

Workshop on Guaranteed Income Experiments

The moral, ecological and economic value of a basic income

February 22-23, 2024

Thursday, February 22, 2024, Dougie Hitt Conference Room, 407 - Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

9:30 am-10:00 pm: Registration.

10:00-10:30 am: **Opening**

Sara Bizarro, *University of New Orleans*, Roberto Merrill, *University of Minho*.

10:30 am-12:30 pm: **Session 1: The moral, ecological, and economic value of a basic income.**

Chair – Marc Landry, *University of New Orleans*.

Speaker 1 – Jim Mulvale, *The Moral-Ecological Case for Basic Income: Changing Minds and Hearts*.

Abstract

This paper explores and draws connections between two areas of theoretical and empirical work: i) policy-oriented literature that sets out ecological arguments for basic income in terms of economic and social policy; and ii) moral-ecologic arguments for basic income that are (or can be) grounded in moral philosophy and ethically-inflected economic theory.

The work of scholars such as Fitzpatrick and Campling (1999), Gough (2022), and Mulvale (2019) will be discussed in regard to policy literature making the ‘green case for basic income.’ The work of Alasdair MacIntyre (on striving for the common good through the practice of virtues) and Herman Daly (on the ethical-moral case for transitioning to a steady-state economy) will be drawn upon to frame a moral-ecologic argument for basic income. Convergences and contradictions will be explored between these two bodies of work – policy-oriented and moral-philosophical – in order to suggest areas of research that could advance both endeavours.

In the final section of the paper, I will discuss some possible strategies for winning over public opinion and mobilizing political leaders to advance a radical ecological agenda that includes basic income as one necessary component in a fundamental social-ecological transition. Such strategies will have to incorporate both reasonable and feasible policy measures and instruments (to win over minds) and compelling and appealing moral arguments about ecological sustainability and intergenerational justice (to win over hearts). Research findings from basic income experiments will be drawn upon to illustrate why basic income in both

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smart social policy and ‘the right thing to do’ in moral terms, as we confront vast social-economic inequality and the environmental emergency.

Speaker 2 – Michael Howard, *Is the strong ecological argument for basic income a strong argument for basic income?*

Abstract

There are broadly speaking two types of arguments connecting basic income (BI) to ecological purposes. The first, “minimalist”, ecological argument is an argument for carbon dividends. Carbon dividends are per capita cash payments distributed periodically to everyone from the revenue from carbon pricing, either carbon taxation or a carbon cap with an auction of emission permits. Carbon pricing is essential for meeting internationally agreed upon climate mitigation goals. Using most of the proceeds for dividends is crucial for rectifying the otherwise unjust effects of a regressive tax, and for making a steadily rising carbon price politically feasible. Thus the minimalist ecological argument for BI is a strong argument. However, carbon pricing can yield at most a partial BI, insufficient for basic needs.

The second argument, the strong or “maximalist” ecological argument, concludes that a full BI funded from sources in addition to carbon pricing, can or will have positive ecological effects.

The minimalist argument has been widely discussed, has many supporters, and is a strong argument. The maximalist argument has received less attention. This paper will focus on the maximalist argument, evaluating its premises, including that a BI will facilitate a post growth economy, by freeing people to spend more time in less carbon-intensive activity, by facilitating work time reduction and work sharing, and by reducing inequality. The initial hypothesis is that the maximalist argument is weaker than the minimalist argument. This is partly because some of the maximalist premises support egalitarian redistribution but not specifically in the form of basic income, and partly because some claims about alleged effects need further empirical support. The argument could be strengthened by making the case for BI over other forms of egalitarian redistribution and by empirical research on the ecological effects of BI.

Speaker 3 – Soomi Lee, *What makes a guaranteed income policy fiscally feasible?*

Abstract

This study explores the feasibility of implementing a guaranteed income policy in the United States by analyzing current federal policies, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The research aims to understand how the principles and objectives of guaranteed income can be incorporated into these existing frameworks, focusing on the

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federal level. The study is spurred by the observation that political interest and support for such policies vary significantly across different regions, with progressive areas that already offer better benefits being more inclined to initiate pilot programs. Conversely, regions with limited resources and conservative leanings show less enthusiasm for adopting guaranteed income initiatives. Thus, the study argues that a grassroots approach from local and state levels to the federal government may not ensure the successful adoption of guaranteed income policies. It emphasizes that pilot programs should not only aim to demonstrate the potential benefits of guaranteed income but also foster policy discussions that could lead to broader acceptance and implementation.

12:30 pm-2:00 pm: Lunch Break

2:00 pm-4:00 pm: **Session 2: Basic Income Experiments and Cash Transfer Programs**

Chair – Sara Bizarro, *University of New Orleans*.

Speaker 1 – Karl Widerquist, *A Critical Analysis of Basic Income Experiments*.

Abstract

The Universal Basic Income (UBI) experiments, more than a hundred of which are taking place or getting underway in the United States and several other countries face great problems both because nonspecialists (the citizens and policymakers who are ultimately responsible for evaluating policy in any democracy) have great difficulty understanding what research implies about policy and because specialists often have difficulty understanding what citizens and policymakers most hope to learn from policy research. Experiments can add a small part to the existing body of evidence people need to fully evaluate UBI as a policy proposal. Specialists can provide caveats about the limits of what research implies, but nonspecialists are often unable to translate caveats into a firm grasp of what that research does and does not imply about the policy at issue. Therefore, even the best scientific policy research often leaves nonspecialists with an oversimplified, or simply wrong, impression of its implications for policy. This presentation, based on the book, *A Critical Analysis of Basic Income Experiments for Researchers, Policymakers, and Citizens*, discusses the difficulty of conducting UBI experiments and communicating their results to nonspecialists given the inherent limits of experimental techniques, the complexity of the public discussion of UBI, and the many barriers that make it difficult for specialists and nonspecialists to understand each other.

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Speaker 2 – Sid Frankel, *Basic Income Experiments in the Canadian Political Context: Lessons for Advocates and Policymakers.*

Abstract

This presentation will focus on lessons for advocates and policymakers based on Canada's history of basic income experimentation, and within the context of the range of available implementation options. These lessons relate to mitigating the risk of cancellation when governments change and enhancing the relevance of experiments to political decision-makers. The relative political and advocacy risks of each implementation option will also be analyzed. Beyond this, an overall risk to the adoption of a basic income in Canada will be considered related to the stable path dependence of state institutional arrangements and practices related to the distinction between deserving and undeserving recipients of aid from the state, which is the genesis of conditionality in income support programs (Crouch 2005; Segal, 2012). Of course, this risk is based on ideology and not empirical evidence, and therefore may be immune to challenges from experimental evidence.

Speaker 3 – Jennifer Ramo, *Ethics in the Design and Implementation of Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers.*

Abstract

This presentation delves into the critical aspect of ethical design in cash transfer programs, aiming to foster dignity, equality, and empowerment among beneficiaries. In recent years, cash transfers have emerged as a prominent tool for poverty alleviation, humanitarian aid, and social protection. However, the design and implementation of these programs raise profound ethical considerations that demand careful attention.

Drawing from principles of justice, autonomy, and respect for human rights, this presentation outlines a framework for ethical design in cash transfer initiatives. It examines the ethical implications of targeting criteria, payment mechanisms, and program evaluation, emphasizing the need for transparency, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity throughout the process.

Through the presentation of New Mexico case studies and learned best practices, this presentation offers practical insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers committed to advancing ethical standards in cash transfer programming. Ultimately, by prioritizing ethical design principles, we can foster more equitable, accountable, and sustainable approaches to poverty reduction and social justice.

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Speaker 4 - Megan Lundstrom, *Voices of Resilience: A Community-Driven Basic Income Pilot for Survivors of Human Trafficking.*

Abstract

In the fall of 2023, Polaris launched The Resilience Fund, an 18-month basic income pilot for survivors of human trafficking in the United States. From conceptualization to program staff recruitment, Advisory Council formation, and the establishment of real-time feedback loops, The Resilience Fund embodies a commitment to centering lived experience in programmatic design. The presentation will delve into the core systems barriers survivors face on their journey to thriving economically, introducing a lived experience trust model.

Drawing on data from intake demographics, monthly feedback surveys, listening sessions, Council meetings, and one-on-one interviews, The Resilience Fund is not only a beacon of empowerment but also a model for fostering meaningful change in the lives of human trafficking survivors.

Friday, February 23, 2024, Dougie Hitt Conference Room, 407 - Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

10:00-10:30 am: Late Registration.
Coffee

10:30 am-12:00 pm: **Session 1: Basic Income Experiments in New Orleans**

Chair - Max Krochmal, *University of New Orleans.*

Speaker 1 – Anamaria Villamarin Lupin, Deputy Director, Mayor’s Office of Youth and Families, and Andrés Acuna, Policy Manager for the Mayor’s Office of Youth and Families, *New Orleans Guaranteed Income Pilot.*

Abstract

In 2022, The CNO received a grant from Mayors for Guaranteed Income to pilot a program here. The New Orleans Guaranteed Income Program served young people in Orleans Parish who were disconnected from work and school. The goal of the program was to support opportunity youth and help connect participants back to education and employment opportunities. The program was administered by the Mayor's Office of Youth and Families (OYF) who partnered with nine community-based organizations to refer participants to the

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program including ALAS, Collegiate Academies, Healthy Start, New Orleans Public Schools, Youth Empowerment Project, New Orleans Youth Alliance, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, and Educators for Quality Alternatives. In addition, OYF partnered with United Way of Southeast Louisiana to provide benefits counseling to all participants.

Speaker 2 – Talia Livneh, *The \$50 Study: A Guaranteed Income Program for Schools.*

Abstract

Students who grow up in low-income communities don't lack character; they lack cash. In 2020, we first asked the question: what becomes possible for students, when they receive \$50/week, to spend as they see fit for a school year? The \$50 Study, now in its third year, is a first-of-its-kind program that explores the impact of unconditional cash on outcomes for high school students. This session will explore the outcomes of The \$50 Study, as well as make a case for why cash transfers should become policy

12:00 am-2:00 pm: Lunch Break

2:00 am-4:00 am: **Session 2: Basic Income Experiments Research - Keynote**

Chair - Roberto Merrill, *University of Minho*

Keynote speaker, Amy Castro, followed by a round table with all workshop participants.

Abstract:

Financial survival in the United States means engaging in systems diffuse with structural oppression, risk and dehumanizing conditions. Performing waged and unwaged labor in this environment requires subjecting oneself to a financial logic governed by self-sufficiency and compliance with deservedness narratives. The chronic experience of scarcity functions as a form of social control and presents barriers to critical consciousness, but it also creates sites of resistance that unconditional cash can exploit. This talk uses a case study of participants in guaranteed income experiments to explore the lives of people who resist capitalism's pull on their sense of self. While some reactions to material hardship reflect shame, others resisted the internalized logic of capitalism by confronting their structural vulnerability and rejecting the notion that they did not matter outside of their value as financial actors. Their mechanism of ontological resistance flowed through the capacity of guaranteed income to alleviate scarcity and disrupt forced vulnerability by creating time for relationships, collective interdependence, and a sense of self that exists outside of capitalist logic.