The Origin of Logical Reasoning: Does a Cheater Detection Module Exist?

Lawson, Anton E.


Abstract: The domain-specific hypothesis of L. Cosmides (1989) and L. Cosmides and J. Tooby (1989, 1992) positing that conditional logic has its origin in the evolution of social exchange and in the detection of potential cheaters was tested against a more domain-general hypothesis positing that adult reasoning is logical and that errors in conditional reasoning arise from misunderstandings, not from a lack of logicality. The results of 5 experiments with undergraduate students (n = 682 for Experiments 1-4; n = 188 for Experiment 5), which involved a series of selection tasks that yielded specific predictions about participant performance, were not consistent with the cheater detection hypothesis. Findings supported the misunderstandings hypothesis and imply that adults possess general-purpose logical competence versus domain-specific modules. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]; (AN 8701916)