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How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity

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How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity. This article explores the idea that a UBI might be a superior mechanism in promoting reciprocity in society, looking at available data from social experiments with cash transfers. The results of these experiments show that when people receive an unconditional grant, they don't usually stop working. Instead, they tend to diversify their time-use, opting to invest in caring for family members or in community activities. Experiences also shows that unlike conditional cash transfers, basic income is less stigmatizing to beneficiaries. These results and their interpretation allow us to expand our idea of productive contribution beyond paid employment. It also allows us to discuss the role of basic income as an essential policy for promoting reciprocity in a fairer society, instead of a mechanism that violates the norm of reciprocity.
KEYWORDS: Unconditional Basic Income; reciprocity; basic income experiments; participation; welfare state; labor activation policies.

Como é que o Rendimento Básico Incondicional incentiva a reciprocidade. Este artigo discute o RBI como política que promove a reciprocidade na sociedade, olhando para os dados disponíveis sobre experiências sociais de transferências monetárias, em particular experiências de rendimento mínimo garantido e de rendimento básico. Os resultados destas experiências mostram que com a atribuição do rendimento incondicional os indivíduos não deixam de investir o seu tempo num emprego mas antes diversificam as suas atividades, investindo no cuidado prestado a familiares ou em atividades na comunidade. As experiências indicam também que, contrariamente a propostas de rendimento mínimo condicional (ex. rendimento social de inserção), o rendimento básico promove a redução do estigma social. Estes resultados permitem-nos expandir a nossa ideia de contribuição produtiva para além do emprego, e discutir o papel do RBI como um mecanismo que, ao invés de violar a norma de reciprocidade, funciona como política essencial para a sua promoção numa sociedade mais justa.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Rendimento Básico Incondicional; reciprocidade; Estado Social; políticas de ativação laboral.

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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 no requirements or conditions to be eligible to receive it.[1]

One of the most discussed objections to UBI is focused on reciprocity (Widerquist, 1999; White, 2003; Segall, 2005; White, 2016; McKinnon, 2003).

1 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.

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 surplus (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 therefore is not to be settled with empirical evidence. It is about considering whether non-wealthy able-bodied people, who choose not to work, should be entitled to income transfers.[2] 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, bearing 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. Consequently, this paper contributes to the 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.

2 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 (1999) have pointed out. 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.

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 surplus. Not doing so is evading our obligations to others (*I receive a gift, that I deny return*), 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 (1960) conception of reciprocity as a universal norm. Before him, much of our knowledge came from anthropologists such as Marcel 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 by 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 to 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 that 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 labor, 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 on many of the current debates in reciprocity, particularly 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 to 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 a 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 first 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 the 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-centered) 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,[3] we will be focusing our analysis on the notion of

3 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 (2012, p. 25) characterizes them, 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 surplus (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., →

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.[4]

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 (1997). The latter claims that more important than grounding our discussion on the distinction between what is a direct result of 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 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 of 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-centered" account of reciprocity, goes further than White's or Atkinson's account (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

→ pensions mechanisms (Bowles and 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.

4 See footnote 1 about the difference between UBI, Minimum Income and Guaranteed Income and Conditional or Workfare policies.

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 as they all consider reciprocity as an important norm. Particularly, Birnbaum's and White's discussions on what is a relevant contribution allow us to 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.

RECIPROCITY AND BASIC INCOME EXPERIMENTS

We can confidently state the existence of reciprocal obligations. We know they are related to social status, exchanges, and mechanisms of social cohesion. Therefore, considering reciprocity when reflecting on implementing a policy such as UBI is important. It can also contribute to strengthening 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, hint at the type of positive and negative outcomes of implementing UBI, and can inform us about the political attitude (Wispelaere, Halmetoja and Pulkka, 2018; Pulkka, 2019; Santens, 2019).[5] They can also impose challenges, where some are intrinsic to any social experiment while others are specific to

5 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 and Pulkka, 2018; Pulkka, 2019; Santens, 2019), showcasing much about the pollical climate and attitude towards UBI.

UBI.[6] 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 consolidate our understanding 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 analyze, given our preferences and prior opinions (Standing, 2017; Widerquist, 2018), or even possible spillover effects from treatment to control groups and attrition biases when results are measured in the medium- to long-run, both difficult to rationalize.[7]

Furthermore, and as pointed out by a World Bank report (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 102), we do not have experiments with 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 et al., 2015).

That is why, in this paper, 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 the method used was a randomized control trial) that received

6 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 (RCT) 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).

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

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. Apart from that, 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; also include the Negative Income Tax experiments that took place in North America in the 60s and 70s 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 1000 vulnerable households received individual cash grants in ten neighborhoods in Barcelona. It was designed to test the policy combining a monetary transfer with four active policies of social and labor inclusion or the famous Finnish basic income experiment (2017--2018), where 2000 individuals between 25 and 58 years old looking for work and receiving an unemployment benefit received an extra 560 EUR allowance, tax-free, and guaranteed, even if individuals found employment during that period.

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).[8] As mentioned, the paper will also engage with existing studies on conditional minimum income schemes, particularly the Portuguese and French cases, given existing information on

8 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/.

stigma (one of the phenomena that will be discussed when comparing this form of assistance with unconditional cash grants).

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, to simplify, let us 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 abled-body 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 of 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 of 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 analyzing net beneficiaries' expectations, perceptions, and behavior while receiving a basic income, we can understand not only if the beneficiaries stop contributing altogether (considering both thick and thinner conceptions) but also learn more about the impact of basic income.

4. *Does UBI promote a thinner and 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 labor, 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, it is proposed that we consider existing 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 minds 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 labor market.

WHAT DO EXPERIMENTS TELL US?

There is ample evidence of 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.[9]

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 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 the age of 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

9 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 and 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.

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 et al., 2015). In fact, increases in entrepreneurial activity seem to be common across experiments taking place in the Global South, such as the ones that took place in Namibia and Kenya (Haarmann et al., 2009; Haushofer and Shapiro, 2016; Osterkamp, 2013). In cases where labor 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 and 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 back to school (Moffitt, 1981, p. 3). On the other hand, the several limitations of the study, like the fact that they did not conduct an analysis on the demand side of the labor equation, could have biased the results, to a point where the reduction in hours worked might have been smaller and the effect on poverty larger (Widerquist, 2005).

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 on labor supply tend to be observed. Moreover, there is reported evidence that basic income can have positive impacts 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, 2005; 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 assessing these results can make it very difficult to establish a definite conclusion (Widerquist, 2018; Merrill, Neves and 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 labor force altogether, as pointed out by Karl Widerquist (2004, p. 27). It should also be noted that modest decreases in labor 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 and 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. 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 exiting of labor 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 as 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 transfers can improve the 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 signaling 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 (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 then 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 their 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).[10] Finally, such bureaucratic procedures often require that the social worker must analyze 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".[11] The same study also found that in

10 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.

11 Author's translation of "Rendimento Social de Inserção," a conditional and means-tested

the group of people who were using the benefit temporarily, the higher levels of stigma felt by the individual can jeopardize their attitude towards his so-called "inclusion" plan (Rodrigues, 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 (Calnistsky, 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,[12] showed that participants saw the payments through

minimum income program. The conditional nature of RSI leads to stigmatization. As → Rodrigues points out, 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).

12 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 Calnistsky 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 Calnistsky, 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.

a "pragmatic lens, rather than the moralistic ones through which welfare is viewed" (Calnistsky, 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 of the study seem to point 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 their 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 of Mincome *versus* welfare was also staggering: they accepted Mincome to supplement their income, 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) (Calnistsky, 2016, pp. 61-62). For Calnitsky, this points out a fundamental aspect of the Mincome experiment in how by sidestepping values on autonomy and work, Mincome as opposed to welfare was deemed acceptable (Calnistsky, 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) seem 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 et al., 2021; Laín, 2019; Merrill, Neves ad Laín, 2022). Hence, evidence seems to suggest that conditionality, alongside monitoring and punitive mechanisms in social assistance, reinforces 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.

UBI and contribution. Finally, it is worth exlporing the role of UBI in promoting activities beyond employement. 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 (2010).[13] It also questions if UBI can have an impact beyond the trade-off: if it is a way to not only expand our notion of valuable contribution but also enable us to invest in such activities.

13 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, 20010, p. 2).

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 using 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 and Laín, 2022).[14] This evidence seems to support the first account of the trade-off: when granted a UBI, people might choose to reduce the number of hours in employment, to spend more time on other activities.

The evidence on community activity is scarce, thus 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 (Calnistsky, 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 et al. (2018) looked for the effects of this same cash grant on the political turnout of the families and children in the study. 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 on increasing civic engagement and social capital, by "in effect closing the participatory gap between high and low-income individuals of this rising generation" (Akee et al., 2018, p. 4). Of course, it is not the income *per se* responsible for the changing behavior, but rather the impact of the exogenous cash grant, on school attainment and the acquisition of social capital and skills throughout life (Akee et al., 2018, p. 5). The study suggests

14 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 and 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.

that a UBI can have a long-lasting impact on civic engagement namely, and particularly in mitigating the inequality of political participation, hence helping to shape more inclusive policies.

Finally, there is 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 were 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 and Laín, 2022, p. 144). In Madhya Pradesh, India, basic income allowed participants to stop borrowing from loan sharks and start resorting to family or neighbors. 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 led to farmers themselves establishing a communitarian seed bank (Davala et al. 2015).

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

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 because employment is often a means for social inclusion. Moreover, 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 for advancing the agenda for a dynamic and fulfilling participation in the labour market.

But perhaps most important is how basic income allows recipients to take control 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 as we believe these are legitimate and important forms of contribution to the social

surplus, 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 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. However, we could promote a a policy such as a UBI,[15] which enables citizens to be reciprocators through employment, but also by caring for 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 to their families, friends, and communities.

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.[16]

15 It is worth pointing 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 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.

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