Shallow Meritocracy

Pre-Registration: Experiment without contingent response method and work-versus-leisure choice

Peter Andre

briq – Institute on Behavior & Inequality

June 22, 2022

1   Overview

This new experiment is analogous to the main experiment with the following important exceptions:

- Workers make a binary working choice: work for 30 minutes on a task or enjoy leisure time on YouTube for 30 minutes. Thus, the choice is between working and enjoying leisure time.

- I do not use a contingent response method. Spectators are assigned to a pair of workers and redistribute earnings conditional on the choices that workers made. Thus, they make only one redistribution decision.

2   Experimental design

Workers   Workers decide whether they work on a task for 30 minutes or whether they enjoy leisure time on YouTube for 30 minutes. They earn money for working on the task, and their pay level is determined randomly (either £5 or £1, each with 50% chance).[1]

Spectators   Each spectator decides whether and how to redistribute the earnings for one pair of workers (worker A and worker B). Workers are selected such that spectators face one of two different effort scenarios: (i) a worker pair where both workers chose to work, (ii) a worker pair where only worker A chose to work.[2] Effort scenario (i) is roughly twice as likely as effort scenario (ii).

---

[1]Workers live in the US but were recruited via Prolific. Prolific pays workers in GBP.

[2]Two other combinations are possible, but cannot be used for the study. First, only worker B chooses to work. But this scenario is extremely rare if the pay levels are known. Second, both workers choose not to work. However, then, there is no money to be redistributed.

Experimental condition: Control   The workers did not know their realized pay level when they made their working choice. They only knew their (identical) odds to earn either £5 or £1 if they work on the task. In the end, worker A is randomly assigned the high pay level. Worker B is randomly assigned the low pay level.

Experimental condition: Treatment   The workers knew their realized pay level when they made their working choice. Worker A is randomly assigned the high pay level. Worker B is randomly assigned the low pay level.

3   Analysis

I test for differences in the mean reward share assigned to the disadvantaged worker B across the treatment and control conditions—jointly across both effort scenarios and separately for each scenario. In the separate tests, I will adjust the p-values for multiple hypotheses testing by controlling the false discovery rate (Benjamini-Hochberg).

4   Sampling

Sample size   About 1,200 respondents (600 per treatment of which approximately 400 will face effort scenario (i) and 200 will face effort scenario (ii)).

Intervention dates   I plan to collect the data from June 22, 2022 (right after the pre-analysis plan has been uploaded) to August 30, 2022.

5   Exclusion criteria

Survey responses will be excluded from the analysis if the respondent

- does not complete the study

- has already participated in the study

- spends too little time on reading the experimental instructions before the treatment variation is introduced (drop respondents with less than 30 seconds reading time)

6   Experimental instructions

I uploaded the full experimental instructions under *Supporting Documents and Materials*.