**Objectives**

Experimental test how the exclusives just, only, merely vary in:
- **Strength**: how robustly they exclude alternatives
- **Scale structure**: rank-order vs. complement-exclusion
- **Sensitivity to QUD**

**Exclusives**

1. Mary *only* just/merely ate the cookies.
   - Mary ate the cookies
   - Mary ate nothing other than the cookies
2. The student is *only* intelligent.
   - The student is not brilliant
3. The student is not curious, not charming, etc.

Exclusives vary along different parameters:
- **Scale structure**: different exclusives prefer either complement-exclusion or rank-order readings (Coppock & Beaver, 2014)
- **Strength of exclusion**: “strong” exclusives like only: exclude false alternatives vs. “weak” exclusives like just: exclude pragmatically unassertable alternatives (Wanstadt, 2020)

**Motivation**: noncanonical ‘weak’ readings of just (also Wiegand, 2018; Beltrama, 2022):
- The lights in this place just turn off and on. → for no reason
- The pumpkin bisque is just delicious. → that’s all we need to say

**Scalar diversity**

Scalar expressions vary in how likely they are to lead to scalar implicature (SI):
- Mary ate some of the cookies. → SI: some, but not all
- The student is merely intelligent. → SI: not as intelligent, but still intelligent

**Hypothesis**: interpretations split between rank-order and complement-exclusion. Complement-exclusion compatible with a “No” response.

### Results of Experiments 1-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Calculating Target Exclusionary Inference</th>
<th>Exp. 1</th>
<th>Exp. 2</th>
<th>Exp. 3</th>
<th>Exp. 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>QUD</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just only</td>
<td>merely</td>
<td>merely</td>
<td>merely</td>
<td>merely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Discussion

Both predictions confirmed:
- merely prefers rank-order scales
- just is “weaker” than only → But in what sense?

### Experiment 3: just + QUD

How should we interpret the Experiment 1 results?
- just excludes via weaker semantic operation than only
- just excludes wider range of possible alternatives
- Wanstadt (2020): just can answer “potential” questions in addition to the QUD: just in (6-a) signals that the hypothetical followup (6-b) is unanswerable.
- If just were excluding potential questions in Experiment 1, the stronger scalar term would have been an alternative less frequently.
- just is lexically ambiguous between exclusive and nonexclusive readings?

### Conclusions

- Higher rates with QUD than null context
- Interaction not significant (Estimate=0.18, SE=0.46, z=-0.39, p=0.7)
- just and only shown to be equally QUD-sensitive.
- just only and pattern the same

### References