

# Ellipsis and the QuD: evidence from sluicing with nominal antecedents

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(slides available at <http://tiny.cc/poppels-camp>)

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- **Big question**: what aspects of the context make ellipsis possible?
- This talk focuses on **"sluicing:"** ellipsis of clauses that are embedded under interrogative wh-phrases, as shown in (1).



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- **QuD hypothesis:** questions can be sluiced iff they correspond to a salient QuD (AnderBois, 2014; Barros, 2014; Ginzburg & Sag, 2000)

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Interim summary:

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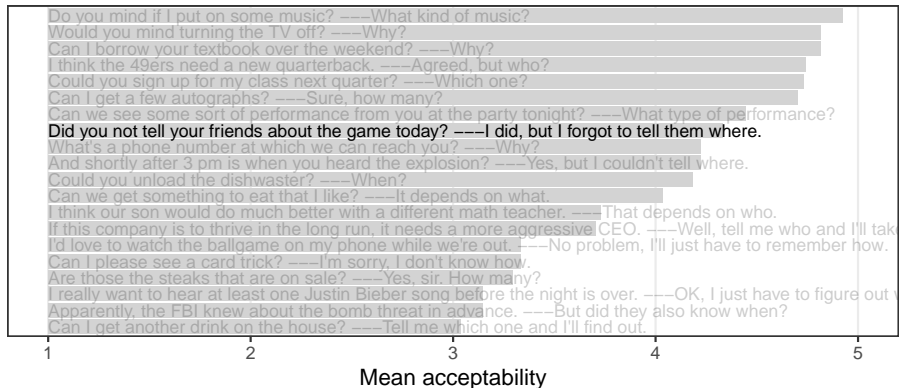
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## This talk: sluicing with **nominal antecedents**

- Experiment 1: acceptability
- Experiment 2: 'QuD availability'
- Experiment 3: acceptability again
- **Preview**: our results raise novel challenges for both Identity and QuD theories

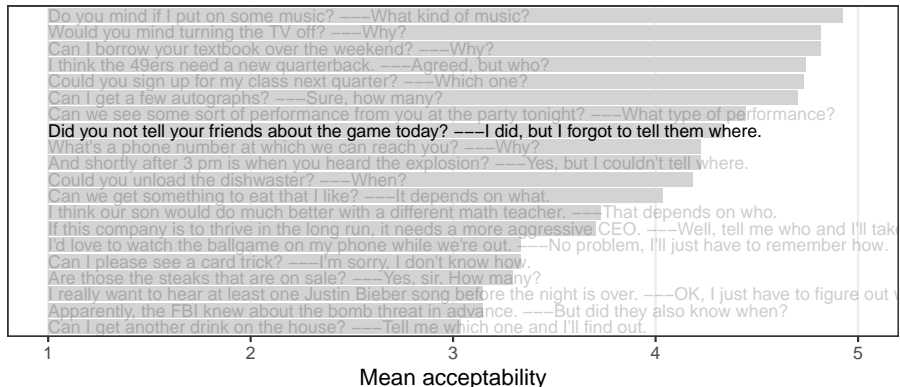
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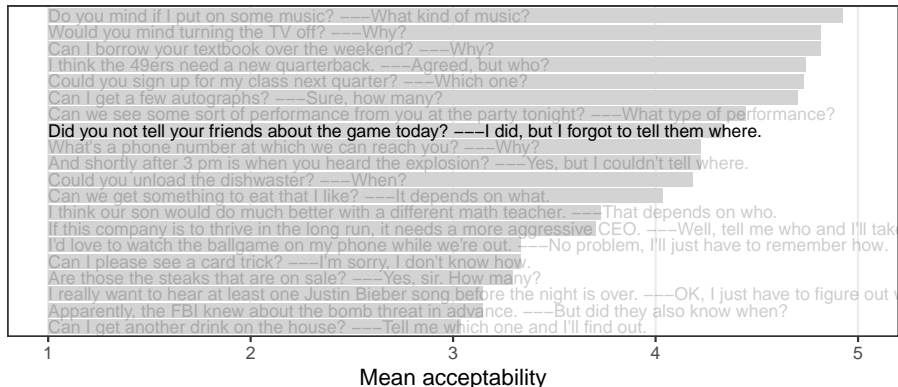


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  - Only previous mention (that I am aware of): Beecher (2007).
  - Nominal-antecedent VP-ellipsis exhibits QUD effects (Miller & Hemforth, 2014):
- (5) Mubarak's survival is impossible to predict and, even if he does, his plan to make his son his heir apparent is now in serious jeopardy. [COCA: CBS Evening News]

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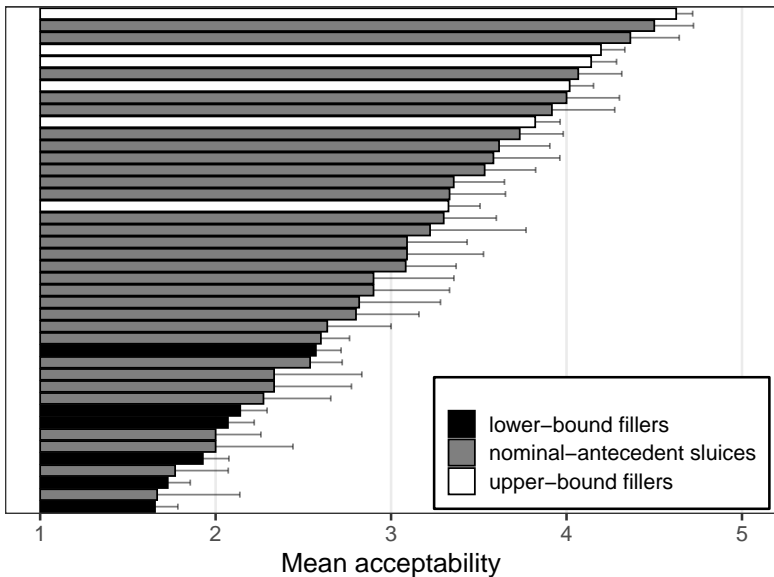
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- 30 nominal-antecedents sluices like (6): 6 contexts, 5 wh-phrases.
- 63 participants, 12 fillers (2:1 ratio)



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- QUD theories: sluicing depends on the availability of a relevant Question under Discussion (QUD) (AnderBois, 2014; Barros, 2014; Roberts, 2012)
- Plan for Expt 2:
  - Measure predictability of sluiced question (QUD)
  - Check if this 'QUD availability' measure predicts acceptability

## Expt 2: passage-completion task

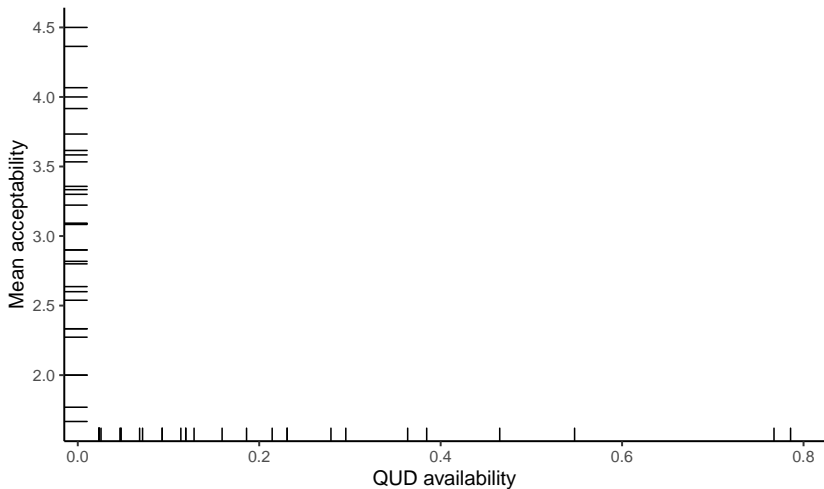
*(Instructions: carefully read the passage below, carefully read all continuations, and then choose the continuation you find most likely.)*

**"A: I can't see your parents in the audience. Did you not tell them about your performance today? B: I did, but I forgot to tell them...**

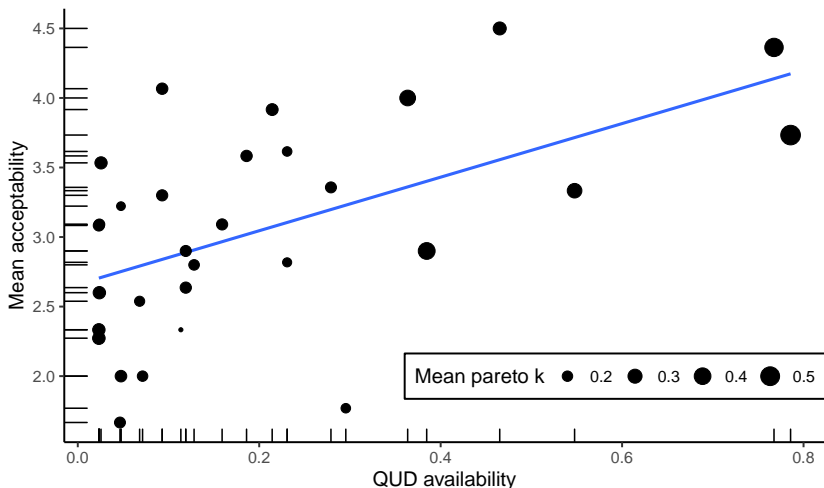
1. ...where I was performing."
2. ...how long it would last."
3. ...when it was going to start."
4. ...why they should be in the audience."
5. ...what it was about."

- Answer choices: modal response in separate norming experiment in which participants paraphrased the ellipsis site

# Expt 2: Results



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- Frequentist analysis:  $\beta = 1.826$ ,  $p = 0.037$
- Bayesian analysis:  $P(\beta > 0) = 0.983$

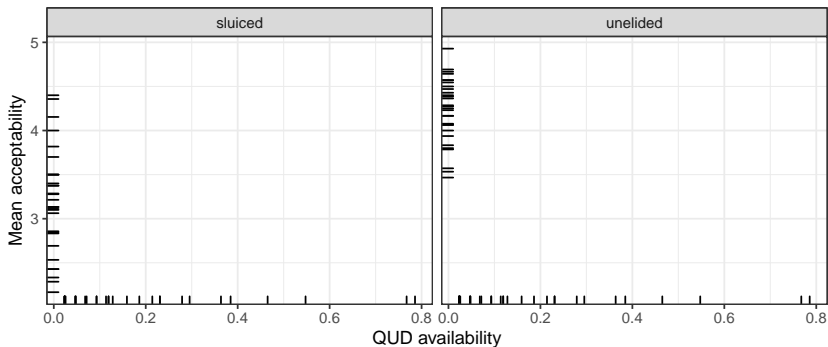


## Expt 3: revisiting acceptability

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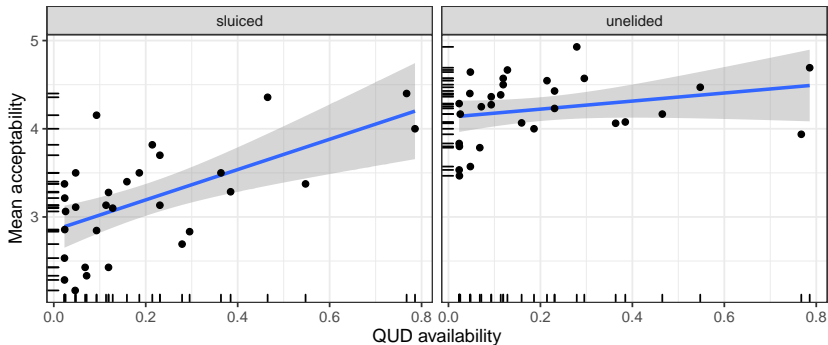
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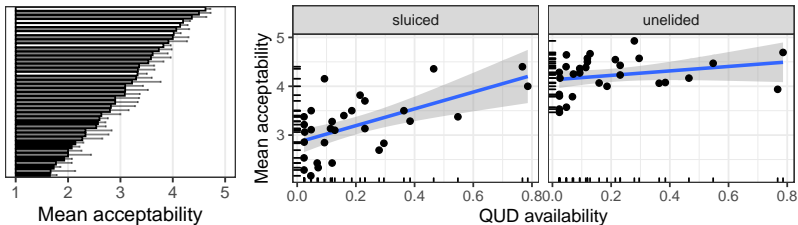
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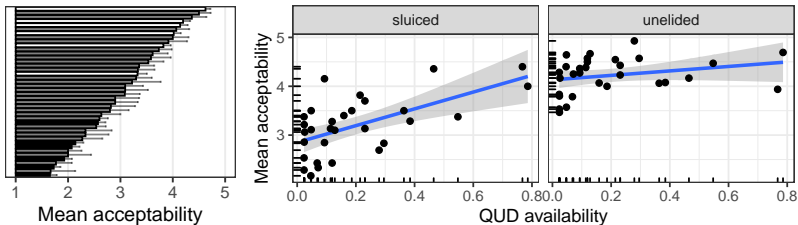
- Replication of QUD effect:  $P(\beta > 0) = 0.998$
- Interaction not significant:  $P(\beta < 0) = 0.837$
- No evidence that QUD effect is ellipsis-specific!

# Discussion



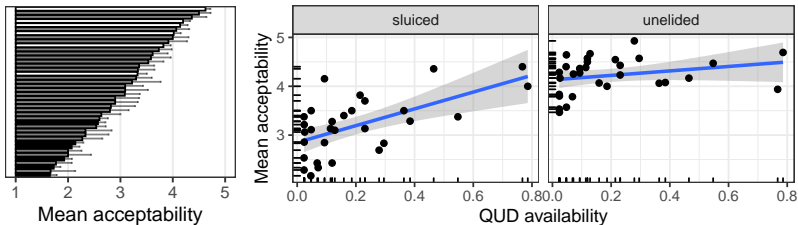
- Expt 1:
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- **Expts 2 & 3:**
  - Some of the variance is due to variation in 'QUD availability'.
  - However, QUD effect is not specific to ellipsis.
- **Bottom line:** something beyond predictability is constraining ellipsis.

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⇒ Even though a perfectly coherent continuation exists for (8-b), sluicing appears to point us back to the antecedent (i.e., the performance).

Thank you!

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