Evidence for constructive influences from simple evaluations

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Abstract

There have been several demonstrations of constructive influences from choice paradigms, for example, when a decision maker has to commit to one of the available options and abandon the rest. In such cases, an expectation of constructive influences, whereby the preference for the chosen option increases, while the preference for the abandoned ones decreases, is perhaps reasonable (e.g., as a way to reduce cognitive dissonance). However, this reasoning is harder to translate to situations such that there is a simple evaluation. We employ an organizational questionnaire to show that a simple evaluation of an earlier statement can lead to systematic influences on a later one. Our results generalize our understanding for when constructive influences may occur. We outline a technical framework for predicting this bias (which we label evaluation bias), based on quantum theory. Quantum theory is an appropriate framework for modelling constructive influences, because the theory involves a fundamental process of state change when a measurement (evaluation) is made.