Study Name: The development of evidence assimilation in a motivated reasoning context
Authors: Prachi Solanki and Zachary Horne
Date: October 21, 2017
Exploratory or Confirmatory: Exploratory

Our interest is in how auxiliary beliefs can lead children to screen off evidence inconsistent with beliefs they are motivated to maintain. To test this, we developed a simple judgment task in which children ages 5 – 10 are presented with different distributions of evidence that one of two pictures is a Flurp. Importantly, children are told that if they correctly guess which picture is the Flurp, **and** it is the picture with the thumbs up on it (henceforth, the bonus picture) then they will be given three stickers. Otherwise, they will get one sticker for correctly guessing the Flurp.

Distribution of evidence manipulation – Within-Subjects

Condition Six-Zero: Six pieces of evidence no-bonus is Flurp, zero pieces of evidence bonus picture is Flurp
Condition Five-One: Five pieces of evidence no-bonus is Flurp, one piece of evidence bonus is Flurp

Condition Three-Three: Three pieces of evidence no-bonus is Flurp, three pieces of evidence bonus is Flurp.

After each trial, children will not receive feedback about whether they correctly guessed the Flurp. They will be told they will find out if they were right at the end of the study.

In total, the children will make three judgments per condition for a total of 9 judgments.

Sample stimuli for Five-One condition:
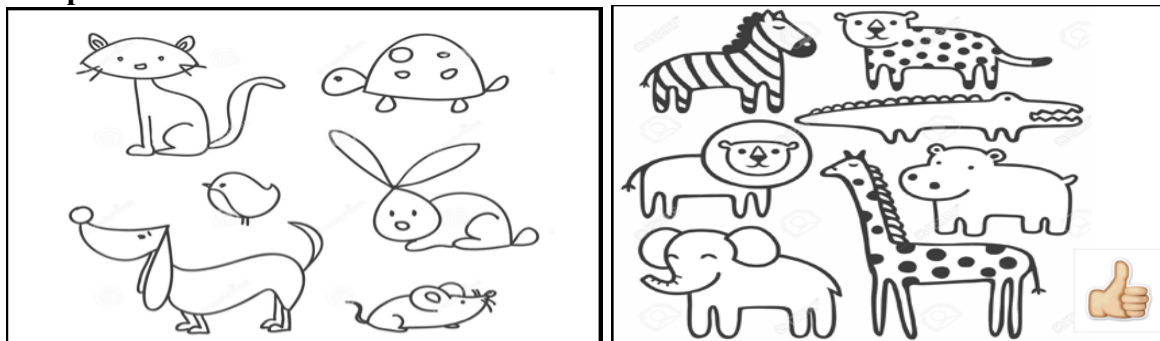
It says here that the flurp might have a bird.
It says here that the flurp might have a turtle.
It says here that the flurp might have a cat.
It says here that the flurp might have a rabbit.
It says here that the flurp might have a mouse.
It says here that the flurp might have a lion.

Predictions:

In Condition Six-Zero, we predict that children will tend to choose that the no-bonus is the Flurp, even though choosing bonus would yield a larger reward.

In Condition Three-Three, we predict that children will tend to guess that bonus is the Flurp, because they have equal evidence that both are the Flurp and bonus yields a larger reward.

We are particularly interested in their guessing behavior in Condition Five-One. On the one hand, most of the evidence supports thinking that no-bonus is the Flurp. However, they will also want bonus to be the Flurp because it would yield more stickers. Thus, because children are given *some* evidence that bonus is the Flurp, we expect their choices to look more like Condition Three-Three than to Condition Six-Zero.