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The role of reliability in causal belief updating

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Abstract: There is not yet a clear agreement about the functional differences between the processing of mechanism versus covariation information in causal judgments. It has been shown recently that causal belief updating does not depend on the information's origin but on the reliability of new information fed to the updating process (Perales, Catena, Maldonado, & Candido, 2007; Perales, Shanks, & Lagnado, 2010). However, there are many aspects that make new information 'reliable'. This study orthogonally manipulates two factors contributing to reliability, information source and sample size, to determine how they interact with the origin of information when updating causal beliefs that involve a high level of contingency. Results suggest that sample size is weighted more heavily when causal beliefs are originally expressed with covariation information. Thus, reliability is better understood as encompassing multiple factors that influence belief updating differently