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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Permalink

Journal

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Publication Date

2020

Peer reviewed

Epistemic Beliefs, Language, and Sources: Interactive Effects on Belief and Trust of Scientific Information

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Abstract

Research suggests that peoples learning may be influenced by individual differences in their epistemic beliefs, such as Faith in Intuition (FiN), Need for Evidence (NfE), and belief that Truth is Political(TiP). This study investigated the extent to which these epistemic beliefs influenced belief in scientific information about global warming and trust in sources. Participants read statements about global warming and rated how much they believed the information and trusted the source. Each statement was presented with a conservative, liberal, or scientific source and framed in certain or tentative language. We found that epistemic beliefs significantly interacted with source and language tentativeness. For example, those with low FiN believed certain language statements more than tentative language statements. Those with low NfE believed conservative sources more than scientific or liberal sources. These findings demonstrate how individuals epistemic beliefs interact with source and language factors to influence belief and trust of scientific information.