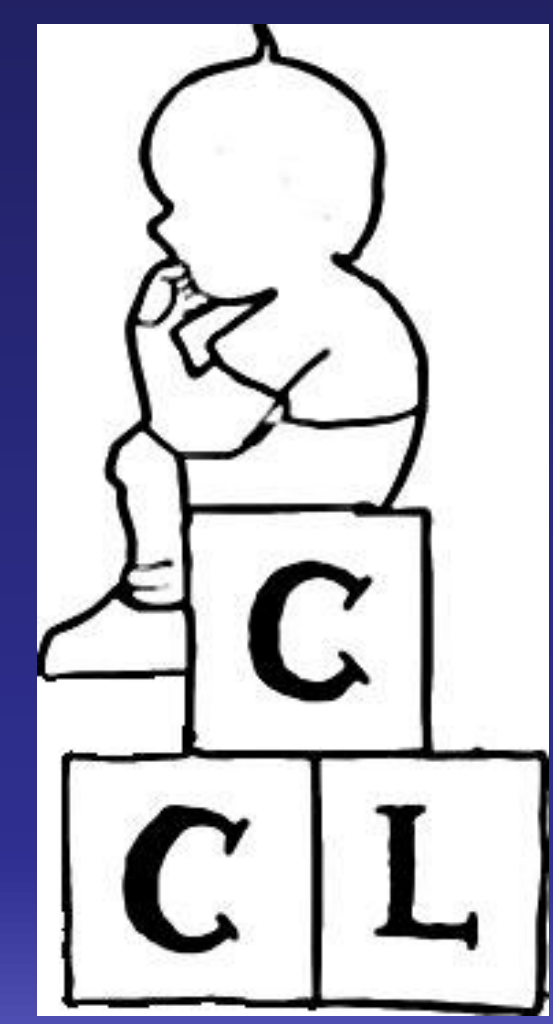


# The Relationship Between Pretense and Children's Views of Possibilities

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## Introduction

- Children might judge whether impossible events are possible based on whether they can imagine circumstances that would allow for the event to happen in real life.<sup>1</sup>
- Children might also incorporate events in pretend play, making up situations that fit in with the premise.<sup>2</sup>

Hypotheses:

- 1) Children who have higher pretense orientation might be more likely to judge impossible events as possible because they have more practice in imagining alternatives to reality.
- 2) There will be differences in the relationship between pretense and possibility judgments depending on whether or not a causal mechanism is presented.

## Participants

- Children ( $N = 192$ ), 3.38- to 6.98 years-old ( $M = 4.828$ ,  $SD = .805$ )
  - Protestant ( $n = 54$ )
  - Catholic ( $n = 39$ )
  - Muslim ( $n = 69$ )
  - Religiously Non-Affiliated ( $n = 30$ )
- Gender: 56.1% Female, 43.9% Male
- Race & Ethnicity:
  - 35.4% White
  - 19.8% Hispanic/Latino
  - 10.9% Asian
  - 5.2% African American/Black
  - 1% Native American
  - 27.7% Decline to Answer

## Procedure

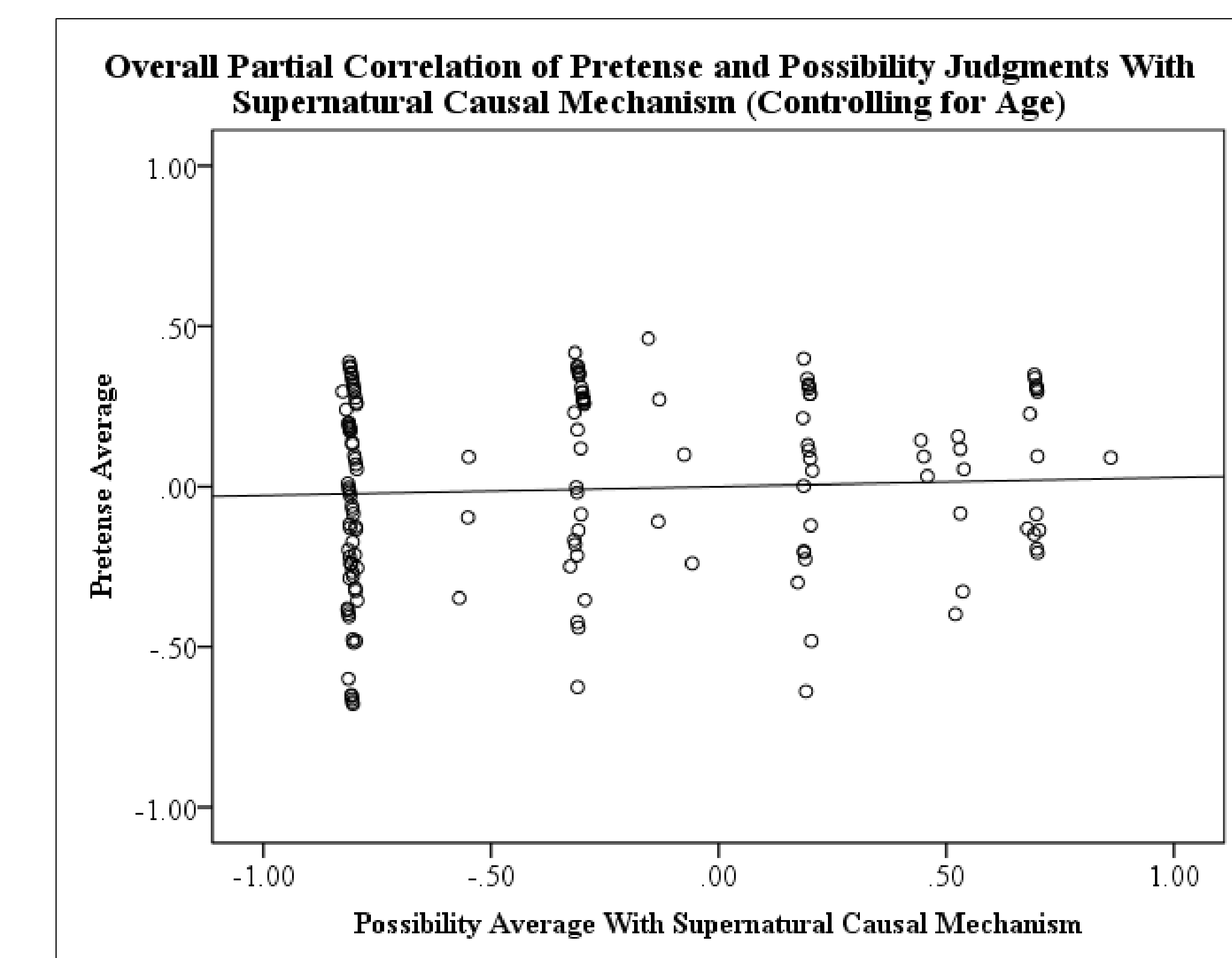
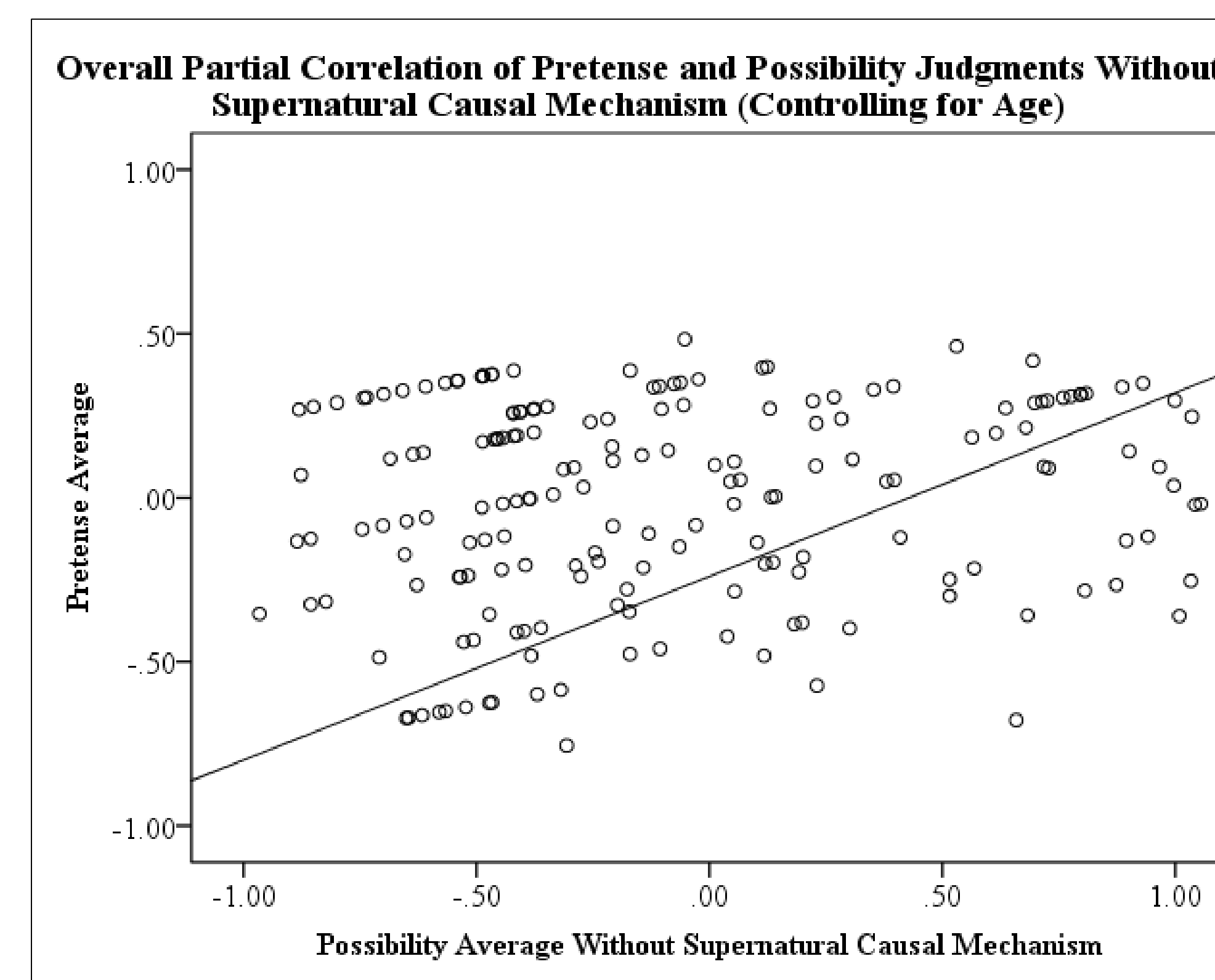
### •Pretense

- Participants asked about their participation in pretense with a variety activities (e.g., making up songs or plays)
- Answers coded as No [-1] to Don't Know [0] to Yes [+1] and summed for Pretense Total

### •Supernatural Causality

- Participants judged the possibility of 4 impossible events (e.g., becoming invisible)
- Participants then judged if a supernatural causal mechanism (i.e., God) would make an impossible event possible
- Answers coded as No [-1] to Don't Know [0] to Yes [+1] and summed for Possibility Total and Possibility with God Total

## Results



Category		Overall	Protestant	Catholic	Muslim	Non-Affiliated
Pretense	Mean	.656	.634	.736	.610	.697
	(SD)	(.312)	(.305)	(.299)	(.317)	(.319)
Possibility Without Supernatural Causal Mechanism	Mean	-.412	-.344	-.468	-.339	-.628
	(SD)	(.649)	(.677)	(.618)	(.691)	(.493)
Possibility With Supernatural Causal Mechanism	Mean	-.194	-.133	-.444	.068	-.583
	(SD)	(.778)	(.804)	(.634)	(.810)	(.574)
Partial Correlation of Pretense and Possibility Without Supernatural Causal Mechanism (Controlling for Age)		$r(189) = .189^{**}$	$r(51) = .303^*$	$r(36) = .062$	$r(66) = .236^\dagger$	$r(27) = .183$
Partial Correlation of Pretense and Possibility With Supernatural Causal Mechanism (Controlling for Age)		$r(189) = .072$	$r(51) = .078$	$r(36) = .118$	$r(66) = .020$	$r(27) = .357^\dagger$

## Summary of Results & Discussion

- Overall there was a small positive significant relationship between pretense and possibility judgments for impossible events without a supernatural causal mechanism. However, pretense and possibility judgments presented with a supernatural causal mechanism were not significantly correlated.
- These data indicate that children who regularly engage in pretense might decide if an event is possible by imagining alternatives to explain it.
- The relationship may be stronger for events that are presented without a potential causal mechanism because presenting a cause as an explanation for an impossible event removes the need for a child to create her or his own causal inferences about the event.

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