



Lesson 7:

Does Self-Interest Prevent Economic Justice?

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Students will participate in an activity that shows how people's self-interest impacts their idea of economic justice.

Description of the lesson

In this lesson, students will explore basic ideas of justice and self-interest. Students will begin by exploring government policies as a group. In the first round, students will vote on the policies behind the veil of ignorance, meaning they do not know if each policy will benefit them or not. In the second round, students will be given role cards and vote on those same government policies. During the second round, groups could be influenced by the interests of their assigned role: a teacher, a retiree, a high-income executive, a college student, or an unemployed person. After both rounds, groups will share how removing the veil of ignorance impacted their decision-making process as well as the outcome of their vote.

Economics

Economics has traditionally focused more on analyzing production and consumption than on assessing the justness of economic outcomes. Yet economic justice is an important value to individuals and societies. Scarcity means that not all wants can be satisfied, and an economic system may generate a high degree of inequality. Some individuals see inequalities as an inevitable outcome of normal economic behavior. Others find the degree of economic inequality in today's society to be morally unacceptable.

Ethics

Justice can be difficult to define and can mean something different to different people. [One definition](#) is the notion that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social opportunities regardless of race, gender, or religion¹. To determine if something is just, people often ask two different - and possibly contradictory - questions:

1. Is the outcome equitable?

People who emphasize outcomes tend to see the existing degree of economic inequity as morally wrong.

2. Is the process equitable?

People who emphasize processes are more likely to approve the results of a system, even if those results are highly unequal, provided individuals have equal opportunity to succeed. If they believe the system is designed to be equal for all, they believe the outcome should be just.

¹ <https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/justice>

Objectives:

After completing this lesson students will be able to:

- explain how incentives and self-interest impact decision-making.
- compare and contrast self-interested decision-making with decision-making done behind the “veil of ignorance.”

Standards

[Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics](#)²

- Standard 2: Decision Making
 - Effective decision making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are “all or nothing” decisions.
- Standard 4: Incentives
 - People usually respond predictably to positive and negative incentives.

Concepts

Decision-making, Incentives

Time Required

60 minutes

Materials Needed

- Slide presentation: Does Self-Interest Prevent Economic Justice?
- Copies of Activity 7.1: Economic Policy Ballot, one per group of 3-4 students.
- Copies of Activity 7.2: Economic Policy Ballot Round 2, one per group of 3-4 students.
- Copies of Activity 7.3: Role Cards, one Role Card per group of 3-4 students. Printed and cut out before class. Ideally, the Role Cards should be printed on cardstock to allow you to use them more than once.
- Copies of Assessment 7: Is it a just process or outcome?, one per student
- Pens/pencils, one per student

² Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics: <https://www.councilforeconed.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/voluntary-national-content-standards-2010.pdf>

Procedure

1. Ask the students, do you think competitions on reality TV are “fair”? **Answers may vary but include, yes because everyone has a chance to win the prize, no because some people do not win anything. Others might mention whether the rules are followed correctly—some students might think that the game is rigged while other students might say that all contestants had a chance to win.**
2. Follow this by asking students what “fair” means. **Answers may vary but generally students will talk about being treated the same or having equal outcomes.** After students have responded, point out that it seems like fair is a really subjective topic. Tell students that maybe rather than fairness we should focus on equity or justice vs. inequity or injustice. Display slides 1 and 2 of Slide presentation: Does Self-Interest Prevent Economic Justice? Explain that in recent years, economics has focused on economic efficiency, yet economic justice is also an important value to individuals and societies.
3. Slide 3: Define and explain the term **scarcity** as the economic condition of not having enough resources to satisfy everyone’s wants. Next, ask students if they think that because of scarcity and the fact that people may differ in their abilities, or may be given different opportunities in life that this creates economic injustice? **Answers may vary but include: yes there are injustices as people have different things, ability, etc. other students might say it’s not unjust if they cannot control the abilities that were given to them.**
4. Explain the definition of justice on slide 4, “The notion that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social opportunities regardless of race, gender, or religion.”³ Explain that the definition of justice can rely on the outcome and process used.
5. Slide 5: It is important to differentiate between outcome and process. Tell students that people who emphasize outcomes tend to see the existing degree of economic inequity as morally wrong. People who emphasize the process are more likely to approve the results of a system- even if those results are highly unequal- provided individuals have equal opportunity to succeed.
6. Next, provide students an opportunity to reinforce their understanding of outcome-based and process-based perspectives. Display slide 6 and ask the students the following questions:
 - **Process based:** If someone is focused on process, would it be just that some students in this class got As while others got Bs, Cs, Ds, or Fs?
Answers may vary but include that students think this is ok because some students work harder than others and so they might earn or deserve a different grade. If they were outcomes based, then this would be harder to justify – everyone should learn how to read at a 12th grade level for example.

³ See full definition and video reference on the University of Texas, Ethics Unwrapped site: <https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/justice>

- Outcomes based:** If someone is focused on outcomes, would it be just for everyone to get a high school diploma regardless of what they did during their time in school?
Answers may vary but most students will say yes because the outcome is the same. If you are in a school system where different diplomas are given – advanced diploma if student earned more credit hours, for example – how would this change their answers? If they were process based then it would be hard to justify because some people worked harder than others or did the work. Point out to students that as long as the process of getting a particular grade was just, meaning all students had an opportunity to get an A in a class, that the unequal outcome is generally seen as acceptable. Additionally, the process of getting the high school diploma was not equal or the same and so the outcome that everyone gets the same diploma might actually seem like an injustice.
- Remind or tell the students that economics is the study of how people choose and ethics is the analysis of right and wrong. Ethical frameworks are needed to help explain human behavior and evaluate policies. Much of what we are going to focus on to talk about justice in this lesson is looking at **outcomes-based ethics**, a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong action based on the consequences produced by the action.
 - Display slide 7. Introduce students to the concept of the **veil of ignorance**. The veil of ignorance is a hypothetical situation where decisions about justice and the allocation of resources are made by a person who does not know what position they may have in society. By not knowing what position they may have that person would make decisions based on the betterment of society rather than what would benefit them individually.
Teacher note: Philosopher John Rawls⁴ created the veil of ignorance scenario to help illustrate how self-interest and ego impacted decision-makers at the highest level. Rawls wanted to find a way to create a more just society by exposing individual biases that may create injustice. The veil of ignorance activity is a way to expose students to their own biases and illustrate how their personal experience and self-interest may shape the way they view the world and others around them.
 - Explain to students that a common example, the Trolley Problem is used to demonstrate the role the veil of ignorance plays in decision-making. Students are asked if they would save five people from a speeding car if they had to push one person in front of the car. They are then asked to remove the veil of ignorance and see how they would react if someone they loved were in the group of five people who would be hit, or if someone they loved would be pushed in front of the car to save the five other people. This unlikely scenario is meant to reinforce how self-interest and personal experience can impact the decision-making process.
Teacher note: The scenario given is a variation of the commonly used trolley problem you can use to illustrate how the veil of ignorance might work in a “real world” scenario. Here’s a good [Ted-Ed video](#) on the trolley problem if you’d rather use this to clarify the veil of ignorance.⁵

⁴ Visit the Stanford University Encyclopedia of Philosophy for more information on the works of John Rawls. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/>

⁵ Ted Ed Video: “Would you sacrifice one person to save five”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yg16u_bzjPE

10. Show the following video from the TV Show “The Good Place”, to the students <https://econ.video/2023/02/11/the-good-place-the-trolley-problem-part-2/> which is also on slide 8.
11. Use slides 9 and 10 to ask students how they would respond to the traditional trolley problem with and without the veil of ignorance. Then explain that people’s experience and self-interest sometimes play a role in how they answer the trolley problem. More often than not, our personal experience or our self-interest can create a bias in how we view the world and others.
12. Explain to students that scenarios like this are being used to help autonomous vehicle decision-making regarding the value of human lives in various scenarios.
 - a. Ask students how using the veil of ignorance might help developers train autonomous vehicles. **Answers may vary but may include: the veil of ignorance may help developers expose their own biases when programming autonomous vehicles.**
13. Tell students they are going to work in small groups to see how **self-interest** - the pursuit of personal gain and **incentives** - benefits that encourage behaviors, impact **decision-making** - deciding among choices or alternatives.
14. Slide 11. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students. **Distribute Activity 7.1: Economic Policy Ballot.** Show and read the following directions for the veil of ignorance simulation on slide 11.
 - Each group will receive an Economic Policy Ballot.
 - Members will read, discuss, and vote on each policy as a group.
 - Voting in Round 1 will be done under the veil of ignorance. **Groups will not know if each policy will benefit them or not.**
 - We will share out how each group voted in 5-10 minutes.**Emphasize to students in Round 1 of the game they don’t know if each policy will help or hurt them because they are voting behind the veil of ignorance.**
15. Give each group 5-10 minutes to discuss the economic policies on the ballot and vote on each policy as a group. After groups have had adequate time to read, discuss, and vote on each policy, groups share out how they voted on each policy.
 - One way to share out is to ask each group to raise their hands if they voted in favor of each policy as you list them.
16. Round Two: Explain to each group they will now be given a Role Card. Each card has information including a short biography, occupation, income, and some additional information relevant to the simulation. They will also be given a new Economic Policy Handout to vote on policies from the perspective of their role.

17. **Distribute Role Cards cut from Activity 7.3: Role Cards.** Hand out **Activity 7.2: Economic Policy Handout Round 2.**

Teacher note: There are only 5 Role Cards. If you have more than 5 groups of 3-4 students you can print and cut more role cards for those groups. It would be a good extension to compare how any duplicate groups voted to see if they were alike or different. It would also be good to explore why they voted the way they did if there are any differences between duplicate groups.

18. Tell students to use **Activity 7.2: Economic Policy Ballot Round 2** to vote on each economic policy. Display slide 12 and explain that this time groups need to vote on each policy according to the interest of the person on their role card. Emphasize that the veil of ignorance has been removed. They now know if each policy will help or hurt them. This may cause their group to change their votes.

19. Give groups 5-10 minutes to read their role card and vote on each policy from the perspective of the individual on their card on Activity 7.2: Economic Policy Handout Round 2.

Closure

20. Display slide 13. Explain to students that this activity demonstrated how the veil of ignorance can illustrate biases based on self-interest and incentives. Ask if any group changed their votes from Round 1 to Round 2 on:

- Funding education
- Unemployment assistance
- Migrant workers
- Health insurance for the elderly

21. Ask the groups who changed their vote, what influenced the group's decision? **Answers may vary but include: they changed their vote because the self-interest/perspective of their role card was different than the group's self-interest for each of the votes they changed.**

Teacher note: This would be a good place to emphasize the role the veil of ignorance played in the original decision-making for each group. You may want to ask if they changed their vote in Round 2 to better society as a whole or themselves individually.

22. Ask if any group considered how your role would view the equity of the outcome or the process for each policy before the group voted? **Answers may vary but include: we did not consider the equity of the outcome or the process while voting. Teachers should direct the conversation to address outcome being equitable and process being equitable as ways people decide if something is just.**

Teacher note: Remember, people who emphasize outcomes tend to see the existing degree of economic inequity as morally wrong. People who emphasize process are more likely to approve the results of a system-even if those results are highly unequal-provided individuals have equal opportunity to succeed.

23. Display slide 14. Explain to your students that the veil of ignorance provides an opportunity to identify how our own self-interest and circumstances can impact our decision-making. By recognizing how our decision-making is influenced, we can attempt to make more just decisions both through government policies as well as in our own life.

Assessment

24. Distribute copies of Assessment 7: Is it a just process or outcome? to each student.

Some sample assessment items:

1. What is the main point of imagining the choices you would make behind a veil of ignorance?
 - a. People tend to make poor choices when they have too much information.
 - b. People tend to make good choices because their ignorance is limited through education.
 - c. People tend to make economically just decisions when they take their own self-interest and individual circumstances into account.
 - d. People tend to make economically just decisions when they recognize how their own self-interest and individual circumstances impact their decisions.**

2. Who is more likely to be upset when people from different communities, but with similar education and experience, are paid different wages?
 - a. People who view justice in terms of outcomes.**
 - b. People who view justice in terms of process.
 - c. People who view justice in terms of the presence of freedom.
 - d. People who view justice as a moral construct.

3. Who is more likely to be upset when learning about the inequality of opportunities given to people?
 - a. People who view justice in terms of outcomes.
 - b. People who view justice in terms of process.**
 - c. People who view justice in terms of the presence of freedom.
 - d. People who view justice as a moral construct.

Short Answer question

1. You and your friend decide to share a slice of cake. You agree that one of you will cut the slice in half and then you will flip a coin to see who gets which half of the slice. Do you cut one piece larger than the other and hope to get the bigger piece? Or do you cut the pieces as equally as possible?
 - a. Explain your decision-making process. **Answers will vary but should reference not knowing the possible outcome of the coin flip (which acts like the veil of ignorance in this scenario)**
 - b. How did the randomization of the coin flip influence your decision? **Answers will vary but should address how the randomization of the coin flip could prevent them from getting the larger piece of cake and would cause them to reconsider cutting one slice larger than the other.**
 - c. Would you have made the same decision if you got to choose which piece of cake you got after you cut the slice? **Answers will vary; some students will demonstrate a strong sense of fairness and may mention not wanting to cheat their friend. Other students may value the larger slice of cake over fairness.**

Assessment 7: Is it a just process or a just outcome? (Suggested answers)

1. Do people differ in abilities due to something beyond their control or is the process the same for everyone? **Answers may vary but include: some people are born with better abilities in some subjects (math, science, etc.) or physically (agility, strength, etc.) than others, or abilities can be honed if you work at it (math tutoring, strength training, etc.).**
2. Do people differ in opportunities due to something beyond their control or is the process the same for everyone? **Answers may vary but include: we live in a society where those born into wealth are provided more opportunities to succeed than those who are not, or we live in a society that affords everyone the opportunity to succeed if they work hard.**
3. If someone is focused on outcomes, how would they feel if someone was paid less for the same work even if they had differing work experience? **Answers may vary but include: someone focused on outcomes would not care much about the difference in experience. If students point to the differing experience as a cause of the discrepancy in pay. Be sure to emphasize to students that someone who emphasizes outcomes would focus on the inequality of pay regardless of worker experience.**
4. If someone is focused on process, how would they feel if someone was paid less for the same work even if they had differing work experience? **Answers may vary but include: process-focused individuals care more about the equity in the process, not the equity in the outcome. Some students will focus on the differing pay as being economically unjust. Be sure to emphasize to students that someone who emphasizes the process is more likely to approve of a difference in pay due to a difference in experience.**

5. If someone is focused on outcomes, how would they feel if [Medicaid](#)⁶, a type of health insurance typically provided for lower income individuals, expanded substantially? ***Answers may vary but include that people who are focused on the outcome of the policy might be in favor of this as it will allow a more equitable health care outcome regardless of income or ability to pay. Others might think that it's less equitable because people who did not pay as much for health care are still getting the same amount as other people.***

6. If someone is focused on process, how would they feel if [Medicaid](#)⁷, a type of health insurance typically provided for lower income individuals, expanded substantially? ***Answers may vary but include that people who are focused on the process of the policy might think that as long as the process to get approved for Medicaid was equitable and the same for all that this policy is just. Others might consider that the process of getting Medicaid is unjust because of the process to prove their income level and the time involved in that is costly.***

7. Do you think the fact that people may differ in their abilities, or may be given different opportunities in life creates economic injustice? What would be economically just? ***Answers will vary but students may agree that people who are born into families with greater wealth are given a better chance to succeed. Others may argue that people who work hard, regardless of their family's status, can succeed. Answers may also include the opportunities granted to students who demonstrate better physical or mental abilities than their peers. Have students give a definition or examples of what would be economically just.***

Extension

The concepts behind this lesson can elevate any activity centered around decision-making. Let's look at another ethics lesson on EconEdLink - [Is Efficiency Ethical?](#) In this lesson, students decide how to best distribute medicine. This extension demonstrates how applying the veil of ignorance discussed in this lesson can impact the decision-making from the lesson, [Is Efficiency Ethical?](#) By applying the veil of ignorance students may find they come to a different conclusion regarding who gets what medicine and may be further enlightened to the role self-interest plays in overall decision-making.

Do you think using the veil of ignorance when making decisions would lead to more outcome-based ethics, more virtue-based ethics, or more duty-based ethics?

Use the Ethical Framework to guide your decision:

⁶ Medicaid official website: <https://www.medicaid.gov/>

⁷ Medicaid official website: <https://www.medicaid.gov/>

Ethical Framework

Economics is the study of how people choose. Ethics is the analysis of right and wrong. Ethical frameworks are needed to help explain human behavior and evaluate policies, even if the frameworks seem to conflict with one another.

For this question, we will focus on three common ethical frameworks.

Outcomes-based ethics: a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong action based on the consequences produced by the action.

Virtue-based ethics: a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong based on whether one's actions contribute to the formation of good character.

Duty-based ethics: a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong based on the analysis of one's obligations.

Scenario: The lesson, *Is Efficiency Ethical?*, posed the following scenario: You are a doctor who runs a hospital in an isolated rural area. You have 20 sick patients. 10 patients have Disease A and 10 patients have Disease B. Both diseases are painful and make the patients unable to function fully day-to-day. Each patient with Disease A needs one dose of medicine to be cured. Each patient with Disease B needs two doses of medicine to be cured. How would a doctor following outcome-based, virtue-based, and duty-based ethics decide which patient gets medicine? What impact would the veil of ignorance have on the decision-making process for someone following each of the three ethical frameworks? Use the following chart to fill out your thought process.

Ethical Frameworks	Impact the Veil of Ignorance might have on the decision-making process under each framework.	Impact <u>removing</u> the Veil of Ignorance might have on the decision-making process under each framework.
Outcome-based ethics		
Virtue-based ethics		
Duty-based ethics		

References

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Activity 7.1: Economic Policy Handout

Directions: There are **4 economic policies** listed below. As a group read through the policies and discuss your thoughts on each. Each group should vote on which policy proposal they believe should be enacted by the government. Groups will share how they voted with the class after each group is finished voting on each policy.

Issue 1: Funding Education		
Increasing Property Tax: Property tax is mainly how public education is funded. Increasing taxes would benefit the schools but all property owners would pay regardless of the number of children in public education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
More Federal Tax: Increase in the amount of federal tax provided to schools. This will provide more funding to the schools, less burden on local taxes, but would increase federal involvement in education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Issue 2: Unemployment Assistance		
Modest assistance: Unemployed workers get 12 weeks of support while they search for a job. Taxes on businesses pay for the assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Generous assistance: Unemployed workers get 24 weeks of support and job training while they search for work. Taxes on businesses pay for the assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Issue 3: Migrant Workers		
Guest-worker policy: Allow households and businesses to hire migrant workers without requiring U.S. citizenship. This increase in workers will offset any increased costs in government spending.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Protectionist policy: Make it more difficult for households and businesses to hire migrant workers without U.S. citizenship. The increase in native-born workers will reduce unemployment insurance payments.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Issue 4: Health Insurance for the Elderly		
Restrictive elderly insurance: Elderly patients should be provided only essential healthcare. Payment of insurance should be provided by the patient.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Generous elderly insurance: Younger, healthier individuals will pay slightly higher premiums to cover the increased cost of healthcare for the elderly. Elderly patients should have better healthcare to provide a stronger quality of life.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.

Activity 7.2: Economic Policy Handout Round 2

Directions: There are 4 economic policies listed below. As a group read through the policies and discuss your thoughts on each. Each group will receive a Role Card detailing basic information about an individual. Each group needs to vote on each issue again based on how they believe the individual on their Role Card would vote.

Issue 1: Funding Education		
Increasing Property Tax: Property tax is mainly how public education is funded. Increasing taxes would benefit the schools but all property owners would pay regardless of the number of children in public education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
More Federal Tax: Increase in the amount of federal tax provided to schools. This will provide more funding to the schools, less burden on local taxes, but would increase federal involvement in education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Issue 2: Unemployment Assistance		
Modest assistance: Unemployed workers get 12 weeks of support while they search for a job. Taxes on businesses pay for the assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Generous assistance: Unemployed workers get 24 weeks of support and job training while they search for work. Taxes on businesses pay for the assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Issue 3: Migrant Workers		
Guest-worker policy: Allow households and businesses to hire migrant workers without requiring U.S. citizenship. This increase in workers will offset any increased costs in government spending.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Protectionist policy: Make it more difficult for households and businesses to hire migrant workers without U.S. citizenship. The increase in native-born workers will reduce unemployment insurance payments.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Issue 4: Health Insurance for the Elderly		
Restrictive elderly insurance: Elderly patients should be provided only essential healthcare. Payment of insurance should be provided by the patient.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.
Generous elderly insurance: Younger, healthier individuals will pay slightly higher premiums to cover the increased cost of healthcare for the elderly. Elderly patients should have better healthcare to provide a stronger quality of life.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes in favor of this policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Our group votes against this policy.

Activity 7.3: Role Cards

Group 1: Role Card
Business Executive

Education: MBA
Family income this year: \$450,000
Total wealth (all assets): \$2,500,000
Age: 54

You have worked your way up the corporate ladder and are now responsible for running a division in a company with a large factory and annual sales of \$300 million. You typically work 12 hours a day and must travel for extended periods. The factory employs 2,000 people, many of them in unskilled jobs. It is difficult to find new workers in your region without substantially raising wages. Your father passed away a few years ago, leaving you as the primary caregiver for your mother.

Group 2: Role Card
Retiree

Education: Bachelor of Science
Family income this year: \$50,000
Total wealth (all assets): \$350,000
Age: 68

You retired three years ago from your job as an automotive mechanic. You are able to live well off Social Security and your company pension. However, your assets are tied up in your house, for which you still make payments. The house desperately needs repairs, but the cost of labor in your area is high. Your spouse is two years older than you and has diabetes.

Group 3: Role Card
College art student

Education: High School Graduate
Family income this year: \$0
Total wealth (all assets): \$2,000
Age: 19

You are a first-year student at a state college. You are a first-generation college student and hope to be an inspiration to your younger sister and brother. Your parents can support you for one more year, then they expect you to pay all your own expenses by working. Eventually, you would like to get a master's degree in art history and work in a museum. You know it won't pay a lot, but it's your passion and you think you can pay the bills on a lower-income job you love.

Group 4: Role Card
Teacher

Education: Bachelor of Arts
Family income this year: \$100,000
Total wealth (all assets): \$150,000
Age: 40

You are a middle school music teacher. You are married and your spouse also works.
Your spouse's income is \$60,000 per year, and you make \$40,000 so your family income is \$100,000.
You have two small children. If possible, you would like to start a college fund for your kids and move into a larger house.
Tuition and housing prices are rising and you are worried about paying for everything you need.

Group 5: Role Card
Unemployed worker

Education: 10th grade
Family income this year: \$10,000
Total wealth (all assets): \$3,000
Age: 23

You are an unemployed construction worker. You dropped out of high school to work and help your mother pay the bills.
The recent slowdown in construction caused you to get laid off from your job. You haven't been able to find work in over 2 months.
You do not have health insurance and your mother has health issues due to high blood pressure.
You would like to find steady work and settle down. If possible you would like to help take care of your mother as well.

Assessment 7: Is it a just process or a just outcome?

1. Do people differ in abilities due to something beyond their control or is the process the same for everyone?
2. Do people differ in opportunities due to something beyond their control or is the process the same for everyone?
3. If someone is focused on outcomes, how would they feel if someone was paid less for the same work even if they had differing work experience?
4. If someone is focused on process, how would they feel if someone was paid less for the same work even if they had differing work experience?
5. If someone is focused on outcomes, how would they feel if Medicaid⁸, a type of health insurance typically provided for lower income individuals, expanded substantially?
6. If someone is focused on process, how would they feel if Medicaid⁹, a type of health insurance typically provided for lower income individuals, expanded substantially?
7. Do you think the fact that people may differ in their abilities, or may be given different opportunities in life creates economic injustice? What would be economically just?"

⁸ Medicaid official website: <https://www.medicaid.gov/>

⁹ Medicaid official website: <https://www.medicaid.gov/>

Assessment 7

Some sample assessment items:

1. What is the main point of imagining the choices you would make behind a veil of ignorance?
 - a. People tend to make poor choices when they have too much information.
 - b. People tend to make good choices because their ignorance is limited through education.
 - c. People tend to make economically just decisions when they take their own self-interest and individual circumstances into account.
 - d. People tend to make economically just decisions when they recognize how their own self-interest and individual circumstances impact their decisions.

2. Who is most likely to be upset when learning about economic inequality?
 - a. People who view justice in terms of outcomes.
 - b. People who view justice in terms of process.
 - c. People who view justice in terms of the presence of freedom.
 - d. People who view justice as a virtue.

3. Who is most likely to be upset when learning about the inequality of opportunities given to people?
 - a. People who view justice in terms of outcomes.
 - b. People who view justice in terms of process.
 - c. People who view justice in terms of the presence of freedom.
 - d. People who view justice as a moral construct.

Short Answer

1. You and your friend decide to share a slice of cake. You agree that one of you will cut the slice in half and then you will flip a coin to see who gets which half of the slice. Do you cut one piece larger than the other and hope to get the bigger piece? Or do you cut the pieces as equally as possible?
 - a. Explain your decision-making process.
 - b. How did the randomization of the coin flip influence your decision?
 - c. Would you have made the same decision if you got to choose which piece of cake you got after you cut the slice?

Extension Activity:

Do you think using the veil of ignorance when making decisions would lead to more outcome-based ethics, more virtue-based ethics, or more duty-based ethics?

Use the Ethical Framework to guide your decision:

Ethical Framework

Economics is the study of how people choose. Ethics is the analysis of right and wrong. Ethical frameworks are needed to help explain human behavior and evaluate policies, even if the frameworks seem to conflict with one another. For this question, we will focus on three common ethical frameworks.

Outcomes-based ethics: a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong action based on the consequences produced by the action.

Virtue-based ethics: a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong based on whether one's actions contribute to the formation of good character.

Duty-based ethics: a moral philosophy that discerns right or wrong based on the analysis of one's obligations.

Scenario: The lesson, [Is Efficiency Ethical?](#), posed the following scenario: You are a doctor who runs a hospital in an isolated rural area. You have 20 sick patients. 10 patients have Disease A and 10 patients have Disease B. Both diseases are painful and make the patients unable to function fully day-to-day. Each patient with Disease A needs one dose of medicine to be cured. Each patient with Disease B needs two doses of medicine to be cured. How would a doctor following outcome-based, virtue-based, and duty-based ethics decide which patient gets medicine? What impact would the veil of ignorance have on the decision-making process for someone following each of the three ethical frameworks? Use the following chart to fill out your thought process.

Ethical Frameworks	Impact the Veil of Ignorance might have on the decision-making process.	Impact <u>removing</u> the Veil of Ignorance might have on the decision-making process.
Outcome-based ethics		
Virtue-based ethics		
Duty-based ethics		