# Justice, Injustice, and History: An EITM Approach

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# Outline

- EITM
- Justice and injustice
- Experimental design

# What is an EITM approach?

Empirical implications of theoretical models (Experimental)

Theoretical Model → Empirical Implications

- Formal model
- Social choice
- Game theory

- Hypothesis
- Regression
- Structural model

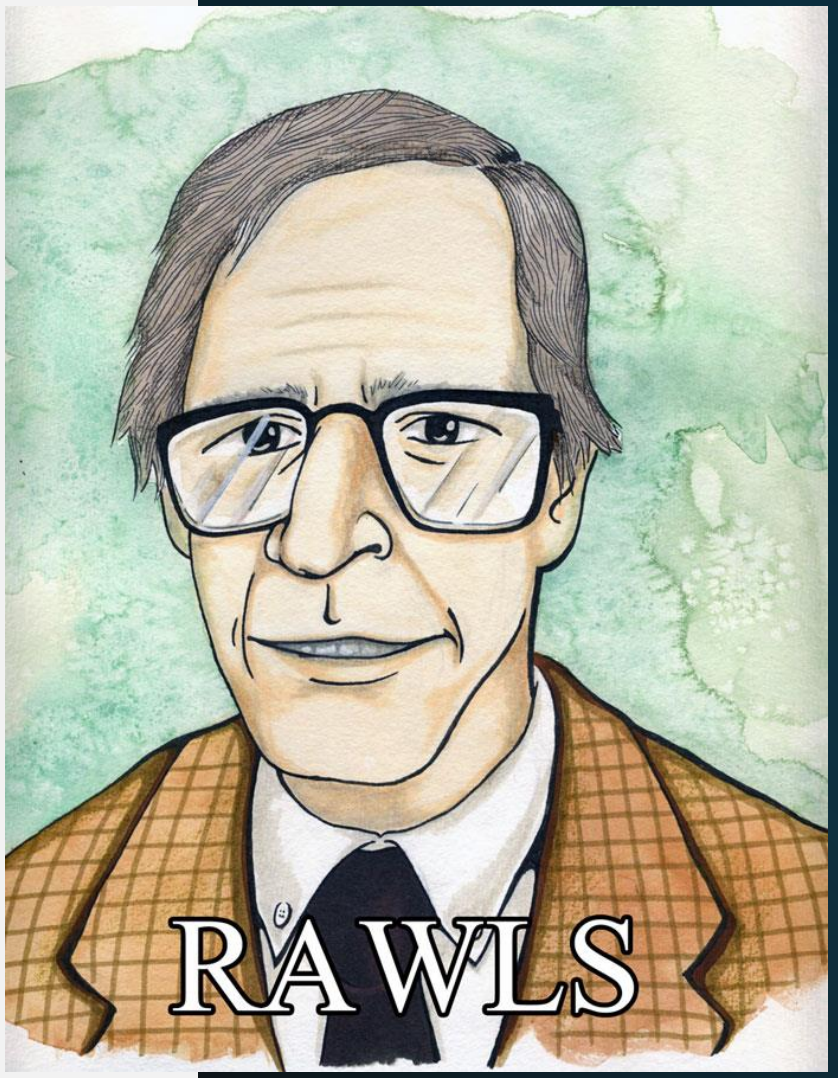
Experimental Model → Empirical Test

# How do people choose to structure a just society?

# *Theory of Justice*
(theoretical model)

- Collective choice under uncertainty by rational agents about principles of fairness
  - Original position
  - Veil of ignorance

- Maximin decision rule
  ⇒ Difference Principle

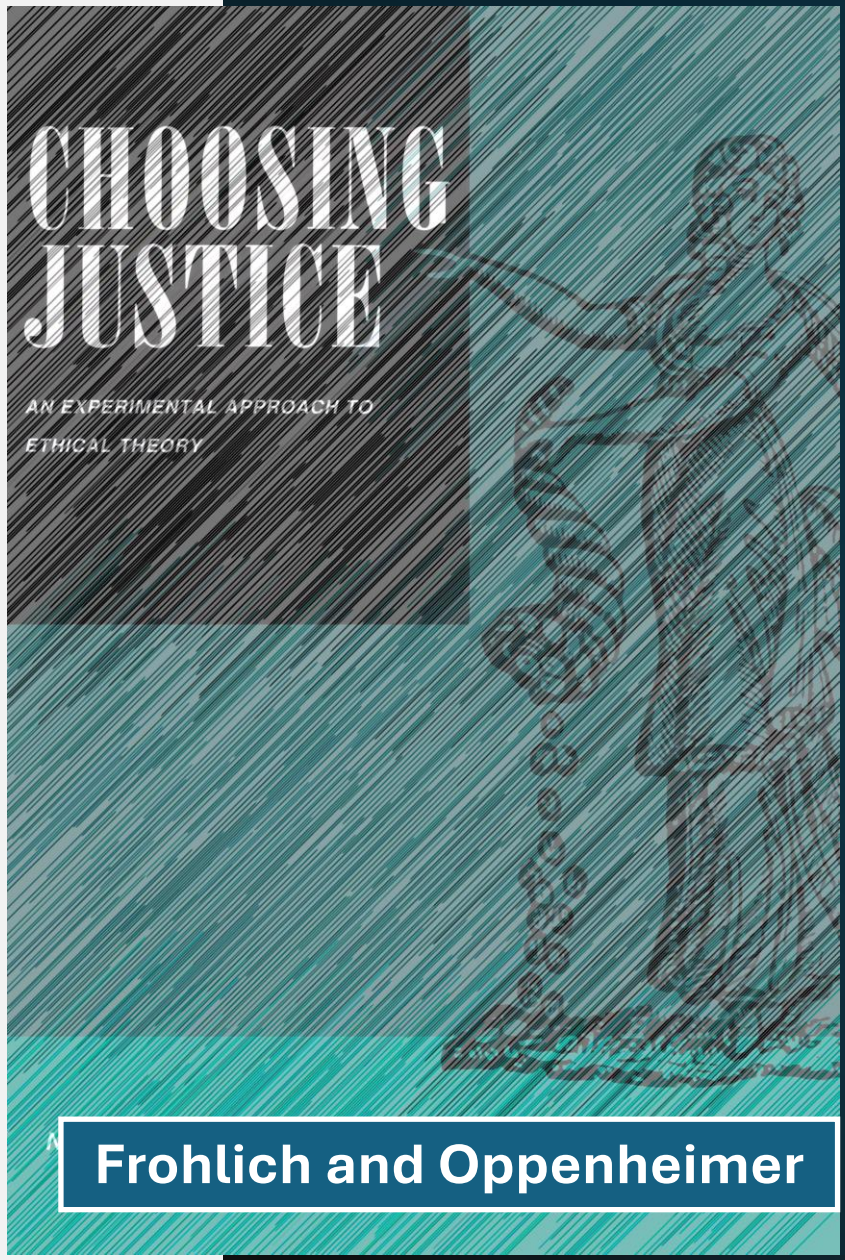


# *Choosing Justice*

(experimental test)

- Small group deliberation
  - Incentivized experiment
  - Veil of ignorance: Uncertainty about positions, distributions

- Choose distributive principle ⇒ Maximize wealth with floor constraint



# How much inequality is acceptable?

Hypothetical societies

Scott et al 2001

Michelbach et al 2003

Inequality aversion

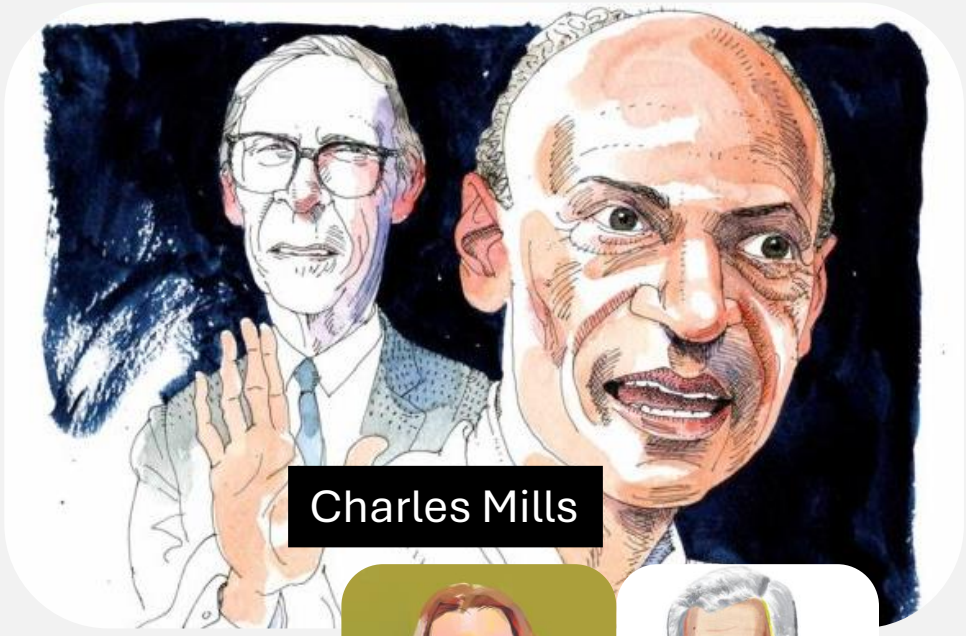
Fehr and Schmidt 1999

Meritocratic beliefs

Cappelen et al 2007

Cappelen et al 2013

**SOMETHING IS MISSING FROM THESE MODELS**



Charles Mills

Iris Marion Young



Amartya Sen

# Critiques of Ideal Theory

- Society is structured by racial hierarchy
- Injustice is inherited—not bad luck
  - Historical, intergenerational
  - Structural, institutional
- Justice should be comparative, achievable—not purely ideal

# Hypotheses

People are more likely to choose fairer institutions when they are

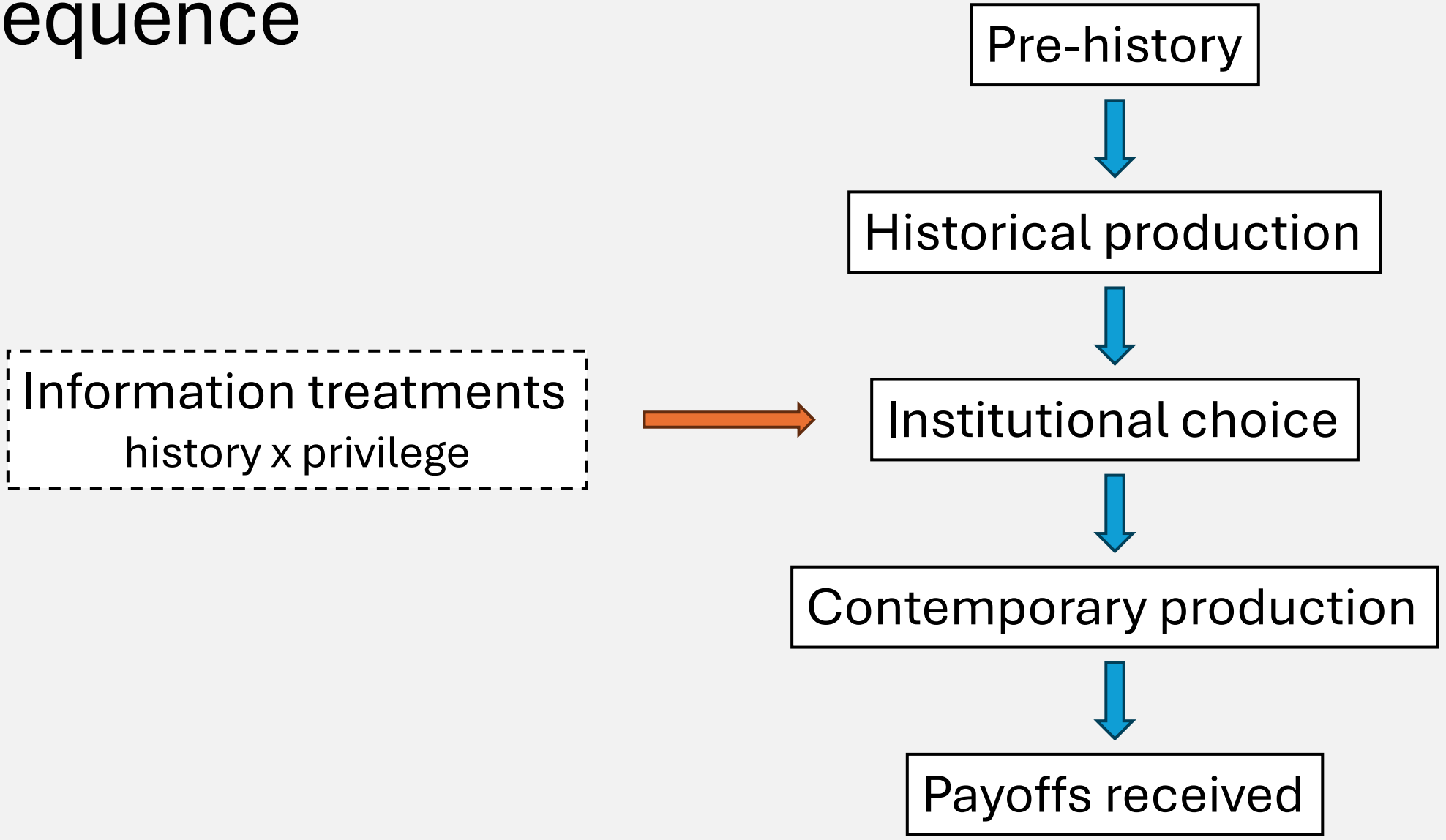
aware of history

aware of privilege

# Goals of experimental design

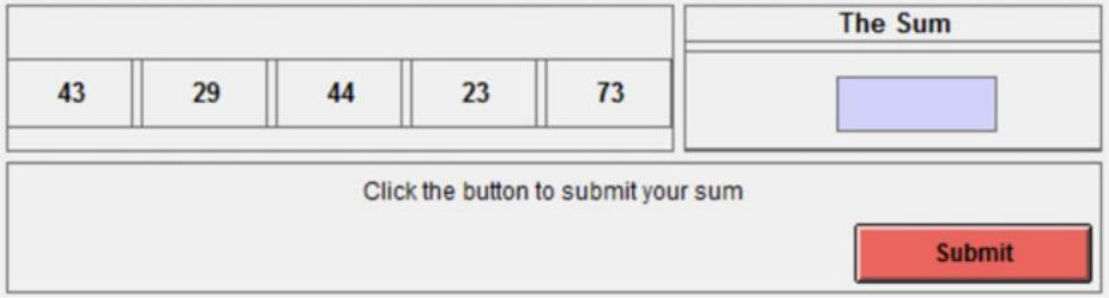
- Choose institutional rules instead of distribution of wealth
- Vary awareness of sources of injustice: history, privilege
- Stylized model (representation) of a non-ideal world

# Sequence


Pre-history
Historical production
Information treatments
history x privilege
Institutional choice
Contemporary production
Payoffs received

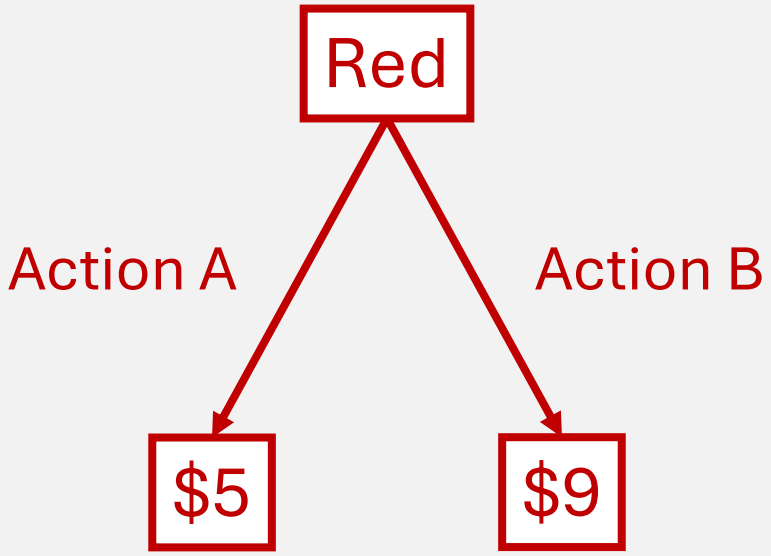
# Pre-history

- Random group assignment: Red and Blue
- Induced group identity (Chen and Li 2009)




- “Real effort” task (Niederle and Vesterlund 2007; Kanthak and Woon 2015)
- Task score (“ability”) is privately known

# Historical production (baseline)



# Contemporary production (baseline)

**Part 1:** Assigned (possibly different) number of tasks to complete

**Contest:** Success proportional to Part 1 tasks completed, winner receives higher Part 2 wage

**Part 2:** Assigned (possibly different) number of tasks to complete

**Variation:** Winner's score is a social payoff

# Institutional choice

Random dictator (individual choice) to determine how Part 2 wages will be assigned

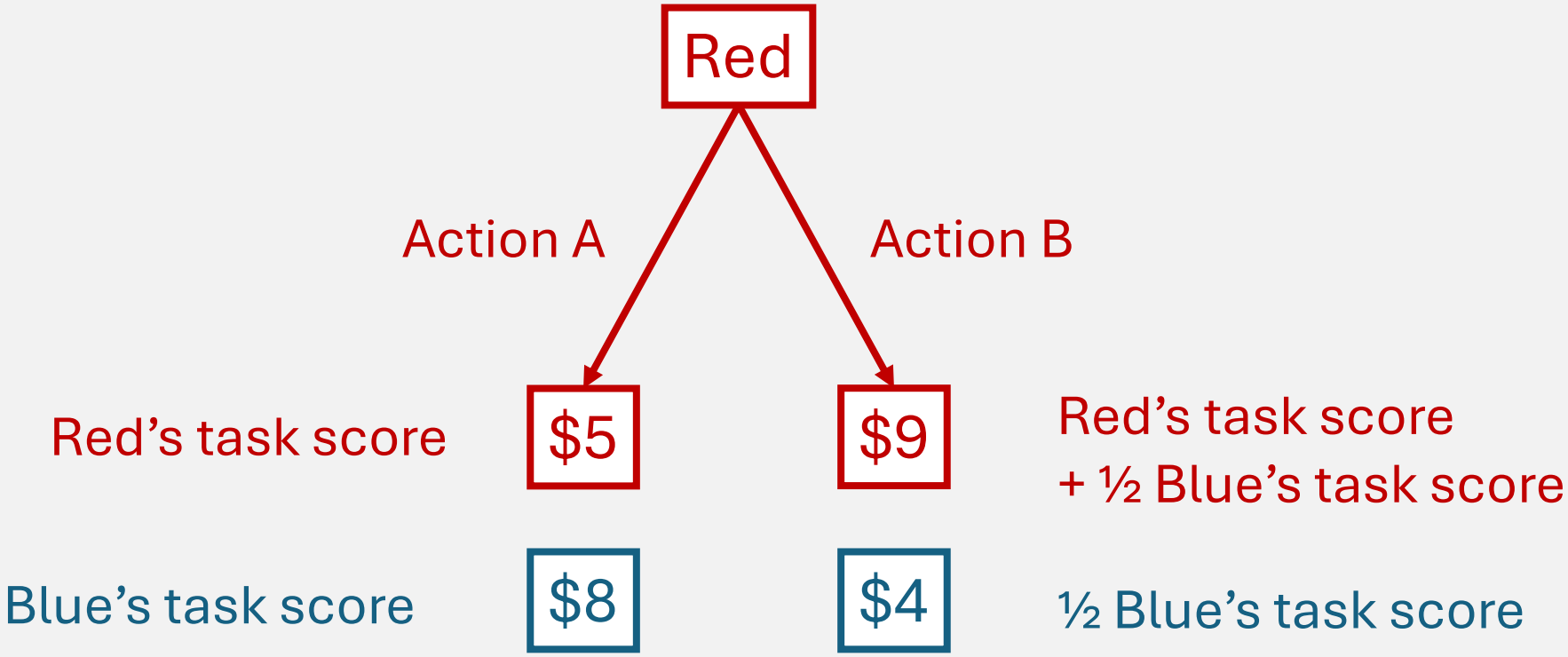
**Proportional Contest**

**Completely Random**

Which institution is fair? Will participants choose it?

Will information about society affect their choice?

# Historical awareness



# Privilege awareness

**Part 1:** ~~Assigned (possibly different) number of tasks to complete~~
Number of tasks depends on Red's historical choice

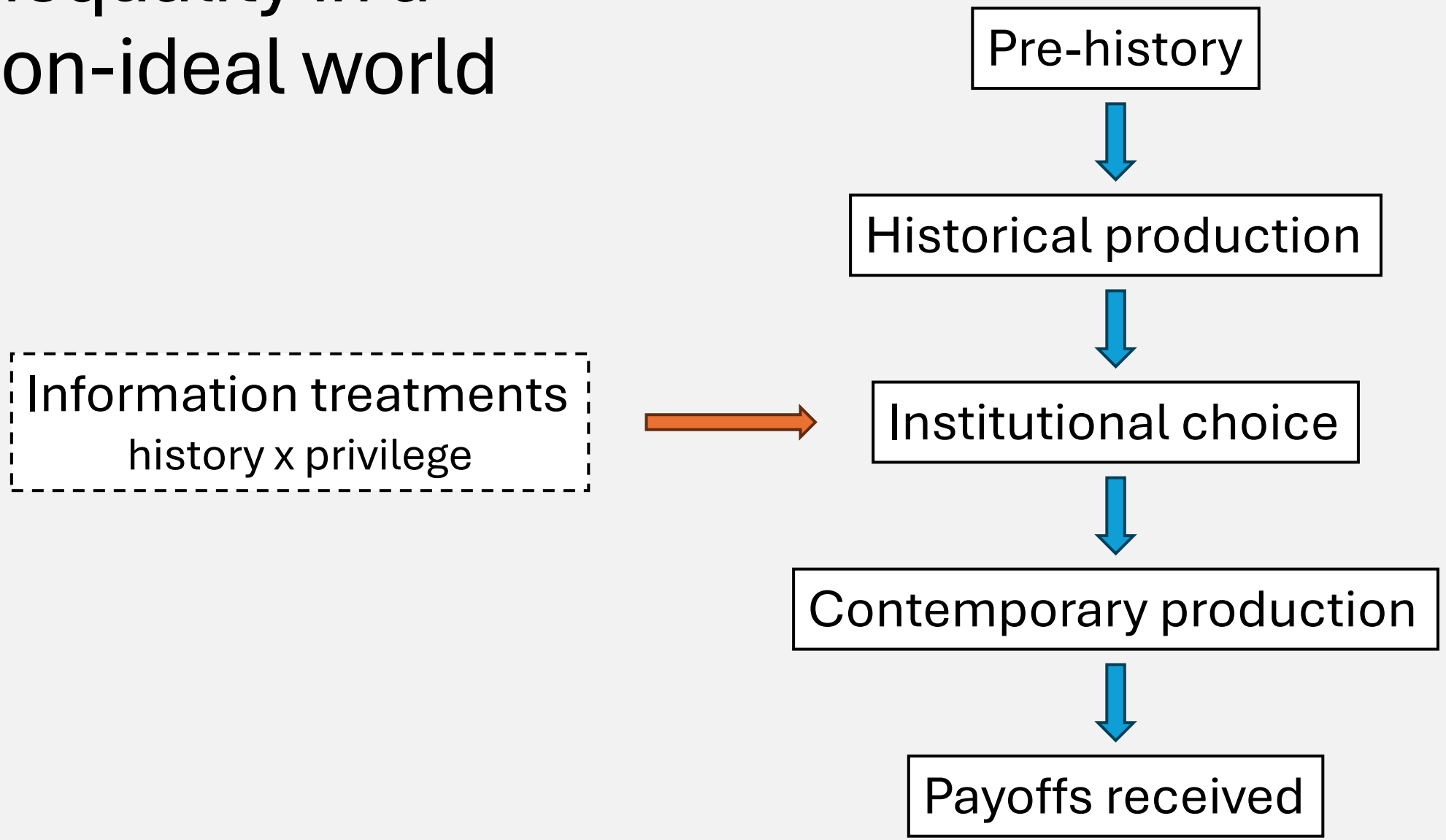
$1 x x $1

**Contest:** Success proportional to Part 1 tasks completed,
winner receives higher Part 2 wage

**Part 2:** ~~Assigned (possibly different) number of tasks to complete~~
Number of tasks depends on pre-history tasks ("ability")

$2 x x $1

# Inequality in a non-ideal world



# Hypotheses

Participants are more likely to choose random selection (equal opportunity) when...

aware of history

aware of privilege

# Discussion

- Justice, injustice are not ahistorical

- Preliminary experimental design
  - Bridges (normative) theory (philosophy) and behavior
  - Inequality is produced in a non-ideal world

- Work in progress, theoretically underdeveloped (payoffs, analysis)

***Can lifting the veil of ignorance—of history, privilege (Mills), not societal position (Rawls)—increase the fairness of institutions?***