Online Appendix: "The Distributional Preferences of Americans"

A. Experimental Instructions



























B. Additional Analysis: Decomposing Preferences without Assuming a CES Utility Function

In this section, we explore the allocation decisions of our experimental subjects in a simple framework that imposes minimal functional form assumptions on distributional preferences.

B.1 Fair-mindedness

We begin by constructing a simple, reduced form measure of fair-mindedness: the fraction of tokens kept by self, $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$, averaged across all 50 decision problems at the subject level. This measure is equal to one for perfectly selfish subjects; fair-minded subjects who put equal weight on self and other will keep approximately half of the total tokens, on average. We observe considerable heterogeneity across subjects. The individual-level average of $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ ranges from 0.03 to 1, though the vast majority of subjects (84.6 percent) kept an average of at least half the tokens. Only 35 subjects (3.49 percent) kept an average of less than 45 percent of tokens. Thus, among subjects that kept less than half of the tokens, most appear to place nearly equal weight on the payoffs to self and other.¹

Several key features of our data stand out. First, we observe very low numbers of selfish subjects who kept almost all of the tokens. The average of $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ is at least 95 percent For only 81 subjects (8.1 percent). This relatively low number of selfish subjects contrasts with the large body of experiments with the the usual collection of undergraduate students. Overall, our subjects kept approximately 65 percent of the tokens. In the studies of standard split-the-pie dictator games reported in Camerer (2003), the typical mean allocations to *other* are about 80 percent. Second, a substantial fraction of subjects kept an average of approximately half the tokens. In fact, these fair-minded subjects far outnumber the selfish types: 370 subjects (36.9 percent) kept an average of 45 to 55 percent of the tokens. Moreover, the distribution of $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ is quite smooth between 0.5 and 0.99, suggesting considerable heterogeneity in fair-mindedness among non-selfish subjects.

¹This suggests that almost all of our subjects comprehended the tradeoff between *self* and *other* that they were making. Numerous experimental studies suggest that subjects rarely allocate more to *other* than to *self* in standard dictator games. Since our design includes random variation in the price of redistribution and subjects may respond to price variation in different ways, subjects who put equal weight on the payoffs to *self* and *other* may not allocate themselves exactly half of the tokens in our experiment.

Figure 1 explores the extent to which this heterogeneity in fair-mindedness is explained by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Each section of the figure represents a partition of the subject pool into mutually exclusive categories — for example, men and women. The figure indicates the average across subjects of the individual-level average of $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ within a category; the 95 percent confidence intervals for means, and the 25th and 75th percentiles of the distribution are labeled for each group. There are substantial differences in the average of $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ across groups. Women keep a smaller fraction of the tokens than men. Surprisingly, $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ increases with both household income and education level. A number of these differences are statistically significant.

In addition to the clear between-group differences, there is considerable heterogeneity within every category. For all the sub-groups included in the figure, the 25^{th} percentile of the distribution is between 0.5 and 0.52. This means that every demographic and socioeconomic category we consider includes non-negligible numbers of fair-minded subjects who treat *self* and *other* more or less symmetrically. The 75^{th} percentiles range from 0.62 to 0.83, and we observe relatively selfish subjects who keep an average of at least 95 percent of the tokens in every category. In most cases — for example, when we compare men to women or lower and higher income households — there is much more variation among subjects within a category than there is across category averages. Regression analysis (reported in Section E, Table 2) confirms this: the complete set of dummy variables for demographic and socioeconomic categories explains 4.95 percent of the variation in average $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$. Thus, most of the observed heterogeneity in fair-mindedness is not explained by demographic and socioeconomic factors.

B.2 Equality-Efficiency Tradeoffs

Subjects may also differ in their equality-efficiency tradeoffs, as discussed above. Of the fair-minded subjects, 85 subjects (8.5 percent) always made nearly equal allocations $\pi_s = \pi_o$ indicating Rawlsian preferences.² Only 2 subjects allocated all their tokens to *self* when $p_s < p_o$ and to *other* when $p_s > p_o$ indicating utilitarian preferences, while 3 subjects made equal ex-

 $^{^{2}}$ Since humans implement their decisions with error, we classify subjects as being consistent with a prototypical model of distributional preferences if, on average, their choices deviate from those prescribed by that model by less than 0.02 (i.e. by no more than 2 percent of the tokens or budget). In the Online Appendix, we report the fraction of subjects behaving in a manner consistent with each of the prototypical types for a range of values for the maximum average deviation.

penditures on *self* and *other* $p_s \pi_s = p_o \pi_o$ indicating Cobb-Douglas preferences. Thus, very few subjects made allocations that fit with fair-minded prototypical distributional preferences.

To explore the equality-efficiency tradeoffs of the remaining subjects, we regress the budget share spent on tokens kept $(p_s\pi_s)$ on the log-price of redistribution $(p = p_s/p_o)$ at the individual level. We classify a subject as efficiency-oriented if the OLS slope coefficient is greater than or equal to 0 because increasing $p_s\pi_s$ when p increases indicates distributional preferences weighted towards efficiency (increasing total payoffs), whereas decreasing $p_s\pi_s$ when p increases indicates distributional preferences weighted towards efficiency (increasing total payoffs), whereas decreasing $p_s\pi_s$ when p increases indicates distributional preferences weighted towards equality (reducing differences in payoffs).

In Figure 2, we explore the variation in the fraction of efficiency-oriented subjects across demographic and socioeconomic categories. Each section of the figure represents a partition of the subject pool into mutually exclusive categories, and we indicate the proportions and the 95 percent confidence intervals. We again observe considerable variation within and across subgroups. Specifically, less educated subjects (those with less than a high school diploma), minorities, younger subjects, the unemployed, and the never married are more efficiency-focused than other groups; older Americans, retirees, non-Hispanic whites, and Protestants focus less on efficiency and more on equality. As in the case of fair-mindedness, most of the observed heterogeneity in equality-efficiency tradeoffs is also not explained by demographic and socioeconomic factors.

C. Additional Analysis: Individual Rationality

In this section, we discuss our revealed preference tests of individual rationality in detail. The most basic question to ask about choice data is whether it is consistent with individual utility maximization. If participants choose allocations subject to standard budget constraints (as in our experiment), classical revealed preference theory provides a direct test. Afriat's (1967) theorem shows that choices in a finite collection of budget sets are consistent with maximizing a well-behaved (piecewise linear, continuous, increasing, and concave) utility function $u_s(\pi_s, \pi_o)$ if and only if they satisfy the Generalized Axiom of Revealed Preference (GARP). Hence, to assess whether our data are consistent with utility-maximizing behavior, we only need to check whether our data satisfy GARP, which requires that if $\pi = (\pi_s, \pi_o)$ is indirectly revealed preferred to π' , then π' is not directly revealed strictly preferred ($\mathbf{p}' \cdot \pi \geq \mathbf{p}' \cdot \pi'$) to π .

Although testing conformity with GARP is conceptually straightforward, there is an obvious difficulty: GARP provides an exact test of utility maximization – either the data satisfy GARP or they do not. To account for the possibility of errors, we assess how nearly individual choice behavior complies with GARP by using Afriat's (1972) Critical Cost Efficiency Index (CCEI), which measures the fraction by which each budget constraint must be shifted in order to remove all violations of GARP. By definition, the CCEI is bounded between zero and one. The closer it is to one, the smaller the perturbation of the budget constraints required to remove all violations and thus the closer the data are to satisfying GARP and hence to perfect consistency with utility maximization. The difference between the CCEI and one can be interpreted as an upper bound on the fraction of income that a subject is wasting by making inconsistent choices.

There is no natural threshold for the CCEI for determining whether subjects are close enough to satisfying GARP that they can considered utility maximizers. To generate a benchmark against which to compare our CCEI scores, we follow Bronars (1987), which builds on Becker (1962), and compare the behavior of our actual subjects to the behavior of simulated subjects who randomize uniformly on each budget line. Such tests are frequently applied to experimental data. The power of Bronars's (1987) test is defined to be the probability that a randomizing subject violates GARP. Choi, Fisman, Gale, and Kariv (2007) show there is a very high probability that even random behavior will pass the GARP test if the number of individual decisions is sufficiently low, underscoring the need to collect choices in a wide range of budget sets in order to provide a stringent test of utility maximization. In a simulation of 25,000 subjects who randomize uniformly on each budget line when confronted with our sequence of 50 decision problems, all the simulated subjects had GARP violations, so the Bronars criterion attains its maximum value.

The Bronars (1987) test rules out the possibility that consistency is the accidental result of random behavior, but it is not sufficiently powerful to detect whether utility maximization is the correct model. To this end, Fisman, Kariv, and Markovits (2007) generate a sample of hypothetical subjects who implement a CES utility function with an idiosyncratic preference shock that has a logistic distribution

$$\Pr(\pi^*) = \frac{e^{\gamma \cdot u(\pi^*)}}{\int_{\mathbf{p} \cdot \pi = 1} e^{\gamma \cdot u(\pi)}}$$

where the precision parameter γ reflects sensitivity to differences in utility – the choice becomes purely random as γ goes to zero (Bronars' test), whereas the probability of the allocation yielding the highest utility approaches one as γ goes to infinity. The results provide a clear benchmark of the extent to which subjects do worse than choosing consistently and the extent to which they do better than choosing randomly, and demonstrate that if utility maximization is not in fact the correct model, then our experiment is sufficiently powerful to detect it. We refer the interested reader to Fisman, Kariv, and Markovits (2007) Appendix III for more detail.³

The CCEI scores in the ALP sample averaged 0.862 over all subjects, which we interpret as confirmation that most subjects' choices are approximately consistent. In comparison, the mean CCEI score of a sample of 25,000 random subjects ($\gamma = 0$) who made 50 choices from randomly generated budget sets in the same way as our human subjects is only 0.60. 74.2 percent of actual subjects have CCEI scores above 0.80, while 10.2 percent of random subjects have scores that high. If we choose the 0.85 efficiency level as our critical value, 64.1 percent of our subjects have CCEI scores above this threshold, while 3.4 percent of the random subjects have CCEI scores above 0.85.

There is, however, marked heterogeneity in the CCEI scores within and across the demographic and economic groups (see regression results in Section E, Table 3). Subjects that completed college display greater levels of

 $^{^{3}}$ Varian (1982, 1983) modified Afriat's (1967) results and describes efficient and general techniques for testing the extent to which choices satisfy GARP. We refer the interested reader to Choi, Fisman, Gale, and Kariv (2007) for more details on testing for consistency with GARP and other measures that have been proposed for measuring GARP violations. In practice, all these measures yield similar conclusions.

consistency than subjects with less education. The magnitudes imply that, on average, subjects without college degrees waste 2.6 percentage points more of their earnings by making inconsistent choices relative to college graduates. We also find that men are more consistent than women, and that the choices of white and Hispanic subjects are more consistent with utility maximization than those of African Americans in our sample. Though all three differences are statistically significant, they are small in magnitude; the average CCEI is above 0.8 for all the demographic and socioeconomic categories we consider.

D. References

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E. Additional Tables and Figures

	BANDWIDTH (PERCENT OF TOKENS/BUDGET)							
	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.10	
Self-interested (allocate all tokens to <i>self</i>)	3.9	4.5	5.7	6.4	7.2	8.1	12.7	
Fair-minded (allocate half of tokens to $self$)	9.3	14.1	21.4	27.0	31.8	36.9	53.3	
Utilitarians	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
Rawlsians	4.6	6.6	8.5	10.5	12.0	12.4	18.6	
Subjects with Cobb-Douglas utility functions	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	2.8	

Table 1: (Classifying	Subjects as	Prototypical	Preference	Types
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The numbers indicate the percentage of subjects in each cell. We generate an index of the extent to which choices are consistent with Rawlsianism by calculating the average magnitude of the gap between the fraction of tokens allocated to self, $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$, and one half, and then subtracting this from 1. To calculate an index of proximity to ultrarianism, we define the fraction of tokens allocated to the less expensive account as $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ in rounds where $p_s \leq p_o$, and as $\pi_o/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ in rounds where $p_s > p_o$. The average fraction of tokens that a subject allocates to the less expensive account indicates the extent to which her choices are consistent with utilitarianism. To calculate a measure of the extent to which choices are consistent with the maximization of a Cobb-Douglas utility function, we follow the same procedures as described above for the Rawlsian case, but we replace the fraction of tokens allocated to *self* with the budget share spent on tokens for *self*. We report the proportion of subjects that behave in a manner consistent with one of the three ideals for a range of bandwidths, defined as their average deviation from the ideal expressed in terms of a fraction of the tokens or budget.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Female	-0.034***	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-0.027**	-0.033***
	(0.011)								(0.012)	(0.012)
Youngest quartile (age 37 or less)	•	0.0007							0.006	0.006
		(0.013)							(0.014)	(0.014)
Oldest quartile (over 60)		0.023^{*}							0.017	0.015
		(0.014)							(0.015)	(0.016)
Did not complete high school			-0.04^{**}						-0.037**	-0.031^{*}
			(0.016)						(0.016)	(0.017)
Completed college			0.04^{***}						0.025^{*}	0.022
			(0.014)						(0.013)	(0.014)
African American				-0.058^{***}					-0.046^{***}	-0.05***
				(0.015)					(0.016)	(0.017)
Hispanic/Latino				-0.043^{***}					-0.023	-0.02
				(0.012)					(0.014)	(0.017)
Lowest income quartile	•	•	•		-0.018		•	•	0.015	0.015
					(0.012)				(0.014)	(0.014)
Highest income quartile	•	•	•	•	0.021	•	•	•	0.0005	-0.0003
					(0.014)				(0.016)	(0.016)
Employed	•	•	•	•	•	0.014	•	•	0.006	0.006
						(0.015)			(0.014)	(0.014)
Unemployed	•	•	•	•		-0.036*	•	•	-0.025	-0.03
						(0.019)			(0.019)	(0.019)
Married	•	•	•	•			0.024	•	0.0006	0.00006
							(0.015)		(0.016)	(0.016)
Widowed, separated, or divorced	•	•	•		•		-0.003	•	-0.021	-0.01
							(0.017)	0.001	(0.018)	(0.018)
Catholic	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-0.021	-0.026	-0.033**
								(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Protestant	•	•	·	•	•	•	·	0.017	-0.002	-0.006
								(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)
No religious preference	•	•	·	•	•	·	•	-0.022	-0.027^{*}	-0.026^{*}
	0.000***	0.000***	0.007***	0.055***	0 0 1 1 * * *	0.000***	0 000***	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Constant	0.663^{****}	0.638****	0.627****	0.657^{++++}	0.644^{++++}	0.636^{+++}	0.629^{****}	0.649^{****}	0.669***	0.675^{***}
State of Decidence FF	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.01)	(0.025)	(0.026)
State of Kesidence FEs	INO 1002	INO 1002	1002	INO 1002	INO 1002	INO 1002	INO 1002	INO 1002	1002	Yes
Deservations D2	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002
<i>n</i> -	0.01	0.003	0.019	0.019	0.008	0.009	0.006	0.009	0.048	0.098

Table 2: OLS Regressions of Estimated $\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o)$ on Subject Characteristics

Robust standard errors in parentheses. All regressions include controls for respondents who are missing data on race (2), household income (5), and religion (8).

Dependent variable:	Сомр	LETED	CCEI Score		
Specification:	OLS	Probit	OLS	Tobit	
- <u>-</u>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
Female	-0.028	-0.155	-0.019**	-0.024**	
	(0.021)	(0.097)	(0.009)	(0.01)	
Youngest quartile (age 37 or less)	-0.004	-0.005	0.011	0.009	
	(0.025)	(0.124)	(0.011)	(0.012)	
Oldest quartile (over 60)	-0.063**	-0.274**	-0.008	-0.012	
- , , ,	(0.03)	(0.125)	(0.012)	(0.013)	
Did not complete high school	0.008	0.034	0.003	-0.003	
	(0.041)	(0.165)	(0.015)	(0.015)	
Completed college	0.079***	0.379^{***}	0.025**	0.033***	
	(0.024)	(0.125)	(0.011)	(0.012)	
African American	-0.083^{**}	-0.351^{**}	-0.032^{**}	-0.037^{**}	
	(0.04)	(0.152)	(0.016)	(0.017)	
Hispanic/Latino	-0.031	-0.138	-0.003	-0.003	
	(0.031)	(0.131)	(0.012)	(0.013)	
Lowest income quartile	0.014	0.05	0.002	0.003	
	(0.029)	(0.122)	(0.012)	(0.013)	
Highest income quartile	-0.037	-0.167	0.007	0.007	
	(0.028)	(0.134)	(0.013)	(0.015)	
Employed	0.019	0.083	-0.005	-0.004	
	(0.027)	(0.119)	(0.012)	(0.013)	
Unemployed	-0.001	-0.009	-0.003	-0.003	
	(0.041)	(0.17)	(0.017)	(0.018)	
Married	-0.015	-0.074	0.021	0.022	
	(0.031)	(0.148)	(0.014)	(0.015)	
Widowed, separated, or divorced	-0.05	-0.207	0.018	0.022	
_	(0.037)	(0.162)	(0.016)	(0.017)	
Protestant	0.027	0.126	0.01	0.008	
~	(0.028)	(0.136)	(0.013)	(0.014)	
Catholic	-0.04	-0.182	-0.002	-0.007	
	(0.031)	(0.132)	(0.013)	(0.014)	
No religious preference	0.003	-0.008	-0.004	-0.004	
~	(0.028)	(0.132)	(0.013)	(0.014)	
Constant	0.899***	1.306***	0.852***	0.864***	
	(0.047)	(0.218)	(0.021)	(0.023)	
Observations	1170	1168	1002	1002	
R^2	0.03		0.033		

Table 3: OLS Regressions of Completion and Comprehension Outcomes

Robust standard errors in parentheses. COMPLETED equals one if a subject completed all 50 incentivized decision problems. The CCEI score indicates how close a respondent's choice are to consistency with the Generalized Axiom of Revealed Preference (GARP). All regressions include controls for respondents who are missing data on race (2), household income (5), or religious affiliation (8). All demographic data is missing for two ALP respondents who logged in but dropped out prior to the practice rounds.

Dependent variable:		Voted fo	or Obama		Identifies as a Democrat			
-	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
ρ_{high} (i.e. $\hat{\rho}_n \ge 0$)	•	-0.045		-0.068**		-0.075*	•	-0.104**
		(0.033)		(0.034)		(0.04)		(0.042)
Female	0.073^{**}	0.069^{**}	0.061^{*}	0.054	0.058	0.052	0.042	0.034
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.043)
Youngest quartile (age 37 or less)	-0.05	-0.046	-0.024	-0.018	-0.038	-0.031	-0.037	-0.029
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Oldest quartile (over 60)	-0.0002	-0.004	-0.009	-0.017	0.009	0.002	-0.0003	-0.013
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.054)
Did not complete high school	0.055	0.06	0.06	0.066	0.1	0.111	0.118	0.133^{*}
	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.073)
Completed college	0.12^{***}	0.122^{***}	0.121^{***}	0.124^{***}	0.08^{*}	0.082^{*}	0.06	0.064
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.05)	(0.049)
African American	0.377^{***}	0.385^{***}	0.317^{***}	0.327^{***}	0.363^{***}	0.378^{***}	0.32^{***}	0.337^{***}
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.058)	(0.057)
Hispanic/Latino	0.305^{***}	0.305^{***}	0.292^{***}	0.295^{***}	0.269^{***}	0.271^{***}	0.291^{***}	0.294^{***}
	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.069)	(0.07)
Lowest income quartile	0.084^{**}	0.087^{**}	0.098^{**}	0.102^{**}	-0.016	-0.014	0.003	0.006
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.055)
Highest income quartile	-0.073	-0.072	-0.092^{*}	-0.091^{*}	-0.09	-0.087	-0.091	-0.09
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.058)	(0.057)
Employed	0.066	0.066	0.044	0.043	0.014	0.013	-0.003	-0.007
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Unemployed	0.111^{*}	0.109^{*}	0.092	0.088	0.03	0.031	0.019	0.016
	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.074)	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.075)
Married	0.002	0.0003	0.017	0.016	0.026	0.023	0.027	0.023
	(0.049)	(0.05)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.064)	(0.063)
Widowed, separated, or divorced	0.005	0.004	0.03	0.03	0.097	0.097	0.106	0.104
	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Catholic	-0.059	-0.056	-0.059	-0.056	-0.031	-0.03	-0.036	-0.036
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Protestant	-0.196^{***}	-0.197^{***}	-0.17^{***}	-0.169^{***}	-0.186^{***}	-0.184^{***}	-0.132^{**}	-0.127^{**}
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.058)
No religious preference	0.066	0.066	0.062	0.061	0.105^{*}	0.105^{*}	0.092	0.092
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.059)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.059)
State of Residence FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	766	766	766	766	528	528	528	528

Table 4: OLS Regressions of Political Outcomes with and without ρ_{high}

Robust standard errors in parentheses. All regressions include controls for respondents who are missing data on race (2), household income (5), and religion (8).



Figure 1: Average Fraction of Tokens Allocated to Self $(\pi_s/(\pi_s + \pi_o))$ by Sub-Group

Dots indicate mean values. Circles indicate 25th and 75th percentiles. Bars indicate 95 percent confidence intervals for means.



Figure 2: Proportion of Efficiency-Focused Subjects, by Sub-Group

Dots indicate mean values. Bars indicate 95 percent confidence intervals.