

Negativity and positivity effects in person perception and inference: Ability versus morality

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Abstract

The present paper deals with negativity and positivity effects in trait inferences and impression formation. In the first experiment we tested the suggestion of Skowronski and Carlston (1987) that in the domain of morality negative information is more diagnostic, will therefore receive more weight and result in a negativity effect whereas in the domain of abilities, positive information is more diagnostic resulting in positivity effects. Results of our first experiment support these predictions: negative behavioural information leads to more certain inferences concerning morality and positive behavioural information leads to more certain inferences concerning ability. In a second experiment, we investigated the relative weight of positive versus negative ability- and morality-related traits in an impression formation task. We counterposed traits from both morality and ability domains to see which was the most dominant in determining evaluative impressions. Findings of this second experiment showed strong negativity effects but also revealed that information related to morality is more influential in forming an evaluative impression than equally extreme information related to ability. Theoretical implications of these findings are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In forming an overall impression of others we are often confronted with a variety of information about their characteristics, traits and behaviours. Research on person perception and information integration repeatedly demonstrates that an impression does not reflect all different attributes to the same extent, but tends to be disproportionately influenced by evaluatively *negative* characteristics of the target. This tendency of over-emphasizing negative information is often referred to as the negativity effect (Anderson, 1965; Birnbaum, 1972; Dreben, Fiske and Hastie, 1979; Van der Pligt and Eiser, 1980).

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However, several researchers (Reeder and Brewer, 1979; Skowronski and Carlston, 1987, 1989) have queried the general character of the negativity effect in person perception. These authors suggest that the impact of negative information is a function of the *type* of personality judgement which is being made and argue that a distinction should be made between judgemental dimensions concerning the morality (e.g. honesty) and the ability (e.g. intelligence, skills) of an actor. Morality and ability appear to be two central dimensions in the way people organize and evaluate impressions of other people (Rosenberg and Sedlak, 1972) and of themselves (Wegner and Vallacher, 1980; Van Lange, *in press*). The main purpose of the experiments presented in this paper is to examine the negativity effect in the context of information about a person's morality or ability.

Reeder and Brewer (1979) have argued that people perceive different relations between dispositions and behaviours depending on the nature of the dimension that underlies the attribute to be judged. Perceived relationships between dispositions and behaviours are called implicational schemata. According to Reeder and colleagues (Reeder and Brewer, 1979; Reeder and Spores, 1983), the implicational schema for behaviours and dispositions concerning both morality and ability, is hierarchically structured. It is proposed that an individual with a moral disposition is behaviourally restricted whereas an individual with an immoral disposition is not. The implicational schema of honesty for example, reflects that honest people ought to behave in correspondence with their disposition and to refrain from dishonest behaviour under all circumstances. Dishonest people on the other hand, are not expected to behave dishonestly all the time; it may sometimes be opportune to act honestly to obtain a desirable outcome. By contrast, the opposite directional tendency applies to ability-related dimensions. It is assumed that an individual with an ability disposition is not behaviourally restricted and that restrictions apply only to an individual with an inability disposition. Individuals at the high end of an ability continuum are thought to be capable of specific tasks but may sometimes fail to succeed because of situational factors. Less capable people are not expected to achieve at levels above their disposition because they simply lack the ability. Reeder and Brewer (1979) reasoned that in the moral domain negative information leads to more certain inferences of an individual's disposition. Inferences of dispositions concerning ability, on the other hand, are made with greater certainty on the basis of positive information. Consequently, negative information about morality and positive information about ability will be accentuated, resulting in negativity or positivity effects respectively.

Skowronski and Carlston (1987, 1989) make a similar distinction between morality- and ability-related behaviour and traits. They argue that negative behaviour in a morality domain is informative and more diagnostic while positive behaviour is often ambiguous; positive behaviour can be exhibited by both moral and immoral actors. Because of the highly diagnostic value of immoral information, this type of behaviour will receive more weight resulting in a negativity effect. In an ability domain however, positive or skilful behaviour is more diagnostic than negative or unskilful information. Skilful performances are considered as characteristic for skilful actors while unskilful performances can be associated with both unskilful and skilful actors. More weight will thus be placed on positive or skilful behaviour. In sum, Skowronski and Carlston argue that positivity effects will occur in an ability domain with negativity effects occurring in the domain of morality.

The related explanations of Reeder and Brewer (1979) and Skowronski and Carlston (1987) for the negativity effect are in contrast with the frequently-cited *figure-ground* explanations of this phenomenon (e.g. Kanouse and Hanson, 1971; Fiske, 1980). Figure-ground explanations are based on the assumption that people tend to hold moderately positive expectations of other people. Negative information stands out in the light of these positive expectations and therefore receives more weight. Skowronski and Carlston note the existence of positive expectations in both the morality and ability domain but consider it of little relevance to the attribution of dispositions.

In this article, two experiments are presented investigating negativity and positivity effects in the context of morality- and ability-related information. In the first experiment we focus on the informativeness and diagnosticity of low morality behaviours and high ability behaviours for trait-inferences. In the second experiment, we investigate whether the proposed distinction between morality and ability is also of relevance for the study of impression formation.

EXPERIMENT 1

Skowronski and Carlston's diagnosticity account (1987) focuses on the judgmental certainty of trait-inferences based on particular behaviours. They tested this idea by asking subjects to rate the probability that an actor with a given trait would engage in particular behaviour. Specifically, subjects estimated the probability that a certain behavioural instance would be performed by an actor whose trait-description is in accordance with the behavioural instance (e.g. moral behaviour by a moral actor). They also had to rate the probability that the same behavioural instance would be performed by an actor with an inconsistent trait-description (e.g. moral behaviour by an immoral actor). On the basis of this information Skowronski and Carlston calculated the diagnosticity of behavioural instances for opposing trait-categories. As described earlier, their results showed that negative behaviour is more diagnostic in a moral domain while positive behaviour is more diagnostic in an ability domain.

In the present experiment subjects were asked to carry out a more direct inference-task. Subjects were presented with different behavioural instances and asked to make a trait-inference. We thus reversed the procedure of Skowronski and Carlston in which the trait-description was given and subjects had to rate the probability of a particular behaviour. In this way, we tried to examine the inference-process as described by Reeder and Brewer (1979) in a more direct manner. Because behaviours are more apparent or visible than dispositions, it seemed to us that people are more likely to infer dispositions from behaviour than the converse, especially when judging unfamiliar targets. For this reason we decided to test whether the principle holds when the judgement task is reversed in this way.

In accordance with Skowronski and Carlston (1987) we expect that low morality and high ability behaviour will be perceived as more informative or diagnostic than high morality and low ability behaviour. In other words, we predict that immoral behaviour will be associated with greater certainty with immoral than with moral actors whereas moral behaviour can be associated with both immoral actors and moral actors. In an ability domain, on the other hand, we expect the opposite relation:

skilful behaviour is more informative or diagnostic than unskilful behaviour. In this domain we thus predict that skilful behaviour will be associated with skilful actors as opposed to unskilful actors whereas unskilful behaviour can be associated with unskilful actors but also with skilful actors.

Method

Subjects

Forty-seven first year psychology students of the University of Amsterdam received credit points for participating in the experiment which was conducted in groups of eight to ten persons.

Procedure

In a pilot study ($n=26$) we tested a series of behaviours which varied in terms of morality. Four behaviours were selected so that the moral and the immoral behaviours did not differ in terms of extremity. We selected four ability-related behaviours concerning intelligence, according to similar criteria. The pre-test values of the morality and ability behaviours are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Subjects rated to what extent they associated a given behavioural item with a trait category and its opposite category. For both dimensions, each of the four behaviours was combined with two trait categories by asking the subjects: 'A person who ... (behaviour). How likely is it that this person is ... (trait)?' The trait categories used were 'moral' and 'immoral' on the morality dimension and 'intelligent' and 'unintelligent' on the ability dimension. Ratings were made on a 7-point probability scale, ranging from 'extremely unlikely' (1) to 'extremely likely' (7). This resulted in a 4 (behaviours) $\times$ 2 (trait categories) probability matrix for the morality and ability (intelligence) domain respectively. There were two versions of the questionnaire so that each subject provided ratings for only half of the 16 items. In this way each subject rated each behavioural item only once. In Tables 1 and 2 the mean probabilities are presented for two trait-inferences on the basis of four behavioural items in the morality and ability domain.

Table 1. Mean probability of morality inferences on the basis of behaviours varying in morality

Behaviour	Trait-category	
	Moral	Immoral
<i>Extremely moral:</i>		
Cancelled a holiday to look after a sick friend instead (5.86*)	5.50†	2.35
<i>Moderately moral:</i>		
Participates in volunteer project (4.92)	5.50	3.35
<i>Moderately immoral:</i>		
Switches prize labels of two products in order to pay less for the most expensive product (2.99)	2.91	4.96
<i>Extremely immoral:</i>		
Stole money from a fellow student (2.16)	1.91	5.18

*Pre-test values, scores range from '1' (very immoral) to '7' (very moral).

†Scores range from '1' (very unlikely) to '7' (very likely).

Table 2. Mean probability of ability inferences on the basis of behaviours varying in ability (intelligence)

Behaviour	Trait-category	
	Intelligent	Unintelligent
<i>Extremely intelligent:</i>		
Improves a computer program in order to make it more user friendly (5.87*)	5.79†	1.96
<i>Moderately intelligent:</i>		
Solved the cryptogram in the newspaper (4.62)	5.33	2.39
<i>Moderately unintelligent:</i>		
Had trouble figuring out which of two tins of different weight and price is the cheapest (3.20)	2.91	4.79
<i>Extremely unintelligent:</i>		
Needed a calculator to add two numbers of two digits (2.26)	3.00	5.17

* Pre-test values; scores range from '1' (very unintelligent) to '7' (very intelligent).

† Scores range from '1' (very unlikely) to '7' (very likely).

Results

Inconsistent behaviour and traits

Our main prediction was that in a morality domain, low morality behaviour is perceived as more diagnostic than high morality behaviour whereas in an ability domain, high ability behaviour is perceived as more diagnostic than low ability behaviour. We examined this relationship by focusing on the certainty of inferences on the basis of behaviours which are *inconsistent* with the trait to be inferred; a procedure comparable to Skowronski and Carlston's (1987) who took trait-inconsistent behaviours as the unit of analysis. It was tested if an inference of immorality on the basis of high morality behaviour was made with less uncertainty than an inference of morality on the basis of low morality behaviour. In the ability domain, we tested if an inference of ability on the basis of low ability behaviour was made with less uncertainty than an inference of inability on the basis of high ability behaviour.

First, we analysed the most inconsistent behaviours in a 2 (dimension: morality versus ability) $\times$ 2 (position: high morality/ability versus low morality/ability) within-subjects design. This resulted in a main effect for dimension ($F(1,22) = 5.71$; $p < 0.05$) indicating that trait-inference on the basis of inconsistent behaviour are made with greater certainty in an ability domain than in a morality domain. Of greatest interest however, was a highly significant interaction-effect between dimension and position of behaviour ($F(1,22) = 15.41$; $p < 0.001$). As predicted, when an actor behaves inconsistently with the trait to be inferred, inferences of immorality ($M = 2.35$) and ability ($M = 3.00$) are made with less uncertainty than inferences of a morality ($M = 1.91$) and an inability trait ($M = 1.96$).

Moderately inconsistent behaviour was also analysed in a 2 $\times$ 2 analyses of variance and resulted in similar effects. We found a main effect of dimension ($F(1,22) = 5.74$; $p < 0.05$); moderately inconsistent behaviour resulted in more certain inferences in an ability domain than in a moral domain. Results also revealed a significant interaction-effect between dimension and position of behaviour ($F(1,22) = 8.18$; $p < 0.001$) indicating that on the basis of moderately inconsistent behaviour, inferences of

immorality ($M = 3.35$) and ability ($M = 2.91$) are made with greater certainty than inferences of morality ($M = 2.91$) and inability ($M = 2.39$).

Consistent behaviours and traits

Next, we examined the inference of traits which are consistent with the performed behaviours. The most consistent behaviours were also analysed in a 2 (dimension: morality versus ability) $\times$ 2 (position: high morality/ability versus low morality/ability) within-subjects design. This resulted in a main effect of position of behaviour ($F(1,23) = 6.19$; $p < 0.05$) indicating that high morality ($M = 5.50$) and high ability behaviour ($M = 5.79$) underlie more certain inferences of a correspondent disposition than low morality ($M = 5.18$) and low ability behaviour ($M = 5.19$).

For moderately consistent behaviour and traits a similar result was found; analysis of variance with the same factors revealed a significant effect for position of behaviours ($F(1,23) = 7.92$; $p < 0.01$). Moderately moral ($M = 5.50$) and moderately intelligent ($M = 5.33$) behaviour led to more certain inferences of a congruent morality or ability disposition than moderately immoral ($M = 4.96$) and moderately unintelligent ($M = 4.79$) behaviour.

Discussion

The implicational schema theory (Reeder and Brewer, 1979) and diagnosticity explanation (Skowronski and Carlston, 1987) of positivity and negativity biases predict increased informativeness or diagnosticity of immoral behaviour in a moral domain while in an ability domain skilful behaviour is perceived as more informative. In other words, behaviour that is inconsistent with an actor's personality will be perceived as less likely for moral or unskilful actors than for immoral and skilful actors. Results of our more direct test of Skowronski and Carlston's hypothesis in which subjects were asked to make trait-inferences on the basis of behavioural instances support their position. Immoral behaviour is more diagnostic than moral behaviour, such that if an actor behaves immorally, an inference of morality will be less feasible than an inference of immorality might be on the basis of moral behaviour. By contrast, in an ability domain, an inference of inability will be less feasible on the basis of high ability behaviour than an inference of ability on the basis of low ability behaviour. These results were obtained for both extreme and moderate behaviours. We also found that trait-inferences in an ability domain on the basis of inconsistent behaviour are made with more certainty than trait-inferences in a morality domain. One possible, albeit *post hoc*, explanation for this finding is that the ability behaviours used in the experiment were less ambiguous than the moral and immoral behaviours. Overall then, our first experiment supports the prediction that negative behaviour is more informative for judgements of morality but positive information appears to carry a higher diagnostic value for judgements of ability.

The reason for the greater perceived consistency between behaviours and actors rating high on dimensions of morality and ability than behaviours and actors rating low on these dimensions, found both here and by Skowronski and Carlston (1987), is not immediately clear. Skowronski and Carlston explained this results by means of a positivity bias. Favourable traits, like morality and intelligence, are expected to occur more frequently in a population than unfavourable trait, like immorality

and unintelligence. The baseline expectation may be that people possess these traits to some positive degree. If someone acts morally or intelligently, this type of behaviour is then in line with positive expectations which may be reflected in a more certain correspondent inference.

EXPERIMENT 2

Our first experiment established the relevance of a distinction between morality- and ability-related dimensions for the explanation of negativity and positivity effects in trait-inferences. Next, we turn to the question of how negative and positive information on these two dimensions jointly influences evaluative or affective judgements of people. Of relevance here, is another distinction made by Peeters (1983) and Peeters and Czapinski (1990) between two types of evaluative dimensions: 'other-profitability' and 'self-profitability'. They argue that negativity effects are restricted to attributes which underlie a negative other-profitability dimension and do not occur when an attribute is associated with negative self-profitability. For example, 'dishonest' is a negative other-profitability attribute, because it implies negative consequences for those who have to deal with a dishonest person. A trait like 'stupid' however, scores high on a self-profitability dimension, because this attribute leads mainly to negative outcomes for the person him- or herself and is relatively less likely to affect other people. It seems likely that other-profitability mainly concerns the morality dimension while ability is more associated with self-profitability. Indeed, Peeters and Czapinski note that most research in which negativity effects are observed (*cf.* Birnbaum, 1972; Fiske, 1980; Reeder and Spores, 1983), the type of behaviour or traits to be evaluated are attributes such as 'friendliness', 'likeability' or 'honesty', all factors concerning other-profitability. Other-profitability thus refers to morality, while self-profitability refers to abilities and skills.

It seems likely then that morality (other-profitability) will be more closely associated with the evaluative dimension than ability (self-profitability). An impression formation study by Martijn, Spears and Van der Pligt (1990) provides evidence for this assumption. Subjects received six descriptions of an actor in terms of two behaviours. In one condition subjects were presented pairs of behaviours on a moral dimension ('sociableness'¹) while in a second condition six pairs of behaviour were presented on an ability dimension ('analytic thinking'). Subjects were asked to indicate their impression of each actor on two types of scales. The first scale was an 'inference scale' on which subjects had to rate their impressions of the 'morality' (condition 1) or 'ability' (condition 2) of an actor. The second scale was an evaluative scale ranging from 'very negative' to 'very positive'. For each pair of behaviours, we calculated the correlation between the inference scale and the evaluative scale. In the morality domain, high correlations were found between the two ratings (morality and evaluation) ranging from 0.40 to 0.68. In the ability domain, much lower correlations were found between ability inferences and the evaluation of the actor (ranging from 0.11 to 0.33). These results indicate that inferences of the morality of an actor are closely related to evaluative judgements *per se*. Classifying a person as 'immoral' strongly implies a negative evaluation. In the case of abilities, a weaker

¹ In Dutch we used the term 'sociaal voelend', which can be translated as 'social' and 'kind-heartedness'.

relationship between inferences and evaluations is found. Judging a person as 'skilful' does not necessarily imply that we also like this person.

Although the first study provides evidence for the inference process for morality and ability dimensions separately, morality and ability may often be closely intertwined in impression formation. One and the same act can be quite often considered from the perspective of either morality and ability. For instance, cheating at one's income tax without ever being caught may be immoral behaviour in terms of morality but reflect well on one's ability. More generally, the question arises of how people combine evidence of (im)morality and (in)ability when judging another person.

In our second experiment the aim is to see how morality and ability dimensions are weighted when combined and how positive or negative information on one dimension is weighted as compared to positive or negative information on the other. We expect that information about morality will be weighted more heavily in forming an overall evaluative judgement of another person than information about ability.

Method

Subjects

A total of 143 first year psychology students of the University of Amsterdam participated in the experiment.

Materials

On the basis of a pilot study we selected four traits denoting various positions on a moral continuum and four traits on an ability continuum, such that the evaluative ratings of the positive and negative traits did not differ in extremity. The four traits related to morality were: 'honest', 'incorruptible', 'hypocritical' and 'unreliable'. The traits on the ability dimension concerned intelligence: 'clever', 'sharp', 'dull' and 'stupid' (traits translated from the Dutch).

Procedure

In the first part of the experiment, we obtained evaluative ratings for each of these eight single trait descriptions. These traits were presented as follows: 'A person that is ..., I find'. Subjects were asked to rate each trait on a 7-point scale ranging from 'very negative' (1) to 'very positive' (7). In the second part of the experiment, subjects rated eight two-trait pairs on a similar 7-point evaluative rating scale. We presented the two-trait pairs by asking the subjects: 'A person that is both ... and ..., I find'. Each trait-pair consisted of a moral trait and an ability trait. Evaluative sign of the adjectives was varied in 2 (valence of morality trait: positive versus negative) $\times$ 2 (valence of ability trait: positive versus negative) within-subjects design. Specifically, subjects judged eight trait pairings, two for each of the four combinations resulting from this design: both traits positive (*incorruptible* and *clever*; *honest* and *sharp*), morality trait positive, ability trait negative (*incorruptible* and *dull*; *honest* and *stupid*), morality trait negative, ability trait positive (*hypocritical* and *sharp*; *unreliable* and *clever*) and both traits negative (*unreliable* and *dull*; *hypocritical* and *stupid*).

The presentation of the trait-pairs was counterbalanced by reversing the order for half of the subjects (e.g. *sharp* and *incorruptible* versus *incorruptible* and *sharp*).

Results

No effects of order of presentation were found. The evaluative ratings of the positive and negative traits groups were approximately equally extreme. The average extremity (taken from scale midpoint) of the positive traits was 1.32 and the average extremity of the negative traits was 1.41, a non-significant difference.

To test for negativity or positivity effects due to differential weighting of morality or ability traits the following data-transformations were required. First, we calculated the predicted overall judgement one would expect on the basis of the ratings of each of the individual traits in order to compare this with the observed overall judgement of a trait pairing. For example, the mean was calculated of the separate ratings of an 'incorruptible person' and a 'sharp person'. Next, we subtracted this predicted judgement from the overall judgement of an 'incorruptible and sharp person'. In this way, we obtained a difference score whereby a negative value indicates a negativity effect (the judgement of a trait-pair is more negative than the mean judgement of the two traits separately) while a positive value indicates a positivity effect (the judgement of a trait-pair is more positive than the mean judgement of the two traits separately). A difference score of zero means that differential weighting did not occur. Table 3 presents for each type of trait combination, the predicted and observed overall judgement, and the difference scores.

Table 3. Predicted and observed overall judgment for different types of trait combinations

Type of trait combination	Predicted overall judgement* (P)	Observed overall judgement† (O)	Difference (O-P)
Morality positive, ability positive	5.84‡	5.98	0.14
Morality positive, ability negative	4.55	4.46	-0.08
Morality negative, ability positive	4.00	3.22	-0.79
Morality negative, ability negative	2.87	1.95	-0.92

* Mean of separately judged morality trait and ability trait.

† Observed overall judgement of morality and ability trait.

‡ Evaluative ratings range from '1' (very negative) to '7' (very positive).

These difference scores were entered into a 2 (valence of morality trait: positive versus negative) $\times$ 2 (valence of ability trait: positive versus negative) within-subjects analysis of variance. Results indicated a highly significant main effect of valence of morality ($F(1,140) = 264.94$; $p < 0.001$). The difference between the predicted and observed overall judgement is greater and more negative if the actor is described in terms of a negative morality trait than if the actor is described in terms of a positive morality trait. We found another, albeit smaller, main effect for valence of ability ($F(1,140) = 9.03$; $p < 0.01$) similarly indicating that the difference between the predicted and observed overall judgement is more pronounced and more negative when the ability trait in the pair is evaluatively negative.

In sum, results of this analysis show that an integrated judgement of an actor's morality and ability is biased towards the most negative trait of the trait-pair. However, these results also suggest that the effect is strongest when the negative trait

concerns the morality of an actor. To examine this, we compared trait-pairs of inconsistent evaluative sign, namely pairings of a negative morality trait and a positive ability trait versus pairings of a negative ability trait and a positive morality trait. We found a highly significant difference between these two types of trait-pairs ($t(140) = 8.12$; $p < 0.001$). A trait-pair which consists of a negative morality trait and a positive ability is evaluated more negatively relative to the separate judgement of these traits (difference = -0.79) than a trait-pair consisting of a negative ability trait and a positive morality trait (difference between overall judgement and mean judgement of traits separately = -0.08).

Discussion

Results of our second experiment indicate that negative information is more influential in the formation of an evaluative personality judgement than positive information. If various traits are integrated into one overall impression and one of these traits reflects immorality or inability, negativity effects are observed. However, a closer examination of these effects revealed that if negative morality traits are combined with equally extreme positive ability traits, this type of combination leads to a much stronger negativity effect than if the combination consists of a negative ability trait and a positive morality trait.

The strong negativity effect of negative morality information is in agreement with the assumption of Peeters and Czapinski (1990) that information related to morality is highly influential in evaluating other people. A possible explanation for this finding is that morality-related dimensions are more explicitly interpersonal in nature than ability-related dimensions (*cf.* Peeters and Czapinski, 1990; Vallacher, 1980). Another, and perhaps somewhat related explanation for the important role of morality may be that morality behaviour is perceived as more under volitional control than ability behaviour. Ability seems less immediately controllable; one cannot choose to be an excellent athlete. A person is thus arguably less accountable for low ability behaviour than for low morality behaviour which may explain why low ability information plays a less central role in an evaluative judgement of a person.

To summarize, it seems that the morality dimension is associated with negativity effects, both for informational reasons (Reeder and Brewer, 1979; Skowronski and Carlston, 1987), but also, as indicated in the second study, for more evaluative and interpersonal reasons. The positivity effects associated with ability in the first study are purely consistent with the informational account. When information concerning ability and morality is combined, it appears that negativity effects result. Again, the relative dominance of negative morality information in this respect seems to reflect the closer correspondence of this dimension to the evaluative dimension *per se* and the perceived interpersonal consequences of such characteristics (Peeters and Czapinski, 1990).

Taken together, these studies suggest a reason for the greater evidence of negativity effects previously reported in the impression formation literature. Positivity biases may be largely confined to inferences of ability (where high ability is taken as positive), while judgements which require the integration of information, particularly from other dimensions (e.g. morality), may produce negativity biases. An important difference between the two studies presented here then, is that the first was concerned

with inferences on a single dimension, while the second involved the integration of information from different dimensions. In this respect, negative information and particularly negative morality information appears to have primacy or is more central (Asch, 1946) where such integrative evaluative judgements are concerned. To summarize, both positivity and negativity effects can be demonstrated depending on the nature and complexity of the judgemental task. If judgement is restricted to non-integrative inferences based on information from an ability dimension, positivity effects are likely to result. However, as judgements become more multidimensional, integrative and evaluative in character, negativity effects are likely to override this positive information.

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