

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-17632-3 - Conflict and Tradeoffs in Decision Making

Edited by Elke U. Weber, Jonathan Baron and Graham Loomes

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Cambridge Series on Judgment and Decision Making

Conflict and Tradeoffs in Decision Making

What makes some decisions easy and others difficult? Current research in judgment and decision making indicates that conflict plays a crucial role in decision-making processes. The chapters in this book address questions about the causes of conflict and its effects on decision making and emotions, particularly (but not only) the emotion of regret. Several chapters address the role of attribute tradeoffs, such as that between money and risk, in the measurement of values for policy purposes. The chapters provide overviews of several current research programs and present new data. Methods involve answers to hypothetical scenarios, other questionnaires, interviews, and observations of behavior outside of the laboratory. Although most contributions are informed by psychology, some also take an economic or sociological approach.

Elke U. Weber is Professor of Management and Psychology at Columbia University. She is Associate Editor of *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* and coeditor of *Risk, Decision, and Policy*.

Jonathan Baron is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. He is author of *Thinking and Deciding* and *Judgment Misguided* and coeditor of *Psychological Perspectives on Justice* (with Barbara Mellers).

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Frontmatter

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Jane Beattie, 1960–1997.

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Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	<i>page</i>	ix
<i>Preface and Dedication</i>		xi
1 Introduction		1
<i>Jonathan Baron and Elke U. Weber</i>		
2 Predicting Perceived Differences in Tradeoff Difficulty		25
<i>Jane Beattie and Sema Barlas</i>		
3 The Enhancement of Feature Salience in Dichotomous Choice Dilemmas		65
<i>David A. Houston, Deborah Sherrill-Mittleman, and Matthew Weeks</i>		
4 The Impact of Emotional Tradeoff Difficulty on Decision Behavior		86
<i>Mary Frances Luce, John W. Payne, and James R. Bettman</i>		
5 Impulse Buying in Ordinary and “Compulsive” Consumers		110
<i>Helga Dittmar</i>		
6 What We Do When Decisions Go Awry: Behavioral Consequences of Experienced Regret		136
<i>Marcel Zeelenberg, J. Jeffrey Inman, and Rik G. M. Pieters</i>		
7 Decisions About Prenatal Screening		156
<i>Rosemary Murray and Jane Beattie</i>		
8 Talk About Tradeoffs: Judgments of Relative Importance and Contingent Decision Behavior		175
<i>William M. Goldstein, Sema Barlas, and Jane Beattie</i>		
9 Private Values and Public Policy		205
<i>Michael Jones-Lee and Graham Loomes</i>		
		vii

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-17632-3 - Conflict and Tradeoffs in Decision Making
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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii CONTENTS

10	Measuring Value Tradeoffs: Problems and Some Solutions	231
	<i>Jonathan Baron</i>	
11	Decisions with Multiple Stakeholders and Conflicting Objectives	259
	<i>Detlof von Winterfeldt</i>	
12	Designing Websites to Empower Health Care Consumers	300
	<i>Mark D. Spranca</i>	
13	Interpreting Conflicts Between Intuition and Formal Models	323
	<i>Deborah Frisch</i>	
	<i>Index</i>	345

Cambridge University Press

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Edited by Elke U. Weber, Jonathan Baron and Graham Loomes

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[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface and Dedication

On March 25, 1997, Jane Beattie died of cancer after a year-long illness. She is survived by her husband and three children. Her students and colleagues will also miss her deeply. She was a wonderful person; her positive attitude and her intellectual contributions inspired us all.

When she died, her former colleagues resolved to do something in her memory. After much discussion by electronic mail, we settled on a book and a memorial fund. The fund, which supports foreign scholars' travel to the United States, is now administered by Joshua Klayman of the University of Chicago for the Society for Judgment and Decision Making. (Contributions are welcome.)

The book evolved in the course of discussions with the Society and with Cambridge University Press. We decided to focus on the major theme of Jane's work (putting aside her interest in hypothesis testing), conflict and tradeoffs, and to attempt to represent the work of the major scholars in this field, some of whom never had the chance to collaborate with Jane, so that the book would also serve as a coherent presentation of the state of the field. The book also includes chapters in which Jane herself played a major role, sometimes as an author and sometimes as an author of collaborative work that is reviewed. We hope that this book will serve as a fitting memorial.

What follows are (slightly edited) memories of Jane, written soon after her death, for the newsletter of the European Association for Decision Making. The first was written by Jon Baron, with help from Elke Weber and Graham Loomes, and is intended as an overview. Two other recollections follow.

Cambridge University Press

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Edited by Elke U. Weber, Jonathan Baron and Graham Loomes

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii PREFACE AND DEDICATION

Overview

Jane was my advisee in graduate school and my closest collaborator from the time she received her Ph.D. until her illness. Before I met her, she was an undergraduate at Sussex University and had worked for 2 years. She came to the psychology department at the University of Pennsylvania in 1983 at the recommendation of Dan Osherson: He recommended us to her and her to us, we all listened, and we were all grateful. Jane had another reason. Her boyfriend, David Weir, was also considering the University of Pennsylvania for graduate work in computer science. When she and David decided to marry, her spirits soared and her productivity increased.

Early in her graduate career she was interested in hypothesis testing, and she retained this as a secondary interest. Her first-year research project was a variation of the four-card problem, and the results were published in the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*. She also worked with me and Jack Hershey on my own main interest at the time, biases in seeking information. Her office mate was Deb Frisch, with whom she formed a lasting friendship.

Jane soon got interested in what was to be the main theme of her work from that time on: tradeoffs in decision making. She wanted to know why some tradeoffs were difficult and why people did not like to make them. She hoped to find measures that would be sensitive to the difficulty, and she and I were still working on follow-ups when she became ill.

After she taught at Swarthmore for a year while David was finishing his Ph.D., they both got jobs in Chicago. David was in the computer science department at Northwestern University. Jane joined one of the best groups in her field, the Center for Decision Research, within the Graduate School of Business at the University of Chicago. There she worked with Bill Goldstein and Sema Barlas, following up her thesis on tradeoff difficulty. She also began a project with Mark Spranca, Jack Hershey, and me on what we called *decision aversion*, the desire to avoid making certain kinds of decisions. We collaborated entirely by e-mail. This was a new idea, and we all got somewhat carried away. We generated several megabytes of correspondence. Jane was always among the most computer literate people I knew, and I picked up many habits from her, such as that of using L^AT_EX (a computer program for formatting text).

During their years at Chicago, Jane and David's first son, Sam, was born, and David developed lung cancer, of which he has now been free for a decade.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE AND DEDICATION

xiii

Several factors led them to move back to England, including a desire to be near their parents and the greater availability and higher quality of child care. This decision involved tradeoffs, though, mainly in the form of a large salary cut for Jane. Jane was a (nonprobationary) lecturer in psychology and then in experimental psychology (1991) at the University of Sussex. Their second son, Gavin, was born, and Jane pursued several interrelated lines of research. With Helga Dittmar, she studied impulse buying in women and men. With me, she worked on in-kind versus out-of-kind compensation. With Rosemary Murray, she worked on decisions concerning fetal testing, yet another example of decision difficulty. With Marcel Zeelenberg, she worked on the psychology of regret.

In 1994 she also began a project with a group of economists – Graham Loomes, Robert Sugden, Chris Starmer, and Robin Cubitt – studying the consistency or inconsistency of preferences under risk and over time. While this work was in progress, she and Loomes joined with Michael Jones-Lee and Nick Pidgeon to investigate the value(s) people place on health and safety benefits in a variety of contexts. Amid all this activity, David and Jane's third child – a daughter, Hayley – was born.

In the spring of 1996, the team working on the health and safety project came to Pittsburgh to meet with several Americans consulting on this project, including me. Jane was to come too, and then Jane and I were going to spend some time working on range effects. I hadn't seen her for years, although we had been corresponding by e-mail almost daily. She had to cancel the trip at the advice of her doctor. At first, everyone thought it was Hodgkin's disease, and we hoped that she would recover soon. It turned out to be much worse: cancer with an unknown primary tumor. Jane and her doctors did everything possible – and there were some optimistic periods – but to no avail.

As is clear from this history, Jane was a wonderful collaborator. It is very encouraging that she has been recognized for her accomplishments, which were essentially all collaborative. She was good at everything and could fill in wherever her collaborators were weak, whether it was writing, statistics, or creative ideas. She was responsible and directed, yet warm and understanding. I also think she had extrasensory perception. For one of our papers, the reviewers asked us to check the interrater reliability of some coding that we had done on subjects' justifications. So I selected 20 cases at random, coded them, and sent them to her by e-mail. I was hoping for 70% agreement, as I felt that I had very little confidence in my own coding. A day later, her codes came back, and agreement was 100%.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv PREFACE AND DEDICATION

Her death, just before her 37th birthday, brought great sadness to everybody who had the pleasure to know her. It has left a big gap in our lives. Things like this aren't supposed to happen, but they do. We were looking forward to many years of collaboration and friendship, but that is not to be. Her family, of course, feels the greatest loss.

**Other Tributes from the Newsletter of the European
Association for Decision Making**

Jane Beattie became a member of the Executive Board of the European Association for Decision Making (EADM) at the Subjective Probability, Utility, and Decision Meeting (SPUDM) conference in Jerusalem in 1995. Her first task as a member of the executive board was to serve on the editorial committee of the selected proceedings, which were published in *Acta Psychologica*. Because of her illness, this was unfortunately the only time EADM was able to profit from her expertise and critical mind. I first met her in 1993 at the SPUDM conference in Aix-en-Provence, where she impressed us all with her presentation about decision aversion in relation to prenatal testing. A year later, she visited the Netherlands and also gave a talk at our Medical Decision Making Unit in Leiden. With the multidisciplinary audience that attended her talk, she had a lively discussion about the relevance of decision aversion and anticipated regret for medical treatment decisions now that patient involvement is becoming increasingly important. We on the board were very much looking forward to working with her. She had a clear mind, but above all she was a very pleasant person. Although we knew she was very ill, her death came as a shock. In her EADM has lost a valuable member, and we will miss her. We wish her family the strength to carry this loss.

Danielle Timmermans
Secretary/Treasurer EADM

Jane Beattie participated in a European network on decision making, and I was one of the lucky Ph.D. candidates who made several visits to Sussex to discuss research with her. Working with Jane was a superb experience. I first met her when she came to the University of Amsterdam to give a colloquium about her work on decisions about prenatal testing. At that time, Jane and I talked for half an hour about our common research interests. Around Christmas 1994 I visited Jane in Sussex for

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE AND DEDICATION

xv

the first time when she was awaiting the birth of her youngest child, Hayley. Despite her busy professional and personal life, Jane found time (or better, made time) to discuss our ideas in detail. I recall our meetings as hard work and great fun. Hard work because Jane was a good sparring partner, asking the right questions at the right time (and providing the right answers as well). Great fun because Jane was generally optimistic, good-humored, and very supportive. We had written a research proposal that would enable me to move to Sussex and work more closely with her after I had finished my Ph.D. Tragically, this never happened. We did get the proposal funded, but Jane was already ill and had to stop working. We kept in touch during her illness by phone and e-mail. On these occasions, Jane was always cheerful and interested in other people. It was difficult to perceive her as an extremely ill person. I realized how serious her illness was after I visited her in early February 1997, a few weeks before she died. It still was a big shock when I learned about her death on 25 March. Jane was a truly good person. Losing her, both as a friend and as a colleague, is hard. I will miss her deeply.

Marcel Zeelenberg