

# *EPICENTER* Spring Course on Epistemic Game Theory

## Advanced Topics III + IV: Psychological Games

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- In “traditional” games, your **utility** only depends on your choice and your **belief about the opponents’ choices**.
- In some situations, your utility may also depend on what you **believe that the opponent believes that you do**.
- For instance, **surprise, meeting somebody’s expectations, disappointment, guilt**, and other emotions.
- Such situations can be modelled as **psychological games**.
- **Psychological games** were introduced by **Geanakoplos, Pearce and Stacchetti (1989)**, and later extended to **dynamic games** by **Battigalli and Dufwenberg (2009)**.

## Example: Surprising Barbara

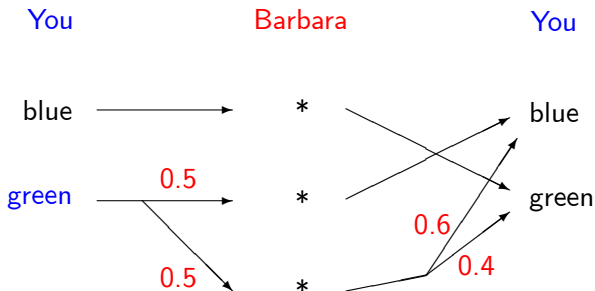
blue	green	red	yellow	no surprise
4	3	2	1	0

### Story

- You are invited to a party together with Barbara, and you still have the same preferences over colors as before.
- But now your objective is to **surprise Barbara** by the color you wear.
- Let  $\text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})$  be the expected probability you think that Barbara assigns to you **not choosing blue**.
- Your **expected utility** from choosing blue is

$$u_1(\text{blue}) = 4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not blue}).$$

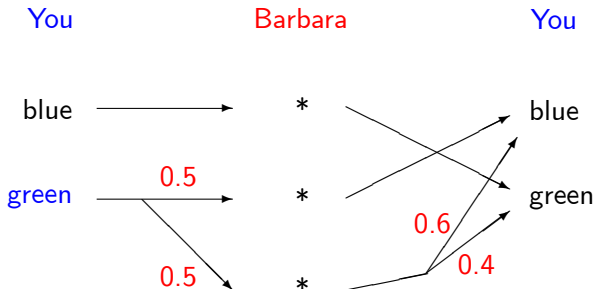
- Similarly for the other colors.



- Expected utility:  $u_1(\text{blue}) = 4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})$ .
- Consider the belief hierarchy that starts at your choice green:

$$\text{Prob}(\text{you not blue}) = (0.5) \cdot 0 + (0.5) \cdot 0.4 = 0.2.$$

- Hence,  $u_1(\text{blue}) = 4 \cdot (0.2) = 0.8$ .



- Expected utility:  $u_1(\text{green}) = 3 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not green})$ .
- Consider the belief hierarchy that starts at your choice **green**:  

$$\text{Prob}(\text{you not green}) = (0.5) \cdot 1 + (0.5) \cdot 0.6 = 0.8.$$
- Hence,  $u_1(\text{green}) = 3 \cdot (0.8) = 2.4$ .
- Therefore, **green** is **optimal** for your belief hierarchy that starts at **green**.

blue	green	red	yellow	no surprise
4	3	2	1	0

- Expected utility:  $u_1(\text{blue}) = 4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})$ .
- Your utility function can be represented by the following matrix:

	extreme second-order beliefs			
	blue	green	red	yellow
blue	0	4	4	4
green	3	0	3	3
red	2	2	0	2
yellow	1	1	1	0

- Your utility depends on your second-order belief.
- This cannot be modelled by traditional game theory.

	extreme second-order beliefs			
	blue	green	red	yellow
blue	0	4	4	4
green	3	0	3	3
red	2	2	0	2
yellow	1	1	1	0

- **Matrix representation** is possible because:
- your **utility** only depends on **finitely many orders of belief**: **belief finite** (Jagau and Perea (2017)),
- your **utility** only depends on the **expected probability** you think that Barbara assigns to each of your choices,
- your **utility** depends **linearly** on this expected probability.
- Last two conditions: **expectation-based game** (Jagau and Perea (2017)).

- In general, in a **psychological game**, your utility from making a choice may depend on your **second-order belief**, ...
- or your **third-order belief**, ...
- or even **higher-order beliefs**.
- That is, your utility may potentially depend on your **full belief hierarchy**.

### Definition (Psychological game)

A **psychological game** specifies for every player  $i$

a finite set of **choices**  $C_i$ ,

a **utility function**  $u_i$  that assigns to every choice  $c_i$  and every **belief hierarchy**  $b_i$  some utility  $u_i(c_i, b_i)$ .

- Taken from **Jagau and Perea (2017)**.
- Similar definitions can be found in **Geanakoplos, Pearce and Stacchetti (1989)** and **Battigalli and Dufwenberg (2009)**.



## Definition (Psychological game)

A **psychological game** specifies for every player  $i$

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- We have seen that belief hierarchies can be encoded by means of **types** in an **epistemic model**.
- Hence, we can write  $u_i(c_i, t_i)$  instead of  $u_i(c_i, b_i)$ .
- We say that a choice  $c_i$  is **optimal** for a type  $t_i$  if

$$u_i(c_i, t_i) \geq u_i(c'_i, t_i)$$

for all alternative choices  $c'_i \in C_i$ .

- Type  $t_i$  **believes in the opponents' rationality** if  $b_i(t_i)$  only assigns positive probability to opponents' choice-type pairs  $(c_j, t_j)$  where  $c_j$  is **optimal** for  $t_j$ .

### Definition (Common belief in rationality)

Type  $t_i$  expresses **1-fold** belief in rationality if  $t_i$  **believes in the opponents' rationality**.

Type  $t_i$  expresses **2-fold** belief in rationality if  $t_i$  only assigns **positive probability to opponents' types** that express **1-fold** belief in rationality.

Type  $t_i$  expresses **3-fold** belief in rationality if  $t_i$  only assigns **positive probability to opponents' types** that express **2-fold** belief in rationality.

And so on.

Type  $t_i$  expresses **common belief in rationality** if  $t_i$  expresses  $k$ -fold belief in rationality for all  $k$ .

- Based on Jagau and Perea (2017). Similar definitions in Bjorndahl, Halpern and Pass (2017) and Battigalli and Dufwenberg (2009).

## Example: Surprising Barbara

blue	green	red	yellow	no surprise
4	3	2	1	0

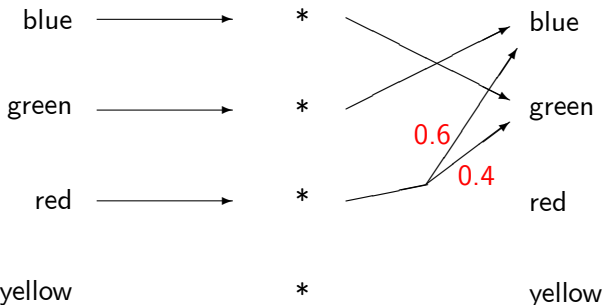
- Expected utility:  $u_1(\text{blue}) = 4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})$ .
- Which colors can you rationally choose under **common belief in rationality**?
- Your choice **yellow** is **not optimal** for any belief hierarchy:
- If  $\text{Prob}(\text{you blue}) \geq 0.5$ , then  $u_1(\text{green}) \geq (0.5) \cdot 3 = 1.5 > 1$ .
- If  $\text{Prob}(\text{you blue}) \leq 0.5$ , then  $u_1(\text{blue}) \geq (0.5) \cdot 4 = 2 > 1$ .
- What about the other colors?

blue	green	red	yellow	no surprise
4	3	2	1	0

You

Barbara

You



- All belief hierarchies for you express **common belief in rationality**.
- You can rationally choose **blue, green and red** under **common belief in rationality**.

# Surprise Exam Paradox

- You announce to Barbara that you will give her a **surprise exam** on epistemic game theory some day next week.
- You would like to **surprise** Barbara with the **day** of the exam.
- Common sense reasoning tells you that this is **not possible**:
- If you have not given the exam by **Thursday** evening, Barbara knows that you must give it on **Friday**, and hence it cannot be a surprise.
- If you have not given the exam by **Wednesday** evening, Barbara knows that you must give it on **Thursday**, and hence it cannot be a surprise either.
- And so on.
- Hence, you could only give it on **Monday**.
- But Barbara expects this, and hence this cannot be a surprise either.
- However, you could then surprise Barbara by giving the exam on **Wednesday**.
- **Surprise exam paradox.**

- We model the **surprise exam paradox** as a **psychological game**.
- For simplicity, we assume that you can only put the exam on **Monday** or **Tuesday**.
- Your **utility function** is given by

	extreme second-order beliefs	
	Monday	Tuesday
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	0	0

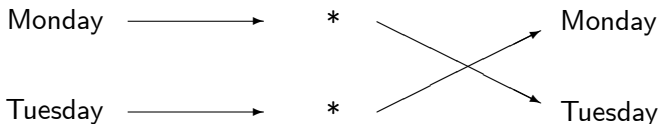
- Is it possible for you to **surprise** Barbara under **common belief in rationality**?
- Subsequent analysis based on **Mourmans (2017)** and **Geanakoplos (1996)**.

	second-order beliefs	
	Monday	Tuesday
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	0	0

you

Barbara

you



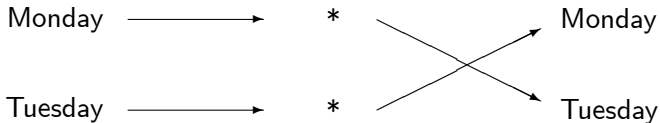
- Your belief hierarchy that starts at your choice **Monday** expresses **common belief in rationality**.
- Hence, you can believe to **fully surprise** Barbara under **common belief in rationality**.

	second-order beliefs	
	Monday	Tuesday
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	0	0

you

Barbara

you



- Your belief hierarchy that starts at your choice **Monday** is **not simple**.
- A **simple** belief hierarchy that expresses **common belief in rationality** is called a **psychological Nash equilibrium**.
- Concept of **psychological Nash equilibrium** is due to **Geanakoplos, Pearce and Stacchetti (1989)**.



	second-order beliefs	
	Monday	Tuesday
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	0	0

- **We show:** In a **psychological Nash equilibrium**, you believe you **cannot surprise** Barbara.
- **Proof:** Take a **psychological Nash equilibrium** generated by a probability distribution  $\sigma_1 \in \Delta(\{\text{Mon}, \text{Tue}\})$ .
- Suppose that  $\sigma_1(\text{Tue}) > 0$ .
- Then, you believe that Barbara believes that you believe that Barbara believes that you, with **positive probability**, will put the exam on **Tuesday**.
- Hence, you must believe that Barbara believes that you will put the exam on **Monday**.
- Therefore,  $\sigma_1(\text{Tue}) = 0$ , which is a **contradiction**.
- **Conclusion:** In a **psychological Nash equilibrium**,  $\sigma_1(\text{Mon}) = 1$ .

# Common Belief in Rationality May be Impossible

- For **standard games**, where the utility only depends (linearly) on your **first-order belief**, and every player has **finitely many choices**, we have seen that **common belief in rationality** is **always possible**.
- Is this also true for **psychological games**?
- **Not** if the utility depends on **all orders of belief**.

# Modified Surprise Exam Paradox

- Suppose you prefer to put the exam on **Monday** if ...
- you believe that Barbara assigns a **positive probability** to **Tuesday**, or
- you believe that Barbara believes that you believe that Barbara assigns a **positive probability** to **Tuesday**,
- and so on.
- However, if you believe that Barbara assigns **probability 1** to **Monday**, and you believe that Barbara believes that you believe that Barbara assigns **probability 1** to **Monday**, and so on, then you prefer to **slightly surprise Barbara** by putting the exam on **Tuesday**.
- Then, **your utilities** are given by

	belief hierarchies	
	$b_1^{\text{Mon}}$	other
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	1	0

where  $b_1^{\text{Mon}}$  is the **simple belief hierarchy** generated by  $\sigma_1 = \text{Mon.}$

	belief hierarchies	
	$b_1^{\text{Mon}}$	other
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	1	0

- We show: There is **no** belief hierarchy  $b_1$  that expresses **common belief in rationality**.
- Based on **Jagau and Perea (2017)**. Similar example in **Bjorndahl, Halpern and Pass (2017)**.
- **Proof: Step 1:** Show that belief hierarchy  $b_1^{\text{Mon}}$  does **not** express **common belief in rationality**.
- In  $b_1^{\text{Mon}}$ , you believe that Barbara believes that you choose **Monday** and that you have belief hierarchy  $b_1^{\text{Mon}}$ .
- But then, you believe that Barbara believes that you choose **irrationally**.

	belief hierarchies	
	$b_1^{\text{Mon}}$	other
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	1	0

- Step 2: Show that there is **no** belief hierarchy  $b_1$  that expresses **common belief in rationality**.
- Suppose that  $b_1$  expresses **common belief in rationality**.
- Then, you believe in  $b_1$  that Barbara believes that you choose **rationally** while holding a belief hierarchy **different** from  $b_1^{\text{Mon}}$ .
- Hence, in  $b_1$  you believe that Barbara believes that you choose **Monday**.

	belief hierarchies	
	$b_1^{\text{Mon}}$	other
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	1	0

- Suppose that  $b_1$  expresses **common belief in rationality**.
- Then, you believe in  $b_1$  that Barbara believes that you believe that Barbara believes that you choose **rationally** while holding a belief hierarchy **different** from  $b_1^{\text{Mon}}$ .
- Hence, you believe in  $b_1$  that Barbara believes that you believe that Barbara believes that you choose **Monday**.
- And so on.
- Hence,  $b_1 = b_1^{\text{Mon}}$ . **Contradiction**.

# When is Common Belief in Rationality Possible?

- We have seen a psychological game in which **common belief in rationality** is **impossible**.
- In that game, your utility depended on **all levels** of your belief hierarchy.
- What if the utility of all players only depends on **finitely many** belief levels?
- **Belief finite games**: See Jagau and Perea (2017).
- For such games, we can show that **common belief in rationality** is **always possible**.

## Example: Surprising Barbara and Being Different

	blue	green	red	yellow	same color	no surprise
you	4	3	2	1	0	0
Barbara	2	1	4	3	0	0

### Story

- You would like to **surprise** Barbara, but also to wear a **different color** than she does. Similarly for Barbara.
- Let  $\text{Prob}(\text{Barbara not blue})$  be the probability you assign to Barbara **not choosing blue**.
- Let  $\text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})$  be the expected probability you think that Barbara assigns to you **not choosing blue**.
- Your **expected utility** from choosing blue is

$$u_1(\text{blue}) = \underbrace{4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{Barbara not blue})}_{\text{being different / first-order belief}} + \underbrace{4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})}_{\text{surprise / second-order belief}}.$$



	blue	green	red	yellow	same color	no suprise
you	4	3	2	1	0	0
Barbara	2	1	4	3	0	0

- Your **expected utility** from choosing blue is

$$u_1(\text{blue}) = \underbrace{4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{Barbara not blue})}_{\text{being different / first-order belief}} + \underbrace{4 \cdot \text{Prob}(\text{you not blue})}_{\text{surprise / second-order belief}}.$$

- Similarly for the other colors.
- Your utilities can be represented as follows:

You	first-order beliefs				+	You	second-order beliefs			
	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$			$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4		$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3		$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2		$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0		$y_1$	1	1	1	0

being different
surprise

	first-order beliefs			
You	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0

being different

+

	second-order beliefs			
You	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0

surprise

$b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...

	first-order beliefs			
Barbara	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

being different

+

	second-order beliefs			
Barbara	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

surprise

$g_1$   $b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...

You	first-order beliefs			
	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0

being different

+

You	second-order beliefs			
	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0

surprise

$r_2$   $g_1$   $b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...

	first-order beliefs			
Barbara	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

+

	second-order beliefs			
Barbara	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

being different surprise

$b_1$   $r_2$   $g_1$   $b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...

You	first-order beliefs			
	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0

+

You	second-order beliefs			
	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_1$	0	4	4	4
$g_1$	3	0	3	3
$r_1$	2	2	0	2
$y_1$	1	1	1	0

being different
surprise

$y_2$   $b_1$   $r_2$   $g_1$   $b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...

	first-order beliefs			
Barbara	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

+

	second-order beliefs			
Barbara	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

being different                      surprise

$g_1 \ y_2 \ b_1 \ r_2 \ g_1 \ b_2 \ b_1 \ b_2 \dots$

Barbara	first-order beliefs			
	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

+

Barbara	second-order beliefs			
	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

being different
surprise

$r_2$   $g_1$   $y_2$   $b_1$   $r_2$   $g_1$   $b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...



Barbara	first-order beliefs			
	$b_1$	$g_1$	$r_1$	$y_1$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

being different

+

Barbara	second-order beliefs			
	$b_2$	$g_2$	$r_2$	$y_2$
$b_2$	0	2	2	2
$g_2$	1	0	1	1
$r_2$	4	4	0	4
$y_2$	3	3	3	0

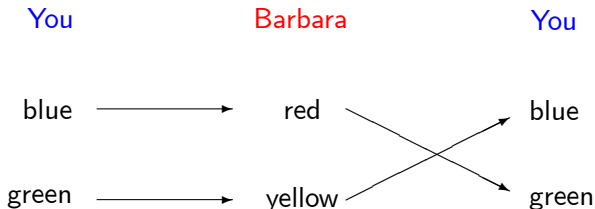
surprise

$r_2$   $g_1$   $y_2$   $b_1$   $r_2$   $g_1$   $b_2$   $b_1$   $b_2$  ...

}  
 cycle

$$\underbrace{r_2 \ g_1 \ y_2 \ b_1}_{\text{cycle}} \ r_2 \ g_1 \ b_2 \ b_1 \ b_2 \ \dots$$

- This **cycle** can be translated into a **beliefs diagram** where all belief hierarchies express **common belief in rationality**:



- This construction can be **generalized** to all psychological games where the players' **utilities** only depend on **finitely many belief levels**.

## Theorem

Consider a *psychological game* with *finitely many choices* such that either

- (a) all utility functions only depend on *finitely many orders of belief*, or
- (b) all utility functions are *continuous* in the belief hierarchy.

Then, there is for every player  $i$  a belief hierarchy  $b_i$  that expresses *common belief in rationality*.

- Follows from [Jagau and Perea \(2017\)](#). They present a *weaker condition* that guarantees the possibility of common belief in rationality: *preservation of rationality at infinity*.
- In *case (b)*, we can even find a *psychological Nash equilibrium* for every player. Follows from [Geanakoplos, Pearce and Stacchetti \(1989\)](#).

## Theorem

Consider a *psychological game* with *finitely many choices* such that either

- (a) all utility functions only depend on *finitely many orders of belief*, or
- (b) all utility functions are *continuous* in the belief hierarchy.

Then, there is for every player  $i$  a belief hierarchy  $b_i$  that expresses *common belief in rationality*.

- *Common belief in rationality* may be *impossible* if (a) and (b) fail:

	belief hierarchies	
	$b_1^{\text{Mon}}$	other
Monday	0	1
Tuesday	1	0

# Elimination of Choices

- For **standard games**, the choices that are possible under **common belief in rationality** can be characterized by the **iterated elimination of strictly dominated choices**.
- In every round, we proceed by **elimination of choices only**.
- We will see that **elimination of choices only** is **no longer enough** for **psychological games**.
- Hence, we must turn to procedures where we eliminate **choices and beliefs** in every round.

# Example: Stay or Go?

## Story

- Once again, you and Barbara are invited for a party tonight. You both must decide whether to **go** or **not**.
- Barbara only wants to **join** the party if you do. Otherwise, she prefers to **stay** at home.
- You only consider joining the party if you believe to **surprise** Barbara at the party by your presence.
- Possible **utilities**:

	first-order beliefs			second-order beliefs			first-order beliefs		
You	go	stay	+	You	go	stay	Barbara	go	stay
go	1	0		go	0	1	go	1	0
stay	1	1		stay	1	1	stay	0	1

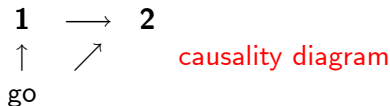
	first-order beliefs				second-order beliefs				first-order beliefs	
You	go	stay	+	You	go	stay		Barbara	go	stay
go	1	0		go	0	1		go	1	0
stay	1	1		stay	1	1		stay	0	1

- For you, **going** to the party is only **optimal** if you believe that Barbara **goes**, and believe that Barbara believes that you **stay** at home.
- But then, you must necessarily believe that Barbara chooses **irrationally**.
- Therefore, **going** to the party **cannot be optimal** for you under **common belief in rationality**.
- However, every choice in this game is **optimal for at least one belief hierarchy**.
- Hence, elimination of choices alone is **not enough** to eliminate your choice **go**.

# When is Elimination of Choices Enough?

	first-order beliefs		+		second-order beliefs				first-order beliefs	
You	go	stay		You	go	stay		Barbara	go	stay
go	1	0		go	0	1		go	1	0
stay	1	1		stay	1	1		stay	0	1

- **Problem:** To make go optimal for you while believing in Barbara's rationality, we must impose conflicting restrictions on your second-order belief.

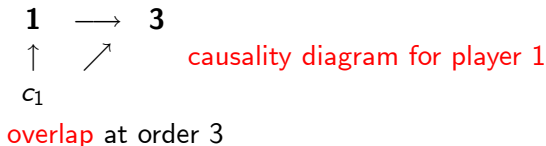


- In the causality diagram, the paths (go, 2) and (go, 1, 2) have an overlap at order 2.

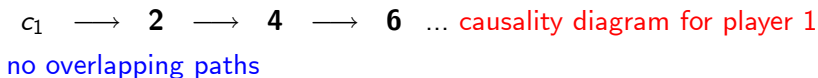


# Causality Diagrams

- The **causality diagram** for **player 1** shows which **orders of belief** are directly, or indirectly, **relevant** for player 1 if he **chooses rationally under common belief in rationality**.
- Suppose, **player 1** cares about **1st** and **3rd** order belief, whereas **player 2** only cares about **2nd** order belief.



- Suppose, **player 1** only cares about **2nd** order belief, but **player 2** cares about **1st** and **3rd** order belief.



- From now on, we focus on psychological games with **two players** where
  - (a) the utility of both players only depends on **finitely many orders of belief**,
  - (b) the utility of both players only depends on a **summary statistic** of a belief hierarchy, called **higher-order expectations** (Jagau and Perea (2019)), and
  - (c) the utility of both players depends **linearly** on the **belief hierarchy**.
- Such games are called **two-player, belief-finite, expectation-based games**. (Jagau and Perea (2017)).
- Look at all such games where **player 1's utility** depends on the orders of belief in  $N_1$ , and **player 2's utility** depends on the orders of belief in  $N_2$ .

- Look at all such games where **player 1's utility** depends on the orders of belief in  $N_1$ , and **player 2's utility** depends on the orders of belief in  $N_2$ .
- **Mourmans (2019)** has shown the following:
  - **Iterated elimination of strictly dominated choices** characterizes, for **all utility functions consistent with  $(N_1, N_2)$** , the rational choices for player 1 under **common belief in rationality**, if and only if, the **causality diagram** for **player 1** has **no overlapping paths**.
  - The **causality diagram** for **player 1** has **no overlapping paths**, if and only if,
    - (a) both players only care about a **single** order of belief, or
    - (b) **player 1** only cares about a **single, even** order of belief, or
    - (c) **player 2** cares about a **single even** order of belief  $a$ , and **player 1** cares about several **odd orders** of belief, such that for every two  $b, c \in N_1$ , the difference  $c - b$  is **not** a multiple of  $a$ .

## Theorem (When elimination of choices is enough)

Consider all two-player games above where *player 1's utility* depends on the orders of belief in  $N_1$ , and *player 2's utility* depends on the orders of belief in  $N_2$ .

Then, *iterated elimination of strictly dominated choices* characterizes, for all utility functions consistent with  $(N_1, N_2)$ , the rational choices for player 1 under *common belief in rationality*, if and only if,

- (a) both players only care about a *single* order of belief, or
- (b) *player 1* only cares about a *single, even* order of belief, or
- (c) *player 2* cares about a *single even* order of belief  $a$ , and *player 1* cares about several *odd orders* of belief, such that for every two  $b, c \in N_1$ , the difference  $c - b$  is *not* a multiple of  $a$ .

- Based on Mourmans (2019).

# What if Elimination of Choices Does not Work?

- Suppose that player 1's utility depends on orders of belief in  $N_1$ , and player 2's utility depends on orders of belief in  $N_2$ .
- What if (a), (b) and (c) in the previous theorem are all violated?
- Then, iterated elimination of strictly dominated choices may not be enough to find the choices that player 1 can rationally make under common belief in rationality.
- In that case, we must turn to a procedure that eliminates combinations of choices and beliefs.

- Suppose the utilities of both players only depend on first- and second-order beliefs.
- **Idea:** Recursively eliminate pairs of choices and first-order beliefs.
- Formally, a second-order belief  $b_i^2$  for player  $i$  is a probability distribution on  $j$ 's choices and first-order beliefs.
- Hence, a second-order belief  $b_i^2$  induces a first-order belief  $b_i^1$ .
- The utility for player  $i$  can be written as  $u_i(c_i, b_i^2)$ .

## Algorithm (Iterated Elimination of Choices and First-Order Beliefs)

Suppose the utilities of both players only depend on the *first-order* and *second-order beliefs*.

**Step 1.** For every player  $i$ , keep the *choice-belief pairs* in

$$R_i^1 = \{(c_i, b_i^1) \mid c_i \text{ optimal for some } b_i^2 \text{ that induces } b_i^1\}.$$

**Step 2.** For every player  $i$ , keep the *choice-belief pairs* in

$$R_i^2 = \{(c_i, b_i^1) \mid c_i \text{ optimal for some } b_i^2 \in \Delta(R_j^1) \text{ that induces } b_i^1\}.$$

**Step 3.** For every player  $i$ , keep the *choice-belief pairs* in

$$R_i^3 = \{(c_i, b_i^1) \mid c_i \text{ optimal for some } b_i^2 \in \Delta(R_j^2) \text{ that induces } b_i^1\}.$$

And so on.

- Algorithm taken from [Jagau and Perea \(2017\)](#).

## Theorem (Algorithm works)

Suppose the utilities of both players only depend on the *first-order* and *second-order beliefs*.

(1) The choice-belief pairs  $(c_i, b_i^1)$  that are possible for player  $i$  if he expresses *up to  $k$ -fold belief in rationality* are exactly the choice-belief pairs that survive  $k + 1$  rounds of *iterated elimination of choices and first-order beliefs*.





(2) The choice-belief pairs  $(c_i, b_i^1)$  that are possible for player  $i$  if he expresses *common belief in rationality* are exactly the choice-belief pairs that survive *all rounds* of *iterated elimination of choices and first-order beliefs*.





- Based on Jagau and Perea (2017).
- The algorithm is **not** guaranteed to terminate within *finitely many rounds*.



	first-order beliefs		+	second-order beliefs			first-order beliefs		
You	go	stay		You	go	stay	Barbara	go	stay
go	1	0		go	0	1	go	1	0
stay	1	1		stay	1	1	stay	0	1

- **Step 1.**  $R_1^1 = \{(\text{go}, \text{go})\} \cup \{(\text{stay}, b_1^1) \mid b_1^1 \text{ arbitrary}\}.$
- $R_2^1 = \{(\text{go}, b_2^1) \mid b_2^1(\text{go}) \geq \frac{1}{2}\} \cup \{(\text{stay}, b_2^1) \mid b_2^1(\text{stay}) \geq \frac{1}{2}\}.$
- **Step 2.**  $R_1^2 = \{(\text{stay}, b_1^1) \mid b_1^1 \text{ arbitrary}\}.$
- $R_2^2 = \{(\text{go}, b_2^1) \mid b_2^1(\text{go}) \geq \frac{1}{2}\} \cup \{(\text{stay}, b_2^1) \mid b_2^1(\text{stay}) \geq \frac{1}{2}\}.$
- **Step 3.**  $R_1^3 = \{(\text{stay}, b_1^1) \mid b_1^1 \text{ arbitrary}\}.$
- $R_2^3 = \{(\text{stay}, \text{stay})\}.$
- **Step 4.**  $R_1^4 = \{(\text{stay}, \text{stay})\}.$
- $R_2^4 = \{(\text{stay}, \text{stay})\}.$

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