

Open-label choice blindness: Exploring the mechanism underlying auto-suggestion

ABSTRACT:

Background

Choice blindness, the failure to detect that one's selected choice has been replaced with an alternative, can be used to change well-entrenched attitudes with little resistance. This paradigm leverages confabulation, in which people generate post-hoc rationalisations after receiving false feedback about their choice.

Aims

First, we tested the generalisation of attitude changes after choice blindness manipulations. Second, we tested whether deception is necessary to cause these attitude changes.

Method

A total of 147 students completed measures of experiential avoidance (a risk factor for depression), depressive symptoms, and life satisfaction. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Control participants were asked to explain their agreement with three of their experiential avoidance questionnaire items; choice blindness participants explained items that were covertly manipulated to indicate less agreement, and non-deceptive choice blindness participants explained these manipulated items while knowing that they were manipulated. All participants then completed the same measures one week later.

Results

Both choice blindness conditions reduced agreement with the manipulated experiential avoidance items, showing that deception is not necessary for this kind of attitude change. These changes did not generalise to the overall experiential avoidance score, nor to related constructs of depression or life satisfaction.

Conclusions

Attitude changes following choice blindness interventions may leverage at least two mechanisms: one due to the process of generating confabulations, which may resemble self-suggestion, and one due to the belief that the manipulated feedback is one's own.

Keywords

Choice blindness, Confabulation, Suggestion, Depression

Published Work:

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