Modified numerals differ sometimes but not always

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On the one hand, much recent work has shown that numerals modified by superlative *at least*/*at most* must be distinguished from numerals modified by comparative *more than*/*fewer than* (e.g. Geurts & Nouwen 2007, Nouwen 2010, a.o.). The inferences licensed by the former differ significantly from those licensed by the latter. On the other hand, Krifka 1999 already noted that both types of modified numerals do not license scalar implicatures. In the last years a number of proposals have been made regarding the absence of scalar implicatures for numerals modified by comparatives. In particular, Fox & Hackl 2006 propose an ingenious account that, however, leaves numerals modified by superlatives unaccounted. This would, of course, be unproblematic if the reasons why *at least n*/*at most n* do not show scalar implicatures are inherently different from those of why *more than n*/*fewer than n* do not do so. And indeed, the literature referred to above gives reason to hope that such split proposals can be successful. In the present talk, I will show that the two types of modified numerals should not be distinguished when it comes to scalar implicatures: first, in environments where one type of modified numeral does not show scalar implicatures the other does not do so either. Second, in environments where one type of modified numeral *does* show such inferences the other does so as well. This means we face a conundrum: from one point of view the types of modified numerals appear to differ, from another they do not. Moreover, a significant defect in Fox & Hackl's account will be pointed out. In other words, another theory of the absence of scalar implicatures is needed, and in particular it should account for both types of modified numerals. I will both show that this problem cannot be straightforwardly solved and point to a potential candidate for an account. This will, however, force me to reevaluate the claims about the inherent differences between the types of modified numerals discussed at the beginning, which I will then briefly do.