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Experienced effort depends on evaluation mode

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Abstract

Our understanding of effort perception is limited. Performance (e.g., response time; accuracy) is typically used as one way to assess effort in cognitive tasks; however, performance can be readily dissociated from subjective ratings of effort. One potential contribution to effort ratings that could lead to such dissociations is the judgment context. We tested this notion using a recently reported dissociation between performance and subjective effort in combination with a manipulation of evaluation mode (i.e., joint versus separate evaluation). Participants were asked to silently read a display of words as quickly as possible, then provide the level of effort experienced. Results demonstrate that evaluation mode can have a marked effect on retrospective judgments of effort. Implications are discussed.