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To organize or not to organize? Examining biases in search strategies using Lego building blocks

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Abstract: A widely-accepted notion is that organization can improve task performance and generally allow us to better function within a given task environment (Kirsh, 1995; 1996). However, it remains unclear the extent to which individuals believe that organization will help to improve task performance when they are asked to carry out mundane tasks in the real world. To examine this, individuals were asked to search through a pile of Lego building blocks for specific pieces. Prior to the search task, they were asked their preferred strategy for this task (e.g., organizing vs. not organizing the Lego pile prior to search) and to estimate how much time and effort each strategy would take for task completion. While both strategies were comparable in terms of objective task completion time and subjective time and effort estimations, participants were overwhelmingly biased against choosing the organization strategy. Implications for the current study will be discussed.