



TASA The Australian
Sociological Association

Abstract

TITLE: *Unpacking the Black Box: The Climate Sceptic Blogosphere and the Idealization of Knowledge.*

Presenter:

Author/s: Mathew Toll

Affiliation/s: PhD Candidate, University of Sydney.

Abstract:

Discussion of the role of the blogosphere in propagating climate scepticism echoes the focus on misinformation implicit in the deficit model. This characterization of the climate sceptic blogosphere suggests an arena without rules or evaluative logics. Yet this is not borne out by a cosmological analysis of climate sceptic blogs. In this paper, preliminary research is presented on the legitimization codes that underpin how ideal knowers and legitimate knowledge are construed on the climate sceptic blogosphere. On the blogosphere there is a commitment to unpacking the black box of science and evaluating it from the position that can be characterized as a *toxic knowledge code*, a schema for the legitimization of knowledge that emphasises the procedural component of knowledge and deems illegitimate the trained gaze of contributory experts that involve tacit insights and judgements. From this idealization of science evidence of the social relations that underpin knowledge practices, interpretive latitude in the construction of knowledge or tacit semantic density can undermine the legitimacy of knowledge. The strength of *epistemic relations* advocated impedes knowledge-building rather than strengthening it. Understanding these idealizations of knowledge production can allow for a more complete understanding of alternative modes of knowledge production and contestation online. Ultimately allowing for more effective strategies of engagement with online counter-movements.