**SONA 45 - Debrief**

1. **What are the research questions?**

Many theories of information seeking argue that humans savour information about upcoming positive events (e.g., a holiday) and dread information about potentially negative events (e.g., whether you carry the Huntington’s gene). This experiment investigates what factors drive human information seeking and avoidance within a controlled laboratory environment. Specifically, whether humans show preferences for receiving advanced information about upcoming negative outcomes (e.g., receiving an electric shock).

**2. How does this study extend previous research on this topic?**

Information avoidance has yet to be produced reliably under laboratory conditions even when outcomes are aversive (e.g., microphone feedback, mutilation images or high likelihoods of losing money). In these instances, people are either indifferent or prefer early information about the event which goes against the hypothesis that individuals want to avoid information about negative events. This experiment further investigates whether this effect depends on a visceral aversive event (shock) and if this is related to a desire to reduce anxious feelings (measured by SCR).

**3. What are some potential real-world implications of this research?**

Selective exposure/avoidance of information can skew perceptions of reality and influence future decisions. The ability to reliably produce and study information avoidance in laboratory settings will allow for intervention studies in controlled settings (e.g., how do we encourage people to embrace health information even if it may be negative?)

**4. Briefly describe a potential issue (e.g., ethical, practical) or limitation of the study (e.g., design, ecological validity).**

One limitation of using skin conductance is that responses habituate over extended trials i.e., the SCR response is attenuated.

**5. Briefly describe the study methodology (e.g., design, dependent/ independent variables, materials).**

The study utilized a within-subjects design. The independent variable was the probability of receiving a shock (50%). A probability level of 50% is selected since the outcome is most uncertain at this level and should therefore elicit the most anxiety. The dependent variables were 1) if participants wanted to find out or keep the outcome secret and 2) skin conductance response during the delay between the choice and receiving the outcome.

**6. Further reading (i.e., a reference to a reading/s related to the current study for curious students).**

Gigerenzer, G., & Garcia-Retamero, R. (2017). Cassandra’s regret: The psychology of not wanting to know. Psychological Review, 124(2), 179–196. [https://doi-org.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/10.1037/rev0000055](https://psycnet-apa-org.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/doi/10.1037/rev0000055)