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Inflated inflation and superseded supersession: testing counterfactual sampling accounts of causal strength judgments

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Abstract

Norm violations have been shown to influence causal judgments. Icard, Kominsky, and Knobe (2017) explained the influence of norms by appeal to a model of norm-weighted sampling of counterfactual possibilities. This model explains two well-known effects (among others): When two agents must act to bring about an outcome (i.e. both actions are necessary), if an agent S violates a norm, they are judged more causal than when they do not violate a norm (abnormal inflation), and the other agent B is judged to be less causal than when S does not violate a norm (causal supersession). In the present study (N = 1008), we find empirical support for two untested further predictions of this sampling model of causal strength judgments: Abnormal inflation of S is greater when B violates a norm (inflation increase), and causal supersession of B is smaller when S violates a norm (supersession decrease).