

Feedback on the Restaurant Menu Study

What are we trying to learn?

The experiment in which you just participated was designed to help us learn about how people coordinate unconscious goals in an interpersonal setting. Previous research has found that goals can be activated and carried out unconsciously (e.g., Bargh et al., 1999). When a person has two or more goals at the same time, they tend to select means of goal pursuit that serve both of the goals over options that serve only one of the goals, even when the goals are unconscious (Chun et al., 2011; Kopetz et al., 2011; Kruglanski et al., 2013; Orehek et al., 2012; Orehek & Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, in press). However, it is not yet known whether two people with unconscious goals are able to jointly decide on a means that satisfies their two different goals in the way that individuals are able to do by themselves.

Why is this important?

In daily life, people often face the challenge of making decisions jointly with others in their social environments. For example, a pair of friends might need to decide on an activity to do together; a romantic couple might need to decide where to live.

Understanding how people are able to communicate about their goals and make joint decisions, even when these goals are operating below the level of conscious awareness, will provide insight into how people can manage multiple, often differing goals in ways that produce decisions that both people are satisfied with.

What are our hypotheses?

We predict that when two people share the same goal (for example, a health goal) that they will come to a quick decision on a means of pursuing that goal (for example, selecting a healthy food option). However, when people have different goals (for example, one person has a health goal and the other person has a food enjoyment goal), the pair will compromise on a mean that serves both goals (for example, by selecting a food that is somewhat healthy but also somewhat tasty).

How did this study relate to unconscious goal pursuit?

You and your partner in the study were each asked to unscramble a series of sentences. For some participants, some of these sentences contained words related to healthy eating (e.g., diet), which was intended to induce a healthy eating goal. For other participants, some of these sentences contained words related to food enjoyment (e.g., delicious), which was intended to induce a food enjoyment goal. In some pairs of participants, each person was given the same goal, and in other pairs of participants each person was given a different goal.

You and your partner were then asked to work together to make a selection from a restaurant menu. We predicted that participants with the same goal (e.g., both health or both enjoyment) would select foods consistent with that category (e.g., a low calorie option in the health condition and a tasty option in the enjoyment condition). We predicted that participants in the mismatched condition (where one person has a health goal and the other person has an enjoyment goal) would compromise and select items that satisfy both goals to some extent. We were also interested in how making the food selection under each of these conditions would affect participants' feelings about the interaction and about their partner.

Where can I learn more?

The following articles provide a general overview of relevant research:

Orehek, E. & Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, A. (in press). Sequential and concurrent strategies of multiple goal pursuit. *Review of General Psychology*.

Kruglanski, A. W., Kopetz, C., Belanger, J. J., Chun, W. Y., Orehek, E., & Fishbach, A. (2013). Features of multifinality. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 17, 22-39.

What if I have questions later or if I would like to withdraw from this study?

Please feel free to contact Dr. Edward Orehek (orehek@pitt.edu) or Dr. Amanda Forest (forest@pitt.edu).

At this point, you can decide to withdraw your participation from this study without losing the benefit (i.e., one credit toward completing your Introduction to Psychology course) you were promised.

Thank you very much for participating in our experiment – your help was valuable and is highly appreciated!

Please note, it is important that you do not share this form or its contents with other students (even in later semesters). If our hypotheses were known to participants beforehand, they might approach the task differently, which might therefore compromise the experiment.