
The role of alternatives in conditional reasoning

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Abstract

When reasoning about conditionals, children and adults fall into reasoning fallacies (e.g., *If the animal is a dog, it has four legs. The animal has four legs. The animal is a dog*). Prior research indicates that fallacies can be limited under certain pragmatic contexts, but the exact mechanism remains underdefined. Here, we propose and test the possibility that adult and children's conditional reasoning is affected by their access to alternative scenarios that could render the conditional false. Findings show that logical fallacies in adults (but not in children) disappeared when they evaluated conditional statements against a broader set of alternatives.

Keywords: conditionals, alternatives, logical reasoning

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