

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Professional utility and desirability of internality

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Abstract

Many researches converged to a two-dimensional approach of social value: usefulness and desirability. An impressive body of research also shows that internality is positively valued, and that utility is underlying this positive valuation. However, few studies have investigated the possible devaluation of externality. Considering the utilitarian anchoring of internality, we assumed that the positive valuation of internal explanations is not complemented by a devaluation of external explanations. We conducted three successive researches to test this hypothesis. As we presumed, the results show that externality is not stigmatized. Still, contrary to our hypothesis and to other research, internality is only conditionally preferred over externality: preference towards internality only intervenes when the items have a positive polarity. These results are discussed on a theoretical and practical level.

Keywords

internality; social utility; social desirability.

Introduction

One of the important concepts for understanding the impact of the social on judgements and behaviours is the power of social norms (Codol, 1984; Dubois, 2003; Durkheim, 1985; Etzioni, 2000; Foucault, 1969; Nietzsche, 1887; Pharo, 2004; Weber, 1922). Law (Ansald & Vincenti, 2008) or rule (Newcomb, Turne & Converse, 1965; Piéron, 1908) that can be used as generic names for this social norm, but the concepts they cover are not similar. The rule is as explicit as the law (Rousseau, 1762). In this sense, every rule and every law obliges, contrary to the norm. The law only obliges to what is required by the legal code (Bécane, Couderc & Hérim, 2010) and the rule to a method to be followed, as for

example, the rules of a game or grammar rules (Descartes, 1647). Instead, the social norm is discretionary, if it is never drawn-up based on the effect of institutionalized constraints (Dubois, 2009). Moreover, the particularity of a social norm lies in the fact that by conforming to it, it induces, implicitly, a social valuation, which is not always the case for the rule or the law. Thus, Legrand (2007) underlines the fact that “the analysis of norms [...] must always be supplemented by what is really at stake: the analysis of the subjectivation of norms, that is, of the valuation of values” (p. 45). The notion of social norm is also not substitutable for those of customs, traditions or social habits, which provide descriptive information used to depict the social practices shared by the majority,

without necessarily inducing prescriptive information about what is socially valued, contrary to the social norm (Dubois, 2003). This attribution of value, dependent on a given culture, differs from any criterion of truth and is Lamarckian, transmitted socially through the participation to psycho-socio-educational structures (Dubois, Loose, Matteuci & Selleri, 2003). Thus, we believe it is important to examine what this value is.

An entire body of experimental research converges on a two-dimensional approach to social value (Cambon, 2006; Gallay, 1992; Leyens, 1983; Rosenberg & Sedlack, 1972; White, 1980). We would judge people according to two distinct types of values: social utility and social desirability (Beauvois, 1995, 2003). Social desirability (or agreeableness) reflects the knowledge of a person's likelihood to generate positive versus negative affects in others. As for social utility (or social success), it refers to knowing the probabilities of success or failure that a person could confer the society they live in. This utility of the individual is called self profitability by Peeters (1983, 1986). On a conceptual level, the models developed by Peeters and Beauvois (1995, 2003) are different. According to Beauvois, the social utility of an individual, within a given society, is considered to be the result of the adequacy of an individual to a certain fundamental option(s) for his manner of functioning, adequacy which ensures the sustainability of the social system. On the contrary, in Peeters' conception, self-profitability is only adaptive for the individual and thus only has implications for them.

One of the most studied norms is that of internality, defined by Beauvois and Dubois (1988, p. 301), as: "The social valuation of explanations given for psychological events (behaviours and reinforcements) that accentuate the weight of the actor as a causal factor". This social valuation of internality applies both to positive and negative events. The internal causal explanations (effort, skill, state...) would thus have more social value than the external causal explanations (chance, the difficulty of the task, the power held by others...). According to the theorists of the norm of internality, internality is inseparable from the manners of evaluation implied by the

democratic and liberal practices of the exercise of power (Beauvois, 1995). This norm would participate in the social reproduction of liberal societies. Within such a system, the evaluators base their judgments on individual responsibility and merit (Pansu, Bressoux & Louche, 2003). The internality norm allows one to consider that "what people do reflects who they are and must be attributed to them and that which must happen to them (...) is the consequence of what they are" (Beauvois & Le Poulter, 1986, p. 100). On the contrary, according to Dubois (1994), the exercise of authority by reinforcements, as it happens in the case of dictatorships, could very well do without internality. Moreover, the internal profile is more appreciated in a company where the management is more liberal than authoritative (Louche, 1998; Testé, 2009).

An impressive body of research conducted over the past 40 years is in line with the socio normative interpretation of internality:

1) In works using the paradigm of judges, which consists in judging a target known for their more or less established adherence to the norm, a subject put in the position to evaluate (student, social assistant, educator, teacher, recruiter, executant, etc.) grants better judgments in terms of utility to internal than to external targets (Beauvois, Bourjade & Pansu, 1991; Bressoux & Pansu, 1998, 2001; Castra, 1995; Desrumaux, 2005, 2007; Desrumaux-Zagrodnicki, Masclet, Poignet & Sterckeman, 2000; Dompnier, Pansu & Bressoux, 2006; Dubois, 1991, 2005; Dubois & Le Poulter, 1991; Le Poulter, 1986; Le Poulter & Beauvois, 1986; Louche, 1998; Louche, Papet & Pansu, 2001; Luminet, 1996; Pansu, 1997; Pansu & Glibert, 2002).

2) In works based on the paradigm of self-presentation, where participants are invited to render the best image (pro-normative instructions) versus the worst image (counter-normative instructions) possible of themselves to an evaluative body, the answers are more internal in order to be well regarded instead of badly regarded, and all the more so in a formal context (organizational context) involving a judgment of utility (Bressoux & Pansu, 2003; Dompnier & Pansu, 2007, 2010; Dubois, 1988; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Jouffre, Py & Somat, 2008;

Moliner, 2000; Pansu & Gilibert, 2002; Py & Somat, 1991).

3) In the identification paradigm, where participants are invited to expose judgements on their own behalf (standard instructions), and then as they believe others would do, the more the target is valued in terms of utility, the more internality they are attributed (Beauvois, Gilibert, Pansu & Abdellaoui, 1998; Cambon, Djouari & Beauvois, 2006; Dubois & Beauvois, 1996; Dubois, Beauvois, Gilibert & Zentner, 2000; Pansu, Tarquinio & Gilibert, 2005).

4) Internality is acquired through participation in psycho-socio-educational structures (Desrumaux-Zagrodnicki, 1988; Dubois, 1988; Dubois & Le Poutier, 1986; Dubois & Trognon, 1989; Gangloff & Sourisse, 1995).

5) Internality is the privilege of categories holding privileged social positions (Beauvois & Le Poutier, 1986; Pansu, 1994).

From these numerous experimental researches, it emerges that the value underlying the internality norm is utility (Cambon et al., 2001, 2006; Dubois, 2005; Dubois & Beauvois, 2005; Jouffre, Somat & Testé, 2002). Researchers working on the internality norm, which is anchored in utility, have shown that to adopt internal explanations is well seen; on the contrary, few studies have examined the possible devaluation caused by nonconformity. From an epistemic point of view, one may wonder whether the devaluation of external explanations is a corollary to the valuation of internal explanations. Some studies seem to underlie the pertinence of this questioning.

Thus, in a study by Desrumaux-Zagrodnicki (2001), professional recruiters had to prioritize eight files that varied according to three sources of information: the professional experience of the candidates (short internship / two years of professional experience), their results to a professional test (satisfactory / very satisfactory) and their adherence to the norm of internality (internal / external). The variable contributing the most to this ranking was the professional experience. The internal with two years of experience and very satisfactory results to the professional test was ranked 1st, the external

with two years of experience and very satisfactory results to the professional test came 2nd. The internal with two years of experience and satisfactory results to the professional test was relegated to 3rd place. Therefore, externality would not be a crippling criterion. Similarly, in an experiment by Pansu and Gilibert (2002), managers evaluated, on a scale from 0 (totally incapable of occupying the position) to 9 (absolutely capable of occupying the position), different internal versus external files presented either with high performances or average performances. It turned out, as expected, that the internal candidates got better evaluations than the external ones. Nevertheless, the external ones, regardless of their performances (high versus average), were not considered to be incapable of occupying the position. And, if the only information available to the evaluators was that regarding the internality/externality of the target, a lack of negative judgement in terms of utility of the external candidates was noted (Dubois, 2005). Therefore, the internality norm would not be a discriminating criterion in social evaluation: professional efficiency would be the decisive factor (Desrumaux, 2007). Their adherence would then be more of an added value in social competitiveness and would above all allow them to stand out from the others in a positive manner.

We therefore hypothesize that the internal explanations will be more valued than the external ones, but that the latter will nevertheless give rise to more average evaluations (even positive) than negative.

In the first study we examined the influence of internality on the judgements of recruitability and value (utility and desirability). Then, in two other studies, we examined the internality, taking as complementary independent variables the polarity of the event (positive versus negative) and the type of event (reinforcement versus behaviour), having either recruitability (study 2) or value (study 3) as the dependent variable.

The First Study

The first study, based on the paradigm of judges, focused on professional recruitment. After reading a file containing an offer of

employment, the CV of a candidate qualified to apply for the position and their answers to an internality questionnaire, the participants were asked to evaluate the applicant in terms of a recruitability prognosis and different useful and desirable personological descriptors.

Method

Participants

60 students in their first year at the ICN School of Business in Nancy (32 men, 28 women, average age: 22.50) took part in this study.

Experimental Design

We included in the 3×2 factorial design two independent variables: an independent inter-subject variable (internality: internal, external, unspecified) and an independent intra-subject variable (the judgement criterion: useful versus desirable) on which judgements were expressed.

Procedure

We solicited the participants on the campus of the business school and we divided them into 3 groups (a group for each of the 3 candidates, with an equivalent male / female distribution in each group). Their task, individual, was to read the job offer, the CV of a candidate and their answers to an internality questionnaire, and then to express their judgements in terms of recruitability and the value of utility and desirability. We instructed the participants that the procedure was anonymous and we thanked them for their participation. The procedure lasted approximately 15 minutes.

Material

The material contained a file consisting of a job offer for filling the position of a marketing manager in a cosmetic group, a candidate's CV and their answers to various questions. The four questions developed for the study, presented as a representative selection of the applicant's answers to a fictitious social skills test (the "Thapenis test, 1995"), measured the degree of their adherence to the internality norm. We also introduced a monitored condition in which the participants only had access to the job offer and the CV. The four internality/externality items to which the candidate was supposed to answer were structured according to the following dimensions: "polarity of the event" (positive versus negative) and "type of event" (reinforcement versus behaviours):

- 1) You get a promotion; is it more a matter of competence or rather a matter of chance?
- 2) You are working on an audit with great difficulty; is it rather because your task is complex or because you lack efficiency?
- 3) You do not get the bonus you were hoping for; is it rather because you did not know how to negotiate it well or because the economic situation is not right?
- 4) You do not exceed the time planned for a market study; is it rather because your manager was able to well calculate the time it would take for this study or because you knew how to manage your time?

The candidate has answered each of these four items using a nine-point scale. For example, for item 1:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A matter of competence /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/ A matter of chance

The internal candidate has thus opted for four internal answers (having ticked 2 twice and 3 twice) and the external candidate for four external answers (having ticked 7 and 8). Thus, three candidate profiles were formed: one internal, one external and one control candidate only known by his CV.

The recruitability prognosis was established on a five-point scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree with the recruitment) to 5 (strongly agree). Utility and desirability were measured starting from a list of 12 personality traits, presented in alphabetical order, out of which participants were instructed to circle three. This

list was drawn from Gallay’s study (1992): three referred to positive utility traits (ambitious, dynamic and hardworking), three to negative utility traits (absent minded, unstable and naive), three to positive desirability traits (honest, sensitive and pleasant) and three to negative desirability traits (hypocrite, pretentious and boastful). The assessment consisted in calculating, for each target (internal, external or control), the number of useful (positive and negative) and desirable (positive and negative) personological adjectives granted. Each positive personological descriptor was coded +1 and each negative personological descriptor was coded -1. Starting from this coding, for each target, the difference between the positive and the negative traits attributed to them was then calculated, on the one hand for the useful traits and on the other hand for the desirable ones. The utility and desirability scores obtained could thus vary from -3 (if the three traits chosen were all negative) to +3 (if the traits selected were all positive). If a participant failed to opt for any useful or desirable trait, for the value judgement in question (useful or desirable) the number 0 was allotted.

Hypotheses

In what regards the recruitment and utility judgements, we expected for the internal applicant to be more valued than the control applicant and the external applicant, with no

distinction between the latter two. We also expected a positive judgement for the internal applicant and an absence of negative judgement for the external applicant and for the control one.

In what regards the desirability judgement, we expected no differentiation among the internal, the external and the control applicant, with an average or positive judgement for all three candidates.

Results

Recruitability Judgements

The variance analysis results in the absence of an internality effect ($F(2,57)=1.60; p<0.212$). The post hoc comparisons (LSD) showed that the internal candidate only marginally obtains a more advantageous judgement than the external applicant ($F(1,38)=1.76; p<0.084$) and that there is no significant difference neither between the internal candidate and the control candidate ($F(1,38)=0.71; p<0.483$), nor between the external candidate and the control candidate ($F(1,38)=1.10; p<0.276$). However, the internal candidate is evaluated positively ($F(1,38)=2.18; p<0.036; \eta^2=0.05$), while the external candidate ($F(1,38)=0.24; p<0.814$) and the control candidate ($F(1,38)=1.28; p<0.209$) are not distinguished from an average judgement.

Table 1. Mean (and, between brackets, standard deviation) of recruitability judgements

Internal	External	Control
3.12 (1.23)	2.45 (0.94)	2.85 (1.23)

The recruitability prognosis were established on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree with the recruitment) to 5 (strongly agree), with a theoretical mean (i.e. average judgment) of 2.50.

Utility and Desirability Judgments

The results reveal the lack of significance of internality ($F(2,57)=0.97; p<0.386$), of the judgment criterion ($F(1,57)=2.33; p<0.132$), as well as of the internality * judgment criterion interaction ($F(2,57)=0.85; p<0.433$).

In what regards the utility judgments, the post hoc comparisons (LSD) revealed that the internal candidate is only marginally better evaluated than the external one ($F(1,38)=1.77; p<0.082$). There is no significant difference neither between the internal candidate and the control one ($F(1,38)=0.63; p<0.530$), nor between the external candidate and the control

one ($F(1,38)=1.14$; $p<0.260$). The internal candidate ($F(1,38)=3.49$; $p<0.001$; $\eta^2=0.08$) and the control candidate ($F(1,38)=3.10$; $p<0.004$; $\eta^2=0.08$) are evaluated positively by comparison with the average judgment, and the external candidate is not distinguished from the average judgement ($F(1,38)=1.63$; $p<0.111$).

In what regards the desirability judgements, according to the post hoc comparisons (LSD), there is no significant difference between the internal candidate and

the external one ($F(1,38)=0.26$; $p<0.795$), between the internal candidate and the control one ($F(1,38)=0.52$; $p<0.604$), neither between the external applicant and the control applicant ($F(1,38)=0.26$; $p<0.795$). The internal candidate ($F(1,38)=1.30$; $p<0.201$) and the external one ($F(1,38)=1.40$; $p<0.168$) are not significantly differentiated from the average judgment. The control applicant is marginally positively evaluated ($F(1,38)=1.69$; $p<0.098$).

Table 2. Mean (and between brackets, standard deviation) of value judgements

	Internal	External	Control
Utility	1.10 (1.41)	0.40 (1.09)	0.85 (1.23)
Desirability	0.30 (1.03)	0.40 (1.27)	0.50 (1.32)

Each positive adjective was coded +1 and each negative adjective -1. Therefore, the utility or the desirability score could vary from -3 (if 3 negative traits were chosen) to +3 (for 3 positive traits selected), with a theoretical mean (*i.e.* average judgement) of 0.

Discussion

Situated within the socio-cognitive approach of social norms, this study was developed in order to analyse the influence of internality on the evaluative knowledge. In order to do so, we used the paradigm of judges whose implementation has led the participants, on the one hand to issuing a recruitability prognosis, and on the other to attributing useful end/or desirable personological descriptors.

Our forecasts of desirability judgements are confirmed: no distinction is made among the three candidates, each of them being the subject of an average evaluation. In what regards recruitability and utility, the results are a little more complex. In fact, we were expecting an absence of negative judgement for the external applicant and for the control one, and a positive judgement for the internal applicant. We also expected, on an inter-candidate level, that the control applicant and the external one would not distinguish themselves and that they would be less appreciated than the internal applicant.

In compliance with our hypothesis, both in what regards the recruitability judgement and the utility one, the external applicant is not stigmatized and is perceived in an average

manner. This data corroborates with previous results in which the external applicant was not granted negative judgements neither in terms of recruitability, regardless of their performances (strong *versus* average) (Pansu & Gilibert, 2002), nor in terms of utility (Dubois, 2005).

Similarly, in accordance with our expectations, in what regards recruitability, the external candidate and the control one are granted an average judgement, while the internal candidate benefits from a positive judgment.

However, in terms of inter-candidate comparisons, both in terms of recruitability and utility, the internal candidate is not more appreciated neither than the control candidate, nor than the external candidate (and in terms of utility, the control candidate is, as is the internal candidate, the object of a positive evaluation).

This lack of valuation of the internal candidate as compared to the other two is an unexpected result, and we wanted to conduct a second study that would take into account the polarity of the event (positive *versus* negative) and the type of event (reinforcement *versus* behaviour), but centred, in terms of a dependent variable, solely on recruitability. Moreover, Dubois (2005) has shown, in what regards the

utility judgement, an absence of negative judgement for the person known solely for their internal / external answers, and we have decided to suppress the information regarding the job offer and the CV of the candidates.

Second Study

In this study, we invited the participants to read eight internal *versus* external items. These items corresponded to four items of the previous study, but they were doubled by four other items corresponding to the four items of the previous study with a reversed polarity (the positive events become negative, for example “you get a promotion” becomes “you do not get a promotion”, and the negative events become positive, for example “you do not get the bonus you were hoping for” becomes “you get the bonus you were hoping for”).

Method

Participants

120 first- and second-year students of the Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense university (80 women, 40 men, average age: 21.16) participated in the study.

Experimental Design

We included in the $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial on the one hand, an independent inter-subject variable (internality: internal *versus* external), and on the other hand, two independent intra-subject variables (type of events:

reinforcement *versus* behaviour; and polarity of the event: positive *versus* negative).

Procedure

On the campus of the Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense University, we asked students if they would voluntarily take part in this research. Their task was, after reading each item, to express a recruitability judgement. The instructions were as follows: “It is common, during the everyday life, to pass judgement on a person virtually unknown to us. This is what we are studying here. Below you will find the answers checked by a person on a recruitment questionnaire. Your task is to read these answer and, starting from this single answer, to say if you believe they will be or not recruited, by circling the number of your choice on the following scale: 0 (I think that this person will be recruited), 5 (I think that this person will neither be recruited, nor rejected, this being the average judgment), 10 (I think that this person will not be recruited).” The procedure, anonymous, lasted approximately 15 minutes.

Material

The material that we proposed consisted in reading eight scenarios (two positive reinforcements, two negative reinforcements, two positive behaviours and two negative behaviours) to which the job applicant responded internally or externally.

Table 3. *The scenarios*

Event	Type of event	Polarity of the event	Internal answer	External answer
Promotion	Reinforcement	Positive	Competence	Chance
		Negative	Lack of competence	Lack of chance
Easy working	Behaviour	Positive	Efficiency	Easy task
		Negative	Lack of efficiency	Difficult task
Bonus	Reinforcement	Positive	Their good negotiation	Good economic situation
		Negative	Their bad negotiation	Bad economic situation
Does not exceed the time allotted	Behaviour	Positive	Good calculation of their time	Manager’s good calculation of time
		Negative	Bad calculation of their time	Manager’s bad calculation of time

We elaborated 16 situations: 2 reinforcements and 2 behaviours x 2 types of polarity (positive *versus* negative) x 2 answers (internal *versus* external). These 16 situations allowed us the elaboration of four questionnaires, two of them internal and two external: 1) an internal candidate with the items of study 1; 2) an internal candidate with the items of study with reversed polarity; 3) an external candidate

with the items of study 1; 4) an external candidate with the items of study 1 with reversed polarity. Each questionnaire was presented to 30 participants.

As in the previous study, the candidate had answered each item on a nine-point scale. For example, concerning the items about promotion:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A matter of competence /-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/-----/ A matter of chance

The internal candidate has thus opted for four internal answers (having ticked 2 twice and 3 twice) and the external candidate for four external answers (having ticked 7 and 8).

Hypotheses

Only the judgment of recruitability was measured, and it was expected that the internal candidate be more valued than the external, with a positive judgment for the internal and an absence of a negative judgement for the external.

Results

A variance analysis was conducted according to a 2 (polarity of the event: positive *versus* negative) * 2 (type of event: behaviour *versus* reinforcement) * 2 (internality: internal *versus* external) plan. The first two independent variables were manipulated on an intra-subject level and the latter on an inter-subject level.

The results reveal a marginal effect of internality and of the type of event variable, but a significant effect of the polarity of the event variable. Moreover, no internality * type of events interaction was noted and the polarity of event * internality interaction is only marginal.

Table 4. Mean (and between brackets, standard deviation) of recruitability judgements according to internality

		Internal	External
Overall		5.18 (1.08)	5.61 (1.32)
Polarity	Positive	4.10 (1.06)	4.88 (1.54)
	Negative	6.25 (1.04)	6.33 (0.81)
Type	Reinforcement	5.44 (1.72)	5.70 (1.72)
	Behaviour	4.91 (1.45)	5.52 (1.67)

The recruitment prognoses were established on a scale from 0 (will be recruited) to 10 (will not be recruited), with a theoretical mean (*i.e.* average judgment) of 5.

The Effect of Global Internality

We only notice a marginal effect of internality ($F(1,118)=3.89$; $p<0.051$). The two by two comparison (LSD) shows that the internal candidate is not evaluated more favorably than the external one ($F(1,118)=1.62$; $p<0.108$). Moreover, the internal candidate is not

distinguished from the average judgment ($F(1,58)=0.90$; $p<0.369$), while the external is devalued by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,58)=2.33$; $p<0.001$; $\eta^2=0.04$).

The Effect of Internality According to the Polarity of the Event

We notice an effect of the polarity of the event ($F(1,118)=76.78$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.39$) and a marginal effect of the polarity of the event * internality interaction ($F(1,118)=2.90$; $p<0.091$). This result shows that both targets (internal and external) obtain judgements differentiated by the positive and negative events: the internal candidate is more valued than the external candidate when the polarity is positive, but it is not differentiated in case of a negative polarity.

In the case of positive events, the internal candidate is better evaluated than the external one ($F(1;118)=2.65$; $p<0.009$; $\eta^2=0.02$). The internal candidate is positively evaluated ($F(1,58)=4.66$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.07$), but the external one is not distinguished from the average judgement ($F(1,58)=0.41$; $p<0.680$).

For the negative events, the internal candidate and the external one are not differentiated, ($F(1;118)=4.90$; $p<0.779$). The internal candidate ($F(1,58)=6.54$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.10$) and the external candidate ($F(1,58)=9.01$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.13$) are devalued by comparison with the average judgement.

The internal candidate is better judged for the positive events than for the negative events ($F(1;58)=7.26$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.11$) and the same is valid for the external candidate ($F(1;58)=4.90$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.08$).

The Effect of Internality According to the Type of the Event

We notice a marginal effect of the type of the event variable ($F(1,118)=3.02$; $p<0.085$) and no internality * type of the event interaction ($F(1,118)=0.72$; $p<0.398$). The analysis of this effect shows that in terms of reinforcements, the internal and the external candidates are subject to similar judgements, and that in terms of behaviours, the internal and the external candidates are only marginally distinguished.

In terms of reinforcements, the internal and the external candidates are not distinguished

($F(1;118)=0.79$; $p<0.428$). The internal candidate is subjected to a marginal negative evaluation by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,58)=1.75$; $p<0.084$) and the external candidate is granted a negative appreciation by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,58)=3.43$; $p<0.001$; $\eta^2=0.06$).

In terms of behaviours, the internal candidate is only marginally better judged than the external one ($F(1;118)=1.71$; $p<0.091$). The internal candidate is not distinguished from the average judgment ($F(1,58)=0.43$; $p<0.670$) and the external candidate is only marginally negatively evaluated compared to the average judgement ($F(1,58)=1.82$; $p<0.072$).

The internal candidate is marginally better evaluated for behaviours than for reinforcements ($F(1;58)=1.84$; $p<0.068$) and the external candidate is not differentiated in terms of behaviours and reinforcements ($F(1;58)=0.59$; $p<0.558$).

Discussion

Overall, the internal candidate (which is not distinguished from the average judgement) is not considered more recruitable than the external one (which is devalued by comparison to the average judgment). Moreover, a more detailed analysis, item by item, shows that the internal candidate is better evaluated than the external one solely on one item (obtaining a promotion), with a positive judgement being attributed to the internal candidate and a negative one to the external. For the other seven items, the internal candidate is not significantly better judged than the external one.

We also note that the type of the event variable does not interfere: the behaviours and the reinforcements give rise to the same judgements, whether for the internal or for the external candidate, with no differentiation between the internal candidate (who is the object of an average judgement) and the external candidate (who is situated on an average level in terms of behaviours and subjected to a negative appreciation in terms of reinforcements), for both behaviours and reinforcements.

On the contrary, we observe an effect of the polarity of the event: in case of positive events, the internal candidate is actually considered more recruitable than the external one (with a positive evaluation being granted to the internal candidate and an average judgement to the external); on the other hand, in case of negative events, the internal and the external candidates are not distinguished (with a negative judgement being attributed to each of them). We also note that both the internal and the external candidates are better evaluated in the case of positive events than in the case of negative events.

The results of this study suggest that self-attribution of positive events leads to positive judgements, while self-attributing negative events is not necessarily a winning strategy in professional recruitment. The polarity of the events therefore appears to be central. Thus, the effect obtained by the polarity of the events seems to explain the lack of impact of internality both in this study and in the previous one (the internal candidate from this second study is not differentiated from the internal candidate from the previous study, and the same applies to the external candidate). These results are also consistent with our hypothesis according to which externality would not, in itself, lead to negative judgements and thus, internality would only correspond to an added value, a conditional surplus in the social evaluation.

Having said that, just as we had, from the first to the second study, widened our questioning by introducing new independent variables (type and polarity of events), we wished, in a third and final study, to refine our results with a new enlargement consisting of a modification of the situational context proposed to our participants. As Pansu (1997) points out, altering the context in which research participants are confronted can alter the data that one is likely to obtain. Therefore, in this last study, we have taken into account the same independent variables as before, but by replacing the context of recruitment with that of academic evaluations, and focusing only on the two-dimensional aspect of the value, that is examining only judgments of utility and desirability of internal (vs. external) attributions on academic evaluations.

Third Study

In this study, participants were invited to read internal *versus* external scenarios. After reading each scenario, they had to express their judgement on a -10 to +10 scale regarding either utility or desirability.

Method

Participants

80 students enrolled in the first and second year with the University of Nancy II (34 men, 46 women, average age: 21) have taken part in the study.

Experimental Design

The $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial plan involved, on the one hand, two inter-subject independent variables: internality (internal *versus* external) and judgement criterion (utility *versus* desirability) and, on the other hand, two intra-subject independent variables: type of events (reinforcement *versus* behaviour) and the polarity of the event (positive *versus* negative).

Procedure

On the university site, students were asked if they agreed to participate in the research. Their task was, after reading each scenario, to express a utility or a desirability judgement. The procedure, individual and anonymous, lasted approximately 15 minutes.

In terms of utility, the participants had to indicate the degree to which they estimated that the person whose answers they read, in view of those answers, was someone who had everything they needed in order to succeed in life, by evaluating them on a +10 to -10 scale (knowing that +10 meant having everything needed in order to succeed in life and -10 having nothing of what was needed in order to succeed in life). For the situation in which the participants were invited to express themselves regarding a desirability judgement, they had to evaluate the target on a scale from +10 to -10 (knowing that +10 meant that they had everything they needed in order to be loved and -10 meant that they had

nothing of what was needed in order to be loved).

Material

The material proposed to the participants was based on eight scenarios related to the norm of internality. Each scenario involved a dialogue between two students: one sentence was issued by a student and another answered it. Eight different phrases and 16 corresponding answers (for each phrase issued, an internal or external answer) have thus been elaborated. These scenarios were inspired from the individualistic pattern questionnaire (QEPI) (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005): the events of their items have been resumed with the corresponding internal or external explanations. The participants read either the internal, or the external answer to the phrase issued. For example, one student would say: “There is a person, in my group, who is well evaluated by the professor.” The internal response would be: “When we are well evaluated, it is no doubt because of the things we have done.” And the external answer would be: “We can be well evaluated without really knowing what for.” Two questionnaires were created: half of the participants were confronted with a questionnaire consisting in eight internal scenarios, and the other half with a questionnaire involving eight external scenarios.

The eight different phrases relating to internality were structured according to the “polarity of the event” and the “type of the event” dimensions. Each participant was thus confronted with two positive behaviours, two negative behaviours, two positive reinforcements and two negative reinforcements.

Hypotheses

It was expected, in what regards the judgment of utility, that the internal target be more valued than the external, with a positive evaluation for the internal and a lack of negative judgement for the external. In what regards the judgement of desirability, it was expected for the internal target not to be distinguished from the external, with average judgements for the internal and the external.

Results

An analysis of variance was carried out according to a 2 (internality: internal *versus* external) * 2 (judgement criterion: desirable *versus* useful) * 2 (type of events: behaviour *versus* reinforcement) * 2 (polarity of the event: positive *versus* negative) plan. The first two independent variables were manipulated into inter-subject and the latter two into intra-subject.

Table 5. Mean (and between brackets, the standard deviation) of value judgements (utility and desirability)

		Internal	External
Overall		1.17 (1.96)	-0.53 (1.73)
Criterion	Utility	1.42 (1.84)	0.40 (1.41)
	Desirability	0.92 (2.08)	-1.47 (2.07)
Reinforcement	Utility	2.19 (2.06)	1.44 (2.42)
	Desirability	0.64 (2.06)	0.35 (2.72)
Behaviour	Utility	0.65 (2.96)	-0.64 (2.12)
	Desirability	1.21 (2.78)	-3.29 (3.07)
Positive polarity	Utility	4.71 (1.98)	-0.24 (1.91)
	Desirability	3.91 (1.46)	0.78 (2.82)
Negative polarity	Utility	-1.88 (2.64)	1.04 (2.58)
	Desirability	-2.06 (3.73)	-2.16 (2.66)

The judgments of utility and desirability were established on a -10 (negative evaluation) to +10 (positive evaluation) scale, with a theoretical mean (*i.e.* average judgement) of 0.

The results of this analysis reveal the significance of internality, of the judgment criterion, of the type of events and of the polarity of the event. Similarly, we can see the significance of the internality * judgement criterion * type of events interactions, and that of the internality * judgement criterion * polarity of the event interactions ($F(1,76)=4.40$; $p<0.039$; $\eta^2=0.05$).

The Influence of Internality on Utility and Desirability Combined

We note an effect of internality ($F(1,76)=16.65$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.18$). The two by two comparison (LSD) shows that the internal target is considered to have more value (utility and desirability combined) than the external ($F(1,76)=3.87$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.05$), with as much valuation for the internal ($M=1,17$) as devaluation for the external ($M=-0,53$), ($F(1,76)=1.5$; $p<0.138$)¹. The internal target is positively appreciated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=3.79$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.09$) and the external is only marginally differentiated from the average judgment ($F(1,38)=1.70$; $p<0.094$).

The Influence of Internality according to the Judgment Criteria (Desirability and Utility)

We notice an effect of the judgement criterion ($F(1,76)=7.98$; $p<0.006$; $\eta^2=0.10$). We notice no internality * judgement criterion interaction ($F(1,76)=2.70$; $p<0.104$). Both targets (internal and external) give rise to undifferentiated judgements in terms of utility and desirability.

In what regards the utility judgement, the internal target is only marginally better evaluated than the external ($F(1,38)=1.72$; $p<0.089$). The internal target is positively evaluated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=3.45$; $p<0.001$; $\eta^2=0.08$)

and the external target is not distinguished from the average judgement ($F(1,38)=1.27$; $p<0.214$).

In what regards the judgement of desirability, the internal target is more appreciated than the external ($F(1,38)=4,05$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.10$), with as much valuation for the internal as devaluation for the external ($F(1,38)=0.83$; $p<0.361$). The internal is only marginally positively evaluated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=1.99$; $p<0.053$) and the external is devaluated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=3.17$; $p<0.003$; $\eta^2=0.08$).

Finally, the internal target is not distinguished in terms of utility and desirability judgments ($F(1,38)=0.84$; $p<0.406$) and the external is less well judged in terms of the desirability index than that of utility ($F(1,38)=3.16$; $p<0.002$; $\eta^2=0.08$).

The Influence of Internality for each type of Event (Reinforcement and Behaviour) according to the Judgment Criteria (Desirability and Utility)

We notice an effect of the type of the events ($F(1,76)=16.62$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.18$). We obtain an effect of the internality * judgement criterion * type of events interaction ($F(1,76)=5.04$; $p<0.028$; $\eta^2=0.06$). The analysis of this effect shows that the two targets (internal and external) obtain differentiated judgements in terms of utility and desirability for reinforcement and behaviour.

In what regards reinforcements, in terms of utility judgement, the internal and the external targets are not distinguished ($F(1,38)=0.96$; $p<0.339$). The internal ($F(1,38)=4.74$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.11$) and the external ($F(1,38)=2.66$; $p<0.012$; $\eta^2=0.07$) targets are

¹ On the scale used from -10 to +10 (with 0 as average judgment), the internal target has obtained a valuation score of $M=1.17$, and the external an average rating of devaluation of $M=-0.53$, which corresponds (on the scale used) to a devaluation score of $M=|-0.53|=0.53$. By comparing the valuation score of the internal target ($M=1.17$) with that of devaluation of the external target ($M=|-0.53|=0.53$), it resulted in the absence of a significant difference, which means that there is as much value for the internal target as there is devaluation for the external.

positively evaluated by comparison with the average judgement.

In terms of desirability, the internal target is not differentiated from the external ($F(1,38)=0.37$; $p<0.713$). The internal ($F(1,38)=1.09$; $p<0.281$) and the external ($F(1,38)=0.57$; $p<0.569$) targets are not distinguished from the average judgement.

The internal is considered more useful than desirable ($F(1,38)=1.99$; $p<0.050$; $\eta^2=0.05$). The external obtains undifferentiated judgements in terms of utility and desirability ($F(1,38)=1.39$; $p<0.167$).

In what regards behaviours, in terms of the utility judgement, the internal target is not distinguished from the external ($F(1,38)=1.48$; $p<0.144$), with as much valuation for the internal, as devaluation for the external ($F(1,38)=0.02$; $p<0.988$). The internal ($F(1,38)=0.98$; $p<0.333$) and the external targets ($F(1,38)=1.34$; $p<0.187$) are not differentiated from the average judgement.

In terms of desirability judgement, the external target is depreciated by comparison with the internal ($F(1,38)=5.15$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.12$), with more devaluation for the external, than valuation for the internal ($F(1,38)=2.24$; $p<0.031$; $\eta^2=0.06$). The internal target is only marginally positively appreciated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=1.95$; $p<0.059$) and the external target is devaluated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=4.79$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.11$).

The internal target is not distinguished in terms of utility and desirability judgments ($F(1,38)=0.64$; $p<0.521$) and the external is more valued in terms of desirability than in terms of utility ($F(1,38)=3.04$; $p<0.003$; $\eta^2=0.07$).

The Influence of Internality for each Event Polarity (Positive and Negative) according to the Judgment Criteria (Desirability and Utility)

We notice an effect of the polarity of the event ($F(1,76)=65.89$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.46$) and an internality * judgement criterion * event polarity interaction ($F(1,76)=4.40$; $p<0.039$; $\eta^2=0.05$). The analysis of this effect reveals

that both targets (internal and external) lead to differentiated judgments in terms of utility and desirability for both positive and negative events.

For the events of a positive polarity, in terms of utility judgement, the internal target is more valued than the external ($F(1,38)=7.44$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.16$), with more valuation for the internal, than devaluation for the external, ($F(1,38)=7.26$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.16$). The internal is positively evaluated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=10.61$; $p\approx 0.000$, $\eta^2=0.22$), while the external is undifferentiated from the average judgement ($F(1,38)=0.56$; $p<0.581$).

Similarly, in terms of the desirability judgement, the internal target is better evaluated than the external ($F(1,38)=7.05$; $p\approx 0.000$, $\eta^2=0.16$), with more valuation for the internal than devaluation for the external ($F(1,38)=4.41$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.10$). The internal is positively appreciated by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=11.97$; $p\approx 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.24$), while the external is not distinguished from the average judgement ($F(1,38)=1.23$; $p<0.227$).

Moreover, the internal target is not differentiated in terms of utility and desirability judgments ($F(1,38)=1.20$; $p<0.233$), and the same applies to the external target ($F(1,38)=0.81$; $p<0.421$).

In what regards the events of a negative polarity, in terms of the utility judgement, it is the external target that is more valued than the internal ($F(1,38)=3.13$; $p<0.002$; $\eta^2=0.08$). The internal target is attributed a negative appreciation by comparison with the average judgement ($F(1,38)=3.18$; $p<0.003$; $\eta^2=0.08$) and the external is not differentiated from the average judgement ($F(1,38)=1.80$; $p<0.080$).

In terms of the desirability judgement, the internal target is not distinguished ($F(1,38)=0.11$; $p<0.915$). The internal target ($F(1,38)=2.47$; $p<0.018$; $\eta^2=0.06$) and the external target ($F(1,38)=3.63$; $p<0.001$; $\eta^2=0.09$) are devalued by comparison with the average judgement.

The internal target is not differentiated in terms of utility and desirability judgements ($F(1,38)=3.13$; $p<0.841$), but the external is more depreciated in terms of desirability than

in terms of utility ($F(1,38)=3.44$; $p<0.001$; $\eta^2=0.08$).

Discussion

Overall, that is to say, without differentiating utility from desirability and without taking into account neither the type, nor the valence of the events, the internal target is at the moment valued by comparison with the external, with a positive appreciation by comparison with the average judgement being granted to the internal target, and an average evaluation to the external. This data, which is in line with our hypotheses, seems however misleading if we perform a variable analysis.

In fact, in terms of utility, if one takes into account neither the polarity nor the type of the event, and solely internality, we notice that the internal is not valued by comparison to the external, even if the internal is evaluated positively in relation to the average judgement while the external is not differentiated from the average judgement. The finer analyses show that this is observed both for reinforcements, as well as for behaviours: whatever the type of the event, the internal and the external are not distinguished, with both the internal and the external targets being granted a positive evaluation by comparison to the average judgement in case of reinforcements and a non-differentiation from the average judgement in terms of behaviours. Moreover, on the polarity level, we notice that it is solely for the positive events that the internal is more valued than the external, with a positive evaluation by comparison to the average judgment for the internal, while the external is not differentiated from the average judgement; on the contrary, for positive events, the internal is not judged less useful than the external, with a positive appreciation by comparison with the average judgement for the internal while the external is not differentiated from the average judgment. An item-by-item analysis also shows, again for the sake of utility, that the internal target benefits from a higher evaluation than the external only in half of the cases, and that these cases concern only, but completely, the positive events (scenarios 1, 3, 5 and 7); in three other cases, the internal is not differentiated from the external (scenarios 4, 6 and 8) and is less well evaluated than the

external in one case (scenario 2). We thus notice that, by comparison with the average judgement, the internal is evaluated positively only in the four positive scenarios (scenarios 1, 3, 5 and 7), with an average evaluation in three scenarios (scenarios 4, 6 and 8) and a negative evaluation in one case (scenario 2). As for the external target, we notice, by comparison to the average judgement, that they are the subject of a negative evaluation only in one case (scenario 7), in the other cases being judged positively (scenarios 2 and 8) or in an average manner (scenarios 1, 3, 4, 5, 6).

We had assumed that the internal would be considered more useful than the external, with a positive evaluation for the internal. This hypothesis is infirmed: in fact, it is the polarity of the event that serves as a differentiating criterion, with a more positive position of the internal target by comparison to the external one and to average judgement. By contrary, as expected, we notice an absence of negative judgement for the external target

In what regards desirability, if one does not take into account the polarity or the type of the event, and thus only takes into account internality, one notices that the internal target is more appreciated than the external, with, by comparison to the average judgement, an average evaluation of the internal and a negative evaluation of the external. The finer analyses also show that, in what regards behaviours, the internal target is more valued than the external, with, by comparison with the average judgement, an average evaluation of the internal and a negative evaluation of the external; on the contrary, only in terms of reinforcements are the internal and the external targets not differentiated and not distinguished from the average judgement. In addition, we notice again an influence of polarity: for positive events, the internal target is more valued than the external, with a positive evaluation by comparison to the average judgement for the internal, while the external is not differentiated from the average judgement; and it is only in the case of negative events that the two targets are not distinguished, each being devalued by comparison with the average judgement. Finally, to end with desirability, the analysis by scenario shows that the internal target benefits from an evaluation superior to that of

the external in three cases (scenarios 1, 3, 6), that the external is more appreciated than the internal in one scenario (scenario 2), and that the internal and the external are not evaluated in the same manner in four cases (scenarios 4, 5, 7, 8). By comparison to the average judgement, the internal is positively evaluated in three of the four positive situations (scenarios 1, 3, 5), negatively in one case (scenario 2), and identically in four cases (scenarios 4, 6, 7, 8). As for the positioning of the external target by comparison to the average judgement, we notice that they are also evaluated both in an average manner (scenarios 1, 2, 5), and negatively (scenarios 3, 4, 6, 7, 8).

In terms of desirability we expected for the internal target not to be distinguished from the external, with average judgements for the internal and the external. We notice much more contrasting results, conditioned by the type and the polarity of the events featured. Our hypothesis of identical treatment for the two targets is in fact verified only for reinforcements or for the negative polarity events (whereas in the case of behaviours or events of a positive polarity, the internal target is considered to be more desirable than the external). Moreover, if the internal target is subjected to an average evaluation in terms of reinforcements and behaviours, taking into account the polarity leads to valuation in the case of positive events and to depreciation in the case of negative events. As for the external target, they are devalued in the case of negative behaviours and events. Thus, here we find the predominant influence of the type and the polarity of the events.

Finally, both overall and in case of behaviours, or even regardless of the polarity of the events, the internal target is not distinguished in terms of utility and desirability judgements: they are not judged more useful than desirable in terms of reinforcements. It would therefore seem that the internal target is as much anchored in utility as they are in desirability. In what regards the external targets, they obtain non-differentiated judgments in terms of utility and desirability in what regards reinforcements or positive events, but for negative behaviours or events, they are more devalued in terms of

desirability than utility. So, once again, the type and the polarity of the events do not allow us to reach an unequivocal conclusion.

General Discussion and Conclusion

The objectives of these works were to verify the positive evaluation of internality by comparison to externality, considering that externality would not be stigmatized. More precisely, we expected, for recruitment prognoses and value estimation of utility, a preference for internal candidates without the external being judged negatively, and in terms of desirability, we expected an equivalence of judgements for both the internal and the external targets. We based our expectations on the large body of research that had showed that, by comparison with the external explanations, the internal explanations were more valued in case of the judgments related to utility (Dubois, 2009). Thus, the norm of internality, norm considered to be anchored in utility (Beauvois & Dubois, 2005; Cambon et al., 2001, 2006; Dubois, 2005; Jouffre et al., 2002) would have had, regarding the judgments related to utility, more to do with valuation than devaluation: nonconformity to the norm would result in little or no negative judgement (contrary to the norms based on desirability, such as politeness or respect for the environment which would have more to do with devaluation than with valuation: according to Cabin (2009), Nugier, Niedenthal and Brauer (2009), this devaluation would be linked to negative emotions generated by their lack of conformity).

In the first study, we anticipated a lack of negative judgment for the external candidate, both in terms of recruitability as well as utility. And, indeed, the external candidate was systematically perceived in an average manner. Likewise, our forecasts of judgements in terms of desirability are confirmed: the internal and the external candidates are not distinguished (nor are they differentiated from the control candidate), each of them being subjected to an average evaluation. Nevertheless, in this study, in what regards the recruitability judgements, the internal candidate is not distinguished from

the external candidate. Moreover, since the control applicants and the internal applicants were not differentiated, we have deduced that the additional information on the candidate's adherence to the norm of internality did not bring any social valuation to these judgements.

In the second study, devoted solely to recruitability, it again appears that the internal candidate is not more valued than the external candidate. However, the results of this study provide some explanatory leads. In fact, we notice the impact of the polarity of the events with a primacy of the internal candidate (in relation to both the external candidate and the average judgment) for the events of a positive polarity, while for the events of a negative value, the internal and the external candidates are not distinguished and are both judged negatively.

The polarity effect is also confirmed in the last study that focuses on social utility and social desirability. In terms of utility, it is solely in the case of positive events that the internal target is more valued than the external (with a positive valuation by comparison to the average judgment for the internal target and an average evaluation for the external). Moreover, for negative events, the internal target is considered to be less useful than the external, with a negative appreciation by comparison to the average judgement for the internal, while the external does not differ from the average judgement. And in terms of desirability, we notice that the internal target is valued more (by comparison with the external or with the average judgement) only in the case of the positive events (the external is not differentiated from the average judgment) while for the negative events, the two targets are not distinguished and are both devalued by comparison to the average judgement.

If our results are therefore consistent with our hypothesis according to which externality would not lead to negative judgements on the utility index (and with the results obtained by Mazilescu & Gangloff, 2017, on a population of employees), on the contrary, the valuation of internality is only observed for the positive events. This last aspect could be related to some remarks addressed to the studies on the norm of internality, more specifically, remarks concerning the necessity to consider the

respective valence of the internal and the external items featured in the internality questionnaires (e.g., Dagot, 2002; Delmas, 2009, 2011; Gangloff, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2002).

This being the case, internality brings about other research perspectives, not explored here, and which limit our results. We only considered a recruitment situation and, based on Pansu's suggestions (1997), an evaluation situation of adults in an academic environment. Pansu had, in a recruitment situation, considered that the absence of negative judgments on the external candidate could have come from the evaluation context: according to this author, if, during a professional recruitment interview, a lack of effort or skill (internal causes) is used, rather than a bad economic situation (external cause), it may be harmful to the candidate, but on the contrary, it would be conceivable that in a school context, for example, one could obtain completely opposite results. The acquisition of internality is in fact done through the participation in psycho-socio-educational structures (school system, specialized educational centre, trainings for adults: *acc. to*, for review, Dubois et al., 2003). It might be better, in this kind of structure, to refer their learning – and the positive or negative events resulting from it – to internal causes and thus not questioning the work of the teacher who, as a guarantor for the transmission of social norms particularly inculcates that one's success is due to oneself rather than to external causes. In addition to the polarity of the event to be taken into consideration, the targets of the evaluative context can therefore also intervene and lead to specific results. So, in our third research, we may have had to set up a situation of academic evaluation with children targets rather than with adults ones. Similarly, it was found that not all internal causal explanations are equal (Jouffre et al., 2008; Pansu & Gilibert, 2002; Perrin, 2010; Py & Jouffre, 2009). For example, it was considered that, of the internal explanations, those regarding the efforts provided (or not provided) would be considered the most popular (Pansu & Gilibert, 2002; Testé, 2009). Thus, still in the school context, Dompnier and Pansu (2007) have shown that the evaluators consider that a pupil who attributes their good

grades more to their effort than to their skill must be rewarded more, but that when explaining the bad grades, the pupil who attributes them to a lack of effort rather than to a lack of skill should be sanctioned more; these results are integrated into the transmission, within our western societies, of a meritocratic ideology linked to effort. On the contrary, when it comes to appreciating the competence of a pupil (that is, their social utility value), Dompnier and Pansu have found that when explaining the good grades, it was better to make reference to skill than to effort, whereas in order to explain bad grades, it was preferable to appeal to a lack of effort than to a lack of skill. As we can see, internality still bears numerous study perspectives. But while waiting for these new studies, we think that the present results could have already some applications, in particular by allowing the individuals to improve their strategies of self-presentation. As we mentioned in the introduction, reading the literature usually leads to present the internal strategies as being the most favorable when one wishes to provide a good self-image. It appears here that it is not systematic.

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