

## Introduction to Special Issue: Emotion and Decision Making

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It is a perennial debate in the social sciences: Are emotions the bane of optimal behavior, or do emotions contribute invaluable to the process of decision making to improve human outcomes? The debate continues, in part because both sides can point to rigorous data and important theories that support their claims. The articles in this special issue advance both sides of that debate and, in doing so, help point the way toward a more integrative solution. Most likely there will not be a simple answer in the form of “Emotions always impair decision making.” Instead, social scientists can begin to ask in what ways emotions sometimes impair decision making — and simultaneously explore how emotions are also valuable, possibly essential aids to some decision making processes.

Recent decades have seen the sciences of emotion and decision making bloom. This burgeoning interest is due, in part, to the widespread importance of understanding the combination of emotions and decision making in numerous fields, including psychology, economics, and marketing. Yet, much of the research on emotion and decision making had until late studied them separately.

The papers in this special issue approach the topics of emotion and decision making as a set, with an eye toward integrating the role of emotion in decision making or the emotional consequences of decision making. The range of topics that served as contexts in which to investigate the interplay between decision making and emotion was surprisingly large. For instance, Finkel’s paper highlights the centrality

of emotion in propelling interpersonal violence, especially when strong emotions combine with weak self-control abilities. Conversely, Loewenstein and Small examine the beneficial role of feelings in producing charitable acts. Their theory focuses on sympathy and cognitive rationalizations in producing prosocial acts. Another paper also examined morality in light of emotion and cognition, and in doing so Monin, Beer, and Pizzaro clarify the otherwise muddy field of moral decisions. Monin et al. propose a new dichotomy of moral judgments that points to conditions under which emotion versus cognition will determine moralistic actions and decisions.

Cultural perspectives guided theories in two papers in this special issue. Vohs, Baumeister, and Chin focus on a particular emotional state—feeling duped (and the fear thereof, which they term *sugrophobia*) — that colors decision making in exchange-based interactions. Goette and Huffman discuss social capital, and the necessary presence of trust for cooperative interactions to take place. They present evidence from economic choice paradigms to support the idea that trust is the foundation of social resources.

Two papers adopted the classic goals of delving into the mechanisms of emotion (Winkielman, Knutson, Paulus, & Trijillo), particularly at the neural level, and the key question of whether emotion helps or hinders rationality (Pham). The arguments presented in those papers raise insightful questions — not to mention several important answers — about whether and how emotion changes decision making.

In short, the papers in this special issue not only introduce readers to core concepts essential to choice and emotion, but also develop sophisticated integrative models. These models promise to advance the fields of psychology, marketing, and economics toward a joint science involving the complex interplay between emotions and decisions.

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