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## **EXPLORING THE MECHANISM OF CHOICE BLINDNESS: GENERALISATION OF EFFECTS AND NECESSITY OF DECEPTION**

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**Background:** *Choice blindness* (CB) — failing to detect that one's selected choice has been replaced by an alternative — can change attitudes with little resistance. It has been demonstrated across consumer, financial, political, and even moral domains. Studies have shown that *confabulation*, in which participants attempt to rationalise why they made the manipulated choice, is partly responsible for the ability of CB to shift attitudes. However, the mechanism responsible for this attitude change remains unclear.

**Aims:** Here, we assessed its mechanism by testing whether the deceptive manipulation is necessary for choice blindness to change beliefs. We had two aims: first, to test the necessity of deception in CB, and second, to test how the manipulated attitudes may generalize to related domains.

**Method:** In this preregistered study, 145 students completed baseline questionnaires and then explained their answers to three items about experiential avoidance (the tendency to avoid negative experiences even though they may be useful). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Control participants explained their own original responses, CB participants explained responses that we covertly modified to indicate less experiential avoidance, and no-deception participants knowingly explained hypothetical responses that were similarly modified.

**Results:** Most participants (80%) did not notice the CB manipulation. Both of the experimental conditions reported lower experiential avoidance beliefs on the manipulated items one week later, but these results did not generalise to related outcomes, including other items on the same scale and related constructs such as life satisfaction and depression. We also did not find large differences between the CB condition and its non-deceptive counterpart.

**Conclusions:** Given these results, we propose that two separate mechanisms may be responsible for CB-induced attitude change: one due to the belief that the false feedback is one's own (choice-induced preference change) and one due to the process of explaining the feedback whether or not it is one's own (confabulation). Our results show that CB can change specific maladaptive beliefs and that using a non-deceptive version of the paradigm can produce similarly positive changes. Because deception is not needed, CB may have practical or clinical value to change beliefs.

**Keywords:** Suggestion, Attitude change, Choice blindness, Deception

### **Publications:**

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