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# Sharing of mental effort in a joint task

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## Abstract

Previous research has shown that when people engage in a joint task, they tend to minimize the total required effort. This is the case even when minimizing total effort increases the amount of effort individuals would need to expend. This tendency towards co-efficiency has previously been investigated in the motor domain. The aim of the current experiments was to investigate whether these findings extend to the sharing of mental effort. Five experiments were conducted using a multiple-object tracking task and two used a memory-based task. The first two experiments confirmed that, individually, participants prefer easier tasks. The following three experiments manipulated task difficulty for a participant and their ostensible partner and measured preferences for different difficulty combinations. Our findings provide support for egoistic effort distribution strategies, with participants mostly minimizing their own effort.