprocity’, read as ‘the possibility to participate in reciprocal gift giving in a non-dominating way, and in equal standing with other partners in interaction’. Following David Schmidtz, I argue that reciprocity ‘should not be a constraint defining ‘who deserves what’, but rather a value we should promote (Schmidtz, 2005). Moreover, I make the additional point that a UBI might be the fitting mechanism to promote such a value, given that it can function as a predistributive policy, which grants everyone the capacity to reciprocate in a universal, non-stigmatizing and non-dominating way.

This is point (d) of my thesis. We ought to shift our attention to recipients and move away from the extensive space that has been devoted to so-called donors’ (or net contributors’) concerns with UBI.

UBI as a Gift

From this follows what I take to be the central claim of my dissertation, both a normative and hypothetical claim borne out of my participation in the empirical work conducted in Paterson, New Jersey, and which is the content of article V of this thesis, further elaborated in the argument of the final chapter of this dissertation in article VI.

In Paterson, New Jersey participants receiving a Guaranteed Income for one year told me how they felt blessed, and expressed a certain sense of responsibility on how they were using or planning to use their GI. Doing so meant considering the items where they spend their money (i.e., often discussing how their decisions to go out for dinner with their family, or to buy some new clothes were small splurges). Such accounts can be a result of years of being in social assistance, where spending patterns are monitored. But most often participants discussed in what way they were using the money to leverage their families’ position and plans, to settle ‘debts’ or to give back to family, friends or even members of the community. In Chapter V, I present these findings, claiming that they showcase instances where a GI was considered a gift, which encouraged reciprocation. Recipients either used it to contribute to their own social networks (either by initiating gift-giving or by returning help they received from their networks) or they gave back to the community. In doing so they frequently claimed this was their obligation, since they had been helped by being granted a GI.

The accounts I heard from Patersonians in the GI experiment inspired what is the central argument of this thesis, introduced in article VI. In this final chapter I ask how a UBI might be experienced by those who receive it. Existing moral justifications for basic income seem to fail in acknowledging the sense of blessing expressed by participants in Paterson. UBI's unconditionality, and its radical proposal to equalize and enhance individuals' freedom, can lead to UBI being experienced as a gift (as defined by Marcel Mauss) by recipients.

Beyond claiming that a UBI embodies some feature of a gift, I discuss how despite no legal obligation to reciprocate, a UBI might encourage a moral obligation to do so. The mechanisms through which this happens are twofold: a sense of indebtedness and a feeling of gratitude. Both mechanisms are said to encourage the sort of value of autonomous reciprocity which I believe we should be endorsing, considering both the action of reciprocating, but also the motives for doing so. Thus, in article VI I argue that a UBI generates an obligation of reciprocity, such that when perceived as a gift, a UBI promotes a sense of indebtedness and gratitude, which produces a felt need on the recipients to meet this obligation. Hence, instead of discussing how a UBI encourages individuals to evade their obligations of reciprocity, the proposal I present in this dissertation claims that a UBI as a gift embodies a moral obligation to reciprocate to the political community, and that through indebtedness and gratitude, recipients feel the need to meet this obligation.

Overview of the Articles

This dissertation consists of six articles that build on each other and together aim to argue that a UBI is the fitting mechanism to promote reciprocity that can foster relationships of equality. Below I provide a short summary of each article, followed by the six full articles, presented as chapters of this dissertation. I end with a short conclusion.

Article I: How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity: and what can experiments tell us.

The first article offers a literature review of what are some of the critical concepts of this dissertation. Namely, it introduces the idea of Unconditional Basic Income, as defined in this Introduction, while also presenting the debate on UBI and reciprocity.

It argues that the discussion of the reciprocity objection is mostly at a standstill – between those who endorse the centrality of reciprocity when it comes to the distribution of entitlements (view of cooperative justice) and those who are in favour of relaxing the norm. Therefore, it proposes we look at existing evidence from basic income experiments to understand whether we can find new hypothesis to discuss UBI and reciprocity. To do so, it focuses on 4 questions:

1 - Does UBI decrease the incentives to take on paid work?
2 - Does UBI generate negative feelings against the recipients?
3 - What is the perception of the net beneficiaries on UBI?
4 - Does UBI promote a thinner and broader conception of contribution by increasing the incentive to perform socially relevant activities?

Surveying a range of basic income experiments, but also conditional cash transfer studies, it concludes that there seems to be no compelling evidence that people will significantly withdraw from the labour market, if granted unconditional cash. Moreover, it argues that UBI can reduce the barriers to work, hence having a positive impact on employment. Finally, it claims basic income can have a tremendous role in promoting the so-called "autonomous sphere" (Gorz, 1980) where we could choose other productive activities, beyond employment. Finally, it claims that a UBI, as opposed to conditional cash transfers, can have positive effects in self-respect and individual's motivation to contribute to the labour market, but also civic activities and projects. An important take not fully developed in article I, but which will partially be taken upon in the final article of this dissertation.

Article I closes by claiming that despite existing evidence, we are still lacking data on the four questions mentioned above, given that basic income experiments have mostly focused on work incentives and in welfare indicators and poverty rates.

Article II: Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity

Article II starts by also introducing the debate on UBI and reciprocity, but also stating why the debate on reciprocity is important. In doing so, it acknowledges that most likely we should not try to relax the duty of reciprocity (at least completely), but rather discuss how a UBI can be reconciled with reciprocity. Hence, it complements article I's project, by offering four clusters of issues in which we should look to gather more evidence from basic income experiments, to better understand UBI's interaction with reciprocity[9]. These include:

- The obligations of the moral principle of reciprocity and UBI, which includes looking at 'Labour withdrawal' but also to the idea of 'Meaningful contribution' (merges aspect 1 and 4 of article I).
- The perception of the moral principle of reciprocity and basic income, which includes looking at 'Basic Income and trust' but also perceptions and debates around 'Basic Income and marginalized groups'.
- Finally, the impact of how basic income is funded.

Finally, it offers a word of caution when it comes to wanting to get information on reciprocity from basic income experiments. It claims we are faced with methodological limitations, but also a mismatch between the norm of reciprocity, as discussed in the context of ideal theory, which is often the inspiration for the objection of reciprocity to UBI, and the non-ideal setting in which basic income experiments are taking place. This results in a potentially wide gap between what evidence tells us about reciprocity, and our account of the norm in an idealized setting. This reflection closes by claiming that we most likely need to reframe the theoretical account of the norm of reciprocity.

Article III: Understanding Reciprocity and the importance of Civic Friendship

Articles III and IV take up the invitation of article II, by looking at the possibility of reframing our theoretical account of the norm of reciprocity. Hence, both are almost exclusively focused on reciprocity (especially on article III), pausing the debate on UBI, which is taken up again in the last articles of this dissertation.

To reframe what has been the dominant view of reciprocity in the theoretical debate on UBI, article III starts off by presenting how reciprocity is used and discussed in political philosophy. It argues that we have had two distinct (albeit related) conceptions of reciprocity:

---

[9] Given that both articles are standalone papers, but also that they set the stage on the relationship on UBI and reciprocity, although from different perspectives, there is some overlap between the two that should be considered when reading them.

One is about reciprocity as a mechanism for political agreement. This is the dominant view in literature on political liberalism, and social contract theory. The second, is about reciprocity as a requirement for mutual productive contribution. This is the most common view when it comes to debates on distributive justice, and UBI.

While distinguishing between the two, and naming them instances of civic and economic reciprocity, article III shows that the latter is the content of the norm, and that agreement and cohabitation in a political community, according with the demands of civic reciprocity, might not demand economic reciprocity as it has been argued for. Beyond acknowledging that the content of the demand of reciprocity might be broader than simply productive contribution, article III also claims that we should side with those who have a relational view of reciprocity, and therefore consider that the norm is shaped by social relationships among those cooperating.

Doing so, amounts to claiming that civic reciprocity, as it is argued for in the article, can only work as it is normatively desirable for a society of equals, if citizens share a relationship of civic friendship. It closes claiming that such a view might make the project of political liberalism more difficult, and hence we ought to be mindful of what sort of policies can foster relationships of civic friendship in the context of pluralism.

Article IV: Promoting the Value of Autonomous Reciprocity: Unconditional Basic Income as a Pre-distributive Policy

In article III it is argued we should consider that the demands of reciprocity are not exhausted by economic contribution, but also that what reciprocity demands is a function of the relationship between those who are in cooperation. But those who object to UBI often focus on economic reciprocity. Hence, they might claim that even if we consider civic reciprocity, and take it to be relational, our current society still relies on and ascribes significant meaning to economic contribution. This can be argued both on instrumental grounds (see footnote 7 of this introduction), or by discussing the social standing of paid employment.

Hence, chapter IV aims to contribute to the broad and multifaceted reading of the norm of reciprocity, which is argued for in this dissertation, but takes on the project of looking solely at economic reciprocity. It argues that the obligations of economic reciprocity include not only the obligation to work (often in a productive manner) but also to contribute to ones' social network – family, friends, neighbours. It further claims that these two obligations constitute a burden to those who occupy the worst-off position in society, while also arguing that such a burden can be deemed unfair, dominating, and detrimental to individuals' self-respect.

The article concludes by arguing that mitigating the unfair burden of reciprocity should be part of a larger project of promoting the value of autonomous reciprocity. Doing so, amounts to encouraging reciprocation to take place in such a way where debts are not instrumental for domination or stigmatization of those cooperating, arguing that a UBI as a pre-distributive mechanism can be the most fitting mechanism to do so.

Hence, article IV closes by circling us back to the discussion on UBI, now armed with a broader and multifaceted conception of what the norm of reciprocity requires.

Article V: Gift Exchange and Reciprocity: evidence from a Guaranteed Income Experiment

The view of reciprocity endorsed in this dissertation considers that civic reciprocity encompasses demands of economic contribution, but it also argues that such demands should follow the values of autonomous reciprocity. Both aspects ensure that we encourage a society of equals, where the unfair burden of reciprocity, which falls on the shoulders of those in the worst-off position in society, is mitigated.

While I argued how a UBI can contribute to the value of autonomous reciprocity, I was still left to argue whether it can or cannot encourage it in a significant way. Can a UBI be better at enforcing the demands of civic reciprocity (with or without economic contribution)? Article V and VII argue that it can.

Article V returns to empirical evidence. It is the only empirical paper of this dissertation, and it's the outcome of a visiting research position at the CGRI – Center for Guaranteed Income Research at the University of Pennsylvania. It builds on the legacy of the first articles of this dissertation and asks whether we can learn anything new from basic income experiments, while taking seriously the perspective of a broad view of reciprocity. By doing so, it offers a different and new perspective. The evidence from Patterson seems to point out that giving money unconditionally does not constitute a free handout to those who receive it. As a gift, Paterson GI recipients often discussed the sense of obligation they felt when receiving their guaranteed income. They considered it important to 'do right with money', both in how they decided to spend it, but also how they felt others should use the money. Therefore, contrary to usual perception, GI as a gift came with strings attached: the obligations of honouring the money, by reciprocating in the different ways in which participants believe make them deserving of the money received.

While this evidence seems to imply that unconditional cash can be perceived as a gift, and hence encourage a moral obligation to reciprocity, one could question whether this hypothesis holds 1) beyond the experimental setting, and 2) if a UBI instead of a GI[10] was implemented. Hence, the final article of this dissertation takes on this issue.

Article VI: Between Charity and Entitlement: Unconditional Basic Income as a Gift

Article VI offers the central thesis of this dissertation, by claiming that a UBI encourages a moral obligation to reciprocate. And in many ways takes up the case of article I, but expands it, to acknowledge the hypothesis of UBI encouraging reciprocation, beyond the possibility of removing barriers to work.

It looks at what are the common moral justifications for implementing a UBI, namely considering it as a mechanism to solve poverty more efficiently (UBI as a charitable donation), a possibility to compensate unpaid work or the appropriation of rights (UBI as compensation) and finally a UBI as a right we are entitled to (UBI as entitlement).

While it acknowledges that a UBI can embody some if not all the framings mentioned above, it claims that we have neglected to look at UBI's impact in recipients' perception and behaviour, namely how they are impacted by UBI's radical proposal of unconditionality.

---

[10] See the first section on this Introduction entitled "The idea of Unconditional Basic Income" for a detailed description of the difference between UBI and GI. The same distinction is also present in Article V's introduction.

By doing so, article VI claims that we should take seriously UBI’s resemblance with a gift (in a Marcel Mauss’ sense), namely because of being unconditional (no targeting, no strings attached), but also because of its impact in enhancing individuals’ freedom. It further claims that the ‘gift-like’ qualities of a UBI promote a sense of indebtedness and gratitude, both of which concur strongly to a moral obligation to reciprocate the UBI received. It closes by claiming that we can design a UBI that reinforces such gift-like qualities, and hence maximize the hypothesis of a strong moral obligation to reciprocate.

References

Adloff, F., & Mau, S. (2006). Giving Social Ties, Reciprocity in Modern Society. *European Journal of Sociology*, 47(1), 93-123.

Atkinson, T. (1996). The Case for a Participation Income. *The Political Quarterly*, 67-70.

Becker, L. C. (1986). *Reciprocity*. Routledge.

Birnbaum, S. (2012). *Basic Income reconsidered. Social Justice, Liberalism, and the Demands of Equality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Birnbaum, S. (2019). The Ethics of Basic Income. Em M. Torry, *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income* (pp. 507-522). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Eleveld, A. (2018). The sanctions mitigation paradox in welfare to work benefit schemes. *Comparative Labor & Policy Journal*, 39, 102-28.

Eleveld, A. (2020). In A. Eleveld, T. Kampen, & J. Arts, *Welfare to Work in Contemporary European Welfare States. Legal, Sociological and Philosophical Perspectives on Justice and Domination* (pp. 263-280). Bristol: Policy Press.

Godbout, J., & Caillé, A. (1998). *The World of the Gift*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Godelier, M. (1999). *The enigma of the Gift*. Polity Press.

Gorz, A. (1980). *Ecology as Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement. *American Sociological Review*, 161-178.

Lister, A. (2011). Justice as Fairness and Reciprocity. *Analyse & Kritik*, 91-112.

Mauss, M. (2002). *The Gift*. London: Routledge Classics.

McKinnon, C. (2003). Basic Income, Self-Respect and Reciprocity. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 20(2), 143-158.

Meuleman, B., van Oorschot, W., Sharon Baute, S. D., & Roosma, F. (2018). The Past, Present and Future of European Welfare Attitudes: Topline Results from Round 8 of the European Social Survey. Brussels: European Social Survey. November 2022.Available at: https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS8_toplines_issue_8_welfare.pdf

Nielsen , M. H., Frederiksen, M., & Larsen, C. A. (2019). Deservingness put into practice: Constructing the (un)deservingness of migrants in four European countries. *British Journal of Sociology and Political Science*, 112-126.

Oorschot, W. v. (2000). Who Should Get What, and Why? On Deservingness Criteria and the Conditionality of Solidarity Among the Public. *Policy & Politics*, 28, 33-48.

Sahlins, M. (1972). *Stone Age Economics*. New York: Routledge.

Schmidtz, D. (2005). What We Deserve, and How We Reciprocate. *The Journal of Ethics*, 9, 435-464.

Standing, G. (2008). How Cash Transfers Promote the Case for Basic Income. *Basic Income Studies*, 3(1), 1–30.

Van Donselaar, G. (2008). *The Right to Exploit. Parasitism, Scarcity, Basic Income.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, P. (1995). *Real Freedom for All*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, P. (1997). Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White. *Political Studies,* 327-330.

Van Parijs, P., and Vanderborght, Y. (2017). *Basic Income: a radical proposal for a Free and a Sane Economy*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

White, S. (2003). *The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, S. (2017). Should a minimum income be unconditional? Em S. Civitarese, & S. Halliday, *Social Rights in Europe in an Age of Austerity* (pp. 1-16). London: Routledge.

Widerquist, K. (2013). Inde*pendence, Propertylessness, and Basic Income: A Theory of Freedom as the Power to Say No*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Article I: How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity: and what can experiments tell us.

Neves, C. 2023. How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity: and what can experiments tell us. *Análise Social*, https://doi.org/10.31447/2021127

Abstract:

One of the principled arguments against UBI is the reciprocity objection, which claims that it is unfair to receive benefits, if someone is not willing to contribute to the common good. The main goal of the paper is to advance the role of UBI as encouraging reciprocity, by looking at the evidence from UBI experiments. Empirical data shows how people do not stop working when receiving an unconditional grant. Moreover, when small reductions in paid work intensity were reported, it was found people were devoting their time to other socially relevant activities, namely reproductive labour, volunteering or community and civic engagement. Evidence also seems to show that contrary to conditional forms of social assistance, a UBI reduces stigma. Hence, experiments allow us to expand our notion of what is productive contribution. As a redistribution mechanism, UBI enables and encourages activities which should be considered as legitimate expressions of reciprocity in society. As such, instead of discussing how UBI violates the norm of reciprocity, we should instead focus on UBI's potential as a requirement to promote reciprocity in a just society. The paper is divided in five sections, including the introduction, section two reviews the literature on reciprocity, section three and four focus on the evidence from experiments and section five concludes with the main argument.

Key words: Unconditional Basic Income; Reciprocity; Basic Income Experiments; Participation; Conditional welfare program.

1. Introduction

Unconditional Basic Income (hereinafter UBI) is a long-debated topic in the realm of social policy and social justice. Philippe Van Parijs, in "Real Freedom for All" defined it as: "an income paid by the government to each full member of society (1) even if she is not willing to work, (2) irrespective of her being rich or poor, (3) whoever she lives with, and (4) no matter which part of the country she lives in." (Van Parijs, 1995, p. 35). Van Parijs argues for the highest possible income, in order to maximize "real freedom". Hence, contrary to other existing cash grants, a UBI is not means-tested, and it has not requirements or conditions to be eligible to receive it[11].

One of the most discussed objections to UBI is focuses on reciprocity (Widerquist, 1999; White, 2003; Segall, 2005; White, 2016; McKinnon, 2003). Reciprocity is the norm that impels individuals to return a gift they have received, hence it is often used to justify obligations that we as members of the same political community owe to each other, namely the obligation to contribute productively to the social product (White, 2003; Rawls, 2001). As such, an unconditional income that demands no contribution in return, is said to be in opposition to the demands of the norm of reciprocity.

Despite the theoretical debate on UBI and reciprocity, little has been written on how much existing evidence from basic income experiments can challenge our interpretation of the objection. This is because reciprocity pertains to ethical considerations, and as such it is not to be settled with empirical evidence. It is about considering whether non-wealthy able body people, who choose not to work, should be entitled to income transfers[12]. However, in what follows, it will be argued that understanding existing evidence from UBI experiments can contribute to this discussion. The goal of the present paper is twofold. Firstly, it aims to investigate existing experimental evidence on basic income experiments, but also minimum income schemes, having in mind the demands of reciprocity. Doing so, will ultimately allow us to propose a broader view of what the norm of reciprocity requires, including paid employment, but also other activities more consistent with our individual and collective obligations, but also each persons' preferences and life projects. Taken together, these two objectives challenge the mainstream interpretation of Unconditional Basic Income and the norm of reciprocity. Namely, this paper will argue that instead of discussing how UBI violates the norm of reciprocity, we should shift our attention to how UBI encourages reciprocal contribution, in a broad sense. By redistributing resources, and hence offering the possibility to have more time (beyond paid employment), UBI enables individuals to better enact their individual preferences, not only in terms of their 'mix' of activities i.e., paid employment, care work, community work, leisure, but also their life projects. Hence, this paper contributes to existing literature by discussing what reciprocity demands, but also what can we find in experimental evidence. Perhaps most importantly, it proposes that we look at reciprocity as a social cohesion mechanism that can be self-generating, through mechanisms such as UBI.

---

[11] While UBI is universal and unconditional, most cash grants are either means tested, or conditional or both. Means-tested cash grants usually define an income threshold to attribute the grant. Hence, only individuals (or households) who are below a certain monthly or annual income are eligible to receive social assistance in the form of a regular cash grant. Examples of such policies include the Guaranteed Income proposals currently being tested in several cities in the United States (for more Information on this topic: https://www.mayorsforagi.org/). The minimum income scheme initially proposed in Portugal was also a form of means-tested income. In these examples, the program is means-tested but unconditional. A second proposal, currently in place in most European countries, is a form of conditional minimum income scheme. The program is not only means-tested but also conditional upon the recipients complying with certain rules, namely that they are unemployed but actively looking for work, or that they are enrolling in some form of adult training or education or even that their children are attending school, or that they are using the money in a certain way when shopping for groceries or toiletries. These are usually called 'workfare' policies or 'work for the dole' programs. The current Portuguese minimum income scheme – 'Rendimento Social de Inserção' – is an 'activation policy' that can be considered a type of means-tested and conditional cash grant assistance.

[12] It is important to highlight that the objection of reciprocity is often used when discussing non-wealthy able-bodied people, as authors like Karl Widerquist have pointed out (Widerquist, 1999). While we can discuss whether wealthy individuals who live off of returns from capital they have inherited are contributing to society i.e., allocation of resources in the financial market?, the objection of reciprocity is often not focusing on such cases, as it should to ensure the coherence of the argument, but mostly focused on non-wealthy, able-bodied people.

The paper starts in Section 2 with a discussion and literature review on reciprocity and UBI. Section 3 and Section 4 discuss the role of experiments and the available evidence, connecting it to the reciprocity argument. When relevant, a comparison between unconditional and conditional cash transfers will be done. Lastly, Section 5, will conclude with the general argument on how UBI contributes to encourage reciprocal duties, and how further evidence should be gathered to support this thesis.

2. Unconditional Basic Income and Reciprocity

One of the standard objections to the idea of UBI is the reciprocity argument. The argument goes as follows: to be entitled to receive a payment or benefit, one is deemed to also contribute to the social product. Not doing so is evading our obligations to others (*I refuse to give a proper return to a gift I have received)*, and potentially an act of free ridding and exploitation if others are forced to continue contributing, to fund benefits. This is linked to Alvin Gouldner 's conception of reciprocity as a universal norm (Gouldner, 1960). Before him, much of our knowledge came from anthropologists such as Marcel Mauss (Mauss, 2002), who studied reciprocal interactions in tribes in the Pacific. Gouldner describes the historical evolution of the concept of reciprocity, and how it has been the subject of discussion of thinkers from Marx to Durkheim. He also discusses how reciprocity is tied to both exchange and exploitation (Gouldner, 1960, p. 167). These accounts inform Gouldner's belief in the existence of a universal and generalized norm of reciprocity, where the ties of reciprocity are formed beyond complementarity duties and obligations: "we owe others certain things because of what they have previously done for us, because of the history of previous interaction we have had with them" (Gouldner, 1960, p. 171). For Gouldner the norm of reciprocity has two fundamental demands: "(1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them" (Gouldner, 1960, p. 171). While it is universal, reciprocity is not unconditional since it can vary considering the status and position of different people in society. Thus, reciprocity is seen as a stabilization mechanism, promoting social cohesion, and governing interactions. As Gouldner puts it: "if you want to be helped by others you must help them; hence it is not only proper but also expedient to conform with the specific status rights of others and with the general norm" (Gouldner, 1960, p. 173). Gouldner is therefore also arguing that reciprocity allows a reflective equilibrium where one follows the rules, expecting others do the same. However, and as the sociologist points out, different cultures can implement the norm in different ways. Hence it can be argued that in modern societies, the norm of reciprocity has been expanded to account for other obligations such as the obligation to be employed or to pay taxes.

Such a thought guides Lawrence C. Becker's work. He deemed reciprocity as a "nonvoluntary social obligation" (Becker, 1980, p. 40), that needs to be "scaled to competence, ability and benefits" (Becker, 1980, p. 41). Moreover, Becker binds reciprocity to work, a direct link which was not as common before, although implicit in Marx's anti-capitalist thought, and his discussion of a lower phase of communism (Marx, 1891). Instead of only discussing reciprocity's role in organizing labour, Becker tells us that reciprocity is a way to justify nonvoluntary "citizenship obligations". Through the benefits we receive and how they are generated, or through the demands of a given benefactor, which can be institutionalized demands, reciprocity yields a social obligation to work (Becker, 1980, p. 42).

Alvin Gouldner and Lawrence Becker's accounts shed light to many of the current debates in reciprocity, particular in the liberal-egalitarian discussions of justice. John Rawls' account is the basis from which many philosophers debated how reciprocity should govern justice in entitlements. Reciprocity can be found at least in two aspects of Rawls' work: One is related with the difference principle, which states that any movement away from equality (such as increasing the wage of the privileged members of society) should benefit the worst-off. Therefore, moving away from equality should be mutually beneficial: it should be reciprocal. There is no reference to an obligation to work or to conditioning income distribution based on individual-level contribution. However, Rawls provides another important account of reciprocity. The American philosopher defines society as “fair system of cooperation”, where cooperation includes “the idea of fair terms of cooperation: these are terms each participant may reasonably accept, and sometimes should accept, provided that everyone else likewise accepts them. Fair terms of cooperation specify an idea of reciprocity, or mutuality: all who do their part as the recognized rules require are to benefit as specified by a public and agreed-upon standard” (Rawls, 2001, p. 6). These are part of the basic structure of society which should be ruled by its two principles of justice. Therefore, cooperation implies reciprocity, where to receive a certain benefit, you must “do your own part in the cooperative scheme”. This notion of individual-level contribution as a requirement to partake in society, precedes any account of reciprocity present in the difference principle. Moreover, Rawls assumes cooperation with a productivist bias: “Social cooperation, we assume, is always productive, and without cooperation there would be nothing produced and so nothing to distribute” (Rawls, 2001, p. 61). Beyond what can be considered productive contribution, it is enough for now to claim that in Rawls cooperation has a productive nature. Therefore, we can argue that to be entitled to the benefits guaranteed by the second principle of justice – the one which governs the distribution of the index of primary goods, and which could include a UBI – one has to accept the requirement to contribute productively.

In a similar account to Rawls, Stuart White endorses a view of cooperative justice, where reciprocity is central: “those who willingly enjoy the economic benefits of social cooperation have a corresponding obligation to make a productive contribution, it they are so able, to the cooperative community which provides these benefits” (White, 2003, p. 52). In doing so, White is referring to Rawls’ account of cooperation, and therefore supporting a conception of justice where the distribution of assets is conditioned by our productive participation. Of course we can discuss what counts as productive participation and White has done it often (White, 2016, p. 8), influenced by Atkinson’s notion of “participation income” (Atkinson, 1996). Moreover, he has also taken a principle of “contribution according to one’s ability” (White, 2003, p. 60). But White’s account of the reciprocity requirement stems not necessarily from a generalized norm, as in the sociological debate mentioned, but from a notion of mutual respect, where we are obliged to contribute because in doing so, we pay respect to our fellow citizen (White, 2003). Contributing becomes necessary for mutual respect, and for satisfying the requirement of justice. Therefore, violating reciprocity by non-contributing (assuming we are an able-bodied citizen) is almost automatically exploitative because 1) cooperation is considered from a productive standpoint (even if not work-centred) and especially because 2) it is assumed that the funding of a high level UBI will partly come from the products of social cooperation. Since we are not here discussing the funding schemes of UBI[13], we will be focusing our analysis on the notion of cooperation and discuss how a UBI is said to be against the spirit of reciprocity, by allowing individuals to evade their obligations to contribute, as opposed to other social assistance programs, namely activation or workfare policies[14].

Before moving on to the evidence experiments can give us, it is worth mentioning those who have tried to overcome the reciprocity objection. One of these accounts is to be found in the reply to Stuart White by Philippe Van Parijs (Van Parijs, 1997). The latter claims that more important than grounding our discussion on the distinction between what is a direct result from cooperation, and hence cannot be distributed unconditionally, we should focus on the value of these assets, and how many are in scarce supply. If we look at value in scarcity, we will find a stronger argument for sharing in the value of assets universally and unconditionally. So, Van Parijs does not deny that reciprocity exists, but focuses on the notion of entitlement as a more important principle to govern the distribution of income (Van Parijs, 1997, p. 4). However, this account disregards reciprocity, and one could argue that when implementing a UBI reciprocal expectations can prove to have a bigger relevance, undermining public acceptance for the policy. The intuition that this might be the case, should inform our discussion, even if in theory we could be moved by an entitlement-based principle, and not a contribution-based one.

Another contribution by Simon Birnbaum argues it would be too difficult to identify the small minority that did not in effect contribute in an economic or political way. By widening the scope of contribution, conditionality would become difficult to implement. The author's case against a "thick, employment-centred" account of reciprocity, goes further than White's or Atkinson's account

---

[13] While discussing funding sources is out of the scope of this paper, is worth considering the limitations of the divorce between discussing UBI and reciprocity and discussing funding sources. There are important implications of considering a UBI funded solely through unearned resources i.e., natural resources, or 'reciprocity-free resources' as Simon Birnbaum characterizes them (Birnbaum, 2012, p. 25), or through earned ones, such as through the income tax. While the first, can be justified as a common inheritance, and as such, one should be entitled to receive it, regardless of how much one contributes to the social product (since the UBI is funded through resources that are entitled to all), in the latter case, a UBI funded through the income tax can be more sensible to the reciprocity objection, by arguing that those who do not work (and hence cannot pay income tax) would free ride on those who do, which would amount to free ridding and exploitation (White, 2003; Donselaar, 2008).
While these two perspectives can be considered as yielding different justifications for a UBI, based on its funding source, it is worth considering how the work ethic, and reciprocity as a criterion of deservingness is part of the public discourse and imagination (Oorschot, 2000). Reciprocity is deemed as a key criterion determining who gets what, and welfare stated have been built in some way on notions of reciprocity i.e., pensions mechanisms (Bowles & Gintis, 2000). As such, regardless of how a UBI would be financed, I still believe reciprocity would be part of the public discussion on a UBI, and is therefore worth discussing, even if one does not get into detail of how a UBI is financed.

[14] See footnote 1 (of this article, so footnote 8 of this dissertation) about the difference between UBI, Minimum Income and Guaranteed Income and Conditional or Workfare policies.

(Birnbaum, 2012). Atkinson supported a "participation income" as opposed to an unconditional one, claiming that *participation*, rather than employment, should be considered as a condition to receive benefits. Participation would include work and self-employment, but also training and education and care work (Atkinson, 1996, pp. 68-69). While this is already a broader conception of contribution, Birnbaum goes further. Much of the activities Atkinson considers are still of an economic nature, even if not employment-related, and for Birnbaum, "economic cooperation needs to build on stable political cooperation" (Birnbaum, 2012, p. 75). Therefore, we should not exclude anyone from the realm of social justice, based on a notion of cooperation that disentangles economic contribution from the political one. Since economic production is interdependent with politics, we should not exclude those who in theory simply contribute to one side of the equation (Birnbaum, 2012, p. 75). The question here is hence what is included in "the realm of social justice", that allows political participation to be a satisfying criterion, without economic cooperation. His second argument is like Van Parijs' principle of entitlement. By claiming a principle of wealth sharing through "taxing a set of "reciprocity-free" resources [unearned resources] UBI would not violate reciprocity (Birnbaum, 2012, p. 82). Therefore, first Birnbaum expands the view of contribution to accommodate UBI under reciprocity, and secondly, he respects reciprocity, and argues for funding that avoids breaking the requirement of individual-level contribution.

These accounts are relevant for our discussion, inasmuch they all consider reciprocity as an important norm. Particularly, Birnbaum's and White's discussions on what is a relevant contribution allows us look into the evidence of basic income experiments in the incentives to work and productive activity, but also in terms of political participation. It also leads to the discussion on how basic income can increase our individual and collective "investment" in spheres of activity outside employment. We will now look at experiments having in mind an expanded notion of contribution.

3. Reciprocity and basic income experiments

We can confidently state the existence of reciprocal obligations. We know they are related to social status, to exchanges and to mechanisms of social cohesion. Therefore, considering reciprocity when reflecting on implementing a policy such as UBI is important. It can also contribute to strengthen the theoretical discussion. Experiments can tell us if some of our concerns do in fact take place. But we first need to assert the relevance of looking at experiments.

Experiments are important because they give us information on research designs, hints on the type of positive and negative outcomes of implementing UBI, and can inform us on the political attitude (Wispelaere, Halmetoja, & Pulkka, 2018; Pulkka, 2019; Santens, 2019)[15]. They can also impose challenges, where some are intrinsic to any social experiment while others are specific to UBI[16]. These include issues such as the sample size, usually too small to generalize, or too focused on segments of the population; the time frame, which tends to be very limited to allow generalizations on the overall impacts of a policy; the media effect, which can bias the results through the way the evidence is communicated; the difficulty in assessing community effects; the streetlight effect, which biases the outcomes that we will analyse, given our preferences and prior opinions, (Standing, 2017; Widerquist, 2018) or even possible spill over effects from treatment to control groups and attrition biases when results are measured in the medium- to long-run, both difficult to rationalize[17].

Furthermore, and as pointed out by a World Bank report (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 102), we do not have experiments of a "pure" UBI. Most experiments implemented so far, are either partly means-tested or have degrees of conditionality. Therefore, enlarging the scope of evidence we resort to, including minimum income schemes is acceptable. Minimum income schemes have also been extensively studied and have been implemented for many years, in entire countries, and as policies and not experiments, which means the evidence collected on outcomes is less biased by the challenges to experiments presented above (Williamson, 1974; Benarrosh, 2003; Barreiros, 2017; Rodrigues, 2010; Sykes, Kriz, Edin, & Halpern-Meekin, 2015).

Therefore, in this study we will be considering the most common experiments that fall within the 'umbrella' of basic income experiments. Most of them have in common the fact that they have at least one treatment group (when method used was a randomized control trial) that received a guaranteed grant. These include pilots for Unconditional Basic Income namely: the Namibia BIG project (2008-2009) a saturation study where 9 euros (the food poverty line) was granted monthly to 1000 inhabitants of the village of Otjivero, the experiments in India, namely in Madhya Pradesh (2008-2013), and the experiment taking place in Kenya, managed by Give Directly, namely the long-term experiment where 44 villages, amounting to 4,966 people are receiving roughly 0.75 US dollar per adult per day, delivered monthly for 12 years. Moreover, it will also include guaranteed income schemes, where there is means-testing such as: the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) - (2019-2020) - in Stockton California, where 125 randomly selected residents received 500 US dollars per month for 24 months. The SEED experiment is an initiative that led to the founding of Mayors for Guaranteed Income and the Negative Income Tax experiments that took place in North America in the 60s and 70 in different states, targeting both lower income populations, but also targeting rural populations and single parent families. Lastly, it will include the experiments that have proliferated in Europe, where a form of guaranteed income, targeted at lower income people or long-term unemployed, is tested. These include: the Utrecht experiment (2017), where 750 beneficiaries of the social insertion income received a cash grant, with three different experimental conditionals, where only one experienced no obligation to find work, the B-MINCOME experiment in Barcelona (2017-2019), where for 24 months 1.000 vulnerable households received individual cash grants in ten neighbourhoods in Barcelona. It was designed to test the policy combining a monetary transfer with four active policies of social and labour inclusion or the famous Finnish basic income experiment (2017-2018), where 2000 individuals between 25 and 58 years old who were looking for work, received a 560EUR allowance, tax free, and guaranteed even if they found and employment during that period. Hence, they received the same amount that the Finnish state attributes to those who are unemployed, but unconditionally.

---

[15] The media coverage of the Finnish experiment throughout Europe shows is evidence of much of the political attitude around basic income. Several misinterpretations about the experiment, or even mistaken claims were discussed i.e., experiment ended earlier, showed people stop working (Wispelaere, Halmetoja, & Pulkka, 2018; Pulkka, 2019; Santens, 2019), showcasing much about the pollical climate and attitude towards UBI.

[16] Besides the scientific limitations of social experiments, namely basic income pilots, it is also worth considering the political and ethical questions surrounding experiments. For one, experimentation is often justified as an evidence-based policy tool. We conduct experiments, to collect data to convince politicians to implement a given policy. But given existing evidence that questions the success of such strategy, we might wonder whether experiments fall short of their justification. Moreover, experiments also face ethical challenges. In basic income experiments who follow a Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) methodology, individuals are randomly assigned to groups, where one receives a basic income, and the other does not. Given how most experiments target certain vulnerable segments of the population i.e., lower income groups, it begs the question of whether it is ethically sound to deprive some of the benefits of a basic income, because of scientific rigor. Even if one uses other methods, such as saturation studies, where everyone in a given community is granted the basic income i.e., like in Namibia, it is still questionable whether we should engage in experimentation, since they are limited in time, and they cannot provide any guarantee that the experiment will result in implementation. As such, participants are given a 1-to-2-years benefit, knowing that afterwards they will probably return to their previous income situation (Neves, 2021).

[17] I am thankful to one of the reviewers at Análise Social for hinting at spillover effects and attrition biases as limitations from social experiments.

A final note to mention that we will also include data from the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' Dividend and data available on literature and resources aiming to compare or discuss the different experiments, their designs and their results (World Bank Group, 2020; Widerquist, 2018; Merrill, Neves, & Laín, 2022)[18]. As mentioned, the paper will also engage with existing studies on conditional minimum income schemes, namely the Portuguese and French cases, given existing information on stigma (one of the phenomena that will be discussed when comparing this form of assistance with unconditional cash grants.

---

[18] More information on basic income experiments can also be found in the Stanford Basic Income Lab Map on Basic Income experiments, available at: https://basicincome.stanford.edu/experiments-map/.

Moreover, we will guide our discussion around four questions:

1. Does UBI decrease the incentives to take on paid work?

This first question is about reciprocity as a duty to work. In this perspective the reciprocity principle is only satisfied if people comply with an obligation to paid work. Different points can be raised, namely the take up of informal work, versus paid work. But, for simplification, let's consider incentives for employment as the main goal.

2. Does UBI generate negative feelings against recipients?

It is crucial to understand the general attitude towards redistributive policies, such as UBI. Universal and Unconditional policies often lead to labelling the worst of as free riders, and lazy who splurge collective resources. The reciprocity argument contends that it is unfair for an able-bodied person to receive a UBI, while not working, and that doing so can amount to an instance of exploitation of those who will be required to continue working to fund it. While we could equally disapprove of those who accumulated capital and live off of it, the most common objection based on a reciprocal duty to work is directed towards the "indigent". And these tend to be the most vulnerable individuals in society: least qualified, at risk of unemployment, and with limited safety net. Hence, it is worth looking at the risk of stigmatization or recipients and tandem backlash against UBI.

3. What is the perception of the net beneficiaries of UBI?

Both "contributors" and "receivers" are important agents of the reciprocity equation. And obviously the outcome and perception on UBI will be shaped by the net recipient's opinion. This is important not only in terms of assessing the direct welfare benefits of basic income, but also in understanding the overall acceptance of the policy. By analysing net beneficiaries' expectations, perceptions and behaviour while receiving a basic income, we can understand not only if the beneficiaries stop contributing altogether (considering both a thick and thinner conceptions) but also learn more about the impact of basic income.

4. Does UBI promote a broader conception of contribution by increasing the incentive to perform socially relevant activities?

Like question three, our take on the reciprocity argument is expanded, but also twisted. While, on the one hand, we assume a broader definition of "contribution", that includes employment but also reproductive labour, volunteering, or community and civic engagement. On the other, we shift the focus of our attention. More than trying to accommodate UBI under a view of reciprocity, which will look at evidence to argue that a UBI rewards, generates trust, and hence enables and encourages these activities. If, as we believe, this is true it can be a strong argument to support it. Obviously, it will not soothe the mind of those who have an employment-centric view of contribution. For them, the answers to the first question will have to suffice. But it will at least help those who believe that being a reciprocator in society is not exhausted through our participation in the labour market.

4. What do experiments tell us?

There is ample evidence on basic income experiments implemented so far. To discuss the four dimensions presented above, we will be using the information available about the most well-known basic income experiments, existing reports surveying experimental evidence, but also reports on the impact of minimum income in European countries[19].

On work incentives. A recent report from the World Bank surveyed results from universal basic income experiments and argued that an unconditional income floor generated no general significant disincentive to work (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 103) . Particularly, the report points out to the fact that when indeed those effects were found (mild ones) such as in the Iranian cash grant, they were the result of a choice to continue school instead of working, an effect observed in people between age 20-29 (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 103). Some experiments reported increases, such as the Madhya Pradesh experiment, where there was a job increase in the agrarian sector, positions which were filled by former part-time workers. Moreover, a decrease in bonded labor was detected and entrepreneurial economic activity, namely the one performed by women increased (Davala, Sarath, Jhabvala, Standing, & Mehta, 2015). In fact, increases in entrepreneurial activity seem to be common across experiments taking place in the Global South, such as the ones who took place in Namibia and Kenya (Haarmann, et al., 2009; Haushofer &

---

[19] In section 3 we discuss which existing basic income experiments are considered in this analysis. They all have some evidence on the impact of unconditional cash. The unconditional nature of basic income is what deems it as a policy contradicting the norm of reciprocity. Given that all these experiments provide some information on what happens when people receive unconditional cash, they were considered as relevant to our discussion on UBI and reciprocity. Besides existing institutional reports, academic papers and journal articles or online resources covering the impacts of these experiments, we will also be using reports that aggregate and discuss these findings, such as the World Bank report on Universal Basic Income (World Bank Group, 2020), or recent books on Basic Income experiments (Widerquist, Noguera, Vanderborght, & Wispelaere, 2013; Widerquist, 2018; Merrill, Neves, & Laín, 2022). Finally, to discuss differences in instances of stigma between basic income and means tested and conditional forms of assistance, some studies on minimum income schemes will be used.

Shapiro, 2016; Osterkamp, 2013). In cases where labour intensity decreased mildly, like the Alaska Permanent Fund, by choosing more part-time arrangements, this was linked to a shift in time used towards other valued activities (World Bank Group, 2020).

This conclusion is a step forward, considering the debate that started in the 80s regarding the reported impacts of the Negative Income Tax experiments that took place in North America. Several articles at the time, reported a decrease in hours worked (Keeley & Robins, 1979), and while for some, they signal the alarming negative impact of basic income on incentives to work, there is reason to reconsider these results. On the one hand, as Robert A. Moffit pointed out, the reduction in hours worked was the result of a decrease in overtime or it represented a shift towards valuable activities, such as younger workers choosing to go back to school (Moffitt, 1981, p. 3). On the other hand, the several limitations of the study, like the fact that they did not conducted an analysis on the demand-side of the labour equation, could have biased the results, to a point where the reduction in hours worked could have been smaller and the effect on poverty larger (Widerquist, 2004).

In what way do these results contribute to our understanding of reciprocity as requiring an obligation to work? Firstly, they fail to prove the theoretical concerns of the reciprocity-hard liners. In fact, no definitive negative effects in labour supply tend to be observed. Moreover, there is reported evidence that basic income can have positive impact in reducing barriers to work: for single mothers, or families with children. This effect seems to be particularly strong for low intensity work or poor households (Widerquist, 2004; Martinelli, 2017). Interestingly, the reports of the Finnish experiment point in that direction, since a modest positive effect on employment was observed in families with children or where Finnish or Swedish was not the first language (Henley, 2020). Therefore, basic income can be an effective policy to promote employment, particularly in vulnerable households. However, it should be noted that in wealthier countries, negative effects on employment, even if mild, should be expected. However, the inherent limitation to rigorously assess these results, can make it very difficult to establish a definite conclusion (Widerquist, 2018; Merrill, Neves, & Laín, 2022). Nonetheless, empirical evidence is weak: it was neither found that basic income has a negative effect on employment and even when those effects were found, no evidence supported the idea that it would cause some segment of the population to withdraw from the labour force altogether, as pointed out by Karl Widerquist (Widerquist, 2004, p. 27). It should also be noted that modest decreases in labour supply might still be in tandem with the requirements of reciprocity. In fact, people might be able to avoid working more hours than what is required of them by the obligations of reciprocity. Of course, the perceptions of those norms in public and political discourse can contribute to the “appearance of exploitation” (Murphy & Nagel, 2002), hence resulting in diminished support for the policy, grounded on the duties of reciprocity.

A second point should be considered when discussing work incentives. In fact, UBI has the potential to be emancipatory: by receiving it people are given the opportunity to choose welfare-enhancing jobs and to refuse “dirty jobs”. This effect was reported in the Mincome experiment, in Canada, where the impact on wages was positive, since the additional income reduced the threat of exit of labour market as mentioned in the World Bank Report (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 108). As the report shows, these effects can be observed when there is no conditionality on work, like it was the case in Mincome, but also in several other experiments (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 108; 114). Therefore, it is interesting that contrary to the theoretical debate, empirical evidence seems to show that implementing unconditional cash transfer can improve overall conditions of workers.

On the perception about UBI. How do people look at unconditional cash transfers? And in what way are the perceptions like other welfare programs in place? These are all important questions since they help us understand whether people feel UBI is exploitative and unfair, particularly if we look at the notion of stigma. Stigma acts as a signalling of what we chose to call “negative-reciprocity feelings”, a notion that was introduced by Gouldner, when considering actions and feelings of revenge and “retaliation” (Gouldner, 1960, p. 172). Social stigma happens when there is a “failure to reciprocate welfare assistance” (Barreiros, 2017) or when there is a perception of that failure. Therefore, when stigma occurs, we could assume that there is a perception that the reciprocity norm is being broken. Moreover, stigmatization is defined as a negative perception, including lower respect and demeaning sentiments towards welfare recipients. It is also a generator of decreased self-respect of the beneficiaries. Even for Rawls, stigma is one characteristic, alongside solidarity, of the “social bases of self-respect”, one of the most important primary goods to be shared among citizens (Rawls, 2001, p. 60).

The notion of social stigma has been reported in studies on welfare assistance, either from the recipients’ point of view, where recipients of social benefits frequently reported feelings ‘of lack of self-respect and negative self-characterizations from participating in welfare’ (Moffitt, 1983), or even from society’s take on welfare recipients. As Mónica Barreiros (Barreiros, 2017) points out, stigma is associated with welfare claims due to its connection with social norms of reciprocity, arising when we believe that net beneficiaries are getting more from the system, than what they contribute to it. The presence of social stigma can hence be seen as empirical evidence of a reciprocity norm, and therefore reinforce a theoretical claim for a principle of justice as reciprocity. It is therefore important to assess how basic income can generate social stigma or not, vis-a-vis other welfare assistance programs.

Universalistic social policies can be seen as promoters of solidarity, whereas income-tested or targeted policies are seen as stigmatizing. Targeted and means-tested programs imply that the beneficiary must be eligible, meaning they need to prove that either they are unemployed, have an income below a given threshold or provide evidence of job-search. The candidate must prove its socioeconomic and vulnerability status. This can yield significant injustices. For one, in 'welfare to work' interactions recipients are income-dependent on both the social assistance and the welfare office. Moreover, they are particularly "vulnerable to exercises of arbitrary power" given that they are "inclined to act in accordance with (their expectations of) the preferences of the welfare officer or work supervisor in order not to lose their benefits of last resort, as well as when they have a legal right to act differently" (Eleveld, 2020, p. 265)[20]. Finally, such bureaucratic procedures often require that the social worker must analyse and monitor the recipients, which means the community will also most likely be aware of who is in welfare assistance. Having to disclaim information to prove our socioeconomic status can lead to negative sentiments, such as shame, as Jonathan Wolff, points out, calling it incidences of "shameful revelation" (Wolff, 1998).

The theoretical debate seems to be supported by evidence. For example, a study in Portugal, aggregating conclusions from interviews conducted with social workers found that the beneficiaries felt stigmatized because of the mechanisms of "Social Inclusion Income"[21]. The same study also found that in the group of people who were using the benefit temporarily, the higher levels of stigma felt by the individual can jeopardize his attitude towards his so-called "inclusion" plan (Rodrigues,

---

[20] In the interaction with social services, the recipient of help has a clear imbalance of power vis a vis the social service who is judging or not whether he is deserving or eligible to be helped. While their decision determines whether someone will be entitled to assistance, the recipient has a limited power. Moreover, power is often administrated in an arbitrary way: bureaucratic requirements can be quite opaque, such as the degree of discretionary power that social services have which might determine that two individuals experience a different outcome, despite having similar eligibility criteria (Eleveld, 2018). Moreover, mechanisms to constraint such practices (i.e., filling complains) are often ineffective, and not timely, hence perpetuating them across time.

[21] Author's translation of "Rendimento Social de Inserção", a conditional and means-tested minimum income program. The conditional nature of RSI leads to stigmatization. As Rodrigues points, the conditionality aspect of a cash transfer can lead to decreasing sentiments of self-esteem and self-worth: "she listens to the outburst of a single mom, talking about the need to prove that she was useful in order to receive the cash payment she needed. This requirement that leads to a reduction in self-esteem, should make us reconsider the relationship between the individual and institutions. It should make us reassess the social contract and reorganize the main instruments of institutional intervention, to avoid they become instruments reproducing vulnerabilities, and structural dependency that while wanting to control and monitor, end up excluding and stigmatizing vulnerable individuals. – (author's translation) (Rodrigues, 2010, p.215)

2010). Studies by Yolande Benarrosh in France also agree with the idea of stigmatization jeopardizing the attitude towards work and inclusion (Benarrosh, 2003). Beyond the moral cost of stigmatization, the evidence implies that conditional programs generate social stigma. Therefore, imposing conditions on welfare, reinforces and promotes negative-reciprocity attitudes. One can argue that it simply confirms the prevalence of a certain reading of the norm of reciprocity. But when literature points to the role that social stigma can have in contributing to fragile social policies (Calnitsky, 2016) and backlash against redistributive policies, one can question how social stigma can be detrimental to a certain conception of justice as reciprocity, in an egalitarian sense. Instead of promoting a system of shared benefits and burdens, it undermines it, by fuelling backlash against any redistributive policy that could be seen as an equalizer of opportunities and means.

When it comes to unconditional cash transfers, the evidence on stigmatization is still scarce, especially due to the larger focus that has been given to work incentives. However, there is some evidence from the negative income tax in Canada – the Mincome experiment. An analysis of the data collected from Dauphin, where all town residents were eligible for guaranteed annual income payments for three years[22], showed that participants saw the payments through "pragmatic lens, rather than the moralistic ones through which welfare is viewed" (Calnitsky, 2016). The pragmatic lens meant that recipients felt they were treated as "normal" people, and not welfare recipients, implying that there was no social stigma. Several accounts on the study seem to point out in that direction, namely the qualitative aspects the beneficiaries mentioned – they felt "pride", "allowed them to live at standards acceptable in the community" – but also the answers on how they life was altered or not – participants were less likely to avoid spending time in the community or to feel embarrassment or difficulties due to the Mincome, when compared with welfare recipients. The perception the recipients had on Mincome versus welfare were also staggering: they accepted Mincome to supplement their income, or to have a safety net, or to participate in the experiment (pragmatic reasons), but refused welfare because they wanted to keep "their dignity", because they were able to support themselves or because they consider welfare to be demeaning (moralistic perceptions) (Calnitsky, 2016, pp. 61-62). For Calnitsky, this points out to a fundamental aspect in the Mincome experiment in how by sidestepping values on autonomy and work, Mincome as opposed to welfare was deemed acceptable (Calnitsky, 2016, p. 63). Interestingly, a similar result has been reported in the Barcelona B-MINCOME experiment, where both the framing of the experiment as a 'European research project' but also the unconditional nature of the cash grant (in some of the treatment groups) seems to have contributed to recipients feeling 'proud of taking part in the project', feeling like they had a 'voice', rather than feeling stigmatized and/or excluded (Riutort, Julià, Laín, & Torrens, 2021; Laín, 2019; Merrill, Neves and Laín, 2022). Hence, evidence seems to suggest that conditionality, alongside monitoring and punitive mechanisms in social assistance, reinforce negative reciprocity feelings, through social stigma. This can potentially contribute to decreased support for redistributive measures, but also reduce the opportunities and self-respect of some of the most vulnerable people in society.

---

[22] Mincome experiment in Manitoba Canada, was a negative-income tax pilot, therefore it was income related, meaning only those up to a certain income received the basic income. However, the accounts used by Calnistsy in his paper on the results of Mincome, are from a particular "saturation" site in Dauphin, Manitoba. In this location, the income levels were low, which meant all town residents were eligible for payments for three years. It therefore amounts to a specific scenario, closer to what an UBI scenario could be. It should also be pointed out, that in Mincome particular aspects of the experiment contributed to some of the results presented by Calnitsky, as he rightly puts it, namely that people volunteered for the experiment, and the fact that it was framed as a pilot test, aimed at gather information to improve social assistance. A "pure" UBI could yield different results.

UBI and contribution. The final question regards the role of basic income in promoting activities beyond employment. It asks whether UBI generates a trade-off: employment versus socially-relevant activities, a discussion analogous to the idea of UBI as an opportunity to expand the "autonomous sphere", defined by (Gorz, 1980) and referred to by (Van Parijs, 2009)[23]. It also questions if UBI can have an impact beyond the trade-off: if it's a way not only to expand our notion of valuable contribution, but also enable us to invest in such activities.

There is some evidence of UBI promoting shifts in activities. As mentioned, in the Alaska Permanent Fund, people reduced their paid work intensity by opting for a part-time arrangement and used the time towards other valued activities (World Bank Group, 2020). In some cases, such as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' Dividend, basic income seems to have allowed parents to reduce their work intensity, and instead devote more time to care work, namely for themselves, but also to be more attentive to their children's education, mental health and well-being (Merrill, Neves, & Laín, 2022)[24]. This evidence seems to support the first account of the trade-off: when granted an UBI, people might choose to reduce the number of hours in employment, to spend more time in other activities.

---

[23] Autonomous sphere as: "one category of productive activities broadly conceived, that is, one subset of contributions to the creation of goods and services useful to oneself or to others. This subset comprises all the productive activities whose products are neither sold on the market nor commissioned by a public authority." (Van Parijs, 2009, p.2)

[24] A small experiment that took place in Ontario, Canada in 2017, and was curtailed due to a change in local government, reported some evidence of adults choosing to quit their jobs or reduce the number of hours worked to return to school (BICN. Basic Income Canada Network, 2019; Hamilton & Mulvale, 2019; Mendelson, 2019). However, given that the experiment lasted very little, and data collected was also scarce, these results are not significant for a more detailed analysis of this impact.

The evidence on community activity is scarce, hence less conclusive, particularly if we wish to assess if people continued working, but increased community engagement. In the Mincome experiment, people seem to have been more active in the community than people in welfare assistance (Calnitsky, 2016). There is also evidence on the role UBI can have in improving social relations within a family and community, and in fostering political activity. The Longitudinal Great Smoky Mountains Study of Youth conducted in North Carolina in the 90s was meant to assess the mental health of low-income children. When a casino opened in the region and provided a portion of its profits to part of those families, hence creating the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' Dividend, the experiment opened new avenues of research. One recent study by Randall Akee, William Copeland, E. Jane Costello, John B, Holbein, and Emilia Simeonova looked for the effects of this same cash grant on political turnout of the families and children on the study (Akee, Copeland, Costello, Holbein, & Simeonova, 2018). It found the additional income increased poorer children's voter turnout (when adults), while in the better-off families, the extra income had no effect. This effect was relevant for the children, but not for the parents. Therefore, the unearned income had a very positive effect of increasing civic engagement and social capital, by "in effect closing the participatory gap between high and low-income individuals of this rising generation" (Akee, Copeland, Costello, Holbein, & Simeonova, 2018, p. 4). Of course, it is not the income *per se* the responsible for the changing behaviour, rather the impact of the exogenous cash grant, in school attainment and in the acquisition of social capital and skills throughout life (Akee, Copeland, Costello, Holbein, & Simeonova, 2018, p. 5). The study suggests that a UBI can have a long-lasting impact in civic engagement namely, and in particularly in mitigating the inequality of political participation, hence helping to shape more inclusive policies.

Finally, there are reported evidence, particularly in countries in the Global South, of how a basic income can impact community-led mobilization. In Namibia, participants created an elected "BIG Committee" of 18 members who was tasked with further mobilizing the community, but also advising recipients on how to best spend their cash grant (Haarmann, et al., 2009, p. 37; Merrill, Neves, & Laín, 2022, p. 144). In Madhya Pradesh, India, basic income allowed participants to stop borrowing from loan shared and start resorting to family or neighbours. After the experiment ended, participants refused to get back to being exploited by money lenders, and as such organized themselves to persuade the non-profit who administered the basic income experiment, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), to establish a revolving fund to provide low-interest loans to farmers to buy seeds at the time of the sowing season. This further lead to farmers themselves establishing a communitarian seedbank (Davala, Sarath, Jhabvala, Standing, & Mehta, 2015).

Therefore, if we endorse a notion of contribution beyond employment, including reproductive labour, volunteering, community and civic engagement, basic income can have a role in promoting socially relevant activities.

5. Conclusion: how UBI encourages reciprocity

Experiments show there is very little evidence to support a negative impact of UBI on employment. This is partly due to inherent limitations from experiments (the stipend value, their short-term focus) but also points at the fact that employment is often a means for social inclusion. Besides, UBI can reduce the barriers to work, hence having a positive impact on employment (for example, for families with children). Therefore, arguing against UBI based on a work-related notion of reciprocity can in fact be detrimental to the advancing an agenda for a dynamic and fulfilling participation in the labour market.

But perhaps most importantly is how basic income allows recipients to take charge of how they spend their time. By redistributing resources and hence offering the possibility to have more time (beyond paid employment), UBI enables individuals to better enact their individual preferences, not only in terms of their 'mix' of activities i.e., paid employment, care work, community work, leisure, but also their life projects. Therefore, it can have a tremendous role in promoting the so-called "autonomous sphere", where individuals can choose other productive activities, beyond employment. Inasmuch we believe these are legitimate and important forms of contribution to the social product, it can be argued that UBI encourages us all to be more fulfilled reciprocators.

Finally, existing evidence discussing UBI and conditional means of assistance, also points out to the non-stigmatizing nature of unconditional cash. As discussed, reciprocity is a multidimensional factor, which can be expressed through negative-reciprocity attitudes, such as instances of social stigma. Existing social assistance mechanisms seem to reinforce such a phenomenon, which in turn reinforces negative sentiments towards welfare assistance and redistributive policies. But if instead we promoted a policy such as a UBI[25], which enables citizens to be reciprocators through employment, but also caring of their relatives or friends, engaging in the community, and participating in political processes? While in both cases we seem to be alluding to the spirit and value of reciprocity, only the latter seems to be conducive to a more egalitarian society, and hence can be called ‘positive reciprocity’. Thus, we should look at a UBI not as a mechanism that allows us to evade our obligations to our fellow citizens, but as a mechanism that enables and encourages citizens to contribute within their families, friends, and communities.

---

[25] It is worth point out that the present paper is not arguing for dismantling all existing social programs, in favour of a UBI. Instead, the analysis focused on the social assistance branch of most welfare states, namely minimum income schemes, and argues that their conditional and means-tested nature breeds stigma and reinforces negative instances of reciprocity, as opposed to what could happen with a UBI. Moreover, it claims that justifying them only on the grounds of needed incentives to work is reductive, especially considering the evidence pointing out that a UBI does not create strong incentives to stop working. That

But all of this requires more evidence. Most basic income experiments are still focused on how the policy can affect paid work incentives. Very little attention is given to how UBI can promote or mitigate social stigma, or how UBI can encourage trust, contributing to more positive reciprocity where I “return a benefit received” instead of “demand a benefit that was given”. Only then we can confidently claim reciprocity as a strong argument for supporting an unconditional and universal policy as UBI.

---

being said, other programs, namely public provision of education, health and even housing were not considered, and this author endorses the view that a UBI should be coupled with such programs, eventually only incorporating cash grants whose value is inferior to a UBI, and ensuring no one is left in a worst-off position once a UBI is implemented.

References

Akee, R., Copeland, W., Costello, E. J., Holbein, J. B., & Simeonova, E. (2018). Family Income and the Intergenerational Transmission of Voting Behavior: Evidence from an income intervention. National Bureau of Economic Research, 1-71.

Atkinson, T. (1996). The Case for a Participation Income. The Political Quarterly, 67-70.

Barreiros, M. (2017). Shame on you. The social stigma of social welfare benefits. Nova SBE - Master thesis.

Becker, L. C. (1980). The Obligation to Work. Ethics, 35-49.

Benarrosh, Y. (2003). Les trappes d'inactivité: chômage volontaire ou chômage de résistance ? Travail et Emploi.

BICN. Basic Income Canada Network. (2019). Signposts to Success: Report of a BICN Survey of Ontario Basic Income Recipients. Ontario: Basic Income Canada Network. Retrieved from https://assets.nationbuilder.com/bicn/pages/42/attachments/original/1551664357/BICN_-_Signp

Birnbaum, S. (2012). Basic Income reconsidered. Social Justice, Liberalism, and the Demands of Equality. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2000). Reciprocity, Self-Interest, and the Welfare State. Nordic Journal of Political Economy, 26, 33-53.

Calnitsky, D. (2016). "More Normal than Welfare": The Mincome Experiment, Stigma and Community experience. Canadian Sociological Association/La Société Canadienne de Sociologie, 26-71.

Davala, Sarath, Jhabvala, R., Standing, G., & Mehta, S. K. (2015). Basic Income. A Transformative Policy for India. London/New York: Bloomsbury.

Van Donselaar, G. (2008). The Right to Exploit. Parasitism, Scarcity, Basic Income. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eleveld, A. (2018). The sanctions mitigation paradox in welfare to work benefit schemes. Comparative Labor & Policy Journal, 39, 102-28.

Eleveld, A. (2020). In A. Eleveld, T. Kampen, & J. (. Arts, Welfare to Work in Contemporary European Welfare States. Legal, Sociological and Philosophical Perspectives on Justice and Domination (pp. 263-280). Bristol: Policy Press.

Gorz, A. (1980). Ecology as Politics. Boston: South End Press.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement. American sociological review, 161-178.

Haarmann, C., Haarmann, D., Jauch, H., Shindondola-Mote, H., Nattrass, N., van Niekerk, I., & Samson, M. (2009). Making the Difference: The Big in Namibia: Basic Income Grant Pilot Project Assessment Report. Namibia: Basic Income Grand Coalition.

Hamilton, L., & Mulvale, J. (2019). ‘Human Again’: The (Unrealized) Promise of Basic Income in Ontario. Journal of Poverty, 23(7), 576-599.

Hart, K. (2007). Marcel Mauss: In Pursuit of the Whole. "A Review Essay". Comparative Studies in Society and History, 473-485.

Hartley, C. (2014). Two Conceptions of Justice as Reciprocity. Social Theory and Practice, 409-432.

Haushofer, J., & Shapiro, J. (2016). The Short-Term Impact of Unconditional Cash Transfer to the Poor: Experimental Evidence from Kenya. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 131(4), 1973–2042.

Henley, J. (2020, May 7). Finnish basic income pilot improved wellbeing, study finds. Retrieved from The Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/07/finnish-basic-income-pilot-improved-wellbeing-study-finds-coronavirus

Keeley, M., & Robins, P. (1979). Work Incentives and the Negative Income Tax. Challenge, 52-55.

Laín, B. (2019). Report on the Preliminary Results of the B-MINCOME Project (2017-2018). BINCOME, Ajuntament de Barcelona.

Martinelli, L. (2017, May). Exploring the Distributional and Work Incentive Effects of Plausible Illustrative Basic Income Schemes. Bath: Institute for Policy Research - University of Bath.

Marx, K. (1891). Critique of the Gotha Programme. Occultus Books.

Mauss, M. (2002). The Gift. London: Routledge Classics.

McKinnon, C. (2003). Basic Income, Self-Respect and Reciprocity. Journal of Applied Philosophy, 20(2), 143-158.

Mendelson, M. (2019). Lessons from Ontario’s Basic Income Pilot. Toronto: Maytree.

Merrill, R., Neves, C., & Laín, B. (2022). Basic Income Experiments. A Critical Examination of Their Goals, Contexts, and Methods. Palgrave Macmillan.

Moffitt, R. A. (1981). The negative income tax: would it discourage work? Monthly Labor Review , 23-27.

Moffitt, R. A. (1983). An Economic Model of Welfare Stigma. American Economic Association, 1023-1035.

Murphy, L., & Nagel, T. (2002). The Myth of Ownership: Taxes and Justice. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Neves, C. (2021). What role for basic income experiments? Ethical Perspectives.

Oorschot, W. v. (2000). Who Should Get What, and Why? On Deservingness Criteria and the Conditionality of Solidarity Among the Public. Policy & Politics, 28, 33-48.

Osterkamp, R. (2013). The Basic Income Grant Pilot Project in Namibia: A Critical Assessment. Basic Income Studies, 8(1), 71–91.

Pulkka, V.-V. (2019, February 8). What (If Anything) Can We Learn from the Preliminary Results of the Finnish Basic Income Experiment? Retrieved from IPR Blog - University of Bath. Available at: https://blogs.bath.ac.uk/iprblog/2019/02/08/what-if-anything-can-we-learn-from-the-preliminary-results-of-the-finnish-basic-income-experiment/

Rawls, J. (2001). Justice as Fairness. A restatement. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Riutort, S., Julià, A., Laín, B., & Torrens, L. (2021). Resultados finales del proyecto piloto B-MINCOME (2017-2019). Barcelona: Barcelona City Council.

Rodrigues, E. V. (2010). O Estado e as Políticas Sociais em Portugal: discussão teórica e empírica em torno do Rendimento Social de Inserção. Revista do Departamento de Sociologia da FLUP, 191-230.

Santens, S. (2019, February 14). What is There to Learn From Finland's Basic Income Experiment? Did It Succeed or Fail? Retrieved from Medium: https://medium.com/basic-income/what-is-there-to-learn-from-finlands-basic-income-experiment-did-it-succeed-or-fail-54b8e5051f60

Segall, S. (2005). Unconditional welfare benefits and the principle of reciprocity. Politics, Philosophy & Economics, 331-354.

Standing, G. (2017). Basic income: and how we can make it happen. London: Penguin Random House.

Sykes, J., Kriz, K., Edin, K., & Halpern-Meekin, S. (2015). Dignity and Dreams: What the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Means to Low-Income Families. American Sociological Review, 243-267.

Van Parijs, P. (1995). Real Freedom for All. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, P. (1997). Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White. Political Studies, 327-330.

Van Parijs, P. (2009). Political Ecology: From Autonomous Sphere to Basic Income. Basic Income Studies, 1-9.

White, S. (2003). The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship . Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, S. (2016). Should a minimum income be unconditional? In S. Civitarese, & S. Halliday, The fate of social welfare in the age of austerity: socio-economic rights in Europe. London: Routledge.

Widerquist, K. (1999). Reciprocity and the Guaranteed Income. Politics & Society, 27(3), 387-402.

Widerquist, K. (2004). A failure to communicate: What (if Anything) Can we Learn From the Negative Income Tax Experiments? Journal of Socio-Economics, 1-51.

Widerquist, K. (2018). A Critical Analysis of Basic Income Experiments for Researchers, Policymakers and Citizens. Parlgrave Macmillan.

Widerquist, K., Noguera, A. J., Vanderborght, Y., & Wispelaere, D. J. (2013). Basic Income: an anthology of contemporary research. Sussex: Blackwell Publishing.

Williamson, J. B. (1974). The Stigma of Public Dependency: A Comparison of Alternative Forms of Public Aid to the Poor. Social Problems, 213-228.

Wispelaere, J. D., Halmetoja, A., & Pulkka, V.-V. (2018). The Rise (and Fall) of the Basic Income Experiment in Finland. CESifo Forum, 15-18.

Wolff, J. (1998). Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos. Philosophy & Public Affairs, 97-122.

World Bank Group. (2020). Exploring Universal Basic Income. A guide to navigating concepts, evidence and practices. Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.

Article II: Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity

Neves, C. 2021. Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity. *Basic Income Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1515/bis-2021-0019

Abstract:

The paper highlights the need to discuss the norm of reciprocity in the context of basic income experiments. Considering how the norm of reciprocity is an important objection to basic income, both at a normative level, but also in empirical discussions, a case is made for considering it in basic income experiments. The paper proposes several hypotheses on basic income and reciprocity and concludes with two distinct points: the first is focused on what in fact experiments could be telling us about behaviours that seem relevant to reciprocity, and how this could enhance our understanding of both basic income and the norm of reciprocity. The second point is a reflection on how our theoretical debate is shaped on ideal settings, whereas experiments take place in real-world conditions, hence non-ideal ones. This reflection might contribute to the need to reframe our theoretical account of the norm of reciprocity.

Key Words: basic income; basic income experiments; ethics; reciprocity; work

Introduction

The discussion on reciprocity and Unconditional or Universal Basic Income (UBI or basic income) has long been a lively discussion. The norm of reciprocity is defined as "those who willingly enjoy the economic benefits of social cooperation have a corresponding obligation to make a productive contribution, it they are so able, and to the cooperative community which provides these benefits" (White, 2003, p. 52). Therefore, if such a norm is a requirement of distributive justice, basic income, as an obligations-free cash transfer violates this requirement. Alongside the normative discussion, the number of basic income experiments has increased since the first wide-range negative income tax experiments in North America in the 60s. The increase in experiments has also led to a growing debate on what role basic experiments can play, whether as instruments of evidence-based policy or as tools for advocacy, a debate that is still not settled.

Existing evidence on experiments has led to discussions on the possible impacts of basic income, namely in a set of outcomes related with quality of life, happiness, children's school attendance, consumption patterns and, most often, labour market participation. It has not, however, led to a discussion on how evidence reshapes our debate on the reciprocity objection to basic income. UBI as an unconditional and universal cash transfer led to a debate on how it might lead to the exploitation of able-body workers (van Donselaar, 2008) or go against citizens "democratic mutual regard" which includes a notion of reciprocity where to receive benefits, one is obliged to contribute (White, 2003; Lister, 2011). The normative debate has mostly been centred on some evidence that basic income will have an effect on work incentives, and can therefore undermine our obligations as citizens. But beyond the aspect of labour participation, evidence from experiments has scarcely been used to discuss whether (1) individual's contribution in society is changed, and in what way, and how that is compatible or not with the different discussion of the norm of reciprocity or (2) if UBI changes the perceptions of communities of how its members comply with such a norm. So even if one sides with the normative debate on reciprocity as a requirement of justice, basic income experiments can be relevant to understand how people behave when granted a UBI, and how those behaviours might be compatible or not with the moral principle of reciprocity.

There seems to be a number of reasons for this lack of discussion of reciprocity in the context of experimental evidence's findings. For one, the main goals of the experiments tend to be well defined, and do not include issues of reciprocity, beyond labour market participation. Moreover, as an institutionalized norm, reciprocity is difficult to be "tested" in a context of experimental setting, such as saturation studies or Randomised Control Trials (RCTs). Usually, it was either tested in the context of game theory or evolutionary biology, where abundant evidence is present (Bowles et al., 1997), or based on qualitative research, namely in the realm of anthropological research (Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 2002). There are also discussions on whether it makes sense to test a claim that is widely considered to be true, based on the theoretical debate. We can also understand the difficulty of discussing how evidence reinforces or expands our notions of the norms of reciprocity under basic income, considering how the theoretical account of reciprocity works in a context so distinct from real-life conditions, and demands such criteria and requirements, that one would find it very difficult to assess its real-life applications. Therefore, there are instrumental difficulties in assessing reciprocity in experimental settings as well as a normative position regarding the usefulness of doing so. A final, third difficulty highlights how the theoretical concept of reciprocity, and its discussion in an ideal type of society are quite distinct and separated from the one we would be able to observe in an experimental context. The main goal of this article is therefore to provide some questions pertaining to the obligations stemming from the moral principle of reciprocity, but also some additional questions on the behaviours and perceptions of the moral principle that can be changed or shaped by the implementation of a basic income. This set of questions is believed to be relevant to our understanding of UBI, but also to the moral principle of reciprocity.

This article works from the theoretical discussion on reciprocity, in Section 2, briefly accounting for the philosophical debate on basic income, and to some of the reasons why discussing reciprocity in the context of UBI is relevant from a theoretical point of view, but also from an empirical and political one. Section 3 will discuss some of the key questions stemming from the theoretical concept of reciprocity, and the philosophical debate which could be expanded with evidence from basic income experiments. It provides two sets of questions: the first is related to how experiments can help us understand whether a UBI undermines our obligations to our fellow citizens. The second discusses whether a UBI influences our perceptions of the moral principle of reciprocity. It also discusses some of the limitations and challenges in doing so. Section 4 concludes on a list of factors limiting our discussion of reciprocity in light of the evidence from basic income experiments: the first, is the inherent limitations basic income experiments face when gathering findings, namely community effects. The second, is a result of how reciprocity has been framed as discusses as a concept, within an ideal-type setting. The discussion concludes with two distinct points: the first and foremost is focused on what in fact experiments could be telling us about behaviours that seem relevant to reciprocity, and how this could enhance our understanding of both basic income and the norm of reciprocity. The second point is a reflection on how our theoretical debate is shaped in ideal settings, whereas experiments take place in real-world conditions, hence non-ideal ones. This results in a potentially wide gap between what evidence tells us about reciprocity, and our account of the norm in an idealized setting. This reflection might contribute to the need to reframe our theoretical account of the norm of reciprocity.

UBI and Reciprocity: The Key Objection and Why is it Important.

One of the most discussed objections to a UBI is the reciprocity one. From John Rawls' discussion on how his principles of justice demand that those who only surf off the beaches of Malibu are not entitled to an unconditional income, to Stuart White's account of our common obligation to contribute as citizens. Both accounts share a conception of reciprocity where to be entitled to receive benefits, which inherently result from cooperation, one has to contribute in a meaningful way. Two aspects are salient in this view:

The first, is that the benefits we receive as members of a given community, are a product of joint cooperation. Rawls himself asserted the following: "Social cooperation, we assume, is always productive, and without cooperation there would be nothing produced and so nothing to distribute." (Rawls, 2001a, 2001b, p. 61). In this perspective the claims of distributive justice are to a certain extent conditioned on a reciprocal requirement: to be a part of a given community, and receive benefits that result from joint cooperation, one has to contribute too. On this aspect much has been written, namely arguing that an unconditional benefit could be granted without violating the reciprocity objection if it is financed through resources which do not derive from cooperation, and by definition, everyone is entitled to. This is one of Simon Birnbaum's claims, when discussing the possibility of justifying a UBI under the wealth-sharing principle: by taxing a set of "reciprocity-free" resources (unearned resources) UBI would not violate reciprocity (Birnbaum, 2013). There is a broad discussion on whether this method would yield a sufficiently high and universal UBI, or if it would nonetheless be parasitic, namely of those who wish to produce versus those who do not wish to do so (Van Donselaar, 2008).

The second important aspect, inherently linked to the first, is the claim that reciprocity entails an obligation to contribute. According to this claim, reciprocity yields particular social obligations, namely an obligation to contribute to the social product. This takes into account a view of reciprocity as a moral norm, which is internalized by individuals who engage in cooperation, as Gouldner seemed to imply when discussing reciprocity as a universal norm (Gouldner, 1960). But it also takes a view on reciprocity in a productivist sense: to be entitled to something (the benefits of cooperation) we are obliged to contribute to it, through work or other meaningful activity. Although Stuart White, in particular, does not endorse this productivism, since his view of reciprocity is grounded in the notion of self-respect, it is nonetheless a view where reciprocity is reduced to the notion of cooperation for the social product. The view of reciprocity as creating an obligation to contribute on the part of citizens on a given political community is closely linked to Lawrence Becker's take where reciprocity generates an obligation to work (Becker, 1980). But it is also part of the tradition of communist and socialist thought, where an egalitarian division of the products of cooperation stood alongside an ethic of contribution (White, 2003). And in fact, much of the discussion on UBI and reciprocity has been centred on how broad our conception of contribution should be. This has led to a discussion on the civic minimum or participatory incomes (Atkinson, 1996; White, 2003) as superior to UBI, where what is considered as productive and meaningful contribution is broadened beyond being a participant in the labour market.

Why is the Reciprocity Debate Important?

The notion of reciprocity as generating specific obligations to which citizens must comply to be able to take part and receive the benefits of cooperation provides an argument against distributing benefits unconditionally. A principled defence of any unconditional benefit becomes very complicated, even if one can accept such a benefit, for "instrumental reasons". As White argues, saying that the current welfare state in UK is rigged with injustice, hence a UBI might be a better solution to mitigate some of these unjust outcomes, even if in principle, UBI cannot be seen as a morally just policy (White, 2017). But what White's argument also shows is the difficulty in setting up the debate. As Catriona McKinnon's chapter in the 2013 book "Basic Income: An Anthology of Contemporary Research" mentions, when it comes to UBI and reciprocity we can find two main broad accounts: In the first account we find those who view UBI as a requirement of justice, either because reciprocity should not govern the distribution of entitlements (Van Parijs' account) or because by expanding our notion of contribution beyond an economic one, UBI does not necessarily violate a given norm of reciprocity, by claiming for example that "reciprocity through work-contribution is sufficient but not necessary for gainful exchange" (2013, p. 119). The second account claims that UBI transgresses the principles of justice. In this view, reciprocity is considered a requirement of justice, therefore UBI is not acceptable. This is White's view, according to whom a "participatory income" is preferable to a UBI since it does not violate any notion of baseline reciprocity. Supporters of this view prefer some degree of conditionality in cash transfers. It is nonetheless important to mention that White believed UBI could be justified if funded through assets which are not jointly produced (external assets). A final and alternative version of this second account on reciprocity and distributive justice, which we can call the "pragmatic" one, states that although UBI violates reciprocity, it can be preferable to conditional or means-tested cash transfers, on empirical grounds. This is Brian Barry's view (Barry, 1997) or the latest account of Stuart White, who claims that the necessary background conditions for justice can be so difficult to ensure in a reasonable time frame, that UBI might be acceptable. As mentioned before, this view presents the idea that conditionality might be unjust if relevant conditions – the background conditions of justice – are not being met. White introduces five conditions which include the "recognition and support for care work" or a "fair taxation of asset income" (White, 2017). The paper introduces not only the notion of injustice in conditionality, but also the political likelihood of ever satisfying the conditions of fair reciprocity. Both arguments might help justify a pragmatic defence of UBI.

Therefore, it seems that the philosophical debate on reciprocity and UBI is at a standstill: On the one side, we consider reciprocity important to govern the distribution of jointly produced assets, and therefore, unconditional benefits are not justified. On the other, the pragmatic side, it seems some are only arguing for a UBI due to the current unfair institutions or outcomes of social policies, where UBI is seen as the unfair but better than the alternative and not as a policy whose outcomes are seen as relevant for any given society (even if not plagued with injustice). Therefore, three positions arise: the ones who consider reciprocity as relevant to distributive justice and think unconditional benefits funded by jointly produced assets are not justified. The second view agrees with the role reciprocity plays in distributive justice, but UBI might be justified because it performs better in addressing particular challenges and inequalities. And the third view which thinks a principle of reciprocity should not govern the distribution of assets. Beyond the normative debate the perspectives hold, empirical evidence can help show how prevalent is each perspective, and more importantly the role UBI versus other welfare benefits can have in shaping each perspective on how a reciprocity principle should govern the distribution of assets.

Despite the relevance of the theoretical debate, the discussion on reciprocity and UBI is also relevant because of how empirical evidence seems to highlight behaviours and opinions which are linked to a conception of reciprocity. The RSA launched a new report on basic income in 2018, with results from a survey to people in UK on their support for a basic income. The results showed openness to the idea of basic income, and 54% favoured an option of a basic income to protect the "needy and vulnerable", as opposed to those who preferred a contribution- based income (Young, 2018). As mentioned in the discussion of the results, the RSA believes this might be a sign towards more acceptance for unconditionality, versus a strictly contribution-based welfare state. However, one should also consider the additional results indicating how support for an unconditional income decreases when stating that it would be funded by an income tax (Painter, 2018). Although indirectly, this alludes to the familiar theoretical discussion of a possible exploitative nature of basic income, where some will be working (the 'crazies') to pay off the basic income of those who withdraw from work (the 'lazies'), where the latter will not contribute, and where the more people decide to stop working, the heavier the burden will be to those who remain in the job market. Therefore, this might be evidence of a reciprocity-ethos, based on work contribution, or a simple general dissatisfaction with any policy that might be funded by income tax.

But even more striking are the results from the European Social Survey (2018) that for the first time included questions on basic income. On the one hand, when assessing support for conditionality on unemployment benefits, it seems there is an overwhelming consensus to accept some form of conditionality (with the largest group opting for softest sanctions). Only 26.1% seem to accept that unemployment benefits should be free of sanctions. Moreover, when comparing attitudes towards entitlement of welfare benefits in different groups – elderly, unemployed, migrants – the results seem to show how attitudes are strongly influenced by two main criteria: need and desert/reciprocity[26]. In the three groups mentioned above, the elderly are the ones who gather the strongest consensus in favour of welfare support, while unemployed are seen as deserving of support by a strong percentage of the population, but with parallel mechanisms of accountability and to promote contribution. Lastly, immigrants are seen as less deserving, either because of not being granted citizenship (hence national identity is seen as a criterion) or they are seen as entitled to benefits only if they contribute through taxation:

---

[26] 1 Other conclusions from the report are important for the analysis, namely national and geographical-group differences. For example, in deciding upon immigrants' rights to welfare support, differences between countries are quite salient: "In Northern and Western Europe, granting rights based on reciprocity (having paid taxes for at least one year) is the most popular position by far. Eastern European respondents are considerably more reluctant to provide social rights for immigrants." (Meuleman, et al., 2018, p. 9).

“While support for provision in favour of the elderly is nearly unanimous, redistribution towards the unemployed and newcomers is met with opposition by a considerable share of the population. These differences can be largely understood in terms of deservingness criteria (Meuleman, et al., 2018). The elderly are generally seen as a relatively deprived group (the need criterion) who have previously contributed to society (reciprocity). The unemployed, conversely, are sometimes deemed to be responsible for their situation (control), while preferences for the in-group (identity) block solidarity with immigrants” (Meuleman, et al., 2018, p. 12).

The two surveys highlight fundamental aspects of the attitude towards basic income, namely the idea of reciprocity. This is partly because of the design of some of the welfare states’ model of assistance, heavily based on contribution and work: as mentioned in Northern and Western countries, paying taxes – contributing to the “social product”– seems to be key to being entitled to benefits. As discussed by Adloff and Mau, this view can be defined as balanced reciprocity, since the norm between citizens entitles each one to benefits, depending on their previous contributions to the surplus (Adloff and Mau, 2006). The same partly explains the support for welfare redistribution to the elderly: they are entitled to support, because of their prior contribution as citizens. But in discussing unemployment conditionality and migrant welfare support, the same is not (necessarily) true. For the former, it seems the desert aspect is stronger: you are to be held accountable for your unemployment, hence you can receive support if you engage in job activation measures. If you do not prove you are actively searching for a job, you are to be sanctioned. This is regardless of the unemployed person having contributed fully to the support she receives. Although it is still based on contribution, notions of autonomy and accountability are at play in the desert-based criteria for entitlement to unemployed benefits. In the migrants’ case, namely in Eastern Europe, the report highlights identity as the key criterion for welfare support, versus contribution through taxes in the western and Nordic countries. While this might still imply asymmetric reciprocity obligations (to my fellow citizen versus someone I do not consider my equal) it is a matter of belonging to a given political community that determines these obligations, rather than explaining the different attitude on the basis on the obligation criteria.

Therefore, what seems a general intuition from the public discourse is confirmed by existing evidence: reciprocity determines, at least partly, our intuitions about what redistributive measures might be legitimate or not, and to whom. Moreover, issues of desert and identity seem to play out in how people perceive welfare benefits, such that not only the conditional versus unconditional nature of UBI is at stake, but also the issue of targeting versus universal benefits. This might have implications to our discussion of reciprocity and basic income, that usually only takes into account the issue of conditionality, and not its universal nature. Moreover, despite evidence suggesting the importance of reciprocity, the results of the European Social Survey also seem to imply, that the relevance or direction of the reciprocity objection to basic income is not widely known, and it can even be argued that could be altered by the framing of the effects of welfare policies: "Support for a basic income scheme is strongest in highly unequal countries (such as Lithuania and Russia), and weakest in the equalising welfare states of Norway and Sweden." (Meuleman, et al., 2018, p. 11).

One could easily wonder whether more affluent countries, who also happen to have a stronger contribution-based criterion for welfare support (as mentioned above), are less supportive of basic income exactly because of this contribution ethos: in this sense, reciprocity in these scenarios would explain why support for basic income is rather low, particularly in the places where it would be easier to implement. But is it reciprocity or general equality that explains less support for basic income? It is possible that more affluent countries are satisfied with the status quo, hence are less prone to consider different, more radical approaches. Or perhaps in these countries its citizens are fearful of disrupting the status quo. In this case, reciprocity would be a minor aspect in the overall moral objection to basic income or in its overall support. And what about other countries, such as southern European ones? The survey seems to imply that countries like Italy are more generous, namely to migrants, but harsher in imposing sanctions to reinforce conditionality: is this a case where desert is stronger than identity? Is desert grounded on contribution, by paying taxes, or by engaging in the labour market, or both?

This set of questions serves to illustrate the need for working on our collective knowledge regarding the role reciprocity might play in citizen's attitudes towards basic income. Contrary to what seems a complicated, but rather straightforward normative discussion on the issue, the empirical one is much more difficult to disentangle, and also much less explored.

Basic Income Experiments: How can They Help the Normative Debate on Reciprocity

Basic income experiments are seen as one of the best possible solutions to the pressing questions in the UBI debate. These include issues related to labour participation, to women's emancipation through the job market, to aspects on inflation or even how basic income might help people make more ecological choices. As Widerquist points out in his 2018 book, the list on the key assumptions to be tested is quite long (Widerquist, 2018).

But the problem with basic income experiments is way beyond the key assumptions we want to test. As a social experiment – or welfare experiment – it is inherently limited in terms of what it might tell us about UBI. The caveats will make it very difficult to generalize any findings or conclude with absolute certainty a particular outcome. Moreover, as Widerquist also highlights, these are experiments which are subjected to a number of effects, such as the streetlight effects or the long-term effects, which can bias our view of the results of any basic income experiment. There is also the important aspect of community effects, which we will discuss below, that most basic income experiments are unable to grasp properly, hence significantly limiting our learning.

Given these inherent limitations, one is tempted to consider basic income experiments useless, or should be extremely cautious in interpreting their results. But instead of looking at basic income experiments as tools to settle the debate on basic income we could see them as incremental steps to help us navigate the theoretical debate on basic income. By providing small samples of evidence on what an unconditional cash transfer can do at individual, or sometimes community level, experiments give us some insights on how basic income works, hence helping us define whether a certain outcome might be more relevant or not, might be more intense, for example, or even the direction of a given outcome. To illustrate, let's take the existing evidence on labour market participation. From the Negative income tax experiments in the U.S. in the 60s, most economists tended to argue that a basic income would lead to labour withdrawal, hence would not be a good policy to be implemented (Keeley & Robins, 1979). However, different interpretations of the data collected at the time, seemed to highlight that evidence on labour withdrawal was exaggerated (Moffitt, 1981). Moreover, also recent analyses on the topic highlight that results were misinterpreted, hence leading to a general perspective on how basic income increases the incentive to stop working (Widerquist, 2004). More recent experiments, namely the Finnish experiment, also show that unconditional cash transfers, per se, do not lead directly to labour withdrawal (Kangas, Jauhiainen, Simanainen, & Ylikännö, 2020). In fact, in the Finish case, some particular groups, like single mothers or immigrants, tended to work more with a basic income, and not less. Coming back to our discussion, can this set of evidence close the debate on whether basic income leads to labour withdrawal? No. For those who believe a UBI will decrease demand for work, existing evidence is either flawed, due to the design of the experiment or, most often, the argument will be that no experiment grants people a sufficiently high basic income to allow a person the "freedom to live as one might like to live" (Van Parijs, 1995, p. 30), hence, the impact on the labour market has not been as large as it would have been. For those who think a UBI would not lead to labour withdrawal, or think those concerns are largely exaggerated, existing evidence seems to side with them, and they tend to find theoretical support for the evidence by looking, for example, for arguments on psychology and sociology of labour, to explain why money and survival are not the only motives behind one's participation in the labour market.

The example illustrated above shows how basic income experiments can reinforce two very different points of view. What the example seems to show is the role experiments can have in promoting the debate or expanding it. In the case of labour market participation, more recent evidence has pushed the debate forward: apparently it is not only unconditionality that will have a determinate influence on an individual's labour choices. Rather the amount of a basic income should be as much our focus as the unconditionality nature of the grant. Moreover, it should also contribute to widen the scope of the discussion, and assume that when talking about labour choices, we should go beyond neoclassical economics, to understand what motivates people to work or not. Therefore, we should look at basic income experiments as a pool of evidence that can help us expand our theoretical debate on what the main outcomes and challenges of implementing a UBI will be.

Basic Income Experiments and Reciprocity

Once we have asserted what role basic income experiments can have, we can return to the reciprocity debate to understand whether experiments can be sources of evidence to expand our debate on the subject. It is important to account for two general and experiments-related difficulties in discussing reciprocity. One has to do with the general difficulty of grasping community effects in any social experiment. As Widerquist pointed out: "(...) important effects of UBI occur at both the individual and the community level. Individuals immediately react to UBI in many important ways that are worth estimating, but they interact with other individuals in markets, society, culture, and politics. All of these interactions generate important feedback effects throughout the community. Existing theory and empirical evidence indicate that some community effects might be as important as or more important than the initial individual effects of UBI." (Widerquist, 2018, p. 24). By definition, reciprocity works as a community effect: it depends on how members of a group will react to the choices made by other members. As Widerquist points out, effects that might lead to feedback loops in different or partly different directions of the individual level outcome, might be very difficult to grasp (Widerquist, 2018, p. 28). Imagine a basic income leads to some part of the population deciding not to work, or work less. Depending on the group who predominately chooses to do so, overall reaction to this decision might be different. Also, the reaction can spill over in many different ways: either deciding to withdraw from the labour market too, or deciding to stop paying taxes, or arguing against that, or changing their political affiliation, by supporting parties who are against a basic income, or who are against certain groups in society. It could also lead to an overall reduction in number of hours worked – where more people decide to work part time, leading to an increase in wages (where employers try to attract more workers). The impacts will largely depend on institutionalized norms, and on the political climate. A basic income experiment will have a hard time telling us how this will play out.

Another crucial aspect is a normative one. Reciprocity is seen as a social norm and the discussion mostly focuses on how important this mechanism is as a requirement of justice (McKinnon, 2013). One will not be able to show empirically that reciprocity is not relevant as a moral principle. This is Widerquist's take on the topic: "The controversy is not over their truth but over their moral content (...) The same UBI makes it possible for wealthy people to consume products that involve labour without themselves contributing with their labour, violating the reciprocity principle in the sense used in that claim. No empirical investigation can settle the disagreement over the moral value of these senses of freedom and reciprocity" (Widerquist, 2018, p. 107). While we agree partly with this proposition, empirical evidence might help explain whether UBI leads people to violate such a moral principle. Moreover, it can also help understand how this moral principle, and its perception, is present in particular communities. Therefore, and taking in the existing account of reciprocity used in the basic income debate, we could define a set of assumptions which could be expanded by evidence from basic income experiments. The first ones will be related to how experiments can help us understand whether a moral principle of reciprocity is violated with the implementation of a UBI. The second set of assumptions pertains to the perception of reciprocity: can experiments tell us how people perceive the principle of reciprocity when a UBI is implemented, and whether such a policy as opposed to welfare benefits influences this perception.

The obligations of the moral principle of reciprocity and UBI:

Basic Income and Labour Withdrawal

Basic income experiments can help determine whether basic income leads to labour withdrawal. In a sense, if this is not the case, a concern that people will forfeit their reciprocity obligations to contribute would be misguided, or at least it should not be our main concern. As illustrated above, the existing evidence won't be conclusive, but it can help shed light on whether any form of basic income would dampen obligations to contribute by working or not, although changes in labour supply are quite difficult to observe in the short-time span of most basic income experiments. Evidence can also tell us is in what way a basic income, by allowing the possibility to withdraw from contributing, violates existing institutionalized norms. If this is the case, the problem is not that people will not contribute, the problem is that they could decide not to. This is a principled argument, but one which can be grounded on empirical evidence, if by granting a basic income some people disapprove of the policy, in principle, regardless of what they perceive to be their impacts on individuals' choice of occupation.

Basic Income and Meaningful Contribution

Finally, experiments could also be helpful to understand how in a given context the notion of meaningful or productive contribution might be broader than the obligation to be engaged in the job market. What will people do if granted an unconditional basic income, and would those activities or occupations be considered as meaningful contributions, hence complying with the demands of the principle of reciprocity? This would be relevant to understanding what particular obligations in fact the norm of reciprocity seems to imply in a particular context. In some contexts paid work might be seen as the only acceptable form of contribution, for able-bodied people, while in others care work can be accepted too. Understanding how social and cultural norms might influence our take on contribution – broadening or not the scope of accepted activities as meaningful – is important to understand how the requirements of reciprocity yield particular obligations. Experiments on basic income could assess how different occupational choices, when granted a basic income, are perceived (beyond simply assessing whether people continue working and at what rate).

The perception of the moral principle of reciprocity and Basic Income:

Basic Income and Trust

Another possible discussion related to reciprocity that could be expanded would be the notion of trust. Could a basic income lead to more trust among individuals, in their communities? Could it increase trust in institutions of the welfare state? Trust is a key feature of reciprocity, since trust tends to be seen as the initial "fuel" for exchange, which can then spark reciprocal interactions (Adloff & Steffen, 2006). If this is the case, assessing whether a basic income could contribute to instil trust (or reinforce it) at individual, community and institutional levels would be important to understand how positive feelings of reciprocity could be instigated, such as: I trust in people, and in institutions, hence I'll contribute what I consider to be a fair share, since I believe others will do the same as opposed to what can be seen as negative ones: I don't want to contribute anymore because I feel exploited or because others might not contribute (or are not contributing). This last account would be more similar to the first two topics of discussions presented above.

Basic Income and Marginalized Groups

Besides the discussion on contribution, experiments can tell us whether a basic income changes or reinforces given public perceptions of particular groups in society. For example, does it contribute to heighten negative feelings towards members of society who receive welfare transfers (besides basic income)? And to those who are unemployed, and receiving a basic income? And to particular ethnic groups? And those who live mainly off the gains of capital? In this sense, one could ask whether basic income would reinforce citizens' recognition of others as their equals (hence reinforcing a key condition for self-respect) as opposed to antagonistic feelings of non- contribution or of exploitation of some by others. This does not pertain to how when granted a basic income people comply or not with the demands of reciprocity, but whether such an unconditional policy changes perception of how others are complying with such norms, or even how the demands of reciprocity are differently considered when a basic income is implemented.

Impact of How Basic Income is Funded

Another interesting account would be to assess whether people's feelings regarding basic income would change if the funding scheme was different: would people feel differently if it was financed by national resources (in a principle of wealth sharing?) or through income tax? Although important to understand how the funding scheme might be a factor influencing our take on reciprocity on basic income, this would be a particularly challenging claim to test in an experiment, and possibly might be better analysed using other research methods.

These questions are interrelated and connected. One could be expected to wish to know how labour market patterns of individuals would change under a basic income, but also to know more on the occupations they might choose (other than work) and whether the fact that more people choose to withdraw from the labour market to do other occupations, influences others to do the same. It would also be interesting to know if a basic income reinforces trust between citizens in a community (to engage more in activities and in the life of the neighbourhood, for example) but does not lead to more trust in political institutions, and in fact this sort of outcome is already starting to be included in some of the emerging pilots in the US. Also, maybe it could lead to more trust, but that trust could be eroded if there is a growing perception of people choosing to withdraw from work when granted a basic income.

Existing evidence is scarce in most of the questions outlined. Most experiments assess the outcome on labour market participation; hence the first question has indeed been provided with relevant data, which seems to imply that a modest basic income has no significant effects in labour market participation. In poorer contexts, like Namibia or India, it seems that a basic income can even have a positive impact on labour market participation (Widerquist, 2018). For other questions, evidence is scarce. Some pieces of evidence allow for some extrapolation – like with the Mincome experiment in Canada, where results show how basic income provided more time to choose “the right job” (Widerquist, 2018). This is similar to accounts from the experiment in Utrecht, where for some groups, a basic income, as opposed to conditional benefits, gave them the time and opportunity to find a job by themselves. This could be seen as an act of trust – of institutions in a given citizen – that impel people to contribute and to proactively find the best occupation for them. But without evidence, very little can be added on this. The accounts on how basic income was less stigmatizing, as it seems to be found in Mincome (Calnitsky, 2016) also impact how citizen’s perceive others, resulting in more trust and in a spirit of cooperation and reciprocity amongst others (instead of a sense of inferiority, which can be disempowering). But again, very little has been pursued on this direction. Lastly, and most striking, in both Kenya and India some of the main research involved in the experiments accounted for changes in community cooperation and relations: for example, in Kenya, the basic income granted by Give Directly has lightened the financial burden of many relatives, who had to support their poorer family members. It has also led to poorer people feeling they had equal standing with other elements of the village, instead of feeling inferior, or in constant need of support “out of pity” (Merrill, Neves and Laín 2021). It also led, in some villages, to community banks, where people found the need to cooperate with each other to ensure the most out of the basic income they were being granted. In India too, one of the main researchers explained how a basic income shifted the borrowing structure from “powerful money lenders” who extracted high interest rates, to the community: people started to borrow more from relatives or friends, whom they trusted, and where they did not feel they were being exploited (Merrill, Neves and Laín 2021). These two accounts seem to imply that basic income contributed to strengthen or change the cooperation links between a given community, having also possibly led to more horizontal-type relationships – of equal standing and of more or less equal power – versus what before seemed to be more exploitative relationships, in India, for example, or at least of more subordination, and of differentiated power and status (in both Kenya and India). Therefore, both examples seem to illustrate the role a basic income can have in shifting the existing structure and power dynamics in a given community, influencing exchange patterns and the direction of existing norms of reciprocity (from more negative to more positive feedback loops, for example).

Despite the significant literature on the theoretical debate on reciprocity and basic income, very little has been studied on the evidence side. And when there is indeed evidence on changes in reciprocal cooperation, they are not given much attention, since most of the questions to be answered consider aspects such as poverty, mental health, school attendance (children), consumption patterns or most often labour market participation. As Widerquist pointed out, the streetlight effect has led many experiments to focus on very particular aspects of basic income – the ones mentioned above – disregarding most of the times other outcomes which could be of interest to existing discussions (Widerquist, 2018).

Shortcomings of Reciprocity or of Basic Income Experiments?

Despite the significance of looking at reciprocity, one last aspect should be considered as a possible shortcoming of any decision to study or research evidence on basic income and reciprocity.

As mentioned above, the theoretical debate on reciprocity has several strings of argument. Moreover, the discussion takes into account different notions of reciprocity: from a broader conception, where meaningful contribution includes very different types of activities, to a narrower one, where only wage work is viewed as a meaningful contribution that fulfils the requirements of reciprocity. It is also a principled argument: from Rawls to White, reciprocity is seen as an obligation that takes place within an existing background of justice: for John Rawls, the background is defined under the veil of ignorance, and reciprocity is a necessary condition of a society of "free and equal citizens" where the two principles of justice are in place, governed by just institutions (Rawls, 2001). For White, reciprocity is also an obligation that exists between able-bodied citizens, who view and consider themselves as equal. Both perspectives represent normative positions, but mostly idealized versions of what reciprocity is (Komter, 2014). Of course, White's later discussion on "conditionality as conditional" on background conditions of justice (White, 2017) is in fact closer to a discussion of the demands of reciprocity in a non-idealized setting. Nonetheless, the normative objection to UBI on the grounds of reciprocity still mostly rests on a narrow principle of contribution, and conditions under an idealized setting, making attempts to discuss evidence from empirical settings difficult to do, namely because of four main arguments:

Firstly, the idealized version of reciprocity only holds, if the background conditions are not too unjust (Lister, 2020; White, 2017). Where can we find such a "just" place to test it? Also, we are capable of seeing reciprocity in current societies (redistribution mechanisms, informal support for the elderly, community banks) where neither institutions nor the individual or collective outcomes were just. It seems that by arguing for the idealized reciprocity, one is only allowing the possibility of one particular stylized mechanism of reciprocity: one that takes place in certain ways, with an egalitarian ethos, based either on rational individuals, who cooperate and reciprocate moved by self-interest, or individuals moved by a spirit of solidarity, and in both accounts, people stand in equal positions in society.

Secondly, the idealized version does not encompass many of the different characteristics of reciprocity, such as the timespan for reciprocal interactions, different motivations (beyond self-interest from cooperation) or even the notions of negative and positive reciprocity (Komter, 2014). In the idealized discussion of reciprocity, we tend to only consider mutual beneficial exchanges (considering able-body people engaging in cooperation). And it is mostly positive feedback of reciprocity – I contribute, because the other does so too; I agree with the rules and follow them, because others so the same – that are being considered. But what about negative reciprocity? Would an idealized version consider the possibility of breaking of cooperation when one chooses not to engage in the rules – a tit-for-tat settlement? It seems the idealized version of reciprocity fails to account how many reciprocal exchanges can be antagonistic, or even lead to non-egalitarian outcomes (Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 2002).

The idealized version of reciprocity becomes even more difficult to apply in "real-life settings" due to what can imply fulfilling its requirements. Rawls' account of contribution was not fully explored, but implied economic cooperation. Therefore, we could consider only activities that contribute to the economy as the ones fulfilling the obligations of reciprocity. But that could arguably leave aside many activities who have intrinsic social (if not economic) value: there are several volunteer activities targeting at patients to provide them with last wishes, or to provide them with music and entertainment. One could choose to be a "full time volunteer" for these organizations. There is also the well-known feminist critique of how this would leave aside reproductive work. Because a productivist account of cooperation has been the norm, namely in the UBI debate, and because economic fears of labour withdrawal fit neatly into this perspective, most experiments have focused mostly on labour market participation outcomes and have left aside the analysis of the types of choices in occupation people do when granted a UBI (in case they exit or reduce their participation in the labour market). Atkinson and White, in particular, have strived to overcome this challenge, by providing broader accounts of what can be considered meaningful cooperation. But when (almost) everything can be seen as meaningful cooperation, how can such a norm of reciprocity be enforced (institutionally or as a social norm)? Such a broad conception seems to be an exercise of accommodation of one's egalitarian ambitions, with one's justice requirements, as opposed to a given principle or norm, that seems to be in place in society. To illustrate, let's consider whether people tend to balance and rationalize in their political choices or daily life encounters what can be seen as a contribution – volunteering or working full time; musician or bank teller; part time versus working in the informal market. It seems hardly the case that we, individually and collectively, go about discussing the pros and cons of each occupation, and defining which should be accepted as meaningful contribution. One can argue how even when we do, our criterion is not only economic and social value to the surplus to be distribute, but also questions of need, desert and even identity. The difficulty in asserting what can count as contribution or not, an argument Simon Birnbaum already touched upon (Birnbaum, 2013), spills over to any attempt to test or to observe how reciprocity norms can be influenced when a basic income is introduced.

Conclusion

What role can basic income experiments have, particularly when discussing the reciprocity argument in implementing an unconditional basic income? Two main conclusions can be drawn.

One would be the importance of the reciprocity debate when considering the implementation of a basic income, hence the need to know more about how the norm of reciprocity and its requirements can be influenced by UBI. The theoretical debate is rich and complex, and no basic income experiment (or other) would settle it. It will not be possible to confirm or not a position where basic income is compatible or not with the demands of justice. We side partly with Widerquist's position about the useless endeavour of testing a reciprocity claim. But we argue that despite the fact that the theoretical debate has concluded on the significance of reciprocity, it could still be expanded by looking at existing and future evidence on UBI. Therefore, basic income experiments could strive to look beyond labour market participation and observe any changes in occupational patterns, feelings towards different groups in society or even changes in cooperation patterns or levels of trust, as important variables in the reciprocity equation. This is partly what the B-MINCOME experiment in Barcelona did, namely by having several "treatment" groups, some with activation policies (conditional and not compulsory) besides one unconditional group, with no additional policies (Laín, 2019). However, this was mostly to see which policies could be more effective, with what seems a particular focusing on discussing the role conditionality in activation policies can play. The fact that it used an RCT, also reduces the possibility of looking for community effects, since RCTs allow for that possibility, but usually that entails significant costs, and logistical challenges (as opposed to saturation studies, despite the fact that these also have inherent limitations). It is therefore still important to assess how cooperation, trust and participation change in current and future experiments where a basic income is introduced.

Despite arguing that looking at basic income experiments to expand our knowledge on reciprocity is important, it seems a rather difficult task to do. For one, because of the goals experiments tend to have. Mostly they focus in labour market participation, school attendance, mental health or other quality of life indicators. But mostly, discussing evidence on reciprocity means having to compare a real-life setting, and evaluate results pertaining to reciprocity that are an outcome from implementing a basic income in those settings, with an idealized and stylized account of the norm of reciprocity. This leads to two shortcomings: either existing evidence does not adequately fit within the background conditions of the idealized notion, hence the evidence will not be seen as credible to be discussed. Or the concept cannot in fact be observed from the beginning, hence it will be impossible to use evidence, observation or other accounts to inform the theoretical debate. In a sense, the principled discussion on reciprocity has become shielded from argument, situated in a frame parallel to reality, but used as standard to judge policies that are trying to fit within the real-life context of cooperation and political institutions.

References

Adloff, F., & Mau, S. (2006). Giving social ties, reciprocity in modern society. European Journal of Sociology, 93–123.

Atkinson, T. (1996). The case for a participation income. The Political Quarterly, 67–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923x.1996.tb01568.x.

Barry, B. (1997). The attractions of basic income. In Franklin, J. (Ed.), Equality (pp. 157–171). London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Becker, L. C. (1980). Reciprocity and social obligation. Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, 411–421. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0114.1980.tb00029.x.

Birnbaum, S. (2013). Basic income reconsidered. Social Justice, Liberalism, and the Demands of Equality. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bowles, S., Boyd, R., Fehr, E., & Gintis, H. (1997). Homo reciprocans: A research initiative on the origins, dimensions, and policy implications of reciprocal fairness. Research Initiative on Reciprocal Fairness, 1–30.

Calnitsky, D. (2016). “More normal than welfare”: The Mincome experiment, stigma and community experience (pp. 26–71). Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Sociological Association/La Société Canadienne de Sociologie.

Van Donselaar, G. (2008). The right to exploit. Parasitism, scarcity, basic income. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Godelier, M. (1999). The enigma of the gift. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement. American Sociological Review, 161–178. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092623.

Kangas, O., Jauhiainen, S., Simanainen, M., & Ylikännö, M. (2020). Suomen perustulokokeilun arviointi (Final results of basic income experiment in Finland). Helsinky: Kela Institute. Retrieved from Kela Institute https://www.kela.fi/web/en/news-archive/-/asset_publisher/IN08GY2nIrZo/content/results-of-the-basic-income-experiment-small-employment-effects- better-perceived-economic-security-and-mental-wellbeing.

Keeley, M., & Robins, P. (1979). Work incentives and the negative income tax. Challenge, 52–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/05775132.1979.11470502.

Komter, A. E. (2014). Idealized versus real-life reciprocity: How to strike the balance? The Netherlands Journal of Legal Philosophy, 158–171.

Laín, B. (2019). Report on the preliminary results of the B-MINCOME project (2017–2018). B-INCOME – Sustainable inclusion in Barcelona – Ajuntamento de Barcelona. Retrieved from https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/results_bmincome_eng.pdf.

Lister, A. (2020). Reconsidering the reciprocity objection to unconditional basic income. Politics, Philosophy & Economics, 1–20.

Mauss, M. (2002). The gift. London: Routledge Classics.

McKinnon, C. (2013). Basic income, self-respect, and reciprocity. In K. Widerquist, J. A. Noguera, Y. Vanderborght, & J. D. Wispelaere (Eds.), Basic income. An anthology of contemporary research (pp. 114–122). Chichester: Blackwell Publishing.

Merrill, R., Neves, C. and Laín, B. (2022). Basic Income Experiments. A Critical Examination of Their Goals, Contexts, and Methods. Palgrave Macmillan

Meuleman, B., van Oorschot, W., Sharon Baute, S. D., & Roosma, F. (2018). The Past, Present and Future of European Welfare Attitudes: Topline Results from Round 8 of the European Social Survey. Brussels: European Social Survey. November 2022, available at: https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS8_toplines_issue_8_welfare.pdf4

Moffitt, R. A. (1981). The negative income tax: Would it discourage work? Monthly Labor Review, 23–27.

Painter, A. (2018). The RSA blog: 6 takeaways from our survey on basic income and pilots. Retrieved January 7, 2020, from https://www.thersa.org/blog/2018/08/6-takeaways-from- our-survey-on-basic-income-and-pilots.

Rawls, J. (2001). Justice as fairness: A restatement. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Van Parijs, P. (1995). Real freedom for all. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, S. (2003). The civic minimum. On the rights and obligations of economic citizenship. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, S. (2017). Should a minimum income be unconditional? In S. Civitarese, & S. Halliday (Eds.),

Social rights in Europe in an age of austerity (p. 16). London: Routledge.

Widerquist, K. (2004). A failure to communicate: What (if anything) can we learn from the negative income tax experiments? The Journal of Socio-Economics, 1–51.

Widerquist, K. (2018). A critical analysis of basic income experiments for researchers, policymakers and citizens. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Young, C. (2018). Realising basic income experiments in the UK: A typology and toolkit of basic income design and delivery. United Kingdom: RSA. Action and Research Centre.

Article III: Understanding Reciprocity and the importance of Civic Friendship

Neves, Catarina. "Understanding Reciprocity and the importance of Civic Friendship". *Res Publica*. 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-023-09614-2

Abstract:

This article aims to contribute to existing literature on the virtues and challenges of political liberalism. It starts by arguing that civic reciprocity, as one of the principles sustaining political agreement under cultural pluralism, can only motivate citizens to act in between their own self-interest, and their altruistic motives, if citizens share a relationship of civic friendship. Moreover, it claims that civic reciprocity requires a thick conception of civic friendship, defined by mutual recognition (Lister 2011, Schwarzenbach 2009), a non-prudential concern for the interest of others (Leland and Wietmarschen 2017) but also by a substratum of shared experiences that can foster interpersonal trust. But this thick definition of civic friendship will render the concept of civic reciprocity culturally sensitive in at least four ways: how citizens commit to reciprocity, what political values and institutional arrangements they deem reasonable and how they choose to cooperate. Hence, it presents a strong challenge to multiculturalism. However, in closing, it is argued that instead of dismissing the possibility of political agreement under multiculturalism, we should consider that reciprocity is more than a formal requirement for political agreement. It is a relational value anchored in how citizens relate to one another. Therefore, for multiculturalism to be successful, policies that strengthen ties of civic friendship – namely by creating shared experiences among citizens - need to be implemented.

Key words:

Multiculturalism; Civic Friendship; Reciprocity; Political Agreement

(1) Introduction

In late 2022 Portugal discussed whether medically assisted suicide should be legal[27]. A new bill was passed in National Parliament and was sent to the country's President. It can be signed off as a law, or the President can choose whether to exercise veto or to send it to the Constitutional Court. This is the most recent outcome of yet another debate on euthanasia in Portugal, and the third bill that the current government (majority of a centre-left party) has tried to pass through the Parliament. In what is mostly a catholic country, and despite polls suggesting popular support for the bill, the debate in euthanasia has been a polarizing one. Those against it, argue euthanasia legalizes suicide and takes off the responsibility of government and individuals to ensure terminal care to those who need it[28]. Moreover, they argue that the movement to push the bill has been guided by 'ideological blindness' of the left leaning majority in Parliament, instead of a project supported by associations of health professionals and patients.

The debate on euthanasia is just one example of the difficulties of striking political agreement when it comes to issues of cultural pluralism. Will Kymlicka defines "societal culture" as a culture "which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres" (Kymlicka 1996, 87)[29]. The debate on euthanasia shows the difficulties in political agreement in conditions of cultural pluralism. One can have different views on individual freedom ('should an individual have the right to end his own life?'), but also distinct values, and views on collective responsibility ('should the state assist those who wish to end their lives?'), both tied to cultural membership and affiliation (Kymlicka 1996, 59). Hence, and because modern democratic societies[30] are characterized by the fact of "reasonable pluralism" where "a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious, philosophical, and moral, is the normal result of its culture of free institutions" (Rawls 2005, p. 441), one needs to understand what is required for political agreement.

---

[27] To know more about the new bill, and the Parliament's discussion on the topic: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63907807, accessed December 26, 2022.

[28] On some of the arguments that have been debated around euthanasia in the country: https://rr.sapo.pt/noticia/politica/2022/06/09/eutanasia-movimento-acao-etica-considera-que-lei-vai-promover-o-suicidio-assistido/287911/, accessed December 28, 2022.

[29] For Kymlicka such definition excludes others (i.e., linked to social rights, such as a 'teenager' culture), but is the best suited definition to a discussion that includes both 'national minorities' but also 'polyethnic' arrangements' (Kymlicka 1996, p. 6)

[30] In Political Liberalism, John Rawls begins by discussing how in pre-modernity there was a form of social unity, and agreement on a shared religious, moral, and philosophical comprehensive doctrine (Rawls 2005). Under a religious or moral doctrine, citizens were impelled to comply with obligations and enforce certain rights based on such religious or moral doctrines. With the creation of the modern state, legal enforcement of rules could fulfil that same rule.

As the example of euthanasia points out, under pluralism[31] people will tend to disagree. Hence, John Rawls discussed in 'Political Liberalism *'*whether in such a context it is possible for people to accept and indorse principles of justice without the need of threats and punishment (Rawls 2005). For Rawls, a commitment to the criterion of reciprocity is a fundamental part of this process, namely because it is a feature of the virtue of reasonableness - and only reasonable citizens will be able to agree on a 'political conception of justice':

> "citizens are reasonable when, viewing one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations, they are prepared to offer one another fair terms of cooperation according to what they consider the most reasonable conception of political justice; and when they agree to act on those terms, even at the cost of their own interests in particular situations, provided that other citizens also accept those terms. The criterion of reciprocity requires that when those terms are proposed as the most reasonable terms of fair cooperation, those proposing them must also think it at least reasonable for others to accept them, as free and equal citizens, and not as dominated or manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position." (Rawls 2005, p. 446)

Political agreement in Rawls is of a specific type. Citizens are expected to agree on a political conception of justice, which is based on political values, such as political equality, religious tolerance, or freedom of speech. Rawls defined these as 'great values (...) that govern the basic framework of social life[32]' (Rawls 2005, p. 139), and which are part of the 'political culture of a democratic society' (Rawls 2001, p. 34). Expressed through the principles of justice, these values set the standard of agreement between citizens, and justify when legitimate coercive power should be exercised and reasonably accepted by citizens. Therefore, they should be distinguished from the values inherent to moral or religious views, to avoid justifying coercive political power in favour of the latter ones. As such, citizens might accept the principles of justice[33], as both rational and reasonable[34], not only because others will do so too, but also because their own doctrines are not to be meddled with.

---

[31] Societies under pluralism are those where people have different conceptions of the good, and also different reasonable comprehensive moral, political or religious doctrines. In pluralism, people with these different conceptions should be able to agree on a democratic regime, by reaching an overlapping consensus: "When political liberalism speaks of a reasonable overlapping consensus of comprehensive doctrines, it means that all of these doctrines, both religious and nonreligious, support a political conception of justice underwriting a constitutional democratic society whose principles, ideals, and standards satisfy the criterion of reciprocity." (Rawls, 2005, 482-483). Rawls explains that : "This is because a basic feature of democracy is the fact of reasonable pluralism—the fact that a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious, philosophical, and moral, is the normal result of its culture of free institutions." (Rawls 2005, p. 441).

[32] Note that Rawls considers these 'great values' things as "values of equal political and civil liberty; fair equality of opportunity; the values of economic reciprocity; the social bases of mutual respect between citizens" (Rawls 2005, p. 139). They are expressed in the two principles of justice. Besides the 'great values', Rawls also includes the 'values of public reason' which include "the appropriate use of the fundamental concepts of judgement, inference, and evidence, but also the virtues of reasonableness and fairmindedness as shown in the abiding by the criteria and procedures of common sense knowledge and accepting the methods and conclusions of science when not controversial" (Rawls 2005, p. 139).

Hence, reciprocity plays an important role in the terms of agreement reasonable citizens propose to each other. But Rawls goes further, claiming that reciprocity works as "a principle giving its content and as a disposition to answer in kind" (Rawls 2001, p. 196). [35] Hence, it is also about the disposition to cooperate in a certain way with other citizens. Hence, it is worth pondering about the motivational aspect of such disposition: how come citizens' sharing little in terms of their comprehensive doctrines, are to be disposed to 'answer in kind' to those they are alien, at least when it comes to their moral or religious values? It is also worth pointing out, that Rawls discussed reciprocity as a disposition of a certain kind, namely one that "lies between the idea of impartiality, which is altruistic (being moved by the general good) and the idea of mutual advantage" (Rawls 2005, p. 16)[36].

This article starts off by questioning whether the criterion of reciprocity can play such a role in political agreement under cultural pluralism[37]. It argues that the idea of civic reciprocity, as providing ground for political agreement, needs to be considered in tandem with notions of civic friendship. To establish this claim, I will first argue for a relational view of reciprocity (a.1.), calling it civic reciprocity, and discuss the implications of the latter, as deeming the mode of reciprocation conditional on the sort of relationship among those cooperating (a.2.). This will be done in section (2).

---

[33] The two principles of justice read as:

"a. Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all; and.

b. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle)." (Rawls 2001, p. 42-43)

[34] People are defined by Rawls as reasonable as people who are "not moved by the general good as such but desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal can cooperate with others on terms all can accept." (Rawls 2005, p. 50). Rational is a different idea, defined as: "applies to a single unit unified agent (either an individual or corporate person) with the powers of judgement and deliberation in seeking ends and interests peculiar its own." (pp.51). Rational and reasonable people are two key conceptions in Rawls.

[35] Sociological work which discusses reciprocity as a universal norm could be an additional grounding justification for claiming that such a disposition is present in reasonable citizens. A topic discussed on section (2).

[36] When arguing why the 'criterion of reciprocity' should be considered between self-interest and altruism, John Rawls looks at his two principles of justice: whereas in the second principle of justice – the difference principle - we can find an idea of fair reciprocity, considering how ones' advantage must benefit those who are worst of, this form of mutual-advantageous exchange is conditioned by the first principle: in the sense that everyone will be entitled to a "fully adequate scheme of basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all". (Rawls 2001, p. 76-77)

[37] Such scepticism is animated by scholarly work about reciprocity. Reciprocity is often discussed as a pattern of exchange of goods and services, that might mediate mutually gratifying exchanges, or negative and vindictive behaviours, which can be observed across societies (Gouldner 1960). As Bowles and Gintis have argued, a tendency to cooperate ("homo reciprocans") is more widespread than that of the self-interest motivation ("homo economicus"), and therefore we can make a case for reciprocity as a universal norm. (Bowles & Gintis 2000; Gouldner 1960). While the view of reciprocity as a universal norm is widely popular, such a disposition is also argued as being conditional on several variables, including cultural aspects but also the nature of the relationship among those cooperating. A topic which will be further elaborated in (2) and then again in (4).

It follows from a.1. and a.2., that one then needs to determine the nature of the relationship that allows civic reciprocity to work as discussed in section (2). Hence, I will claim such a relationship is best embodied in current definitions of 'civic friendship' (b.1), and I will contribute to existing accounts (Lister 2011, Schwarzenbach 2009, Leland and Wietmarschen 2017), by arguing that such a relationship should be defined by three main characteristics (b,2) namely that (i.) citizens express a non-prudential concern for the interests of other citizens, a (ii.) requirement of mutual recognition but also (iii.) a solid ground of shared experiences between citizens. This will be done in section (3).

By establishing both a. and b. in (2) and (3), I will move on to argue that civic friendship and civic reciprocity are culturally sensitive, which compromises the extent to which agreement and cooperation can take place under cultural pluralism. Finally, I will close by sketching out some implications of this view. This will be discussed in section (4).

This paper is animated by concerns shared by philosophers such as John Rawls and Will Kymlicka: in increasingly diverse societies, how can we ensure political agreement and stability? What can be the sources of unity in multination but also polyethnic states? In what follows I aim to argue that the value of civic reciprocity, anchored on a robust relationship of civic friendship offers a possible answer. Doing so provides three distinct contributions.

First, it highlights the limits of looking at the criterion of reciprocity solely as a formal requirement for political agreement in pluralism. Instead, I believe we should take the relational component of reciprocity seriously. For the principle of reciprocity to work as a mechanism for political consensus and cooperation, we need a thick conception of civic friendship. Secondly, instead of focusing on discussing civic friendship as a requirement for political consensus, I will focus on reciprocity. If our conception of justice was grounded on cooperation determined by mutual self-interest, and hence 'tit-for-tat' reciprocity, it would not be necessary to foster relationships of civic friendship. Hence, the defence of civic friendship is grounded on the endorsement of a certain reading of civic reciprocity. Finally, I believe discussing the need for civic reciprocity to be anchored on a robust notion of civic friendship has important political implications. Namely the need to consider institutions and policies where citizens can have shared experiences, and hence build the fertile ground for civic friendship governed by civic reciprocity.

(2) Reciprocity as a Relational Value

Through the influential work of John Rawls, reciprocity has been discussed as an important principle for political agreement between people with different comprehensive doctrines. Two notes are warranted on Rawls' take on reciprocity in 'Political Liberalism':

First, the 'criterion of reciprocity' is not a criterion of economic reciprocity[38], as discussed in other Rawlsian work (Rawls, 2001, 2005), or by Stuart White (2003). The latter is about obligations of economic reciprocity, which demand that in a liberal society, those who are able bodied are required to contribute productively to the social product. These two accounts – of civic reciprocity and economic reciprocity - share the fundamental notion of reciprocity as a commitment among parties to uphold and abide certain rules or norms, provided that other parties will do the same. However, they are distinct: one is about the content of the norm - one should contribute productively if he is so able, provided others who are also able will do the same; whereas the other is about the foundations of social cooperation – it is the 'norm itself' - one should cooperate by upholding the agreed upon standard rules and obligations, provided others do the same. The rules of the latter might or might not include contributing to the production of goods and services[39]. In this paper I am mostly focusing on the latter – civic reciprocity - while acknowledging that economic reciprocity is often seen as part of the fair terms of cooperation, and hence part of what is required by civic reciprocity.

Secondly, reciprocity is defined as a principle that "lies between the idea of impartiality, which is altruistic (being moved by the general good) and the idea of mutual advantage" (Rawls, 2005, p. 16). Hence, citizens are not simply moved by the self-interest to cooperate, nor the altruistic desire to do so[40]. As RJ. Leland and Han van Wietmarschen pointed out, the general framework of political liberalism assumes ‘fair social cooperation’, and hence we can infer that citizens have a “non-prudential concern for the interest of their fellow citizens” (Leland and Wietmarschen 2017, p.160), as opposed to perspectives that see politics as an arena for self-interest cooperation. As Rawls himself put it, reciprocity “appears both as a principle giving its content and as a disposition to answer in kind” (Rawls 2001, p. 196). Hence it determines how agreement takes place, but also its stability, by ensuring fair cooperation and thus promoting trust across time. Thus, citizens sharing little in terms of moral, philosophical, and religious views, might look at the ‘criterion of reciprocity’ as a sufficient but also limited requirement for their agreement and cooperation across time.

---

[38] Although the criterion of reciprocity does not demand economic reciprocity, Rawls himself believes such an obligation was important, namely as a value. Two important aspects where he mentions the need for contributing productively. In *Justice as Fairness*, Rawls mentions how cooperation is always productive "Social cooperation, we assume, is always productive, and without cooperation there would be nothing produced and so nothing to distribute." (Rawls 2001, 61). Economic cooperation is required to produce a surplus that can then be distributed according to the principles of justice. He also argues that political agreement under political pluralism depends on acceptance of 'great values' which include, among other things, economic reciprocity: "these values govern the basic framework of social life – they are the very groundwork of our existence – and specify the fundamental terms of political and social cooperation. In justice as fairness some of these great values – the value of justice – are expressed by the principles of justice for the basic structure: among them the values of equal political and civil liberty, fair equality of opportunity, the values of economic reciprocity, the social bases of mutual respect between citizens" (Rawls 2001, 189-190).

[39] Oftentimes these two are discussed as the same, partly because the principle of criterion of reciprocity is said to require a general compliance with rules that include participation in the division of labour and/or the production of the social product. This seems to be Rawls' belief (2005, 2001), as well as Andrew Lister's (2011).

[40] When arguing why the 'criterion of reciprocity' should be considered between self-interest and altruism, John Rawls looks at his two principles of justice: whereas in the second principle of justice – the difference principle - we can find an idea of fair reciprocity, considering how ones' advantage must benefit those who are worst of, this form of mutual-advantageous exchange is

I believe however that this reading of civic reciprocity implies defining it as a relational value. Reciprocity as a disposition in between our altruistic and self-interested motives, indicates that we all take our interests, but also the interests of our fellow citizens into account. That is a demanding principle for citizens who do not share a view on philosophical, moral, or religious matters, but most importantly, for citizens who do not necessarily need to stand in relation to each other, or whose relationship is thinly defined as being based on an agreement on political values. It also seems at odds with existing sociological and anthropological work, who contend that reciprocity as a norm is established and influenced by the type and nature of the relationship amongst those cooperating (Bowles & Gintis 2000; Beltran, Chong, & Montoya 2021; Gouldner, 1960; Sahlins 1972; Godelier 1999; Mauss 1990). It is worth pointing out that philosophers like Lawrence Becker have also discussed how distinct interpersonal relationships (e.g., married couple or friends) influence how the virtue of reciprocity can be catered to (Becker 1986), while Andrew Lister, in analysing the role of reciprocity in Rawls has also contended that the principle should be considered in light of the relationship between citizens within a political community (Lister 2011).

Taking reciprocity as a relational value is analogous to considering the relationality of justice. In the latter, the sphere of justice, and its inherent principles, only apply to those who are cooperating. Hence, for most social contract theories, such as the Rawlsian view, the principles of justice apply only to those cooperating on fair terms. Justice is relational because it only applies when and until citizens agree to stand in a relationship with each other. Reciprocity as a relational value has the same implication. Its moral justification only holds for those who are in a

---

conditioned by the first principle: in the sense that everyone will be entitled to a “fully adequate scheme of basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all”. (Rawls 2001, p. 76-77) relationship of a certain kind. Such a distinction is often echoed in discussions on principles of just distribution. Andrea Sangiovanni, for example, contends that a relational view of distributive justice holds that "the practice-mediated relations in which individuals stand condition the content, scope, and justification of those principles" (Sangiovanni 2007, p. 5). A non-relational account, on the other hand, would argue that while relations can play a given role, it does not contribute to either the justification or formulation of the principles of distribution (Sangiovanni 2007, p. 6). Hence, a relational view of civic reciprocity will argue relationships contribute to how we justify the norm, but also how it is formulated. Let's call this claim a.1.

Hence, a relational view of civic reciprocity implies that the relationship between citizens is what justifies the principle, but also conditions its content. While we tend to consider reciprocity as a straightforward principle that obliges us to return gifts that we have received, one can wonder whether this holds for every situation. A few examples illustrate the point: what if the person giving a gift is our enemy? What if it was our mother? And if it was a stranger in the middle of the street? What about if the gift received is quite expensive and/or rare – what should we return, if any? What if we have received a gift a very long time ago, are we still obliged to return it? Would our answers differ for these two last questions considering whether the gift came from our mother, stranger, or enemy? Looking at reciprocity as a relational value implies considering that the type of reciprocity is influenced by the relationship amongst those cooperating, a point made by Marshall Sahlins in his observations of modes of reciprocation mediated by social distance[41]. Let's call this claim a.2.

Hence, taking civic reciprocity as a relational value implies considering that its rules and principles apply only to those cooperating, and who share a certain relationship, hence functioning as a norm sustaining social interaction (a.1.); But it also implies that the nature of the relationship amongst those cooperating influences the *mode* of reciprocation (a.2.), determining, for example, whether returns always need to be proportional and timely, or whether unrequited, disproportional or indirect exchanges are to be permissible.

---

[41] Marshall Shalins, a French anthropologist, famously observed how reciprocity is tied in with 'social distance'. In tribal societies, morality was linked to functions and roles in society, and hence someone being a stranger, enemy, family member or friend (having closer interpersonal relationship with the tribe and/or the person) would determine different ways to reciprocate gifts received. (Sahlins 1972). Sahlins discusses how social distance allows us to analyse reciprocity and define exchanges according to a continuum: one of the poles, the positive one, is governed by 'generalized reciprocity' and is defined as "'the 'solidary extreme'[which] refers to the transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given, and possibly and necessary, assistance returned" (1972, p. 418). Balanced reciprocity is considered the midpoint and "refers to direct exchanges. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay. (...) Balanced reciprocity is 'less personal' than generalized reciprocity. From our own advantage point, it is 'more economic' (1972, p. 420-421). Finally, the negative pole is defined as "negative reciprocity" and is reserved for those we are most socially apart, or even those we see as enemies, rivals, or threats: "negative reciprocity is the most impersonal sort of exchange. (...) The participants conform each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximize utility at the others' expense." (1972, p. 422)

To engender and sustain political agreement under cultural pluralism, Rawls argued that reciprocity needed to be an idea in between our self-interest and altruistic motives. A relational account of civic reciprocity will thus ask what sort of relationship among citizens mediates exchanges in between impartiality and self-interest, thus allowing that citizens will be disposed to 'answered in kind'. It will consider that without defining such a relationship, one cannot demand a mode of reciprocation as the one mentioned above. In what follows, I will argue that the best candidate for such a relationship is the idea of civic friendship.

(3) Defining Civic Friendship

As established through claims a.1. and a.2., the principle of civic reciprocity, as a relational value, seems to require that citizens share a certain relationship. There is a long tradition spanning to Aristotle's political thought, of looking at political relationships as constituting instances of civic friendship (Schwarzenbach 2009). These intend to convey the idea that in a political community we should express some form of care, concern, and respect for our fellow citizens. In what follows, I will argue civic friendship offers the best candidate for determining a relationship between citizens, that can sustain civic reciprocity in cultural pluralism.

Rawls discussed how the purpose of the criterion of reciprocity is "to specify the nature of the political relation in a constitutional democratic regime as one of civic friendship" (Rawls, Political Liberalism, 2005, p. 447). A notion of "deep reciprocity" is also expressed in the difference principle, since the better-off can only deserve more than others, provided they serve the benefits of the community as a whole and guarantee that the worst off are left in a better situation than before (Rawls 2001, p. 42-43; 49, Schwarzenbach 2009, p. 143). Hence, Rawls' discussion of civic reciprocity seems to acknowledge its relational value, namely its role in determining relationships of civic friendship. However, what sustains civic friendship in the Rawlsian account seems to be a formal reading of the criterion of reciprocity. It is characterized by the agreement and compliance with the principles of justice, and the constraints imposed by public reason, which demand that citizens address each other with reasons they can understand (i.e., expressing public values instead of comprehensive ones). I believe this is a narrow view of reciprocity. Moreover, when claiming that reciprocity is both a principle and disposition, not much is mentioned on the grounds and motivation for such a disposition. I side with Sibyl

Schwarzenbach who believes this is a weak justification for what motivates citizens to abide by the principles of justice (Schwarzenbach 2009, p. 144). Moreover, if one agrees with a relational reading of civic reciprocity as introduced above, one will need to offer a more detailed definition of the relationship between citizens.

Andrew Lister offers an additional reading of reciprocity, also focused on its relational nature. Lister believes reciprocity expresses a relationship among equals: when citizens cooperate, provided others do the same, they initiate a relationship of mutual recognition. So, in his view, not complying with civic reciprocity means we are not perceiving others as our equals (i.e., we might consider ourselves inferior, or superior to others by not contributing). The point of reciprocity is therefore to constitute a relationship between citizens grounded on equality, and this in turn gives content to civic friendship. Hence, according to Lister, reciprocity demands timely and proportional returns, and should limit some duties of justice. He provides the example of the obligation to work: Lister argued that one should comply with such an obligation to be entitled the fruits of social cooperation. Not doing so, he believes, implies denying that we are on a par with other citizens who work and contribute to the social product, and hence creates instances of misrecognition who should not be permissible.

While I side with Lister's point that unrequited exchanges can influence the nature of a relationship, I believe his view is insufficient to account for the interaction between civic reciprocity and civic friendship. Namely because it focuses too much on how *the nature of the return influences the relationship between citizens,* and too little on how the *relationship between citizens influences the nature of the return.* The principle of reciprocity has often been narrowly considered as a principle of proportional and timely return of a gift. This is based on a view that exchanges need to be 'balanced' to promote equality, as opposed to exploitation (Godbout and Caillé 1998). Lawrence Becker pointed out the same, when arguing that "fruitful relationships" are those who tend to be balanced. In 'Reciprocity', Becker explains how different relationships, namely between friends, or spouses, cannot be unrequited for too long, since this can lead to the exploitation, resentment, or even to negative reciprocity (Becker 1986). But this is somewhat distinct from what some anthropological accounts have documented (Sahlins 1972; Godelier 1999; Mauss 1990). Marshall Sahlins discussed in his observations of pre-capitalist societies that it is within socially close relationships that unbalanced exchanges tend to be accepted. He called this 'generalized reciprocity'[42], which is characterized by delaying or even withdrawing restitution. It is when intimacy and trust is solidified among those cooperating, namely between friends or relatives, that unbalanced exchanges are more tolerated, without jeopardizing the nature of the relationship.

Not only does reciprocity plays a role in *nurturing and shaping* relationships of equality or inequality, as Lister points out (Lister 2011). The *nature of the relationship* among those cooperating also determines which mode of reciprocity might be prevalent, considering different variables (e.g., trust, past record of interaction, degree of intimacy, norms, and social roles). Take Lister's concern with equality. I believe the mode of reciprocal interaction cannot establish equality among citizens per se (even if balanced exchanges can contribute to nurturing relationships of equality). Rather, from the onset, we might establish that a certain relationship is defined by equality, which then conditions the sort of reciprocal exchange that is conducive to guaranteeing the nature of that relationship. Assuming these are the same means naturalizing a certain way of reciprocating, instead of discussing the different shades of reciprocity that might exist, and how these can coexist with the nature of different relationships, namely between citizens. Hence the reason why Lister's view obscures how a requirement of reciprocity can accommodate delayed and unrequited exchange, without necessarily jeopardizing equality among those cooperating. Moreover, it also dismisses how non proportional exchanges can be a requirement for equality: Danielle Allen has argued that African Americans used 'sacrifice' and 'sacrificial exchanges' to demand equality and distributive justice along racial lines (Allen 2004).

Another reading of the relational nature of reciprocity can be found in the work of R. J. Leland and Han van Wietmarschen. They found two justifications for how the principle of reciprocity in pluralism can be justified: the first, is that reciprocity allows the expression of joint rule. The second, is that it allows citizens to stand in a relationship of civic friendship. They argue that civic friendship provides a more convincing ground for the reciprocity principle than the idea of joint rule, since civic friendship provides a basis for a "partially shared conception of one another's good" (Leland and Wietmarschen 2017, p. 163). Hence, they believe it better favours a principle of reciprocity, than the idea of a shared interest in following a certain democratic procedure of joint rule, where citizens will comply with reciprocity because of wanting to have a formal mechanism for deliberation. Such a view is better aligned with the one I propose in this paper, by claiming that a certain relationship of civic friendship is a superior justification for why citizens would be motivated to agree and cooperate according to civic reciprocity.

---

[42] See note 15. (footnote 40 in this dissertation).

This broader understanding of the principle of reciprocity acknowledges the possibility for accepting unbalanced exchanges, which seems to be in line with instances where both unrequited exchanges (e.g., if we think about distributive goods and services for those who are not able bodied) or delayed returns (e.g., if we think about the case for reparations) are demanded by justice. But as pointed out above, this broader notion of what reciprocity demands requires citizens to be socially close to some degree. The relationship between citizens can be analogous to perhaps a new friend, with whom we are starting a relationship. If we are moved only by our self-interest, the relationship will likely be difficult to sustain. We will be considered selfish, and the new acquaintance might feel her attentions are unreciprocated. But if we are only moved by our altruism, we might be exploited, or neglected; or the new acquaintance might always feel a sense of discomfort borne of a perpetual sense of indebtedness. While in a specific political community, we might find ourselves closer to an end of the spectrum (i.e., more self-interested, or more altruistic), relationships between citizens require both some level of balanced reciprocation, but also unrequited or disproportional exchanges to occur, allowing distributional patterns that might be more conducive to equality and trust-building in the long run. Such a relationship is best expressed through an idea of civic friendship – Let’s consider this claim b.1. which established that the relationship that best embodies civic reciprocity is one of ‘civic friendship’.

Before moving on discussing in what way can civic friendship and civic reciprocity be deemed culturally sensitive, it is worth pondering on how to best characterize this relationship. While Rawls seem to argue that the reciprocal agreement based on shared political values, and expressed through public reason, is enough to constitute a relationship of civic friendship, for Leland and van Wietmarschen civic friends are defined by having a mutual non-prudential concern for other citizens’ interests. Civic friends do not have to share the same comprehensive or partial doctrine, nor wish to impose their values onto others. Instead, they should “care for one another as friends”, which “involves citizens concerned to advance each other’s interests, in ways that all parties regard as genuinely beneficial” (Leland and Wietmarschen 2017, p. 159). Such a perspective is in line with Sibyl Schwarzenbach’s proposal for a society that values care and ethical reproduction. In her book “On Civic Friendship. Including Women in the State*”*

Schwarzenbach argues that civic friendship is a requirement of justice (Schwarzenbach 2009). Moreover, she presents an expanded version of what civic friendship requires. Civic friends have a “general reciprocal awareness” of other citizens, but they are also characterized for having “basic trust and good will between citizens, as well as a practical doing for one another” (Schwarzenbach 2009, p.55). Hence, civic friendship is about a certain feeling of concern towards other citizens, but also daily actions that express a form of caring. Both accounts do not define civic friends as having shared doctrines or mutual acquaintances, and as such, are compatible with plural societies. However, in what follows I will argue both are insufficient in characterizing what sustains such relationships. To understand the point, let’s reflect on how two people become friends.

The grounds in which friendships occur can be very distinct. Some friendships are based on shared worldviews: two people who share the same political ideology, or the same religion. Others are based on similar tastes: they might like to listen to the same music, go to the same shows, or they might the same food. Other friendships are based on similar values: maybe they feel the same way about what they value in a relationship, but also on what they judge as being right or wrong. These could be seen as friendships based on some sort of comprehensive view. There are also other friendships based on shared acquaintances: maybe they belong to the same circle of friends, or they have partners who are friends with each other, which ‘push them’ into a friendship of their own. Finally, and this is in no way an exhaustive list on what can be the basis for friendships, some might be a result of shared experiences: maybe they have experienced the same past positive or negative events, or they have similar background stories, even if they have little in common today. These examples, seem to show that friendships can occur even when people share little in terms of religious, moral, or philosophical views. Friends can exist because and despite their individual comprehensive or sectarian views. Of course, in all these cases, the solid ground for friendship is dependent on how cooperation takes place across time. And in this, Rawls’ account of reciprocity as a key mechanism for trust and stability of cooperation[43] seems to be right. A friend who no longer trusts me, will most likely not remain a friend for too long. Similarly, a new acquaintance, who reciprocates my favours, and offers her own, hence signalling that she can be trusted, might become a friend quickly. I will hold that this is also true for civic friends.

---

[43] John Rawls discusses how once shared agreement on principles of justice takes place, citizens’ mutual abidance of the principles generates trust, thus contributing to sustaining cooperation over time (Rawls 2001, p. 196). Reciprocal cooperation is necessary to generate trust and hence encourage continuous acceptance of the rules.

In many ways, this is a perspective closer to Leland and van Wietmarschen claim on reciprocity being justified by citizens' having a "non-prudential concern for others' interests", or Sibyl Schwarzenbach's idea that civic friends need to a "practical doing for one another". Being concerned by other citizens, makes us act accordingly to civic reciprocity, hence accepting balanced and sometimes unbalanced exchanges, which in turn promotes trust, and encourages the flourishing of civic friendship. But both accounts seem to fail at explaining what citizens' share – similar acquaintances, views, values, or experiences - that might persuade them to care for others and be motivated to cooperate according to the principle of civic reciprocity. Such sharing seems to be required to build a solid ground for trust, so that the principle of reciprocity (Ostrom and Walker 2003) can sustain civic friendship. But interestingly Leland and van Wietmarschen reject in their account of civic friendship the premise that a key feature of friendships is that they often "share a species of intimacy or familiarity, and they may also need to share projects or activities with one another" (Leland and Wietmarschen 2017, p. 158), instead focusing on the idea of concern. While such a dismissal renders civic friendship in principle more compatible with pluralism, I believe civic reciprocity demands a thicker conception of the relationship between citizens.

If we take Will Kymlicka's account of how liberal theory has discussed cultural pluralism, it points out to how political agreement and stability can be maintained through several mechanisms. The first, is the Rawlsian view of "shared values", namely shared political values (Rawls 2005; Kymlicka 1996, p. 212), which can also accommodate Leland and van Wietmarschen and Schwarzenbach's idea of concern and care. A second perspective argues for "shared identity", namely the sharing of comprehensive or partial doctrines (e.g., shared religion, or shared history or language) (Kymlicka 1996, p. 213-14). A third discusses unity based on a commitment to "deep diversity": if the political community values and is proud of the diversity it exhibits, it might be motivated to continue cooperating in a fair manner (Kymlicka 1996, p.215). The third point might help illuminate what can be an important soil for nurturing civic friendship. In Sibyl Schwarzenbach's take on civic friendship as a "practical doing good for one another" we find an idea of process. We are friends with people we have a past and present record of doing good for each other. It is not only about concern, but as discussed above, it is about being 'socially close' to one another. But this requires some form of ‘coabitation’ ‘coexistence’ (physicial or constructed), and thereofore I believe it requires the acknowledgement that citizens need to have shared experiences. Such a concept does not necessarily demand shared doctrines, in which case pluralism would be rejected. But it does require a form of shared livelihood and the building of shared references (which might include shared values, but also a certain shared cultural membership) across time, that can be enough to build trust among citizens. This might also help nurture a commitment to “deep diversity” as argued by Kymlicka. Hence, I believe, civic friendship should be defined as involving a (i.) non-prudential concern for the interests of other citizens, as Leland and van Wietmarschen point out, a (ii.) requirement of mutual recognition (in line with Andrew Lister) but finally also (iii.) a solid ground of shared experiences amongst citizens, as defined. It is (iii.) that provides the necessary conditions for civic reciprocity and trust to flourish. Together, I believe these three aspects offer a comprehensive picture of what is required of civic friendship to foster the sort of civic reciprocity that can promote and sustain agreement and fair cooperation in conditions of cultural pluralism (consider this the final claim b.2.).

However, the idea of shared experiences, as building a thin form of membership, can include feelings of patriotism or a certain cultural membership, hence making agreement under cultural pluralism challenging. Therefore, I will now discuss why I believe incorporating the idea of ‘shared experiences’ in our view of civic friendship, alongside the general commitment to the principle of civic reciprocity, renders it culturally sensitive, before turning to some implications of this view in the conclusion.

(4) Civic Reciprocity is Culturally Sensitive

As argued above, if one agrees with a relational view of the principle of civic reciprocity, one needs to define the relationship of civic friendship that sustains such a principle. For civic reciprocity to work as mediating relationship that stands in between self-interested and altruistic motives, civic friendship requires a set of dispositions that not only includes mutual recognition and mutual concern for the interests of others, but also a process of constructing shared experiences that can sustain trust and reciprocity. However, such a robust notion of civic friendship that can sustain civic reciprocity is partially sensitive to cultural membership in at least four ways.

(1) Rawls accepts there are several reasonable political conceptions of justice to choose from, and that these do not always lead to the same conclusion (Rawls, Political Liberalism, 2005, p. 479). However, he does not explicitly argue how this opens the possibility of looking at political conceptions of justice as culturally specific. Political values include a commitment to 'economic reciprocity or basic civil rights' (Rawls 2005, p. 139). Van Wietmarschen believes values of efficiency of security can also be seen as political values (Wietmarschen 2021). But one can think how these values are a result of historical events, (e.g., feudalism or socialist movements), or are inherited from religious tradition (e.g., Christianity) or part of technological and intellectual development (e.g., new ideas from the Enlightenment or the demands and changes from the Industrial Revolution). Take the obligation to work. Often it has excluded members of society – such as women, who were prevented from entering the labour market[44], or to those who have inherited wealth, and live off their earnings. The value of efficiency might also be credit to the rise of the discipline of economics[45]

(2) Moreover, the commitment to a conception of justice is also mediated through social and historical narratives. Rawls calls them "roots of democratic citizens' allegiance to their political conceptions" and argues that these are rooted in citizen's respective "comprehensive doctrines" (Rawls 2005, p. 463). As Rawls points out, religious tolerance, for example, is a necessary condition for his theory of political liberalism. Without it, the criterion of reciprocity cannot be met, and no reasonable political conception of justice can be agreed upon. This means acknowledging that part of what makes a reasonable political conception is a result of historical and social processes, often of historical membership. For example, ideas and notions of patriotism, can be particularly important, such as the allegiance to a certain flag, statue, or commitment to a certain narrative of a country's history. Considering the family as part of the basic structure can also be culturally specific.

(3) If 1 and 2 are true, it follows that the choice of the best institutional arrangement to satisfy a given conception of justice might be sensitive to history and a related culture. Whereas in certain western European countries the idea of liberal socialism can most likely figure in public debate,

---

[44] I am disregarding how reproductive labour should be viewed as any other economic contribution, to make the claim that up until recently (and even not always now) the work done by women who are not formally employed, was often not recognized nor compensated as employment, and hence not equated with other forms of economic reciprocity, which often mean participating in employment.

[45] Included after publication for clarification: Both examples show how political values (i.e., to contribute productively to the social product, or efficiency, can also be the result of historical and cultural processes).

regardless of comprehensive moral, philosophical and religious doctrines, in the US such a discussion might be overridden, due to the historical, political, and social legacy of the cold war.

But a final point is worth noting. (4) Inasmuch the concept of friend, family or neighbour is culturally sensitive the concept of civic friend must also be. Hence, what it means to reciprocate as a civic friend might be culturally specific, in that in certain cultures reciprocation among friends might be closer to the altruistic side (e.g., socialized and communitarian ones) whereas in more individualist ones, it might tend be closer to the self-interested side of the spectrum, even if not totally motivated by egoistic purposes. In fact, empirical evidence seems to support the claim that how we reciprocate is influenced by our cultural background (Beltran, Chong and Montoya 2021, Simon and Benedikt 2009). One clear example of how culture mediates how we reciprocate with fellow citizens is the different institutional architectures of welfare states. The concept of "strong reciprocity"[46], for example, might justify support for egalitarian policies, according to Bowles and Gintis[47], provided the concept of desert is considered. But such a behaviour is conditioned by contextual factors. On the one hand, it seems social distance remains a key factor, and hence segregation might shape reciprocal interactions (Bowles and Gintis 2000, p. 45). But what social distance means, might also embody cultural norms, namely whether one is socially close to blood relatives, friends, or neighbours. Both authors also credit a study that finds different evidence on how strong reciprocity might vary, depending on how kinship groups are organized and perceived in society[48]. Frank Adloff and Steffan Mau, on the other hand, have investigated welfare state and reciprocity. They argue that how each society structures its social relations and endorses a certain reading of reciprocity helps determine the institutional structure of their welfare state (Adloff and Mau 2006, p. 114)[49]. Finally, Robert E.

---

[46] Bowles and Gintis define strong reciprocity as "a propensity to cooperate and share with others similarly disposed, even at personal cost, and a willingness to punish those who violate cooperative and other social norms, even when punishing is personally costly. We call a person acting this way Homo reciprocans." (Bowles and Gintis 2000, p. 37)

[47] The authors believe strong reciprocity is a result of several hundred thousand of years of sharing, which created a propensity to reciprocate, as opposed to being guided mostly by self-interest motivations.

[48] In one of their articles' footnotes, Bowles and Gintis mention the following: "The only known exception to this statement concerns experiments run by the University of California, Los Angeles anthropologist Joe Henrich, a member of our research group who works with the Machiguenga Indians, a famously individualistic indigenous group living in a remote region of the Peruvian Amazon. In the ultimatum game, he found offers to be small, and even small offers were typically accepted. In the public goods game, contributions to the public account were very low. We believe the most likely explanation of this result is a peculiarity of the subjects: their basic social unit consists of closely related kin, with extra-kin social relationships being much weaker than typical even of simple societies." (Bowles and Gintis 2000, p. 45)

[49] Frank Adfloff and Steffen Mau discuss the welfare state as "systems of transfer are seen here less as one-sided relationships of assistance, and more as a specific form of reciprocity between givers and receivers of assistance" (Adloff & Mau, 2006, p. 113). The authors investigate Esping-Anderson typologies of welfare state and discuss how the institutional design of modern welfare states is associated with "a correspondingly different repertoire of patterns of normative interpretation", and distinguish between "generalized reciprocity, reciprocity of risk, an obligating reciprocity and balanced reciprocity" and defined

Goodin looked at workfare policies, and discussed how the concepts of mutuality and reciprocity can be organized in different ways, hence producing different institutional models for welfare states, namely when it comes to structuring workfare policies (Goodin 2002). Hence, these examples help illustrate that while the norm of reciprocity, and our propensity to reciprocate might be universal (Gouldner 1960, Bowles and Gintis 2000), the way we do it might be a function of our culture, namely how society is organized, how issues of need and desert are perceived and the degree of importance that is given to institutions of the basic structure like ideas on the family or other associations.

Hence, while it seems to be true that civic friendship is influenced by cultural membership, and that what we deem acceptable of civic reciprocity might also be culturally sensitive, focusing on shared experiences might be a key mechanism for agreement to be sustained within cultural pluralism. Multiculturalism requires institutions and policies that can promote shared experiences between citizens. Having universal access to hospitals, schools, or neighbourhoods, creates opportunities for shared experiences between citizens with distinct cultural backgrounds. It is in such contexts that 'deep diversity' can flourish, hence building shared references that can overcome the limits of the cultural sensitivity embodied in how agreement under civic reciprocity can take place. Co-creating such references, allows citizens to have opportunities to get to know different cultures that are part of the political community, and their justification, in a way more conducive to generating trust and civic friendship. Moreover, institutions and policies that foster shared experiences are more than vehicles for built-in references for shared political values. They are essential moments for negotiating what civic reciprocity requires, so that people with distinct cultural backgrounds can agree on what is acceptable for governing their mutual relationship. It creates the moments for conviviality under cultural pluralism to take place, and tandem norm-building to occur, hence limiting the possibilities for our ethos of reciprocity to be informed only by our comprehensive doctrines.

(5) Conclusion

This article aims to contribute to existing literature on how the principle of civic reciprocity is justified through appeals to the idea of civic friendship. To do so, I propose a broader conception of the principle of reciprocity, by defining it as a relational concept, that is both shaped by

---

them as "autonomous logics of exchange within the framework of welfare state resource transfers". (Adloff and Mau 2006, p. 114).

relationships among citizens, and influences how such relationships can change across time. I believe this is not only a broader account of civic reciprocity, but also potentially one that can justify the demanding functions attributed to the criterion of reciprocity in generating political agreement under reasonable pluralism. Without it, the principle of reciprocity is deemed to be too demanding to account for political agreement in a context of democratic pluralism, and instead we should appeal to the familiar ideas of justice as mutual advantage or what Allen Buchanan called 'justice as self-interested reciprocity' (Buchanan 1990).

However, civic reciprocity as defined demands that citizens share a relationship of civic friendship. Hence, I propose a thick definition of civic friendship, characterized by mutual recognition and concern for others, but also concerns with how citizens trust each other. The latter is the result of how citizens behave to one another daily, but it is also dependent on the idea of shared experiences across time. If civic reciprocity demands this robust notion of civic friendship, then we need to contend that both can be influenced by citizens' cultural membership. How citizens commit to reciprocity, what political values they agree to, and how they choose to cooperate, are all influenced by culture, hence posing a challenge for multiculturalism. Hence, I close by arguing in favour of institutions and policies that can promote and encourage spaces and moments for citizens to have shared experiences.

Finally, the argument presented for civic reciprocity and civic friendship certainly deems the project for cultural pluralism more challenging: ensuring citizens have shared experiences under open borders and increasingly culturally diverse societies can be harder to achieve. However, I believe this does not render the project of political agreement under cultural pluralism impossible. Rather, it forces us to focus on what sort of policies need to be put in place to promote the flourishing of civic friendship that sustains civic reciprocity, namely inclusive schools, public services, and neighbourhoods. Hence, grounding political consensus on claims of civic reciprocity and civic friendship should come hand in hand with claims for policies that can promote shared living experiences, and joint knowledge of one another, as those that can better nurture the robust account of civic friendship, that is demanded by the principle of civic reciprocity.

References

Adloff, Frank, and Steffen Mau. 2006. “Giving Social Ties, Reciprocity in Modern Society.” European Journal of Sociology 47 (1): 93-123.

Allen, Danielle S. 2004. Talking to Strangers. Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Becker, Lawrence C. 1986. Reciprocity. Routledge.

Beltran, Arlette, Alberto Chong, and Mariano Montoya. 2021. “Socio-economic level, neighborhood segregation and determinants of reciprocity: evidence using representative artefactual data from Latin American cities.” Journal of Economic Policy Reform 1-16.

Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. 2000. “Reciprocity, Self-Interest, and the Welfare State.” Nordic Journal of Political Economy 26: 33-53.

Buchanan, Allen. 1990. “Justice ad Reciprocity versus Subject-centered Justice.” Philosophy & Public Affairs 227-252.

Godbout, Jacques T. G, and Alain Caillé. 1998. The World of the Gift. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Godelier, Maurice. 1999. The enigma of the Gift. Polity Press.

Goodin, Robert E. 2002. “Structures of Mutual obligation.” Jnl Soc. Pol. 31 (4): 579–596.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1960. “The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement.” American Sociological Review 161-178.

Kymlicka, Will. 1996. Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leland, RJ, and Han van Wietmarschen. 2017. “Political Liberalism and Political Community.” Journal of Moral Philosophy 14: 142-167.

Lister, Andrew. 2011. “Justice as Fairness and Reciprocity.” Analyse & Kritik 91-112.

Mauss, Marcel. 1990. The Gift. The form and reason for exchange. London: Routledge Classics.

Mittiga, Ross. A. 2017. “Pluralist Partially Comprehensive Doctrines, Moral Motivation and the Problem of Stability.” Res Publica 23: 409-429.

Ostrom, Elinor, and James Walker. 2003. Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Research. Russell Sage Foundation.

Rawls, John. 2001. Justice as Fairness. A restatement. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

—. 2005. Political Liberalism. New York: Columbia University Press.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. Stone Age Economics. New York: Routledge.

Sangiovanni, Andrea. 2007. “Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State.” Philosophy & Public Affairs (Wiley) 35: 3-39.

Schwarzenbach, Sibyl. 2009. On Civic Friendship. Including Women in the State. New York Chichester: Columbia University Press.

Simon , Gãchter, and Herrmann Benedikt . 2009. “Reciprocity, culture and human cooperation: previous insights and a new cross-cultural experiment.” Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B (364): 791–806.

White, Stuart. 2003. The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wietmarschen, Han van. 2021. “Political Liberalism and Respect.” The Journal of Political Philosophy 29 (3): 353–374.

Article IV: Promoting the Value of Autonomous Reciprocity: Unconditional Basic Income as a Pre-distributive Policy

Status: Under Review at *RES PUBLICA*

Abstract:

This article advances a defence of the value of autonomous reciprocity. It starts by arguing that we have obligations of economic reciprocity both to the larger political community where we belong, but also to social networks that include friends and relatives. It further claims, that for the least-advantaged members in society, such obligations are experienced in a burdensome way. This 'double burden of reciprocity' is deemed unfair for three reasons: the uneven allocation of resources that determines the limited capacity of the poor to reciprocate is an outcome that should be considered arbitrary (claim one); the worst-off have limited opportunities to exit these obligations in such a way that they might be prey to domination (claim two) and finally, the mechanisms that enforce these obligations are often breeders of stigma and shame, in such a way that recognition is denied to the worst-off, further contributing to their domination, but also jeopardizing their equal standing in society (claim three).

In the final section, it will be argued that mitigating the unfair burden of reciprocity should be part of a larger project of promoting the value of autonomous reciprocity. Doing so, amounts to encouraging reciprocation to take place in such a way where debts are not instrumental for domination or stigmatization of those cooperating. The final section will also discuss UBI as a pre-distributive mechanism that can be well-qualified as one of the policies whose outcomes can be conducive to ensuring everyone has the capacity throughout their lives to engage in cooperation according to the value of autonomous reciprocity.

Key words: Unconditional Basic Income; Reciprocity; Pre-distribution; Freedom from Domination; Recognition.

1. Introduction

Simon Birnbaum finishes his discussion of UBI as a pre-distributive mechanism in the following disheartening way:

> "What about social cohesion, political community, and the shared identities needed for sustainable bonds of justice and solidarity to be established and maintained across groups over time? (...) The argument for Basic Income as pre-distribution remains silent about the preconditions for establishing and sustaining the social forms and agents (individual and collective) that might sustainably empower the disadvantaged in such a way that their interests can be successfully advanced and protected (Gourevitch 2016)."
>
> (S. Birnbaum 2019)

Birnbaum argues that an Unconditional Basic Income (hereinafter UBI or basic income) that equalizes unfairly distributed rents from both natural resources, and of socio-economic and technological progress, pays too much attention to our individual property right, risking alienating the concerns for cooperative justice. Such is a concern that resonates with relational egalitarians. For them, UBI is promising insofar it ensures a distribution mechanism that is less stigmatizing (Calnitsky 2016) and hence less detrimental to self-respect and equal standing in society (McKinnon 2003). Neo-republicans on the other hand, offer a different relational defence of UBI, where its potential is in how it might increase the possibilities for 'exit' in the workplace, but also in other contexts, namely in relationships within families (Pettit 2007, Lovett 2010, Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017), and between recipients of welfare and the state (Eleveld 2020, White 2020). As Birnbaum points out, these relational arguments are distinct from the pre-distributive ones, who focus on assets and their ownership to justify implementing a UBI. In what follows, I intend to bridge the gap between these two perspectives. A UBI can be construed as a mechanism that pre-distributes not only assets that should be considered as jointly owned, but also opportunities to stand on a par with others. I will argue that doing so amounts to promoting the value of autonomous reciprocity: the possibility to remain in voluntary interdependence with those we are cooperating. Autonomous reciprocity will be argued as a value, rather than a constraint (Schmidtz 2005) that demands that everyone has a fair share of resources. Doing so, amounts to pre-distributing the capacity to reciprocate, ensuring that everyone is granted the same opportunity to be a *homo reciprocans.* Most importantly, evenly distributing this capacity, contributes to enhancing self-respect and avoid instances of domination, which often take place when such a capacity is exhausted or limited, particularly for the worst-off in society.

I will start by discussing obligations of economic reciprocity. I take these to include the obligations of able-bodied people to contribute productively to the social product (White 2003) but also, obligations that come from participating as economic actors in relationships among families, friends, and neighbours (Zelizer 2007). While such a distinction might collapse in real life (*is caring for one's neighbour or family member not part of our contribution to the social product?*) I will include it insofar as it helps illustrate instances of economic interaction, but also because we tend to disregard the role that economic transactions have in family life, a point well credited to Viviane Zelizer's work (2007). I will argue these obligations are burdensome to the worst-off in society, given their limited income, capital, or time.

Secondly, I will argue that such a burden is unfair on three grounds: it is mostly felt by the worst-off because they are the ones who are limited in their capacity to reciprocate. I will further claim that such a limitation is a result of arbitrary inequalities (i.e., the luck egalitarian argument). Claim two argues that the worst off are also limited in their possibilities to exit these obligations or doing so comes at significant cost. While this can be positively perceived by individuals (i.e., *I am doing it for my family; I am willing to sacrifice)*, it might be argued that these are conditions that can lead to domination, and hence reduce people's freedom, in a republican sense (Pettit 2007, Lovett 2010). Finally, claim three is that such a limitation is damaging for people's self-respect, since it jeopardizes people's ability to participate in community life on equal standing with others. Hence, it creates instances of misrecognition for the worst-off.

Finally, I will argue that mitigating the unfair burden of reciprocity should be part of a larger project of promoting the value of autonomous reciprocity. Doing so, amounts to encouraging reciprocation to take place in such a way where debts are not instrumental for domination or stigmatization of those cooperating. Instead, voluntary interdependence is too be achieved. I will close by arguing that a UBI as a pre-distributive mechanism can be well-qualified as one of the policies whose outcomes can be conducive to ensuring everyone has the capacity throughout their lives to engage in cooperation according to the value of autonomous reciprocity.

2. Obligations of Economic Reciprocity

Reciprocity has been described as a universal norm that takes on several forms (Mauss 2002, Sahlins 1972, Gouldner 1960, Bowles, Boyd, Fehr, & Gintis 1997). It has also been considered a virtue to be catered to (Becker 1986), a requirement for just transfers and fair cooperation in society (Rawls 2005), or a norm that is embodied in how welfare states have been structured (Goodin 2002, Mau 2004, Bowles & Gintis 2000). While this is in no way an exhaustive survey on reciprocity, it serves the purpose of highlighting some of its main readings. In its simplest form, we can define reciprocity as the mechanism that impels us to return a gift received. But of course, such a definition is quite vague. For one, it says nothing about what might count as a "return": is vindictive behaviour, such as when one returns 'injuries' considered an appropriate return for reciprocity? What about appropriation?[50] What should be included in the category of what is given and returned – time, money, objects, symbols? And a non-proportional return - would it still be considered an act of reciprocation? These examples highlight how describing reciprocity often means acknowledging different ways of reciprocating or engage in a discussion on what type of reciprocity might be just.

One of the most important readings of reciprocity has been his connection with fair cooperation. In contractualism, such as in John Rawls' work, the terms of cooperation that we should accept, are the ones that can also be justified and accepted by other people. Reciprocity is not self-interested nor egotistic, rather, it specifies a "political relation in a democratic regime as one of civic friendship' (Rawls 2005, p. 447) where the terms reasonable and rational people offer to others, are those they deem fair. It's an instance of 'civic reciprocity'.

Another important reading of reciprocity, often discussed within distributive justice, is the idea of 'economic reciprocity': "where the institutions that govern economic life are sufficiently fair in terms of the opportunities they afford for productive contribution, and the awards they apportion to it, those citizens who claim the high share of the social product available to them under these institutions have an obligation to make a decent productive contribution, proportionate to their abilities, to the community in return." (White 2003, p. 50). For White, as for Rawls before him

---

[50] Alvin Gouldner, the sociologist who argued that reciprocity should be seen as a universal norm, discussed several instances of reciprocity, namely 'homeomorphic reciprocity' as "exchanges where equivalence (...) should be concretely alike, or identical in form, either with respect to the things exchanged or to the circumstances under which they are exchanged". He argued that retaliation or vengeance as instances of 'negative reciprocity' constitute an example of 'homeomorphic reciprocity' where "the emphasis is placed not on the return of benefits but on the return of injuries". (Gouldner 1960, p.171). Marshal Sahlins has also pointed out that 'negative reciprocity' is also common and should be defined as the "the unsociable extreme" and "the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity, the several forms of appropriation" (Sahlins 1972, p. 421).

(2001), economic reciprocity is a requirement for a just society: doing our fair share is a requirement to be entitled the fruits of social cooperation. Given that the debate on UBI mostly focuses on economic reciprocity, for the remaining on this paper I will focus on economic reciprocity.

Economic reciprocity is about ‘productive contribution’, which might include a broad range of activities, such as paid employment, but also forms of unpaid care work and volunteering. A limited reading will mostly restrict it to participating in the labour market. Such a debate has been particularly relevant when discussing whether unconditional cash is superior to conditional mechanisms, such as a participatory income (Atkinson 1996) or a civic minimum (White 2003). Regardless of the scope, in both accounts ‘economic reciprocity’ generates a duty for all able-bodied people to contribute productively to the social product. Hence, obligations of economic reciprocity have mostly been discussed in the context of distributive justice and are therefore to a significant extent restricted to the realm of the so-called ‘public sphere’[51]. But duties of ‘economic reciprocity’ are in fact pervasive across our lives: as Zelizer has pointed out, individuals actively engage in economic activities in their interpersonal relationships namely through the ‘consumption, production, distribution and asset transfer’ within families. What Zelizer deems as ‘household pooling’, is an important component of any relationship, contributing to the view that separating spheres –the intimate and the non-intimate– obscures how people within families also serve as economic agents (Zelizer 2007). Hence, in what follows, economic reciprocity will also include obligations people have within their families, alongside obligations to other citizens, outside of their families.

---

[51] Rawls discussed how the principles of justice should or should not be applied to the family. He argued that while the principles of justice are to apply directly to the basic structure of society, as the “arrangement of society’s main institutions into a unified system of social cooperation overtime” (Rawls 2001, p.163). Moreover, such principles “are not to apply directly to the internal life of the many associations within it, the family among them” (Rawls 2001, p. 163). As such, feminists such as Susan Moller Okin have criticized Rawls’ theory of justice, as not being attentive to inequalities within the family, namely gender inequality. While not disputing this, when discussing whether obligations of economic reciprocity are considering obligations within the family, it is worth point out the following: (1) Rawls concedes that while the principles of justice should not govern the internal life of the family, they still “put essential restrictions on the family and all other associations” (Rawls p.166). These restrictions largely follow from the first principle of justice: “The adult members of families and other associations are equal citizens first: that is their basic position. No institution or association in which they are involved can violate their rights as citizens. Hence, Rawls claims such constraints determine that women should enjoy the same basic liberties and fair equality of opportunities as their husbands, as such, families should not be allowed to restraint such principles. Moreover, Rawls discusses how women have disproportionately taken care of children in such a way that it constitutes a burden that not only makes them vulnerable (dependent from their husbands) but also impacts children’s “capacity to acquire the political virtues required of future citizens” (Rawls 2001, p. 166). As such, the principles of justice can be invoked to reform such a distribution of reproductive labour; (2) Rawls also claims that fulfilling the principles of justice also means that “those with lesser opportunity can accept more easily the constraints the family and other social conditions impose” (Rawls 2001, p.163). Hence, it is enough to say that while the principles of justice do not apply to the internal life of the family, they might constraint them, in such a way that might impact existing obligations of economic reciprocity within families (i.e., obligation of care). However, it does not follow that accounts on economic reciprocity as influencing distributive justice consider obligations of economic reciprocity within the family. In fact, the idea of fair terms of cooperation, governed by the mutually accepted principles of justice, entails an idea of productive cooperation (i.e., economic reciprocity). However, as argued, such principles do not govern the internal life of families, hence fulfilling obligations of economic reciprocity might not be considered as fulfilling a threshold of contribution that is accepted as part of a citizens’ productive contribution (as fulfilling their fair share). Although Rawls contends that in some cases such obligations should be governed by the principles of justice (i.e., as in the case of reproductive work, which has disproportionally fallen on the hands of women) we might consider other cases where it does not have to be the case (i.e., caring for one’s uncle, borrowing money to one’s children).

The obligations of economic reciprocity discussed above are enforced through several mechanisms. To ensure contribution to social product, mechanisms as social norms, that embody the enhanced value of work in society, or education are key. But when one is unable or unwilling to work, workfare is the mechanism to enforce compliance with such obligations. I take workfare to include 'any welfare programme in which benefit eligibility is conditional on work-related activity, whether this be job search, education, training, or actual work" (White 2004). As such, workfare incorporates a norm of economic reciprocity in its programs, or what Robert E. Goodin mentions as of mutual obligation (Goodin 2002). In its contemporary form, with the United Kingdom as a crucial example, the norm of economic reciprocity is pre-emptively required and contractually enforced: to receive the benefits, people need to agree to follow the rules. Being unable or unwilling to do so is punished with reduced benefits or withdraw of them altogether[52]. And while in some welfare states some goods are deemed unconditional – education or health – welfare to work arrangements are particularly prevalent when it comes to cash grants such as minimum income schemes. Hence, minimum income schemes that incorporate workfare rules (i.e., conditioned) are the biggest counter policies to the idea of unconditional income.

Besides the obligation to contribute productively to the social product, people are also asked to participate in their social networks. Examples include contributing to the household economy by doing unpaid labour, sending remittances to family abroad, or pooling resources within friends or neighbours. I would argue these can often be explained as demands that fit the obligations of economic reciprocity. Consider the three examples above: if a neighbour offers to be a regular care giver to your child, but you consistently fail to help her out with home chores when she asks for your help, she might feel less inclined to continue to help you as an unpaid worker; or if a daughter refuses to send remittances to help pay her mother's care back in her home country, she might feel her family will judge her, or even refuse to help her in the future. Finally, if a neighbour borrows a car from a friend, but then refuses to do the same when the time comes, this might strain their relationship. These mutual demands of economic reciprocity from close neighbours, friends, or their relatives, constitute an important mechanism that helps explain the role ‘social networks’ (Matthews and Besemer 2014) play as safety nets, particularly in lower income contexts. And the reasons why relying on social networks is more common for the least-advantaged members in society, is because their economic independence is more difficult to achieve, while the services provided for the state are often either non-existent or deficient. Of course social networks are also important for the most advantaged members in society: discussions on transmissions of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) or inheritance transfers (Halliday 2018) showcase how important these networks can be in sustaining intergenerational wealth within certain families and groups. However, it seems that for lower income people, social networks act as robust safety nets, as opposed to platforms to sustaining privilege or moving up in the wealth ladder (Matthews and Besemer 2014), and as such constitute important mechanisms for livelihood.

---

[52] Goodin points out that this reading of workfare (or work-for-the-dole policies) is only among several, where mutual obligation is construed differently across them. He argues that workfare style policies (where money is conditioned on work-related activities) are not necessarily the most desirable policy to enforce a norm of mutual obligation, since in cases where there are "In such circumstances of asymmetric resources, to insist upon strict and immediate reciprocity has the effect of reinforcing relations of social subordination." (Goodin 2002, p. 592). Models such as 'Contributory social insurance', for example, are deemed as more favourable models to express ideas of 'fair reciprocity'. (Goodin 2002, p. 590)

2.1 The burden(s) of economic reciprocity

We have established economic reciprocity as the ongoing obligations people experience to contribute productively to the social product, but also to consume, produce and transfer assets within their circle of friends and family. As economic agents, they are asked to participate in forms of economic pooling and are also offered benefits from that collective pooling. Such demands do not constitute a burden per se. Social networks are mechanisms that tighten interpersonal relationships and ensure that communities thrive. Contributing to the social product with a fair share, constitutes a mechanism to promote justice in distribution, in equality of circumstances, as opposed to generating free riding or exploitation. However, for the least advantaged members in society, experiencing both demands at the same time might be considered burdensome. While everyone might experience them in tandem, most often the poor are the ones who rely on both mechanisms as safety-nets. Moreover, they most likely experience a limited capacity to be able to meet their obligations of economic reciprocity, both in terms of an obligation to contribute productively (i.e., work) but also to participate in their existing safety nets. And both are interrelated: working less, for a lower salary, or for longer hours will jeopardize the capacity to give more to their family and friends. Hence, the least-well off members in society are disadvantaged in several ways, which are detrimental to their capacity to reciprocate:

a) They do not have the skills set to be hired in the market or their skillset is not valued in the market in a significant way, hence it is more difficult to find or hold on to a job (i.e., due to technological development). Most often, the pool of available jobs is either precarious, or pays lower wages. Given their limited or undervalued skillset, bargaining for better pay or working conditions (in the absence of unionization – which is the most likely scenario nowadays given the lower unionization rates in most countries) is very difficult. Hence, they are faced with a limited pool of jobs, or one that offers bad working conditions.

b) Besides the struggles they face when it comes to the job market, they are also constrained by a limited stock of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Social and cultural capital has been argued as a fundamental mechanism to 'get ahead' and perpetuate privileged positions. Through the intergenerational transmission of social capital, the well-off members in society can dress and talk in a way that is more conducive of signalling privilege and success. They are also more likely to have networks of acquaintances that can secure them better educational and job opportunities, and to promote intergenerational inequality (Halliday 2018). The least-advantaged members in society often lack such acquaintances, and cultural and social capital. Hence, they might be less likely to know of existing opportunities, or even if they apply, they might suffer from existing biases, that favour those with a higher stock of a certain social and cultural capital.

c) Because existing mechanisms of welfare, namely workfare, are often tied-in with an obligation to work, but existing jobs are often poorly paid, or have bad working conditions. the least-advantaged members in society often experience what has been called 'the poverty trap' or unemployment trap' (Standing 2011), where any wage gain leads to loss of benefits, that often do not constitute a strong incentive to job search: while in the absence of welfare, inactivity constitutes destitution, with workfare programs, and limited availability of 'good jobs', the poor face an incentive to keep their work intensity low or close to zero, because increasing it often means losing out on benefits in a significant way, and ending up receiving less than when they were only reliant on welfare.

d) Finally, the least advantaged members in society often also experience more obligations of unpaid care. Single mothers, for example, are consistently among the poorest members in society partly because of 'the burden' of care. The same applies for unpaid care givers. While some welfare states (especially in continental Europe) might offer care leaves, or care facilities for children and the elderly, coverage might be limited. Given that outsourcing care is expensive, care givers experience a trade-off between working more, or taking care of their dependents (Lafferty, et al. 2022, Gordon, Kaestner and Korenman 2008). Obligations of care not only amount to higher costs, but also limit the amount of work people can take. Social networks can be particularly important in this respect: intimate acquaintances can provide care at a minimum cost, hence reducing the burden of such obligations. However, that often comes at a cost: relying on a social network means standing in an outstanding debt with those who are providing care. If one is asked to 'pay the debt', but finds itself limited to do so, the burden of reciprocity increases.

All in all, if we agree that the least-advantaged members in society are faced with demands of economic reciprocity from workfare, but also from their social networks, and that the four mechanisms mentioned above further contribute to a limited capacity to reciprocate, we should acknowledge this constitutes a double burden of economic reciprocity on the least-well off members in society. I will argue in what follows, that this 'double burden' of reciprocity is unfair.

2.2 The unfair burden of economic reciprocity

The demands of economic reciprocity from welfare but also social networks seem to be mostly felt by the least-advantaged members in society, given that they are the ones who usually benefit the most from welfare, and are also the one whose minimal material and social well-being is more reliant on social networks. As such, they constitute a double burden of reciprocity. But as mentioned above, such a burden does not need to constitute an unfairness. To do so, I will argue certain conditions need to be in place, namely citizens need to find themselves limited in their capacity to reciprocate, and such limitation needs to be to a certain extent the result of arbitrary circumstances (claim one). They need to face limited opportunities to exit those obligations or experience significant costs if they want to do so (claim two). And finally, the mechanisms used to ensure people comply with these obligations need to constitute instances of stigma, that lead to misrecognition (claim three). When such conditions are met, I believe people experience an unfair double burden of reciprocity, that both restricts their individual freedom in a republican sense (Pettit 1999, Lovett 2010) but also constitutes an instance of misrecognition (Fraser 1998), that undermines their sense of self-respect and equal standing in society[53]. Exiting gift-giving is both costly materially but also socially significant: it means being stigmatized, feeling ashamed or alienated.

Let's start by discussing claim one. As mentioned above, the least advantaged members in society have a limited capacity to reciprocate, since they have limited income, capital, and time to meet such obligations. While such a limitation might come from not being employed full-time, oftentimes this is a result of structural constraints, namely how the job market functions, or some unlucky circumstances (i.e., place of birth; abilities) which are arbitrary, in the sense that the individual cannot be held accountable for them. Someone cannot be held accountable for not having a skillset valued by the market; or by not having had the possibility to study, given the necessity to provide for one's family. Having or not the 'right and valued' social capital is also arbitrary: maybe our parents are well-connected, but maybe they are not; maybe we were in a poorer school and were not taught certain rules nor customs. These are few examples that showcase the familiar arguments by egalitarians such as Ronald Dworkin, G.A. Cohen or John Rawls, arguing that "people's starting positions cannot be justified by appeal to merit or desert" (Rawls 1971, p.7; 104). Insofar as the capacity to reciprocate is tied in with instances of poverty and disadvantage in the job market that are arbitrary, then this limitation constitutes an unfairness, which contributes to the argument that the least-advantaged members in society experience an unfair double burden of reciprocity.

Experiencing a limited capacity to reciprocate paired with limited possibility for exiting obligations of economic reciprocity, might constitute an instance of domination, and hence of reduced individual freedom, in a republican sense. Frank Lovett argues that domination should be understood as a "condition suffered by persons or groups whenever they are dependent on a social relationship in which some other person or group wields arbitrary powers over them. (...) The arbitrary power conception divides into three primitive building blocks: the idea of being dependent on a social relationship, the idea of having social power over another person or group, and the idea of being able to exercise such power arbitrarily" (2010, p. 17). On the one hand, Lovett's relational account of domination is the optimal fit to the discussion on demands of economic reciprocity. The sort of interaction that governs the demands of economic reciprocity discussed in this paper fits well with Lovett's definition of a social relationship as a 'strategic partnership where the actions of one (individual or group) influence the actions of the other' (Lovett 2010, p. 35). Having said that, in what way can the demands of economic reciprocity experienced by the least advantaged members of society constitute instances of domination?

---

[53] I will consider the Rawlsian view of self-respect as a primary good, defined not as an 'attitude' but rather as the 'social basis of self-respect' (Rawls 2001, p. 60). While Rawls contended that citizens having basic rights or endorsing the principles of justice, namely the difference principle implies that the social basis of self-respect entail citizens expressing a form of reciprocity (Rawls 2001, p. 60), what we can call a form of 'civic reciprocity'. However, I will argue that the capacity to reciprocate is an important basis for self-respect, given the preponderant role of the obligations of economic reciprocity not only between citizens, but also within particular social networks, composed of institutions such as the family, associations, among others.

When it comes to the obligations to contribute productively to the social product, the workfare-type mechanisms determine that those who require social assistance agree to rules that in effect demonstrate their commitment to pursuing mechanisms that will quickly turn them into 'productive members of society', thus leaving welfare. To do so, they pre-emptively require the agreement with rules, and enforce surveillance and punitive actions to noncompliers. As Anja Eleved has pointed out, such mechanisms, and assuming the individual faces difficulties in finding a job, impose high costs of exiting welfare, namely the threat of losing a big portion of their monthly income (Eleveld 2018). When it comes to the obligations one has with their family, friends, or close communities, not contributing might also come at great personal expense, as mentioned above. Recall: If a daughter refuses to send remittances to help pay her mother's care back in her home country, she might feel her family will judge her, or even refuse to help her in the future. If a father refuses to partake in his children's lives, they might not feel inclined to help him in his old age. Someone who consistently refuses to help a neighbour, when he asks for some sugar, might not be helped when she asks for some salt. Social networks are important mechanisms to sustain material well-being in lower income communities (Matthews and Besemer 2014). Consistently refusing to participate reciprocally in gift-giving equations, might not only jeopardize interpersonal relationships, but might also reduce the likelihood of being helped in the future.

As discussed, the least-well off members in society experience limited possibilities of exit, and high costs of doing so. They experience both material costs (i.e., threat of not having welfare, or benefiting from social networks) but also social and psychological ones (i.e., threat of breaking-up a valuable relationship). While such costs might be higher for some than others, it is undeniable that they constitute difficult trade-offs (often impossible ones) that increase the dependency in the relationship of the least advantaged members of society with their social networks, but also with welfare – represented by social services. Moreover, in both accounts, arbitrary power may be exercised. As Eleveld has pointed out, in 'welfare to work' interactions not only are recipients' income-dependent on both the social assistance and the welfare office, but they are also particularly "vulnerable to exercises of arbitrary power" given that they are "inclined to act in accordance with (their expectations of) the preferences of the welfare officer or work supervisor in order not to lose their benefits of last resort, as well as when they have a legal right to act differently" (Eleveld 2020, p. 265)[54]. While Lovett contents that the way of constraining such power is through "effective rules, procedures, or goals that are common knowledge to all persons or groups concerned" (2010, p. 111), Eleveld has pointed out how this definition might exclude instances of workfare as arbitrarily dominating (given that often bureaucratic rules aimed at reducing discretionary power are in place). Eleveld has pointed out that a combination of Lovett's conception of rules, and Philip Pettit's conception of 'democratic oversight'[55], might better accommodate why we can observe reports that constitute domination in welfare to work relationships (since such democratic oversight is often absent) but also help devise policies and strategies to reduce domination in these instances (Eleveld 2020).

What about domination in how social networks take place? People in the network might be heavily dependent on what is provided through the social network, especially if their income and capital is limited. It might also be their primary means of social interaction and inclusion. Hence, they might experience high degrees of dependency on the network. While not all interactions need to exhibit power imbalances, we might imagine situations where that might be the case. A wife might have less power than her husband, and experience a higher degree of dependency (i.e., lower earnings; more obligations of care). The same might be true of a mother and daughter: the power the elder exercises over her daughter might be very high. More often, such networks might exercise power in the form of groups, and not individuals. Looking again at the case of the daughter sending remittances to her mother, we might argue that her family as a group, which includes her mother, perhaps a brother and maybe cousins, exercise power over her: while she might decide not to speak to some of them, they still have each other. If all of them condemn her refusal to continuously send remittances to her mother, they might backlash by deciding together to exclude her, and break-off her relationship with the family. Such power is to a certain extent arbitrary: while the daughter might know the rules, most likely she has little capacity to avoid such an outcome to take place. Moreover, if we take Pettit's conception in tandem with Lovett's, such relations might lack democratic oversight, and often be confined to the realm of 'the family', lacking the influence of any 'contestatory culture' that could amount to civic vigilance to constraint these exercises of power (Pettit 2012, p. 174), namely those that might not fall within the scope of Rawls' principles of justice[56]. Inasmuch as this is true, social networks can in effect be dominating to someone who is dependent on them and experiences a power imbalance which is arbitrary.

---

[54] In the interaction with social services, the recipient of help has a clear imbalance of power vis a vis the social service who is judging or not whether he is deserving or eligible to be helped. While their decision determines whether someone will be entitled to assistance, the recipient has a limited power: maybe he can ask a reassessment, in case he is denied help, maybe file a complaint, or report instances of misconduct, in case they happen. But given the preponderant role of bureaucracy, and the tight mechanisms around workfare, often, their power is quite limited vis a vis the one held by social services. There is also a claim to make on why such power is arbitrary. Lovett defines social power as arbitrary if its exercise "is not externally constrained by effective rules, procedures, or goals that are common knowledge to all persons or groups concerned" (Lovett 2010, p. 111). In many ways, recipients of welfare have some degree of knowledge of the rules and procedures to apply for welfare, and to continue benefiting from such assistance. However, reports have highlight the arbitrariness of such procedures: namely how opaque bureaucratic requirements are, for example, or the degree of discretionary power that social services have which might determine that two individuals experience a different outcome, despite having similar eligibility criteria (Eleveld 2018). Moreover, mechanisms to constraint such practices (i.e., filling complains) are often ineffective, and not timely, hence perpetuating them across time. Inasmuch this is true, we might argue that social services experience more power than recipients of welfare, and that such power is arbitrary.

[55] Philip Pettit has advanced a conception of 'freedom from domination' whose mitigation partly depends on the notion of 'democratic insight' to constraint 'uncontrolled interference of power' defined as 'interference that is not subject to rules' (2012, p. 58). For Eleveld this is an attempt by the philosopher to distinguish his conception from Lovett's idea of arbitrary power, in order to better accommodate his proposal of democratic oversight to all the instances where uncontrolled interference leads to a lack of control by individuals (2020, p. 274). In a way, it is a mechanism to better fit the theory to empirical cases where domination is observed, namely as Eleveld points out, welfare to work relations.

Some final comments on claim two: the conclusion on the potential for domination does not lend well to an oversimplistic account where all social relations governed by economic reciprocity are to be considered as dominating. It is not a zero-sum game. Firstly, because there are degrees and scales of dependency, power, and arbitrariness, as Lovett rightly points out (2010). While some daughters might experience domination when sending remittances abroad, others might not experience it to the same degree or at all. The point I am trying to make is humbler: I aim to show that while not all social interactions where economic reciprocity is governing the exchange need to be dominating, the least advantaged members in society are more often than others prey to such an outcome, given their limited capacity to reciprocate, the high level of dependency vis a vis such relationships and the arbitrary social power that often is exhibited in such interactions.

Finally, it is worth considering claim three: *the recognition or relational egalitarian claim.* In workfare, the mechanisms of surveillance by social services require that recipients periodically show that they are deserving of the aid, and incapable of securing their material well-being (Eleveld 2020, Barreiros 2017). As such, applicants and recipients from welfare can suffer from stigma – what Moffit defined as "a feeling of lack of self-respect from participation in welfare due to an inability to support oneself'" (Moffitt 1983). Stigma contributes to the experience of lower self-esteem and sense of self-respect, further challenging people's capacity to return to the job market. In fact, Rawls considered absence of stigma, alongside solidarity, as one of the "social bases of self-respect" – self-respect being one of the most important primary goods to be shared among citizens (Rawls 2001, p. 60). As such, stigmatizing workfare mechanisms contribute to diminished self-esteem, hindering self-respect and jeopardizing the capacity to pursue different life projects beyond welfare. Workfare mechanisms are also typically targeted (i.e., below a certain income; without occupation, among others). Through their enforcement and monitor mechanisms, they signal those who are dependent on welfare as opposed to 'others' (Calnitsky 2016). They create a 'subpopulation group' – poor people on welfare – who are judged according to how different they are from everyone else who supposedly 'contributes productively to society'. Doing so is also deemed stigmatizing to the poor. While obligations of economic reciprocity from social networks do not necessarily have built in formal mechanisms who monitor compliance, and punish noncompliance, the psychological cost of not participating in the network might be quite high. As the daughter case illustrates, not being able to help one's mother in her old age might be very detrimental to one's sense of self-esteem and self-respect – 'I don't have the capacity to fulfil my duty as a daughter, to payback my debt to my mother, to express how much I care for her'*.* Often those who persistently do not contribute might feel the social pressure of their relatives or close communities to participate in gift-giving, and refusing to do so might lead to scorn, criticism or even isolation. Such threats and punishments might be as challenging or even worse than the ones enforced by welfare, leading to stigma and even the breakdown of social relations with friends and families. As such, they also create strong psychological barriers to exiting the demands of reciprocity from social networks. Finally, not being able to reciprocate might also jeopardize the 'recognition bases of self-respect' (McKinnon 2003). If being an active reciprocator (or gift-giver) within one's social network is part of being recognized by others in the social network, being constrained in that capacity will impact negatively the recognitional bases of self-respect.

---

[56] See footnote 2 (here in this thesis, footnote 50) with an expanded discussion of how the Rawlsian principles of justice might apply within the family. There might be instances where basic liberties and fair equality of opportunities are not being threatened, and even so a person might feel dominated to a certain degree by the obligations of economic reciprocity within her family. Let's consider the ways in which parents' might use the idea of care as an obligation to insist on their children taking care of them; or how inheritance can be used by parents to exert pressure and influence over their children's life paths. While the fulfilment of difference principle might mitigate the possible impact of such pressures, by providing more expanded options for exit (i.e., public provision of care services, or resources to outsource care) I would argue that it is not definitive that such mechanisms could be enough to assume without a doubt that there is not a possibility of domination in both instances.

What both accounts aim to show, is that obligations of economic reciprocity are frequently enforced in such a way that creates stigmatization. People are labelled and signalled as the ones who ‘do not contribute’, ‘are not useful’, ‘are lazy’ or ‘self-interested’. While different, workfare mechanisms and the social pressure from networks resort to strategies that share the same logic, that of recognition: those who refuse to reciprocate according to the rules are denied recognition as equals. Using Nancy Fraser’s words: in both instances we find evidence of refusal to ensure ‘parity of participation’ as a requirement of justice that deems that ‘social arrangements permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers’ (Fraser 1998, p. 5). Denial of parity in participation is also important because of the impact it has in claim two about experiencing domination. In fact, stigmatization is not only a mechanism that is detrimental to self-respect and recognition. It also influences power. By feeling stigmatized (through workfare) or ashamed (social norms), the power the others exercise over me grows. Hence, most likely my experience of domination will increase, further damaging my possibility to act as a free agent (Pettit 2007).

All in all, this section aims to show that the double obligations of economic reciprocity experienced by the worst-off members in society constitute a burden on the least-advantaged members in society, given their limited capacity to reciprocate. Such a burden is unfair, because the uneven allocation of resources that determines the limited capacity of the poor to reciprocate is an outcome that should be considered arbitrary (claim one); the worst-off have limited opportunities to exit these obligations in such a way that they might be prey to domination (claim two) and finally, the mechanisms that enforce these obligations are often breeders of stigma and shame, in such a way that recognition is denied to the worst-off, further contributing to their domination, but also jeopardizing their equal standing in society (claim three).

Before moving on to a possible solution to the unfair double burden of reciprocity, some final notes are warranted. Firstly, it is important to highlight how the account of economic reciprocity discussed is different from ‘exchange’, ‘direct reciprocity’ or ‘balanced reciprocity’. I do not aim to say that reciprocity demands that every gift is repaid immediately in a proportionate manner. Someone might not send remittances to her mother for a portion of the year, and not feel scorned by her family. Rather, I meant to argue that persistent noncompliance with the demands of economic reciprocity might increase the likelihood of punishment, or that the threat of such punishment might be sufficient for some outcomes described above to take place. Secondly, I am not arguing that exiting obligations of economic reciprocity is the best alternative to mitigate the impacts of the double burden of reciprocity. What I aim to show is that this burden is unfairly targeted at the least-well off members in society, because of their limited capacity to reciprocate, and the non-existing opportunities to exit. An unfair distribution of resources amounts to reducing the capacity of the poor to reciprocate. Hence, subjecting the poor to the demands of economic reciprocity, without a fairer distribution of resources and possibilities to exit such obligations, constitutes an unfair burden.

3. Moving Towards Autonomous Reciprocity: Pre-Distributing the Capacity to Reciprocate through a UBI

In the following and final section, I aim to argue for an Unconditional Basic Income as the mechanism to help mitigate the unfair double burden of economic reciprocity experienced by the worst-off members in society. To do so, I will argue that a UBI might be useful for a larger project of promoting 'autonomous reciprocity'. I will start by conceptualizing 'autonomous reciprocity', by framing it as a value that we should be catering to. Secondly, I will argue that a UBI contributes to mitigating claim one, two and three, and will establish in what way doing so leads to 'autonomous reciprocity'. Finally, I will close by stating that the aim of autonomous reciprocation is a pre-distributive one, hence rendering a UBI as an example of a pre-distributive policy.

Autonomous reciprocity should be read as the possibility to participate in reciprocal gift giving in a way that does not risk one's domination, and in equal standing with other partners in interaction. David Schmidtz argues reciprocity should not be a constraint defining 'who deserves what', but rather a certain value we should promote (Schmidtz 2005). In what follows, I will assume this perspective, and argue that given the burden of economic reciprocity, and how it is disproportionately targeting the least-advantaged members in society, we should be looking at catering 'autonomous reciprocity'. To define what autonomous reciprocity is, it is better to start by looking at what it is not.

Firstly, I take reciprocity not to be a constraint. As Schmidt points out, this amounts to looking at reciprocity as something we wish other people to have, and to behave in such a way as to abide by it: "Reciprocity as a value, then, grounds duties beyond the duty to reciprocate." (2005, p. 462). As such, "we value reciprocation per se, but what we promote is the willingness and ability to reciprocate, because at some point free will has to take over." (2005, p. 462). Instead of looking at reciprocity as the constraint that demands us to return what we receive, it is the capacity to do so that we aim to instil in ourselves and our fellow citizens. As such, reciprocity as a value can coexist with non-reciprocation.

Autonomous reciprocity is not necessarily aiming at equalizing resources among those cooperating. Schmidtz calls this ‘Symmetrical reciprocity’ (2005, 461), Marshall Sahlins calls it ‘balanced reciprocity’ (1972) and broadly speaking, we could call this a form of ‘exchange’. While ‘autonomous reciprocity’ can culminate in equalized resources (part A, B and C exchanging end up with the same amount of goods), that does not have to be the case. Hence, autonomous reciprocity is also not about generating independence from cooperation. It follows, that this conception of reciprocity is not necessarily a way to zero-out outstanding debts. We do not observe autonomous reciprocity only when debts are cancelled at the end of an exchange.

Finally, it is also not about timing nor about the number of people cooperating. Autonomous reciprocity does not demand timely returns, nor that exchange takes place in a direct manner. Passing on debts (Schmidtz calls ‘transitive reciprocity’, Sahlins calls ‘generalized reciprocity’) can be accommodated under this definition. Cooperation can be indirect, where returns might be given to a third or fourth partner in interaction.

This conception discusses reciprocity as a value that is not defined by the type or nature of the exchange, but rather by the sort of relationship between those cooperating, and in what way are they positioned regarding others. We are aiming at voluntary interdependence, where debts cannot constitute mechanisms to exercise domination, nor stigmatize those cooperating. As pointed out before, the unfairness of the double burden of economic reciprocity imposed on the poor, is related to how debts are instrumentalized in such a way that the inability to pay, because of reasons that are not solely attributed to the ‘debtor’, can constitute domination, but also jeopardize their equal standing. As such, they depict instances where reciprocity is seen as a constraint, and where the value of autonomous reciprocity is further from being promoted.

In what follows, I will argue for UBI as a mechanism that can help pre-distribute the capacity to reciprocate in an autonomous manner. The chief mechanism to do so, is by mitigating the unfairness of the double burden of economic reciprocity. I define unconditional basic income as a cash grant, given to every individual in a political community, which means there is no targeting, hence no profiling of those who are or who are not eligible to receive it, and no strings attached, which means recipients do not need to comply with any requirements nor assume any formal commitment to be eligible. I take UBI to be closer to the living wage level (which is a demanding level), although set at a lower amount (i.e., closer to the poverty line) might also satisfy the claims I am putting forward bellow, even if to a lesser degree.

To start off let's look at the concept of pre-distribution. Pre-distribution has been hailed by liberal egalitarians like Alan Thomas, Jacob S. Hacker or Martin O'Neill as a promising mechanism to ensure the values of equality. One of Hacker's definitions, for example, argues that pre-distribution can be seen as "market reforms that encourage a more equal distribution of economic power and rewards even before government collects taxes or pays out benefits" (Hacker 2011, p. 35). Gavin Kerr, on the other hand, defines pre-distribution as a concept that draws attention to "policies that aim to generate a fair distribution of opportunities and benefits from the operation of the free market system, prior to any redistribution of these benefits through tax-and-transfer policies." (Kerr 2016, p. 68). Often, pre-distributive policies have been argued as more promising in how they might generate egalitarian outcomes, but also potentially because these will be easier to implement in the context of modern market economies (Thomas 2017, p. 163). Even though the topic has been receiving momentum in recent years, there is still contentious debates on how to best define pre-distribution. Martin O'Neill surveyed existing definitions on the concept, argued that the latter suffer from conceptual problems, which make the distinction between pre-distribution and redistribution collapse analytically[57]. Instead, he offers an account of pre-distribution that is pluralistic, in that it does not exclude certain policies because of their nature, but rather focuses on which aims these policies are trying to achieve:

> "insofar as there is an important distinction here, it has to be with regard to the aims and effects of policy, rather than in terms of the nature of the policy tools or mechanisms that are used. The content of these policy aims [comes from] its potential twin roles in both reducing objectionable inequalities of power within market relationships and giving

---

[57] Martin O'Neill discusses Hacker's ongoing definition of pre-distribution, taking it as a representation of common definitions of the concept. O'Neill argues they often rely on a temporal distinction (pre- vs post-tax income) or rely on discussing policies focusing on shaping outcomes before any 'governmental' intervention. O'Neill dismisses both claims as not being able to hold in real-life settings, of property and tax systems. Moreover, the British philosopher claims any relevant definition of pre-distribution should reclaim the concept, and frame it under an egalitarian project. As both O'Neill and Margaret Sommers point out, pre-distributive policies have been used for non-egalitarian purposes, in Margaret Thatcher's and Reagan's government (O'Neill 2020), but also in more recent neoliberal contexts (Somers 2021). Hence, O'Neill claims a pre-distribution concept should not be strictly formal, but rather a more substantive idea "that involves the pursuit of broadly progressive or egalitarian goals". Finally, in an equally important survey of the uses of the term, he claims a substantive conception of pre-distribution should not be grounded on a distinction between what policies can be seen as pre-distributive – such as 'market sharping mechanisms' – and those who could be seen as re-distributive as involving taxation and spending - such as cash transfers. He argues such a distinction is not robust, given that both sort of policies can comprehend both re-distributive and pre-distributive mechanisms (O'Neill 2020).

> individuals a secure standing outside of the market transactions in which they may otherwise be potentially vulnerable to a troubling degree." (O'Neill 2020, p. 85).

Using O'Neill's definition of pre-distribution excludes readings of UBI as a pre-distributive mechanism, that focus on how UBI is financed. Simon Birnbaum, for example, argued that a UBI can be seen as a pre-distributive mechanism, if it is financed through unearned resources[58]. However, I take O'Neill's definition to be a robust account of pre-distribution, less subject to strong objections (which could be mounted against a view of UBI as pre-distributive only on the basis of its funding sources) and better aligned with egalitarian objectives. Hence, it is worth considering whether according to this definition, a cash transfer such as a UBI can be seen as a pre-distributive mechanism, something O'Neill himself granted as possible (O'Neill 2020).

UBI is first a cash grant, so it works on distributing income to everyone, in an unconditional manner. As such, receiving a UBI increases the possibilities for reciprocation: recipients have more income to buy things for their families and relatives. They might have more possibilities to share with their neighbours. They also might reduce the number of hours they work, hence increasing their time to participate in activities where they are 'giving back' to family, friends, or community (i.e., unpaid caregiving, volunteering activities). This is in fact corroborated by existing experiments with unconditional cash transfers[59]. Extra income is often used to contribute to household economy – buying food staples, and household items – but also to invest in education or health (Banerjee,Niehaus, & Suri 2019; Davala 2019; Forget 2011; Haarmann & Haarmann 2007; Merrill, Neves and Laín 2022; Widerquist 2018). Moreover, most people continue working the same amount as before (Banerjee, Niehaus and Suri 2019; Calnitsky and Latner 2017). It is arguable that most experiments are still targeted in some way to low-income groups. Hence, one could say it is not surprising that they contribute to household economy. But given how I showed that obligations of economic reciprocity are often unfairly burdensome to the worst-off, evidence showcasing their choices to use the extra money to contribute to their social networks, while continue to work the same amount, highlights the possibility of UBI reducing that burden. Giving the worst-off unconditional cash income, allows them to fulfil obligations of economic reciprocity with less stress, anxiety and without having to compromise on their emotional and materially well-being.

---

[58] As unearned resources, their distribution in an equal manner through a UBI, amounts to a form of pre-distribution (instead of redistribution). Birnbaum further discusses how one can extend the perspective of which assets might legitimately be claimed as needing to be pre-distributive, for justice reasons. The talents we are endowed, the wealth we inherit are mostly a result of our circumstances at birth, which can be construed as morally arbitrary, and can therefore also be included as unearned resource (Birnbaum 2019).

[59] I include in the umbrella of 'experiments with unconditional cash' existing studies that focus on understanding the impact of no-strings attached money *vis-à-vis* conditional cash grants. These include basic income pilots, like the ones who took place in India or Namibia, guaranteed income experiments taking place in the US, but also the negative income tax trials that took place in North America, as well as experiments in Barcelona or Finland, where there was some research into understanding the impacts of unconditional cash transfers.

While distributing material means and granting people income to reciprocate is itself an important goal, it is the interrelation between distributing the means to reciprocate, and how such distribution changes recipients standing *vis-à-vis* their partners in cooperation that deems UBI a pre-distributive mechanism. This is reminded by O'Neill in his assertion that a UBI can have pre-distributive features, namely because it increases workers' bargaining power, and therefore, makes them 'less vulnerable to market outcomes' in similar ways to other 'canonical cases of labour pre-distribution' (O'Neill 2020, p. 82). As O'Neill points out, this is the neo-republican idea echoed by Karl Widerquist in his book *Independence, Propertylessness and Basic Income.* Widerquist argues for UBI on the grounds of how it might give individuals "freedom as the power to say no", increasing their possibilities of exit and voice within the labour market, and allowing them to participate in the market in a voluntary way (Widerquist 2013). Hence, one way to look at a UBI as a pre-distributive mechanism, is to claim that solving distribution issues contributes to increasing possibilities of voice and exit, hence reducing instances of domination, and promoting freedom in a republican sense. Recent literature has pointed out to the potential UBI can have in promoting exit, particularly for workers in the labour market (Widerquist 2013; Pettit 2007), welfare recipients (Eleveld 2020; White 2020) their social networks (Birnbaum 2013; 2019; Pettit 2007) or even in 'welfare-to-work' relationships (Eleveld 2020; White 2020). Granting everyone a secure income to rely on means they won't need to 'to beg the favour of the powerful, or even of the counter-clerk' (Pettit 2007, p. 5). Instead, they are given the material conditions to decide in which relationships they wish to remain. Hence, if someone believes she is being exploited in her work, she might demand better conditions (not fearing further retaliation) or might switch jobs, without the threat of destitution from unemployment. If individuals are relying on the money sent by their parents but are suffering constant threats of withdrawing the money if they chose different life prospects, having an income to rely on, might reduce the parent's influence.

It is worth mentioning that recent literature has pointed out limits in how a UBI can promote exit, particularly for workers. Simon Birnbaum and Jurgen De Wispelaere have questioned such an effect when it comes to promoting exit for precarious workers (Birnbaum and De Wispelaere 2021; 2016) and Orlando Lazar argues that while a UBI can certainly mitigate domination in the workplace, a more radical view[60]of its role in significantly reducing or abolishing worker's domination from their employers, requires other policies (Lazar 2021). I take Lazar's view to be a sound one. One should not expect UBI to be a one-cut solution to solve dependency and 'uncontrolled power', not only in worker's relations, but also within the family. As feminists such as Anca Gheaus or Ingrid Robeyns have pointed out, we are to be cautious when discussing how UBI can provide gender justice, namely reducing exploitation for women by their families (Gheaus 2008; Robeyns 2001)[61]. UBI is not a panacea, and as such will not solve domination entirely in all these interactions, but it can certainly be part of an egalitarian toolkit – borrowing from Stuart White's concept (White 2015).

Finally, basic income has also a promising effect in shifting how these relationships often contribute to reduced self-respect and encourage misrecognition between those cooperating. As Nancy Fraser pointed out in her discussions on the links between distribution and recognition, means-tested benefits, as those who target the poor, are often stigmatizing casting recipients as 'deviants and scroungers and invidiously distinguishing them from 'wage-earners' and "'taxpayers' who 'pay their own way'" (Fraser 1998, p. 9). Fraser argues this amount to misrecognition, where populational subgroups are created, as those who are productive and contributors, and those who are not. A UBI has been discussed as a potential less stigmatizing mechanism for welfare assistance, namely because universal disbursements blur the lines that separate those who are 'in need' or 'who are not contributing' of the rest of the population, and as such mitigates the possibilities for stigmatization and misrecognition (Calnitsky 2016). If this is the case, it is a further argument to why a UBI can contribute to ensure cooperation takes place in equal standing, hence encouraging the value of autonomous reciprocity.

---

[60] Orlando Lazar claims that often a republican defence of UBI depicts a 'UBI-first' approach, as those who 'expect solving the problem of domination at work to require little, if anything, other than fighting for the introduction of such a policy and its predictable consequences' (Lazar 2021, p. 428). Instead, he contends that approaches that combine UBI with 'an economic ceiling' and workplace democracy (Lazar 2021, p. 442), are better targeted at solving the issue of worker's domination and should be called 'UBI-too' (Lazar 2021).

[61] It is worth point out feminists' body of literature on the impact of UBI in the family. Anca Gheuas, for example, as argued that a UBI does not necessarily contribute to a 'gender-symmetrical lifestyle' as one where "women and men engage equally in paid work and family life, which includes unpaid care work for dependents" (Gheaus 2008, p. 2). Instead, by not working on ensuring that preferences are formed in gendered-just circumstances, a UBI might increase the cost for gender symmetry, in a such a way that it might increase the polarization between preferences (work-centred versus home-cantered), instead of encouraging men to also partake in care work. She finishes by also contending the possible benefits of UBI for gendered justice, but only if a 'UBI-too' perspective is adopted, by also implementing policies such as 'socialized childcare and elderly care, or even a duty of citizenship to provide care' and working on preference setting (Gheaus 2008).

4. Conclusion

Autonomous reciprocity is seen here not as a constraint, but rather as a value. We wish to cater for reciprocation in a free, non-dominating way, that promotes self-respect and recognition between citizens, friends, and family. For this reason, promoting autonomous reciprocity can only be deemed a pre-distributive goal: we aim to ensure everyone stands in equal standing when engaging in obligations of an economic nature, and is offered protection from domination within those relations. It is about valuing voluntary interdependence and aiming to promote it in all arenas of cooperation we are engaged with. Hence, autonomous reciprocity does not require pre-emptive assurances, rather it trusts people will answer their obligations of economic reciprocity if they are given the opportunities to do so. It focuses on ensuring voluntariness in economic exchange, where being granted the capacity to be a reciprocal actor (instead of being constrained to do so) is seen as fundamental to avoid instances of misrecognition (Fraser1998; Calnitsky 2016; Parsell & Clarke 2022). Therefore, UBI is pre-distributive in the sense that it ensures everyone has the capacity to participate in obligations of economic reciprocity throughout one's life, free from stigma and domination. It pre-distributes this capacity which is mostly a privilege of those who have income and capital to do so and are therefore less materially reliant on their social networks and on welfare.

Finally, it also returns reciprocity to its rightful place within modern society: reciprocity as a value that should be encouraged, where interdependence is fostered, but in such a way not to promote constraints that are conducive to stigmatization and misrecognition, but also not to encourage relationships that are dominating, As a value, non-reciprocation can be accommodated, since our goal is not to avoid unpaid debts, but rather to promote a society of autonomous reciprocators. While this does not render reciprocity the only principle governing justice (Schmidtz 2005) it does consider it to be an important value we ought to be encouraging in social life.

References

Atkinson, Tony. 1996. “The Case for a Participation Income.” *The Political Quarterly* 67-70.

Banerjee, Abhijit , Paul Niehaus, and Tavneet Suri. 2019. “Universal basic income in the developing world.” *Annual Review of Economics 2019* 11 (1): 959-983.

Barreiros, Mónica. 2017. *Shame on you. The social stigma of social welfare benefits.* Nova SBE - master thesis.

Becker, Lawrence C. 1986. *Reciprocity.* Routledge.

Birnbaum, Birnbaum Simon, and Jurgen De Wispelaere. 2021. “Exit strategy or exit trap? Basic income and the ‘power to say no’ in the age of precarious employment.” *Socio-Economic Review* 19 (3): 909–927.

Birnbaum, Simon. 2013. *Basic Income reconsidered. Social Justice, Liberalism, and the Demands of Equality.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Birnbaum, Simon. 2019. “The Ethics of Basic Income.” In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income*, by Malcom (ed) Torry, 507-522. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Birnbaum, Simon, and Jurgen De Wispelaere. 2016. “Basic Income in the Capitalist Economy: The Mirage of “Exit” from Employment.” *Basic Income Studies* 11 (1): 61-74.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. “The Forms of Capital .” In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, by J. Richardson, 241-258. Westport: Greenwood.

Bowles, Samuel , and Herbert Gintis. 2000. "Reciprocity, Self-Interest, and the Welfare State." *Nordic Journal of Political Economy* 26: 33-53.

Bowles, Samuel, Robert Boyd, Ernst Fehr, and Herbert Gintis. 1997. “Homo reciprocans: A Research Initiative on the Origins, Dimensions, and Policy Implications of Reciprocal Fairness.” *Research Initiative on Reciprocal Fairness* 1-30.

Calnistsky , David. 2016. ““More Normal than Welfare”: The Mincome Experiment, Stigma and Community experience.” *Canadian Sociological Association/La Société Canadienne de Sociologie* 26-71.

Calnitsky, David, and Jonathan Latner. 2017. “Basic Income in a Small Town: Understanding the Elusive Effects on Work.” *Social Problems* 64 (3): 373–397.

Davala, Sarath. 2019. “Pilots, Evidence and Politics: The Basic Income Debate in India .” In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income*, by Malcom (ed.) Torry, 373–387. Cham. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Eleveld, Anja. 2020. In *Welfare to Work in Contemporary European Welfare States. Legal, Sociological and Philosophical Perspectives on Justice and Domination*, by Anja Eleveld, Thomas Kampen and Josien (ed.) Arts, 263-280. Bristol: Policy Press.

Eleveld, Anja. 2018. “The sanctions mitigation paradox in welfare to work benefit schemes.” *Comparative Labor & Policy Journal* 39: 102-28.

Forget, Evelyn. 2011. “The town with no poverty: The health effects of a Canadian guaranteed annual income field experiment.” *Canadian Public Policy* 37(3): 283-305.

Fraser, Nancy. 1998. “Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, participation.” Edited by Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB). *WZB Discussion Paper* FS (I): 98-108.

Gheaus, Anca. 2008. “Basic Income, GenderJustice and the Costs of Gender-Symmetrical Lifestyles.” *Basic Income Studies* 3 (3): 1-8.

Goodin , Robert E. 2002. “Structures of Mutual obligation.” *Jnl Soc. Pol.* 31 (4): 579–596.

Gordon, Rachel A., Robert Kaestner, and Sanders Korenman. 2008. “Child Care and Work Absences: Trade-Offs by Type of Care.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70 (1): 239-254.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1960. "The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement." *American Sociological Review* 161-178.

Haarmann, Claudia, and Dirk Haarmann. 2007. “From Survival to Decent Employment: Basic Income Security in Namibia.” *Basic Income Studies* 2 (1): 1-7.

Hacker, Jacob S. 2011. “The institutional foundations of middle-class democracy.” *Progressive Governance,* 33-37.

Halliday, Daniel . 2018. *The Inheritance of Wealth. Justice, Equality, and the Right to Bequeath.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kerr, Gavin. 2016. “‘Predistribution’, property-owning democracy and land value taxation.” *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 15 (1): 67-91.

Lafferty, A., D. Phillips, G. Fealy, G. Paul, C. Duffy, L. Dowling-Hetherington, M. Fahy, B. Moloney, and T. & Kroll. 2022. “Making it work: a qualitative study of the work-care reconciliation strategies adopted by family carers in Ireland to sustain their caring role.” *Community, Work & Family .*

Lazar, Orlando. 2021. “Work, Domination, and the False Hope of Universal Basic Income.” *Res Publica* 27: 427-446.

Lovett, Frank. 2010. *A General Theory of Domination and Justice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matthews, Peter, and Kirsten Besemer. 2014. *Poverty and social networks –evidence review.* Stirling: School of Applied Social Science.

Mau, Steffen. 2004. “Welfare Regimes and the Norms of Social Exchange.” *Current Sociology* 52-74.

Mauss, Marcel. 2002. *The Gift.* London: Routledge Classics.

McKinnon, Catriona. 2003. “Basic Income, Self-Respect and Reciprocity.” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 20 (2): 143-158.

Merrill, Roberto, Catarina Neves, and Bru Laín. 2022. *Basic Income Experiments. A Critical Examination of Their Goals, Contexts, and Methods.* Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moffitt, Robert A. 1983. “An Economic Model of Welfare Stigma.” *American Economic Association* 1023-1035.

O'Neill, Martin. 2020. “Power, Predistribution, and Social Justice.” *Philosophy* 95 (1): 63-91.

Parsell, Cameron, and Andrew Clarke. 2022. "Charity and Shame: Towards Reciprocity." *Social Problems* 69: 436–452.

Petersen, Linea M., Sine N. Just, and Emil Husted. 2022. “Redistributive Solidarity? Exploring the Utopian Potential of Unconditional Basic Income.” *Critical Sociology* 1-19.

Pettit, Philip. 2007. “A Republican Right to Basic Income?” *Basic Income Studies* 2 (2): 1-8.

—. 2012. *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—. 1999. *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, John. 2001. *Justice as Fairness. A restatement.* Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

—. 2005. *Political liberalism.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Robeyns, Ingrid. 2001. “Will a Basic Income Do Justice to Women?” *Analyse & Kritik* 23: 88-105.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics.* New York: Routledge.

Schmidtz, David. 2005. “What We Deserve, and How We Reciprocate.” *The Journal of Ethics* 9: 435-464.

Somers, Margaret R. 2021. “Toward a predistributive democracy: Diagnosing oligarchy, dedemocratization, and the deceits of market justice.” In *The Condition of Democracy (Volume 2)*, by Jürgen Mackert, Hannah Wolf and Bryan S. Turner, 56-87. Routledge.

Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Thomas, Alan. 2017. *Republic of Equals. Predistribution and Property-Owning Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, Philippe. 1995. *Real Freedom for All.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, Philippe, and Yannick Vanderborght. 2017. *Basic Income: a radical proposal for a Free and a Sane Economy.* Cambridge Massachussets: Harvard University Press.

White, Stuart. 2015. “Basic Capital in the Egalitarian Toolkit?” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 32 (4): 417-431.

White, Stuart. 2020. “Freedom, exit and basic income.” In *Welfare To Work In Contemporary European Welfare States. Legal, Sociological and Philosophical Perspectives on Justice and Domination*, by Anja Eleveld, Thomas Kampen and Josien (ed.) Arts, 307-330. Bristol: Policy Press.

—. 2003. *The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, Stuart. 2004. “What's Wrong with Workfare?” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 271-284.

Widerquist, Karl. 2018. *A Critical Analysis of Basic Income Experiments for Researchers, Policymakers and Citizens.* Parlgrave Macmillan.

—. 2013. *Independence, Propertylessness, and Basic Income: A Theory of Freedom as the Power to Say No.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan .

Zelizer, Viviane. 2007. *The Purchase of Intimacy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Article V: Gift Exchange and Reciprocity: evidence from a Guaranteed Income Experiment

Status: *To be submitted*

Outcome of the Visiting Researcher Position at CGRI - Centre for Guaranteed Income Research, at University of Pennsylvania, from January to June 2022.

Abstract:

Since the 1990s there has been a surge in 'workfare' policies (Simpson 2021; Hiilamo 2022), where conditional requirements are attached to welfare transfers. But a recent trend has seen social movements and politicians arguing in favour of unconditional cash, namely the idea of Basic Income (UBI) or Guaranteed Income (GI). However, such proposals still face opposition, namely from those who endorse a norm of reciprocity, which demands that benefits received ought to be returned. Drawing on data from a Guaranteed Income Pilot in Paterson, New Jersey, this article explores GI recipients' expressions of reciprocity. It investigates how GI was perceived as a gift, that triggered and amplified obligations of reciprocity, which can be discussed at two levels: (1) obligations on how to use the money (sense of accountability) and, (2) obligations that encourage participants to give back by sharing GI around with other people in their social vicinity. The date on the interaction between GI and reciprocity allows us to argue that GI as a gift accomplishes what workfare policies aim to enforce, pre-emptively: it compels recipients to give back, through expressions of reciprocity that match their own individual and collective perceptions of what deservingness requires.

Key words:

Guaranteed Income; Welfare State; Deservingness; Reciprocity.

Introduction

Since the 1990s there has been a surge in workfare policies in both Europe and the US (Simpson 2021; Hiilamo 2022). Such a transition to conditional support in social assistance has been made in the name of a fairer distribution of benefits, often culminating in instances where safety net policies for the working poor were maintained, while assistance to the poor collapsed (Tach and Edin 2017). The rise in work for the dole policies has been accompanied by a narrative of deservingness, particularly focused on the idea of reciprocity. Perceived as a universal norm (Gouldner 1960), reciprocity establishes that we ought to return gifts we have received, and therefore has been argued as one of the criteria that determines who is deserving (Nielsen , Frederiksen and Larsen 2019; Oorschot 2000). The requirement to work, alongside built-in differential between social security and public assistance reflects and fuels narratives on who is deemed as deserving of aid[62], contributing to stigmatization of those deemed undeserving, negatively affecting individuals' sense of worth, but also impacting policy take-up (Castro and West 2022; Abramovitz 2001; Baumberg 2016). Concerns with these shortcomings of workfare policies has given rise to claims for new safety nets, namely the idea of Unconditional Basic Income or Guaranteed Income [63]. GI is a cash grant, paid to individuals unconditionally: there are no restrictions on how people should spend the money, nor any requirements in terms of occupation. While basic income is the 'umbrella' concept, guaranteed income can be perceived as a negative income tax (Gonalons-Pons and Calnitsky 2021, p. 2), where benefits are means-tested. Those in favour of unconditional cash highlight existing evidence from basic income experiments that found impacts in education (Merrill, Neves and Laín 2022, Widerquist 2018), health and hospitalization rates (West & Castro 2023; Forget 2011; Troller-Renfree, et al. 2022), but also in women's emancipation (Gonalons-Pons and Calnitsky 2021) and reduced stigmatization of welfare recipients (Calnitsky 2016; Thomas , et al. 2022). Policymakers, trade unions and social organizations who oppose to the policy, discuss challenges in financing it, but also that social assistance mechanisms need to be congruent with reciprocity.

Hence, it is worth looking at what basic income experiments tell us about reciprocity. Drawing on data from a Guaranteed Income Pilot (GIPP) this article explores GI recipients' expressions of reciprocity. First, I will argue GI was perceived as a *gift* by a significant number of participants in GIPP*.* This perception has important implications for how participants discussed reciprocity. Namely, GI as a gift triggered or amplified obligations of reciprocity expressed at two levels: (1) obligations on how to use the money and, (2) obligations to give back. Hence, I will argue Gi as a gift accomplishes what workfare policies aim to enforce, pre-emptively: it enables recipients to fulfil their existing obligations, but it also encourages them to *give back*, through expressions of reciprocity that match their perceptions of what deservingness requires.

---

[62] Social security and public assistance are considered distinct programs, namely because of the people they are targeting. The first signal someone deemed deserving, while the latter are often portrayed as targeting the needy or those who lack motivation to work and hence should be perceived as undeserving. (Abramovitz 2001; Abramovitz 2017 (first edition 1988))

[63] Not only have we witness a new wave of basic income experiments, in Europe, US with Mayors for Guaranteed Income (Merrill, Neves and Laín 2022), but Basic Income has also entered the political debate, both in Europe and US.

The argument bridges the discussion on reciprocity and GI with evidence on deservingness. Moreover, it offers a distinct contribution by looking at GI and reciprocity from an empirical standpoint. While a lot has been written on the reciprocity objection to unconditional cash (McKinnon 2003; Van Parijs 1997; Segall 2005; White 2003; Widerquist 1999), I am not aware of any discussions on reciprocity using empirical evidence. Finally, it offers a novel perspective, by claiming that unconditional cash can be perceived as a gift, hence opening new fields of research on unconditional cash.

Reciprocity, Deservingness and Guaranteed Income

Reciprocity is considered a universal norm (Gouldner 1960; Bowles and Gintis 2000), defined as a mechanism that compels people to return benefits received, hence allowing the development of sustained interpersonal relationships (Sahlins 1972; Bowles and Gintis 2000)[64]. This general definition of reciprocity has been used to discuss what motivates people to reciprocate gifts they have received[65] and what *types* of reciprocity can we observe in societies[66]. As a social norm that helps judge fair exchanges, reciprocity has also been argued as one of the main criterion that determines who is deserving, alongside need, attitude and control (Nielsen , Frederiksen and Larsen 2019; Oorschot 2000)[67]. But the universal nature of the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner

---

[64] Despite this general definition, the demands of reciprocity can take many forms, i.e., direct, indirect, proportional returns (Gouldner 1960; Mauss 1990; Sahlins 1972; Bowles and Gintis 2000; Adloff and Mau 2006).

[65] Marcel Mauss theorized the gift-receive-return equation, arguing that gifts are as much voluntary as obligatory, since any gift carries an obligation to reciprocate (Mauss 1990).

[66] While gift relations are often contrasted with market exchange (Gregory 1993), Mau (2004) has questioned this assumption, arguing that exchange relations within the market also encompass non-economic motives that are governed by rules of reciprocity. Finally, it is worth point out Marshall Sahlins' work (1972), which discusses the existence of three types of reciprocity, defined by the interpersonal relationship of those engaging in exchanges. Hence, while we might observe balanced reciprocity (like market exchange) which take place between non-intimate acquaintances. For intimate relations, generalized reciprocity is the norm, where returns do not have to be direct, proportional nor immediate. Finally, negative reciprocity (i.e., vengeance) takes place among enemies.

[67] As Mathias Nielsen, Morten Frederiksen and Christian Larsen have pointed out, recent work on deservingness has looked to theorize a "universal heuristic that citizens apply to rank people in terms of their welfare deservingness" (Nielsen , Frederiksen and Larsen 2019). One well-known version of this attempt to theorize deservingness, argues that there are four main criteria acknowledged by the public when determining who deserved social assistance: Control; Attitude, Reciprocity and Need (CARN) (Oorschot 2000; Nielsen , Frederiksen and Larsen 2019).

1960), finds different translations across contexts, which means that what it means to reciprocate in a way that makes one deserving can take different forms (Nielsen , Frederiksen and Larsen 2019; Øøsterby-Jørgensen 2022). In certain contexts, it requires paying taxes or working full time. However, Wim van Oorschot also points out that the criterion of reciprocity might be fulfilled through symbolic forms, namely behavioural attitudes such as being compliant with social norms, i.e., saying thanks, or the appearance of 'docility' (Oorschot 2000).

Given the role reciprocity plays in determining deservingness, the institutional design of welfare states has also been largely influenced by readings of this norm. Steffen Mau (2004), for example talks about the welfare state as an 'arrangement of institutionalized reciprocity' (Mau 2004, p. 68), where the type of reciprocity[68], determines the unconditional and universal nature of the provision of social benefits. On the other hand, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (2000) argue for the role reciprocity plays in political support for the welfare state. The authors found a strong statistical support for redistributive programs and that historical accounts show humans have favoured arrangements that balance generosity and reciprocity (Bowles and Gintis 2000, p. 37). Finally, Robert E. Goodin (2002) argues that workfare policy arrangements are only one of the possible institutional arrangements for welfare provision that incorporate reciprocity. Goodin discusses social assistance programs are characterized by three features: conditionality, currency, and temporality[69], each implying a different reading of reciprocity. For instance, workfare programs are characterized by mutually conditional obligations, and these are synchronous: benefits are discharged if recipients have proven they have complied with the rules in the present or recent past. Finally, the currency exchange is money per time (i.e., labour), where it might be perceived as an 'equally good' return on the perspective of the donor (state) or the recipient (Goodin 2002, p. 584-588).

As these examples point out, workfare policies are designed to have in mind the respect for a certain notion of reciprocity. This is especially true in recent years, where welfare programs have embodied strict readings of deservingness, often incorporating gender and racial biases (i.e., welfare queen) and a commitment with the work ethic, where unemployed are deemed as lazy, passive (Hiilamo 2022; Somers 2008; Castro and West 2022)[70]. The trend for conditional support alongside a widespread public narrative on personal responsibility (Hiilamo 2022) has led to the dismissal of unconditional cash, claiming it stands in opposition to the spirit of the welfare state. Given the objection to unconditional cash on the grounds of reciprocity, but also the role that the norm plays on public narratives on deservingness, it's worth considering what experimental evidence on guaranteed income tells us about norms of reciprocity.

---

[68] Mau discusses welfare transfers as "as bilateral relationships between the giver and the recipient wherein reciprocal expectations need to be satisfied in order to preserve people's willingness to contribute to the common good" (Mau 2004, p. 61). As such, he argues reciprocity is essential in how different welfare states are designed, namely in determining what benefits are entitled to whom and under what conditions.

[69] Goodin argues that these three criteria can be applied in different ways, yielding different institutional designs for social assistance policies and welfare states. Conditionality, for example, can determine obligations that might fall closer of further away from the idea of unconditionality, while temporality determined whether obligations are discharged simultaneously or not. Finally, he argues that currencies can differ (i.e., time, money, training) (Goodin 2002, p. 587-588).

Methodology

Setting

In May of 2021 the Mayor's office of Paterson New Jersey launched the GIPP. The GIPP is a RCT of unconditional cash consisting of 110 participants in treatment receiving 400 USD per month for one year from 2021- 2022, and 200 in control. The money was given unconditionally to those in the treatment condition. To be eligible, they had to be residents in Paterson, and have an income below New Jersey's living wage of $30,000 for a single person and $88,000 for families. The analysis of this paper is based on a qualitative sub-strand with 23 participants in the larger on-going RCT.

Sampling

In February 2022, mid-way after the first payment was disbursed, the research team interviewed 23 people. Everyone in the treatment and control conditions were eligible to participate in semi-structured interviews. Recruitment occurred over text and email using the RCT study contact lines. We aimed to schedule 30 interviews total to yield 25 narratives, but due to last minute cancelations 23 were conducted.

Name	Age	Gender	Condition
Amelie	40s	Female	Treatment
Angela	40s	Female	Treatment
Billy	50s	Male	Treatment
Dante	20s	Male	Treatment
Enith	30s	Female	Treatment

---

[70] As Heikki Hiilamo points out, two theories discuss why social assistance recipients might struggle to find employment. One is the "'passivation' theory", which claims that "the receipt of social assistance affects behavior, resulting in a decline of energy levels, work motivation, capabilities and morale". Hence, receiving benefits reduces the incentive to work. The competing theory of "selection theory", claims that "welfare clients most capable of work leave social assistance more quickly while the remaining clients are those who have more problems and fewer qualifications" (Hiilamo 2022, p. 34).

Kini	70s	Female	Treatment
Lady J	60s	Female	Treatment
Lezette	40s	Female	Treatment
Maria A	30s	Female	Treatment
Maria B	30s	Female	Treatment
Nancy	60s	Female	Treatment
Olivia	30s	Female	Treatment
Pepe	80s	Male	Treatment
Ruth	30s	Female	Treatment
Sasha	30s	Female	Treatment
Arlene	50s	Female	Control
Beauty	40s	Female	Control
Jean	20s	Female	Control
Maria3	40s	Female	Control
Mary	50s	Female	Control
Nelly	40s	Female	Control
Rose	40s	Female	Control
Tiffany	40s	Female	Control

Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews, that lasted around one hour and a half, included questions on participants' experiences and whether GI affected their lives, opportunities, and abilities to take risks. All interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. The interview guide draws on the scarcity literature (Shah, Mullainathan and Shafir 2012) and literature on the role of hope and goal setting in economic mobility (Lybbert and Wydick 2018; Castro, et al. 2022). The interviews were conducted by three researchers between February and March 2022, either in person or through zoom. To ensure interviewees' anonymity and confidentiality, interview data was stored on a password-secured cloud. Additionally, the interview excerpts are presented in anonymized form.

The analysis of the data followed an inductive approach. Since I was specifically interested in understanding the degree to which the norm reciprocity functions within an empirical cash transfer study, grounded theory represented the optimal choice (Corbin and Strauss 1998). Each interviewer wrote memo notes of the interviews, focusing on their impressions, and a description of concepts they were picking up in the data based on the conceptual frameworks guided by scarcity. These memos, additional notes, and previous interviews allowed the development of a codebook that was used to code the interview transcripts using Dedoose. The transcripts were coded by researchers, who wrote memos about their coding decisions. Coding followed an open phase to conceptualize the phenomenon of an unconditional gift, an axial phase to see the relationships between themes, and a selective coding phase to conceptualize theory (Vollstedt and Rezat 2019).

Data was reviewed for codes related with background and demographics, guaranteed income, employment, emotions, pooling and moral judgements. Full narratives on participants' life experiences were also extracted out of the transcripts and reviewed to contextualized isolated quotes in the axial and selective phases.

Findings

Guaranteed Income as a Gift

Enith is a young Latino immigrant in the US, recent mother of an eight-month-old baby. Besides her caring responsibilities, she sends remittances to her mother, and contributes to her father's rent. She was fired due to the economic consequences of covid-19. With GI she has been able to cover her bills, but also to stay home and take care of her new born baby. GI came at the right time for her: it allowed her to face the consequences of the pandemic, while being able to enjoy a sort of maternity leave. She expressed her gratitude:

> I am very thankful for the assistance. I wish blessings to those who are assisting me, and – and I feel that at first, I thought that the guaranteed income was being provided to me because I was pregnant, but now I knows that it's for the public and I hope that more people receive it.
>
> (Enith, in her 30s)

Having successfully recovered from substance abuse, Kini was also grateful for having been granted a 'gift'. During the interview she was emotional for several times, expressing how GI was an important blessing in her life.

> There's no question in my mind that God saved me. And – and I believe – there's a part of me that believes that, maybe he had something to do with me, being one of the chosen ones. I know it was a lottery but sometimes why do some people win the lottery?
>
> I'm just, I'm so blessed, you know, so that – yeah, I'm gonna miss it. It'll be difficult but um, you know, I'll – I'll be okay and I made it all these years without it so um... I'm just looking as that – that's it. It's a gift, which just happen to last 12 months.
>
> (Kini, in her 70s)

These excerpts express ideas of gratitude. Participants often acknowledged the same feeling when discussing welfare payments, namely SNAP or SSI[71], given they also meant having more money at the end of the month. But when it came to GI, participants were also grateful for being given autonomy. GI is unconditional and therefore participants could cover unexpected expenses. Autonomy in spending was deemed very important, and motivated the feeling of gratitude, especially given the uncertain and challenging times of covid-19. Moreover, participants felt the process to receive GI was less bureaucratic. But also, not stigmatizing, especially compared with some participant's experiences with social services. Hence GI's unconditional nature and eligibility process were a source of gratitude for recipients.

Participants also discussed feeling 'blessed' *for being chosen.* There was a sense of luck, but most often of retribution from their religious devotion, like Enith claiming, "that God answered my prayers" or Kini discussing that maybe God had something to do with her being selected. While Lady J expressed a similar feeling, she also felt blessed for being granted something that makes such a difference.

> No, I never thought it was a scam, but just I was just so elated for that, to, to be picked. But when they told me that— because I never win anything so I said I'm just going to fill it out, because even if I applied for Section 8 or whatever, I never really win anything— so, then when they told me I won I was just so excited, and I thought well, when you pray— you, one thing about that I do know prayers work— so, God heard my prayers, I needed

---

[71] SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 'provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency' To be eligible, it is necessary to meet resources and income requirements. It's a federal program. In: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program (accessed in May 2022).

SSI - Supplemental Security Income is a federal income supplement to help 'aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income'. It is cash grant supplement who helps covering basic needs. In: https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/ (accessed in May 2022).

> that $300 bucks, plus then I had the extra $100 dollars, because I had bought furniture, and I had to, you know, I had to really do a lot of stuff. So, when that came in it was a blessing to me.
>
> (Lady J, in her 60s)

The sense of blessing was beyond feeling lucky. Participants felt *blessed* by the impact GI had in their lives. Maria B is a single mom of two young boys, one who is autistic. She fled an abusive household and relies mainly on her sister to help her taking care of her children. Her care work responsibilities only allow her to take a part-time job in a school. So, she juggles her monthly income, and yearly income tax records to be able to make ends meet. When asked about the impacts of GI, Maria B focused on discussing the new opportunities it gave to provide for her family.

> Um, no, that's not, uh, the first, oh my god, the first thing I spend it was, oh, was for my son's, um, uh, school supplies. He's now he's in pre K, so he needs, um, a lot of stuff in school, like I tell you I'm a single mom, I was like oh my god [LAUGHTER]. Yeah, it was a blessing, it was really blessing, then I've been saving money is helping with my bills, of course.
>
> (Maria B, in her 30s)

Maria B expressed similar feelings to Lady J (in the quote above). They are grateful and happy for being chosen, but also felt GI has been a blessing in their lives, considering the impact it has in their monthly budget. This was also echoed by Billy, a recently retired, living alone with a small pension. The blessing GI brought him is the opportunity of eating healthier and felling less stressed about not having enough money.

> For - for me to getting GI it has s made a huge difference. Um, um, I can get healthier food, fruits, uh, because I have some extra money. And I actually I will say that it has - it - it has turned around now. Before, it was getting crazy. I mean, I was like, "I need help. I need help," and I never got them. And now that I got this from - from nowhere, not even expecting it and, um, I will say, "Man, God is good. God is there." I mean, I will say loving, and, um, I just want to say, "Thank you everyone.".

(Billy, in his 50s)

Gratitude and feeling blessed are emotions one can expect to have when receiving a gift. Consider a particularly challenging month, where your friends decide to help you with rent. You feel elated for being helped, and lucky for having supportive friends. But your gratitude is also a function of the impact of the gift. Without your friends' help, you could be evicted or in debt. And feeling grateful does not imply feeling undeserving. You might have been unfortunate. Or might work hard but receive little. Moreover, maybe you have been a supportive friend in the past, and hence feel like your friends are returning the favour. The same is true for GI recipients. They were grateful for being chosen, but also for the impact GI had in their lives. Moreover, they also recognized the coexistence between deservingness and gift: they recognized other people in Paterson might be experiencing more challenging times. However, they would quickly attest to their own sense of deservingness, claiming they have also been in need and that they have been working hard, despite their financial struggles.

One might point out that participants experienced GI as a gift because of GIPP's RCT methodology. Other basic income pilots have found results that can be attributed to the design of the experiment, such as David Calnitsky's MINCOME case[72]. However, the evidence tells something different. For one, data supports the view that some participants did not fully understand the RCT methodology. Due to their experience with social services, several participants felt GI followed the same rules, and therefore believed there was a selection process. They talked about being chosen because of how they filled the forms or complied with the rules. In fact, references to RCT or 'lottery' in the data were scarce. Secondly, and as mentioned, participants often refer to the idea of 'blessings' from GI, namely its unconditionality. Hence, we can claim that the feelings expressed by participants are to be attributed at least partially to the gift-like qualities of GI[73].

Obligation to reciprocate

Although participants discussed GI as a gift, and praised the flexibility of unconditional cash, they also expressed a sense of obligation attached to receiving the monthly stipend. One of our participants, Beauty, said people receiving a guaranteed income would have to ‘do right with money’, further claiming that people should not ‘take it as a free giveaway*’.* In the findings this sense of obligation was discussed at two levels: (1) *How I behave* alongside *how I expect other to behave*, which represents a sense of accountability, and finally, (2) *how I give back.*

---

[72] When discussing possible reasons for why MINCOME participants felt less stigmatized when receiving a GI, vis a vis when receiving other benefits, Calnitsky discusses the role of 'ideological framing'. By emphasizing the scientific nature of the pilot, and how it contributed to "all Canadians"' it reduced the archetypes associated with assistance programs, that are often stigmatizing (Calnitsky, 2016, p. 29-30).

[73] The design of the experiments across the US ensured that the cash grant is fully unconditional. This means that once participants are selected for the treatment group, there is no requirement to receive the income, not even the participation in the research study. Therefore, it further resembles a gift as a voluntary, one-sided, surrender of resources (Elder-Vass 2020).

Firstly, participants discussed a sense of obligation that compels them to *use the money the best way possible.* They talked about using the money for treats, like ‘buying some clothes’, or ‘taking their families out to eat’. But they would quickly justify how they have also been using it in other ways, they believe are more responsible.

> The basic change has been that I've been able to afford to get things that I couldn't get before. And I'm not talking about, you know, I'm not go and buy tons of jewellery and... like, oh let me see, how many gold chains I can get? It's just clothing. I've been able to go to thrift shops.
>
> And I have a friend who is a – who is a stylist. And I talk to her about the idea of coloring. And so - that was probably the one splurge, I did cuz that – that was more –I would never have spent that, without this. But that one month, I just said – and it happened to be December. And I said, I'm doing this. And – and it felt so good. You know, I felt a little guilty, but just a little. Because I thought, this is a gift and I – I deserve to treat myself good.
>
> (Kini, in her 70s)

Kini is describing how the gift of unconditional cash generates an obligation. It can be summarized as: *I was given a gift, and so I ought to respect it by using it in a certain way*. Take the example of Ruth. She is a single mom in her 20s, living in Paterson with her two-year old daughter. She works as a remote billing specialist, while her mom helps her taking care of her daughter. Her income does not allow extra expenses. Hence, she discusses how receiving a GI allowed her to gift herself with a new bedroom set:

> There's always something. And then, I was – um, I remember one of the first things that I did, to be completely honest with you, uh, ...I was like – because I was trying to save up for like a bedroom set. Cuz I only had like the bedframe. Like, my room looked like a guy's room, you know? Like, that – I didn't even have a mirror or anything. It was just like

> the bedframe and that's it. And I was like, oh, my god, like I need a set, you know? Like, I need this house to look like, uh, like a woman's house. The first time that I received like those $400, I was like, you know? And I bought it, and honestly, like that made me happy.
>
> (Ruth, in her 20s)

This sense of responsibility was also translated into what participants perceived as a general obligation for everyone receiving GI.[74] Dante was concerned with people 'taking the money for granted'. As a 27-year-old man living in Paterson, he has juggled different occupations, from working at a fast-food restaurant to being a factory worker. He currently works with his father, doing appliance delivery. Besides the physical strain of the job, and the stress, he receives very little, since he is paid with the tips that the drivers receive. He has also experienced homelessness for about 2 years and has been estranged from his family for the better part of his life. Dante discussed how the money 'shouldn't be thrown away'. He concedes that everyone might initially use it 'frivolously' but that after that period they should 'try to make use of it' in the best way possible

> Uh, I felt like in the beginning, most people would do what I did and sort of just, just do– buy something you know, like dumb with it. Like, I don't know. Something that they couldn't really afford before. Then from there I really I don't know. I guess, some people will do what I did and try to like make the use of it, and others would just sort of throw it away like my father. I do feel like sometimes people, um, get things like this and they do take it for granted.
>
> (Dante, in his 20s)

The second obligation expressed by participants was about sharing and giving back. Often GI was used within the household economy. Kini, for example, discussed the possibilities she had to gift her grandsons during Christmas time. She had a chance to actively participate in this ritual, contributing to her sense of self-worth.

---

[74] This perspective was often a direct response to our question on whether GI should be implemented across New Jersey and who should be eligible to receive it.

> Uh, although the 400 would, wouldn't last for long – this is where I – I'd like to think that most people would be sensible with it. Maybe hear on my take –they'll think, okay, this is an opportunity to catch up on some bills or to do something nice for somebody else. Um, like in December – I was able for Christmas with my grandsons where normally I don't have much money that I could spend on them. I was able to, you know, be more – more of a Santa, you know, and that was like an amazing feeling uh, of uh, you know, just absolutely wonderful feeling.
>
> (Kini, in her 70s)

Besides wanting to 'do something nice for somebody else' Kini also shared the GI with her roommate, discussing how the money was a 'game changer' for the household:

> But when I got it. You know, I was just so excited and I did share it with my roommate, cuz I thought, well, she's gonna – all of a sudden, I've got this extra money, every month. Not that we – I mean, you know we're pretty much aware of what each, each of us gets, but – um, I mean, it's definitely gonna be a game changer.
>
> (Kini, in her 70s)

Enith also shared it with her relatives. She was able to pay her father's rent, and to stretch the GI to continue to send remittances to Columbia. While 400 USD was much less than what she earned when working, she still used the GI to comply with her obligations within the family. The same was true for Maria B, also a single mom. She used GI to cover her monthly bills. However, she also took an opportunity to pay her mother's phone bills. GI is therefore shared among the members of her family.

But more than just granting the means to comply with existing obligations of reciprocity, GI seemed to also trigger new obligations:

> I've been able to donate more, I've been able to buy supplies for, like, the different things that we do. My kids get to go to, like, movies, get to buy them more random stuff. Um, they do more school projects. It's helped me in the offseason.

> It's been good, and then, like, having that extra to help others makes you feel better. And it's like, I'm not the richest person. We don't have money like that, but I can help you with a plate of food. I can help you with five cans of food. I can, you know?
>
> (Maria A, in her 30s)

Maria A. discussed how having extra money allowed and motivated her to provide help to families in the area. An idea further elaborated by Billy, who believed that because he received a GI, he should reciprocate, and help those around him in Paterson:

> Actually, uh, I love to help, um, especially because, um, I will say that's something that I have for myself that I got that help where I needed the most. And I had no - nowhere to go to get that help and it came out - out of nowhere. And I got like the G.I...- and I'd say it's, if I can help anybody, um, I will do it. I will do it. Yeah, because, um, - like, because I got the opportunity. I needed help and I got it from nowhere.
>
> They say that when you're driving most of the time you see some on those traffic light that you've seen those people asking for money, um, I might say. 'Well, like I - I am going to have some extra money at the end of the month or on the middle of the month'. And then, you can say, 'Well, I'm getting some help, I can help somebody else'.
>
> (Billy, in his 20s)

In all the above, participants discussed how they used the money to be more active contributors to their households, but also their communities. While GI was essential to pay everyday expenses, participants also took the chance to share it around. Either by reciprocating benefits they have received in the past – as Enith or Maria B when they buy things for their relatives, or Kini when she gifts her roommate. Or by reciprocating the benefits from GI, as when Billy or Maria A. share money or goods with people in their social vicinity.

It is however worth noting that the capacity for reciprocating is not evenly distributed across our sample. Most participants used their GI to pay bills. However, this is not surprising: participants received a small amount especially considering rent prices averaging 1560 USD/month[75].

---

[75] https://www.rentcafe.com/average-rent-market-trends/us/nj/paterson/ (accessed May 2022)

Moreover, they were selected based on their income, and most participants found themselves barely making ends meet. Also, the GIPP pilot took place in the midst/aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic (late 2021/2022), so a lot of participants were still coping with outstanding bills[76].

To sum up, experiencing GI as a gift triggered or amplified obligations of reciprocity expressed at two levels: (1) Participants felt they ought to use the money responsibly to honour the gift they had received. They expressed such responsibility by choosing carefully where they used the money. (2) Participants discussed how the money granted an opportunity, but also encouraged them to return benefits received by their social networks, or to give back to other people in Paterson.

Discussion

Existing literature has long argued that gifts create obligations to reciprocate (Mauss 1999; Godbout and Caillé 1998; Godelier 1999). However, findings that a GI can be experienced as a gift are new. Hence it is worth discussing what are the nature of the obligations triggered by GI, and their impact on our understanding of reciprocity and deservingness.

These findings illustrate how participants mobilized their conceptions of desert. In other words, receiving GI impelled participants to act according to their own conception of deservingness, namely discussing need and ideas of reciprocity, a finding consistent with the literature on deservingness and the CARN framework (Oorschot 2000). When participants said that they *should do right with* money, they were expressing a sense of obligation attached to GI. Namely, that they ought to return the benefits received by using the money in a certain way. Hence, it illustrates the multiple ways in which reciprocity is expressed, a conclusion consistent with findings which point out that the demands of reciprocity can vary across contexts. Namely that while being deserving of welfare assistance is often correlated with monetary exchange, non-monetary returns can also be accepted (Oorschot 2000; Nielsen , Frederiksen and Larsen 2019).

Participants also discussed their consumption decisions, illustrating that to honour the gift they have received, they should behave in a certain way. It is worth noting that the way participants discussed their attitude towards the money is different from what is usually considered the paternalistic objection to guaranteed income. Rather than arguing that people should use the money in a particular way, because that is the ‘best way to live’, participants argue that the money ‘should not be spoiled’, but rather used in the best way possible, considering each person and family’s needs and obligations. As such, it is different from wanting people to live according to what they individually consider to be the best route in life.

---

[76] The story of one of GIPP's participants is illustrative. When Lezette heard she would be receiving a GI, she had big plans. As a single mom, who works in accounting, she was making enough money to support her family, namely her son and parents. She was planning to start save, buy a new car and considering going back to school. However, all her family got hospitalized due to covid, which led to outstanding medical bills. Therefore, it became impossible to use GI beyond paying debts.

Moreover, gift-giving within social networks was particularly common, with participants using the money for pooling resources or gifting their relatives. Such acts illustrate the role that obligations of reciprocity play in the lives of people experiencing poverty (Matthews and Besemer 2014), and how social networks are instrumental for welfare, given the precarious nature of public assistance. But besides enabling or amplifying existing obligations, GI also prompted new ones, impelling participants to give back the benefits received. Hence, GI worked as a ‘shock’ mechanism: allowing the fulfilment of existing obligations, while triggering new ones. Therefore, being deserving of the GI meant ‘honouring’ it, both by giving back and sharing the money, but also by having a certain behaviour, in line with Nielsen et al.’s findings on deservingness (2019).

These findings tell us that we should expand our account of what reciprocity demands for someone to be deserving. This is particularly relevant for basic income experiments, which focus on labour market participation as the acceptable return for benefits received. Given the limited capacity of experiments to capture changes in the labour market, we might be missing evidence on the interaction between reciprocity and unconditional cash. Take the evidence from GIPP. Discussions about whether a GI allowed participants to exit the labour market were almost absent, namely because 400 USD do not create enough of a trade-off when it comes to employment decisions. Only Enith talked about changing her occupation. After being fired under covid-19 she decided to stay home. This was both influenced by her desire to take care of her baby, and the challenges of paying childcare. For other participants, GI did not impact their work hours significantly. Nonetheless, in some cases, they expressed a desire to take on more paid work once the experiment is over, with both Olivia and Maria A. considering taking part-time jobs, or Lezette planning to go back to school to be able to have a higher paying job. Hence, it is plausible that, given a higher income, ‘doing right with money’ would also mean leveraging it to create better prospects for the future.

In acknowledging GI’s post-gift obligations, we are reminded that the way welfare states have been designed is evidence of a misunderstanding of reciprocity. Workfare policies where money is given if recipients comply with several requirements are informed by a strict and contractual reading of the norm of reciprocity (Goodin 2002; Somers 2008). While workfare policies can be designed to reduce their stigmatizing nature (Goodin 2002; White 2004), the evidence presented in this paper demonstrates the strength of moral obligations of reciprocity which are prevalent even without mechanisms for legal enforcement.

Conclusion

The discussion on GI is often obscured by heated arguments on what people owe to each other. Those who disagree with the idea of giving money unconditionally are frequently inspired by the motto: to be entitled the fruits of social cooperation, one must work. Not surprisingly, this has been translated into the design of social assistance. Workfare policies are now the norm, where pre-emptive mechanisms are implemented. Hence, eligible recipients are required to commit to look for work or accept the first job they are offered to, to receive benefits, they require. Hence, benefits come at a cost: to receive it, one must prove he is a contributing member of society and hence deserving of benefits.

This paper presents evidence that GI triggers a post-gift sense of obligation that incorporates a norm of reciprocity. It shows that familiar concerns that once people receive a GI they will abandon their reciprocal obligations towards fellow citizens are misguided. GI can contribute to ensure social assistance as ‘a citizenry right’, that not only provides the means for individuals to make sense of their existing obligations within their own networks, but also triggers new obligations consistent with reciprocity. Hence, giving money unconditionally does not constitute a free handout.

Therefore, this paper finishes with an invitation to look at unconditional cash in a different way. Instead of labelling it as a mechanism that rewards free riding, these findings show that GI is a ‘causal agent’ by promoting a moral obligation of reciprocity, and without imposing stigmatizing demands for individuals to be entitled to social assistance. As such, it is a promising mean for forging a new path in the design of the welfare state.

References

Abramovitz, Mimi. 2017 (first edition 1988). *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present.* New York: Taylor and Francis.

Abramovitz, Mimi. 2001. “Everyone Is Still on Welfare: The Role of Redistribution in Social Policy.” *Social Work* 46 (4): 297-308.

Adloff, Frank, and Steffen Mau. 2006. "Giving Social Ties, Reciprocity in Modern Society." *European Journal of Sociology* 47 (1): 93-123.

Baker, Amy, Stacia, Samra, Sukhi West, and Meagan Cusack. 2020. “Mitigating loss of health insurance and means tested benefits in an unconditional cash transfer experiment: Implementation lessons from Stockton's guaranteed income pilot.” *Population* 11: 100578.

Baumberg, Ben. 2016. “The stigma of claiming benefits: a quantitative study.” *Journal of Social Policy* 45 (2): 181-199.

Birnbaum, Simon. 2019. “The Ethics of Basic Income.” In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income*, by Malcom (ed) Torry, 507-522. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bowles, Samuel , and Herbert Gintis. 2000. "Reciprocity, Self-Interest, and the Welfare State." *Nordic Journal of Political Economy* 26: 33-53.

Calnitsky , David. 2016. ““More Normal than Welfare”: The Mincome Experiment, Stigma and Community experience.” *Canadian Sociological Association/La Société Canadienne de Sociologie* 26-71.

Castro, Amy, and Stacia West. 2022. “The Case for Basic Income Experiments.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 41 (2): 632–649.

Castro, Amy, Chenyi Ma, Claudette Grinnell Davis, and Meagan Cusack. 2022. “Hope, Mattering, and Pathways Towards Economic Agency among Financially Marginalized Adults.” *Social Work and Society* 19 (2).

Elder-Vass, Dave. 2020. “Defininf the gift.” *Journal of Institutional Economics* 16: 675-685.

Forget, Evelyn. 2011. “The town with no poverty: The health effects of a Canadian guaranteed annual income field experiment.” *Canadian Public Policy* 37(3): 283-305.

Godbout, Jacques T. G, and Alain Caillé. 1998. *The World of the Gift.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Godelier, Maurice. 1999. *The enigma of the Gift.* Polity Press.

Gonalons-Pons, Pilar, and David Calnitsky. 2021. “Exit, voice and loyalty in the family: findings from a basic income experiment.” *Socio-Economic Review* 00: 1-29.

Goodin , Robert E. 2002. “Structures of Mutual obligation.” *Journal of Social Policy.* 31 (4): 579–596.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1960. "The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement." *American Sociological Review* 161-178.

Gregory, C. A. 1993. “Exchange and Reciprocity.” In *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology : Humanity, Culture and Social Life*, by Tim (ed.) Ingold, 911-939. Taylor & Francis Group.

Halmetoja, Antti, Jurgen De Wispelaere, and Johanna Perkiö. 2018. “A Policy Comet in Moominland? Basic Income in the Finnish Welfare State.” *Social Policy & Society* 18 (2): 319–330.

Hiilamo, Heikki. 2022. *Participation Income. An Alternative to Basic Income for Poverty Reduction in the Digital Age.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Keeley, Michael, and Philip Robins. 1979. “Work Incentives and the Negative Income Tax.” *Challenge* 52-55.

Lybbert, Travis J., and Bruce Wydick. 2018. “Poverty, Aspirations, and the Economics of Hope.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 66 (4).

Matthews, Peter, and Kirsten Besemer. 2014. *Poverty and social networks –evidence review.* Stirling: School of Applied Social Science.

Mau, Steffen. 2004. “Welfare Regimes and the Norms of Social Exchange.” *Current Sociology* 52 (1): 53-74.

Mauss, Marcel. 1990. *The Gift. The form and reason for exchange.* London: Routledge Classics.

McKinnon, Catriona. 2003. “Basic Income, Self-Respect and Reciprocity.” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 20 (2): 143-158.

Merrill, Roberto, Catarina Neves, and Bru Laín. 2022. *Basic Income Experiments. A Critical Examination of Their Goals, Contexts, and Methods.* Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moffitt, Robert A. . 1981. “The negative income tax: would it discourage work? .” *Monthly Labor Review* 23-27.

Nielsen , Mathias Herup, Morten Frederiksen, and Christian Albrekt Larsen. 2019. "Deservingness put into practice: Constructing the (un)deservingness of migrants in four European countries." *British Journal of Sociology and Political Science* 112-126.

Oorschot, Wim van. 2000. "Who Should Get What, and Why? On Deservingness Criteria and the Conditionality of Solidarity Among the Public." *Policty & Politics* 28: 33-48.

Øøsterby-Jørgensen, Andreas Michael. 2022. "Deserving Hukou: An Exploration of How Chinese People Evaluate Migrants' Welfare Deservingness." *Journal of Social Policy* 1-19.

Parsell, Cameron, and Andrew Clarke. 2022. "Charity and Shame: Towards Reciprocity." *Social Problems* 69: 436–452.

Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of our Time.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Rawls, John. 2001. *Justice as Fairness. A restatement.* Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics.* New York: Routledge.

Segall, Shlomi. 2005. “Unconditional welfare benefits and the principle of reciprocity.” *politics,philosophy & economics* 331-354.

Shah, Anuj K. Shah, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Eldar Shafir. 2012. “Some Consequences of Having Too Little.” *Science* 682-685.

Simpson, Wayne. 2021. *Is Basic Income Within Reach? Building the Case Amidst Progress and Poverty.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Somers, Margaret. 2008. *Genealogies of Citizenship.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Tach, Laura, and Kathryn Edin. 2017. “The Social Safety Net After Welfare Reform: Recent Developments and Consequences for Household Dynamics.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 43: 541–61.

Thomas , Catherine C., Gregory M. Walton, Ellen C. Reinhart, and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. “Mitigating welfare-related prejudice and partisanship among U.S. conservatives with moral reframing of a universal basic income policy☆.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 105: 1-15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY Troller-Renfree, Sonya V., Molly A. Costanzo, Greg J. Duncan, Katherine Magnuson, Gennetian, Lisa A., Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Sarah Halpern-Meekin, and Nathan A. Fox. 2022. "The impact of a poverty reduction intervention on infant brain activity." *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences* 119 (5).

Van Parijs, Philippe. 1997. “Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White.” *Political Studies* 327-330.

Vollstedt, Maike, and Sebastian Rezat. 2019. "An Introduction to Grounded Theory with a Special Focus on Axial Coding and the Coding Paradigm." Chap. Chapter 4 in *Compendium for Early Career Researchers in Mathematics Education*, by Gabriele Kaiser and Norma Presmeg, 81-100. Springer Open.

West, S. & Castro, A. (In Press). Impact of Guaranteed Income on Health, Finances, and Agency: Findings from the Stockton Randomized Control Trial. Journal of Urban Health

White, Stuart. 2003. *The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship .* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, Stuart. 2010. “The Left and Reciprocity.” *Soundings* 46: 18-30.

White, Stuart. 2004. “What's Wrong with Workfare?” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 271-284.

Widerquist, Karl. 2018. *A Critical Analysis of Basic Income Experiments for Researchers, Policymakers and Citizens.* Parlgrave Macmillan.

Widerquist, Karl. 2005. “A failure to communicate: What (if Anything) Can we Learn From the Negative Income Tax Experiments?” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 1-51.

Widerquist, Karl. 1999. “Reciprocity and the Guaranteed Income.” *Politics & Society* 27 (3): 387-402.

Article VI: Between Charity and Entitlement: Unconditional Basic Income as a Gift

Neves, C. 2023. Between Charity and Entitlement: Unconditional Basic Income as a Gift. *MAUSS International*, https://www.maussinternational.org/copie-de-n-2-the-gift-in-movement-1

Abstract

One of the most well-known objections to Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) states that to be entitled the fruits of social cooperation, able body people need to contribute productively. While much has been said on this objection of reciprocity, this paper aims to offer two distinct contributions. Firstly, it frames UBI as a payment system, discussing it as an entitlement, compensation, or charitable donation (Zelizer 1998,1996). It will be argued that we should pay attention to how different framings of a UBI yield different moral and political justifications, with important implications to the debate on reciprocity. Secondly, there is no existing literature on how a UBI could be framed within the Gift Paradigm, with the small exception of Alain Caillé's claim of UBI as a form of "conditional unconditionality" (Caillé 1996). By showing that a UBI has important gift-like qualities, it is argued that those receiving unconditional cash can experience psychological emotions of indebtedness and gratitude, which in turn promote a moral obligation to reciprocate the UBI received. Inasmuch as this hypothesis is true, it can contribute to a better understanding of the influence of a UBI in our mutual obligations to contribute to society.

Key words: Unconditional Basic Income; Reciprocity; Gift; Gratitude; Indebtedness.

1. Introduction: Cooperative Justice and the Problem with Unconditional Transfers

Roughly speaking, reciprocity can be defined as the norm that impels us to return a gift received. In the realm of distributive justice, one of the most important readings of reciprocity is the principle of economic reciprocity. It establishes that to be entitled the fruits of social cooperation, able bodied citizens need to contribute productively[77]. As such, the principle is often used to discuss justice in transfers.

I would argue that some commitment with economic reciprocity populates our intuitions on justice. Both anthropological and sociological evidence support the idea of a universal norm of reciprocity, although the norm is sensitive to differences in culture and values (Bowles, et al. 1997, Gouldner 1960, Mauss 2002, Sahlins 1972, Godelier 1999, Oorschot 2000). Moreover, empirical data suggests that reciprocity plays an important role in how citizens determine the justice of welfare transfers. In the European Social Survey on Welfare Attitudes, most respondents argued for some form of conditionality in transfers, particularly those targeting the unemployed (Meuleman, et al. 2018, p. 5). Hence, it seems to be plausible to consider reciprocity as an important value for determining justice in transfers.

Moreover, endorsing such a commitment is also normatively appealing. Catriona McKinnon argues there is a range of reasons why one might feel committed with the principle of economic reciprocity. In one of such perspectives, which McKinnon calls the ‘friendly view’, reciprocity is important to foster relationships of equality[78]. Stuart White, for example, argues that a norm of economic reciprocity is important to ensure the preservation of ‘democratic mutual regard’ between citizens. When we agree to cooperate, we recognize ourselves as equals (White 2003, p. 68). Such seems to be the position endorsed by Andrew Lister, who claims that reciprocity, namely in John Rawls’ principles of justice[79], serves the purpose of ensuring that citizens stand in equality with each other (Lister 2011). A second account, by Axel Honneth, discusses the role reciprocity plays in engendering recognition. Honneth claims that as individuals we experience three forms of recognition: first, recognition in love in one's family, secondly, reciprocal recognition of citizens as bearing rights and obligations, and finally when we come to recognize individuals as members of the same ethical community (Honneth 1992). In the second stage, recognition establishes legal equality and autonomy to claim rights, hence contributing to citizens' self-respect (Honneth 1992, p.108). Therefore, one could argue that a commitment with economic reciprocity is part of our recognition as citizens, contributing to self-respect.

---

[77] Stuart White for instance, coined the term ‘economic reciprocity’ which he defines in the following way: “where the institutions that govern economic life are sufficiently fair in terms of the opportunities they afford for productive contribution, and the awards they apportion to it, those citizens who claim the high share of the social product available to them under these institutions have an obligation to make a decent productive contribution, proportionate to their abilities, to the community in return.” (White 2003, p. 50)

[78] McKinnon argues that in the friendly view, reciprocity expresses the values of fraternity and solidarity as an aspect of just forms of social co-operation, namely by being willing to contribute to the social product, which in turn is what ensure we all collectively benefit of the goods and services jointly produced (McKinnon 2003, p. 204).

[79] Andrew Lister points out that one way to discuss how reciprocity, namely expressed in Rawls’ difference principle, conditions our duties, is to consider the nature of relationship among those cooperating, namely the desire to ensure citizens stand on a position of equality (Lister 2011, p. 105).

Although the principle of reciprocity can be applied differently – from considering that returns need to be proportional, to those who believe returns can vary according to the nature of the relationship[80] - the friendly view of justice as reciprocity can be stated as aiming to promote a society where free individuals enjoy the means to pursue their life projects, but also contribute to the social product, in a way that fosters relationships of equality[81]. And as mentioned, I believe this is a normatively appealing view. The question is then how such a commitment might be reconciled with UBI, and its premise of granting money without any requirement to contribute to the social product.

Not surprisingly, proponents of a UBI have tried to offer their answer. A first set of arguments, illustrated by Philippe Van Parijs and Simon Birnbaum, claims that if a UBI is funded through reciprocity-free resources, as those who do not qualify as "economic benefits of social cooperation", a UBI would be permissible (Van Parijs 1997, Birnbaum 2012, p. 25). However, data suggests that such resources might yield a very small UBI (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017)[82], while also not soothing the concerns of those who argue for justice as reciprocity[83]. Hence, those committed to reciprocity have mostly argued for conditional transfers (Atkinson 1996, White 2003). To be entitled to benefits, individuals need to agree to certain rules (i.e., look for a job, attend school) and agree to some monitoring by social services to ensure their compliance. This is the case for most minimum income schemes (i.e., in the European Union, and in the US), but also some unemployment subsidies.

---

[80] While the norm of reciprocity is often considered universal (Gouldner 1960), it varies across culture, from being considered as negative or positive, as entailing proportional or non-proportional returns, or demanding immediate or delayed returns. Moreover, Marshall Sahlins has argued that we can observe three distinct 'modes' of reciprocity, according to the nature of the relationship of those cooperating. Such modes can be represented through a continuum, where in one of the poles, the positive one, we can observe 'generalized reciprocity' defined as "'the solidary extreme', which refers to the transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given, and possibly and necessary, assistance returned" (Sahlins 1972, p. 418). Balanced reciprocity is considered the midpoint and "refers to direct exchanges. In precise balance" (Sahlins 1972, p. 420-421). Finally, the negative pole is defined as 'negative reciprocity' and is reserved for those we are most apart from, socially, or even those we see as enemies, rivals" (Sahlins 1972, p. 422).

[81] I am aware of the numerous problems entailed in endorsing a view of justice as reciprocity, instead of a principle of equal shares regardless of contribution, for example. For one, it might restrict the realm of justice, and make global justice claims hard to justify. The numerous debates on disability have shown that the commitment with reciprocity in an economic standpoint is particularly problematic because it excludes those who are not able-bodied from the realm of justice, especially if such a commitment is restricted to contribution in the division of labour. Finally, animal ethics has also pointed out that a certain reading of the norm of reciprocity also tends to exclude animals, hence jeopardizing the possibility to consider transfers and exchange with non-human animals (Sangiovanni 2007, Buchanan 1990, Nussbaum 2006). While interesting and important, such debates are out of the scope of this article.

[82] It is worth considering that in their book, little attention is given to inheritance taxes, which could raise the potential amount of money used to fund a UBI (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017, p. 148). However, it is still worth arguing that a UBI funded through such assets might not be enough to accomplish what UBI proponents desire.

[83] It is also worth acknowledging the work of Gijs van Donselaar, who claims that UBI is parasitic, because it does not discriminate between those who are poor because of bad luck and those who are poor because they are unwilling to work, hence allowing the 'lazy ones' to benefit from the effort of those who work to ensure there is enough resources to, among other things, fund a UBI (Van Donselaar 2008).

Therefore, UBI proponents have since focused on arguing against conditional transfers. This second set of arguments states that not only it's too difficult to identify the small minority that does not in effect contribute in an economic or political way, but also that we should not exclude anyone from the realm of social justice, based on a notion of cooperation that disentangles economic contribution from political one (Birnbaum 2012, p. 75). But the question is then what is included in the realm of social justice, that allows political participation to be a satisfying criterion. Many proponents of justice as reciprocity would argue that this would be seen as a minimum threshold that might not be permissible[84].

Finally, a third line of arguments discusses how activation policies might not be fulfilling their role, or even might be doing 'more harm than good'. Anja Eleveld claims that activation policies can lead to stigmatization of recipients, but also create instances of domination[85]. Stuart White, a proponent of justice as reciprocity, has argued that in current unequal societies, activation policies can prove to be less successful, but also detrimental to the goals of social justice, and hence a UBI might be preferable (White 2017).

Hence, it seems that a commitment to the norm of reciprocity does not allow a defence of UBI, except if one drops or significantly relaxes such a commitment. But conditional policies do not seem to be a desirable alternative, not only because of their unfair side effects but also because they often seem to fail in promoting social inclusion. Work and income requirements tend to create poverty or inactivity traps, by not encouraging recipients to accept what are often poorly paid jobs (Standing 2008). Stigmatization also affects recipients' confidence and self-respect, often jeopardizing their capacity to return to their social lives, or to the job market. Hence, while activation policies embody a commitment to the norm of reciprocity, they fail in promoting the society those in favour of a friendly view of justice of reciprocity aspire to. Therefore, how can we build robust safety nets that are equally concerned with reciprocity, mutual regard, self-respect, and solidarity? In what follows I will argue that a UBI can embody all such principles, namely because of it's potential to encourage reciprocation.

---

[84] Birnbaum also argues that if we broaden the scope of what is considered meaningful contribution (to include paid work but also volunteering, etc..) it will become too difficult to implement conditional mechanisms (Birnbaum 2012).

[85] Moreover, they have also proven to be ineffective, by promoting poverty traps, which incentivize recipients to remain outside of paid employment. (Eleveld 2020, 2018; White 2017).

To establish this claim, I will look at existing framings of a UBI as charitable donation, UBI as a compensation for undervalued work and UBI as an entitlement. I will argue that all are limited in describing how UBI is experienced by recipients. As such, I will propose discussing UBI as sharing features with the notion of a gift (i.e., as in Gift Paradigm), which consequently renders the possibility that a UBI promotes reciprocation. Section 2 will discuss which features and moral justifications allow us to frame a UBI as a different payment system, while also introducing which aspects of a gift are embodied by a UBI. Section 3 focuses on discussing why a UBI experienced as a gift encourages reciprocation. Namely, I will argue that as a gift-like transaction, UBI promotes emotions of gratitude and indebtedness, which in turn yield a moral obligation to reciprocate[86]. Section 4 will attempt to present how choices pertaining to the institutional design of a UBI can contribute to highlighting its gift-like features, and hence maximize its role in encouraging reciprocity, before concluding.

This paper builds on the legacy of a special issue by the M.A.U.S.S. revue (Caillé 1996), where the idea of a UBI as expressing 'unconditional conditionality' was introduced. By building on such legacy, it offers a new opportunity to look at UBI and its moral justification, while maintaining a commitment with the principle of reciprocity.

2. UBI as a Payment System: Compensation, Entitlement and Charitable Donation

Unconditional Basic Income can be discussed as a 'payment system'[87]. Viviane Zelizer, who coined the term, distinguishes between three: compensation, as a form of "direct exchange"; entitlements, as "the right to a share" and gift defined as "one person's voluntary bestowal on another" (Zelizer 1998, p. 329). Zelizer argues that what allows us to establish whether a certain transfer should be read as compensation, entitlement or gift is the "social relation between the parties involved"

---

[86] Included after publication for clarification: as mentioned in the introduction, I am arguing that a UBI generates an obligation of reciprocity. Moreover, when perceived as a gift, it also nurtures both a sense of indebtedness and gratitude, which produces a felt need on the recipients to meet this obligation,

[87] This is because a UBI is a monetary transaction, but also because the concern with reciprocity in this article is focused on ensuring citizens nurture relationships of equality. This relational justification is analogous to Zelizer's one for distinguishing between payment systems.

(Zelizer 1998, p. 330). Hence when a son decides to gift his mother after she spend Friday night taking care of her two grandchildren, the son might see it as a fitting mechanism to compensate his mothers' lost time, while the mother might see it as a kind gift from her son. It is worth pointing out that these are ideal types, and a payment embodies more than one system. Such a point can be illustrated in George A. Akerlof's famous paper on labour markets. Akerlof argued that firms pay above the market-clearing wage to encourage worker's effort and productivity. This resembles a gift exchange, where on the "worker's side, the "gift" given is work in excess of the minimum work standard; and on the firm's side the "gift" given is wages in excess of what these women [workers] could receive if they left their current job" (Akerlof 1982, p. 544).

A UBI can be considered along the same lines. As a monetary transaction, embedded in social relations between citizens, a UBI constitutes a payment system. But the degree to which a UBI can be experienced as any one of Zelizer's types is a function of the social relations among those cooperating and the institutional setting in place. Moreover, this will have distinct implications when it comes to the norm of reciprocity. Hence, in what follows, I will discuss how a UBI can embody features of a compensating mechanism, an entitlement, and a charitable donation (which will later be distinguished from a gift).

To start, let's discuss how a UBI can be framed as compensation. A compensation implies an *ex-post* transaction. Compensating is ensuring that one receives a good, service or money for something she has lost/done/performed/sold in the recent or immediate past. It is often analogous to an exchange in the labour market. A UBI as a compensation will thus imply granting everyone an unconditional grant, as return for something they gave or lost. For example, when we argue for a UBI on the grounds that it rewards work that is undervalued in the market (i.e., care work). Libertarian arguments also introduce the idea of UBI as compensation, since individuals have lost the right of ownership of resources, they had a prior claim to (Steiner 2016, p. 294). An unconditional grant is the mechanism through which such compensation can take place, without violating liberal neutrality[88].

However, as Hillel Steiner points out, some proponents of the view that a UBI ensures a fair distribution of resources that all have a prior claim to, often do not discuss it on the grounds of 'compensation'. Instead, philosophers like Thomas Paine were arguing for a dividend as a right

---

[88] As Philippe Van Parijs discusses, this is the 'typical' libertarian defence of a UBI, which can be found in the work of Robert Nozick, but also in Charles Fourier arguments. They rely on the idea of compensation and of being given something as rightful payment for something given or stolen (Van Parijs 1992, p. 9).

(Steiner 2016, p. 294). This is the preferred framing for most UBI proponents**.** Looking at UBI as an entitlement, implies considering it as a grant every individual has a claim, regardless of their standing in society, and hence as prior to social institutions (Van Parijs 1992).

Finally, a UBI might be framed as a form of charitable donation. This is the position of those who argue that a UBI is the preferred mechanism of assistance to the poor, either on the grounds of stigma and recognition, or because of efficiency. Milton Friedman has famously argued for a negative income tax[89] as a more efficient mechanism for assistance to the poor. He claimed that social assistance is generally bad, given its administrative costs, but also because of its interference in individual's freedom (Friedman 1966, p. 9). However, a NIT is not a UBI: the latter is an *ex-ante* mechanism, where everyone receives the same amount regardless of their income. However, we can argue that a UBI should be embedded in a tax system where some are net contributors while others are net recipients. As such, the disbursement of UBI to net recipients can be said to embody the charity duty of those who are better off, if net contributors are those who have more income or capital. But this is a far less common justification for a UBI. Instead, proponents claim that UBI can indeed contribute to solving poverty, but it's not justified solely on that.

We might also consider how a UBI has been justified as a better mechanism for aid agencies in the Global South. GiveDirectly, a non-profit organization working in several countries in Africa and Central America, claims that UBI is a way of "direct giving" which is "efficient, proven, and [an] empowering way to help"[90]. Hence, UBI is justified as a better mechanism for fulfilling an individual or collective duty to help the poor[91] in countries in the Global South, or under emergency contexts.

The gift like qualities of UBI

Philippe Van Parijs in his "Real Freedom for All" argues that a UBI can be justified by being funded through assets upon which nobody has a prior claim, and as such should be construed as gifts. These include natural resources, but also jobs (Van Parijs 1995). Moreover, the unearned nature of these resources also enforces an obligation to give on the part of donors (i.e., the talented or those with a higher share of natural resources). However, such a notion is not extended to how recipients perceive a UBI. While when discussing UBI as charity, compensation, and entitlement we were considering both net contributors and recipients, when discussing UBI as a gift, we have only concentrated on the nature of the assets, and not on UBI experienced by those who receive it. In what follows I will argue that a UBI, by design, embodies aspects of a gift, especially when perceived by net recipients, a point also made by Alain Caillé in a paper for the *Revue du MAUSS* in 1996. This notion of gift is distinct from charitable donations mentioned above. Acknowledging such features, I will argue, implies recognizing UBI's potential in encouraging reciprocity.

---

[89] Negative Income Tax (NIT) is a cash grant whose outcome resembles that a UBI, but while a UBI is distributed to everyone regardless of their income level, or their occupation, a NIT has an income threshold, and hence it is focused on providing people below a certain income level with unconditional cash.

[90] Give Directly is a non-profit organization that collects donations to implement basic income pilots while also allowing donors the possibility to send money directly to households in poor countries or regions, including Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda or in emergency-relief areas in the United States. https://www.givedirectly.org/, accessed January 24th, 2023.

[91] While I am mostly focusing on the framing GiveDirectly introduced to support the idea of UBI, we could also conceive of a UBI that distributes financial assistance to the Global South as a form of compensation (i.e., reparations for past colonial exploitation).

Marcel Mauss famously claimed that gifts entail obligations of reciprocity, in such a way that we should consider the triple obligation of a gift: that of giving, of accepting the gift and of feeling obligated to reciprocate (Mauss 2002). Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, following Mauss, define gift as "any exchange of goods and services with no guarantee of recompense in order to create, nourish or recreate social bonds between people" (Godbout & Caillé 1998, p. 20), which Dave Elder-Vass claims should be identified as a 'bonding gift' (Elder-Vass 2020)[92]. Hence, unstated obligations of reciprocity are at the centre of gifts' capacity to engender social relationships. This is also the main distinction between a gift and a charitable donation. However, it is worth noting that such perspectives are contested. Alain Testart for example, argues that while in exchange there is a legal obligation to reciprocate, in gifts no such obligation is present (Testart 2013, p. 257). While claims to counterparts might be desired, and required by a moral norm, they cannot be legally enforced. Therefore, Testard argues we should be careful in claiming that gifts demand returns, to preserve the distinction between gift and exchange (Testart 2013, p. 258). I will briefly consider in what way a UBI embodies features of a gift, before delving into how such features contribute or not to encourage reciprocity.

1. First, UBI is obviously a transfer, more specifically, it's a unilateral transfer of money.
2. Second, the idea that in gifts we renunciate any enforceable claims on the transfer or the recipient, mirrors the 'unconditional' feature of a UBI. A UBI is unconditional in two senses:
    a. No requirements or rules on how the money should be spent.

---

[92] Caillé claims that Gifts are in the middle of two 'paradigms of social sciences' – individualism and 'holism'. The gift does not deny these two moments and paradigms, but rather highlights how they are interchangeably linked, given that through the gift two distinct persons are interrelated in an obligation as translated in Mauss' triadic of give-receive-return. As such, for Caillé, the gift reconciles not only "obligation and freedom" but also "between personal, self-interest and the interest of alliance or of friendship, the interest in others (alias disinterest)" (Caillé 2000, p. 49).

    b. No requirements regarding occupation or income.

3. Third: Testart argues that in gifts no legal reciprocation can be obligated from the recipient. However, this does not deny the existence of a moral obligation to provide a counterpart. Such a distinction is important. While conditional transfers attach a legal obligation to reciprocate, and as such embody a form of exchange (Goodin 2002, Testart 2013) a UBI does not establish a legal obligation to reciprocate. However, this does not mean that no moral obligation is created once a UBI is granted.
    a. Finally, from point 3 it might follow the possibility that gifts entail the possibility of sustaining enduring social ties, through the triple obligation of give-receive-return. If such obligations are created when a UBI is granted, it might also be argued that a UBI contributes to nurturing social ties, for example, by contributing to institutional trust or social cohesion. This will not, however, be covered in this article.

A final note is warranted. While a UBI can be perceived as a transfer, it is difficult to argue that it might be a voluntary one. While I will claim that we could institutionally design a UBI that is not so strongly perceived as a right prior to social institutions, once it's implemented, a UBI will always yield a legal claim on recipients to receive it[93]. And this is probably a desirable outcome, given that at its core a UBI is meant to function as a safety net. Hence, it will always to a certain extent be perceived as a mechanism that we are entitled to, or that we deserve to receive as compensation. Regardless, as discussed, being an entitlement or a compensation does not dismiss the possibility that a UBI might also be perceived as a gift. Hence, in what follows I will focus on discussing point three: namely on how a moral obligation to reciprocate can be encouraged by receiving an unconditional grant.

3. The Moral Obligation to Reciprocate

Some attention has been given to discussions about how unconditional cash can encourage participation in the labour market. Arguments vary from claiming that a UBI removes poverty and inactivity traps, but also grants people the resources to resort to their personal networks to find jobs. While these can be used as reasons in favour of a UBI on the grounds of reciprocity, I am proposing that a UBI by design creates a moral obligation to reciprocate. I will argue that a UBI can encourage reciprocation by producing psychological effects, namely a feeling of indebtedness (as *I owe something back)* and of gratitude. Let's start by considering one example:

---

[93] A point I was reminded by João Ribeiro (CEPS, University of Minho).

H1: Sara was transferred to a new school. She is a good student, and she is eager to make new friends. She is also a good note keeper, so at the end of the week, she has great notes from her course in Portuguese. At the end of class, she overhears Susana, complaining that she had trouble gathering notes, and is concerned about how she will study for the upcoming test. Sara decides to offer her notebook to Susana, who is surprised with her new colleagues' kindness. Hence, Susana decides to help Sara blend in, by touring her around the school. Moreover, she offers to help in the future if Sara happens to struggle at school.

We might claim that Sara's gesture creates a sense of indebtedness in Susana, compelling her to quickly decide to try to help her new colleague. This is the standard view of gifts and obligations to reciprocate, what Claudia Card calls the 'Debtor-Creditor' Paradigm (Card 1998). When someone receives a gift, a debt is created. Only the payment of such a debt could discharge this obligation. And doing so is essential to ensure equal standing. Indebtedness can thus be defined as "a state of obligation to repay another" (Greenberg 1980). Moreover, it is said to have "motivational properties, such that the greater its magnitude, the greater the resultant arousal and discomfort, and, hence, the stronger the ensuing attempts to deal with it or reduce it" (Greenberg 1980). Martin S. Greenberg's take on indebtedness is not uncommon. Being in someone's debt is often considered uncomfortable or undesirable – and hence the reason why one is impelled to reciprocate, by discharging the debt as quickly as possible. Take the well-known Aristotle's passage on *Nicomachean Ethics*, describing what it takes to be a magnanimous person:

"He is the sort of person who does good but is ashamed when he receives it; for doing good is proper to superior person, but receiving it is proper to the inferior. He returns more good than he has received; for in this way the original giver will be repaid, and will also have incurred a new debt to him, and will be the beneficiary". (*NE* Book IV, p. 3)

Being in another's debt is accepting an asymmetry of standing, and it is therefore detrimental to our standing in society. Only repayment can revert this situation. Such a view would determine that the follow up to Sara and Susana's example is the following:

H2: Weeks passed, and Susana never found an opportunity to help Sara with course work. Sara was always on top of classes and never needed help. Susana contemplated several ways to discharge her obligation and get rid of her debt. She took Sara to a concert. She even shared her favourite place to go get ice cream. But this was never enough. Susana always felt uneasy by not being able to return the favour Sara kindly bestowed upon her.

If such an example seems plausible, one could ask why would Susana accept the favour in the first place? She might as well not accept any favours, fearing she will never find a way to discharge her obligation to her benefactor. Moreover, if reciprocation is encouraged only through the uncomfortable sense of indebtedness, I would be careful in endorsing a UBI that encourages such a feeling. One could even argue that if this is so, we might better stick with conditional transfers, whose contractual rules determine what is the required return from recipients.

However, I am confident in saying that most people would agree that the follow up scenario for Sara and Susana (H2) is not a realistic account of how the latter would feel in the aftermath of Sara's kindness. This is because most people don't keep accounting books on the benefits they receive, the amount they have reciprocated, and what they are still owing to other people (especially, the more intimate[94] a relationship is, or if they believe their partners is acting in 'goodwill' or 'good faith'). Hence, one can imagine a different scenario:

H3: Susana did not forget what Sara did for her. Susana saw it both as a kind gesture from someone she did not know, but also felt it had an important impact on her academic progress. She felt grateful and decided to tour her colleague around, sharing some of the tips she had about the school.

H3 brings to the fore a second mechanism that is often associated with gift exchange. Gratitude can be defined as "the positive recognition of benefits received" (Emmons 2004 p. 5). Georg Simmel claimed gratitude is the 'moral memory of mankind' and a 'cognitive-emotional supplement' (Emmons 2004, p. 7)[95], that reminds us that we ought to return gifts we receive. Such perception seems to be confirmed by empirical studies, which observed that gratitude has an 'action-tendency' geared towards contributing to the welfare of 'the benefactor (or a third party) in the future" (Emmons 2004, p. 7). Hence, feeling grateful for a gift motivates us to reciprocate in the future. But where can we ground feelings of gratitude? Catriona McKinnon makes the very compelling case that only gifts that we don't feel any "special desert claim" can spark gratitude (McKinnon 2006, p. 206). Whereas, if we feel we deserve a gift, we will not feel obligated to reciprocate the favour. Hence, at the core of gratitude is the idea of being undeserving of the claim.

---

[94] I am assuming intimacy to be determined more by the affectionate nature and goodwill amongst those standing in a relationship, then by what their relationship status could in principle define. So, for example, it is plausible that Joana has a closer relationship with her friend and does not keep score on the benefits accrued to both, than with her husband, with whom she shares a tempestuous relationship.

[95] Emmons believes that Simmel's definition of gratitude is justified because formal social structures are insufficient to ensure reciprocation. Hence gratitude acts as a reminder that favours should be reciprocated (Emmons 2004, p. 7).

McKinnon is partly right: undeservingness contributes to feeling grateful. But we can also be grateful for gifts that we deserve.

Take a devoted father. Throughout his daughter's upbringing, he does everything he can to provide for her, taking her to school, feeding her, and teaching her the basics for her to be able to be independent and confident. When she is grown, she feels grateful for the father she had. She is encouraged to also be a devoted daughter, partly because doing so pays tribute to the role her father played in her upbringing. But she is also capable of arguing that such treatment is something she was entitled to as a child, who deserves to be nurtured. She feels strongly about being entitled to care and love, but also feels lucky for having received it. As we can see, gratitude is not reserved only for our undeserved gifts. As Emmons points out, "people experience the emotion of gratitude most consistently and strongly when they perceive themselves as recipients of an intentionally rendered benefit that is both valuable to the beneficiary and costly to the benefactor" (Emmons 2004, p. 5). Gratitude is a function of our sense of deservingness but also of our perception of the gift received. This is also consistent with what I heard while interviewing people involved in a guaranteed income experiment in the northeast of the United States. When asked about receiving a guaranteed income, a lot of the respondents replied something along these lines: 'I feel like a lot of people in the city need the money, some might need it more, so I am so grateful for having these extra bucks. But I am glad I received it, because I also need it, and I also work so hard, and deserve this help'. For a lot of the recipients feeling grateful was not at all inconsistent with feeling deserving[96]. As such, gratitude seems to be elicited not only because one feels lucky, in the sense of undeserving, but also because of the extent to which the gift benefits the recipient and translates a cost for the donor.

Considering that gratitude can be sparked whether one feels deserving or not, it is important to distinguish it from indebtedness. In fact, we often talk of 'debts of gratitude', which would imply that gratitude is a form of repayment typical of certain debts (i.e., kindness). Except that there seems to be an agreement on the distinction between being indebted and being grateful (Emmons 2004; Goyal, et al. 2022; Peng, et al. 2018; Fitzgerald 1998; Card 1998). Such a distinction might lie in several places. One could say that indebtedness is a duty who requires that we repay a benefit according to a certain amount and regardless of how we feel about it; whereas in gratitude 'our heart needs to be in it', since gratitude without feeling grateful does not exist. This is the distinction Patrick Fitzgerald makes, arguing that gratitude is a set of feelings, namely "1) a warm sense of appreciation for somebody or something, (2) a sense of goodwill toward that individual or thing, and (3) a disposition to act which flows from appreciation and goodwill" (Fitzgerald 1998, p. 120). I take this distinction to capture some of our intuitions on the topic. However, it seems somewhat limited since it considers debts as external to our perception of their existence. But many debts are not like that – like Susana and Sara's example implies. In such cases, the psychological impact of indebtedness is important, to recognize the existence of a debt, but also to impel us to reciprocate. In fact, when Aristotle discusses the diminished pride from being indebted to someone, I think he is rightly pointing out that our recognition of a debt, implies an emotion that for Aristotle should be uncomfortable, which in turn should impels us to repay the debt.

---

[96] These were insights collected on interviews conducted by the CGIR – Center for Guaranteed Income Research from University of Pennsylvania, in February 2022, in Paterson, New Jersey, to individuals receiving a guaranteed income. The results are summarized in an empirical paper, claiming that the emotions participants felt when receiving a guaranteed income are a result of experiencing a GI as a gift-like transaction (Neves 2023).

Thus, I believe the distinction between indebtedness and gratitude lies somewhere else, namely in (1) the nature of the emotions sparked, and (2) the moral motives that are consequently created. Greenberg surveyed empirical studies to discuss how feeling grateful might be distinct from feeling indebted, namely in how one is more likely to motivate someone to reciprocate (Greenberg 1980, p. 13). Gratitude can be said to elicit a positive emotion that is backward looking[97], in the sense that it carries with it an appreciation and recognition for the donor's benefit, which is better illustrated by the notion of being obligated than indebted (Goyal, et al. 2022, Peng, et al. 2018)[98]. Such a distinction between indebtedness and gratitude has led authors like Mees van Houten to claim that gratitude is a form of recognition of the other (Hulzen 2021, p. 119), a point both Fitzgerald and Card share. Card claims that feeling grateful is assuming a responsibility for the other, which should not be conflated with actual debts (Card 1998, p. 124), while Fitzgerald argues that gratitude's positive glow is essential to preserve special relationships with friends or lovers, or to reinforce communal ties (Fitzgerald 1998, p. 130).

We are now capable of discussing the implications of gratitude and indebtedness to our discussion on the norm of reciprocity and UBI. I started this paper by stating the normative appeal of the 'friendly view of reciprocity', in part because of the promise reciprocity has of promoting equal relationships and enduring social bonds. If we all do our fair share, and give not in proportion to what we take, but in proportion to what we can, and to what we believe others need, we are closer to a fairer society, animated by the values of trust and reciprocity. And as I mentioned, defenders of UBI seem to side-line this discussion, fearing that basic income lacks the potential to contribute to the values mentioned. But if one looks closely at UBI's gift like qualities, we might be persuaded to think otherwise.

---

[97] I am thankful for the exchanges I had the pleasure of having with Philippe Van Parijs at the Hoover Chair, where he rightly discussed how gratitude has a 'positive glow'.

[98] On the one hand, Goyal et. al. found that while indebtedness is a better predictor of reciprocation, gratitude is long lasting. Hence, while one stops feeling indebted once the debt is discharged through repayment, gratitude lasts some time, after the reciprocation is made (Goyal, et al. 2022). Peng et. al. contribute to this distinction. Indebtedness is a more effective mechanism in facilitating social exchange, by motivating reciprocation. While gratitude is better at promoting social proximity and enduring social relations. Hence, gratitude is about signalling the desire to form a bond, while indebtedness is about facilitating exchange (Peng, et al. 2018). Our examples of Susana and Sara illustrate this functional distinction.

Conditional transfers establish contracts. To receive assistance, we agree to contribute in a certain manner. If one does not contribute according to the rules, one will be cut off. Such mechanism coerces contribution, by creating a debt: from the beginning, those who ask for help, are made aware that they have a creditor – the state and so every taxpayer – and that the debt should be paid every week or month, with an active proof of job search, training, or any other requirements pre-agreed to. Indebtedness is the key mechanism which is being instrumentalized to ensure those receiving assistance are aware of their standing as creditors. In contrast, when receiving a UBI no counterpart is legally required. Hence why proponents of reciprocity have argued that no-strings-attached is a violation of collective obligations to contribute. But I am proposing that unconditional cash can create a sense of indebtedness, but most importantly, of gratitude, which is conducive to reciprocity of a 'positive kind'.

When receiving an unconditional grant, one might feel indebted, and wish to become an activist for UBI, or even vote more often. A UBI can also give an opportunity to settle old debts, or to create new ones. I am reminded of some insights coming out from basic income experiments. Dirk Haarmann told me that people in Otjivero, Namibia, demanded more from fellow citizens once a UBI was implemented (Merrill, et al. 2022). Moreover, in interviews with people involved in a guaranteed income experiment in Paterson, New Jersey, the sense of indebtedness after receiving a UBI was often echoed by participants. Some said they were receiving the money because they had been good citizens or faithful Christians. Others said that because they received the money, they had to share it with family members who helped them before. There were also some who said that because they were being helped through a UBI, they were also encouraged to help others, namely by giving some money to beggars on the street. Finally, there were also expressions such as "doing what's right with the money", that conveyed the idea that the money created a debt that can only be paid by using the money in ways deemed responsible[99]. Indebtedness might be self-motivating, but also a form of social regulation[100].

But while UBI promotes a sense of debt, it might also inspire gratitude. With a UBI no one has a legal obligation to reciprocate. Nor is anyone constantly told they are indebted to the state or fellow citizens[101]. Gratitude cannot be created if one is constantly told that they are in debt. The nature and bureaucracy of social assistance mechanisms, coupled with the often-meagre benefits given to recipients, crowds out the possibility for gratitude. By granting benefits unconditionally, a UBI removes barriers for gratitude, but also offers 'real freedom' (Van Parijs 1995), which further amplifies the sense of gratitude, given how impactful such a gift is. The fact is that a modest-to-high UBI might enable the pursuit of desired life projects, or the abandoning of exploitative work arrangements or relationships. All the expected outcomes a UBI promises to deliver, symbolize a significant shift in individual's freedom and in their lives, whose magnitude is conducive to feelings of gratitude.

4. UBI to Encourage Reciprocity

Before closing, it is worth considering in what way can the institutional architecture of a UBI reinforce its gift like qualities. I will consider three aspects: 1) Highlight the sense of indebtedness; 2) Maximize feelings of gratitude and 3) Design it as much as possible as a voluntary transfer. All these aspects will contribute to specific insights into how a UBI should be financed, designed, communicated, and implemented.

1) Highlight the sense of indebtedness: One of the ways to create a sense of indebtedness when receiving a UBI, is by looking at UBI's funding. Financing a UBI from resources that we have inherited not only from nature, but also from past generations, can generate a sense of indebtedness (and possibly also gratitude), a point argued by both Van Parijs, but also Simon Birnbaum (Van Parijs 1992, p. 24; Birnbaum 2020, p. 281).

Funding a UBI through the taxes on certain technologies, or certain natural resources can contribute to highlight this sense of a collective years-long inheritance. The sense of indebtedness will then contribute to encourage the collective obligation to reciprocate to the next generations, namely through the maintenance of the resources, or through sustainable growth and development. As such, each generation will have the capacity to pass on the gifts they have received, generating a flow of indebtedness (but also gratitude) while also sustaining social bonds[102]. Such a mechanism might be stronger for small administrative regions, or if the source of funding is identified as something that is inherited from the past. As such, to highlight the sense of collective indebtedness it might be worth having a local UBI. For example, in a region well known for wine production it might be worth having this as a source for UBI funding (even if only partially). Funding a UBI through local resources or services, which relate to local history, can be a way to also accentuate the physical but also symbolical aspect of inheritance, and of an obligation to give back.

---

[99] See footnote 20 (or footnote 95 of this dissertation)

[100] Small account from the experience in Otjivero, Namibia, implied that indebtedness could also act as a sort of informal 'moral police' demanding the compliance with the norm of reciprocity. This is however out of scope for this article.

101 A point often made by participants in Paterson who discussed being so grateful, not only for being a GI recipient, but also because for the first time they received money which they could use in whatever way they want or need (Neves 2023)

2) Maximize feelings of gratitude: Two communication and design features might be important to maximize the individual sense of gratitude when receiving a UBI. The fist comes from McKinnon's idea of 'undeserved claim'. Once a UBI is implemented, individuals will most likely feel 'entitled to the transfer', given that legal and administrative procedures will be implemented. Hence, not only it will be important to design and highlight how it is, for example, a transfer we inherited from past generations, and ought to give it back to future ones, but it might also be worth exploring mechanisms to create a sense of constant 'wonder'. One way to do this, might be to have a similar mechanism as the Alaska Permanent Fund. Funded through the proceedings of the oil industry in Alaska, the amount of the dividend is conditioned on the industry's profits. The Alaska government created a yearly national broadcast on the media, where it is announced the yearly profits and how much each Alaskan will receive that year. This sense of unexpectedness can contribute to the emotions of gratitude, especially in years where the dividend is quite high.

Besides playing with the idea of un-deservingness, it is also worth considering that gratitude is generated by a sense that the gift we receive is impactful for the recipient, and costlier for the donor. While the former will be conditioned on how basic income is used (i.e., in moments of unemployment, or of difficult financial situation, it might be perceived as more impactful), the latter might be reinforced by communicating the opportunity cost of a UBI. Every policy has an opportunity cost, as the cost that results from not funding something else. A UBI will always have a high opportunity cost, which should be communicated in order to maximize a sense of gratitude.

---

[102] Discussions on intergenerational justice have introduced the idea of reciprocity as sustaining obligations to future generations (Gosseries 2009). We can also argue that individuals' will have 'lifetime individual interests' that might be consistent with retaining a certain resource (ex. ensure a certain region continues to be known because of their river, or their cork production). Inasmuch as these interests sustain a sense of indebtedness to honour these commitments and principles, an intergenerational chain will be sustained (Thompson 2009).

3) Highlight the ‘choice to give’ nature of UBI: Designing a UBI as a voluntary transfer is perhaps the most challenging feature. Being a periodical transfer, jeopardizes the sense of being a voluntary unilateral transfer, which is a characteristic of what gifts are. Regardless, there are still design features that can contribute to generate a sense of a UBI being a transfer that is chosen and hence, to a certain degree, voluntary: The first is again the idea of opportunity cost. Introducing what a UBI costs, but also stressing what was not funded to implement it, creates the idea that we chose to have a UBI instead of other policies. It might also be worth pondering the possibility that basic income should be subjected to public voting, either through nation or local-wide polls or even referendums. However, one should keep in mind that there might be an important trade-off between security and choice. Regular voting might render the policy more unstable, which might compromise the sense of UBI being a safety net. Thirdly, local assemblies could also be created to discuss the implementation of basic income. Such assemblies could centralize communication on how UBI is being implemented, on how much the policy costs, but also on sharing stories about how the money is being spent (in an anonymized way to avoid paternalism). This degree of transparency can contribute to all three mechanisms - the sense of indebtedness, gratitude and of voluntary transfer - while also contributing to the democratic accountability of UBI.

Before closing, some notes are warranted. As mentioned above, these mechanisms are meant to highlight the gift-like features of a UBI. However, a UBI will also have features that allow us to characterize it as an entitlement or even as a compensation, especially considering how citizens relate to each other and interact with the policy. However, if we intend to encourage the moral obligation to reciprocate, it is worth acknowledging but also promoting the gift-like features of a UBI. This was the concern that guided the institutional proposals mentioned above. Finally, it is also worth recognizing that many of the proposals mentioned above, namely the ones that render a UBI more like a voluntary transfer, can make it more susceptible to political and economic crisis. Recent events such as the Brexit have laid bare the challenges of direct democracy, especially given the impact of misinformation campaigns. Hence, there might be important trade-offs, which determine that some measures should be scrapped in favour of securing the core features of UBI.

5. Conclusion

One of the participants of an unconditional cash grant experiment in the US told me that anyone receiving an unconditional cash should '*do right with the money'.* This echoes the paternalistic objection to UBI (*don't use the money in a wrong way*) but I believe it is also a testament to how gifts can have moral obligations to reciprocate. This is the main claim put forth in this article. Inasmuch UBI shares some features with what gifts are, it may be a mechanism that encourages an obligation to reciprocate.

We might consider that this *ex-post* obligation of reciprocity is not bullet-proof: what happens if citizens do not reciprocate? While I strongly belief such cases are negligible, I would not dismiss the power of both the psychological propensities of indebtedness and gratitude, but also the impact of collective moral accountability in bringing about changes in behaviour. I believe UBI can promote the need to reciprocate the gift received, hence contributing to a society where all have the resources, but also the motivation to reciprocate the benefits they are given.

Finally, we might be worried that the sense of UBI as a gift will fade away in time, hence weakening the feelings that encourage the obligation to reciprocate. Besides the institutional proposals, which I believe reinforce the gift-like qualities of a UBI, it is worth considering that a UBI is a life-long safety net, whose impacts are felt differently across our lifetime, depending on the circumstances we face. Inasmuch this is true, our lives will grant us several opportunities to experience UBI as an important gift to counter challenging economic crisis, or to encourage the pursuit of distinct goals.

I believe the possibility of a UBI encouraging reciprocation should be seriously entertained in our debates on unconditional cash. And while this is a theoretical claim that should be subjected to empirical verification, the aim of this article is to make a normative claim. It is not just that a UBI encourages reciprocity, but also, that it is a better fit to promote the norm of reciprocity we should be endorsing. If our concern is only with ensuring people repay benefits received, we shouldn't be concerned with motives. But, if we are concerned with relationships of equality, mutual recognition, and self-respect, we ought to pay attention to what motivates people to reciprocate. I believe being grateful is more enduring, more positive, and more conducive to a society where trust and reciprocity are fostered. And I believe it is worth exploring the hypothesis that a UBI, with its strong commitment to trust and freedom, and its gift like qualities, might be the right mechanism to deliver such a society.

References

Akerlof, G. A. 1982 Labor Contracts as Partial Gift Exchange, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 97, 4: 543-569.

Aristotle, Bartlett, R. C., & Collins, S. D. 2011 *Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Atkinson, T. 1996 The Case for a Participation Income, *The Political Quarterly* 67,1: 67-70.

Birnbaum, S. 2012 *Basic Income reconsidered. Social Justice, Liberalism, and the Demands of Equality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Birnbaum, S. 2020. Unconditional basic income and duties of contribution: exploring the republican ethos of justice, in Eleveld A, Kampen, T & Arts, J. ed. Welfare to work in Contemporary European Welfare States: Legal, Sociological and Philosophical perspectives on Justice and Domination. Bristol: Policy Press, 281-305.

Bowles, S., Boyd, R., Fehr, E. and Gintis, H. 1997 Homo reciprocans: A Research Initiative on the Origins, Dimensions, and Policy Implications of Reciprocal Fairness, 1-30.

Buchanan, A. 1990 Justice as Reciprocity versus Subject-Centered Justice, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19, 3: 227-252.

Caillé, A. 1996 Presentation of La Revue du MAUSS semestrielle, Vers un revenu minimum inconditionnel, *La Revue du MAUSS semestrielle* 7, 1er semester.

Caillé, A. 1996 De l'inconditionnalité conditionnelle in Presentation of La Revue du MAUSS semestrielle, Vers un revenu minimum inconditionnel, *La Revue du MAUSS* semestrielle 7, 1er semester: 367-382.

Caillé, A. 2000 Gifts and Associations, in Vandevelde, T. ed. Gifts and Interests. Leuven: Peeters, 45-55.

Card, C. 1998 Gratitude and Obligation, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25, 2: 115-127.

Elder-Vass, D. 2020 Defining the gift, *Journal of Institutional Economics* 16: 675-685.

Eleveld, A. 2018 The sanctions mitigation paradox in welfare to work benefit schemes, *Comparative Labor & Policy Journal*, 39: 102-28.

Eleveld, A. 2020 Welfare to work and the republican theory of non-domination, in Eleveld A, Kampen, T & Arts, J. ed. Welfare to work in Contemporary European Welfare States: Legal, Sociological and Philosophical perspectives on Justice and Domination. Bristol: Policy Press, 263-280

Emmons, R. A. 2004 The Psychology of Gratitude. An Introduction, in Emmons, R. A. & McCullough, M. E. ed. The Psychology of Gratitude. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-16.

Fitzgerald, P. 1998 Gratitude and Justice, *Ethics* 109, 1: 119-153.

Friedman, M. 1966 The Case for the Negative Income Tax: A View from the Right, *Proceedings of the National Symposium on Guaranteed Income*. Chamber of Commerce: Washington, U.S., 49-55.

Godbout, J., & Caillé, A. 1998 *The World of the Gift*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Godelier, M. 1999 *The Enigma of the Gift*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goodin , R. E. 2002 Structures of Mutual obligation, *Journal of Social Policy* 31, 4: 579–596.

Gosseries, A. 2009 Three Models of Intergenerational Reciprocity, in Gosseries, A. & Meyer, L. H. ed. Intergenerational Justice. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 120-146.

Gouldner, A. W. 1960 The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement, *American Sociological Review* 25, 2: 161-178.

Goyal, N., Adams, M. M., Wice, M., Sullivan, S. and Miller, J. G. 2022 Gratitude endures while indebtedness persuades: investigating the unique influences of gratitude and indebtedness in helping, *Cognition and Emotion* 36, 7: 1361-1373.

Greenberg, M. S. 1980 A Theory of Indebtedness, in Gergen, K. J., Greenberg, M. S. & Willis, R. H. ed. Social Exchange. Advances in Theory and Research. New York: Plenum Press, 3-26.

Honneth, A. 1992 *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Hulzen, M. V. 2021 Gratitude and that which we cannot return: critical reflections on gratitude, *Zemo* 4: 109-119.

Lister, A. 2011 Justice as Fairness and Reciprocity, *Analyse & Kritik* 1: 91-112.

Mauss, M. 2002 *The Gift*. London: Routledge Classics.

McKinnon, C. 2003 Basic Income, Self-Respect and Reciprocity, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 20, 2: 143-158.

McKinnon, C. 2006 Giving as Good as you Get?, *Res Publica* 12: 203–212.

Merrill, R., Neves, C., & Laín, B. 2022 *Basic Income Experiments. A Critical Examination of Their Goals, Contexts, and Methods*. Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan.

Meuleman, B., Van Oorschot, W., Sharon Baute, S. D., & Roosma, F. 2018 The Past, Present and Future of European Welfare Attitudes: Topline Results from Round 8 of the European Social Survey. Brussels: European Social Survey. Retrieved November 2022, from https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS8_toplines_issue_8_welfare.pdf

Neves, C. 2023 Reciprocity, Guaranteed Income and Gift: Evidence from a Guaranteed Income Experiment, *forthcoming*.

Nussbaum, M. C. 2006 *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership.* Boston: Harvard University Press.

Oorschot, W. V. 2000 Who Should Get What, and Why? On Deservingness Criteria and the Conditionality of Solidarity Among the Public. *Policy and Politics* 28: 33-48.

Peng, C., Nelissen, R. M. and Zeelenberg, M. 2018 Reconsidering the roles of gratitude and indebtedness in social exchange *Cognition and Emotion* 32, 4: 760-772.

Sahlins, M. 1972 *Stone Age Economics*. New York: Routledge.

Sangiovanni, A. 2007 Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35: 3-39.

Simmel, G. 1950 *The sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe: IL: Free Press. (Original work published 1908).

Standing, G. 2008 How Cash Transfers Promote the Case for Basic Income *Basic Income Studies* 3, 1:1–30.

Steiner, H. 2016 Compensation for liberty lost. Left libertarianism and unconditional basic income *Juncture* 22, 4: 293-297.

Testart, A. 1998 Uncertainties of the “Obligation to Reciprocate”: A Critique of Mauss, in James, W & Allen, N. J. ed. Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute. New York: Berghahn Books, 97-110.

Testart, A. 2013 What is a gift?, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, 1: 249–261.

Thompson, J. 2009 Identity and Obligation in a Transgenerational Polity, in Gosseries, A. & Meyer, L. H. ed. Intergenerational Justice. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 25-49.

Van Donselaar, G. 2008 *The Right to Exploit. Parasitism, Scarcity, Basic Income*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, P. 1991 Why Surfers Should be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 20, 2: 101-131.

Van Parijs, P. 1992 *Arguing for Basic Income* London: Verso.

Van Parijs, P. 1995 *Real Freedom for All. What (if Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Parijs, P. 1997 Reciprocity and the Justification of an Unconditional Basic Income. Reply to Stuart White, *Political Studies* 45: 327-330.

Van Parijs, P., and Vanderborght, Y. 2017 *Basic Income: a Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

White, S. 2003 *The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, S. 2017 Should a minimum income be unconditional?, in Matteucci Civitarese, S. & Halliday, S. ed. Social Rights in Europe in an Age of Austerity. London: Routledge, 181-196

White, S. 2020 Freedom, Exit and Basic Income, in Eleveld A, Kampen, T & Arts, J. ed. Welfare to work in Contemporary European Welfare States: Legal, Sociological and Philosophical perspectives on Justice and Domination. Bristol: Policy Press, 307-330

Zelizer, V. A. 1996 Payments and Social Ties, *Sociological Forum* 11, 3: 481-495.

Zelizer, V. A. 1998 How do we know whether a monetary transaction is a gift, an entitlement, or compensation?, in Ben-Ner, A. & Putterman, L. G. ed. Economics, Values, and Organization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 329-333.

Conclusion

I would like to return to what was one of the main initial questions of my dissertation.

If I dismiss or relax the objection of reciprocity, a UBI would be permissible. So… 'Why Reciprocity?'

I have a sense that anthropologists and sociologists would tell me this is a futile question. Reciprocity has been argued as a universal norm (Gouldner, 1960; Adloff & Mau, 2006). Such authors have claimed that reciprocity is present across societies, even if expressed differently according to culture and history.

But this is a dissertation in political philosophy, and in this domain, such a question does not seem vain. Even if reciprocity has a long-lasting tradition, there is no reason why we ought to endorse it as a normative principle. History and custom are not always the right source for moral principles. Therefore, we should ask: why reciprocity?

I think reciprocity is appealing as a normative principle that embodies ideas of interdependence and mutuality. Reciprocity as defined in this dissertation is of a generalized kind (Sahlins, 1972)[103] It is often indirect, non-proportional nor immediate. Returns are not governed by the nature and value of the initial gift; rather, they are mostly defined by what each relationship determines to be required. A mode of generalized exchange such as this one is both compatible with differentiated returns (i.e., if someone is not able to contribute the same amount; or if one is required to receive more than it gives), but also with a recognition that everyone in a given political community should contribute to the social product, according to their talents, preferences and possibilities. Moreover, this form of reciprocity might be the one that better fosters trust and 'social solidarity'[104], and hence better captures what seems to be the project of most egalitarians.

But we should not stop this enquiry once we have an answer to why reciprocity ought to be defended. In my dissertation I am also arguing that political philosophers need to reconsider their framing of reciprocity. Often this seemed to be a project of rescuing reciprocity from what has been a consistent narrowing down of what we owe (and give!) each other. Recognizing the many meanings of reciprocity, also means acknowledging that we should try to be specific as to which form of reciprocity we are endorsing and why.

---

[103] Such a form of reciprocity still considers that everyone should aim to contribute to the social product, but it is much more sensitive to citizen's capacity and possibilities for doing so. It is also much more forgiving of non-returns, given its embeddedness in social relationships.

[104] This sort of generalized reciprocity can in many ways resemble what often is considered as a form of solidarity. Interestingly, Molm, Collett and Schaefer claimed that solidarity should not be seen as a mode of exchange, but rather the outcome of certain forms of reciprocal exchange. In such a perspective, generalized reciprocal interaction, like the one I argue for in this dissertation, can be considered the best mechanism to encourage and enhance social solidarity, defined as "the integrative bonds that develop between persons, and between persons and the social units to which they belong." (Molm, Collett and Schaefer, 2007).

Hence, while I believe reciprocity should remain as a central principle in any political theory concerned with equality, I don't think we should want 'any reciprocity', but only the one which serves our purposes of creating an egalitarian society, concerned with trust, community, and solidarity. This means acknowledging that what reciprocity demands of us can vary (in what is demanded, to whom is demanded and when, and in how much). Therefore, I also believe we must subordinate reciprocity to relationships among individuals, so that we understand and encourage relationships, which can then sustain (and later be sustained) by the sort of reciprocity that best fits them, but also best fits principles of individual freedom and equality.

Thus, there is no tension when it comes to upholding freedom and reciprocity. We can have a society of free individuals, who stand in relationships of equality, but recognize their mutual interdependence, and embrace it.

This debate is especially important for the defence of UBI I present in this dissertation. Ever since Philippe Van Parijs' wrote *Real Freedom for All* (Van Parijs, 1995), UBI has mostly been argued on the grounds of its potential impact in maximizing individual freedom. I believe the argument of this dissertation allows us to consider how a UBI could also be an important tool to build a society where reciprocity stands alongside freedom as an important value. As I claim in my final article, if our concern is only with ensuring people repay benefits received, we shouldn't be worried with what motivates people to cooperate in a political community. But, if we are concerned with 'democratic mutual regard' (White, 2003), mutual recognition and self-respect, we ought to pay attention to what motivates people to reciprocate. I believe when it comes to social assistance mechanisms, UBI with its strong commitment to trust and freedom, might be the best fitting mechanism to deliver a society that recognizes both the concerns with freedom, but also with community.

It is however necessary to address some of the possible objections to the arguments of this dissertation. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the possible objections that might be raised, but rather my own response to the ones who seem to be the most common but also the strongest.

Objection 1. On reciprocity. Is it not preferable to have direct but also proportional 'tit-for-tat' reciprocity? Direct and proportional reciprocity might be the best mechanism to ensure relationships of equality.

I would argue that it does not.

Such a perspective focuses too much on the nature of the return, and too little on the relationship taking place. On article III of this dissertation, I discuss how philosophers such as Lawrence Becker or Andrew Lister, argued that exchanges need to be 'balanced' to promote equality, as opposed to exploitation, or to ensure "fruitful relationships" (Becker 1986). But I also pointed out how such perspectives seem to run counter to important anthropological evidence on reciprocal exchanges (Sahlins, 1972; Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 1990). Particularly, Marshall Sahlins discussed in his observations of pre-capitalist societies that it is within socially close relationships that unbalanced exchanges tend to be accepted – something he called generalized reciprocity. And this is simple to understand: if one trusts a partner, one is more likely to be willing to accept a delayed return, or even to accept not receiving any return at all – as with a friend, or a brother. In a political community, where trust among citizens is present, generalized reciprocity explains why I might be willing to help a stranger: I might be moved by the stranger's need of help, but I might also have a strong belief that I ought to help others, since I have been helped before, or I want to be helped in the future.

Therefore, I believe we should not assume that equality in relationships is only a function of balanced 'tit-for-tat' exchanges, but we should also not endorse it. If we take the view that reciprocity that is conducive to equality among citizens is only the one where everyone ships in as much as it gets, then we assume that a number of citizens will be automatically considered unequal: either because of their talents, their capacities or their disadvantages. No one will be allowed to be helped if they see themselves incapable of contributing the exact same amount of what they require to survive. This will most likely be unfair for people with disabilities, but also to women and to those who might see themselves in a dire situation (i.e., unemployment or poverty; mental health, struggling with addiction). This is a familiar objection from those who argue against justice as reciprocity (Nussbaum, 2006; Sangiovanni, 2007; Buchanan, 1990). I think this is also why some egalitarians, like Stuart White, might be in favour of direct reciprocity, but reject proportional reciprocity (White, 2003). What I am arguing in this dissertation follows the same reasoning, and hence part of this objection only holds if one considers a significant narrow view of what reciprocity requires.

But it is worth considering whether in that case we should focus not on proportionality, but on the direction of exchange, and at least favour direct reciprocity. I believe this still is a significant narrowing down of reciprocity. While direct reciprocity seems to be quite familiar, accounts like Sahlins, and his view on generalized reciprocity, considers how in socially close relationships returns are often delayed, or quite postponed, but also take place within networks, in such a way that I might give a gift, and only receive a return from someone else, and in a very distinct period of time. Such a view is to be contrasted even with accounts of direct reciprocity, that do not require proportionality.

Hence, I claim that 'reciprocity plays a role in nurturing and shaping relationships of equality or inequality' but 'the nature of the relationship among those cooperating also determines which mode of reciprocity might be prevalent, considering different variables (e.g., trust, past record of interaction, degree of intimacy, norms, and social roles)'.

Objection 2: Fine, I understand your point both on reciprocity and UBI, but what if the moral obligation created by a UBI is not strong enough, and people decide not to cooperate?

This objection rests on the perspective that under conditional cash grants and activation policies, individuals who choose not to comply with the legal obligation to reciprocate will be sanctioned. The sanction mechanism functions as the 'tit-for-tat' version of reciprocity – *if you do not contribute, you do not receive assistance* – but it is also instrumentalized as an incentive to prevent non-compliance. In a moral obligation such mechanisms do not exist. Hence, people will be free to choose not to cooperate. This is the nature of granting everyone an unconditional cash grant.

This is also in many ways an empirical question. It remains to be seen how strong is the perceived need felt by recipients of their moral obligation to reciprocate the UBI received, and also how people will choose to comply with it, considering their social and cultural backgrounds.

Regardless, two points can be raised to temper these concerns, mostly focusing on the difference between legal and moral obligation. They also provide important normative arguments in favour of an unconditional cash grant that yields a moral obligation to contribute, as opposed to conditional assistance.

1. Moral obligations are not without sanctions.

It is a misconception to assume that moral obligations do not have any sanctioning mechanisms. While these mechanisms will not be legally enforced, nor necessarily disclosed, they are still prevalent and often they are quite strong in willing action. Hence, it will not be surprising to see how people might be felt compelled to contribute once receiving a UBI, considering the pressure and customs of their own social circle. They might feel that their families expect them to do something with the money; or that their neighbours wish them to become someone different. Or this might also be internally created: they might wish to help because a UBI has also helped them in some way.

Article V of this dissertation provides some empirical clues on how such mechanisms might take place. Participants in the Guaranteed Income Paterson Pilot (GIPP) told me about the different ways through which they felt this obligation. Some said that once they had the extra bucks, they felt the need to repay the assistance received from family members; others felt the need to use the money to gift their kids, something they could not do before; a lot of them express the need to use it in a way that is deemed responsible, namely, to leverage their families' position. Not to 'spoil' the gift, but rather to honour it. Finally, some said that they wanted to give back to the community, because if they were helped, they ought to help others in return.

While data on this effect is limited, it is well-known that moral norms create sanctioning mechanisms. People do not throw garbage on the street because it is not right to do so, but also because they don't want to be frowned upon by their neighbours. Therefore, I believe there are strong reasons to consider that the moral obligation to reciprocate created by a UBI will also create sanctioning mechanisms, that further incentivize compliance with the norm.

2. The crowding out effect.

While the first point is about whether people will be 'coerced' into contributing because of existing sanctioning mechanisms attached to the moral obligation to reciprocate, the second point emphasizes why people might willingly do so, regardless of existing coercing mechanisms.

In article VI of this dissertation, I claim why a UBI experienced as a gift is distinct from conditional cash grants. In the latter, recipients enter a contract with social services: to receive assistance, they are required to contribute – either by accepting the first job offer that pops up, by attending training or by showing regular proof of their commitment to find a job. If they decline to do so, they will be cut off. As mentioned, such mechanisms 'coerce contribution', by creating a debt: from the beginning, those who ask for help, are made aware that they have a creditor.

But as pointed out, when we highlight the indebtedness of the mechanism, we crowd out the possibility for feeling grateful. If one is constantly monitored, and constantly told that they need to pay out their debt, gratitude will not be sparked. A simple example illustrates the point:

> Afonso needs help. He was recently laid off and does not have the money to pay his rent. He seeks the help of a close friend, Paulo, who agrees to lend him the money. However, this friend is not very trusty, and really wants to be paid. Hence, Paulo regularly tells Afonso that he owes him 400 euros. He is also constantly sending Afonso job offers he finds in the newspaper or on social media, regardless of whether they are desirable for Afonso, and suitable for his set of skills and aspirations.

We can imagine Afonso quickly feeling annoyed at Paulo. Of course, such actions from Paulo might encourage Afonso to quickly discharge his debt, by either finding a job quickly, or asking someone else the money. But they might also encourage Afonso to regret asking Paulo for help, and even to feel less friendly towards him in the future.

Hence, it seems that by highlighting (only) a sense of indebtedness, we crowd out the positive emotions that might not only encourage reciprocity, but also contribute to positive feelings towards those who helped us. With a UBI, we might create a sense of indebtedness, but given its unconditional nature, we can also spark gratitude, hence contributing to a positive glow that is more conducive to a certain form of reciprocity of a 'positive kind'. The nature and bureaucracy of social assistance mechanisms, coupled with the often-meagre benefits given to recipients, crowds out the possibility for gratitude. By granting benefits unconditionally, a UBI removes barriers for gratitude, and reduces the crowding out of motivations to contribute, which might be created with conditional assistance mechanisms.

Objection 3: We can agree that it is plausible to assume that a UBI creates a moral obligation of reciprocity. However, is this preferable to a legal one?

Objection 3 requires further research – both on the nature of moral norms, but also their sanctioning mechanisms. In my dissertation I mainly wanted to argue against what I believed to be a narrow account of the norm of reciprocity, but also point out that we have been dismissing important impacts created by a UBI, which are central to the discussion on reciprocity and unconditional cash.

Nonetheless, it is worth point out what might be arguments in favour of a moral obligation of reciprocity, as opposed to a legal one.

The first was already discussed. A moral obligation might be more conducive to feelings of gratitude, and hence mitigate possible crowding out effects that reduce incentives (and positive motives) for cooperation.

The second, is related to the side effects of a legal obligation to reciprocity. As pointed out in article IV of my dissertation, a UBI reduces what I argued to be an unfair burden to reciprocate, which is partly created by mechanisms required to enforce a legal obligation to contribute. The least advantaged members of society who require social assistance, tend to both rely on the welfare state but also on their own social networks. This double burden of reciprocity is often unfair. For one, because individuals are limited in their capacity to reciprocate, and such limitation is the result of arbitrary circumstances. Moreover, they face limited opportunities to exit those obligations, or experience significant costs if they want to do so – they are either cut off from social assistance, or they suffer shame and might even be shunt if they decline to contribute to their social networks. Finally, the mechanisms used to ensure people comply with these obligations constitute instances of stigma, that lead to misrecognition. A UBI can at least mitigate such a burden, by significantly reducing the costs of not being able to contribute, but also by increasing the likelihood of meeting existing demands of reciprocity, from social networks or from society at large (i.e., reducing inactivity and poverty traps).

By reducing this burden, a UBI can free up people to be able to cooperate in a way that is fitting to their life circumstances, and preferences, but also that is not stigmatizing. If to do so, we need to rely on a moral obligation instead of a legal one, I would argue this might be a preferable mechanism, even considering the possible downsides of moral sanctioning from the part of peers.

Regardless, more research is required to understand the sanctioning mechanisms behind a moral obligation to reciprocate, and how these might be preferable or not to existing legal sanctions used to coerce and incentivize reciprocity.

Objection 4: Great, I think your point on the moral obligation of a UBI experienced as a gift is reasonable. But it seems that in highlighting the experience of a UBI as a gift, you might downplay it as an entitlement or a right.

Objection 4 targets the institutional design features proposed in article IV to encourage the experience of a UBI as a gift. It argues that there might be costs to experiencing a UBI as a gift, namely in downplaying it as a right, which yield strong political support. As mentioned in the chapter, I believe this concern should be taken seriously, namely when discussing features of policy design that render a UBI more like a voluntary transfer. I argued that there might be important trade-offs, which determine that some measures should be scrapped in favour of securing important features of what a UBI is. I believe doing so would not jeopardize the sense of how a UBI can be experienced as a gift.

However, objection 4 is also pointing to another problem, of whether a sense of entitlement is jeopardized by a sense of a gift. For example, Catriona McKinnon, when discussing gratitude and gifts, argues that the former is only sparked in the case of undeserved gifts (McKinnon 2006, p. 206). If in any way we feel deserving, or entitled to a gift, gratitude is most likely not produced. However, this seems to be a very narrow view of how we perceive both gifts, and entitlements. There is no reason why they have to be competing sentiments. In chapter VI I discuss the case of a daughter, trying to make sense of her feelings when considering the nurturing care she received from her father. She can both experience a sense of gratitude, but also entitlement, given that being a father embodies an obligation of care. Akerlof’s paper on firms paying above the market-clearing wage to encourage worker’s productivity and loyalty also illustrates this point. From a worker’s perspective, the wage received will most likely be considered as an entitlement (or compensation). But they also experienced the ‘surplus wage’ as a gift, which encouraged a specific behaviour (i.e., increased productivity).

Therefore, while we should consider the specific trade-offs of designing a UBI that overplays the experience of a gift, hence downplaying its sense of entitlement, I believe the experience of a UBI, or of any other policy proposal, can embody both a sense of entitlement and gift, without one compromising to a significant degree the other.

Objection 5: Fine – but... Imagine we accept that a UBI can be perceived as a gift, and that this creates an obligation of reciprocity, and a felt need to comply with this norm, given the feelings of indebtedness and gratitude it creates. I believe these feelings will most likely fade-out.

After some years, won't people stop being grateful for having a UBI?

Once again, one might claim this is an empirical question. Will people stop feeling grateful? Has this happened with other welfare state mechanisms, and can we assume it will be the same for a UBI?

But even without disregarding the need for evidence on such an impact, I would like to point out important aspects of what a UBI is, which might provide a compelling case for how a UBI creates a long-lasting feeling of gratitude, regardless of empirical data.

For one, gratitude can be long lasting, especially if the recipient was moved by the action of the donor and/or if the gift was very impactful in the recipient's life. UBI's radical proposition, is most likely going to be perceived as impactful by a many individuals. Even a modest UBI around the poverty line, might free people from starvation, but also grant them the possibility to reduce working hours, or to enjoy parental leave, or even to consider exiting abusive relationships. It might also grant people the capacity for saving, and hence contemplate pursuing life goals such as a big trip, opening a business, or going to college. Empirical evidence from most unconditional cash transfers constantly reports participants expressing how small grants have changed their lives, even when the experiment lasted for only one year.

But one could still say that once a UBI is implemented, and we've enjoyed the first years to pursue such projects, or are in a better financial position, we won't really recognize UBI's impacts. This might certainly be true, but it is also worth considering that one's financial position is not constant – not even with a UBI. In recent years we have seen subprime crises, fluctuations in unemployment, increased precariousness, we have experienced inflation and increased living costs, and we have gone through a pandemic. Most people have experienced the impacts of such events differently, but in a lot of cases, these have been difficult financial situations, where people have seen their earnings diminish, or disappear. A UBI offers a life-long safety net, that helps us in different ways across our lives. So if one is starting their working life, they might be able to save for a house, or to invest in their education; if one is older, and wishes to work less, they might use it to reduce the intensity of work, or to hire help in case they require it; if someone experiences long-term unemployment, or if they are forced to stop working because of an impairment of any sort, they might use a UBI to get help, or to at least be confident that they won't be destitute. In a pandemic, no one needs to be forced to put their health in risk, if they have a safety net to rely on.

UBI's role as a flexible safety net is perhaps the best mechanism to ensure that throughout our lives, both when a UBI is used to leverage good moments, but also to help us fare better difficult ones, we can feel grateful for having such a mechanism implemented.

.

Future work

This dissertation aims to offer a new perspective on reciprocity and UBI, while also opening up new avenues of research on both topics.

Many of the arguments in this dissertation are borne out of theoretical discussions on UBI and reciprocity, but also existing empirical evidence from both unconditional and conditional cash grant experiments. Hence, I believe empirical research is a valid tool to help us understand how a UBI works, and its implications for normative debates on the policy (Neves, 2021). And when it comes to empirical research, we are still mostly guessing what people will do if they are granted a UBI, namely people across the income spectrum. How will their work intensity change? Will they have a different mix of occupations? I believe having richer data on changes in occupation from UBI recipients, will help us expand our understanding of UBI and the demands of reciprocity.

Besides getting more data to expand our notions of contribution, further research is also required to observe whether the main hypothesis of this dissertation is sound. Beyond the work I conducted in Paterson, and which is explained in article V of this dissertation, it is worth considering whether other unconditional cash experiments also find evidence of a moral obligation to reciprocate, and how such obligation is upheld. Qualitative accounts from experiments taking place in the United States, but also of policies like the Maricá Basic Income (in Brazil)[105] might provide important data to contribute to this discussion.

Finally, if such a moral obligation is created, it is worth exploring the possibility of this norm promoting trust in political institutions, but also between citizens. In the Finnish basic income experiment, there was small evidence pointing out to how participants in the treatment group – hence receiving unconditional cash - felt more trusting towards political institutions (Merrill, Neves, & Laín, 2022). Such a hypothesis was not however pursued, and it would be worth exploring it, together with the idea of a moral obligation to reciprocate, given the links between reciprocity and trust.

Beyond the possible outlooks for further empirical research on unconditional cash, I believe this dissertation also points towards different avenues for normative research.

Very little conceptual work has been done to distinguish and understand the relationship between solidarity and reciprocity. And often those in favour of solidarity reject reciprocity. But the latter tends to be grounded on the narrow view of reciprocity which is rejected on this dissertation: the view that returns need to be balanced and proportional. If we take the view of generalized reciprocity, are we conflating reciprocity with solidarity (or the other way around)? And if not, is there room for discussing solidarity, and the relationship between the two concepts? I believe there might be an important conceptual distinction to be made, which is deserving of further research.

Finally, I believe the account on gratitude and indebtedness presented on article VI of this dissertation also requires further normative work. Most work on political philosophy is still grappling with the deontological nature of gratitude. And gratitude has often been dismissed as a requirement of justice and has rather been considered as an outside issue (Fitzgerald, 1998). But if the argument present on this dissertation is sound, it might be worth exploring not only the deontological nature of gratitude, but also its relevance when it comes to judgements on the justice of transfers, and the stability of welfare programs. Further work on such topics might help us understand how citizens might be moved to contribute, care, and protect the welfare state.

---

[105] The Maricá Basic Income is the largest basic income Policy in Latin America, in the city of Maricá. It is currently being evaluated by an interdisciplinary team of researchers. To know more about the Policy, you can visit their website: https://www.maricabasicincome.com/en/about-the-study, accessed on August 1st, 2023.

In his 2015 book on Basic Income, James Ferguson discussed the case of South Africa, and the potential perception of an unconditional cash grant. He claims that those in favour of employment as social inclusion, namely for able-bodied men, are not expressing a concern with welfare dependence, but rather with 'attachment':

> "Men's desire for employment of this kind cannot be figured as a yearning for autonomy; it is on the contrary precisely a desire for attachment—for incorporation, even under highly unequal and often dangerous and humiliating terms, into a social body" (Ferguson, 2015, p. 159).

If such concerns are sound, he claims, the danger of an unconditional grant is not that it creates dependence of the state but rather:

> "If anything, the danger may be that it can provide only a shallow and impersonal sort of dependence instead of a richly social one—for a mere grant, at least as such grants are presently conceptualized, cannot provide the sort of full social position that comes with employment or other forms of socially "thick" incorporation.
>
> In place of the social personhood and membership long associated with a job, a cash transfer may appear to offer only a notional national membership and a cold and impersonal relation with a technocratic state" (Ferguson, 2015, p. 160).

Ferguson further claims that the issue at stake is that of social recognition. I think his view is the right one. And hence the reason why I believe UBI's potential in promoting a moral obligation to reciprocate, grounded on indebtedness, but most of all, on gratitude, is so important. By catering the value of autonomous reciprocity and encouraging people to reciprocate through 'positive motives', and in a non-coercive manner, UBI asserts itself as more than a mere technocratic mechanism, and as a potential policy that contributes to freedom, equality and social cohesion.

References

Adloff, F., & Mau, S. (2006). Giving Social Ties, Reciprocity in Modern Society. *European Journal of Sociology, 47*(1), 93-123.

Buchanan, A. (1990). Justice as Reciprocity versus Subject-Centered Justice. *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 19*(3), 227-252.

Ferguson, J. (2015). *Give a Man a Fish. Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Fitzgerald, P. (1998). Gratitude and Justice. *Ethics*, 119-153.

Godelier, M. (1999). *The enigma of the Gift.* Polity Press.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement. *American sociological review*, 161-178.

Mauss, M. (1990). *The Gift. The form and reason for exchange.* London: Routledge Classics.

Merrill, R., Neves, C., & Laín, B. (2022). *Basic Income Experiments. A Critical Examination of Their Goals, Contexts, and Methods.* Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan.

Molm, L. D., Collett , J. L., & Schaefer, D. R. (2007). Building Solidarity through Generalized Exchange: A Theory of Reciprocity. *American Journal of Sociology*, 205-242.

Neves, Catarina. 2021. "Basic Income Experiments: Expanding the Debate on UBI and Reciprocity." *Basic Income Studies* 16 (1): 55-74.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2006). *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership.* Boston: Harvard University Press.

Sahlins, M. (1972). *Stone Age Economics.* New York: Routledge.

Sangiovanni, A. (2007). Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State. *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 35*, 3-39.

Van Parijs, P. (1995). *Real Freedom for All.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, S. (2003). *The Civic Minimum. On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship .* Oxford: Oxford University Press.