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Sharing the pie: the Lutheran is neither opportunistic nor generous

Matteo Migheli

UNIVERSITA' DEL PIEMONTE ORIENTALE "*Amedeo Avogadro*" ALESSANDRIA

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Sharing the Pie: the Lutheran is neither Opportunistic nor Generous

Matteo Migheli*

Abstract

This paper studies how individual religiosity affects people's behaviour. In particular here I study the behaviour of the second players in a standard trust game. They have the possibility of sharing some resources between themselves and their game mates. It results that more religious people tend to choose an even allocation of these resources, whilst the less religious participants are either opportunistic or generous.

Keywords: religiosity, distribution of resources, inequity aversion

JEL Codes: C93, D30, Z12

University of Eastern Piedmont, Department of Public Policy and Collective Choice; Via Cavour, 84 15121 Alessandria (AL) – Italy. Tel: +39 0131 287807. Email: matteo.migheli@sp.unipmn.it

1. Introduction

Religions teach particular rules and values to theirs members. One of the most important precepts of Christ's teaching is charity: the good Christian cares about the others' situation and is concerned about sharing his/her resources with the poor. In the Gospel this idea is generally equalitarian: it is presented as an equal division of the resources among the members of a group[1] (Wallis, 2005). I aim at checking whether religious people apply this moral rule in economic decisions.

Religion is found to affect relevant economic decisions of the individuals. An important consequence of this at a macro level is that more religious countries attain higher growth (Barro and McClearly, 2003). At the micro level Iannaccone (1994) stresses that affiliation to a certain confession rather than to another is likely to drive people towards higher saving rates and higher wages. Iannaccone (1995) provides also evidence of how religious beliefs are important in household production. Keister (2003) relates the accumulation of financial assets in early adulthood to religious affiliation and participation. However, so far little attention has been paid by the economists or religion to the possible effects of religiosity on individual pro-social attitudes.

According to Holm and Danielson (2005) the decisions of the players in experimental games are driven also by unconditional distribution preferences: donations in a dictator game and shares returned in a trust game are significantly correlated. The existence of a moral norm (equal sharing in the case of Christians) followed by the players could be an explanation. Indeed Anderson and Mellor (2009) find that religiosity may sustain cooperation in a public good game. Using a trust game (see Berg et al., 1995) I find that more religious (namely Lutherans[2]) people tend to split the pie equally, rather than behaving in an opportunistic or other-rewarding way.

[1] Luke, 3:11; Acts, 4:32. See also Harrington et al. (2005).

[2] Although I did not ask of which religious denomination the responder was member, I assume that the large majority of the participants to the experiment were lutheran, mirroring the Norwegian population.

2. Methodology

In this paper I use a basic trust game. This involves couples of people, playing non simultaneously. The first member of the couple (the first to play) is endowed with some money: he/she has to decide how much to pass to the game mate (who has no endowment). The experimenter triples this amount and gives it to the second player, who must decide how much of the received sum he/she wishes to pass back to the first player. This decision ends the game. Both the players have complete information about the rules of the game, and full anonymity is ensured. An ultimatum or a dictator game (for designs see Camerer, 2003) could also be employed, but a trust game is more suitable for this type of study. In fact, the second mover may receive some money from the endowment of the partner, and this may stimulate some sentiments[3] to play a role, thus strengthening the impulse to pass back some positive sum. To look for the presence of this positive stimulus is useful for my inquiry: if religiosity makes the player's choice to converge towards even sharing rather than to one of the other two possible outcomes (especially the generous one; see below), this would mean that among religious people the sense of equal splitting prevails.. It might also be possible that the presence of the stimulus induces the more religious people to prefer the intermediate outcome to the others. In other words I am hypothesizing that equal sharing is the way followed by religious people to "reciprocate". Also in this case, however, if the choice of equal redistribution prevails on the others within religious people, this would clearly highlight an influence of religion on people's decision process.

The existent literature typically measures the individual religious attitude through personal beliefs and/or participation to the services. I adopt a stricter measure of individual religiosity: the time that a person spends weekly within religious voluntary associations. Participation to these groups requires both a religious belief and a positive intention to devote some spare time within an association, among whose goals the propagation of religious values plays a central role. Hence these people show a strong religious attitude, which I assume to be stronger and stronger as the time devoted to the association increases.

A total of 207 undergraduate students from the University of Oslo[4] participated in the game: 105 were first movers and 102 were second movers[5]. I classify the choices of the second movers into three strategies: opportunistic (keeping a payoff higher than the counterpart's), equalitarian (transferring an amount of money such that both players end with the same payoff), or generous

[3] Among them we can mention anger, reciprocity or gratefulness, as highlighted by Fehr and Schmidt (1999), Molm et al. (2000), Camerer (2003) and Bouckaert and Dhaene (2004).
[4] All of them were from the School of Economics, but none had already taken any course in Game Theory or related topics.
[5] The difference between the number of participants in the two groups reflects the fact that some people in both groups had to be excluded because they violated the requirement of anonymity in filling their forms.

(transferring an amount of money so that the counterpart ends with a payoff higher than the second mover)[6]. As a consequence here I consider only those second movers who got more than ¼ of the initial endowment (2,300 NOK) from the first mover[7]. Since the decision of the latter is tripled, those who receive more than ¼ of the initial endowment can choose one out of the three possible described outcomes. The other second movers have not access to the full set of choices and therefore are not taken into account[8]. Indeed the considered sub-sample is such that, after the first stage of the game and before the second is played, the first mover has a preliminary payoff that is lower than the second mover's. After playing the game, the participants filled in an anonymous questionnaire aimed at collecting socio-demographic data and participation to several different voluntary associations and social networks. At the end of the game two couples were randomly drawn and paid according to their choices. Notice that the high notional endowment ensures a high expected value[9], whose magnitude constitutes a good incentive to play seriously.

Three dummy variables are constructed, one for each of the three possible outcomes; this allows for estimating the probability of belonging to one of the three groups by the means of a probit analysis. This methodology to analyze the outcomes of a trust game has also been employed in Migheli (2007).

[6] A long discussion about this "generous" strategy would be possible. The existing experimental literature does not provide a definitive explanation for this behaviour. Apparently more than just generosity justifies it: the original designers of the game talk about reciprocity, others about gratefulness, social paradigms, etc. However here it is neither my intention, nor the aim of the paper, to discuss this point. The etiquette that I attach to this behaviour is purely motivated by practical reasons, and the semantic choice is aimed at driving the attention of the reader intuitively towards the outcome of the choice. I do not intend to participate, by this specific paper, to the discussion about the motivation(s) behind this kind of choice.

[7] A total of 88 subjects are therefore retained.

[8] This can be easily shown. Let S be the initial endowment of the first mover and α the share passed to the second mover. Since the experimenter triples this amount of money, the second mover's endowment is equal to 3α. If $\alpha > \frac{1}{4}S$, then at this stage of the game the first movers keeps less than ¾S, whilst his/her counterpart is endowed with more than this.

[9] Equivalent to an hourly income ranging from a minimum of 184 NOK and a maximum of 552 NOK.

3. Results

The graphs depict the frequencies of the amounts passed back to the first player. It is possible to notice that people who are member of religious associations display a behaviour that appears to be more "regular" than non-members' (Figures 4 and 5). In particular the sums passed back by the players who devote some spare time to religious associations are chosen so to split the pie evenly. I will show this in the following econometric analysis. Here it is sufficient to notice that the modal choice for the full sample and for the two gender-based sub-samples is represented by 3,450NOK; moreover, while some males who received 6,900NOK passed back the entire amount (this means that they did not keep any money for themselves), no female player chose it.

Table 1 reports the results of the probit regressions, one for each possible outcome. As usually found in the literature (Camerer, 2003), the received amount affects the decision of the second mover positively: the larger it is, the higher the probability of not behaving opportunistically. The time spent within voluntary religious associations is significantly linked with all the three behaviours, but the association is negative for the opportunistic and the generous outcomes, whilst it is positive for the equalitarian. This supports the initial hypothesis: the more people are endowed with religious capital[10] and the more practice Christian values the more they are prone to share the resources equally, rather than to choose any other allocation. The analysis of the marginal effects suggests that the aversion to an opportunistic behaviour is more significant than to a generous behaviour, when the whole sample is considered (table 1); this finding no longer holds when each of the two non equalitarian outcomes is compared to the equalitarian only (table 2), but in this case the difference between the marginal effects is not significant (so the aversion against either non equalitarian behaviour may be the same). Moreover we can notice that men tend more to be generous rather than opportunistic or equalitarian with respect to women, while working students are rather opportunistic instead of generous or equalitarian, perhaps because they have a utility function of money shifted upwards.

Table 2 shows the results of probit regressions when only a couple of outcomes (i.e. either generous and equalitarian or opportunistic and equalitarian) are analyzed. The previous conclusion gets confirmed.

[10] For the strong connection between religion and social capital see Smidt (2003).

4. Conclusions

This paper shows that, when allocating resources, the participants to the experiment who spend more time in voluntary religious associations are more prone than the average of the population to opt for an even distribution rather than for an opportunistic or a generous one.

People who spend time in voluntary religious organizations put in practice and very likely teach the fundamental rules of their religion (in Norway, namely Lutheran Christianity). Among these the even sharing of resources plays a crucial role, and this paper shows that the more a person participates in a religious based network, the more probably he/she will apply this social norm. This result is relevant as also when they are required to allocate resources outside the environment of the association, or, in any case, outside a religious environment they may exhibit the same allocation preference. As a conclusion I would highlight that Christian values can affect the behaviour of people charged of managing resources of programmes with (above all) humanitarian or social aims.

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Figure 1. Amounts passed back to the first player (whole sample)

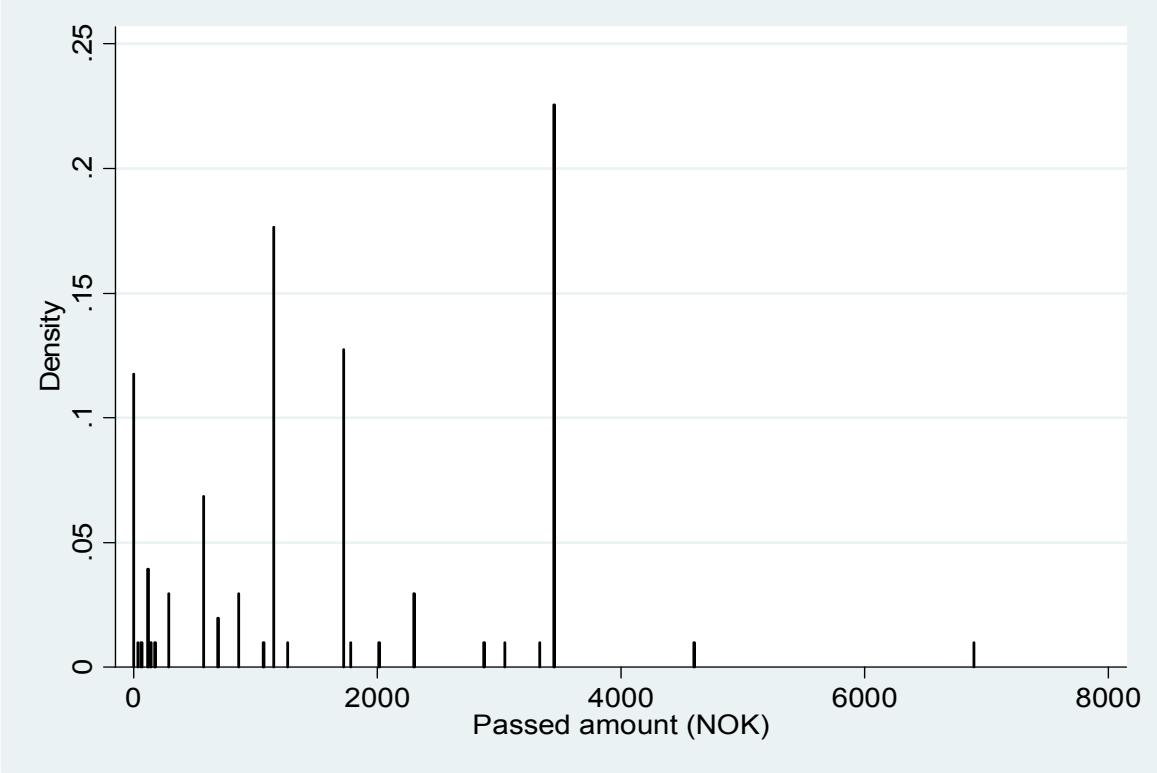

Figure 2. Amounts passed back to the first player (male players)

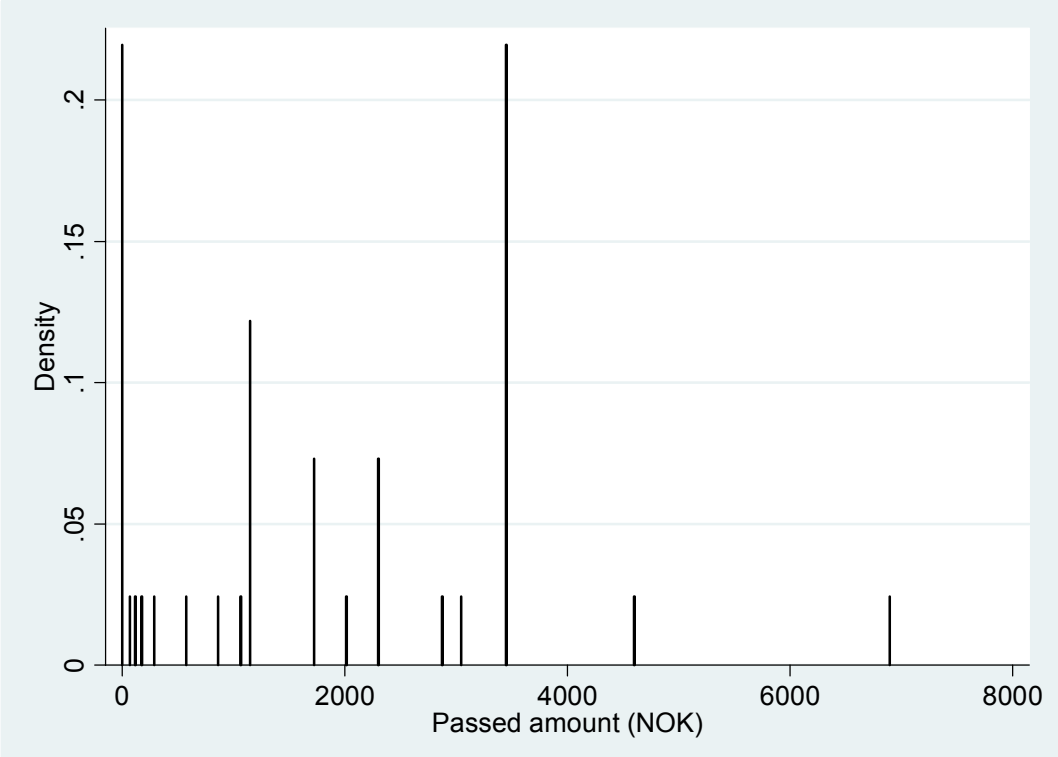

Figure 3. Amounts passed back to the first player (female players)

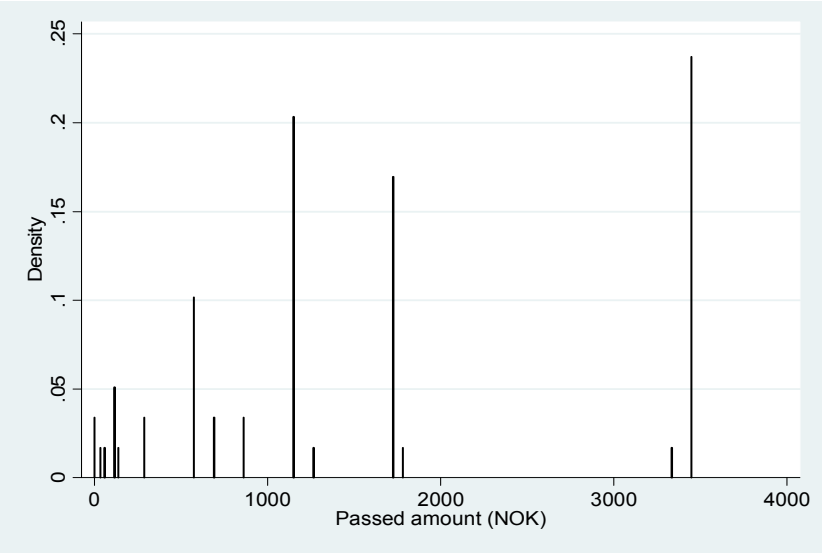

Figure 4. Amounts passed back to the first player (subsample of those participants who are not members of religious associations)

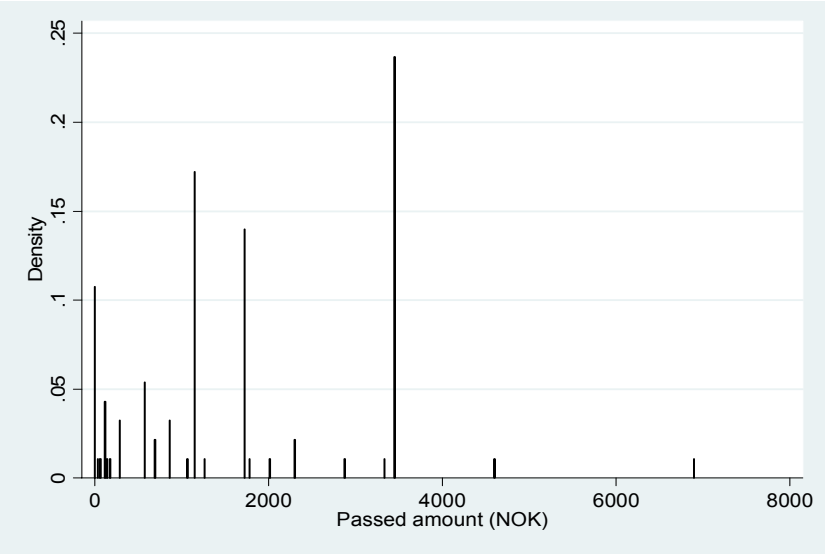

Figure 5. Amounts passed back to the first player (subsample of those participants who are members of religious associations)

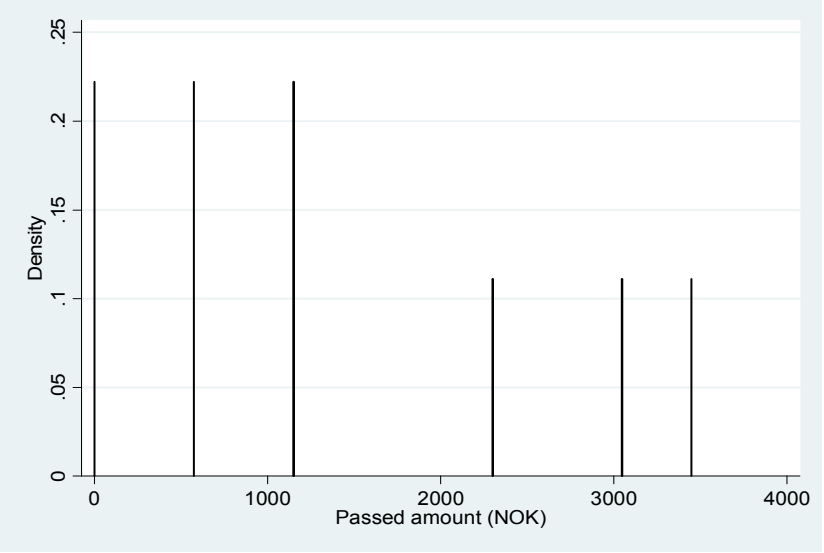

Table 1. Probit regressions for the three different outcomes

Dependent variable:	**Opportunistic behaviour**		**Equalitarian behaviour**		**Generous behaviour**	
	Coefficient	*Marginal effect*	*Coefficient*	*Marginal effect*	*Coefficient*	*Marginal effect*
Received amount (for each 10€)	0.055	-0.002	0.056	0.002	-0.003	-0.0005
	(0.013)***	($4*10^{-4}$)***	(0.012)***	($5*10^{-4}$)***	(0.011)	(0.002)
Male	0.462	0.164	-0.753	-0.283	0.873	0.150
	(0.366)	(0.136)	(0.426)*	(0.149)*	(0.406)**	(0.078)**
Time spent within:						
religious associations	-0.385	-0.134	0.595	0.233	-0.460	-0.068
	(0.209)*	(0.071)*	(0.194)***	(0.076)***	(0.216)**	(0.032)**
sports associations	-0.043	-0.015	0.014	0.006	0.039	0.006
	(0.068)	(0.024)	(0.046)	(0.018)	(0.047)	(0.008)
cultural associations	0.124	0.043	-0.203	-0.079	0.158	0.023
	(0.088)	(0.029)	(0.044)**	(0.037)**	(0.084)*	(0.014)*
political associations	-0.222	-0.077	0.153	0.060	-0.084	-0.012
	(0.137)*	(0.045)*	(0.115)	(0.046)	(0.077)	(0.012)
Time spent in communications through						
telephone	0.010	0.004	-0.138	-0.054	0.223	0.033
	(0.117)	(0.041)	(0.100)	(0.039)	(0.111)**	(0.018)**
text messages	0.005	0.002	-0.004	-0.001	-0.003	-0.0004
	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.0005)
the Internet	-0.038	-0.013	0.123	0.048	-0.185	-0.027
	(0.041)	(0.014)	(0.037)***	(0.014)***	(0.064)***	(0.001)***
Having a job	1.025	0.311	0.243	0.094	-1.587	-0.344
	(0.414)**	(0.100)***	(0.353)	(0.135)	(0.391)***	(0.103)***
Ethnicity[1]	0.071	0.025	-0.264	-0.103	0.355	0.052
	(0.205)	(0.071)	(0.201)	(0.079)	(0.263)	(0.040)
Constant	0.896		-2.160		-0.629	
	(0.716)		(0.750)***		(1.014)	
Pr(y = 1)		0.301		0.423		0.079
Number of observations:	85		85		85	
Pseudo-R^2	0.374		0.361		0.302	

1 Ethnicity takes values 0, 1, 2, 3 according to the answer of the player to the following question: “Do you feel: 0) from my own region; 1) Norwegian; 2) European; 3) nationality is not important at all.

Table 2. Probit regression for adopting a generous or an opportunistic behaviour vs. an equalitarian behaviour

	Opportunistic behaviour		Generous behaviour	
	Coefficient	*Marginal effect*	*Coefficient*	*Marginal effect*
Received amount (for each 10€)	-0.006	-0.002	-0.003	$-7*10^{-4}$
	(0.001)***	$(5*10^{-4})$***	(0.001)*	$(3*10^{-4})$*
Male	0.805	0.243	1.773	0.431
	(0.469)*	(0.113)**	(0.646)***	(0.159)***
Time spent within:				
religious associations	-0.421	-0.159	-0.953	-0.230
	(0.169)***	(0.064)***	(0.312)***	(0.081)***
sports associations	-0.032	-0.012	0.040	0.008
	(0.067)	(0.025)	(0.057)	(0.012)
cultural associations	0.190	0.072	0.306	0.065
	(0.087)**	(0.034)**	(0.191)	(0.043)
political associations	-0.296	-0.112	-0.146	-0.031
	(0.139)**	(0.053)**	(0.135)	(0.028)
Time spent in communications through				
telephone	0.080	0.030	0.290	0.062
	(0.114)	(0.044)	(0.198)	(0.042)
text messages	0.006	0.002	0.005	0.001
	(0.003)*	(0.001)*	(0.010)	(0.002)
the Internet	-0.072	-0.027	-0.288	-0.061
	(0.039)*	(0.015)*	(0.100)***	(0.022)***
Having a job	0.386	0.152	-1.661	-0.391
	(0.486)	(0.188)	(0.491)***	(0.125)***
Ethnicity[1]	0.268	0.101	0.407	0.087
	(0.236)	(0.086)	(0.364)	(0.081)
Constant	1.151		0.567	
	(0.783)		(1.246)	
Pr(y = 1)	0.409		0.123	
Number of observations:	73		52	
Pseudo-R^2	0.438		0.434	

APPENDIX I: EXPERIMENTAL INSTRUCTIONS

There are two groups of students: A and B (both from the University of...). Each Student A is anonymously and randomly matched to another Student B.

Step 1

Student A receives the notional sum of 200€ and decides how to share this amount between himself and Student B.

Step 2

The amount Student A passed to Student B is tripled; in other words, for each euro that Student A passes, Student B receives 3€. Student B knows that the received sum is determined in this way.

Step 3

Student B decides how to share the received sum between himself and Student A.

Step 4

A couple of students will be randomly drawn and paid according to their decisions. These two students will be separately paid to avoid them to meet.

Warning:

- **All the decisions remain totally anonymous.**
- **These instructions are perfectly identical for all the components of both groups A and B.**

You are a student of group… (exactly as all the other students in this classroom).

- Please, write in part A of the attached form how much you want to pass to Student B.
- Then answer the attached questionnaire.
- Take the numbered paper. If your number is drawn, you have to show it in order to be paid.
- Handle back the form and the questionnaire.

The drawn number will be announced during one of the following classes and published on the website.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Part A

Student A:

You divide 200€ between yourself and a Student B. Write down the sum (between 0 e 200€) that you want to pass to Student B:

_____€

Part B

Student B:

You receive three times the amount Student A gave you. Thus, you receive

_____€

You divide this amount between yourself and Student A. Write down the sum you pass back to Student A:

_____€

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions:

1. Below there is a list of different voluntary associations. Indicate how much time on average (hours and minutes) you spend weekly in each of them. Indicate also the number of associations of the same type you are a member. Moreover explicitly indicate whether you are not a member of some of the listed types.

Associations	Time	Number	Not a member
Sports associations (including gyms)	h min.		□
Religious associations	h min		□
Cultural associations (music, theatre, arts, ...)	h min		□
Own Faculty students' associations (i.e..)	h min		□
Other students' associations ↳ Specify	h min		□
Environmental associations (WWF, Greenpeace, ...)	h min		□
Associations for animals' rights (es.)	h min		
Political parties/associations	h min		□
Youth clubs (Scouts, ...)	h min		□
Social aimed associations (i.e. Red Cross, …)			
Other associations ↳ Specify	h min		□

2. How much time on average do you spend weekly in phone talks with friends (including Skype)? _____ h _____ min

3. How many short text messages do you send from your mobile on average per week? _____

4. How much time (hours and minutes) on average do you spend weekly in active Internet communications (reading and writing emails, chatting, ...)?
   _____ h _____ min

5. How much free time on average do you spend weekly with your friends?
   _____ h _____ min

6. How many brothers do you have? _____
   How many sisters do you have? _____

7. Have you a student job currently? □ Yes □ No

8. Do you live in *the city of the university*? (domicile) □ Yes □ No
   If no, during the week do you live … (in a student room/apartment)? □ Yes □ No

9. Which country and province are you from?
   Country: _____ Region:_____

10. Are you the owner of the apartment you live in? □ Yes □ No
    If no, please indicate how many crowns per month you pay for the rent of your room/apartment
    _____

11. To which of the following group do you feel to belong firstly □ *own region* □ Norwegian □ Scandinavian □ European
    □ Other (specify):_____

12. Gender: □ M □ F

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

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