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Utilizing simple cues to informational dependency

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Abstract: Participants can adequately take into account several cues regarding the weight they should grant majority opinions, but that they do not consistently take into account cues regarding whether the members of the majority have formed their opinions independently of each other. We suggest that these conflicting results can be explained by hypothesizing that some cues are evolutionarily valid (i.e. they were present and reliable during human evolution), and others not. Using this framework we derive and test hypotheses about two facets of informational dependency. The first 3 experiments show that participants adequately take into account cues to informational dependency when they are presented in a simple, evolutionarily valid way. Experiments 4 to 7 show that people consistently take into account shared motivation, but not shared cognitive traits, as a source of potential dependency, as predicted by the likely greater importance of differences in motivation during our evolutionary history.