Disproportionate Influence of Positive and Negative Traits on Judgement.

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The common phrase first impressions are long-lasting has become a cornerstone for most social psychology research in recent decades. First impressions are believed to last over a month with any information we gather from people, be it physical properties, environment they inhabit to both verbal and nonverbal behaviors all proven to contribute significantly to the first impression we develop. While people are adept to making inferences based on information, they gather these impressions impact both their judgements and interpersonal behavior and last long in their memories even after the initial information can no longer be recalled.

Research on social cognition has conceptualized impressions via a number of constructs. One of the most commonly studied form of impression in social cognition is culture. A study by Noguchi, Kamada and Shrira (2014) determined that out cultures and believes affect how we perceive things. Noguchi et al. exposed a set of Japanese and American sample participants to vignette that described a target individual behavior and then later required to rate the targets personality. A control group was required to rate personality without exposure to vignette information. The study showed that majority of Americans used this initial data to guide their judgement of the target’s personality. The Japanese on the other hand used the information more evenly. Noguchi et al. (2014) thus concluded that cultural differences does in fact influence the primacy effect of a person’s perception.

As noted above information we gather from people, be it physical properties, environment they inhabit to both verbal and nonverbal behaviors all significantly affect impressions we develop. A study by Fourakis, and Cone (2019) showed that similar to explicit impressions, primacy effects are also susceptible to implicit effects. The study aimed to determine the influence of information on implicit evaluations. In a three-stage study the researchers were able to carry out a misattribution procedure, priming task test and an implicit association test. The difficulty in measuring implicit impressions means we cannot judge or evaluate the overall impression we form toward something through simple arithmetic such as addition or subtraction. However, the concept can be conceptualized with a rating scale of favorable and unfavorable traits (McKelvie, 1990). In a replica study of Asch’s primacy effect, Nauts et al. (2014) discovered that warmth is often a primary over competence in people’s impressions of others.

We are often encouraged not to judge a book by its cover but rather its content. A study by Gunaydin, Selcuk and Zayas (2017) drew from this concept and analyzed the effect of photos and interaction on impression formulated. The researchers subjected sample participants to photos and determined how respondents rated impression given. Another set of participants interacted with the target before providing their impressions. The study showed that despite interacting with target majority of respondents gave impressions based on the photo.

For this research paper, our study draws from Asch’s Primacy effect study. We hope to determine the effect of both positive and negative traits on impressions developed. The hypothesis for our study is to test primacy effect, or the psychological tendency for first impressions to have a disproportionate influence on judgement of others. Specifically, participants in positive-trait first condition will more strongly agree that a Facebook user is a good person and have a positive impression of her than participants in the negative trait first condition, with those who read a mixed order word listing falling between these extremes.

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