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The Effect of Expertise and Strategy on Practical Problem Solving In College Life

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Poster Presentation P33

**THE EFFECT OF EXPERTISE AND STRATEGY ON PRACTICAL PROBLEM SOLVING
IN COLLEGE LIFE**

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How can we be sure to make the best possible decisions in everyday life, especially in situations with limited time? Research by Tversky and Kahneman (1974) has suggested that analysis is the best strategy; whereas others (Dijksterhuis, 2004) have shown that intuition is better. Gigerenzer's (2004) research has shown that heuristics, mental shortcuts, can be adaptive. Klein (1998) has found that good decisions can be made in short amounts of time, particularly if one has expertise. The present study sought to investigate the effectiveness of decisions in the domain of college life made under a variety of conditions: use of analysis, use of holistic intuition, and the use of heuristics under time constraint. We also investigated the effect of expertise on the appropriateness of the strategy used. 274 undergraduates were split into three levels of expertise in college life: novice (first-year students), intermediate (sophomore students), and expert (junior and senior Resident Assistants and Greek Peer Counselors) and four strategy conditions (analysis, intuition, time constraint, and control). They rated solutions to problems they might encounter in everyday college life. We expected a direct positive effect of expertise on decision making. The effect of expertise was predicted to interact with the effect of strategy. Different levels of expertise were expected to benefit under different experimental conditions.