**WEEKLY RECAP – 17 Jan 2019**

Just a quick email with a bit of info regarding my progress to precede our meeting tomorrow:

1. I’ve read all the material you sent me last week, as well as the original Ellsberg article that expounds the paradox.
2. Below is a summary of all the searches that I have undertaken so far (not that I have been particularly systematic in my perusal of the results). In any case, here is my best estimation of the state of the literature insofar as it relates to our prospective project:
   1. There is a lot of research re the ambiguity aversion -- but most of it definitely focuses on the economics of it. Most of it focuses on the mathematical, philosophical, modelling etc and does not involve experimentation.
   2. There is also a lot of experimental econ work which uses money and gambling tasks, card games etc.
   3. The effect is generally regarded as being very robust. Although there is considerable work trying to understand when it exists and when it doesn’t. The most interesting thereof seems to be the ‘comparative ignorance’ theory from Tversky and Fox (see [here](http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.395.8835&rep=rep1&type=pdf) – although these findings diminishing or circumscribing the ambiguity effect themselves [may not be robust](http://static.luiss.it/hey/ambiguity/papers/Chow_Sarin_2001.pdf))
   4. [This paper](https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/23817/1/Kocher.pdf) looks promising for the idea that the ambiguity aversion isn’t necessarily as ubiquitous as it may seem (although it also uses the econ paradigm of bets and games etc.).
   5. To conclude, I am somewhat confident that the type of study we are proposing is novel in the field; while there are some studies which give a ‘real world’ context to ambiguity aversion, they ordinarily focus on only one area -- e.g. Health ([link](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4205160/pdf/nihms539588.pdf)) , trust, online behaviour, asset markets. Even in these studies however, the data is often behavioural (in a stricter sense) rather than the vignette approach that we are looking at taking.
3. I’ve taken the liberty of crafting a few more possible vignettes to add to the few which you have already made. Please seebelow.

**WEEKLY RECAP – 24 Jan 2019**

Below is a little recap of where I am at so far in relation to this project.

1. I have continued to draft (roughly) some vignettes in the two-choice fashion as we discussed last week. I’ll send them to you tomorrow morning. I have endeavoured to include a ‘gain’ and ‘loss’ possibility for each scenario. I didn’t go ahead with an option for ‘discreet’ and ‘continuous’ possibilities (using the terminology we adopted last week) within each scenario at this stage because:
   1. [This paper](https://cloudfront.escholarship.org/dist/prd/content/qt9zr2296h/qt9zr2296h.pdf) by Sule Duney and Ben Newell from UNSW (thanks for the recommendation) shows that giving subjects a glint of information about the distribution of the uncertain variable does not ordinarily affect the presence of the ambiguity aversion (see table 1 of the paper). Here, there was no difference in the level of ambiguity aversion and inconsistent decision making by participants who were given:
      1. the traditional Ellsberg problem with absolute uncertainty of the distribution of the black and yellow balls;
      2. a ‘50-50’ condition in which participants were told that the uncertain balls were either *all* black or *all* yellow; and
      3. the ‘equal probability’ condition which implied that the number of black balls could be anything from 1 to 60 with an equal probability.
      4. **NB.** there was a fourth condition, the ‘normal distribution’ condition which did reduce the ambiguity aversion that participants manifested and showed a much greater instance of consistent decision making. Here, “the scenario suggested that the number of black balls could be anything from 0 to 60 but middle values (close to 30) are more probable than extreme values (close to 0 and 60)”.

On this basis, it may be unlikely that we would observe differences in our study on this point, unless we further explore the ‘normal distribution’ idea which might make our vignettes overly complex, less real world, and difficult for people to understand. This may not be worthy of our time and efforts.

1. In relation to the gain/loss matter – I have yet to do a ‘deep dive’ on this but my present inkling (based primarily on the summary of the research found on pages 104-105 ‘ambiguity seeking for losses’ [here](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8e1a/49f6611989d984239f599b88760ece497e17.pdf)) is:
   1. It is definitely worthwhile looking at both gains and losses because, as you are well aware, gains and losses are frequently treated differently by participants in the decision-making literature; and
   2. The literature regarding ambiguity aversion often shows differences for how gains and losses under uncertainty are dealt with: some studies find ambiguity aversion only for gains and not for losses, some find it for both, and some studies even find ambiguity *seeking* for losses – all in all, the literature here is not clear and so we should definitely seek to include this variable in our vignettes.
2. Finally, I haven’t gotten quite as far on the project this week as I might have liked. For next week I’m planning to dedicate more time to it, set up a more systematic process for my literature search etc., as well as use Github to keep you updated on this.

**THINGS TO DO BEFORE NEXT MEETING ON 4 FEB**

* Write about 20 or so vignettes
* Have a list of 5-10 papers that are super relevant, have understood them and made some notes.

**WEEKLY(ish) RECAP – 4 Feb 2019**

Research

* + - 1. You can see a summary of the research notes that I have made in the file ‘Notes re Recap’ in the root folder of the GitHub repo. They are still a work in progress.

Vignettes

* + - 1. I’ve now drafted 20 vignettes: 10 gains and 10 losses. They can be found under ‘draft vignettes’ in the root folder of the GitHub repo.

Coding

* + - 1. I’ve completed coding a skeleton version of the study. You can have a look its current form at <https://ambavexp1.appspot.com/> .
         1. At the moment, it is just a demo which only randomly draws from 4 different vignettes (2 gain, 2 loss), and it will also randomise the order of the two options given. It is very heavily based on the code you had for the Black Swan experiment.
         2. I have done some basic testing of it, and so far it works well – although I’m sure there are still many many changes that will need to be made in relation to the content of the instructions, consent, pls, and the vignettes. I’ve taken it all the way to downloading the data, and parsing from JSON format to a csv (using the JSON Parser script that you’ve written). Everything here works great!
         3. I’ve gotta say, the information you gave at the CHDSS was great and super helpful for me in doing this; particularly, in relation to using google app engine to get the experiment set up online. So thanks for that, and hopefully it’s similarly helpful for other attendees!
      2. As an idea – a very speculative idea at the moment – would it be worthwhile attempting to track participant response time in answering the vignettes? This way we can set up some minimum time limit (that we pre-register) to exclude participants who appear to be answering without any thought (or even reading the vignette!) just to get their Mturk money. I understand this may be a difficult task, because of varying delays of different browsers and computers to load etc., but I was interested in your thoughts here.
      3. Do we include a third response option to the effect of “I am indifferent to the above options”? Or should we have participants choose which option they prefer on a Likert Scale rather than (or in addition to) making a simple forced dichotomous choice)

**NOTES FROM MEETING**

* Give more backup info -- most experiments ask what you would do. ours ask what world would you prefer – give example.
* ways to ensure good data
  + Instruction check
    - what is this study is about? 4 options
    - imaginary world question?
  + Dummy question before
    - Concreate real world easy question.
  + Instruction check after – making sure they read it. optional:
* 20, add 4 or so
* Ethics. Don’t specify how we ask them. Allow to cover possible follow-ups.

**10 Feb**

Hi Amy,

Firstly, I hope it’s not inappropriate to email this to you outside of business hours (I obviously don’t expect that you read or respond until it is business hours again), but please let me know if it is ☺

As an update in relation to this project, I have pushed all the following changes to the GitHub repo:

1. A completed *draft* of all the ethics docs needed to submit.
2. Updated code for the experiment. I still have a little work to go, but I have more or less integrated the changes (at least in relation to structure – there is a lot of work to still be done in relation to the content of instruction questions and exclusion questions etc).

Things for me to continue doing:

1. I’ll now turn my attention to updating and improving the vignettes.
2. Finish coding the (skeleton) experiment.

Cheers,

Josh

**4 March 2019**

Hi Amy,

By way of update in relation to this project.

Experiment

The experiment as it currently stands can be found here: <https://ambavexp1.appspot.com/>

It works all the way to downloading the data and parsing it to a useable form. It seems to me that it is completed except for:

1. Adding all the vignettes to it. Currently it just randomly draws from 2 gain and 2 loss vignettes (also randomising order). This will be an easy job, we just need to finalise the vignettes first.
2. Writing the content for the post-test questions (although the skeleton for this is already coded, I just wasn’t sure what to put here and my brain started to hurt haha).
3. Ad hoc tweaks and improvements.

Vignettes

A completed draft set of vignettes can be found on the GitHub repo in the file vignettes.md. Also, here is a frequency table of the types of vignettes. In general, I think there is a pretty good spread across gain and loss particularly given the many different ways that one could categorise the vignettes (some of them have a few themes aswell).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | health | work | social/romantic | money/property | family | urn | other | **total** |
| GAIN VIGNETTES | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | **12** |
| LOSS VIGNETTES | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 | **12** |

Look forward to speaking soon.

Josh

**Things to discuss for meeting 5 March**.

Project related

1. This project going forward. There is likely to be a few weeks where I put in on the backburner as exams and assignment due dates approach (likely near the end of semester). In that time, you could keep running with the project while I am out of action, or just wait it out until I can work on it again. Does something like this sound ok to you?
2. X and Y in vignettes
3. Change coding for reverse order now, or just later?

Other

1. Attending CCS lab meetings. Leave early? Ok to come a little sporadically?
2. Other ideas:
   1. Quantifying the Overton window.
   2. “Marketplace of ideas”. Good ideas will eventually win this marketplace.
      1. Censorship – does it actually work
      2. <https://medium.com/@danmcgee/the-marketplace-of-ideas-is-a-failed-market-5d1a7c106fb8>
      3. sunlight is the best disinfectant
3. RA work.