

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014, I walked into one of my supervisors' office with a few (very confused) ideas about continuing my studies by joining a Ph.D programme.

They listened carefully to my doubts and questions and then presented me with a choice. They offered me ten cigarettes¹, asking me to divide them with an anonymous partner.

Maybe it was because I wanted to make a good impression on them by behaving nicely, or maybe it was because I did not smoke at that time. In any case, I decided to give away all the ten cigarettes at once.

This was my first encounter with the Dictator Game. In that very moment, I did not know that the situation was typical of what I would have to do for my research. That evening I walked away with no cigarettes and hopes of starting a Ph.D. in the following year.

The present work is the result of that afternoon in June 2014. During the course of my Ph.D., I had the chance of getting involved with CSCC research and of using data collected for the GRIP program, a rehabilitation program for prisoners in two Californian prisons. The research was conducted using a questionnaire based on behavioural game theory. As will be extensively discussed below, subjects had to make choices in six situations (the Dictator Game, the Ultimatum Game, the Trust Game, the Reciprocity Game, the Sincerity Game and one Inter-temporal Discount Measure task) and then explain some of their choices in words.

This thesis falls in-between a theoretical and an empirical work. More specifically, it aims at addressing two main research questions: do motivations mentioned by the subjects in their answers correspond to the classical interpretation of choices in behavioural game theory? Does the GRIP program have an effect on how subjects choose and explain their choices?

¹ At that time the CSCC research centre was conducting research on rehabilitation programs for drug addicted subjects, and the reward chosen for the experiment were cigarettes. My supervisors showed me the questionnaire used in that specific research.

This work is divided into two parts. The first includes chapters 1 to 3 and aims at a general theoretical framework for the research. Chapter 1 will give a general overview of behavioural game theory and discusses in depth all six situations in which subjects were asked to make decisions, namely: the Ultimatum Game, the Dictator Game, the Trust/Reciprocity Game, the Inter-temporal Discount Rate Measures task and the Sincerity Game.

For each situation, the general theory, the sub-game Perfect Equilibrium and the experimental results will be discussed with the interpretation that authors generally give. Relevant issues will be also presented which may differ from the different situations. In the case of the Ultimatum Game, game structure variation will be analysed; in the Dictator Game, the Hawthorne effect and property rights will be dealt with; in the Trust Game, the possibility will be considered that the game could elicit different social preferences while for the Inter-temporal Discount Measures task measurement issues and impulsivity will be discussed. Chapter 2 gives a general overview of experimental economics. First, possible methods to study social preferences used in different disciplines will be looked at and then we will move on to experiments, as is the practice in economics. Some issues when making experiments: instructions, deception and incentives will then be discussed. Chapter 3 will look at the context and methodology of experiments. First, the methodology and techniques of the GRIP program will be presented. The methodology of the research will then be discussed, and includes experimental design, subject pool and questionnaire structure.

The second part of the work includes Chapters 4 to 9 and presents the results of the analysis. Chapter 4 will discuss the methodology of the analysis while Chapters 5 to 8 will present the results of the four games analysed (Dictator Game, Ultimatum Game, Trust Game and Reciprocity Game). Chapter 9 includes conclusive remarks and tentative answers to the two research questions.