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Authors

Choi, Jae Hyuk
Do, Kyung Soo

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Accidental Proximal Events of Teleological Scenarios Increase Counterfactual Reasoning

Jae Hyuk Choi

Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul 110-745, KOREA

Kyung Soo Do

Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul 110-745, KOREA

Abstract: Participants were asked to rate the sufficiency and the necessity of the distal and the proximal causes of two scenarios which involve double prevention, to test the idea of causal explanatory pluralism (Lombrozo, 2010) which emphasizes the mode of explanation, and the judgment dissociation theory (Mandel, 2003) which emphasizes the goal of causal reasoning. The events in one scenario were related with the goal, whereas the events in the other scenario were merely mechanical. In addition, the proximal cause's action was described either intentional or accidental. If causal pluralism is more relevant, the effects of intentionality of the proximal actor's action would be different between the two scenarios and the same between sufficiency and necessity judgments. If JDT is more relevant, the effects of intentionality would be different between the two judgments. Results of the experiments were more in accordance with the JDT theory.