

Motivated Misreports to Sensitive Survey Questions

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There Are Many Ways to Arrive at an Answer: Lucky Guesses vs. Edited Responses

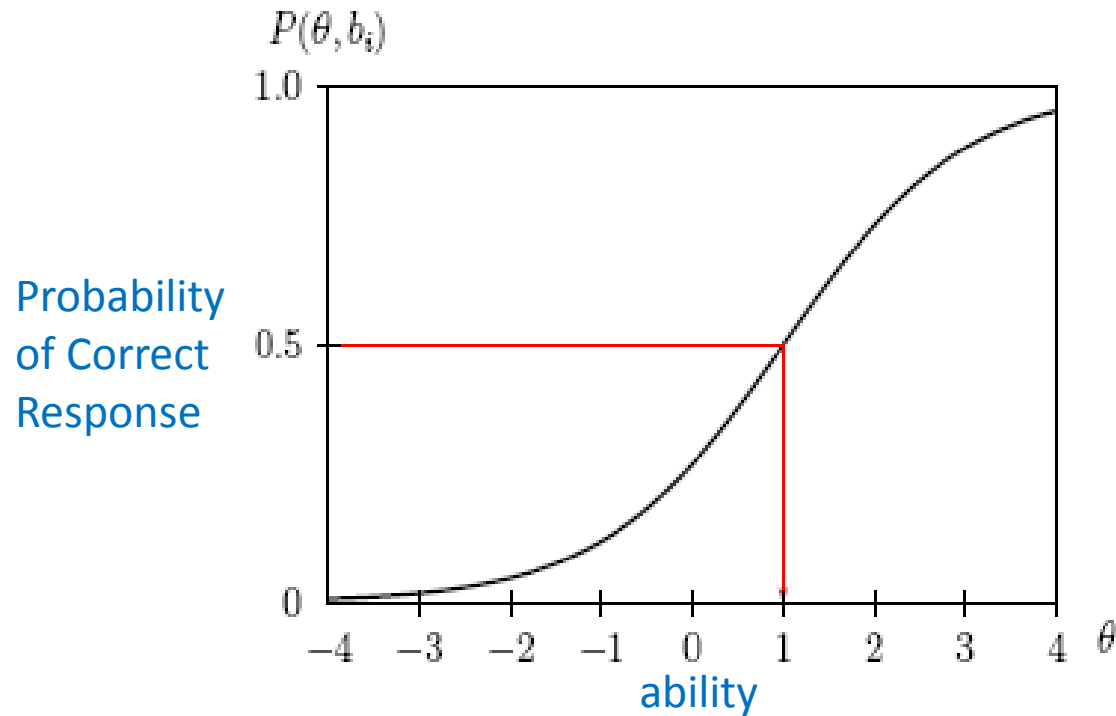
ABILITY QUESTIONS

- Competing Response Goals:
 - Accuracy versus speed
- Measurement:
 - Knowledge and guessing

SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

- Competing Response Goals:
 - Honesty versus impression-management
- Measurement:
 - Actual behavior and tendencies to enhance, hide, cheat,...

Single-Response Process



How do People Self-Enhance or Self-Protect?

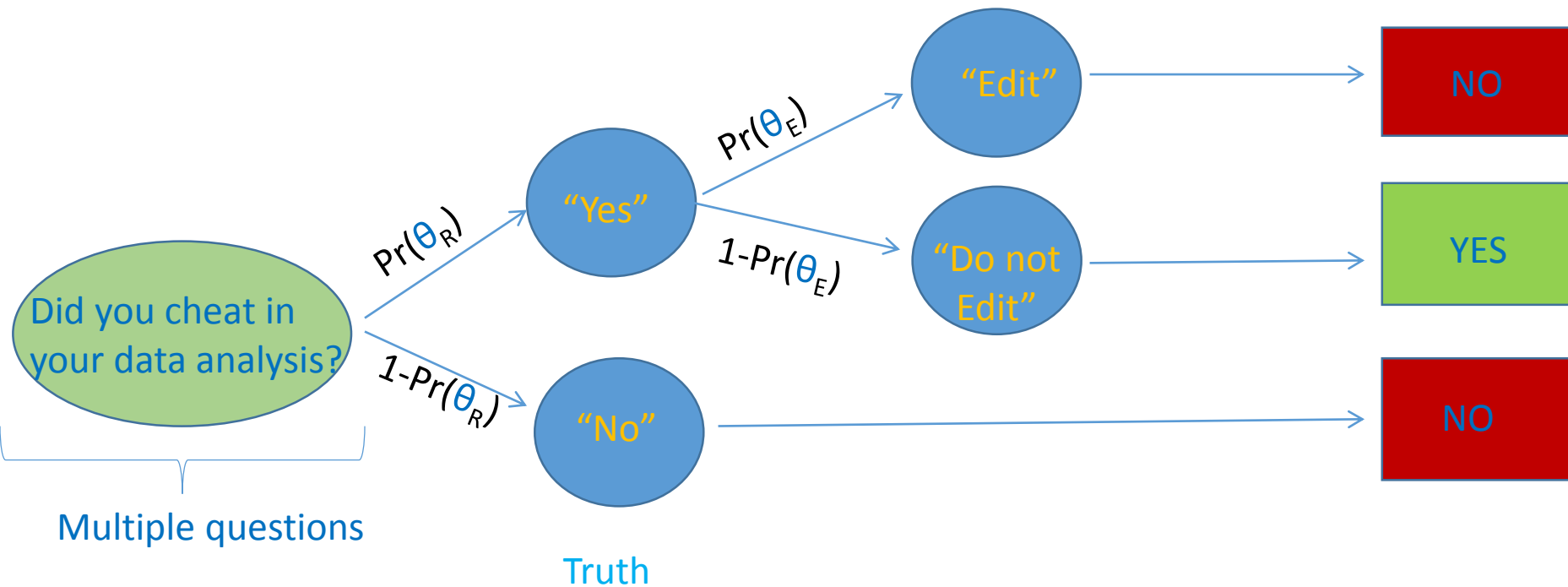
Retrieve-Edit-Select (R-E-S)

1. Retrieval of response.
2. Decision to “edit” or “not to edit” response.
3. Selection of response category:
 - if “Edit”, selection of more positive response category;
 - otherwise, selection of initial response category.

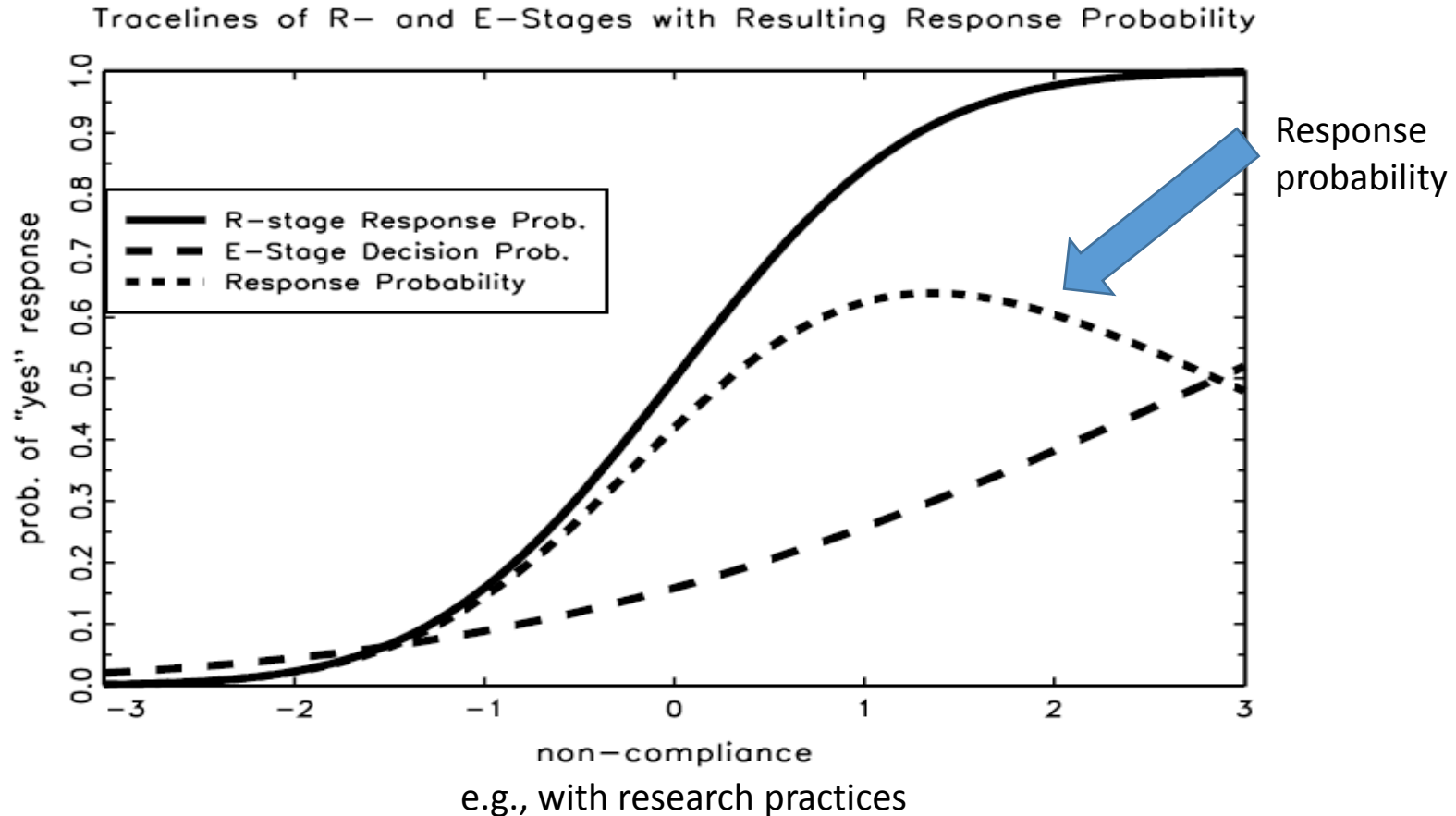
Identification of Editing Stage

- **Self-enhancement/self-protection considerations can be enhanced or reduced:**
 - threats, self-affirmation, privacy protection methods;
 - apply more to judgments of oneself and less to judgments of others; and
 - take time.

Self-Protection: Retrieval and Editing Stages



Being truthful for small compliance violations



How Familiar Are You with the Following Terms? (Life Science Knowledge Test)

Never heard of it

Very familiar

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

☐ Sciatica

☐ Meta-toxin

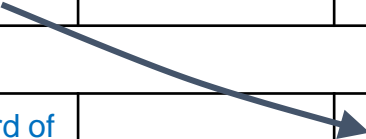
☐ Meiosis

☐ Antigen

Overclaiming (Paulhus et al. 2003)

Please rate your familiarity with the term “meta-toxins”

TRUTH	Never heard of it		Somewhat familiar		Very familiar
RESPONSE	Never heard of it		Somewhat familiar		Very familiar



Real items: sciatica, meiosis, antigen,...

Made-up items: meta-toxins, bio-sexual, retroplex

Predictions

1. Power manipulation increases “editing tendency”.
2. Moderators:
 - Need-for-Cognition scale and Knowledge measures are positively related to Retrieval stage.
 - Self-Deceptive Enhancement scale is positively related to Editing stage.

Over-Claiming Study

- 514 participants
- Two conditions
 1. Recall an event in which you experienced power.
 2. Recall an event in which you went shopping.
- DV: Rate familiarity with 12 real and 3 made-up Life Sciences items
- Moderators:
 - “Self-Deceptive Enhancement” , “Need-for-Cognition” , Knowledge test
- SDE Items:
 1. My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.
 2. It would be hard for me to break any of my bad habits. (R)
 3. I don't care to know what other people really think of me.
- NfC Items:
 1. I would prefer complex to simple problems.
 2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.
 3. Thinking is not my idea of fun. (R)

Knowledge Questionnaire

1. Sciatica is:

- an anxiety-reducing drug
- caused by the compression of nerves
- a hormone
- a protein
- none of the above

2. Meiosis is:

- a chromosome
- a hormone
- a type of cell division
- a skin disease
- none of the above

3. Antigen is:

- a hormone
- a protein
- a disease
- a virus
- none of the above

4. Meta-toxins are:

- produced by cancer cells
- pain relievers
- chemical agents
- used to develop vaccines
- none of the above

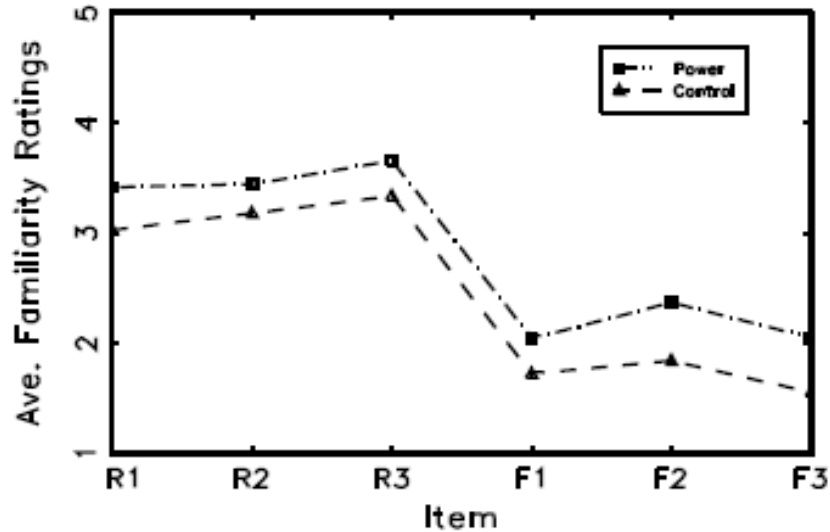
5. Bio-sexual

- refers to the reproduction of plants
- refers to non-chemical birth-control methods
- refers to the passion for biology
- refers to an account of someone's sexual life
- none of the above

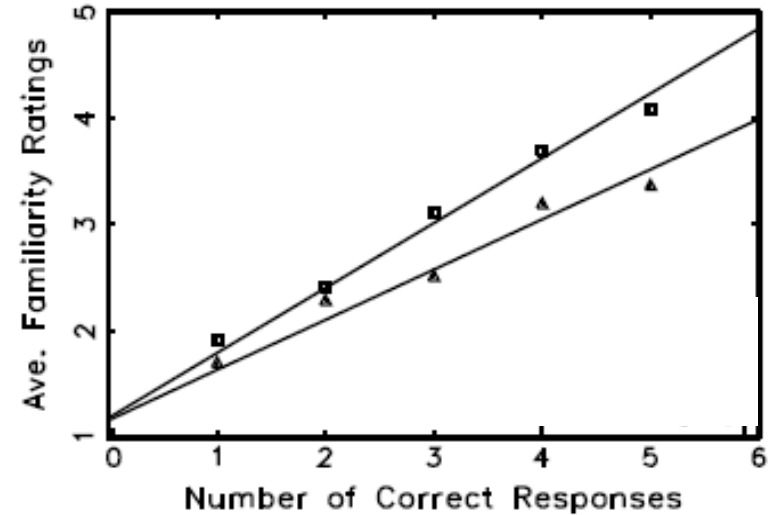
6. Retroplex is:

- a part of cell structures
- a neck muscle
- an involuntary movement
- the inability to recall past events
- none of the above

Power increases Familiarity Response



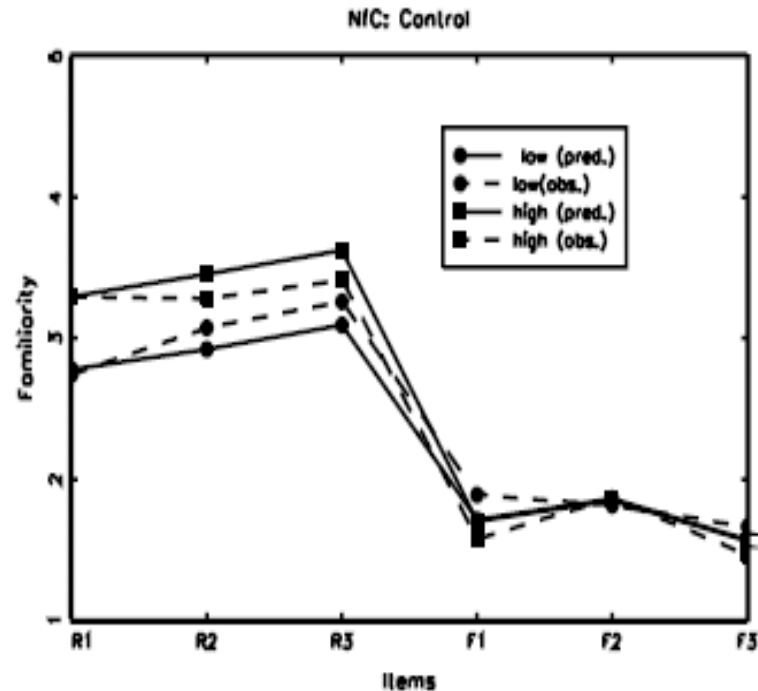
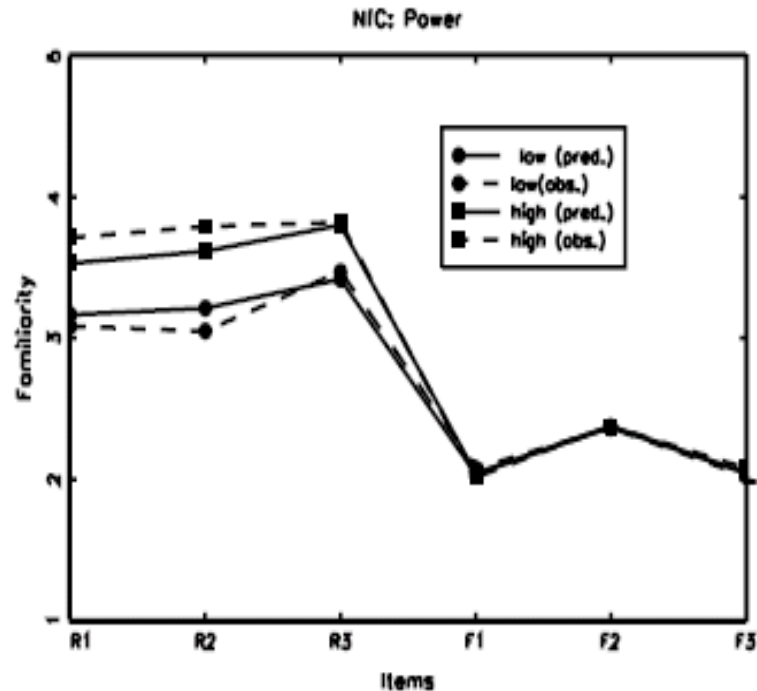
Power increases familiarity ratings
 $F(6, 507) = 4.2, p < .001$
No interaction with item



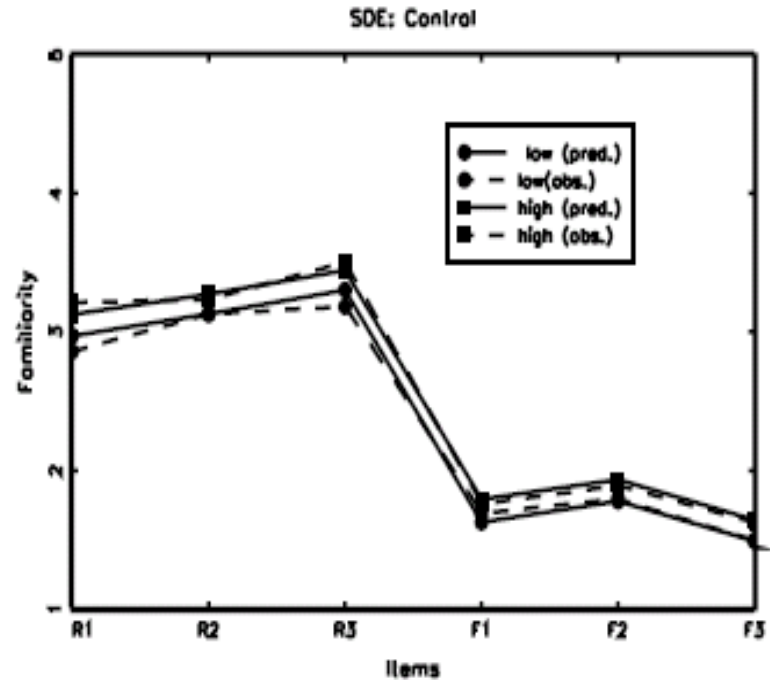
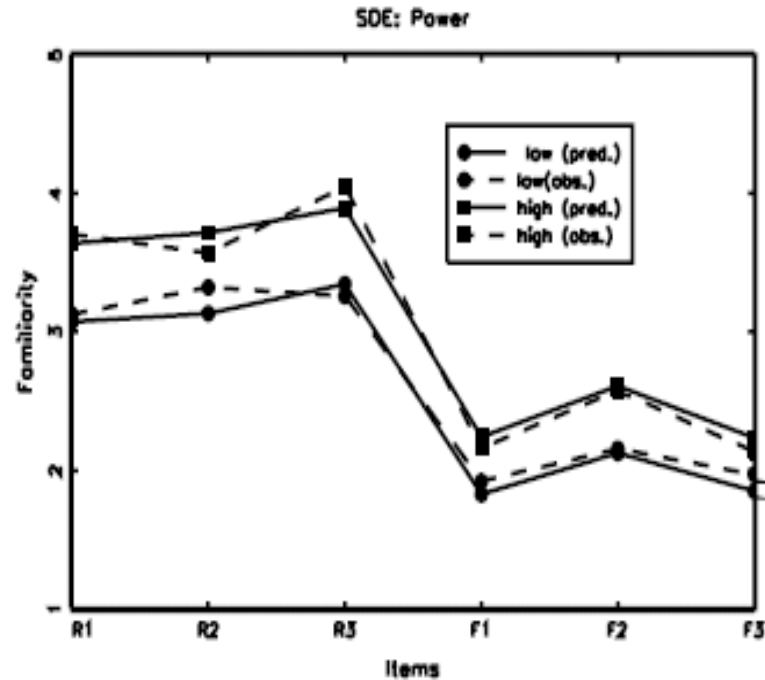
More knowledgeable respondents
show stronger familiarity effect under
power ($t(11) = 4.8, p < .001$)

Results for 3 real and 3 fake items.

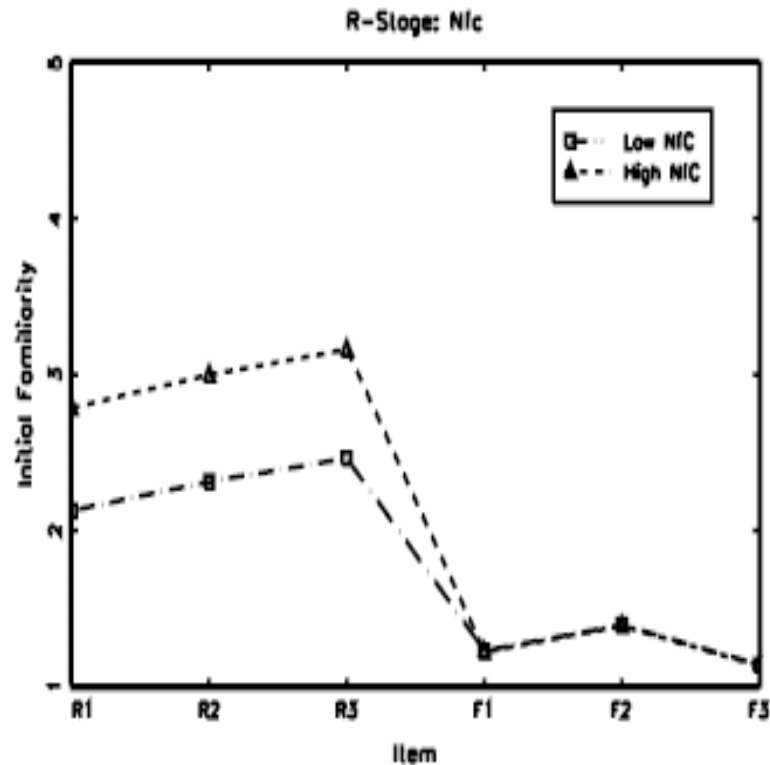
Need-for-Cognition associated with higher Familiarity Response for Real Items



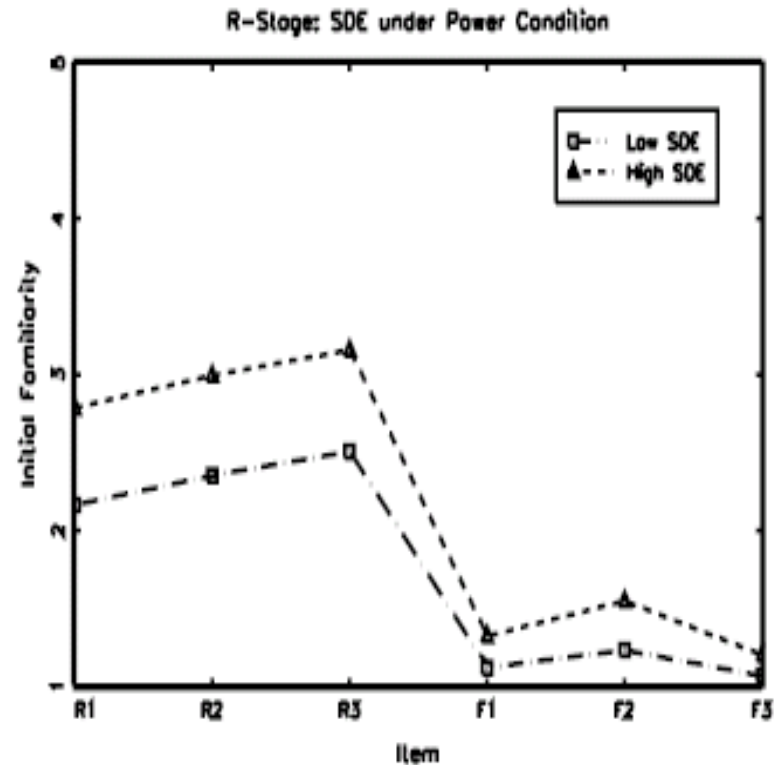
Self-Deceptive Enhancement associated with higher Familiarity Response



RES Model: Retrieval Stage Effects

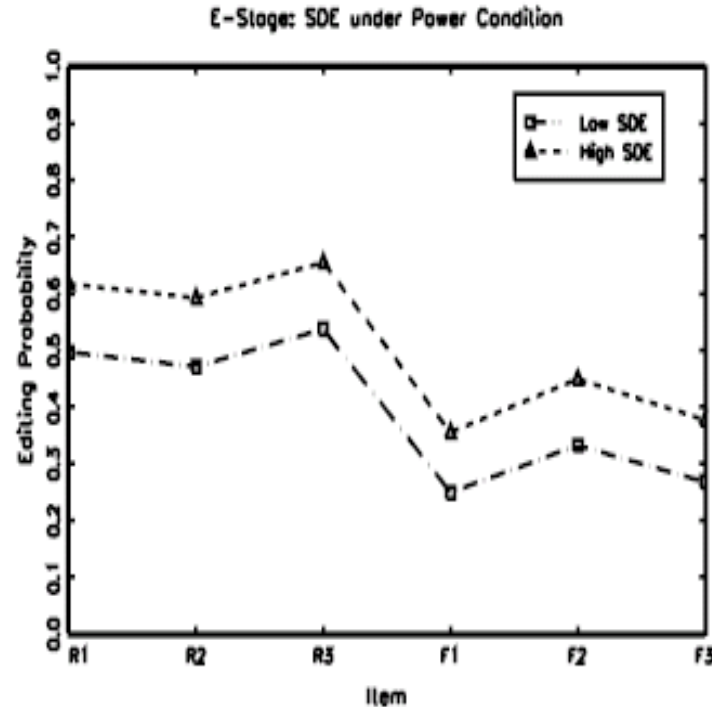


NfC associated with higher
“Initial Familiarity” for real items



SDE associated with higher “Initial Familiarity”
for real and fake items in Power Condition

RES Model: Editing Stage Effects



- SDE is positively related to Editing Probability in Power Condition
- No NfC effects (as predicted)

Measuring Motivated Misreports

- Single process models are too restrictive and unrealistic.
- R-E-S models try to capture stages preceding a response:
 - Initial latent response
 - Editing decision
 - Response category selection
- Editing stage can be
 - influenced separately via experimental interventions,
 - measured reliably, and
 - related to psychological measures to facilitate interpretation.