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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 41(0)

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Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed

The Influence of Implicit Normative Commitments in Decision-Making

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Abstract

We approach some decisions (e.g., choosing an investment plan) by deliberating about our options, and others (e.g., choosing dessert) by relying on intuition. In a study with 259 participants evaluating hypothetical decisions, we investigate factors that predict whether deliberation and/or intuition is judged appropriate. We find that participants are more inclined to endorse deliberation, and less inclined to endorse intuition, when they believe the means and ends involved in a decision can be objectively evaluated (consistent with Inbar, Cone, & Gilovich, 2010). We also find that violations of coherence (i.e., endorsing contradictory beliefs about a decision) predict higher ratings for intuition, as does belief that a given decision reflects one's identity. These findings hold after adjusting for perceived effort, importance, and stakes. We suggest that deliberation is judged appropriate when people believe that norms governing rational action apply, and we consider the implications for real-world decision-making.