

"Motivated vs. Skeptical Beliefs"

Abstract: This experiment aims at studying how individuals reconcile the formation of skeptical beliefs and the formation of motivated beliefs in disclosure games. Subjects play several rounds of Sender-Receiver communication games, in which the Receiver's equilibrium beliefs are skeptical. The experimental treatments affect whether or not the Receiver has intrinsic preferences over what he/she believes. We then vary whether the skeptical beliefs are aligned or not with the Receiver's preferred beliefs. We show that the Receivers' level of skepticism is lower when the skeptical beliefs are self-threatening than when Receivers have no preferences over beliefs.

When the skeptical beliefs are self-serving, skepticism is not significantly enhanced compared to the case where Receivers have no preferences over beliefs. We investigate the role of Receivers' IQ and priors on the beliefs they form.