

# Behavior, Conflict and... Games???

Dr Neil T. N. Ferguson

ISDC – International Security and Development Center

[ferguson@isdc.org](mailto:ferguson@isdc.org)

Measuring Violent Conflict in Micro-Level Surveys Workshop

Perugia, Italy – 19 March 2018

Do you consider yourself to be  
an altruistic person?

On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is not at all and 10 is absolutely):

How altruistic are you?

In the last week, how many of the following have you done?

- Donated money to charity
- Engaged in work without monetary reimbursement
- Given away your umbrella on a rainy day
- Helped a stranger physically struggling (e.g. heavy suitcase)
- Given up your seat on public transport
- Joined an organ donor register
- Put coins into a parking meter that was about to expire
- Given someone a gift (but not for birthday / other holiday)
- Picked up litter in a public place
- Let someone with fewer things go in front of you in a line

# How many of these things have you ever done?

- Given away every single penny of your money to philanthropic causes?
- Given up some of the space in your home to strangers in need of accommodation?
- Given an exorbitant tip to waiting staff in a restaurant?
- Invented a vaccine but didn't patent it, at the opportunity cost of billions of dollars foregone?

How many of these things have you ever done?

1. Attended a live sporting event of any sport and any sporting team
2. Attended a live music event or concert of any musician, group or orchestra
3. Climbed a mountain to its highest peak
4. Gone on holiday to somewhere warm, with a beach

# How many of these things have you ever done?

1. Attended a live sporting event of any sport and any sporting team
2. Attended a live music event or concert of any musician, group or orchestra
3. Watched a film, TV series or other form of media via an unpaid online stream or download from an unofficial source
4. Climbed a mountain to its highest peak
5. Gone on holiday to somewhere warm, with a beach





# How many of these things have you ever done?

- Right hand side:

1. Attended a live sporting event of any sport and any sporting team
2. Attended a live music event or concert of any musician, group or orchestra
3. Climbed a mountain to its highest peak
4. Gone on holiday to somewhere warm, with a beach

- Left hand side:

1. Attended a live sporting event of any sport and any sporting team
2. Attended a live music event or concert of any musician, group or orchestra
3. Watched a film, TV series or other form of media via an unpaid online stream or download from an unofficial source
4. Climbed a mountain to its highest peak
5. Gone on holiday to somewhere warm, with a beach

# Social Desirability Bias

“...a type of response that is the tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably. It can take the form of over-reporting "good behaviour" or under-reporting "bad," or undesirable behaviour.”

- There is...

a “unit of analysis” problem: we are interested in understanding the individual person’s decision to rebel or commit a crime, or perhaps a group’s ability to recruit, but most of the evidence is at a regional or national level.

- Blattman and Ralston (2015)

Question 1:

You are given an endowment of €100.

You are asked to split this €100 between yourself and another person who is chosen at random from this in this room. Whatever you keep is yours. Whatever you give away is given to your randomly ascribed partner.

How much would you like to keep?

## Question 2:

You are given an endowment of €100.

You are asked to split this €100 between yourself and another person who is chosen at random from this in this room. Whatever you keep is yours. Whatever you give away is given to your randomly ascribed partner.

How much would you like to keep?

# Learning

“...a situation where a respondent’s choice in a behavioural experiment is informed by his or her experiences learned previously completing that, or other, experiments.”

## Question 3:

You play this game with a partner. Your partner is the person in your group whose number is one higher than your own.

You are given an endowment of €100. You can give any amount of this €100 to a public good. Whatever you do not give to the public good is yours to keep. Whatever you give to the public good is multiplied by 1.5 and shared equally between you and your partner. You will be given no information on how your partner chooses; nor will your partner be given information on how you choose.

How much would you like to give to the public good?

## Question 4:

You play this game with a partner. Your partner is randomly chosen from those in other groups.

You are given an endowment of €100. You can give any amount of this €100 to a public good. Whatever you do not give to the public good is yours to keep.

Whatever you give to the public good is multiplied by 1.5 and shared equally between you and your partner. You will be given no information on how your partner chooses; nor will your partner be given information on how you choose.

You will be given no information on how your partner chooses; nor will your partner be given information on how you choose.

How much would you like to give to the public good?



## Question 5:

You play this game with a partner. If your group begins with a consonant, your partner is randomly selected from a group beginning with a vowel. If your group begins with a vowel, your partner is randomly selected from a group beginning with a consonant.

You are given an endowment of €100. You can give any amount of this €100 to a public good. Whatever you do not give to the public good is yours to keep. Whatever you give to the public good is multiplied by 1.5 and shared equally between you and your partner. You will be given no information on how your partner chooses; nor will your partner be given information on how you choose. You will be given no information on how your partner chooses; nor will your partner be given information on how you choose.

How much would you like to give to the public good?

## Three Questions

1. When did you choose to give more? In answer to Question 3 or Question 4?
2. When did you choose to give more? In answer to Question 4 or Question 5?
3. Why do you think you made this decision in the first instance? And why in the second?
4. What might these decisions say about behavioural games?

# Interviewer Demand Effect

“...a situation where a respondent’s choice in a behavioural experiment is informed by his or her expectation of the purpose of the experiment, by the social style and personality of the interviewer, or some combination of the two.”

# Question 7:

You have an endowment of €100. You must choose how much of this €100 to keep and how much to offer your partner. Your partner is randomly selected from others in the room.

Upon receipt of your offer, your partner can make three choices.

- 1) Accepts your offer
- 2) Proposes a counter-offer
- 3) Ends the game

If your partner chooses Option 1, you both receive a payoff as per your decision. If your partner chooses Option 2, the endowment is reduced by 10% and your partner is asked to make the same decision you have just made. You must then choose from the three available options. If your partner chooses Option 3, then the game ends and you both receive a payoff of zero.

How much would you like to offer your partner in the first round of the game?

## Two Questions:

1. As individuals, did you understand this game?  
If not, could someone else in your group clarify?
2. Imagine you are homoeconomicus: what is the optimal offer in the first round?

# Complexity

“...a situation that arises when respondents do not understand the game they are asked to play. Responses, consequently, are little better than random.”

## Question 8:

You and a partner both receive an endowment of €100. Your partner is randomly selected from all other individuals in this room.

You have an option to destroy up to €40 of your opponent's endowment in €2 units but you do not have to destroy any part.

Each €2 of your opponent's endowment you choose to destroy costs you €5. Whatever you do not spend on destroying your opponent's endowment you can keep for yourself, minus the amount of your endowment your opponent chooses to destroy.

How much of your opponent's endowment would you like to destroy?

## Three Questions:

1. What do you think the purpose of this game was? What does it measure?
2. How do you think behaviours in this game might link to conflict?
3. How might choices in this game differ from conflict?



## Key Takeaways

- Behavioural games can overcome some of the problem associated with collecting survey data
  - ...but are also no “one-size-fits-all” standard
- Games should, therefore, be viewed as complements to, not substitutions of, surveys
  - Indeed, field experiments can easily be incorporated into surveys
- Aspects of these games can (easily) relate to conflict but this must be linked to (expected) fracture lines

## Key Takeaways

- More general behaviours might be linked to willingness / experience of engaging in violence
  - ...but requires novel and interesting baseline work to test these key relationships
  - ...and this comes with the earlier caveat about how to measure willingness / experience