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The Max-Wertheimer Minerva Center for Cognitive Processes and Human Performance

אנו שמחים לארח את

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The Role of Expectation in the Ease of Retrieval Effect

If people are asked to bring forward arguments in favor of or against a position, the ease or difficulty of retrieving these arguments from memory can influence subsequent attitude judgments (e.g. Wהnke, Bless, & Biller, 1996; Wהnke, Bohner, & Jurkowitsch, 1997). Following an idea from cognitive psychology (the discrepancy-attribution hypothesis; Whittlesea, & Williams, 1998), it is assumed that expectation of ease or difficulty, respectively, moderates the ease effect, i.e. the ease effect should be stronger if there is a discrepancy between actual and expected ease/difficulty of retrieval. Results of three experiments support this hypothesis. In the study 1 and 2, the discrepancy between expected and actual ease/difficulty was manipulated via a priming procedure. In the first study, participants who expected an easy task found a medium difficult argument generation task to be more difficult than participants who expected a difficult task. Subjective ease/difficulty was used for a subsequent attitude judgment. In the second study, the actual task requirement was manipulated additionally. After receiving the priming task, participants were asked to write down few (which is an easy task) or many (which is a difficult task) arguments against a position. Afterwards, the attitude toward this position was measured. Ease effects were only found if ease or difficulty were unexpected (i.e. discrepant to the prime). The third study confirmed the found results with a more direct manipulation of the expectation of retrieval ease/difficulty.

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