**Introduction**

Research on Stereotype Threat has shown that effects of negative (stereotypic) expectations on test performance are particularly detrimental when the perceived importance of the performance domain is high (Aronson, 1999). The current study aims to investigate effects of Ease of Retrieval on perceived domain importance in the context of Stereotype Threat. Thus, both theoretical approaches will be combined in the following.

**Stereotype Threat Theory** (Steele, 1997).

- Test performance can be impaired by negative (stereotypic) expectancies (e.g., “Men have lower emotional intelligence than women”).
- This effect of negative expectancies on test performance occurs in particular when the performance domain is regarded as relevant or important.

**Ease of Retrieval** (Schwarz et al., 1991):
- The perceived ease with which information comes to mind affects judgments on frequency and attitudes.
- The easier the recall of information is perceived the more likely an attitude will be expressed that is consistent with the information.
- This Ease of Retrieval effect on attitudes occurs in particular when the motivation to process information (e.g., Need for Cognition) is low (see Greifeneder & Bless, 2005).

**Combination of both approaches:**
- When information regarding the importance of a performance domain is recalled with ease, the importance of the domain will be rated as high. Accordingly, negative stereotypic expectancies should have detrimental effects on test performance. This effect should especially occur when the motivation to process information is low (e.g., for individuals low in Need for Cognition).

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**Experiment 1**

**Method**

- *N* = 31 male participants
- **Stereotype Threat manipulation:** The description of a test ostensibly assessing emotional intelligence was said to have yielded better results for women than for men in the past.
- **IV 1 - Ease of Retrieval manipulation:** Naming of few vs. many arguments in support of the importance of emotional intelligence (EI).
- **DV – Test performance:** The ratio of correct responses of the attempted tasks on a verbal test (verbal analogies) framed as a test of emotional intelligence.
- **Manipulation check - Ease of Retrieval:** Self-reported perceived ease of naming arguments.

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**Results**

**Manipulation check Ease of Retrieval**

Participants who named few arguments reported more ease in naming the arguments as compared to those who had named many arguments (*t*(29) = 2.02; *p* = .05).

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**Test performance as a function of Ease of Retrieval and Need for Cognition**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for Cognition (NIC)</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Retrieval (EoR)</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIC x EoR</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.66</td>
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*Effects on test performance:*
- Under low Need for Cognition participants who had named few arguments performed worse on the test than those who had named many arguments. Under high Need for Cognition this effect was reversed (*t* = .66; *p* = 2.17; *p* < .05).

**Discussion**

- Ease of Retrieval can have effects on behavior (i.e., test performance).
- The Ease of Retrieval effect occurs in particular for individuals with low motivation to process information (i.e., Need for Cognition). This is consistent with research on Ease of Retrieval effects on judgment processes (Greifeneder & Bless, 2005).
- When naming arguments in support of the importance of a performance domain it is experienced with ease, negative stereotypic expectancies have detrimental effects on test performance. This confirms Stereotype Threat theory which assumes that the detrimental effects of negative stereotypic expectancies on test performance occur in particular when the domain is regarded as important.

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**References:**


