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Universal Basic Income and Divergent Theories of Gender Justice

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Abstract

This article assesses the potential for basic income to become a tool for empowering women in the household and in the workplace. Recent debates among feminist political theorists indicate that it is not obvious whether basic income has the potential to push our society toward greater socioeconomic gender justice. I show that arguments for and against basic income put forward by feminist theorists rely on implicit assumptions about how women's work should be conceived—assumptions that are not shared among all of them. I also argue that these beliefs can be sorted into two dichotomies: one concerned with the suitability of remuneration for caregiving, the other with the question of who should be responsible for caregiving. I conclude by explaining the possible causes of the divergences in the views of feminist supporters and critics of UBI, and by recommending ways to arrive at common conceptual grounds.

I. Introduction: Basic Income and the Gendered Division of Labor

In one of his universal basic income (UBI) proposals, Philippe Van Parijs notes that a key advantage of UBI is that it provides a solution to a number of concerns about gender justice. He claims that it would have a positive effect on intra-household financial distribution and empower the lives of women, who perform a disproportionate part of care work (Livingston 2018) within the family:¹

Given the sexist division of labor in the household and the special “caring” functions that women disproportionately bear, their labor market participation, and range of choice in jobs, is far more constrained than those of men. Both in terms of direct impact on the interindividual distribution of income and the longer-term impact on job options, a UBI is therefore bound to benefit women far more than men. . . . [I]t is not only against the tyranny of bosses that a UBI supplies some protection, but also against the tyranny of husbands and bureaucrats. (Van Parijs 2014)

Van Parijs puts forward UBI as a tool that could empower women who have taken on the traditionally female role of caregivers and financially rely on their husbands. He also claims that UBI can be an instrument of freedom from male domination—both within households and within larger social milieus such as the workplace or the bureaucratic apparatus of the state.²

Van Parijs's claim that the gendered division of labor has severely disadvantaged women is a point of convergence among feminist political theorists and scientists. Most of them, in fact, regard it as the primary cause of women's socioeconomic inequality (Davis 1983; Okin 1989; Baxter and Kane 1995; Orloff 2013). First, women assume the majority of unpaid care responsibilities inside the home. In the United States in 2017, twenty-seven percent of women stayed home to care for children compared to seven percent of men (Livingston 2018). These are activities that, despite enhancing welfare and being necessary for the maintenance of a healthy society, are notoriously unpaid, undervalued, and—as Angela Davis puts it—“invisible, repetitive, exhausting, unproductive, [and] uncreative” (Davis 1983, 177). Notoriously, this gendered division of labor results in the lack of satisfactory and consistent independent income, which frequently leads to economic dependency on a partner. This, in turn, increases the risk of experiencing emotional and physical abuse and the risk of poverty in old age after the loss of the wage-earning partner (Elgarte 2008, 2).

The gendered division of labor also seriously disadvantages girls and women in terms of opportunities for full-time wage work or other activities beyond the household, and ultimately renders them less economically valuable than men (Okin 1994, 12). Middle-aged women, in turn, are more likely than their male counterparts to leave a job to care for an elderly family member (Wakabayashi and Donato 2006). The gendered division of care work both in and outside the home thus conspires to limit women's social and professional flourishing and leaves them economically worse off than men³

As envisioned by Van Parijs, basic income would be a just and bureaucratically efficient solution to long-standing discrimination against women in both the public and private spheres. However, despite his claims that UBI has the potential to reduce socioeconomic gender injustice, the vast literature on women and unconditional cash transfers reveals that many conceptual and empirical questions regarding this issue remain contested or unaddressed altogether. Some of the relevant questions are: Can UBI empower economic dependents who perform care- and housework (most of whom are women)? Can it empower single mothers? Might UBI help improve labor conditions and opportunities for women working outside the household by giving them an alternative source of income? Would a UBI help waged care workers or harm them? Can a UBI be a way of helping women not work at all?

For example, a recent debate among feminist philosophers and political theorists featured in a special issue of *Basic Income Studies* (Zelleke 2008) has shown that it is not at all obvious whether the basic income proposal has the potential to advance feminist goals by pushing our society closer toward desired socioeconomic gender justice, or, on the contrary, poses the danger of reinforcing already present gender injustice. This debate revealed deeply rooted differences between feminist conceptions of gender justice. Indeed, the question of UBI's compatibility with feminist goals seems to be closely tied to another, wider debate on how the nature of women's work should be

conceived. Two of the most common feminist conceptions of gender justice conceive of it as either an assimilation of women into dominant socioeconomic roles (the traditionally “male” ideal of paid employment), or a recognition of the uniqueness and irreducibility of women’s traditional work, and especially caregiving.⁴

In this article I will argue that arguments for and against basic income put forward by feminist theorists rely on implicit assumptions about how women’s work should be conceived—assumptions that are not shared among all of them. I will also show that these assumptions can be sorted into two dichotomies: one concerned with the suitability of remuneration for caregiving, the other with the question of who should be responsible for caregiving. These dichotomies figure in the background of feminist arguments for and against UBI, and therefore it is worthwhile to spell them out in order to get a clearer picture of the ways they affect contemporary feminist debates around basic income. This will reveal the normative sources of the disagreements between feminist supporters and critics of UBI.

Once the normative sources are clear, furthermore, I will be in the position to distinguish them from disagreements stemming from inconclusive or absent empirical data about basic income’s impact. Identifying shortcomings in empirical information available to us from UBI pilot programs and experiments can help orient future programs toward the most salient empirical questions, and identifying normative disagreements can help structure future philosophical discussions around basic income and women’s well-being; doing both can also show that normative judgments play an important role in assessing specific empirical results of policy experiments as favorable or unfavorable.

In what follows, I will first provide a brief summary of the conceptual space of these discussions (section II). Next, I will argue that different feminist arguments for and against UBI do not share a common conceptual ground. To do so, I will examine them in light of two dichotomies I have identified above, focusing both on feminist arguments in favor of UBI (section III) and against UBI (section IV). In the final section, I will suggest the kind of empirical questions that future experiments should address in order to resolve these disparities, comment on the limits of policy experiments, and speculate whether positions other than the ones that exist in the feminist literature on UBI are possible (section V). Since my treatment of the feminist debate around UBI does not rely on a particular, “correct” account of gender justice, its aim is to account for divergent feminist theories of women’s well-being and socioeconomic equality in a way that brings to light nuanced differences among such views. I will use my conceptual differentiations to point to differences between views that have been overlooked. This will shed light on the disagreement and clarify whether it is located in the conceptual or the empirical sphere.⁵

II. Conceptual Divergences within Feminist Assumptions about Socioeconomic Gender Justice

I now turn to a brief summary of the conceptual space of these discussions, which I sketch with the use of two dichotomies: one concerned with the suitability of remuneration for caregiving, the other with the question of who should be responsible for caregiving.

The first of these dichotomies concerns the suitability of formal, employment-like remuneration for all types of housework and caregiving. Here, the point of disagreement concerns whether housework and caregiving should be put on a par with formal employment, institutionalized and commodified, or whether its distinct nature lies in being contrasted with paid work. Some feminist theorists argue that justice demands that all types of housework and care work be treated in the way paid work is. If all types of such work become commodified or paid in the same manner as jobs, they will finally gain societal status, respect, and recognition equal to formal employment, and thus women's traditional social role will be viewed on par with men's. Other feminist theorists, however, claim instead that remunerating all types of care work in a formal manner would have the negative effect of stripping the act of caregiving of its essence and enforcing the already dominant male conception of what counts as a respectable occupation (that is, that which is remunerated). Formal remuneration, moreover, would degrade the activity of caregiving and obscure its unique essence: the commitment to the flourishing of human relationships and the ideally voluntary nature of this activity (which, it is important to keep in mind, is not always voluntary). According to feminist thinkers who hold this view, justice demands that some forms of care work be treated differently from paid work. (To be sure, this view is compatible with the view that care work should be financially supported or enabled through financial support, but not in a way that treats caregiving like a job.)

For the purposes of the article, I will refer to this dichotomy as the *remuneration dichotomy* and distinguish two opposing views: the *care- and housework as employment* view and the *care- and housework as unique occupation* view. This terminology, though inevitably very simplified, will be useful in spelling out the assumptions of the different feminist conceptions of gender justice.

The second dichotomy is concerned with the question: Does justice demand that caregiving be equally shared between men and women, or is the gendered division of domestic work permissible? Some feminist theorists believe that no serious issues are raised by unequal division of care work—provided that, of course, women actually freely choose to do it and are not disadvantaged by choosing such work. On this framework, caregiving still ought to gain more social recognition and respect. Other feminist theorists argue that justice demands that both types of work, formal employment and caregiving, be split as equally as possible between the two genders. (This issue is relevant exclusively to heterosexual households, of course.) They thus postulate incentivizing men to share caregiving responsibilities, which would make it easier for women to pursue careers alongside caregiving. This, they claim, will result in the abolition of gendered divisions of labor.

I will call this dichotomy the *labor-division dichotomy* and distinguish two opposing views: the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view versus the *care- and housework split between genders* view.

In light of the dichotomies presented above, there are eight logically possible feminist standpoints one can take on UBI (not all of which will be plausible and/or argued for in the literature). One can endorse the *care- and housework as employment* view or the *care- and housework as a unique occupation* view; and the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view or the *care- and housework split between genders* view. Furthermore, independently of these views, one can claim that UBI will help us approach gender justice, or that it will not.

Here is a preliminary classification of the positions taken:

CLAIM:	DICHOTOMY:	PRESUPPOSED VIEW ABOUT GENDER JUSTICE:	AUTHOR WHO TAKES THIS POSITION:
<i>UBI will further gender justice</i>	<i>The remuneration dichotomy</i>	<i>Care- and housework as employment</i>	Davis, NWRO activists
		<i>Care- and housework as a unique occupation</i>	Van Parijs, Baker, Zelleke
	<i>The labor-division dichotomy</i>	<i>Care- and housework as permissibly female</i>	McKay, Baker
		<i>Care- and housework split between genders</i>	Van Parijs, Zelleke, Pateman, Elgarte
<i>UBI will not further gender justice</i>	<i>The remuneration dichotomy</i>	<i>Care- and housework as employment</i>	Bergmann
		<i>Care- and housework as a unique occupation</i>	
	<i>The labor-division dichotomy</i>	<i>Care- and housework as permissibly female</i>	
		<i>Care- and housework split between genders</i>	Gheaus, Bergmann, Orloff

In the remainder of this article I will return to each of these views in more detail and I will reconstruct the views of specific feminist thinkers. I begin in the next section by providing a classification of feminist arguments in favor of UBI in accordance with the two dichotomies (and four views) outlined above.

III. Feminist Arguments in Favor of Basic Income

In his basic income proposal from 2014, Van Parijs writes that women’s career choices and professional opportunities are “far more constrained than those of men” due to “the sexist division of labor in the household and the special ‘caring’ functions that women disproportionately bear” (Van Parijs 2014, 9). He evaluates pejoratively the fact that women take on a much bigger part of caregiving responsibilities than men do and are thus deprived of career opportunities. For him, the combination of the gendered division of labor and the lack of remuneration for caregiving leaves women worse off than men. His position is therefore compatible with either eliminating the division of labor or paying for care work.

Because the gendered division of labor is a socioeconomic phenomenon that is not going to change in the short term, Van Parijs focuses on the latter solution: the financial support of care- and housework. He claims that UBI would ameliorate the social, psychological, and economic inequalities a gendered division of labor generates by providing financial support for the women who are absent from, or have disadvantaged positions in, the labor market. Van Parijs’s feminist conception of gender justice, therefore, consists of the ideal of *care- and housework split between genders* (as opposed to *care- and housework as permissibly female*). Furthermore, since the type of UBI he proposes would be unconditional (not subject to performing a certain amount of

caregiving or any other type of work) and fixed-rate (not geared to how much work an individual does), we can also attribute to him the *care- and housework as a unique occupation* view (as opposed to the *care- and housework as employment* view).

But, as I have noted in the introduction, Van Parijs's original feminist argument for UBI does not exhaust the possibilities of feminist approaches toward the policy—not even the *pro* approaches. Several other feminist theorists who also support basic income share Van Parijs's ideals of *care- and housework split between genders* and/or *care- and housework as a unique occupation*, whereas others reject one or both of these views, or do not take a stand at all.

Almaz Zelleke appears to share the ideal of *care- and housework split between genders* and the *care- and housework as a unique occupation* view with Van Parijs. Zelleke argues that UBI “promotes gender equality by creating the social and economic conditions required to reduce the gendered division of labor” (Zelleke 2008, 1). Her argument is centered around the thought that true gender justice cannot be achieved only by equating the financial sides and social statuses of paid work and care work, but must enable men to share care work with women and incentivize them to share it.

Zelleke starts by analyzing two alternative policy proposals whose aim is to enhance women's opportunities: Bergmann's “universal breadwinner model” and Kittay, Abelde, and Beem's “caregiver parity model” (cited in Zelleke 2008). The first model—itsself a variation on the job-guarantee proposal—aims to further gender equity by promoting women's entrance into the labor force and designing care-support services to free them from caregiving responsibilities. Zelleke dismisses this model by arguing that it “does nothing to challenge the gendered division of labor or the low standing of care work, and fails to eliminate or even reduce the exploitation of unpaid and low-paid caregivers” (Zelleke 2008, 3), as a result of which it “does little to induce men to do more care work” (4). The second model, caregiver parity, aims to further gender equity by recognizing the value of care work through remunerating it on a par with paid employment, and thus raising its social status. Zelleke claims that this model, too, misses the point of the feminist struggle to abolish the gendered distribution of labor to arrive at gender equity. First, unless the pay for care work is very high, the parent who earns less—usually the woman—becomes the caregiver. Second, remunerating care work suggests that:

caregiving is comparable to a job with limited and definable hours and responsibilities, when in fact it is not. When workers are off duty, they can enjoy leisure, but homebased caregiving is a job that can be round the clock. . . . Viewing caregiving as a *job* with an income risks entrenching the view that it is an individual, *chosen* responsibility. (5)

Zelleke argues that we need a policy proposal that is not trying to arrive at gender equity by taking men's work as the default, as it were, and striving to assimilate women's work to it by either remunerating it as though it were a paid job, or enabling women to be employed in the traditional way. She claims that “caregiving and household responsibilities cannot be fully commodified or restricted to the confines of employment-comparable hours and tasks” (3). This androcentric character of both the universal-breadwinner model and the caregiver-parity model is remedied by another model, originally proposed by Nancy Fraser: the “universal caregiver model” that equally redistributes what now is seen as primarily women's work—care- and housework—across both genders (Fraser 1997). A path toward gender justice conceived

this way will be possible, Zelleke claims, with a UBI since basic income “best compensates care work in accordance with the principles of the universal caretaker model of citizenship” (Zelleke 2008, 5). UBI recognizes the fact that all citizens, regardless of their gender and career plans, should receive some financial support that enables them, for example, to take care of their dependents, among other things. It does this by empowering both women and men to choose a mix of paid work, caregiving, and leisure that best suits their interests and needs. Furthermore, UBI does not discriminate between paid work and care work, for its universal character ensures that all adult citizens receive the same level of basic income.

A significant number of other feminist theorists presuppose the *care- and housework split between genders* view within the *labor-division dichotomy* while remaining neutral with regard to the *remuneration dichotomy*. Two examples are Carole Pateman and Julieta Elgarte. Pateman argues for UBI by endorsing the idealized conception of the gendered division of labor in society and thus agrees with Van Parijs and Zelleke when it comes to the *labor-division dichotomy*. She claims that we need “opportunities to investigate new ideas and look critically at new arrangements—including the moral hazard of institutions that give incentives to men to avoid their fair share of the unpaid work of caring for others” (Pateman 2004, 100). Pateman argues that the fact that care work has been, and continues to be, spread unequally between the man and the woman is an injustice that takes place within the realm of the household. She views the basic-income proposal as a possible solution to this problem, seeing UBI as “important for feminism and democratization precisely because it is paid not to households but individuals as citizens” (101). On this view, UBI is attractive because it shifts the emphasis from the family as a social nucleus and the smallest unit of justice to the individual *qua* citizen who is always at risk of being abused at the level of the household. For Pateman, “the problem of women’s self-government and full standing as citizens is visible only when individuals are conceptualized within the context of social relations and institutions” (101).

Elgarte claims that a UBI would help the society transition to one with abolished gendered divisions of labor and one where men and women can share paid work and unpaid domestic or care work equally. She argues that UBI can protect homemakers (who are predominantly female) while at the same time not trapping them in the household, and that it can protect women from the economic insecurity and dependency they face due to the gendered division of labor. She concludes that UBI can provide women with lifetime economic security and with increased bargaining power (Elgarte 2008, 1–7). Thus Elgarte’s conception of gender justice presupposes the *care- and housework split between genders* view within the *labor-division dichotomy*, similar to Van Parijs’s, Zelleke’s, and Pateman’s conceptions of gender justice.

Another feminist case for UBI that presupposes the *care- and housework as a unique occupation* view within the *remuneration dichotomy* is John Baker’s argument. However, Baker does not endorse the *care- and housework split between genders* view as do the previous four theorists I have discussed, but the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view within the *labor-division dichotomy*. Baker argues that treating care work as a form of paid and formal work would run against the essence of caregiving and miss the point of human relationships. He acknowledges that a key problem for egalitarians, whom he identifies with, is that “recognising, valuing and supporting care work risks reinforcing the gendered division of labour, a problem of much wider remit than the issue of basic income” (Baker 2008, 1). He contends, however, that it is possible to construe UBI as a way of valuing and acknowledging the importance of the activity of caregiving and other forms of domestic work (4).⁶

On these grounds, Baker concludes that basic income acknowledges the value of care work and recognizes it as one of “(partially) noncommodifiable activities” that deserve material sustenance (4). This might be the first step toward women’s achieving fair professional opportunities anyway, he believes, since in order for men to become more interested in care work, caregiving must first be destigmatized.⁷ Ultimately, however, Baker endorses the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view within the *labor-division dichotomy*, as suggested by his remark that UBI can “[provide] everyone with a more effective opportunity to engage in [care work], whether by partial or complete withdrawal from the labour market.” Justice does not demand that the man and the woman necessarily share caregiving responsibilities equally, but rather that both of them are able to engage in whatever activities they find most fulfilling: be it waged labor, housework and caregiving, or other activities.

Somewhat similarly to Baker, Angela Davis expresses support for guaranteed income in her book *Women, Race, and Class* (Davis 1983, ch. 13)—a book focused on examining how the legacy of slavery and systemic racism have affected black women’s standards for womanhood, the types of work and activism they perform, their reproductive rights, and the shape of America’s working class. Davis supports guaranteed income on the grounds that such a measure, together with the socialization and industrialization of care- and housework, will free individuals who assume the majority of burdensome responsibilities of this kind—in particular, black women. Consequently, such a policy will enable women to engage in other activities they find meaningful. Davis writes: “The abolition of housework as the private responsibility of individual women is clearly a strategic goal of women’s liberation. But the socialization of housework—including meal preparation and child care—presupposes an end to the profit-motive’s reign over the economy” (193). As I will show below, Davis rejects the ideal of *care- and housework split between genders*, although she does not necessarily support the opposite ideal of *care- and housework as permissibly female*. Her views thus cannot be put in terms of the categories of the *labor-division dichotomy*. But we can classify them as endorsing the ideal of *care- and housework as employment* within the *remuneration dichotomy*.

Davis believes that what women need most is not the desexualization of household work (that is, not a gender-equitable division of care- and housework), but the socialization and industrialization of such work. Before the Industrial Revolution and the shift of economic production from the home to the factory, women were included in productive activities performed from home, and domestic labor was not seen as inferior to other types of labor (178–82). That we currently perceive care- and housework as private in character (when it is performed by a member of the household, not by a paid worker) is an undesirable consequence of living in a capitalist society, in which nothing that does not produce profitable and economically tangible goods can be held in high esteem and valued. As Davis puts it, “A substantial portion of the housewife’s domestic tasks can actually be incorporated into the industrial economy. In other words, housework needs no longer be considered necessarily and unalterably private in character” (178). Therefore, Davis holds the *care- and housework as employment* view within the *remuneration dichotomy*.

If we connect her view to the fact that UBI would likely improve the working conditions and financial situation of people who work as waged caregivers and domestic workers, it seems that there is an argument for basic income from Davis’s perspective on the grounds that such a policy would both liberate women from burdensome care- and housework responsibilities and improve the economic well-being of paid domestic

workers, the majority of whom are people of color. With regard to paid domestic workers, though basic income would not itself constitute a wage for caregiving, it might nevertheless have effects on those employed as caregivers, many of whom are immigrants with limited economic opportunities.⁸ Waged care work and domestic work could thus also benefit from an unconditional cash transfer in the same way as for workers in other low-wage and precarious environments. However, UBI is not likely to address or challenge the gendered and racialized status of waged care and domestic work on its own.

The *care- and housework as employment* view within the *remuneration dichotomy* may also be attributed to the political activists of the US National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO): a movement of welfare recipients—mostly black women—between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. This movement’s focus was to gain recognition of care- and housework and to challenge the concept of waged labor, performed disproportionately by men and white people, as socially and morally superior to care- and housework, performed disproportionately by women and people of color (West 1981; Nadasen 2005 157–92; Weeks 2011, 144). Wilson Shervin and Frances Fox Piven describe the motivation behind NWRO:

propelled by their own experience of exploitative jobs, poverty wages, and paternalistic, intrusive, and stingy public programs, welfare activists took to the streets, welfare centers, and courts alike with the aspiration that women’s lives would no longer be dictated by husbands, employers, government bureaucrats, and clerks. (Shervin and Piven 2019, 136).

For NWRO activists, one solution aimed at gaining recognition of housework and challenging the superiority of waged labor was expanded welfare. In this context, a key tenet of the NWRO was the demand for guaranteed income. This demand envisioned a UBI-like policy as an alternative to the precariousness and invasiveness of the welfare system as well as the social hierarchies created by it (Weeks 2011, 137–38). With regard to the latter, NWRO activists battled for economic and social equality against the policymakers’ racist beliefs that people of color (and in particular, black women) are undeserving of welfare benefits. The elderly, the disabled, and the working poor seemed worthy of governmental financial assistance, but African Americans, single mothers, and the unemployed poor were deemed unworthy of it (Nadasen 2005, 157–92). A basic income that was universal and unconditional in nature was seen as a way to fight against the racialized narrative about the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor that surrounded welfare during the 1960–70s. In other words, UBI was a way of challenging what Van Parijs has called “the tyranny of bureaucrats” (Van Parijs 2014, 9).

As Shervin and Piven have shown, the more radical feminist activists of the NWRO movement, whose voices have been largely forgotten in contemporary feminist politics, demanded the freedom *not* to work (Shervin and Piven 2019, 136–37). These activists battled against the popular belief that waged work was a solution to the problems faced by women and people of color, which was evident in the policymakers’ imposition of work requirements on welfare recipients. But, in addition, they battled against the idea that women should be either at work or at home with their children; rather, they wanted to open up the range of options for women, and in particular emphasize the value of community engagement and activism (138–42). In doing so “they extended the concept of ‘reproduction,’ as many socialist feminists do, to include ‘social reproduction,’ which consists not just of the intergenerational reproduction of life but also the daily

reproduction of people by providing necessary food, housing, and care” (146; see also Bhattacharya 2017, 1–20).

A related feminist perspective on basic income that has recently revived the idea of the freedom not to work is Kathi Weeks’s socialist-feminist case for UBI (Weeks 2011, 113–50). Weeks envisions basic income as a contribution to a post-work political project centered around the refusal to work. She understands this refusal as “a refusal of work’s domination over the times and spaces of life and of its moralization, a resistance to the elevation of work as necessary duty and supreme calling” (124). UBI could underline the reciprocal relation between productive and reproductive activities, and, even further, the impossibility of separating these two types of activities. In other words, basic income could represent an understanding that the family is a necessary part of society’s economic apparatus and not a separate, secondary sphere, thus challenging the privatization and feminization of reproductive work. For Weeks, then, the demand for UBI involves what Ailsa McKay and Jo Vanevery call “an implicit recognition that all citizens contribute to society in a variety of ways”—even if some of these contributions “may not have monetary value or even be measurable” (McKay and Vanevery 2000, 281).

Weeks’s postwork political project, which includes the refusal to work, is not easily characterizable in terms of the two dichotomies and four views on gender justice concerning care- and housework. Arguably, one might attribute to her the *care- and housework as employment* view within the *remuneration dichotomy*. This is because, though Weeks rejects the privatization and feminization of reproductive work, what would be compatible with her views is a scenario where domestic work is performed by some paid workers, regardless of their gender, whose wage and working conditions are far better than they currently are.⁹ Perhaps she would also endorse the *care- and housework split between genders* view within the *labor-division dichotomy*, provided that the women performing such work did not do so unwillingly and out of societal or familial pressures.

Most of the feminist thinkers I have discussed so far have presupposed the *care- and housework split between genders* view. A notable exception from such a framework is McKay, who rejects critiques of basic income on the grounds that it could further entrench traditional gender roles instead of emancipating women (McKay 2007, 342). She claims that such arguments against UBI and other universalistic policies¹⁰ that promote paid work are limiting. This is because they focus only on women who are employed (or willing to be employed), and not on all kinds of women. Therefore, according to McKay, policies that promote paid work would not promote overall gender equality since they would devalue nonemployed women and would not remedy the unfair domestic-work allocation.

By contrast, UBI has the potential to help women with all sorts of lifestyle and career preferences. It would do so by giving them more freedom in determining life choices and reducing the gendered division of domestic work:

considering the nature of women’s work, both paid and unpaid, and women’s actual experience of employment, a citizens’ basic income would have particular advantages for women. Establishing a right to a basic income independent of work could have major consequences for women in determining their life choices. (341)

McKay’s critique of traditional productivist models focuses therefore on the fact that such models neglect or, at best, undervalue the life choices and experiences of many

women—women who occupy a significant, or perhaps primary, role in caring for the household or childrearing. What UBI offers, by contrast, “is real freedom for *all* individuals to choose between work and non-work”; this is why “rather than being representative of a policy that responds to some predetermined individual situations, the citizens’ basic income should be viewed as a measure that adapts to a whole range of individually defined life choices” (345). Having a UBI would mean that the welfare state does not prioritize income maintenance over needs such as care work, thereby lifting up the societal perception of the value of caregiving. Basic income would effectively remunerate socially valuable activities that have not been officially classified as “work” (such as caregiving) and it would thereby contribute to the revaluation of the modern notion of “work”—which, as currently understood, is not always liberating or enriching.

The way McKay views the freedom women (and men) should have when determining their life and career choices, including the choice not to enter the labor market in order to focus on domestic work, suggests that she endorses the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view within the *labor-division dichotomy*. This view, as explained before, is the view that unequal (gendered) division of domestic work within the household is permissible *so long as* the person who is the primary caregiver chooses such an occupation freely and is not disadvantaged by choosing such type of work (because it is financially supported and societally acknowledged as a type of “work”). In other words, the view holds that no serious issues of justice are raised by unequal division of care work.

Interlude: The Effects of Basic Income on LGBTQ Individuals

A large part of the discussion about UBI and gender justice up to this point has revolved around gender justice within the heterosexual household and the woman’s freedom to engage in other activities: waged work with good working conditions, community work, activism, or leisure. But what about the effect basic income could have on LGBTQ (and in particular noncisgender) individuals—youth and adults alike? Although the academic literature on this important topic is very limited, we might draw on other resources—broader literature regarding welfare and LGBTQ people or the postulates of LGBTQ social movements centered around cash transfers—to speculate about the kinds of arguments that could be constructed in favor of UBI from the perspective of LGBTQ youth and adults.

According to numerous surveys and reports, LGBTQ individuals are significantly more likely to struggle economically than straight people, specifically with regard to issues such as poverty, child poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and food insecurity (see, for example, Center for American Progress 2014; Funders 2019a; 2019b). People of color who identify as noncisgender face additional challenges stemming from the intersection of their racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. These include limited access to medical resources, shorter life expectancy, higher risks of getting infected with HIV and developing mental health issues, and increased risk of workplace discrimination (see, for example, Jefferson, Neilands, and Sevelius 2013; Longman, Bauer, and Scheim 2013; Robinson and Ross 2013; Scheim et al. 2013). For these reasons, I believe that an unconditional in-cash transfer such as basic income could have an enormous effect on the economic well-being of LGBTQ individuals and communities, including individuals and communities of color. A policy of this kind could directly address some of these issues (poverty and child poverty) and reduce the likelihood of others (food insecurity, homelessness, or limited access to medical resources). It would also address the consequences of unemployment and workplace discrimination in an indirect way.

This conjecture has to be qualified, however, by adding that in order to have such effects, basic income would have to be provided on top of, and not instead of, the existing means-tested benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, or unemployment assistance. According to Caitlin Rooney, Charlie Whittington, and Laura E. Durso, “cuts to benefits such as nutrition assistance, Medicaid, unemployment benefits, and public housing assistance would likely disproportionately harm the LGBTQ community” (Rooney, Whittington, and Durso 2018). If UBI replaced existing benefits and if the level of UBI were lower than the sum of means-tested benefits people in poverty receive, such a policy change would actually harm LGBTQ individuals.

There are further reasons to believe that unconditional cash transfers could help LGBTQ individuals in ways that means-tested benefits might not. Means-tested benefits such as unemployment assistance can implicitly discriminate against LGBTQ people in general, and LGBTQ people of color in particular, who are often unable to find employment for a long period of time and end up leaving the category of people “actively searching for work” (James et al. 2016). This might become an even bigger problem if the period of time during which a person may receive unemployment benefits is shortened. Given the discriminatory nature of means-tested benefits, it is likely to be the case that an unconditional program such as basic income would, once again, disproportionately benefit LGBTQ individuals.

In addition to economic issues, LGBTQ people—and in particular LGBTQ people of color—struggle disproportionately with physical and emotional challenges such as violence, access to adequate healthcare (Schein et al. 2013; Funders 2019b, 92–129), discrimination in the classroom (Infanti 2009; James et al. 2016 130–38), and—in the case of youth—psychological abuse within the household (James et al. 2016, 64–80). A cash transfer such as UBI cannot, of course, address a multitude of issues like this on its own. The emotional and physical struggles of LGBTQ communities call for a variety of solutions—some of which exceed the realm of policymaking entirely or call for further analysis through intersectionality theory. But basic income at a level of basic subsistence would economically empower them, providing them with financial independence and exit options. Consequently, UBI could provide them with a certain degree of psychological and emotional stability. The receipt of an unconditional and regular financial safety net could therefore partially ease some of the social and emotional struggles of LGBTQ individuals.

IV. Feminist Arguments against Basic Income

I now turn to showing how existing feminist arguments against UBI can be classified in accordance with the same two dichotomies (and four views) on socioeconomic gender justice.

First, the conception of gender justice similar to the one endorsed by the majority of feminist supporters of UBI (Van Parijs, Zelleke, Pateman, and Elgarte)—the ideal of *care- and housework split between genders* within the *labor-division dichotomy*—is presupposed by another feminist, Anca Gheaus, to construct an argument *against* the basic income proposal. Gheaus claims that UBI would “perpetuate the traditional gendered division of labour resulting. . . in a drop of women’s participation in paid work” (Gheaus 2008, 5) and that it would not encourage men to share domestic duties with women, thereby perpetuating the devaluation of care. She concludes that basic income would not promote gender justice, but rather cause further entrenchment of the opposite phenomenon.

Gheaus's argument revolves around the fact that having a UBI would raise the cost of "gender-symmetric lifestyles" by making it easier for both men and women to opt for gender-unjust preferences, and thus promote gender injustice. Gheaus's criterion for gender justice is having as high a gender-symmetrical lifestyle as possible, where a gender-symmetrical lifestyle is defined as "one in which women and men engage equally in paid work and family life, which includes unpaid care work for dependents" (2). Just social arrangements, according to Gheaus, are those that promote the view of people who are equally engaged in their work and their family, and do not have to choose one over the other. Her case against the UBI proposal is centered on the claim that UBI would raise the cost of gender-symmetrical lifestyles and thus further social injustice. Having a basic income would incentivize women to give up on their career-oriented goals, so UBI would cause a drop in female paid labor. This, in turn, would result in a drop in women's self-esteem and bargaining power within the household, which would promote the traditional gender stereotypes.

Gheaus's response to the objection that some women simply prefer domestic work instead of a career is that such preferences are themselves deeply influenced by the social context women grow up in: "the preference-formation for women growing up in a world where, for both men and women, the default lifestyle is that they shoulder equally the burdens (and reap equally the benefits) of both work and home would be different than it currently is" (4). Consequently, we should not respond to the existing preferences of women, but "aim to ensure that preferences (of all individuals) are formed under just circumstances" (4). Overall, on Gheaus's view UBI would promote (lower the cost of) leading gender-asymmetrical lifestyles, thus further entrenching gender injustice.

A similar position is taken by Barbara Bergmann, who, like Gheaus, presupposes the *care- and housework split between genders* view and uses it to argue against UBI on feminist grounds (Bergmann 2008). Bergmann compares UBI with two other economic regimes: the welfare state (but without lengthy parental leave) and a low tax-low benefit regime, and concludes that basic income is the worst of these three alternatives. This is because UBI—unlike the other two regimes—would reverse the progress women made on the labor market, and would promote single mothers' special needs less well than a welfare state. Due to its universality, UBI does not target specific needs that women, especially single mothers, have more often than men (such as housing, childcare, and higher-education costs).

In her discussion, Bergmann envisions a path toward gender equality:

The differences in men's and women's opportunities and activities have been progressively lessening. . . . Further moves in that direction [toward gender equality] would involve a more equal sharing of leadership roles and a further decrease in occupational segregation. Household operations and child care activities would be further commodified—either financed privately or paid for by the government. Whatever household activities remained for family members to perform would be divided more equitably between men and women. (Bergmann 2008, 3)

Bergmann clearly views the equal division of domestic work between the woman and the man as an issue of justice, and thereby presupposes the *care- and housework split between genders* view. This position is also evident in her more nuanced arguments against UBI, such as the claim that provision or subsidization of childcare encourages women's labor-market participation whereas UBI encourages women's withdrawal from it, and the claim that, for single mothers, targeted schemes equalize their living standard

with other citizens, whereas UBI has the opposite effect because single mothers on basic income would have to either spend it on childcare or stop working.

Bergmann acknowledges the opposing view as worthy of consideration: “Some would argue that a move toward gender equality should include giving women a choice to maintain their traditional household activities, perhaps with higher prestige, better pension arrangements, and even pay for housework . . . [thus] making it easier to combine household activities with paid work” (3). However, she rejects the suitability of such a view for feminist purposes because policy measures that would help women who choose to dedicate themselves to care- and housework as their sole or primary activity would likely reduce the opportunities for women in the labor market and would reinforce the commonly held view that domestic work is and should be performed by women.

Finally, Bergmann’s remark quoted above—“Household operations and child care activities would be further commodified”—makes it evident she would like to see care work commodified to a large extent. Bergmann, in other words, endorses the *care- and housework as employment* view within the *remuneration dichotomy*: the view that justice demands that all types of care work be treated in the way paid work is, or that caregiving should be put on par with formal (paid) employment and should be commodified. Bergmann thus calls for a high degree of commodification of the tasks that women have traditionally performed as a means to gender equity.

Ann Orloff, like Gheaus and Bergmann, criticizes basic income on the grounds that it will not contribute to the furthering of gender justice in the way she understands it (Orloff 2013). Orloff claims that even though basic income might reduce women’s economic dependence on men, it is not the most promising strategy for combatting gender inequality because it does not have a good chance of reducing women’s responsibility for childcare and housework. Other universalistic welfare schemes and policies—those that encourage participation in the workforce—would be better at reducing gender injustice than UBI. Moreover, according to Orloff, basic income would not change the character of women’s paid work, which is often based on care; rather, it might incentivize them to choose to specialize in the unpaid “dirty work” of taking care of children and the elderly while giving them only enough money to cover their basic needs. Orloff’s argument against UBI makes it clear that she endorses the *care- and housework split between genders* view, but—unlike the feminist thinkers discussed before—this view led her to reject UBI as a possible solution (or even a partial solution) to the challenges of socioeconomic gender justice.

Throughout my exposition of a selection of notable feminist arguments for and against basic income, I have tried to show in what ways the question of whether UBI has the potential to advance feminist goals remains unresolved. One thing, however, is certain: the case is much more complicated than Van Parijs’s original position made it seem. It is not clear that UBI would have a positive effect on inter-household financial distribution and on women’s lives. Rather, feminist arguments for UBI start from radically different conceptions of socioeconomic gender justice.

In what follows, I conclude my discussion by commenting on the disparities in the views endorsed by feminist supporters and critics of UBI. I also argue that only some of these disagreements could be resolved with more empirical data from relevant policy experiments, since there are limits to the kinds of evidence afforded by them.

V. Conceptual Disagreements and What to Do with Them

Feminist concerns about women’s socioeconomic well-being are centered around the problem of male domination within two social realms: the household and the

workplace. These two are closely connected. Given the cultural constitutive differences between men and women, only women have to make a choice between family life and a career—or, if they want both, then they have to struggle to work a so-called “double shift.” As a result, women are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage and/or precarious jobs, which in turn makes them seemingly less valuable to the society and economically dependent.

The aim of a feminist policy proposal, we can thus generalize, should be to provide women with power and agency equal to what men have, both within the family realm and beyond it, at the workplace and in society at large. But this would require more than just removing gender discrimination from the political, social, and economic spheres. As William Kymlicka writes, the solution to gender inequality must include the presence of power, not only the absence of discrimination (Kymlicka 2002, 383–84). Therefore, in order for UBI to satisfy the fundamental feminist requirement of furthering socioeconomic gender justice, it would need to result in the empowerment of women to create socially recognized and respected female-defined roles: either as valued caregivers, or as employees treated on par with their male coworkers, or as respected members of a community who engage in activism and other community-specific pursuits. How could UBI contribute to achieving this, according to feminist accounts supporting this policy proposal?

According to a significant number of feminist accounts supporting UBI—those developed by Zelleke, Baker, and Van Parijs—this policy would contribute to the empowerment of women by, first, raising the societal perception of the importance of care work, whose enormous value cannot be defined or perceived in the way formal employment is. This argument for UBI relies on the assumption that caregiving is a unique occupation: that it requires the commitment to the flourishing of human relationships, the consent to being called to work at any point during the day, and (ideally, though not always) the voluntary nature of this activity to which one commits from love and affection. According to Zelleke, Baker, and Van Parijs, remunerating all types of care work in a formal manner (let alone commodifying care work) would have the negative effect of stripping the act of caregiving of its essence and enforcing the already dominant male conception of what counts as a respectable occupation and how it ought to be rewarded.

Interestingly, several feminist supporters of basic income or similar policies—such as Davis and the NWRO activists—do not endorse this *care- and housework as a unique occupation* view, but the opposing ideal of *care- and housework as employment*. They believe that thinking of care- and housework as deeply distinct from other kinds of work might pose the danger of further separating care- and housework from the conceptual sphere of “valuable” and “important” work, or even from regarding it as “work” in the first place. But Bergmann, who also endorses the *care- and housework as employment* view, is against basic income. She believes that it would be disproportionately performed by women even if these women receive basic income and that the pay for such work performed by domestic workers would remain low. This is because receiving UBI is structurally different from receiving a salary: it is not measured hourly or task-based, it does not come with health benefits, and it is not tied to performing any specific tasks.

The disagreement between Davis and the NWRO activists on the one side and Bergmann on the other side seems to point to the fact that this issue cannot be resolved on a purely conceptual level. Without empirical data from UBI experiments and unconditional cash-transfer pilot programs, we cannot be sure whether the *care- and housework as employment* view is compatible with the basic income proposal. The specific empirical questions that need to be addressed are: (1) How would basic income affect

the working conditions of paid domestic workers and the way their work is perceived? (2) Would basic income equalize the gender imbalance among paid domestic workers? (3) Would UBI increase or decrease the proportion of adult women in the labor force and other public activities? (4) Would it cause more men to opt for performing a large part of care- and housework?

Another relatively dominant position shared among feminist supporters of UBI—Van Parijs, Zelleke, Pateman, and Elgarte—is that basic income would contribute to splitting or sharing care work equally between the two partners, which is something that a just policy should do. This feminist argument for UBI relies on the view that justice demands that both types of work, formal employment and caregiving, be split as equally as possible across the two genders, which will eventually result in the abolishment of gendered divisions of labor.

Finally, some feminist theorists supporting UBI, namely McKay and Baker, support it for the opposite reason: because they believe that basic income would empower women who are legitimately and willingly home-centered. This view, *care- and housework as permissibly female*, is that no serious issues are raised by unequal division of care work (provided that women choose to do it and are not disadvantaged by this choice) and that the decisions of women who occupy the primary role as caregivers should be valued and respected.

What is interesting about feminist arguments against UBI, most notably presented by Gheaus, Bergmann, and Orloff, is that all of them endorse the same view that a large number of UBI supporters endorse: that gender justice demands that care- and housework be shared equally between the man and the woman. But, unlike Van Parijs, Zelleke, Pateman, and Elgarte, these critics of UBI claim that basic income would further entrench existing unjust domestic arrangements. Given that this disagreement is empirical rather than conceptual, only empirical data from basic income experiments and from unconditional cash-transfer pilot programs will be able to resolve it. What is needed are more basic income experiments designed to track women's choices and women's lives. The specific empirical questions that need to be addressed are: (1) How does long-term receipt of unconditional cash affect the amount of time that women and men spend on caregiving and domestic work? (2) How does it affect the amount of time that women and men spend at work or performing other public activities (such as volunteering or activism)? (3) Does it influence women's and men's educational and career choices?

However, simply performing new policy experiments designed to address these questions will not suffice. Though experiments and pilot programs would provide us with more empirical data, they would not ensure that such data would be sufficient to answer the most salient questions regarding gender justice (Weiss and Birckmayer 2008). One reason for this is that policy experiments are by design limited to a relatively short period of time and to a selected group of participants;¹¹ another reason is that even large experiments spanning a long period of time do not necessarily produce results relevant to all political and cultural contexts.¹²

In light of these limitations, some questions about unconditional in-cash welfare and gender justice will be easier to address in the experimental context than others. For example, changing the social perception of the value of caregiving is something that would likely involve an entire nation and take many years; it would also be difficult to measure quantitatively. Thus it would be extremely difficult to test for it. It seems more likely that an appropriately lengthy UBI experiment or pilot program could yield results about the educational and work-related decisions of people of different

genders, and consequently measure the amount of time that people spend performing unpaid work at home, paid work, or other activities. However, even in this case, certain assumptions by feminist theorists could lead to more or less favorable interpretations of the empirical results.¹³

Despite these challenges, it seems worth noting that existing empirical data on cash transfers—even if not directly related to UBI—shows promising evidence that such policy programs can empower women in a variety of ways and thus broaden their lifestyle choices.¹⁴ Empirical data from programs related to UBI in relevant ways (that is, being regular, in-cash transfers) strongly suggests that basic income would be able to further the feminist goals related to the economic and psychological empowerment of women, childcare affordability, and the expansion of good employment opportunities for women.

Before concluding, I want to briefly comment on the logical space of the table of positions I sketched at the beginning of the article. Curiously, as the table in section II showed, no one has argued that UBI will *not* further gender justice while assuming either the *care- and housework as a unique occupation* view or the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view. Does this mean that such a position is impossible, or simply that no one has expressed it yet? I believe that it would be difficult to argue against UBI on feminist grounds assuming the *caregiving as a unique occupation* view. This is because UBI does not have to be conceived as a form of payment for domestic labor, but simply as a means of empowerment and emancipation. This framing of UBI is quite obvious if we consider the fact that the receiving UBI would not be based on, or limited to, performance of domestic work and caregiving. The unconditionality of UBI excludes conceiving of it as a form of payment for domestic labor.

I also believe that it would be difficult to construct a good feminist argument against UBI while holding the *care- and housework as permissibly female* view. An unconditional and individual regular cash transfer would most certainly improve the economic and psychological situation of an adult who has willingly dedicated herself to caregiving. Of course, it is certainly possible that there are other welfare proposals on the table capable of improving the lives of caregivers more efficiently than UBI; but this alone does not mean that UBI would not improve the lives of caregivers in the slightest. One could easily argue that basic income would be worse at furthering gender justice than another policy, but this would not be the same as arguing that basic income would not improve the lives of caregivers. A pro-tanto assessment of UBI's potential to further gender justice, nonetheless, would have to compare its potential to do so with similar policy proposals (with basic capital and job guarantees, for instance).

Whether basic income has such potential or not also depends on the broader policy package it would come with. Throughout this discussion I have been assuming—together with the feminist thinkers I have engaged with—that UBI would not altogether replace existing welfare schemes, but rather complement them. According to Juliana Bidanure, “The vast majority of political theorists are found in the camp of those who see UBI as a further expansion and enhancement of the safety net—a complement to the necessary provision of welfare goods by the state. They concomitantly advocate for universal healthcare, a well-funded public education system, and affordable housing” (Bidanure 2019, 486). This is the assumption behind most of the UBI proposals, with the exception of Charles Murray’s libertarian case for UBI (Murray 2006). Murray suggests replacing all the current government subsidies and public assistance programs with a UBI of \$800–\$1,000 per month on the grounds that it would be a very cost-effective solution. As Avshalom Schwartz and I write, “this position is heavily criticized by most of the UBI supporters, as they assume that UBI will supplement many of the existing welfare

programs, rather than replace them. Such a program might increase efficiency, but at the potential cost of massive loss to overall social welfare” (Lenczewska and Schwartz 2020, 25–26).

Nevertheless, the broader policy package that basic income would come with is one of its “unsteady features”—it varies from proposal to proposal (Bidadanure 2019, 485–86). This is another reason—that it is difficult to predict UBI’s impact on women’s lives abstracting from a concrete proposal or political context. The question concerning what kind of programs (if any) UBI would replace, Bidadanure notes, “is highly contextual, since packages of provision of cash and in-kind goods vary vastly from one country to the next” (486). But, typically, proponents of basic income assume that UBI would replace only programs that have a goal similar to UBI but give individuals less, while leaving untouched contributory programs whose level is higher than UBI’s level and unique in-kind benefits whose value is not easily translatable into cash (White 2015).

Feminist political theorists do not agree about what an ideal, gender-just society should look like. It is difficult to theorize about a hypothetical situation for which history does not provide many examples. Here I have brought to light normative and conceptual differences within a number of prominent feminist accounts of gender justice. I have also pointed to some potential directions of future empirical work on unconditional cash transfers, without which some of the questions raised in this article cannot be answered. In distinguishing normative disagreements from disagreements stemming from inconclusive empirical data, I have suggested which aspects of feminist discussions of UBI can be addressed experimentally, and which go beyond an analysis of the data and can affect the way it is evaluated.

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Notes

- 1 My article focuses mostly on women inhabiting Western capitalist states.
- 2 The idea that a basic income can free women from male domination in the private and public spheres is not original to Van Parijs, of course. In the 1960–70s, the National Welfare Rights Organization—an activist movement composed largely of working-class black women—proposed a welfare scheme called “wages for housework” on similar grounds (Nadasen 2005 Weeks 2011; Shervin and Piven 2019). I will return to this movement later on in the article.
- 3 Additionally, feminist thinkers working within the Marxist and psychoanalytic traditions have long emphasized the problem of the “double shift” in women’s lives. Nancy Hartsock, Angela Davis, and Kathi Weeks have argued that women are institutionally responsible both for reproductive activities and for producing wages, thus contributing to subsistence in a twofold manner: in the public and in the private spheres (Davis 1983, 182–83; Hartsock 1983; Weeks 2011, 109–10). However, women’s work at home has not been considered real “work” since it has lacked the features that the social and economic world of capitalism considers crucial for a productive and useful activity: visibility, a wage, and creation of new profits. In Susan M. Okin’s words, “All of the work that women do in bearing and rearing children, cleaning and maintaining households, caring for the old and sick, and contributing in various ways to men’s work does not count as work” (Okin 1994, 10–11).
- 4 A notable exception from this division is Kathi Weeks’s work, to which I will return later in this article (Weeks 2011).
- 5 My article faces an important limitation that is worth acknowledging explicitly. Much of the debate around UBI and gender justice has focused on heterosexual households and heterosexual relationships. The heterosexual model has been presupposed during discussions of male domination over female partners within the household. Therefore, when I discuss caregiving and housework within households and the

familial realm, my primary focus will be the heterosexual family model. But my discussion concerning gender justice within the workplace, society at large, and receipt of welfare benefits from the state can and will be broadened to include single mothers as well as individuals who identify as LGBTQ—people who, after all, are members of the most vulnerable social groups. During the discussion of issues surrounding the workplace, therefore, I will not be presupposing that the discussion be limited to heterosexual women, but will apply also to individuals on the LGBTQ spectrum: to women of other sexual orientations and to noncisgender minorities. Nonetheless, I do want to acknowledge that a full treatment of UBI and gender justice within the household focused specifically on LGBTQ youth and adults deserves a separate article.

6 Baker writes: “Precisely because basic income is not conditional on identifying worthwhile occupations, it can serve not as a *payment* for care work but as a universal *support* for care work, providing everyone with a more effective opportunity to engage in it, whether by partial or complete withdrawal from the labour market. At the same time, it can be thought of as operating on the presumption that nearly everyone is engaged in a range of worthwhile activities that it is legitimate for society to support” (Baker 2008, 4).

7 William Kymlicka, for instance, argues for the need for domestic labor to be given greater public recognition: “Even if men and women share the unpaid domestic labor, this would hardly count as genuine sexual equality if the reason why it was devalued was that our culture devalues ‘women’s work,’ or anything ‘feminine.’ Sexism can be present not only in the distribution of domestic labor, but also in its evaluation” (Kymlicka 2002, 387).

8 The fact that a large number of paid domestic and care workers are both people of color and immigrants means that they likely face multiple forms of oppression and discrimination on the basis of sex/gender, race, national origin, and immigration status. Immigrants frequently face more challenges than citizens or permanent residents when searching for employment, accessing education, becoming socially and linguistically functional, accessing medical resources, and proving eligible for welfare benefits (Dali 1988).

9 A similar view is endorsed by Meagher 2002.

10 These arguments have been made, for example, by Anca Gheaus and Ann Orloff (Gheaus 2008; Orloff 2013). I will discuss them in more detail in the next section.

11 This means that the behavior and choices of the participants do not fully reflect the behavior and choices people would make in a nonexperimental context without time limits. For example, a woman who enrolls in a cash-transfer pilot program for five years might not give up a low-wage job that she does not enjoy in order to start a small business; but she might do so if she knew she would continue receiving an unconditional transfer. (Pamela Morris and Richard Hendra provide a useful discussion of the effects that time-limited welfare policies, brought by the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, had on poor families—a phenomenon that is not related to policy experiments per se, but is relevant here nonetheless [Morris and Hendra 2009].) Likewise, limiting welfare payments to a selected group of participants, as experiments must do, does not enable us to see the kind of community-wide changes an unconditional cash policy would have. These limitations are particularly problematic if what we want to test are big-picture questions such as the ones I listed above.

12 First, a specific welfare benefit might be surrounded by a different “policy package” in different countries or regions—an issue I will return to shortly. Second, the sociocultural norms of a place related to work or caregiving would influence people’s decisions at least as much as the independence that comes with unconditional cash would (Weiss and Birckmayer 2008, 823).

13 For example, feminist theorists who believe that some women would freely choose to spend significantly more time than their male partners performing care- and housework would be less bothered by a lack of change in women’s labor-market participation than feminist theorists who believe that truly free women would never make such a choice. Normative assumptions and empirical results mutually affect each other.

14 The Mexican *Progresa/Oportunidades* program, through which women received cash transfers, has increased women’s self-esteem, social status, economic security, and decision-making role in household expenses (World Bank 2008). A gender audit of the Brazilian cash-transfer program *Bolsa Família* showed that receiving regular cash improved women’s status at home and increased their labor-market participation by 16% in comparison to women in similar, nonparticipating households (OECD 2009).

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