

Tutorial on Epistemic Game Theory

Part II: Dynamic Games

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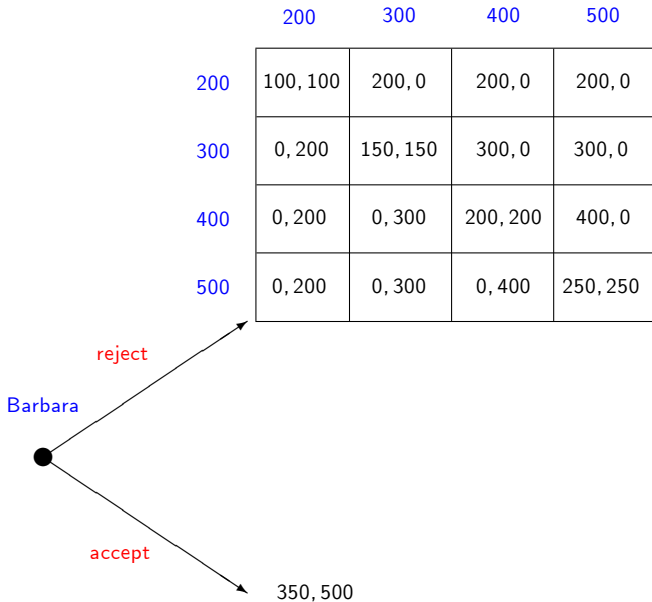
EASSS, June 19, 2018

- In a **dynamic game**, players may choose **one after the other**.
- Before you make a choice, you may (partially) **observe** what your opponents have chosen so far.
- It may happen that your **initial belief** about the opponents' choices will be **contradicted** later on.
- Then you must **revise** your belief about the opponents' choices. But **how?**
- There may be **several** plausible ways to revise your belief.

Example: Painting Chris' house

Story

- Chris is planning to **paint** his house tomorrow, and needs someone to **help** him.
- You and Barbara are both interested. This evening, both of you must come to Chris' house, and whisper a **price** in his ear. Price must be either **200, 300, 400** or **500 euros**.
- Person with **lowest price** will get the job. In case of a **tie**, Chris will toss a coin.
- Before you leave for Chris' house, Barbara gets a **phone call** from a colleague, who asks her to repair his car tomorrow at a price of **350 euros**.
- Barbara must decide whether or not to **accept** the colleague's offer.



	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250

Barbara



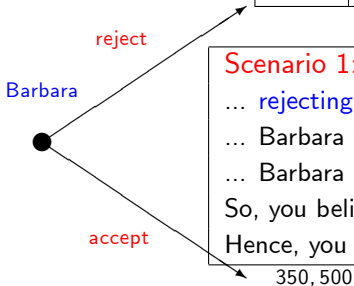
reject

accept

Initially, you believe that Barbara **accepts** the offer.
 What if you observe that she has **rejected** the offer?
 Then, you must **revise** your belief.
 But **how**?

350, 500

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



Scenario 1: You believe that ...
 ... rejecting offer was a **mistake** by Barbara,
 ... Barbara **will choose rationally** from now on
 ... Barbara believes that **you choose rationally**.
 So, you believe that Barbara chooses **200** or **300**.
 Hence, you will choose price **200**.

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250

Barbara

reject



accept

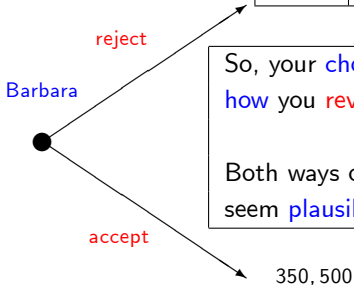
Scenario 2: You believe that ...

... rejecting colleague's offer was a rational choice for Barbara.

So, you believe that Barbara chooses price 400. Hence, you will choose price 300.

350, 500

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



So, your **choice** crucially depends on **how** you **revise your belief** about Barbara.

Both ways of revising your belief seem **plausible**.

- An **information set** for player i is a situation where player i must make a **choice**.
- H_i : collection of **information sets** for player i .
- At an information set h , **more than one** player can make a choice.

Definition (Strategy)

A **strategy** for player i is a function s_i that assigns to each of his information sets $h \in H_i$ some **available choice** $s_i(h)$, **unless** h cannot be **reached** due to some choice $s_i(h')$ at an earlier information set $h' \in H_i$.

In the latter case, **no choice** needs to be specified at h .

- This is **different** from the **classical** definition of a strategy!
- **Rubinstein (1991)** calls this a **plan of action**.

Epistemic model

- In a **dynamic** game, you do not only hold a belief **once**, but you hold a **new, conditional belief** at each of your **information sets**.
- You may **revise** your belief as the game proceeds.
- We would like to model **hierarchies** of **conditional beliefs**.
- That is, we want to model
- the **conditional belief** that player i has, at every information set $h \in H_i$, about his opponents' **strategy choices**,
- the **conditional belief** that player i has, at every information set $h \in H_i$, about the **conditional belief** that opponent j has, at every information set $h' \in H_j$, about the **opponents' strategy choices**,
- and so on.

- Hence, in a **conditional belief hierarchy** you hold, at **each** of your **information sets**, a **conditional belief** about
 - the opponents' **strategy choices**, and
 - the opponents' **conditional belief hierarchies**.
- Like before, call a **(conditional) belief hierarchy** a **type**.
- Then, a **type** for you holds, at **each** of your **information sets**, a **conditional belief** about
 - the opponents' **strategy choices**, and
 - the opponents' **types**.
- This leads to an **epistemic model**.

Definition (Epistemic model)

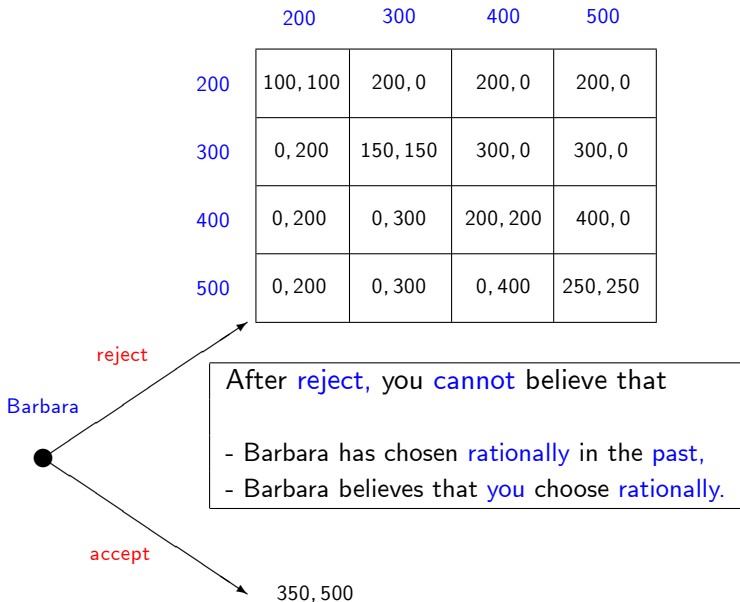
An **epistemic model** for a dynamic game specifies for every player i a set T_i of possible **types**.

Moreover, every type t_i for player i specifies at every information set $h \in H_i$ a **probabilistic belief** $b_i(t_i, h)$ over the set $S_{-i}(h) \times T_{-i}$ of opponents' **strategy-type combinations**.

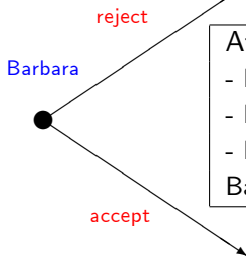
- Based on **Ben-Porath (1997)** and **Battigalli and Siniscalchi (1999)**.
- Here, $b_i(t_i, h)$ represents the **conditional belief** that type t_i holds at information set $h \in H_i$ about the opponents' **strategy-type combinations**.
- From the epistemic model, we can **deduce** the **complete belief hierarchy** for every type.
- A type may **revise his belief** about the opponents' **strategies** during the game.
- A type may also **revise his beliefs** about the opponents' **beliefs** during the game.

Common belief in future rationality

- We would like to extend the idea of **common belief in rationality** to **dynamic games**.
- **Problem:** At certain information sets, it may **not** be possible to believe that
 - opponent has chosen **rationally** in the **past**, or
 - opponent has chosen **rationally** in the **past**, and that the opponent believes that **you** choose **rationally**.
- Hence, **common belief in rationality at all information sets** is in general **not possible**.
- We must therefore look for a **weaker** definition of **common belief in rationality**.



	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



After **reject**, you **can** believe that

- Barbara will choose **rationally** in the **future**,
- Barbara believes that you will choose **rationally**,
- Barbara believes that you believe that Barbara will choose **rationally** in the **future**, etc.

Common belief in future rationality.

350, 500

- You **believe in the opponents' future rationality** if you **always** believe that your opponents will make optimal choices at every **present** and **future** information set.

Definition (Belief in the opponents' rationality)

Type t_i believes at h that opponent j chooses **rationally at h'** if his conditional belief $b_i(t_i, h)$ only assigns **positive probability** to strategy-type pairs (s_j, t_j) for player j where strategy s_j is **optimal** for type t_j **at information set h'** .

Definition (Belief in the opponents' future rationality)

Type t_i believes at h in opponent j 's **future rationality** if t_i believes at h that j chooses rationally at **every** information set h' for player j that **weakly follows** h .

Type t_i **believes in the opponents' future rationality** if t_i believes, at **every** information set h for player i , in **every** opponent's future rationality.

- Based on Perea (2014). Similar ideas appear in Baltag, Smets and Zvesper (2009) and Penta (2015).
- **Common belief in future rationality** means that you **always** believe that
- your opponents will choose **rationally now and in the future**,
- your opponents always believe that their opponents will choose **rationally now and in the future**,
- and so on.

Definition (Common belief in future rationality)

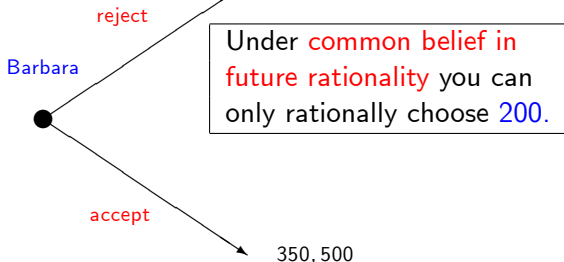
- (1) Type t_i expresses **1-fold belief in future rationality** if t_i believes in the opponents' **future** rationality.
- (2) Type t_i expresses **2-fold belief in future rationality** if t_i assigns, at every information set $h \in H_i$, only **positive probability** to opponents' types that express **1-fold belief in future rationality**.

And so on.

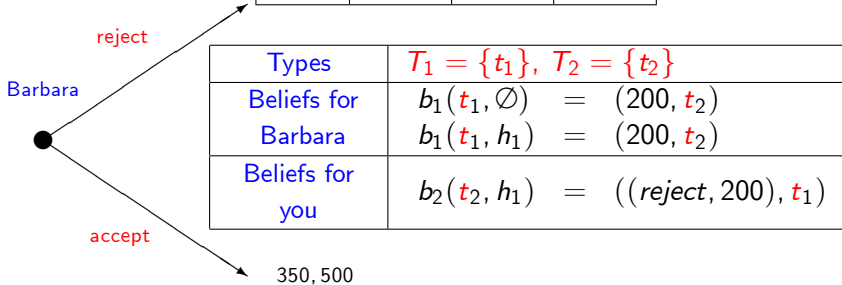
Type t_i expresses **common belief in future rationality** if t_i expresses **k -fold belief** in future rationality for **every** k .

- Based on [Perea \(2014\)](#).
- Similar concepts can be found in [Baltag, Smets and Zvesper \(2009\)](#), [Penta \(2015\)](#), [Dekel, Fudenberg and Levine \(1999, 2002\)](#) and [Asheim and Perea \(2005\)](#).

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



Both types express **common belief in future rationality**.

- We wish to find those **strategies** that you can rationally choose under **common belief in future rationality**.
- Can we construct an **recursive procedure** that helps us find these strategies?
- Yes! It will proceed by **iterately removing strategies** at the various **information sets** in the game.

- Fix an **information set** h for player i .
- The **full decision problem** for player i at h is $\Gamma^0(h) = (S_i(h), S_{-i}(h))$, where $S_i(h)$ is the set of strategies for player i that lead to h , and $S_{-i}(h)$ is the set of opponents' strategy combinations that lead to h .
- A **reduced decision problem** for player i at h is $\Gamma(h) = (D_i(h), D_{-i}(h))$, where $D_i(h) \subseteq S_i(h)$ and $D_{-i}(h) \subseteq S_{-i}(h)$.

Definition (Backward dominance procedure)

Step 1. At every full decision problem $\Gamma^0(h)$, eliminate for every player i those strategies that are strictly dominated at some full decision problem $\Gamma^0(h')$ that weakly follows h and at which player i is active. This leads to reduced decision problems $\Gamma^1(h)$ at every information set h .

Step 2. At every reduced decision problem $\Gamma^1(h)$, eliminate for every player i those strategies that are strictly dominated at some reduced decision problem $\Gamma^1(h')$ that weakly follows h and at which player i is active. This leads to new reduced decision problems $\Gamma^2(h)$ at every information set.

And so on. Continue until no more strategies can be eliminated in this way.

- Based on Perea (2014).

Definition (Backward dominance procedure)

Step 1. At every full decision problem $\Gamma^0(h)$, eliminate for every player i those strategies that are strictly dominated at some full decision problem $\Gamma^0(h')$ that weakly follows h and at which player i is active. This leads to reduced decision problems $\Gamma^1(h)$ at every information set h .

Step 2. At every reduced decision problem $\Gamma^1(h)$, eliminate for every player i those strategies that are strictly dominated at some reduced decision problem $\Gamma^1(h')$ that weakly follows h and at which player i is active. This leads to new reduced decision problems $\Gamma^2(h)$ at every information set.

And so on. Continue until no more strategies can be eliminated in this way.

- The algorithm always stops within finitely many steps.
- At every information set, it yields a nonempty set of strategies for every player.
- The order in which we eliminate strategies – including the order in which we walk through the information sets – is not important for the final result!

Theorem (Perea (2014))

(1) For every $k \geq 1$, the *strategies* that can rationally be chosen by a type that expresses *up to k -fold belief in future rationality* are exactly the strategies that survive the *first $k + 1$ steps* of the *backward dominance procedure* at \emptyset .

(2) The *strategies* that can rationally be chosen by a type that expresses *common belief in future rationality* are exactly the strategies that survive the *full backward dominance procedure* at \emptyset .

- Based on Perea (2014).
- A strategy survives the *first $k + 1$ steps* of the *backward dominance procedure* at \emptyset if it is in the reduced decision problem $\Gamma^{k+1}(\emptyset)$.
- A strategy survives the *full backward dominance procedure* at \emptyset if it is in the reduced decision problem $\Gamma^k(\emptyset)$ for every k .

$\Gamma^0(h_1)$ 200 300 400 500

$(r, 200)$	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
$(r, 500)$	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^0(\emptyset)$	200	300	400	500
$(r, 200)$	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
$(r, 500)$	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250
<i>accept</i>	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

Step 1

$\Gamma^0(h_1)$ 200 300 400 500

$(r, 200)$	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
$(r, 500)$	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^0(\emptyset)$	200	300	400	500
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
$(r, 500)$	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250
accept	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

Step 1

$\Gamma^0(h_1)$ 200 300 400 500

$(r, 200)$	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
$(r, 500)$	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^0(\emptyset)$	200	300	400	500
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
$(r, 500)$	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250
<i>accept</i>	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

Step 1

$\Gamma^0(h_1)$ 200 300 400 500

$(r, 200)$

100, 100

200, 0

200, 0

200, 0

$(r, 300)$

0, 200

150, 150

300, 0

300, 0

$(r, 400)$

0, 200

0, 300

200, 200

400, 0

$(r, 500)$

0, 200

0, 300

0, 400

250, 250

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^0(\emptyset)$

200

300

400

500

$(r, 400)$

0, 200

0, 300

200, 200

400, 0

accept

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

Step 1

$\Gamma^0(h_1)$ 200 300 400 500

$(r, 200)$

100, 100

200, 0

200, 0

200, 0

$(r, 300)$

0, 200

150, 150

300, 0

300, 0

$(r, 400)$

0, 200

0, 300

200, 200

400, 0

reject

B



accept

$\Gamma^0(\emptyset)$

200

300

400

500

$(r, 400)$

0, 200

0, 300

200, 200

400, 0

accept

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

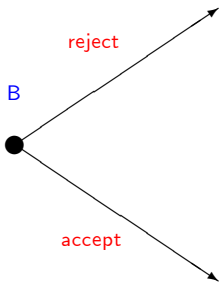
350, 500

350, 500

Step 1

$\Gamma^0(h_1)$ 200 300 400

$(r, 200)$	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	



$\Gamma^0(\emptyset)$	200	300	400	500
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
<i>accept</i>	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

Step 1

$\Gamma^1(h_1)$ 200 300 400

$(r, 200)$	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	
$(r, 300)$	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^1(\emptyset)$	200	300	400
$(r, 400)$	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200
<i>accept</i>	350, 500	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

End of Step 1

$\Gamma^1(h_1)$ 200 300 400

$(r, 200)$

100, 100

200, 0

200, 0

$(r, 300)$

0, 200

150, 150

300, 0

$(r, 400)$

0, 200

0, 300

200, 200

reject

B



accept

$\Gamma^1(\emptyset)$

200

300

400

accept

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

Step 2

$\Gamma^1(h_1)$ 200 300 400

$(r, 200)$

100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	
0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	

$(r, 300)$

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^1(\emptyset)$

200

300

400

accept

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

Step 2

$\Gamma^1(h_1)$ 200 300

$(r, 200)$

100, 100

200, 0

$(r, 300)$

0, 200

150, 150

reject

B

accept

$\Gamma^1(\emptyset)$

200

300

400

accept

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

Step 2

$\Gamma^2(h_1)$ 200 300

$(r, 200)$

100, 100

200, 0

$(r, 300)$

0, 200

150, 150

reject

B



accept

$\Gamma^2(\emptyset)$

200

300

accept

350, 500

350, 500

350, 500

End of Step 2

$\Gamma^2(h_1)$ 200 300

$(r, 200)$

100, 100	200, 0		

reject

B

accept

$\Gamma^2(\emptyset)$	200	300
<i>accept</i>	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

Step 3

$\Gamma^2(h_1)$ 200

$(r, 200)$

100, 100			

reject

B

accept

$\Gamma^2(\emptyset)$	200	300
<i>accept</i>	350, 500	350, 500

350, 500

Step 3

$\Gamma^3(h_1)$ 200

$(r, 200)$

100, 100			

B

reject

accept

$\Gamma^3(\emptyset)$

200

accept

350, 500

350, 500

End of procedure

Backward induction

- For dynamic games with **perfect information**, the **backward dominance procedure** reduces to a very **simple** procedure called **backward induction**.

Definition (Game with perfect information)

A dynamic game is with **perfect information** if at every information set there is only **one active player**, and this player always **knows** exactly what choices have been made by his opponents in the **past**.

Theorem (Common belief in future rationality leads to backward induction)

*Consider a dynamic game with **perfect information**.*

*Then, the strategies that can rationally be chosen under **common belief in future rationality** are exactly the **backward induction strategies**.*

Theorem (Common belief in future rationality leads to backward induction)

Consider a dynamic game with *perfect information*.

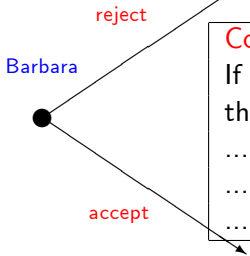
Then, the strategies that can rationally be chosen under *common belief in future rationality* are exactly the *backward induction strategies*.

- Hence, *common belief in future rationality* can be viewed as an *epistemic foundation* for *backward induction*.
- Other epistemic foundations for backward induction: *Aumann (1995)*, *Samet (1996)*, *Stalnaker (1996, 1998)*, *Balkenborg and Winter (1997)*, *Asheim (2002)*, *Quesada (2002, 2003)*, *Clausing (2003, 2004)*, *Feinberg (2005)*.
- See *Perea (2007)* for an *overview*.

Strong belief in the opponents' rationality

- So far, we have discussed the concept of **common belief in future rationality**.
- **Main idea:** Whatever you observe in the game, you **always** believe that your opponents will choose **rationally from now on**.
- **Common belief** in this type of reasoning leads to **common belief in future rationality**.
- It may **not** be the **only plausible way** of reasoning in a dynamic game.

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



Common belief in future rationality:

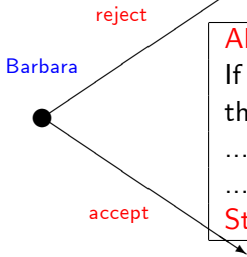
If you observe that Barbara has **rejected** offer, then you believe that

- ... rejecting offer was a **mistake**,
- ... Barbara chooses **rationally from now on**
- ... Barbara believes that you choose **rationally**.

350, 500

You will choose price **200**.

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250



Alternative way of reasoning:

If you observe that Barbara has **rejected** offer, then you believe that

... **rejecting** offer is **part of a rational strategy**,
 ... Barbara will choose price **400**.

Strong belief in Barbara's rationality.

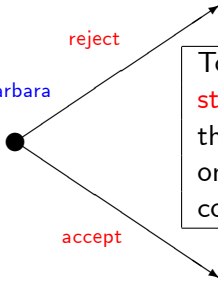
350, 500

You will choose price **300**.

- Strong belief in the opponents' rationality:
- If at information set $h \in H_i$, it is possible for player i to believe that each of his opponents is implementing a rational strategy,
- then player i must believe at h that each of his opponents is implementing a rational strategy.
- Like belief in the opponents' future rationality, this can be formally defined within an epistemic model.
- To make this possible, the epistemic model must contain sufficiently many types of a certain kind.

	200	300	400	500
200	100, 100	200, 0	200, 0	200, 0
300	0, 200	150, 150	300, 0	300, 0
400	0, 200	0, 300	200, 200	400, 0
500	0, 200	0, 300	0, 400	250, 250

Barbara



To formally define
strong belief in Barbara's rationality
 the epistemic model must contain **at least**
 one type for Barbara for which **rejecting**
 colleague's offer is **optimal**.

350, 500

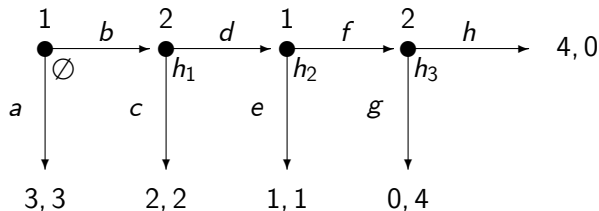
- By **iterating** the condition of **strong belief in the opponents' rationality**, we arrive at **common strong belief in rationality**.
- Proposed by **Battigalli and Siniscalchi (2002)**.
- This is a **forward induction concept**: Whenever possible, you try to **explain** the past choices made by your opponent.
- In contrast to **common belief in future rationality**, which is a **backward induction concept**: You **ignore** the opponent's past choices, and concentrate solely on the **game that lies ahead**.
- **Battigalli and Siniscalchi (2002)** show that **common strong belief in rationality** characterizes the concept of **extensive-form rationalizability** (Pearce (1984), Battigalli (1997)).

- Shimoji and Watson (1998) proposed the **iterated conditional dominance procedure**.
- It yields exactly those strategies that can rationally be chosen under **common strong belief in rationality**.
- Procedure is similar in flavor to the **backward dominance procedure**.

Comparison with common belief in future rationality

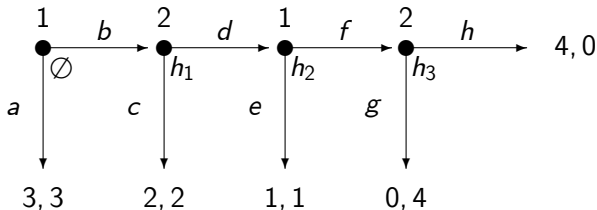
- Common strong belief in rationality and common belief in future rationality represent completely different lines of reasoning.
- The example “Painting Chris’ house” has shown that in terms of strategies selected, there is no logical relationship between the two concepts. Both concepts lead to a unique, yet different, strategy choice for you.
- However, both concepts lead to the same outcome in that example, namely that Barbara accepts the colleague’s offer at the beginning.
- What about dynamic games with perfect information?

Example: Centipede game.



Common belief in future rationality: Do backward induction.

- At h_3 , player 2's backward induction choice is g .
- At h_2 , player 1's backward induction choice is e .
- At h_1 , player 2's backward induction choice is c .
- At \emptyset , player 1's backward induction choice is a .
- Hence, **common belief in future rationality** uniquely selects strategy c for player 2.
- Induced outcome is a .



- **Common strong belief in rationality:**
- At h_1 , player 2 must believe that player 1 is choosing a **rational** strategy.
- Hence, at h_1 player 2 must believe that player 1 is implementing the strategy (b, f) .
- But then, the unique **optimal** strategy for player 2 is (d, g) .
- Hence, **common strong belief in rationality** uniquely selects the strategy (d, g) for player 2.
- Induced outcome is a .

Theorem (Outcomes under common strong belief in rationality and common belief in future rationality)

Every outcome that is possible under common strong belief in rationality, is also possible under common belief in future rationality.

- A proof can be found in [Perea \(2017\)](#).
- This result does **not** hold for [strategies](#).

Theorem (Outcomes under common strong belief in rationality and common belief in future rationality)

Every *outcome* that is *possible* under *common strong belief in rationality*, is *also* possible under *common belief in future rationality*.

- Remember that in games with *perfect information*, *common belief in future rationality* leads to the *backward induction strategies*, and hence to the *backward induction outcomes*.
- In *generic* games with perfect information, the backward induction outcome is *unique*.

Corollary (Battigalli's Theorem)






Consider a generic dynamic game with *perfect information*. Then, the only *outcome* that is possible under *common strong belief in rationality* is the *backward induction outcome*.







- Result does *not* hold for *strategies*.







Corollary (Battigalli's Theorem)







Consider a generic dynamic game with *perfect information*. Then, the only *outcome* that is possible under *common strong belief in rationality* is the *backward induction outcome*.








- This result was first shown by Battigalli (1997).
- Other proofs can be found in Chen and Micali (2013), Heifetz and Perea (2015), Catonini (2017) and Perea (2018).

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