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Investigating deliberate ignorance in children and adults

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Abstract

The emergence of deliberate ignorance, i.e. what influences children's deliberate decisions not to seek information, is a phenomenon so far notably overlooked. This project addresses this gap by investigating various factors that systematically modulate such decisions in children and adults. Across five studies, we presented participants with short stories illustrating social situations where a misdeed occurs, and measured participants' preference for knowing the identity of the wrongdoer. Studies 1-3 (N = 550) shows that both children and adults systematically manifest a preference for ignorance when the information value is low, and when the potential wrongdoer is suspected to be a friend. Studies 4-5 (N = 333) further investigate the role of information probability in this phenomenon. This first contribution shows that children's preference for deliberate ignorance is modulated by information value and the relationship frame proposed, suggesting a rational approach to ignorance.