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Ego-involvement and utility in causal inference

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Abstract: This study suggests the possibility of application of utility theory to causal inference. Arai (2011) has shown that people tend to think causality stronger when they are involved in the task than when they are not. Therefore we attempted to explain the effect of ego-involvement on causal reasoning by gain and loss. Two hundreds and thirty-five university students inferred the relation between cause and effect and decided their action in terms of taking the action of cause in an imaginary content. Each participant was allocated into one of four conditions: gain, loss, involvement or control. The result indicated the action was less in loss group than in ego-involvement group. This is consistent with a prediction from utility theories. Based on these findings, it appears that the effect of ego-involvement on causal reasoning can be explained by utility.