

**Study Name: The development of evidence assimilation in a motivated reasoning context – Study 2.**

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**Exploratory or Confirmatory: Confirmatory**

**Overview:**

In this study, we are examining the development of evidence assimilation in a motivated reasoning context. Specifically, we are investigating how children's beliefs are affected by different distributions of evidence when they are inclined to believe one proposition over another because it will allow them to get a larger prize.

This study is a follow-up to an initial study with 100 children which suggested two main findings: First, even when motivated to believe the contrary, children are remarkably sensitive to the evidence for a proposition at question. Second, when the evidence does not clearly support one proposition over another, children tend to believe the proposition that maximizes the prize they would win. This question investigates why it is this is occurring. One hypothesis is that children recognize the evidence equally supports two inconsistent propositions but choose the proposition that maximizes the prize they'll win *because* it will maximize the prize they win. A second possibility is that when the evidence does not clearly support one proposition over another, children *remember* that the evidence more strongly supports the proposition that maximizes the prize. Obviously, these are two very different mechanisms and entail different claims about the nature of how children reason in a motivated reasoning context.

**References:**

Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(11), 2098.