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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Permalink

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 42(0)

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Publication Date

2020

Peer reviewed

Consideration of Alternative Outcomes of Psychological Studies: Some Evidence for Transfer

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Abstract

Scientific thinking relies on consideration of alternative possible outcomes to research. We considered whether 1. engaging with psychological research results some of which were surprising in a learning phase transferred to consideration of alternative outcomes for a different set of research studies in a test phase, and 2. whether transfer was heightened by predicting results before learning the actual outcomes (foresight), as opposed to indicating what one would have predicted after learning the actual outcomes (hindsight). One indication of transfer would be decreased confidence in the outcome one believed to be true, but we did not observe this trend. However, we did see evidence of transfer for a subset of participants: No participants in the learning phase provided reasons for alternative outcomes, but a sizable minority of participants, across both hindsight and foresight groups, did so in the test phase. We will discuss what factors distinguish participants who showed transfer.