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The Effects of Dyadic Conversations on Coronavirus-Related Belief Change

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Abstract

In a high-risk environment, such as during an epidemic, people are exposed to a large amount of information, both accurate and inaccurate. Following exposure, they typically discuss the information with each other in conversations. Here, we assessed the effects of such conversations on their beliefs. A sample of 126 M-Turk participants first rated the accuracy of a set of COVID-19 statements (pre-test). They were then paired and asked to discuss either any of these statements (low epistemic condition) or only the statements they thought were accurate (high epistemic condition). Finally, they rated the accuracy of the initial statements again (post-test). We did not find a difference of epistemic condition on belief change. However, we found that individuals were sensitive to their conversational partners and changed their beliefs according to their partners' conveyed beliefs. This influence was strongest for initially moderately held beliefs.