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### Effect of Perception Biases on Associated Value of Stimuli

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# Effect of Perception Biases on Associated Value of Stimuli

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## Truth in the Negativity Bias?

- According to past research, people appear to have a "Negativity Bias" (tendency to focus more on negative information over positive information)
- This study will examine if people are also more likely to believe negative feedback and perceive it as more "truthful" than positive
  - Depending on what is viewed as most truthful can give us insight on the level of importance that is attributed to that stimuli
  - Thus, when given feedback about their performance, which will subjects perceive as being the most truthful or valuable?
- Positive and negative information exists everywhere in daily life; it is important to examine how people perceive them
- Hypothesis: Those in negative condition will be more likely than those in positive to view negative feedback as more truthful than positive feedback

## Methods: University of Montana News Articles as Priming Stimuli

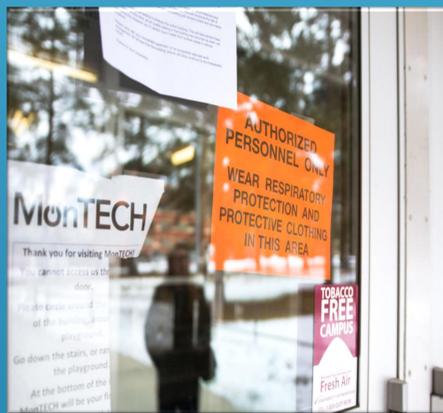
- Participants: 43 University of Montana students
- Independent Variable: Negative/positive priming stimuli (i.e. news articles)
- Dependent Variable: Answer given (i.e. "Bad"/"Good" student)
- Materials: Pencil and paper, "positive" or "negative" Kaimen news story, and the "Truthful" feedback question
- Procedure: 21 participants participated in the "Negative" [N] condition and had to read a negative news story, while 22 others were in the "Positive" condition [P] and had to read a positive news story
  - Then, all participants were given a scenario where two professors provided feedback about their performance as a student and were asked to choose which feedback they believed to be the most truthful

## Evaluation of Truth in P/N Feedback

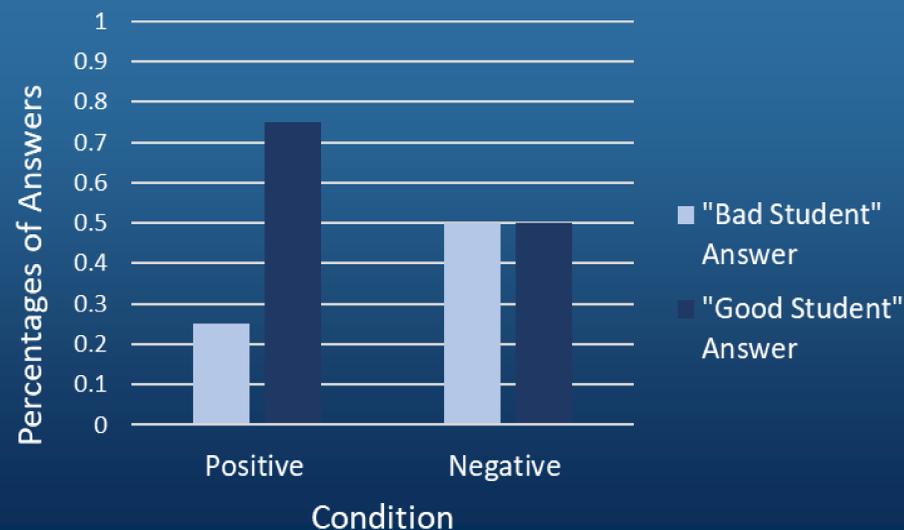
- Please choose which feedback you believe to be the most truthful
  - When talking about your performance as a student, a professor stated, "your work is awful, you are a terrible student!"
  - When talking about your performance as a student, a professor stated, "your work is great, you are an amazing student!"

UM professor brings bags of food and donations to TSA Agents

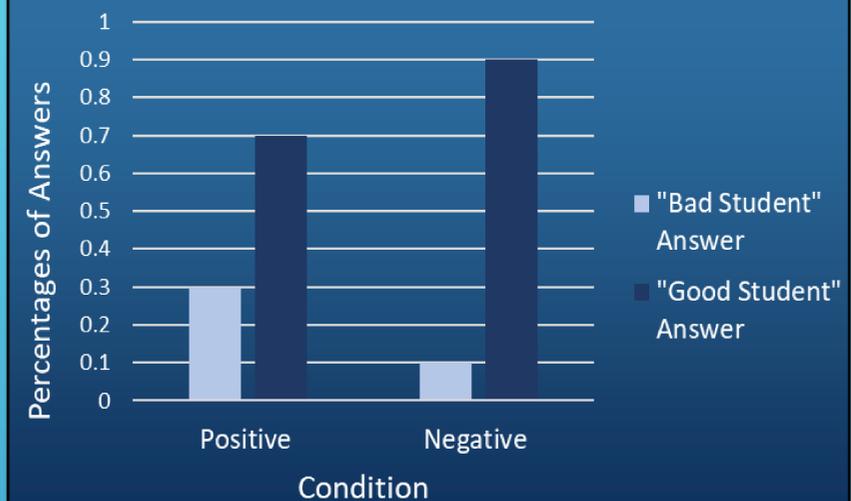
McGill closed indefinitely for asbestos testing



## Expected Results



## Results



- Chi-square (1): 3.23,  $p = .132$ 
  - Results are not significant enough to support hypothesis

## Interpretations and Future Research

- Results weren't significant but showed interesting trend
- Why did the data turn out the way that it did?
  - "Overestimation effect": perhaps students in N condition are very confident!
  - "Ebbinghaus Illusion": comparing performance to kind volunteers in positive article made subjects in P condition feel "not good enough"
- P and N stimuli do affect us, even if it isn't in the way we would expect
- In the future..
  - Generalized (not personal to subject) question?
  - Better measurement for evaluation of truthfulness
  - Less abstract priming stimuli

## References

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- Peters, G. & Czapinski, J. (1990). Positive-Negative Asymmetry in Evaluations: The Distinction Between Affective and Informational Negativity Effects. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 1, 33-60.

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