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Unconscious Thought: Biased by Negative Framing?

Individuals chose best options from complex information more often if they are distracted from consciously thinking about that information, and have an evaluation goal versus none (Bos et al., 2008). However, people heavily weight negative information, and are risk averse. Thus, this effect might exaggerate when people must choose a worst option, or disappear because the worst-framing serves as an implicit processing goal. Testing these possibilities, participants randomly received a goal to choose the best or worst roommate, then information regarding three potential roommates, the best (worst) associated with mostly positive (negative) traits and the third with balanced traits. Next, participants' goal was satisfied or not via random assignment before they engaged in a distraction task, then reported their choices. Logistic regression revealed participants with a processing goal during the distraction (vs. not) chose the correct option significantly more often, but only when asked to choose the best roommate.