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What role plays the lack of fit in the stigma of incompetence?
An experimental study

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Abstract

Women are still scarce in certain job fields and positions. Affirmative Action Programmes (AAPs) try to support women in entering male-dominated fields and positions. However, AAPs can negatively affect women by creating the impression that women are not competent enough to secure male-typed job positions on their own – a phenomenon called “stigma of incompetence”. The aim of this thesis is to replicate previous findings on the stigma of incompetence, that is, to examine whether women who benefit from AAPs are perceived less competent than women who do not benefit from AAPs. In addition, we examined the role of *lack of fit* in the stigma of incompetence. 241 individuals participated in an online experiment where they were presented with the profile of a young woman who had been selected for the position of “surgery assistant”. The position was either male- or female-typed and the young woman was hired either on a merit- or a gender-based AAP. In all conditions, participants were asked to evaluate the woman’s competence. Results did not show statistically significant differences between the conditions concerning the perceived competence. Hence, previous research on the *stigma of incompetence* could not be replicated. There was no significant impact of the *lack of fit*, although exploratory analyses indicate that a higher lack of fit leads to a poorer rating of competence. Future research may use different vignettes for the scenario and could extend the research on the *stigma of incompetence* in Europe.

Keywords: affirmative action programmes (AAPs), quotas, lack of fit, stigma of incompetence, stereotypes

Introduction

In German speaking countries, the working landscape is characterised by a horizontal and vertical job segregation between women and men. There are typical male and female working fields. For example, 26.5% of electricians and 24.6% of mechanics are women, and only 12.5% of hairdressers and 30.1% of employees in design and clothing technology are men (WKO Austria, 2019). However, the lack of women is most conspicuous in positions that are influential, prestigious, and financially rewarding. In Austria, only 8% of the CEOs of the top selling companies are women; even less than that, only 5% of representatives in the boards of listed companies are women (Seebacher & Wieser, 2018). Moreover, 14.9% women work in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) professions in Germany (Statista, 2019). Studies show that the low number of women in STEM fields is due to early developing childhood interests, which may be influenced by stereotypes as well as a lack of information about the different opportunities in various scientific domains (Smyth & Nosek, 2015).

An explanation for the underrepresentation of women in leadership and male-dominated fields is that the horizontal and vertical sex segregation of work originates as a natural consequence of gender stereotypes (Heilman, 2001). Gender stereotypes portray men as “agentic”, which means people expect men to be amongst other more assertive, aggressive and bold than women. These characteristics are linked to successful leadership (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011; Schein, 2001) and success in male-dominated fields (Carli, Alawa, Lee, Zhao & Kim, 2016). A study by Nosek and colleagues (2009) found that 70% of the Implicit Association Tests taken by half a million participants from 34 countries showed implicit stereotypes associating science with men more than with women. In contrast, women are seen as “communal” they are thought to be relationship-oriented, caring and kind (Ellemers, 2018; Heilman, 2012). The traits agentic and communal are defined as opposites; that is, individuals are thought to be either agentic *or* communal (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). In a special issue on gender and leadership, Heilman and Eagly (2016) state, that gender stereotypes are the main culprit that hinder women in entering male-dominated fields and leadership positions.

The Lack of Fit model (Heilman, 1983, 2012) explains how gender stereotypes hinder a rational evaluation of a person’s competence. This biased evaluation of women’s competencies is caused by two factors. First, gender stereotypes produce a certain perception of women in a working context. Second, managerial positions and certain job fields are male-

typed. These two factors lead to a perceived *lack of fit*, which is responsible for a number of distorted judgements about women in work settings (Heilman, 2001). The Lack of Fit model furthermore proposes that expectations about how well a person will do in their job are very important for personnel decisions. Performance expectations are determined by the perceived fit of the attributes ascribed to a person based on gender stereotypes and the skills and abilities the job requires. When the perceived fit is good, success is perceived to be likely. However, when the perceived fit is poor, failure is perceived to be likely. This also explains how discrimination against women is often based on cognitive biases. Likewise, the perceived fit or lack of fit between a person's attributes and the job requirements profoundly affect evaluation and selection processes (Heilman, 2001).

Affirmative action programmes and the stigma of incompetence

There have been various attempts to support women entering the better paid, higher status, "male" fields and positions (Block, Croft & Schmader, 2018). To tackle the issue of the low representation of women in male dominated branches and higher positions, different forms of *affirmative action programmes* (AAPs) were introduced. In 1993 in Austria, a law was passed to ensure a quota of 40% women in civil service, which was increased to 50% in 2012 (Frauenförderungsgesetz, 2003). Furthermore, a women's quota of 30% in the supervisory boards of listed companies was introduced in 2018 (Republik Österreich, Parlament, 2017). The aim of AAPs is to reduce discrimination based on demographic characteristics such as gender. There are several different forms of AAPs: opportunity enhancement, equal opportunity, weak preferential treatment (tie break), and strong preferential treatment. The idea of opportunity enhancement is to increase the number of qualified applicants, before the selection process even starts (e.g. through trainings). Equal opportunity tries to inhibit discrimination by prohibiting discrimination based on demographic characteristics of the candidates. Weak preferential treatment means that given two otherwise identical applicants, the one belonging to an underrepresented group will be selected. This kind of AAP is used in Austria. Strong preferential treatment is straight forward; the applicant belonging to a minority group will be selected over any other applicant (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie & Lev-Arey, 2006).

Few workplace policies are as controversial as AAPs (Harrison et al., 2006). Indeed, research revealed that quotas, and especially women's quotas – as increasingly applied in

Austria and the E.U. – may not only have their intended effects, but also negative consequences for the women they intend to promote.

Research showed that AAPs can have negative effects on the target's self-perception and reactions to work situations (Heilman, Battle, Keller & Lee, 1998). Women who were selected because of an AAP reported lower satisfaction with work, supervision, and co-workers, and they showed less organizational commitment as well as greater role stress (Chacko, 1982). In addition, women who benefited from AAPs chose easier work tasks compared to women who were selected purely based on merit (Heilman, Rivero & Brett, 1991). Gender-based AAPs may enhance the perception of a lack of fit because they make the gender of the person benefiting from an AAP more salient as well as making women being identified as minorities in a certain field even stronger.

The use of AAPs can also have a negative impact on how AAP targets are perceived by others. Women who were associated with an AAP are likely to be evaluated as less competent than women who are not linked to such policies – a phenomenon succinctly named the stigma of incompetence (e.g. Heilman et al., 1992).

The stigma of incompetence is based on an attributional bias (Kelley, 1972); when an affirmative action policy provides a plausible and salient explanation for the selection of an employee, the role of qualification in the selection is discounted (Heilman et al., 1992). The stigma of incompetence was particularly pronounced when women were associated with rigid quotas (Evans, 2003; Heilman et al., 1998), but occurred also when the selection procedure was ambiguous. Ambiguous selection decisions cannot be identified as explicitly merit-based or explicitly affirmative action-based (Heilman et al., 1998; Heilman & Blader, 2001). There are additional factors, that might play a role in the stigma of incompetence, one of them being the lack of fit. By making the gender of a person more salient, AAPs could enhance the lack of fit and ultimately, lead to a worse evaluation of the AAP beneficiary.

Present study

The goal of this study is to replicate previous findings on the stigma of incompetence, that is, that women who get selected because of an AAP are stigmatized as less competent than women who are not selected under an AAP. In addition, we examine the impact of lack of fit on the stigma of incompetence. Specifically, we want to examine how a lack of fit between a female candidate and a job position and AAPs interact. Thereto, we test the following hypotheses:

H1: Overall, female applicants who are associated with an AAP will be perceived as less competent than female applicants who are not associated with an AAP.

H2: Lack of fit enhances the stigma of incompetence, that is, female applicants who are associated with an AAP will be perceived as less competent when the lack of fit is high compared to when the lack of fit is low.

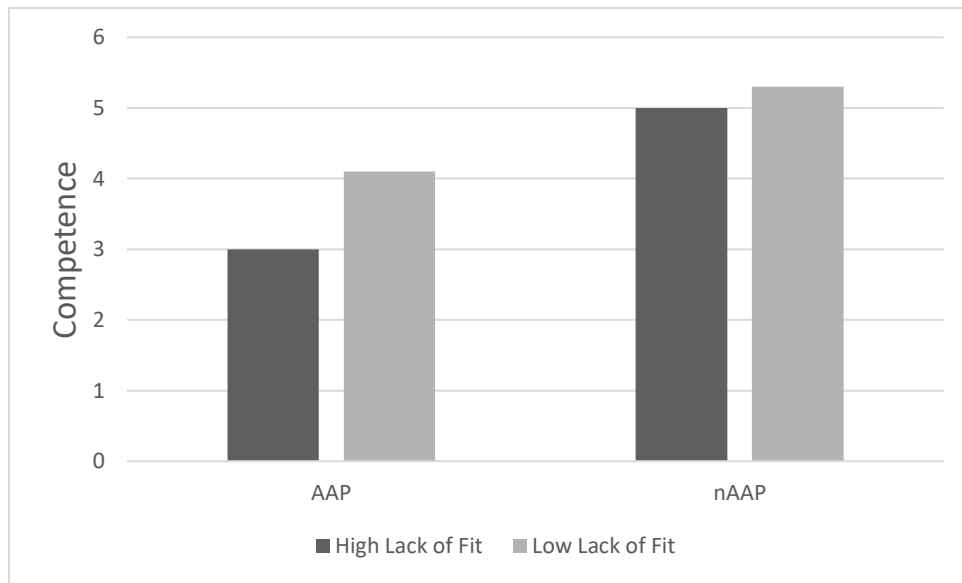


Figure 1. The expected competence evaluations in the different conditions based on the assumptions made above.

Method

To test our hypotheses, we developed an online experiment with a 2 (high lack of fit vs. low lack of fit) x 2 (affirmative action programme (AAP) vs. no affirmative action programme (nAAP)) between subject design.

Sample

The sample size was calculated in g*power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2009). Previous studies on the stigma of incompetence found very large effects ($\eta^2 = .43$, $f = 0.87$) (Heilman, Block & Lucas, 1982). Based on publication bias and unpublished work (Dreilich, 2018; Zehnter, 2012) with smaller or null effects, we expected a medium effect of $f = .25$. The sample size was estimated using the parameters alpha = 0.05, power = 0.90, numerator df = 3

and number of groups = 4. The calculated sample size was 231 individuals, with 58 individuals per condition.

In total, two hundred sixty individuals participated in the study. 241 participants were retained after excluding 19 (7.3%) because of various reasons: (1) participants were excluded when they did not give consent to use their data ($n = 4$), (2) if they were younger than 18 years old ($n = 5$) or (3) if it took them too much or too little time to fill out the questionnaire ($n = 7$). (4) 3 participants were excluded because they were identified as outliers using boxplots. The third exclusion criterium was defined based on the index TIME_RSI on soscisurvey (Leiner, 2013). This index provides information about the participants' relative response speed. A speed factor is calculated for each page by dividing the sample's median page completion time by the individual completion time. It is suggested to have a closer look on values between 1.6 and 1.9 to make sure the answer patterns of these participants do not look suspicious (e.g. only choosing "7" for each item). Values higher than 2.0 make it highly unlikely that the person has filled out the questionnaire in a reasonable way and were therefore excluded from the analysis (Leiner, 2019). When designing the study, we defined two more exclusion criteria. Firstly, we wanted to exclude all participants who did not fill in one of the manipulation checks described below. Secondly, we aimed to minimize biased results by excluding participants working as medical doctors or in nursing. Excluding those individuals would have caused a too high loss of data and analyses showed no difference in the results using the bigger or the smaller sample.

The final sample consisted of 241 people. 166 (68.9%) participants identified as female, 74 (30.7%) as male, and 1 (0.4%) as diverse. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 77, with the average age being $M = 30.6$ ($SD = 11.4$). The sample consisted of 84.6% Austrians, 11.2% Germans, 1.7% Swiss and 2.5% indicated another country. More than half of the sample holds a college or university degree (52.7%), 32.7% have finished a secondary school and 10.3% finished an apprenticeship, high school or other educational trainings. 48.5% of the participants are employed, 36.5% are students at a university or college and 6.6% are self-employed and 5.8% are either retired, students at school, unemployed or indicated "other".

Procedure

The study was conducted as an online experiment using the software soscisurvey (Leiner, 2019). The link to the questionnaire was distributed using social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram and was directly sent to friends and acquaintances of the

authors via Whatsapp. When we asked the participants to share the link to the questionnaire, we provided them with a standardised sentence they should use: “Please fill out this questionnaire to help supporting a friend’s master thesis. Thank you!” Upon entering the link, participants were presented with basic information about the study (study duration, measures to ensure confidentiality, contact details of the responsible researchers). Upon agreeing to participate in the study, the participants received further details of the study aim. The participants were told that the goal of the study was to investigate the perceived competence of a new employee. This disguise was necessary to reduce the risk for stimulating socially desirable answers. Then, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. All participants were presented with a description of a training position for a surgery assistant. The description entailed the experimental manipulation for lack of fit. Half of the participants saw a description of a training position for surgery assistant that was strongly male typed; the other half saw an identical description of the training program which was however more female-typed. Then, all participants saw the description of a young woman, who was selected for the position. This description included the experimental manipulation for the selection criteria. Half of the participants learned that the woman was chosen because of a “young talent” programme, supporting young people in finding a job (nAAP condition). The other half learned that the woman was chosen because of a “female talent” programme that wants to make sure to increase the number of women in this field (AAP condition).

Then participants had to answer questions about the selected candidate. First, they were asked to evaluate her competence and the likelihood of her future success. After that, they had to fill out three questions about the fit of the person with the job and rated the candidate with a list of different characteristics. To make sure participants understood the reason why the person was chosen, we asked if the candidate was chosen because of “work experience”, “gender”, “skills”, “education” or “age”. Moreover, participants rated the job of a surgery assistant as either typically male or female and were then asked if they worked as a doctor or a nurse. Finally, participants were asked to provide demographic data. At the end of the study, participants were fully debriefed about the goal of the study.

Experimental Manipulations

High vs. low lack of fit

The experimental manipulation was included in the job description for a surgery assistant. In the high lack of fit condition, the job description was strongly male-typed,

emphasizing the stereotypically masculine traits required for this job (e.g., good spatial sense and physical stamina, good grades in Maths and chemistry and technical comprehension). In addition, participants saw a circle diagram about the current sex distribution in this job which showed 13% women and 87% men. In the low lack of fit condition, the job description was strongly female-typed, focusing on the stereotypically feminine traits (e.g., good knowledge of humans nature and communicative skills, good grades in German and biology and pleasure in working in teams and supporting others). The circle diagram in this condition showed a sex distribution of 41% women and 59% men.

Affirmative action programme (AAP) vs. no affirmative action programme (nAAP)

This experimental manipulation was included in the description of a new employee - a young woman called Sarah Berger. In the affirmative action condition, the description entailed the information that she was selected because of a female talents programme, that was introduced in order to support female applicants in the selection process. In the no affirmative action condition, the applicant was selected based on a programme for young talents.

Measures

Perceived competence was assessed by three items based on Heilman and Welle (2006). Participants were asked to indicate their first impression about the female employee. They rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very) whether they perceived the new employee as “competent”, “suitable” and “qualified” for the job. The internal consistency of this scale was $\alpha = .84$.

Perceived future success. As an additional competence measure, we asked participants to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely), how likely they perceived the employee's to be successful in the future (Heilman et al., 1992). Two items represented female-typed success (a) “*The new employee will be devoted to the employer*”, b) “*The new employee will support the team well*”) and two items represented male-typed success (c) “*The new employee will be successful*” and d) “*The new employee will get a leadership position*”. The internal consistency of future success was $\alpha = .74$.

Perceived lack of fit of the employee was assessed by three items. Participants had to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree) whether

they agreed on statements such as “The new employee is the right person for the job” These items had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .76$.

Perceived ability (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). As an additional measure for competence, participants rated the employee on three adjectives (*competent, intelligent and independent*). Again, a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very) was used. The internal consistency of this scale was $\alpha = .82$.

Manipulation checks. To make sure that participants remembered the gender of the candidate correctly, we asked participants to indicate the candidate’s name after reading her profile. This was to ensure that the participants realized that the hired person was a woman. We intentionally placed this manipulation check right after the profile of the new employee to make the gender more salient.

To check whether participants realized, if the employee got the job because of a women’s quota or not, they were given a number of different reasons to rate with 1 = not at all relevant to 7 = totally relevant (education, age, sex, skills, work experience). This was the manipulation check for “AAP” vs. “nAAP”.

Furthermore, to check if the “high lack of fit” vs. “low lack of fit” condition worked, we asked if the job was considered as either “female” or “male” by asking for an evaluation of the job on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 7 = totally).

Finally, the participants had to answer a question if they worked as a medical doctor or in nursery in order to identify those, who work in a medical job. We planned on excluding those participants in order to prevent biased results because their familiarity with the job described in the experimental manipulation. We expected an impact on our manipulation in unpredictable ways. As this was not the case, we did not have a reason to exclude medical doctors and nurses from our analyses.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Male/female perception of the job surgery assistant. High lack of fit/low lack of fit manipulation check. Checking whether the experimental manipulations worked was crucial for the next steps of the analysis. We wanted to make sure that participants had recognized the difference between the high lack of fit and the low lack of fit conditions. Therefore, we asked, “How feminine would you describe the job of a surgery assistant?” and “How masculine

would you describe the job of a surgery assistant?” offering a 7-point Likert scale for both questions. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations in the experimental conditions high vs. low lack of fit indicating higher “male” ratings in the high lack of fit condition and higher “female” ratings in the low lack of fit condition.

Table 1

Ratings of perceived male/female evaluation of the job in the lack of fit conditions

Conditions	High lack of fit	Low lack of fit
Male	3.80 (1.97)	3.20 (1.52)
Female	2.98 (1.64)	3.61 (1.70)

Note. $n = 241$

The higher rating of “male” and the lower rating of “female” in the high lack of fit condition and the other way around (see Table 1) shows that manipulating the job description in a more male or female way has led to the intended evaluations of the job. A MANOVA showed a significant effect of the experimental condition on the ratings of the job as either more male or more female $F(2, 229) = 9.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$. Thus, we can assume a successful manipulation.

Reason for the new employee’s selection. AAP/nAAP condition manipulation check.

We checked whether participants understood that in the AAP condition, an AAP was used. Therefore, we asked participants, for what reason they think the new employee was chosen. In the AAP condition, participants rated “gender” as criterion of selection higher ($M = 3.62, SD = 2.41$) than in the nAAP condition ($M = 2.69, SD = 1.95$). Normal distribution of the variable “gender” was graphically tested and could not be found. Therefore, a Mann-Whitney-U test was conducted to test for a significant difference between the two groups. The manipulation of the AAP vs. nAAP condition can be assumed to have worked due to a significant result ($U = 4088.00, z = -2.84, p = .004, r = .20$).

Research Questions and Hypotheses Testing

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 19. To test hypothesis 1, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). We concluded 3 dependent variables in our analysis (perceived competence, ability, and future success) and the

independent variable “selection criteria” (AAP vs. nAAP). For both hypotheses, MANOVA was used although the assumption of normal distribution of the residuals was not met (see Appendix A), since the sample sizes in our conditions were large enough to assume the robustness of the analysis (Finch, 2005). We did not find a significant main effect for AAP $F(3, 235) = 1.74, p = .16, \eta^2 = .02$, therefore hypothesis 1 could not be confirmed.

For testing hypothesis 2 we repeated the MANOVA and added the variable “lack of fit” (high vs. low), as well as the interaction of selection criteria (AAP vs. nAA) x lack of fit (high vs. low) Hypothesis 2 also had to be rejected $F(3, 233) = 2.37, p = .07, \eta^2 = .03$. Even though we could not find overall significance, the results showed the predicted directions. The mean for competence for the high lack of fit AAP group was $M = 5.39$ ($SD = .80$) and for the low lack of fit AAP group $M = 5.81$ ($SD = .94$). The overall effect of the MANOVA on the dependent variables was not significant. Examining the effects of AAP and lack of fit on the individual dependent variables showed that there was a significant effect for competence $F = 6.61, p = .011, \eta^2 = .027$, but not for future success ($F = 1.94, p = .165, \eta^2 = .01$) and ability ($F = .82, p = .365, \eta^2 = .00$). The divergent results may be based on a relatively low correlation between competence and future success ($r = .55$) and competence and ability ($r = .57$). Although the significant effects of lack of fit on competence should be interpreted with caution, as the MANOVA was only by trend statistically significant, they may indicate that the lack of fit does have an effect on competence but not future success and ability.

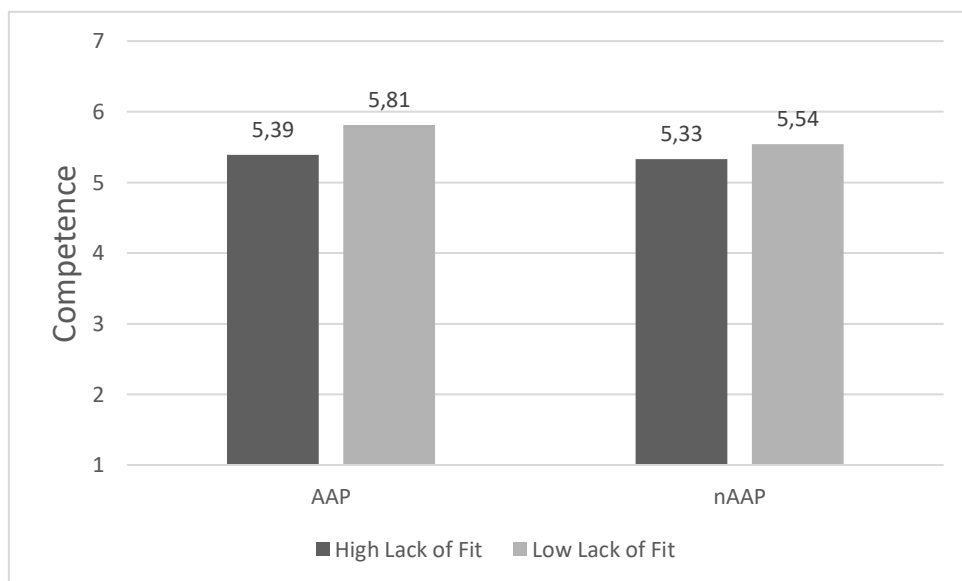


Figure 2. Means of competence in all four conditions

The means for future success and ability were also higher in the low lack of fit AAP condition, indicating that a high lack of fit leads to a worse evaluation of competence, which is in line with hypothesis 2. No interaction effect between the lack of fit and AAP was found $F(3,233) = 2,43, p = .07, \eta^2 = .03$.

Table 2 gives an overview of the Cronbach's α and correlation of the dependent variables with one another.

Table 2
Cronbach's α and correlations for the dependent variables

Variable	Cronbach α	1	2	3
1 Competence	.84	.	.55**	.57**
2 Future success	.74	.55**	.	.60**
3 Ability	.82	.57**	.60**	.

Note. $n = 241$. $p < .01$

Exploratory Analysis

We conducted an exploratory analysis examining the differences in evaluations of male and female participants. Interestingly, male and female participants answered differently. For men, no significant results could be found for AAP $F(3,68) = .63, p = .60, \eta^2 = .03$ and for lack of fit $F(3,68) = 1.14, p = .34, \eta^2 = .05$. For women, on the contrary, the impact of lack of fit was significant unlike for the overall sample $F(3,158) = 2.84, p = .04, \eta^2 = .05$. Table 3 shows that the competence rating is lowest in the AAP/high lack of fit condition, which is in line with the predictions we made (see H2). However, female participants rated the competence highest in the AAP/low lack of fit condition, which is contrary to findings in the framework of the stigma of incompetence. The lack of fit seems to have a stronger impact than the use of an AAP. For a better comparison between the female and the male sample, Table 4 shows the means and standard deviation for competence when only the male individuals of our sample were taken into consideration.

Table 3

Means and standard deviations for competence for an only female sample

Conditions	High lack of fit	Low lack of fit
AAP	5.32 (.80)	5.68 (.95)
nAAP	5.31 (1.00)	5.17 (.89)

Note. $n = 164$

Table 4

Means and standard deviations for competence for an only male sample

Conditions	High lack of fit	Low lack of fit
AAP	5.45 (.79)	5.87 (.95)
nAAP	5.34 (1.06)	5.69 (.96)

Note. $n = 74$

Discussion

The aim of this study was to replicate previous findings on the stigma of incompetence and to examine whether it was enhanced when the lack of fit was high rather than low. Results from an experimental study suggest that the ratings of competence under different conditions did not differ significantly from one another. Hence, our results do not support the conclusions of earlier studies on competence of AAP beneficiaries (e.g. Heilman et al., 1992; Heilman et al., 1998; Heilman & Blader, 2001). There are various possible explanations why the results of past research could not be replicated. Socially desirable answers are often a problem when it comes to studies with a sensitive topic. Earlier studies showed that research on sensitive topics are more likely to be answered in socially desirable patterns (Krumpal, 2011). Participants might have evaluated the new employee as competent independently from the AAP/nAAP conditions, because it is socially more desirable to rate someone's competence higher and participants could have guessed that the study is about a sexism related topic. Future research may try to add more subtle methods to a scenario study like this by letting participants perform an implicit association test (IAT) (Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998) on sexism before filling out the questionnaire. By comparing the results of

the IAT with the ones from the questionnaire, there could be hints whether or not the participant seems to have answered in a socially desirable way.

Additionally, the merit condition may have been ambiguous, not clearly indicating that the participant was not benefitting from an AAP. The “young talent programme” could have been misread as an AAP. Future studies could try to vary the nAAP vignette by not mentioning any programme at all. Another possible explanation for the different findings of our study compared to prior research on this topic is the fact that most of the studies on the stigma of incompetence were conducted in the USA. The use of quotas and affirmative action programmes differs fundamentally in the USA compared to Austria. Quotas are not statutory in the USA (Iyer, 2009) as opposed to Austria, where a law for gender quotas was passed in 1993 (Bundesministerium für Frauen und öffentlichen Dienst, 1993) (Frauenförderungsgebot des Bundes-Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, (B-GIBG)). System justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Kay et al., 2009) describes the process of perceiving current arrangements as fair and just and legitimizing existing social norms and systems. Thus, our sample could be more familiar with the use of affirmative action programmes and would not rate an AAP target dramatically less competent than a merit based new hire. This German speaking sample could therefore be more acceptant of quotas as part of the status quo. This gives an important hint for a practical implication on how to deal with gender quotas in the working environment. Apparently, the acceptance for quotas rises when people are getting used to it. Although there is still a lot of criticism concerning quota policies, going through with AAPs and actually making use of them helps people not to stigmatize AAP beneficiaries as much after some time.

Although we could not find an effect of AAP/nAAP and could not confirm the hypotheses, we did find some notable results on the lack of fit. Exploratory analyses with an only female sample showed significant results with small effects concerning the lack of fit. As described in the results, women answered differently. Women rated the competence of the new employee on average higher in every condition than men. A reason for this could be, that women decisively identify with this topic over men. They could possibly emphasize more with the AAP target presented in the study or even might have been in a similar situation where an AAP has supported them getting a certain position or job.

Limitations and future research

Like all scientific research this study has some limitations which are crucial to mention. Regarding the sample, there are two points that could have biased the results: First, the sample cannot be considered representative for the Austrian population. As we did not have the possibility to recruit paid participants, we used social media platforms to share the link to our study and created a convenient sample. Our sample was rather young ($M = 30.6$, $SD = 11.4$) and highly educated, which could have also caused a bias concerning the attitude towards AAPs for women. Young and highly educated people tend to be more progressive when it comes to supporting women in entering male dominated fields. Finally, the sample consisted of 68.9% women, which can have distortive consequences for the response patterns, especially because of the sensitive gender-related topic of this study.

Concerning the design of the study, the description of the new employee was rather short, which could have led to a reactant reaction by the participants resulting in less commitment with filling out the questionnaire. The short description was necessary though because only then, stereotypical thinking becomes active. In addition, the job of “surgery assistant” might be connotated more female than male which could result in a better evaluation of a female employee.

Future research could vary the study design by using different job vignettes and adding an evaluation for a new male employee. To check whether the provided information was enough, it would be useful to evaluate participant’s experience with the questionnaire. Research on the stigma of incompetence should also be extended for Europe. As the majority of research on this topic comes out of the USA, it would be interesting to see if other studies conducted in Europe or in German speaking countries found similar results to ours. Recent unpublished work also could not support the negative impact on perceived competence for AAP targets (Dreilich, 2018; Rusa, 2020), showing that there might be cultural differences concerning the attitude towards AAPs between people living in the USA and the ones living in Europe.

Conclusion

All in all, this study could not confirm effects of the stigma of incompetence that were found in previous studies (e.g. Heilman et al., 1992; Heilman et al., 1998; Heilman & Blader, 2001). This is in line with other unpublished work (e.g. Dreilich, 2018; Rusa, 2020) on the stigma of incompetence in German speaking countries. The different findings in US studies compared to European studies point out that in Europe there might be a greater familiarity

with AAPs. Also, there could have been a shift in the stigma of incompetence suggesting that there has been a progressive change, meaning that the stigmatization of AAP beneficiaries has become less. The lack of fit does not seem to have an influence on the stigma of incompetence. Nevertheless, future research should vary the research design to closely examine under which conditions the impact of a lack of fit is higher.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Data analysis

1. Testing normality – Results of the Shapiro-Wilk and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test
2. Means of competence rating men vs. women

Appendix B: German abstract

Appendix C: Study

1. Introduction
2. Instruction
3. Job description “surgery assistant”
4. Introduction of new employee “Sarah Berger”
5. Manipulation check name
6. Scale: perceived competence
7. Scale: perceived future success
8. Scale: lack of fit
9. Scale: stereotypes
10. Manipulation check AAP
11. Manipulation check Lack of fit
12. Exclusion reason: Working as doctor/nurse
13. Scale: necessity to promote women
14. Scale: new sexism
15. Demographics
16. Demographics
17. Question: Aim of the study
18. Debriefing and consent

Appendix A: Data analysis

Table 5.

Testing normality

	Kolmogorov- Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
Competence	Significance	Significance
AAP/HLOF	.08	.01
AAP/LLOF	.00	.00
nAAP/HLOF	.00	.03
nAAP/LLOF	.20	.02

Note. n = 241.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Es gibt immer noch einen Mangel an Frauen in bestimmten Berufsfeldern und -positionen. *Affirmative Action Programmes (AAPs)* versuchen Frauen und andere Minderheitsgruppen dabei zu unterstützen, in ebendiese Felder und Positionen eintreten zu können. Der Zweck dieser Arbeit war es, die Auswirkungen von AAPs auf AAP Nutzerinnen im Rahmen des *stigma of incompetence* zu untersuchen. Wir führten die Forschung über das *stigma of incompetence* weiter, indem wir die Rolle des *lack of fit* in diesem theoretischen Feld untersucht haben. 241 Teilnehmer/innen partizipierten in einem online Szenario-Experiment, wo ihnen eine Stellenausschreibung für den Job für eine/n „operationstechnische/r Assistent/in“ und die Beschreibung einer jungen Frau, die für diesen Job ausgewählt wurde, präsentiert wurde. Die Teilnehmer/innen wurden gebeten die Materialien durchzusehen und eine Einschätzung der Kompetenz der neuen Mitarbeiterin zu geben. Die Stellenausschreibung war entweder „männlich“ oder „weiblich“ beschrieben und die Mitarbeiterin wurde entweder durch ein neutrales oder ein Geschlechts-bezogenes AAP unterstützt. Die Ergebnisse zeigen keinen statistisch signifikanten Unterschied zwischen den Bedingungen in Bezug auf die Kompetenz-Bewertung. Somit konnte bereits existierende Forschung zum *stigma of incompetence* nicht repliziert werden. Es gab keine signifikanten Auswirkungen durch den *lack of fit*, dennoch zeigen explorative Analysen, dass ein hoher *lack of fit* zu einer schlechteren Bewertung der Kompetenz führt. Zukünftige Forschung könnte andere Vignetten für die Szenario-Studie verwenden und die Forschung zum *stigma of incompetence* in Europa ausweiten.

Stichwörter: affirmative action programmes (AAPs), Quoten, lack of fit, Stigma der Inkompetenz, Stereotype

Appendix C: study

Page 1: Introduction



0% ausgefüllt

Lieber Teilnehmer, liebe Teilnehmerin,

vielen Dank, dass Sie sich bereit erklären, an dieser Studie, welche Teil unserer Masterarbeit ist, teilzunehmen. Auf der nächsten Seite erfahren Sie mehr zu Studienziel und Ablauf.

Das Bearbeiten des Fragebogens dauert **ca. 10 Minuten**.

Ihre Angaben werden selbstverständlich vertraulich behandelt und nur für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet. Jegliche Angaben werden **anonym** ausgewertet. Die Teilnahme ist freiwillig und kann jederzeit abgebrochen werden.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme!

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Page 2: Instruction



6% ausgefüllt

Studienziel

Operative Eingriffe stellen für viele Menschen eine Ausnahmesituation dar und können Angst machen. Wie gut aufgehoben sich Menschen während einer Operation fühlen, hängt maßgeblich davon ab, wie sehr sie dem Personal vertrauen, welches sie betreut.

Diese Studie ist Teil eines Forschungsprojekts, welches untersucht, was Menschen über das medizinische Personal im operativen Setting denken. Sie werden einen neuen Mitarbeiter bzw. eine neue Mitarbeiterin begutachten, der oder die kürzlich die Ausbildung in einem OP-relevanten Beruf begonnen hat.

Ablauf

Dazu werden Sie 1) die Beschreibung der Stelle sehen. 2) wird Ihnen der neue Mitarbeiter/ die neue Mitarbeiterin vorgestellt. Bitte lesen Sie die Unterlagen gut durch. Danach stellen wir Ihnen ein paar Fragen zu Ihrem ersten Eindruck über den Mitarbeiter/ die Mitarbeiterin. Ihre Einschätzungen werden später mit den tatsächlichen Leistungen des neuen Mitarbeiters/ der neuen Mitarbeiterin verglichen.

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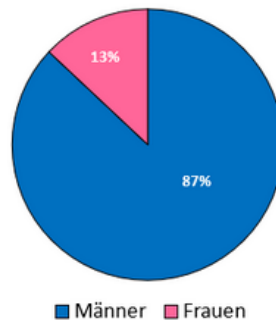
Ausbildungsstelle Operationstechnischer Assistent (m/w)

Wenn du Blut siehst, wird dir NICHT schwindelig? Du kannst hochkonzentriert arbeiten und verfügst über viel Durchhaltevermögen? Dann bringst du schon mal gute Voraussetzungen für diesen Beruf mit! Operationstechnische Assistenz ist ein medizinisch-technischer Beruf, in welchem du die rechte Hand von Chirurgen bist – und zwar vor, während und nach Operationen.

Du solltest folgende Voraussetzungen und Fähigkeiten mitbringen:

- Gute Noten in Mathe und Chemie
- Gutes technisches Verständnis
- Gutes räumliches Vorstellungsvermögen
- Kraft und Durchhaltevermögen

OperationsassistentInnen in Österreich



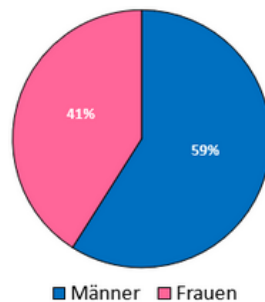
Ausbildungsstelle Operationstechnischer Assistent (m/w)

Wenn du Blut siehst, wird dir NICHT schwindelig? Du kannst hochkonzentriert arbeiten und verfügst über viel Einfühlungsvermögen? Dann bringst du schon mal gute Voraussetzungen für diesen Beruf mit! Operationstechnische Assistenz ist ein medizinisch-pflegerischer Beruf, in welchem du die rechte Hand von Chirurgen bist – und zwar vor, während und nach Operationen.

Du solltest folgende Voraussetzungen und Fähigkeiten mitbringen:

- Gute Noten in Deutsch und Biologie
- Gute Menschenkenntnis
- Gute kommunikative Fähigkeiten
- Freude an der Arbeit im Team und an unterstützenden Tätigkeiten

OperationsassistentInnen in Österreich



Weiter

Page 4a: Introduction of new employee “Sarah Berger” – AAP



17% ausgefüllt

Sarah Berger – Operationsassistentin in Ausbildung

Wir freuen uns, Frau Sarah Berger als unsere neue Operationsassistentin in Ausbildung begrüßen zu dürfen.

Wir konnten Sarah Berger im Rahmen von „**Female Talents – Frauen im OP**“ für den Beruf zur Operationsassistentin begeistern und freuen uns, dass wir ihr im Zuge unseres Programms zur **Förderung weiblichen Nachwuchses** eine Ausbildungsstelle anbieten konnten.

Frau Berger hat im vergangenen Jahr ihre Ausbildung zur diplomierten Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegerin bestanden und danach zunächst ein Praktikum absolviert. Frau Berbers Lieblingsfächer in der Schule waren Biologie, Englisch und Musik. In ihrer Freizeit fährt sie gerne Rad, verbringt viel Zeit mit ihrem Hund und spielt Klavier.

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Page 4b: Introduction of new employee “Sarah Berger” – nAAP



17% ausgefüllt

Sarah Berger – Operationsassistentin in Ausbildung

Wir freuen uns, Frau Sarah Berger als unsere neue Operationsassistentin in Ausbildung begrüßen zu dürfen.

Wir konnten Sarah Berger im Rahmen von „**Young Talents – Junge Talente im OP**“ für den Beruf zur Operationsassistentin begeistern und freuen uns, dass wir ihr im Zuge unseres Programms zur **Förderung junger Menschen** eine Ausbildungsstelle anbieten konnten.

Frau Berger hat im vergangenen Jahr ihre Ausbildung zur diplomierten Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegerin bestanden und danach zunächst ein Praktikum absolviert. Frau Berbers Lieblingsfächer in der Schule waren Biologie, Englisch und Musik. In ihrer Freizeit fährt sie gerne Rad, verbringt viel Zeit mit ihrem Hund und spielt Klavier.

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Page 5: Manipulation check name



22% ausgefüllt

Wie war der Name der vorgestellten Person?

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Page 6: Scale: perceived competence



28% ausgefüllt

Wie war der erste Eindruck, den der neue Mitarbeiter/ die neue Mitarbeiterin bei Ihnen hinterlassen hat?

Antworten Sie bitte so spontan wie möglich. Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten.

Der neue Mitarbeiter/ die neue Mitarbeiterin wirkt...	gar nicht	sehr
qualifiziert	☐	☐
kompetent	☐	☐
geeignet	☐	☐

Weiter

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Page 7: Scale: perceived future success



33% ausgefüllt

Wie könnte die berufliche Zukunft des neuen Mitarbeiters/ der neuen Mitarbeiterin aussehen?

Antworten Sie spontan. Der erste Eindruck zählt.

Der neue Mitarbeiter/ die neue Mitarbeiterin wird...	Gar nicht wahrscheinlich	Sehr wahrscheinlich
sein/ ihr Team gut unterstützen.	☐	☐
eine führende Rolle einnehmen.	☐	☐
im Job erfolgreich sein.	☐	☐
wird dem Arbeitgeber lange treu sein.	☐	☐

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Page 8: Scale: lack of fit



39% ausgefüllt

Wie sehr stimmen Sie folgenden Aussagen zu?

	stimme gar nicht zu	stimme vollkommen zu
Die neue Mitarbeiterin/ der neue Mitarbeiter ist die/ der Richtige für den Job.	☐	☐
Die neue Mitarbeiterin/ der neue Mitarbeiter erfüllt das Anforderungsprofil.	☐	☐
Eine Anderer/ eine Andere wäre besser für den Job geeignet.	☐	☐

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Page 9: Scale: stereotypes



44% ausgefüllt

Bitte bewerten Sie den neuen Mitarbeiter/ die neue Mitarbeiterin bezüglich der folgenden Eigenschaften:

Antworten Sie bitte so spontan wie möglich. Der erste Eindruck zählt.

Der neue Mitarbeiter/ die neue Mitarbeiterin wirkt...	gar nicht	voll und ganz
freundlich	☐	☐
ambitioniert	☐	☐
stark	☐	☐
kompetent	☐	☐
nett	☐	☐
höflich	☐	☐
selbstständig	☐	☐
sympathisch	☐	☐
intelligent	☐	☐
geduldig	☐	☐
einfühlsam	☐	☐
rational	☐	☐

Weiter

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Page 10: Manipulation check AAP



50% ausgefüllt

Welche Faktoren waren Ihrer Meinung nach bei der Auswahl des neuen Mitarbeiters/ der neuen Mitarbeiterin relevant?

	nicht relevant	sehr relevant
Arbeitserfahrung	☐	☐
Fähigkeiten	☐	☐
Geschlecht	☐	☐
Alter	☐	☐
Bildungsniveau	☐	☐

Weiter

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Page 11: Manipulation check: lack of fit



56% ausgefüllt

Bitte geben Sie eine Bewertung des vorgestellten Jobs (Operationsassistentin) an.

Der Job ist...

gar nicht

sehr

typisch männlich

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

typisch weiblich

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Weiter

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Page 12: Exclusion reason: working as a doctor/nurse



61% ausgefüllt

Arbeiten Sie als Arzt/Ärztin oder in der Krankenpflege?

☐ Ja, ich bin Arzt/Ärztin

☐ Ja, ich arbeite in der Krankenpflege

☐ Nein, ich arbeite weder als Arzt/Ärztin noch in der Krankenpflege

Weiter

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Page 13: Scale: necessity to promote women



67% ausgefüllt

Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu:

Antworten Sie bitte so spontan wie möglich. Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten.

Frauenförderung ist...

stimme gar
nicht zu

stimme voll
zu

überflüssig

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

notwendig

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

wichtig

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Weiter

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Page 14: Scale: new sexism

72% ausgefüllt

Wie sehr stimmen Sie folgenden Aussagen zu?

Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten. Wir interessieren uns für Ihre Meinung!

	Stimme gar nicht zu	Stimme voll zu
Frauen können die „Gender-Karte“ zu ihren Gunsten ausspielen; Männer nicht.	☐	☐
Heutzutage bietet der Arbeitsmarkt Männern nicht dieselben Chancen wie Frauen.	☐	☐
Alles in allem erfahren Männer in der heutigen Gesellschaft Respekt.	☐	☐
Die Diskriminierung gegen Männer wird immer stärker.	☐	☐
Es ist offensichtlich, dass die Medien Vorurteile gegenüber Männern hegen.	☐	☐
In der heutigen Gesellschaft können Frauen Dinge äußern, die Männer nicht öffentlich aussprechen könnten.	☐	☐
Männer werden nicht speziell diskriminiert.	☐	☐
Mit ihrer Initiative für Frauenrechte hat die Regierung die Rechte der Männer vernachlässigt.	☐	☐
Feminismus heißt, dass Frauen Männern gegenüber bevorzugt werden.	☐	☐
Männer werden durch den Feminismus nicht diskriminiert.	☐	☐
Wenn überhaupt, erfahren Männer heutzutage mehr Diskriminierung als Frauen.	☐	☐
Alles in allem tragen Männer mehr Verantwortung, genießen aber weniger Vorteile.	☐	☐
Die heutige Gesellschaft bestraft Männer häufig dafür, wenn sie sich männlich verhalten.	☐	☐
Hinter der Gleichstellung von Frauen verbirgt sich die Diskriminierung von Männern.	☐	☐
Wer Frauen mehr Rechte zuspricht, muss dafür häufig Männern Rechte entziehen.	☐	☐

Weiter

Page 15: Demographics



78% ausgefüllt

Welches Geschlecht haben Sie?

- ☐ Weiblich
- ☐ Männlich
- ☐ Divers

Wie alt sind Sie? Jahre

Welche Nationalität haben Sie?

- ☐ Deutschland
- ☐ Österreich
- ☐ Schweiz
- ☐ Anderes Land:

Page 16: Demographics

Welches ist der höchste Bildungsabschluss, den Sie haben?

☐ Pflichtschule

☐ Abgeschlossene Lehre oder Fachausbildung

☐ Fachschule

☐ Reifeprüfung (Matura/Abitur)

☐ Akademischer Abschluss

☐ Anderer Schulabschluss:

Was machen Sie beruflich?

☐ Schüler/in

☐ Student/in

☐ In anderer Ausbildung

☐ Angestellte/r

☐ Selbstständig

☐ Arbeitslos/Arbeit suchend

☐ Hausfrau/Hausmann

☐ Pensionist/in bzw. Rentner/in

☐ Sonstiges:

Weiter

Page 17: Question: aim of the study



83% ausgefüllt

Was denken Sie, worum es in der Studie ging?

Beschreiben Sie das Studienziel kurz in eigenen Worten.

Weiter

[Corina Rusa](#), [Christina Furtner](#), [Viktoria Schwab](#) Universität Wien – 2019



Vielen herzlichen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Studie!

Wir möchten uns bei Ihnen für die Teilnahme an dieser Studie bedanken. Das Ziel der Studie ist es zu untersuchen, wie sich Frauenförderprogramme auf die Bewertung der Kompetenz von jungen Frauen auswirken. Wir möchten Sie darauf aufmerksam machen, dass das Ziel der Studie zu Beginn verschleiert wurde und dass eventuell gezeigte Grafiken der experimentellen Manipulation dienten und nicht die tatsächliche Geschlechterverteilung der gezeigten Berufe/ Studienrichtungen widerspiegeln.

Wir bitten Sie aufrichtig, diese kleine Irreführung zu entschuldigen! Sie können sich sicher vorstellen, dass es bei solchen Fragestellungen zu sozial erwünschten Antworten kommen kann. Um dies zu vermeiden und aussagekräftige Daten zu erhalten, war es leider unumgänglich, das Studienziel zu Beginn zu verbergen.

Bitte behandeln Sie den Inhalt der Studie **vertraulich** und sprechen Sie in den kommenden Wochen (bis die Datenerhebung abgeschlossen ist) nicht mit Anderen darüber – nur so können wir gewährleisten, dass die Studienergebnisse aussagekräftig sind.

Wir freuen uns sehr, wenn Sie den Link für diese Studie weitergeben & teilen. Bitte teilen Sie dabei keine Details zur Studie, sondern benutzen Sie z.B. den folgenden Satz: "Bitte unterstütze diese Masterarbeit und nimm an der folgenden Studie teil."

Wir möchten Ihnen an dieser Stelle noch einmal versichern, dass all Ihre Angaben vertraulich behandelt werden und dass keine Rückschlüsse auf Ihre Person möglich sind.

Bei Fragen und Rückmeldungen schreiben Sie uns gerne per E-Mail, indem Sie untenstehende Namen anklicken.

Ich habe das Debriefing gelesen und...

- ☐ erlaube ausdrücklich die Verwendung meiner Angaben zu wissenschaftlichen Zwecken.
- ☐ möchte nicht, dass meine Angaben für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet werden.