

# Economics and Behaviour

Prof. Dr. Nora Szech

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Martin Belica

# Content of teaching

The course covers topics from behavioral economics with regard to contents and methods. In addition, the students gain insight into the design of economic experiments. Furthermore, the students will become acquainted with reading and critically evaluating current research papers in the field of behavioral economics.

## **Prerequisites**

None. Recommendations: Basic knowledge of microeconomics and statistics are recommended. A background in game theory is helpful, but not absolutely necessary.

## **Aim**

The students gain insight into fundamental topics in behavioral economics; get to know different research methods in the field of behavioral economics; learn to critically evaluate experimental designs; get introduced to current research papers in behavioral economics; become acquainted with the technical terminology in English.

## **Bibliography**

- Kahnemann, Daniel: Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.
- Ariely, Dan: Predictably irrational. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Ariely, Dan: The Upside of Irrationality. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

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# 1 Gametheorie

## Introduction

In analysing game theoretical situations we distinguish between

- **prescriptive** - means containing an indication of approval or disapproval
- **normative** - means relating to our model

or the kind of equilibrium

|               | complete information     | incomplete information            |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| static games  | Nash-Equilibrium         | Bayesian-Nash-Equilibrium         |
| dynamic games | Perfect Nash-Equilibrium | Perfect Bayesian-Nash-Equilibrium |

## 1.1 Games in strategic form and the Nash-Equilibrium

A **game in strategic form** is completely characterised by  $\{N, S, u\}$  where

- (1)  $N$  is the number of players and for player  $n$  would that mean  $n \in \{1, \dots, N\}$ .
- (2) For each player we have a set of *pure* strategies  $S$ .
- (3) For each player  $n \in \{1, \dots, N\}$  we have an expected utility function  $u : S \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$

For two players ( $P1$  and  $P2$ ) and two possible signals ( $a$  and  $b$ ) we could use the matrix form, where the  $u_i(x, y)$  is the utility function for Player  $i$  for signal  $x$  for  $P1$  and  $y$  for  $P2$  with  $x, y \in \{a, b\}$

| $P1 / P2$ | a                        | b                        |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a         | $(u_1(a, a), u_2(a, a))$ | $(u_1(a, b), u_2(a, b))$ |
| b         | $(u_1(b, a), u_2(b, a))$ | $(u_1(b, b), u_2(b, b))$ |

We call a **set of strategies** in a game a complete plan of actions for each situation in the game.

### Example 1.1 (Prisoner's Dilemma)

Two members of a criminal gang are arrested and imprisoned. Each prisoner is in solitary confinement with no means of communicating with the other. The prosecutors lack sufficient evidence to convict the pair on the principal charge. They hope to get both sentenced to a year in prison on a lesser charge. Simultaneously, the prosecutors offer each prisoner a bargain. Each prisoner is given the opportunity either to: betray the other by testifying that the other committed the crime, or to cooperate with the other by remaining silent. The offer is:

- If A and B each betray the other, each of them serves 6 years in prison
- If A betrays B but B remains silent, A will be set free and B will serve 9 years in prison (and vice versa)
- If A and B both remain silent, both of them will only serve 1 year in prison (on the lesser charge)

| P1 / P2    | defects    | cooperates |
|------------|------------|------------|
| defects    | $(-6, -6)$ | $(0, -9)$  |
| cooperates | $(-9, 0)$  | $(-1, -1)$ |

Other Interpretations for the Prisoner's Dilemma

- Collusion on prices
- Investing in human capital vs. arming for a war
- Buying a SUV vs. a smaller car

**Definition 1.2 (Strict dominance)**

A strategy  $s_i''$  is strictly dominated if and only if there exists another strategy  $s_i'$  such that

$$u(s_i', s_{-i}) \geq u(s_i'', s_{-i}) \quad \forall s_{-i} \in S_i$$

In the **Prisoner's Dilemma** *cooperate* is strictly dominated by *defect*. Simply the elimination of strictly dominated strategies leads to the prediction of  $(defects, defects)$ , even though  $(cooperates, cooperates)$  would result in a lower prison sentence.

**Example 1.3**

Iterated elimination of strictly dominated strategies leads to

- for Player 2:  $l$  strictly dominates  $r$
- after having eliminated  $r$  we can further eliminate  $d$ , since  $d$  is then strictly dominated by  $u$

Important to notice is that here, the prediction we derived relies immensely on the rationality of all players.

**Definition 1.4 (A strategy profile)**

We call a vector  $S = (S_1, \dots, S_N)$  of dimension  $N$  that specifies a strategy for every player in the game a strategy profile.

**Definition 1.5 (Nash-Equilibrium)**

An informal definition of a Nash-Equilibrium would be that it is the mutual best response for every player, therefore a strategy profile in which no player can do better by unilaterally changing their strategy.

Defining it formally would mean: a strategy profile  $x^* \in S$  is a Nash-Equilibrium if no unilateral deviation in strategy by any single player is profitable for that player, that is

$$\forall i \in \{1, \dots, N\}, x_i \in S_i : \quad u_i(x_i^*, x_{-i}^*) \geq u_i(x_i, x_{-i}^*)$$

**Example 1.6 (Battle of the sexes)**

The next example is a two-player coordination game.

Imagine a couple that agreed to meet this evening, but both individually cannot recall if they will be attending the opera or a football match. The husband would most of all like to go to the football game. The wife would like to go to the opera. Both would prefer to go to the same place rather than different ones.

Hence, the Battle of sexes in strategic form could look something like:

| M / F    | football | opera  |
|----------|----------|--------|
| football | (1, 2)   | (0, 0) |
| opera    | (0, 0)   | (2, 1) |

The two Nash-Equilibriums in this game are  $(opera, opera)$  and  $(football, football)$  since

$$u_i(opera, opera) \geq u_i(football, opera) \quad \forall i \in \{1, 2\}$$

**Example 1.7 (The Beauty-Contest)**

Keynes described the action of rational agents in a market using an analogy based on a fictional newspaper contest, in which entrants are asked to choose the six most attractive faces from a hundred photographs. Those who picked the most popular faces are then eligible for a prize. The agents has to consider that not his preferred choice is the optimal strategy but the one with the highest chances to be chosen by all others.

The rest is missing in my notes.

**1.1.1 Presentations****a) Unraveling in Guessing Games: An Experimental Study**

Consider the following game: a large number of players have to state in several rounds simultaneously a number in the closed interval  $[0, 100]$ . The winner is the person whose chosen number is closest to the mean of all chosen numbers multiplied by a parameter  $p$ , where  $p$  is common knowledge. The payoff to the winner is a fixed amount, which is independent of the stated number and  $p$ . If there is a tie, the prize is divided equally among the winners. The other players whose chosen numbers are further away receive nothing. By analysing the given choices and using eye-tracking the author is trying to study the thought processes. In first period behaviour deviates strongly from gametheoretic solutions and the chosen numbers correlate in all rounds with the parameter. A kind of learning process or adjustment process seems to happen.  $p$ .

**b) More than Meets the Eye: an Eye-tracking Experiment on the Beauty Contest Game**

The beauty contest game has been used to analyse how many steps of reasoning subjects are able to perform. A common finding is that a majority seem to have low levels of reasoning. We use eye-tracking to investigate not only the number chosen in the game, but also the strategies in use and the numbers contemplated. We can show that not all cases that are seemingly level-1 or level-2 thinking indeed are – they might be highly sophisticated adaptations to beliefs about other people's limited reasoning abilities.

**Example 1.8 (Guessing-Game / Beauty-Contest)**

In a game with at least two players we can describe the sequel for the Guessing-Game as following

- $n \geq 2$  players
- Every player guesses a number  $b_i \in \{0, 1, 2, \dots, 100\}$
- Goal is to guess  $b_i$  as close as possible to  $\frac{p}{n} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^n b_i = p \cdot \varnothing$ ,  $p \in (0, 1)$
- The best guess (closes to  $p \cdot \varnothing$ ) wins, in case of a tie a random device that is 'fair' decides who win the price  $P > 0$

**1. Question:** Is  $(0, \dots, 0)$  a Nash-Equilibrium?

**Answer:** Yes. Assume all bidders except for bidder  $i$  bid 0.

- if bidder  $i$  bids 0 expected win equals  $\frac{1}{n}P$
- if bidder  $i$  bids something above 0 his expected profit is going to be 0 as 0 is closer to  $p \cdot \varnothing$  then the bet  $b > 0$  of player  $i$ :

$$p \cdot \varnothing = p \frac{(n-1)0 + 1b}{n} = p \frac{b}{n}$$

$$d\left(b, p \frac{b}{n}\right) > d\left(p \frac{b}{n}, 0\right) \iff \left|b - p \frac{b}{n}\right| > \left|p \frac{b}{n}\right|$$

and since  $b > p \cdot \varnothing$  we can simplify this further

$$b > (p \cdot b) \cdot \frac{2}{n} \text{ is true because of } n \geq 2 \text{ and } p < 1.$$

**2. Question:** is  $(0, \dots, 0)$  the unique Nash-Equilibrium here?

**Answer:** Yes, since:

$$b_i^* \leq \frac{1}{2} \frac{\sum_{j \neq i} b_j^*}{n-1}$$

$$\Rightarrow \sum_{i=1}^n b_i^* \leq \frac{1}{2} \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j \neq i} b_j^*}{n-1} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{(n-1) \sum_{j=1}^n b_j^*}{n-1}$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j=1}^n b_j^*$$

$$\iff \sum_{i=1}^n b_i^* \leq \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n b_i^*$$

therefore  $(0, \dots, 0)$  is the only Nash-Equilibrium here.

**3. Question:** is  $(0, \dots, 0)$  also a strictly dominant strategy?

**Answer:** No. By analyzing the following situation we find a counterexample:

50 players. 48 of them bid the number 100, bidder 49 bids 0 then the optimal strategy for player 50 is to bid 97.

Therefore 0 is not the best answer and cannot be a strictly dominant strategy.

**Example 1.9**

something is missing in my notes here



## 1.2 Sub-game-Perfect Nash-Equilibrium

The Dictator-Game is nicely analysed by Christoph Engel in his book *Dictator-Games: A meta study (2011)*. In the following part we'd like to look at a modification of the Dictator-Game:

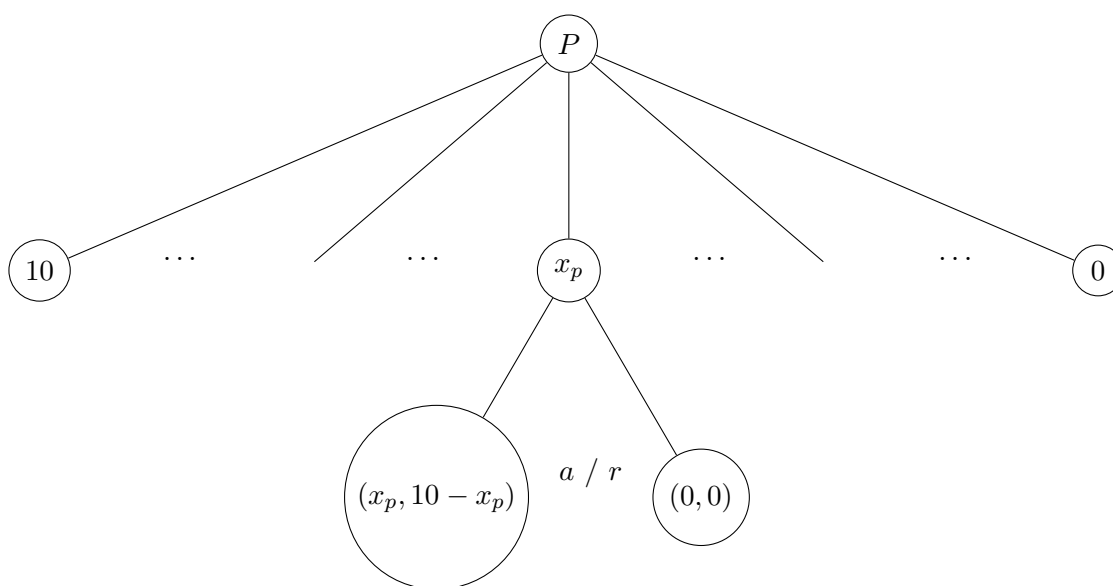
### Example 1.10 (Ultimatum-Game)

The Ultimatum-Game is a dynamic game under complete information.

We look at two players in two stages. The first player (the proposer (P)) receives a sum of money ( $M = 10$ ) and proposes how to divide the sum between himself ( $x_p$ ), where  $x_p \in \{0, 1, 2, \dots, 10\}$ , and another player ( $10 - x_p$ ). The second player (the responder (R)) chooses to either accept or reject this proposal. If the second player accepts, the money is split according to the proposal. If the second player reject, neither player receives any money.

Lets sum this up again:

- P proposes split up  $(x_p, 10 - x_p)$
- R accepts or rejects
  - If R accepts ( $a$ ), proposal becomes implemented. P receives  $x_p$  and R  $10 - x_p$
  - If R rejects ( $r$ ), the whole money gets destroyed.



A strategy set in this game would have to look like

- Proposer sets a  $x_p$
- Receiver decides for *any*  $x_p$  that might come up if he'd accept or reject that offer.

( a strategy needs to specify a complete action plan. )

**1. Question:** Can the outcome  $(5, 5)$  be stabilised as a Nash-Equilibrium?

**Answer:** Yes. Say P proposes  $x_p = 5$  and the strategy set for R is defined by accepting for any

value of  $x_p \leq 5$  and rejecting the offer for values larger than 5.  
In this situation (5, 5) would be stabilised as a Nash-Equilibrium.

**2. Question:** Is there another Nash-Equilibrium that stabilises the (5, 5) outcome?

**Answer:** Yes. If P again proposes  $x_p = 5$  and the strategy set for R is defined by accepting for only  $x_p = 5$  and rejecting for any other case, so  $x_p \neq 5$ .

**3. Question:** Can (0, 10) be stabilised as a Nash-Equilibrium?

**Answer:** Yes. We set the strategy for P as  $x_p = 0$  and for R demand accepting for  $x_p = 0$  and rejecting for any other case, meaning for  $x_p \geq 1$ .

As we can see the Nash-Equilibrium can lead to an infinite amount of outcomes some of them even with implausible threats. We'd therefore like to refine this kind of equilibrium which leads us to the (sub-game) perfect Nash-Equilibrium.

### Definition 1.11 (Sub-game)

A sub-game is any part of a game that meets the following criteria:

- It has a single initial node that is the only member of that node's information set (i.e. the initial node is in a singleton information set).
- If a node is contained in the sub-game then so are all of its successors
- If a node in a particular information set is in the sub-game then all members of that information set belong to the sub-game.
- and finally the node must not contain a deterministic state but instead at least one non-trivial choice

### Definition 1.12 ((Sub-game-)Perfect Nash-Equilibrium)

A strategy profile is a Sub-game-Perfect Nash-Equilibrium if it represents a Nash equilibrium of every sub-game of the original game. Informally, this means that if the players played any smaller game that consisted of only one part of the larger game and their behaviour represents a Nash equilibrium of that smaller game, then their behaviour is a sub-game perfect equilibrium of the larger game.

How to find a Perfect Nash-Equilibrium:

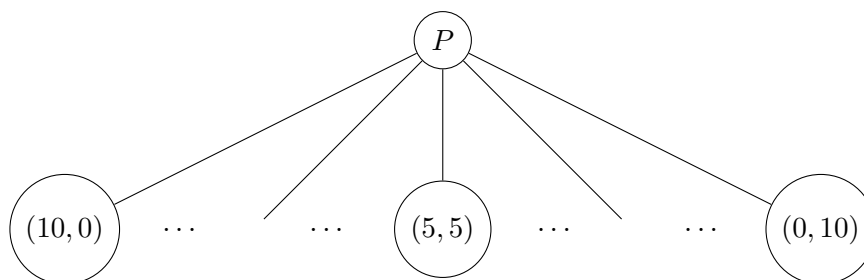
- (1) Define (one set of) optimal actions for the last sub-game
- (2) Replace that decision nodes with the respective outcome
- (3) Repeat (1) and (2) until the first decision node.

### Example 1.13 (Sequel to the Ultimatum-Game)

Searching for the Perfect Nash-Equilibrium in this case leads to:

- (1) Defining the optimal actions
  - In the case  $P$  chooses  $x_p = 10$ , then  $R$  receives  $10 - x_p = 0$  and he is indifferent between refusing and accepting. Let's assume for now he'd accept in this case.
  - In all other cases, meaning  $x_p \in [0, 10)$ , would  $R$  receive  $10 - x_p > 0$ . Therefore he would accept the offer in all cases.

(2) Now we can reduce the game to the following game tree



(3) Since we have already reached the first node, a simple analyse of the reduced situation for Nash-Equilibriums returns the Sub-Game-Perfect Nash-Equilibrium. In this situation  $P$  is supposed to chose  $x_p = 10$  since it results in the highest utility value.

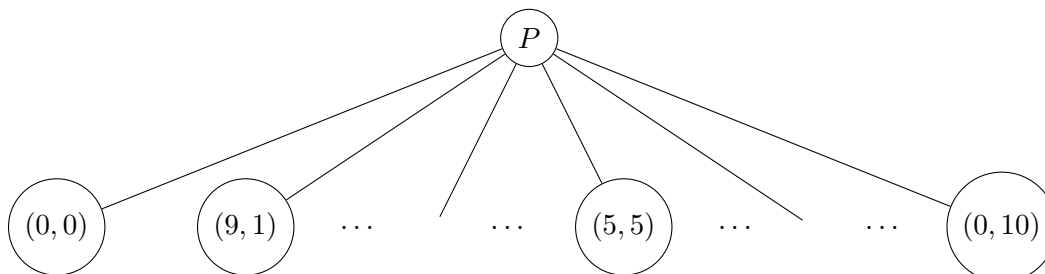
$\Rightarrow P$  playing  $x_p = 10$  together with R always accepting constitutes a Sub-game-Perfect Nash-Equilibrium.

If we'd look for another equilibrium it yields

(1) the optimal actions

- Again, in all cases  $x_p \in [0, 10)$  would R receive  $10 - x_p > 0$ , therefore he'd accept the offer in all cases.
- If he now would refuse to the offer  $x_p = 10$  it would be plausible therefore sub-game perfect, since he indifferent between both choices.

(2) the tree changes only slightly:



$\Rightarrow P$  playing  $x_p = 9$  together with R always accepting if  $x_p < 10$  and refuses for  $x_p = 10$  also constitutes a Sub-game-Perfect Nash-Equilibrium.

### 1.2.1 Presentations

#### a) An ultimatum game with multidimensional response strategies

Negotiations frequently end in conflict after one party rejects a final offer. In a large-scale Internet experiment, we investigate whether a 24-hour cooling-off period leads to fewer rejections in ultimatum bargaining. We conduct a standard cash treatment and a lottery treatment, where subjects receive lottery tickets for several large prizes. In the lottery treatment, unfair offers are less frequently rejected, and cooling off reduces the rejection rate further. In the cash treatment, rejections are more frequent and remain so after cooling off. We also study the effect of subjects' degree of "cognitive reflection" on

their behavior.

b) **A ultimatum game with multidimensional response strategies**

We enrich the choice task of responders in ultimatum games by allowing them to independently decide whether to collect what is offered to them and whether to destroy what the proposer demanded. Such a multidimensional response format intends to cast further light on the motives guiding responder behaviour. Using a conservative and stringent approach to type classification, we find that the overwhelming majority of responder participants choose consistently with outcome-based preference models. There are, however, few responders that destroy the proposer's demand of a large pie share and concurrently reject their own offer, thereby suggesting a strong concern for integrity.

## 1.3 Pleasures of Skill and Moral Conduct

Background:

- Jeremy Bentham points out fourteen different "simple" sources of pleasures for humans
- In this short list, number three are the "pleasure of skill" while number five are "the pleasure of a good name".
- Yet if being skilful is of crucial importance to people then this can oppose the possibility to keep a good name

**As an example: The Manhattan Project.** After the dropping of the plutonium bomb on Nagasaki, numerous members of the Manhattan Project started worrying about moral implications. Many of the scientists suffered from e.g. depressions.

The Self-Image is so relevant in this concept. Both the desire for mastery and acting in accordance with moral values originate from the same source, a desire for positive self-image.

The remaining question is therefore: does morality in some (everyday) situations get traded off against skilfulness?

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