

**Troy Franklin**

**Climate Change Information's Impact on  
Death-Thought Accessibility and Global  
Climate Change Belief**

**Doctoral Thesis / Dissertation**

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Troy Franklin

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Abstract

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by

Troy Franklin

MA, Lesley University, 2003

BA, Excelsior College, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Psychology

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May 2020

## Abstract

Global climate change is perhaps the greatest current existential threat to life on this planet. Despite the overwhelming scientific consensus for the existence of human-made global climate change, climate change skepticism continues to be a significant obstacle. The purpose of this experimental online study was to address research questions concerning the effect of climate change information on death-thought accessibility (DTA) and belief in global climate change and to investigate whether a relationship exists between DTA and belief certainty in global climate change. Terror management theory was the theoretical foundation for the study. The study sample consisted of 104 participants randomly assigned to two experimental groups and a control group. Group 1 read an essay about the environmental effects of climate change, Group 2 read an essay on the human causes of climate change, and Group 3 (control) read information about rainy weather. A 25-item word completion task was used to measure DTA and a 17-item Likert scale (Whitmarsh Skepticism Scale) measured belief certainty in global climate change. An ANOVA with planned contrasts and an ANCOVA were performed with nonsignificant results, indicating that climate change information alone does not necessarily increase DTA or belief certainty in global climate change, nor does it indicate a relationship between the 2 variables. The findings indicate that more than educational information on climate change may be needed to effect positive social change regarding the issue of global climate change.



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