

**Shallow Meritocracy – Experimental instructions**  
Experiment without contingent response method and  
work-versus-leisure choice

**Peter Andre**  
briq – Institute on Behavior & Inequality

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**1 Condition: Pay level known, only worker A works**

**Welcome**

**Thank you very much for participating in this study!** This study is conducted by researchers from the briq institute. Participation in the study is **anonymous**.

It is very important for the quality of our research that you **answer carefully** and **read the questions very carefully** before answering.



## Participant information and informed consent form

Below, you find the informed consent form of this study. We ask you to confirm that you want to take part in this study.

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### Who is responsible for the study?

Responsible for the execution of the study and therefore for the processing of your data:  
Peter Andre  
briq - Behavior and Inequality Research Institute GmbH  
Schaumburg-Lippe-Str. 5-9  
53113 Bonn  
Germany

### What are the purposes of the study?

The purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of human behavior in economic contexts. We are interested in natural, unbiased behavior. Hence, no details on the background of this research project is given beforehand, which is in accordance with the standard in experimental economics. All necessary information will be provided in due time.

### What happens to my data?

All participating employees and scientists work in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Regulation, the Federal Data Protection Act and the relevant State Data Protection Acts. For this project, we cooperate with research institutions, universities, institutes or laboratories which are based in and outside the EU. In general, these partners only receive anonymized data. In all other cases, we contractually oblige our partners to process the data as securely as is required in the EU. Those contracts are accepted by the EU for this purpose.

Immediately after the collection, your data will be stored anonymized and then statistically analysed. No conclusions about your person can be drawn from these results. We work together with other partners, universities and laboratories for this study. These also only receive anonymized data, which do not allow any identification of your person. Even the laboratory or survey institute is no longer in a position to merge the survey data with your name after the execution of survey.

Your data will be stored on a server within the EU, which is not operated by briq. We have taken all necessary precautions with the operator of the server and concluded all contracts which are necessary in order to comply with data protection.

For this study, we collect "special categories of personal data", in particular data revealing migration background (racial or ethnic origin - term according to Art. 9 GDPR), political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs or trade union membership, genetic data, health data or data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation, which we use only for research purposes and solely with your consent.

### Which rights do I have?

You have the right to obtain information about the personal data stored about you (Art. 15 GDPR). Should incorrect data be processed, you have the right to rectification (Art. 16 GDPR). When the legal requirements are met, you have the right to request the deletion or restriction of the processing and submit an objection against the processing of your data (Art. 17, 18 and 21 GDPR).

You can also contact our external data protection officer: Mr. Johannes Baeck, 2B Advice GmbH, Joseph-Schumpeter-Allee 25, 53227 Bonn, Germany, e-mail: [briq@2b-advice.com](mailto:briq@2b-advice.com).

You have the right to complain to the competent data protection authorities.

The consent given here can be withdrawn at any time with effect for the future. However, if your data has already been anonymized, it can no longer be associated with you. Therefore we are unable to "remove" your data from the result.

### Declaration of Consent

I hereby consent to the processing of my personal data for the research project PA2206SM for the questions on human behavior in economic contexts. **I can withdraw my consent at any time.** I have taken note of all information concerning the usage of my data and on my rights in the [privacy policy](#).

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I confirm

I do not confirm



Before you proceed to the HIT,  
please complete the captcha  
below.

 I'm not a robot   
reCAPTCHA  
Privacy - Terms

The next question is about the following problem. In questionnaires like ours, sometimes there are participants who do not carefully read the questions and just quickly click through the survey. This compromises the results of research studies. **To show that you are reading the survey carefully, please choose both “Very strongly interested” and “Not at all interested” as your answer to the next question.**

Given the above, how interested are you in politics?

Very strongly interested

Very interested

A little bit interested

Not very interested

Not at all interested



Which gender describes you more accurately?

Male

Female

What is your age?

In which state do you currently reside?

What was your yearly household income in 2021 in US dollars before taxes and deductions?

*Note: The household income is the total amount of money earned by every member of your household.*

Less than 15,000

Between 15,000 and 25,000

Between 25,000 and 50,000

Between 50,000 and 75,000

Between 75,000 and 100,000

Between 100,000 and 150,000

Between 150,000 and 200,000

More than 200,000

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

12th grade or less

Graduated high school or equivalent

Some college, no degree

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Post-graduate degree

In what follows, we will ask you to make a decision that might have **consequences for a real-life situation**.

**Please read the following pages very carefully.** A **quiz** will test your understanding. You can proceed with the study only if you answer all quiz questions correctly.



## The setting

In a recent study, our institute hired adults from the US general public via Prolific to work on an important task for one of our projects. Here, we refer to them as "workers". The task involved searching for publicly available email addresses of academic scholars. Workers were provided with a list of scholar names, they searched for the scholars' webpages, identified their email addresses, and saved them. The task requires no special qualification or ability but demands concentration and effort.

### Workers' choice

Each worker had to make a choice. They had to stay at their computer for 30 minutes, but they did not have to work on the task. **Instead, workers could choose between two options.**

- **Option "work": Work on the task for 30 minutes.** The worker collected email address data for 30 minutes. We monitored the output to ensure that the worker worked hard.
- **Option "leisure": Enjoy leisure time on YouTube for 30 minutes.** The worker spent 30 minutes watching videos on YouTube and watched whichever video seemed most fun to them.



## Workers' earnings

Each worker receives a fixed reward of £5 for completing the job as well as a bonus payment. From now on, when we say "payment", we are only referring to this bonus payment. It is calculated in two steps:

**Step (1): Workers earn money if they decide to work on the task, but they do not earn money if they decide to enjoy leisure time.** How much money they earn depends on their pay level. You will learn more about the pay level later.

**Step (2): Afterwards, someone else determines the final payments.** Workers are informed about this, although they do not know how and why this happens.

**This is where you will come into play ...**



## Your decision

In the last weeks, we hired 100 workers on Prolific and matched them into 50 pairs. The decisions that you and others make in this study determine their final earnings. We randomly select one study respondent for each pair of workers.

If you are one of the selected respondents, **your decision determines the final earnings of a pair of workers**. Let us call them *worker A* and *worker B*.

**You can redistribute the payments between worker A and worker B.** That is, you decide which share of the total payment amount each worker receives.

**Example:** Worker A receives a payment of £10 and worker B of £0 so that the sum of their payments is £10. You can freely choose how to distribute the total amount of £10 between both workers.

**Completely anonymous:** Please note that your decision is completely anonymous. The workers will receive the shares that you choose with no further information. In particular, they will not learn anything about you or the nature of your decision.



## Workers' pay level

Recall: Workers earn money if they decide to work on the task, but they do not earn money if they decide to enjoy leisure time. How much money they earn depends on their pay level. But how is their pay level determined?

**The workers knew that their pay level was determined by pure luck**, namely a random virtual coin flip. Each worker could be assigned one of two equally likely pay levels: a **high pay level of £5** (with 50% chance) and a **low pay level of £1** (with 50% chance).

**Important: Workers were informed whether they could earn the high or the low pay level before they decided whether to work or enjoy leisure time.**



## What happened?

What did workers earn if they decided to work on the task? And which decisions did worker A and worker B make?

### Pay level: results of the random coin flip

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker B was randomly assigned the low pay level (£1).

*Recall: Worker A and worker B were informed about their pay levels.*

### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to enjoy leisure time.

### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £0.



## Quiz

Please select all correct statements in the following list. Do not select wrong statements.

If you want to read parts of the instructions again, navigate to previous pages using the "back" button at the bottom of this page.

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Each worker had to work on the task.

Workers had a choice. They could either work or enjoy leisure time.

Workers who worked on the task earned money.

The pay level was determined by pure luck (a coin flip).

Worker A and worker B were informed about their pay level before they made their working choice.

Worker A and worker B were not informed about their pay level before they made their working choice.

Both workers were randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker A was assigned the high pay level (£5). Worker B was assigned the low pay level (£1).

Worker A chose to work and earned £5. Worker B chose to enjoy leisure time and earned £0.

Neither of the two workers worked on the task.



Submit responses

**Well done! All responses were correct.**



## Your decision

On the next page, you can redistribute the payments between worker A and worker B. That is, you decide which share of the total payment amount each worker receives.



## Your decision

### Recall: What happened?

#### Pay level: results of the random coin flip

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker B was randomly assigned the low pay level (£1).

*Recall: Worker A and worker B were informed about their pay levels.*

#### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to enjoy leisure time.

#### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £0.

**Total payment: £5**

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### Please split the total payment between both workers.

To do so, please specify which share of the total payment each worker gets. The shares need to add up to 100%.

Share of <b>worker A</b>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	%
Share of <b>worker B</b>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	%
Total	<input type="text" value="0"/>	%



Please explain why you made your decision in a couple of sentences.



## What do you think?

In the past weeks, we have hired many workers. As you already learned, these workers were randomly assigned to either a high pay level of £5 or a low pay level of £1.

**We observed that 18% of the workers were willing to work for a low pay level of £1.**

**Which share of workers do you think were willing to work for a high pay level of £5?**

0      10      20      30      40      50      60      70      80      90      100  
in %

Share of workers willing to work



On economic policy matters, where do you see yourself on the liberal/conservative spectrum?

Very liberal

Liberal

Moderate

Conservative

Very conservative

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?

Republican

Democratic

How would you describe your ethnicity/race?

White

African American/Black

Hispanic/Latino

Asian/Asian American

American Indian

Other



## 2 Condition: Pay level known, both workers work

*Only changes to Section 1 are displayed.*

### **What happened?**

What did workers earn if they decided to work on the task? And which decisions did worker A and worker B make?

### **Pay level: results of the random coin flip**

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker B was randomly assigned the low pay level (£1).

*Recall: Worker A and worker B were informed about their pay levels.*

### **Workers' choices**

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to work.

### **Earnings**

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £1.



## Quiz

Please select all correct statements in the following list. Do not select wrong statements.

If you want to read parts of the instructions again, navigate to previous pages using the "back" button at the bottom of this page.

---

Each worker had to work on the task.

Workers had a choice. They could either work or enjoy leisure time.

Workers who worked on the task earned money.

The pay level was determined by pure luck (a coin flip).

Worker A and worker B were informed about their pay level before they made their working choice.

Worker A and worker B were not informed about their pay level before they made their working choice.

Both workers were randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker A was assigned the high pay level (£5). Worker B was assigned the low pay level (£1).

Worker A chose to work and earned £5. Worker B chose to work and earned £1.

Neither of the two workers worked on the task.



Submit responses

## Your decision

### Recall: What happened?

#### Pay level: results of the random coin flip

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker B was randomly assigned the low pay level (£1).

*Recall: Worker A and worker B were informed about their pay levels.*

#### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to work.

#### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £1.

**Total payment: £6**

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### Please split the total payment between both workers.

To do so, please specify which share of the total payment each worker gets. The shares need to add up to 100%.

Share of <b>worker A</b>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	%
Share of <b>worker B</b>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	%
Total	<input type="text" value="0"/>	%



### 3 Condition: Pay level unknown, only worker A works

*Only changes to Section 1 are displayed.*

#### **Workers' pay level**

Recall: Workers earn money if they decide to work on the task, but they do not earn money if they decide to enjoy leisure time. How much money they earn depends on their pay level. But how is their pay level determined?

**The workers knew that their pay level was determined by pure luck**, namely a random virtual coin flip. Each worker could be assigned one of two equally likely pay levels: a **high pay level of £5** (with 50% chance) and a **low pay level of £1** (with 50% chance).

**Important: Workers were not informed whether they could earn the high or the low pay level before they decided whether to work or enjoy leisure time.**



## What happened?

What did workers earn if they decided to work on the task? And which decisions did worker A and worker B make?

### Pay level: results of the random coin flip

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker B was randomly assigned the low pay level (£1).

*Recall: Worker A and worker B were not informed about their pay levels. They only knew that they could either earn a high pay level of £5 (with 50% chance) or a low pay level of £1 (with 50% chance).*

### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to enjoy leisure time.

### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £0.



## Quiz

Please select all correct statements in the following list. Do not select wrong statements.

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Each worker had to work on the task.

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Neither of the two workers worked on the task.



Submit responses

## Your decision

### Recall: What happened?

#### Pay level: results of the random coin flip

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

Worker B was randomly assigned the low pay level (£1).

*Recall: Worker A and worker B were not informed about their pay levels. They only knew that they could either earn a high pay level of £5 (with 50% chance) or a low pay level of £1 (with 50% chance).*

#### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to enjoy leisure time.

#### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £0.

**Total payment: £5**

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### Please split the total payment between both workers.

To do so, please specify which share of the total payment each worker gets. The shares need to add up to 100%.

Share of <b>worker A</b>	<input type="text" value="0"/> %
Share of <b>worker B</b>	<input type="text" value="0"/> %
Total	<input type="text" value="0"/> %



*The belief question is not included.*

## 4 Condition: Pay level unknown, both workers work

*Only changes to Section 1 are displayed.*

### **Workers' pay level**

Recall: Workers earn money if they decide to work on the task, but they do not earn money if they decide to enjoy leisure time. How much money they earn depends on their pay level. But how is their pay level determined?

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**Important: Workers were not informed whether they could earn the high or the low pay level before they decided whether to work or enjoy leisure time.**



## What happened?

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### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to work.

### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

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## Quiz

Please select all correct statements in the following list. Do not select wrong statements.

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Submit responses

## Your decision

### Recall: What happened?

#### Pay level: results of the random coin flip

Worker A was randomly assigned the high pay level (£5).

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*Recall: Worker A and worker B were not informed about their pay levels. They only knew that they could either earn a high pay level of £5 (with 50% chance) or a low pay level of £1 (with 50% chance).*

#### Workers' choices

Worker A chose to work.

Worker B chose to work.

#### Earnings

Worker A earned £5.

Worker B earned £1.

**Total payment: £6**

---

### Please split the total payment between both workers.

To do so, please specify which share of the total payment each worker gets. The shares need to add up to 100%.

Share of **worker A**  %

Share of **worker B**  %

Total  %



*The belief question is not included.*