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Does Being an Expert Matter? The Influence of Source Expertise on Recognition Memory

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Abstract

The current information ecosystem has made it difficult to judge the veracity of information. Presumably, evaluating an informational source's expertise aids in this judgment process. However, whether these judgements influence memory for that information is unclear. In this study, we investigate the extent to which a source's expertise influences recognition memory for explanations given by that source. Participants viewed 20 vignettes describing events and two potential explanations for each event. Each explanation was either said by a source (domain expert vs. non-expert) or given without a source. Participants were exposed to both source and no-source conditions. We investigated whether participants' recognition of explanations were predicted by condition and source expertise. Our findings indicated that neither condition nor source expertise influenced participants' performance on the recognition task. This suggests that people either do not attend to source in their evaluations of explanations or do not encode these evaluations.