THE IMPACT OF DESIRABILITY AND FEASIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELF AND OTHERS

Claudia Carolyn Kubowicz Malhotra

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Approved by

Advisor: Rebecca K. Ratner

Reader: Steve Hoeffler

Reader: John G. Lynch Jr.

Reader: William D. Perreault, Jr.

Reader: Gal Zauberman

ABSTRACT

Claudia Carolyn Kubowicz Malhotra: The Impact of Desirability and Feasibility Considerations for Self and Others
(Under the direction of Rebecca K. Ratner)

Construal Level Theory (CLT) proposes that social distance will operate similarly to temporal distance in that individuals' perceptions of others will be high level, abstract construals, and individuals' own perceptions will be low level, concrete construals (at least for the near future; Liberman, Trope, and Stephan in press, Trope and Liberman 2003). Consequently individuals will predict that desirability considerations are more important to others than to self, and will indicate that feasibility considerations are more important to self than to others. Four studies show this effect by examining the prediction of others' preferences, and the choices people make on behalf of others. These studies replicate the effect using different manipulations of desirability considerations (i.e., importance of brands in general, a specific brand of a consumer product, and attributes of a consumer product and experience) as well as feasibility considerations (i.e., importance of value in general, the price of a consumer product, and attributes of a consumer product and experience). Therefore, the effect is not driven solely by individuals' perceptions that they are more price sensitive than others, but rather results from perceived differences between self and others in the importance of the tradeoff between desirability and feasibility considerations. Results also indicate that closeness of the relationship to the other to the self is a moderator of the effect such that the effect is attenuated as the relationship to the other becomes closer to the

self (i.e., average other vs. friend). Because individuals perceive that others value desirability considerations, results show that they report different preferences (i.e., preferences favoring desirability considerations) for themselves in public than they do in private. Consequently, the self-other difference not only influences the choices individuals make for others, but also the choices they make for themselves in different social settings. Two final studies examine representation of the other (i.e., level of concrete representation) as the underlying mechanism for the self-other effect. No conclusive evidence is found that a concrete representation attenuates the self-other effect. Future directions and managerial implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

People make consumption choices not only for themselves, but also for others. For example, people purchase items to give as gifts to family and friends. When grocery shopping, people make decisions for the other members of their household. Individuals may make living arrangements for elderly relatives. In work environments, people make all kind of decisions for others by choosing everything from the copier paper to the restaurant catering lunch. The focus of certain jobs, such a client services in industries as diverse as brokerages to wedding coordinators, is making decisions on behalf of customers. In all of these situations, people must make consumptions decisions for others.

This dissertation will examine the choices individuals make for others as well as for themselves. Specifically of interest are decisions where individuals have to trade off desirability and feasibility considerations (i.e., they can not have both).[1] For example, a person considering buying a sweater as a gift for a friend may be attracted to a high-end designer label because a prestigious brand is a desirable attribute. However, because it is a high-end product, the sweater may only be cleaned at the dry cleaner. Dry cleaning is expensive and logistically difficult, which are both important feasibility attributes. Compare this sweater to one that does not have the high-end designer label, but is machine washable. Which sweater does the person buy for his friend? If the person were buying the sweater for

[1] The focus of the current research is on the tradeoffs people will make when the choice set includes options that are either highly desirable (not highly feasible) or highly feasible (not highly desirable). An option that is both highly desirable and highly feasible would be considered to be a dominating option.

himself, would his choice be different? This dissertation studies how people make these tradeoffs between desirability and feasibility considerations by examining the prediction of others' preferences, the choices people make for others, and one's own choices in different social settings. Moreover, this dissertation attempts to identify the level of representation as the underlying mechanism of this self-other effect. Specifically, as the representation of the other person becomes more concrete, it is predicted that people will be less likely to predict that others would prefer the highly desirable alternative. The studies also use different manipulations of desirability considerations (i.e., importance of brands in general, a specific brand of a consumer product, and attributes of a consumer product and experience) as well as feasibility considerations (i.e., importance of value in general, the price of a consumer product, and attributes of a consumer product and experience) to show that the effect is not driven solely by individuals' perceptions that they are more price sensitive than others, but rather are due to perceived differences between self and others in the importance of the tradeoff between desirability and feasibility considerations.

Construal Level Theory (CLT)

Prior research has examined how individuals tradeoff desirability and feasibility considerations primarily in the context of time. Specifically, Construal Level Theory (CLT) has found that people are poor predictors of the own behavior because future events are construed differently than present ones. CLT presents evidence that people have more abstract, desirability-focused construals for distant future decisions and more concrete, feasibility-focused construals for near future decisions (Trope and Liberman 2000, 2003). Trope and Liberman (2003) define desirability as "the value of an action's end state" and feasibility as "the ease or difficulty of reaching the end state." These definitions are

supported by prior research which has defined desirability to be the superordinate "why" aspects of an action and feasibility to be the subordinate "how" aspects of an action (Carver and Scheier 1981, 1990, 1999; Vallacher and Wegner 1987). For example, in one of their studies, Liberman and Trope (1998) presented students with an actual choice in assignments in a social psychology class. Students were given two options. One was a highly feasible assignment because the necessary readings were in their native language, but the topic of the history of social psychology was not very interesting which made it less desirable. The other assignment was difficult and thus less feasible because the readings were in a foreign language, but the topic of love was interesting which made it highly desirable. Students indicated that they would prefer the easy assignment, if they had to do the assignment in the near future. However, students were much more likely to choose the difficult, but interesting assignment for the distant future. In other words, feasibility considerations were more important in the near future whereas desirability considerations were more important in the distant future.

The CLT proposes that social distance (self vs. other) will operate similarly to temporal distance (Liberman, Trope, and Stephan in press, Trope and Liberman 2003). In other words, social distance (self vs. other) may also cause a shift in construal level with the self being more concrete and focused on feasible objects and perceptions of others being more abstract and focused on highly desirable objects. Therefore, social distance may be a reason why people are not successful in making predictions and assessing the preferences of others.

Although proposed by Trope and Liberman (2003), there has been limited research on social distance as a mechanism of shifting levels of construal. One exception is work by

Chandran and Menon (2004), which in one study looked at the interactive effect of social and temporal distance in a health risk context. Specifically, the dependent variables were perceived health risk for self and others, and the objective of their research was to determine whether framing health hazards as occurring every day versus every year would make risks more concrete and proximal which would then result in higher self-risk perceptions. For example, would a day frame increase the perceived self risk of dying from tobacco smoke when an ad states that 1,206 people (versus 440,000 a year) succumb each day to its deadly effects (Chandran and Menon 2004)? Indeed, when a health risk, such as the contraction of Mono, was given in a daily statistic (i.e., proximal and concrete time frame) people indicated that they were at a higher risk of contracting Mono than when the risk was communicated in a yearly statistic. Additionally, the study asked participants to indicate not only their own risk perceptions, but also that of a best friend (i.e., close other) and the average undergraduate student (i.e., distant other) in order to test whether temporal framing will moderate the self-positivity bias. No differences were found between the three (e.g., self, best friend, average undergraduate student) in the day time frame. Everyone perceived to be at a high risk for contracting Mono. However, in the year time frame (i.e., distant and abstract time frame), people indicated that they and their best friend were less at risk to contract Mono than the average undergraduate student. The day frame is more effective for the self and close others because the frame is concrete and self and close others are represented more concretely than others. Moreover, people perceive others to be at high risk even in the year frame. The daily frame does not change their already high perceptions of others' risk. On the other hand, the year frame is abstract, and although in this frame people are able to predict high risk for distant others, they are not able to accurately predict their own risk as well as that of close

others (because there is a mismatch in representation between target and frame). The theoretical implication of this work is that concrete representations attenuate the difference between perceptions of self and others; however, this result was found for perceived health risk not for the perceived willingness to make tradeoffs between desirability and feasibility considerations.

Another exception is work by Ebert (2005) who also examined the interactive effect of social and temporal distance in a dilemma context where people had to incur short-term costs to obtain long-term benefits. Study participants indicated how they and others (i.e., a friend) would make these types of tradeoffs, such as quitting to smoke for health reasons, but knowing it would be difficult to quit and wanting to get into shape, but knowing it would be challenging to exercise everyday. Results indicated that people did not perceive any difference in the importance of the benefit (i.e., quitting smoking, getting into shape, etc.) to self and others. However, the importance of the cost (i.e., not being able to pick up a cigarette, going to the gym, etc.) was perceived to be more important to the self than others. Additionally, the relative importance of the long-term benefit versus the short-term cost was perceived to be more important to others than self. As a result, this research argues that people perceive others to more forward-looking and self-controlled than they are themselves. The dependent variables in the research were the importance of the benefits and costs to self and others. Even though this research examined how people make tradeoffs, it explicitly studied how people trade off current costs for future benefits (i.e., the temporal tradeoff), and how people perceive others make these tradeoffs.

Ebert's (2005) research work differs from the current work in a number of ways. First, her primary interest was to study how individuals trade off costs and benefits because

her primary research interest is the influence of delayed consequences on present behavior. Second, the focus of her work was the interactive relationship between the importance of costs and benefits now and in the future. The studies reported here do not have a time component in that all scenarios are in the present. Moreover, the focus of the current work is the impact of social distance on the self-other effect in the context of predicting others' preferences, choosing for others, and choosing for one's self in different social settings (i.e., private vs. public). Lastly, the work of Ebert (2005) does include a measurement of different representations (i.e., abstract, concrete, and vivid), but representation was not manipulated or identified as a potential mediator of the self-other effect as it is the present research.

Even though recent research (Chandran and Menon 2004, Ebert 2005) has begun linking self-other research to the CLT, none has provided direct tests of the present hypotheses. According to CLT, both the distant future and distant others are represented abstractly. Therefore, just as people are poor predictors of their own future preferences by focusing too much on desirability and not enough on feasibility considerations, people should be poor at predicting the preferences of others by focusing too much on desirability considerations and not enough on feasibility considerations. This dissertation seeks to provide evidence to support this prediction by studying the prediction of others' preferences (including a test of the effect in a context where one presumes to already have the item in one's possession, i.e., receiving a gift and making the decision to return it or not), the choices individuals make for others, and the choices individuals make for themselves. Moreover, the level of representation of the other is studied in order to determine whether representation is the underlying mechanism of this self-other effect.

Prediction Errors

How accurate are consumers in predicting the preferences of others? An extensive literature on social prediction has found that people are not accurate when predicting the preferences of others. Research has found that people's lay theories exaggerate the importance of material pay-offs on others' behavior by predicting that others will be more motivated by money than they are themselves (Miller and Ratner 1998). It has also been found that people think others are generally more materialistic than they are themselves, and thus are more likely to be satisfied with a monetary compensation in cases of product and service failure than individuals would be themselves (Ratner and Kubowicz Malhotra 2006). Not only are people poor predictors of others' responses, they are overly confident in their predictions (Dunning, Griffin, Milojkovic and Ross 1990). Specifically, people are poor in predicting the activities, interest and opinions of others, and experts are not more accurate than others in making predictions (Hoch 1988). Individuals cannot blame a lack of motivation for the poor predictions of others' preferences because even individuals who were highly motivated have been found to make incorrect predictions (Kray 2000).

How do these prediction errors occur? There are instances where the prediction errors occur because people rely too heavily on their own opinions in predicting the opinions of others. One such example is that of experts who feel confident in their opinions and rely heavily on them to predict the preferences of others. Misprediction occurs because experts are not similar to the target population for whom they make predictions (Hoch 1988). However, in other cases, the prediction error occurs because people do not rely enough on their own opinions in predicting the opinions of others. Even spouses (i.e., people who know one another well) have been found to be poor predictors of each other's preferences (Davis,

Hoch, and Ragsdale 1986). Almost half of the predictions would have been more accurate if the predictor had just reported her own preference. Additionally, Hoch (1987) argues against false consensus or projection where people rely too heavily on their own attitudes and behaviors in making predictions about others and finds that people would be more accurate if they relied on their own positions even more.

How do people make predictions? Davis and colleagues (1986) argue that people use an anchor and adjustment model to make predictions about others. The anchor is their own preferences, and they use available information about the other to adjust the prediction. They find that people adjust too much, and would be better off using their own preferences to predict the preferences of others. Hsee and Weber (1997) test the anchor and adjustment model in the context of risk aversion and find that people are highly risk-adverse themselves. However, because people cannot be fully empathetic of others, they adjust their own feelings toward risk neutrality when making predictions about others. As a result, people predict that others are less risk adverse than they are themselves. The accuracy of the prediction is governed by the target. When the target is concrete, the predictor's own feelings are weighed more heavily and consequently the prediction is more accurate. When the target is abstract, the predictor's own feelings are weighed less heavily and results in inaccurate predictions. Thus, the prediction error only occurs when the target is abstract, not when it is vivid or concrete, because people do not adjust as much when the target is vivid and use their own preferences to drive their predictions of others' preferences.

The Effect of Social Distance

In the context of CLT, social distance is predicted to operate similarly to temporal distance in shifting construal levels (Liberman, Trope, and Stephan in press, Trope and

Liberman 2003). Specifically, it is predicted that people will perceive others using abstract, high level construals. Consequently, individuals will predict that desirability considerations are more important to others than they are to the self. When identifying their own preferences, individuals will use low level, concrete construals. As a result, individuals themselves will find feasibility considerations to be more important in determining their preferences than others' preferences. Therefore, it is predicted that individuals will predict that others will have a greater preference for the more desirable, albeit less feasible option, than they do themselves. Additionally, the reverse should also hold. It is predicted that people will indicate that their own preference for the more feasible, but less desirable option is greater than that of others.

It is also predicted that this effect will appear in the choices people make for others. Even though individuals may personally care extensively about feasibility, it is predicted that their preferences will shift when they make a choice for someone else. Specifically, when choosing for others, the goal is to make the best choice for the user. If people perceive others to care more about desirability than feasibility, then people will perceive the best choice to be one that is more desirable than feasible. Consequently, when asked to choose between highly desirable and highly feasible options, they will choose the highly desirable option for others. In addition to examining direct choices made for others, another way to examine the self-other effect is to see whether any differences emerge in why people return items purchased for them (i.e., gifts). The dependent variable, likelihood to return, reflects preferences once a person is given a product. No significant differences are expected in such circumstances,

but it does allow for another test of the self-other effect using a different scenario.[2]

Therefore, the first set of hypotheses is:

> H1: Social distance (self vs. other) will shift preferences between desirability and feasibility considerations such that:
>
> > H1A: Individuals will predict that others place more importance on desirability considerations than self does, and that self places more importance on feasibility considerations than others do.
> > H1B: Individuals will choose more desirable, but less feasible options for others than oneself.

The Moderating Role of Similarity

Previous research has found that psychologically close others (e.g., friends and acquaintances) are perceived to be more similar to self than remote others (e.g., people in general; Brosius and Engel 1996). Thus, when predicting the preferences of others, not all other people are perceived to be the same. Specifically, when predicting others' preferences, a key question a person may ask herself is how similar the other person is to oneself. By perceiving the other to be similar to oneself, one may use one's own preferences to predict the preferences of others. For example, one's spouse is presumed to have similar preferences to one's own (Davis et al. 1986). As a result, people may rely on their own preferences to predict those of close others, and as a result be more accurate in their predictions (Davis et al. 1986). Or the person can be completely dissimilar to oneself, as in the case of a stranger. Consequently, a person may predict that the distant other's preferences are nothing like their own. Similarity of the other is an important component of psychological distance, and has an

[2] It is predicted that individuals will indicate that others are more likely to return a gift if it is highly feasible but not very desirable, because they will think that desirability considerations are very important to others. On the other hand, it is predicted that people will indicate that they would be more likely to return a gift themselves if it was highly desirable but not very feasible, because feasibility considerations are important to them personally.

important role in the prediction of others' preferences.

Prior research has found that one's best friend is more similar to oneself than the average undergraduate, and thus is perceived to be in the same risk category with similar risk preferences to oneself than the average undergraduate student (Chandran and Menon 2004). Additionally, it has been found that people perceive that political attacks ads will have a greater impact on others than they do on the self, and the self-other difference increases as the others becomes more geographically distant and less similar to themselves (Paek, Pan, Sun, Abisaid, and Houden 2005). Supporting the arguments made by Davis and colleagues (1986), Paek and colleagues (2005) also contend that as the other becomes more distant and dissimilar, people are unable to compensate for their lack of knowledge about the other by using themselves as a proxy to make predictions. Taken together, research has found that similarity of the other is a critical element of self-other differences. Consequently, similarity is one of component relationship closeness that may lead to the attenuation of the self-other effect. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

> H2: Similarity to the other will moderate the self-other effect such that the effect will be attenuated as similarity of other to the self becomes greater (i.e., as similarity increases, desirability considerations will become less important in predictions of others' preferences and feasibility considerations will become more important in predictions of others' preferences).

The Effect of the Social Setting on Individuals' Own Choices

The self-other effect may not only influence the choices individuals make for others, but also the decisions they make for themselves. Specifically, in public, people perceive that others will be making judgments about them given the choices they make (Asch 1956; Deutsch and Gerard 1955; Diener et al. 1976; Schlenker, Britt, and Pennington 1996). When

individuals expect that others are evaluating their decisions, they will alter their decisions (Belk 1988; Calder and Burnkrant 1977; Ratner and Kahn 2002). Additionally, if people know the attitudes of others, then they change what they say in public (Lerner and Tetlock 1999). Therefore, research has found that individuals may make different choices in public settings than in private ones.

There is also an extensive literature in the area of impression management (Baumeister 1982, 1986; Baumesiter and Tice 1986; Goffman 1959; Jones 1964; Jones and Pittman 1982; Leary and Kowalski 1990; Schlenker 1980, 1985; Schlenker and Weigold 1990, 1992; Tedeschi 1986). Impression management has been defined as the behavior people engage in to protect their self-image and/or to influence the way they are perceived by others (Schlenker 1980). It has been found that people know that others form impressions of them, and treat them according to those perceptions (Goffman 1959). As a result, it is in one's self-interest to manage the impressions others have of us. Research has also found that people engage in impression management behavior in order to communicate a desired persona to others (Goffman 1959), increase one's power over others (Jones and Pittman 1982) and increase liking by others by appearing to be more similar to them (Baumeister and Tice (1986). In summary, the impression management literature shows that people try to actively manage the impressions of others for a variety of reasons.

In the context of the CLT, when people perceive that others care about desirability, they may not want to reveal that they care relatively more about feasibility. Therefore, they will adhere to the perceived norm and choose the high desirability option. In private, however, people will not feel the need to conform to the perceived norm and will tend to choose more in the direction of the high feasibility option. If individuals report different

preferences depending on the social setting (i.e., private or public) in which they are asked, then the self-other effect has real personal consequences. Individuals' perceptions of others' preferences influences the choices people make for themselves. In private, it is predicted that individuals are more likely to choose the highly feasible, but less desirable alternative that they are in public. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

> H3: The setting (private vs. public) will shift individuals' own preferences between desirability and feasibility considerations such that in private individuals will indicate a greater preference for the highly feasible option than in public.

Representation as the Underlying Mechanism of the Self-Other Effect

Representation can be considered to be a continuum anchored by concreteness and abstractness. Concrete representations are known, tangible and specific. People can easily evoke concrete representations in their mind with great detail. Abstract representations are unknown, intangible and non-specific. People have greater difficulty evoking abstract representations because the details are unclear and the images are fuzzy. Prior research has made the distinction between concrete and abstract representations by how directly an attribute corresponds to an object (Brown 1958; Paivio 1971). If people are asked to think about a vehicle, thoughts are fairly abstract in that people can envision different types, models, styles, colors, etc. However, if people are asked to think about a new yellow Hummer, the representation evoked will be concrete with details specific to that object.

In the self-other context, the self is more often than not represented concretely in the near future. If asked what you would like to have for dinner today, one can picture her favorite lasagna with spicy tomato sauce and hot cheese. The representation may be so concrete one can say that they can actually taste the lasagna because it the item is known,

tangible and specific. However, psychological distance (in the case achieved by social distance) leads to more abstract level representations (Trope and Liberman 2003, 2000; Werner and Kaplan 1963). Whereas the self is represented concretely, other people are represented more abstractly. No matter how well we may know someone else, we did not have full knowledge of the other person. Allport (1937, p. 497) says it best "…no person can understand any other person completely because no human being shares directly the motives, thoughts, and feelings of another. The only self to which we have immediate access is our own. Knowledge of other people comes to us indirectly and in fragments." Therefore, our perceptions of others' preferences will always differ from our own to some degree. If we were asked what he would like to have for dinner tonight, we may not be sure - maybe lasagna like us, but maybe not. He may be in the mood for Mexican food or just dined at an Italian restaurant the night before. The representations of the other are more abstract. The dinner prediction is more difficult and uncertain, and the choices are less known, tangible and specific. As CLT demonstrated with temporal distance, we often are not able to predict our own preferences accurately. Consequently, our prediction of others' preferences should be even more flawed.

According to the CLT, feasibility considerations refer to the subordinate how aspects or low-level construals. On the other hand, desirability considerations refer to the superordinate why aspects of an action or high-level construals. Given that concrete representations are low-level construals, feasibility considerations, which focus on the how aspects of the action, become important. Additionally, given that abstract representations are high-level construals, desirability considerations, which focus on the why aspects of the action, become important. Therefore, if the self is represented concretely, then feasibility

considerations should be very important to the self. If others are represented with more abstract constuals, the desirability considerations should be perceived to be more important to others. The underlying mechanism for the self-other effect is predicted to be the level of representation. One way to test this prediction is to see what would result if people were able to think of others in more concrete ways. Would a concrete representation of the other lead people to predict that feasibility considerations are also important to others to some degree (i.e., to the same or weaker degree than their own strong preferences for highly feasible alternatives)? Moreover, would changing the representation level of the other lead to the attenuation of the self-other effect? If the level of representation is the underlying mechanism of the self-other effect, then the answer to these questions should be yes. Changing how others are represented (i.e., represented others with more concrete level construals) should lead to an attenuation of the self-other effect. Therefore, I hypothesize that

> H4: As the representation of the other becomes more concrete, the self-other effect will be attenuated such that people will predict that others are more likely to choose the highly feasible alternative.

Prior research has examined how different evoked mindsets (abstract vs. concrete) change the recommendations people make to others (Freitas, Gollwitzer and Trope 2004). In that research, a manipulation (e.g., the concrete mindset manipulation is used in this research in Study 6 and Study 6 Follow-up Study B, and the concrete and abstract manipulations were both used in Study 6 Follow-up Study A) was used to create either an abstract or concrete mindset. The manipulation was a two-step thought exercise. The first part of the thought exercise required participants to read a passage about learning a new language. Participants were asked to consider why (in the abstract manipulation) or how (in the concrete

manipulation) they do the things they do. The abstract manipulation was designed to focus participants on the benefits whereas the concrete manipulation focused participants on the process of achieving a goal. Participants were then asked to identify three ways learning a new language could help you meet an important life goal that you have (abstract manipulation condition) or identify three things they could do in order to learn a new language (concrete manipulation condition). Participants were then asked to rate how much engaging in this activity would help them meet the goal (abstract manipulation condition) or help them in the process (concrete manipulation condition). In the second part of the thought-exercise, participants listed four specific outcomes (abstract manipulation condition) or process activities (concrete manipulation condition) of learning a new language. Participants were given an example with completed boxes for the goal of attaining life happiness that served as a guide for their task. After completing the mindset manipulation, participants were asked to anticipate and suggest what others can do to improve their health by choosing between two options. One option was to take positive feedback about their strengths, which would have a more positive short-term outcome (i.e., highlighting one's strengths is relatively easy and quick to implement). The other option was to take negative feedback about their weakness, which would have a more positive long-term outcome (i.e., improving one's weakness is relatively difficult and time-consuming to implement). Participants in the concrete mindset recommended that others take the short-term positive feedback more than the participants in the abstract mindset. Even though this research (Freitas et al. 2004) has examined the impact of different mindset (abstract vs. concrete) with regard to feasibility and desirability tradeoffs in the context of others, no known research has examined the role of the level of representation or different mindsets (abstract vs. concrete)

on the difference between own and others' preferences. The current research is designed to achieve this goal by adding the self-other component to this literature.

Introduction Summary

The main objective of this dissertation is to establish that social distance shifts levels of construal in a similar pattern as temporal distance and to study the impact of this shift of construals on the choices people make for others as well as themselves. The dissertation begins by examining this effect in the context of making choices for others, and then explores how closeness of the relationship to the other moderates the self-other effect. Different desirability considerations (i.e., brands and feature attractiveness) and feasibility considerations (i.e., price and product maintenance) will be used to study the tradeoffs individuals make between the two. The self-other effect will be extended to show how it impacts the choices people make for themselves when in the social presence of others. Lastly, a possible underlying mechanism for the self-other efftect, the level of representation, will be explored to determine whether perceiving the other person more concretely will lead to an attenuation of the self-other effect.

In the following sections, eight completed studies test whether individuals make different decisions for others than they do for themselves. Study 1A tests whether individuals predict that others will have different preferences than their own in terms of the importance of desirability and feasibility considerations using brand and value subscales. Study 1B uses the same scales to provide initial evidence that closeness of the relationship to the other moderates the self-other effect. Study 2 uses a choice scenario about a consumer product (i.e., laundry detergent), where desirability is manipulated by the brand of the product and feasibility is manipulated by its price. Study 3 tests whether the self-other effect

will emerge when the product is already in possession of the person and the feasibility consideration is care needed to use the product rather than price. Study 4 tests the self-other effect using consumer experiences (i.e., selecting an amusement park). Study 5 uses the same stimuli as Study 4 to test whether individuals' reports of their own preferences would change depending on the social setting (i.e., making a choice in the presence or absence of others) because they perceive that others value desirability considerations. Studies 6 and 7 explore the level of representation as the underlying mechanism for the self-other effect. More specifically, these last two studies test whether making the level of representation of the other more concrete will lead to an attenuation of the self-other effect such that people will predict that feasibility considerations are also important to others (i.e., to the same or lesser degree as they are to themselves).

CHAPTER 2 - STUDIES

STUDY 1A: BRAND VS. QUALITY VS. VALUE SUBSCALES

Study 1A used three established subscales to test whether individuals will predict that others place more importance on desirability considerations that they do, but that self places more importance on feasibility considerations than others do (Hypothesis 1A). The first of these scales is the Brand Consciousness/Price Equals Quality Scale, which is a subscale of the Consumer Styles Inventory (Sproles and Kendall 1986; Sproles and Sproles 1990). The subscale is comprised of six items designed to measure "a consumer's orientation toward buying the more expensive, well-known national brands (Sproles and Kendall 1986; Sproles and Sproles 1990)." The second of these subscales is the Perfectionist/High Quality Conscious Scale with seven items that was also developed as part of a Consumer Styles Inventory (Sproles and Kendall 1986; Sproles and Sproles 1990). It is defined to measure "the degree to which a consumer searches carefully and systematically for the best quality in products." The third of these subscales is the Value Consciousness Scale, which is comprised of seven items developed as part of a set of price perception scales and is designed to measure "a concern for price paid relative to quality received (Lichtenstein, Ridgway and Netemeyer 1993)." This study uses these subscales to measure how brand, quality and value conscious consumers are themselves and how brand, quality and value conscious they think others are. Consuming a branded product is thought to be desirable. For example, people need clothes, but they want clothes from Nordstrom and are willing to pay more for the brand. If brands were not highly desirable, then everything on store shelves would be

generic products. Therefore, it is predicted that individuals will indicate that others are more brand conscious than they are themselves. Consuming a high quality product is also thought to be desirable. For example, a low quality item may suffice, but people may want a higher quality version that will cost them more. Thus, it is predicted that people will indicate that others are more quality conscious than they are themselves. Lastly, by definition, a value orientation is a feasibility consideration. Thus, it is predicted that people will indicate that they are more value conscious than others.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a 2 (Target: Self vs. Other) x 2 (Order: Self First vs. Other First) mixed design with the first factor as manipulated within-subjects and the second factor manipulated between-subjects. One hundred thirteen MBAs (38 females and 75 males) completed the study during an hour-long experimental session. As compensation for their participation, a donation was made on their behalf to a charity.

The items of the three scales were randomized to create one new scale with 20 items. Sample items from the Brand Consciousness Scale include "1) The well-known national brands are for me, 2) The more expensive brands are usually my choices, and 3) I prefer buying the best selling brands." Sample items from the Perfectionist/High Quality Conscious Scale include "1) Getting very good quality is very important to me, 2) I make a special effort to choose the very best quality of products, and 3) My standards and expectations for products I buy are very high." Sample items from the Value Consciousness Scale include "1) I am very concerned about low prices, but I am equally concerned about product quality, 2) When grocery shopping, I compare the prices of different brands to be sure I get the best

value for the money, and 3) When I buy products, I like to be sure that I am getting my money's worth." The items were randomized and given in the same order to all participants.

Procedure. Participants completed the scales for themselves and others (average MBA student) in random order. For the *self* questions, participants were instructed to "Please think about yourself when answering the following questions. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by writing a number from 1 to 5 next to the statement (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)." For the *other* questions, participants were instructed to "Please think about the average UNC MBA student when answering the following questions. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by writing a number from 1 to 5 next to the statement (1 = *Strongly Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)."

Results

Effects of Brand Consciousness for Self vs. Other. The alphas for the Brand Consciousness Subscale were .80 for the self condition and .84 for the other condition. A significant self-other difference was found where individuals indicated that they care less about brands (M = 2.90) than others do (M = 3.26; $F(1, 112) = 23.29$, $p < .001$). Order was not significant ($F(1, 112) = .59$, $p = .44$, *ns*), and neither was gender ($F(1, 112) = .00$, $p = .99$, *ns*). Gender did not have a significant main or interactive effect in this study or in any of the other studies. Therefore, gender will not be discussed further.

Effects of Quality Consciousness for Self vs. Other. The alphas for the Quality Consciousness Subscale were .78 for the self condition and .70 for the other condition. No self-other difference was found between self (M = 4.01) and other (M = 3.97, $F(1, 109) = .71$, $p = .40$, *ns*).

Effects of Value Consciousness for Self vs. Other. The alphas for the Value Consciousness Subscale were .87 for the self condition and .76 for the other condition. A significant self-other difference was found whereby individuals indicated that they care more about value (M = 3.89) than others do (M = 3.64; $F(1, 112) = 12.90$, $p < .001$). There was no effect of order ($F(1, 112) = .06$, $p = .80$, *ns*).

Effects of Brand and Value Consciousness for Self vs. Other. Participants indicated that they are more value conscious (M = 3.89) than brand conscious (M = 2.90; $t(1, 112) = 8.80$, $p <$ .001). Participants indicated that others also are more value conscious (M = 3.64) than brand conscious (M = 3.26; $t(1, 112) = 4.34$, $p < .001$). Even though they think that value is more important than brands to both oneself and others, people think that value is more important to them than others and that brands are more important to others than to themselves. See Figure 1.

Discussion

The results of this study provide evidence that people place more importance on feasibility considerations than others do and believe that others value desirability considerations more than self does. In this study, people thought that others cared more about brands (i.e., which are desirable) than they do (i.e., Brand Consciousness was considered to be a desirability attribute), and less about value than they do (i.e., Value Consciousness was considered to be a feasibility attribute). Using the third subscale measuring Quality Consciousness did not yield the predicted difference between self and others. Participants did not indicate that others prefer quality more than they do. It might be that quality encompasses both feasibility and desirability considerations. If a product is not easy to use (i.e., not feasible), then it may be judged to be of poor quality. If the quality of a product is

good, then it may be thought of as better than its competitors and thus highly desirable. Therefore, only the Value and Brand Consciousness Subscales will be used in the following study.

STUDY 1B: BRAND VS. VALUE SCALES WITH CLOSENESS OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER AS A MODERATOR

Study 1B is designed to replicate the prior study by testing whether individuals will predict that others care more about desirability considerations that they do, and reveal that they care more about feasibility considerations than they think others do (Hypothesis 1A). Additionally, the goal of this study is to identify closeness of the relationship to the other as a moderator of the self-other effect (Hypothesis 2). Study 1B uses two of three subscales used in Study 1A – the Brand Consciousness/Price Equals Quality Scale (Sproles and Kendall 1986; Sproles and Sproles 1990) and the Value Consciousness Scale (Lichtenstein, Ridgway and Netemeyer 1993). As in Study 1A, consumption of a branded product is considered to be desirable, and it is predicted that individuals will indicate that others are more brand conscious than they are themselves. Value consciousness is a feasibility consideration, and it is predicted that people will indicate that they are more value conscious than others.

Social distance is a function of how similar or different the target other is perceived to be to the self. Prior research has distinguished different target others by their level of vividness (Hsee and Weber 1997) with random others viewed as abstract and close others viewed as vivid. When the target is vivid, Hsee and Weber (1997) find that prediction errors do not occur (i.e., people do not incorrectly predict that others are more risk seeking than they are). However, when the target is abstract, prediction errors occur because people perceived the target not to be like them and thus were less likely to use their own preferences

to guide their prediction of others' preferences. In this research, I predict that people's predictions of others' preferences will differ from their own because even close others are not represented as concretely as oneself, and therefore making prediction requires some abstract construals. As a result, it is predicted that as the relationship to the other person becomes closer and the target becomes less abstract the self-other difference will be attenuated. In other words, individuals may think that random others prefer branded products (i.e., highly desirably items) much more than they do, but their friends prefer branded products only slightly more than they do themselves. Similarly, individuals may think random others are much less value oriented than they are, but their friends are only slightly less value oriented than they are themselves.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a 2 (Target: Self vs. Other) x 2 (Other: Randomly selected UNC undergraduate student vs. UNC undergraduate student who is a good friend of yours) mixed design with the first factor manipulated within-subjects and the second factor manipulated between-subjects. Undergraduate participants (N = 95; 40 males and 45 females) completed the study as part of a 30-minute session for which they were paid $7. The items from two of the subscales used in Study 1A (Brand Consciousness and Value Consciousness) were randomized and given in the same order to the participants.

Procedure. Participants completed the scale first for themselves and then for others (either a randomly selected UNC undergraduate student or a UNC undergraduate student who is a good friend of yours). [3] For the self-condition, participants were instructed to "Please

[3] Order of the completion of the scale for self and other was not manipulated because order was found not to be a significant factor in Study 1A.

indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 5 below each statement." For the distant other condition, participants were instructed to "Now, please indicate the degree to which you think a randomly selected UNC undergraduate student would agree or disagree with the following statements." For the close other condition, participants were instructed to "Now, please indicate the degree to which you think a UNC undergraduate student who is a good friend of yours would agree or disagree with the following statements." Each item was followed by a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

Results

Effects of Brand Consciousness for Self vs. Other. The alphas for the Brand Consciousness Subscale were .73 for the self condition and .88 for the other condition. Consistent with Study 1A, the self-other difference was significant with individuals indicating that others (M = 3.63) care more about brands than they do (M = 2.74; $F(1, 94) = 72.62$, $p < .001$).

Effects of Value Consciousness for Self vs. Other. The alphas for the Value Consciousness Subcale were .77 for the self-condition and .78 for the other-condition. Consistent with Study 1A, the self-other difference is significant with people indicating that they care more about value (M = 4.20) than others do (M = 3.56; $F(1, 94) = 56.43$, $p < .001$).

The Moderating Role of the Other Condition. A MANOVA was conducted with the Brand and Value Consciousness Scales as the two dependent variables and the other condition (friend vs. random other) as the independent variable. An overall marginally significant effect of the other condition was found ($F(2, 93) = 2.95$, $p = .06$). For the Brand Consciousness Scale, no significant differences were found between friends and random others ($F(1, 94) = .49$, $p = .48$, *ns*), but a significant difference was found between friends

and random others for the Value Consciousness Scale ($F(1, 94) = 5.74$, $p = .02$) with participants reporting that value would be more important to their friends ($M = 3.72$) than to random others ($M = 3.41$). See Figures 2 and 3.

Discussion

Replicating Study 1A, this study also finds that individuals indicated that brands are more important to others than they are to themselves. It was predicted that closeness of the relationship to the other would moderate the effect such that people would indicate that distant others would value brands more than their friends. Although the results were directionally consistent, individuals did not significantly indicate that brands would be more important to distant others than to their friends. However, individuals did indicate that both their friends and distant others would value brands more than themselves.

Also replicating Study 1A, it was found that individuals indicated that value is more important to themselves than to others. It was predicted that closeness of the relationship to the other would moderate the self-other effect. Specifically, individuals themselves would place a lot of importance on value, and think that value is less important to their friends and even less important to random others. This result was found, and provides preliminary evidence that the closeness of the relationship to the other moderates the self-other effect.

STUDY 2: LAUNDRY DETERGENT STUDY

The results from the first two studies indicate that individuals perceive others to care more about desirability considerations and less about feasibility considerations than they do. Study 2 is designed to test whether this effect will translate into the choices people make for

others (Hypothesis 1B). Even though individuals may predict that others have different preferences from their own, they may choose the same option for both themselves and others. Therefore, this study is designed to determine whether the effect will appear when individuals are asked to make choices for others as well as themselves. Additionally, the first two studies measured individuals' preferences and their prediction of others' preferences for brands. This study uses a specific consumer product (i.e., laundry detergent) to test whether individuals will be more likely to choose highly desirable, but less feasible product (i.e., a national brand laundry detergent) for others than they are for themselves.

Participants will be asked to choose between two types of laundry detergent. One option will be labeled a National Brand (i.e., the highly desirable, but less feasible option) and the other will be labeled a Store Brand (i.e., the highly feasible, but less desirable option). Research has found that price is the main factor for the purchase of Store Brands, and National Brands are often perceived as offering higher quality than Store Brands (Prendergast and Marr 1997). When deciding which type of product to purchase, people tradeoff quality for price (Prendergast and Marr 1995, 1997, Szymanski and Busch 1987, Yelkur 2000). The study was designed so that the national brand laundry detergent would be considered highly desirable due to its brand, but less feasible given its higher price. The store brand would be perceived as highly feasible due to its lower price, but seen as less desirable because it lacks a well-known name brand and consequently may be seen as a lower quality product. It was predicted that people would be more likely to choose the national brand for others than for themselves.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a 2 (Brand: Store vs. National) x 2 (Target: Self vs. Other) mixed design with the first factor manipulated between-subjects and the second factor manipulated within-subjects. The study was run with three different populations. In the first data collection, data were collected during a 50-minute session for which the undergraduate participants were paid $10 in compensation. In the second data collection, data were collected from the members of several sports teams as part of an hour session for which the undergraduate students were paid $10 in compensation. In both the first and second data collections, data were collected from undergraduate students (N = 162). The data were collapsed across these two data collections, and will not be discussed separately. In the third data collection, data were collected from MBA students (N = 126) as part of an hour session for which a $10 donation was made on their behalf to a charity or sports team. A total of 288 students participated in this study.

Procedure. All participants were asked to consider the following scenario "Imagine that you are going to the grocery store, and one of the products you need to purchase is laundry detergent. While in the store, you narrow your choice down to the following two laundry detergents." Participants were then presented with two brands (one store and one national brand) of the same product (i.e., laundry detergent). The one identified as the "Store Brand" was cheaper with a price of $4.99 and the one identified as the "National Brand" was more expensive with a price of $5.99. The two products were only identified as the "Store Brand" or the "National Brand" rather than with actual national (i.e., Tide, Wisk) or store (i.e., Harris Teeter, Food Lion) brand names so that any specific brand associations would not effect the results.

Participants were then asked the two main dependent variables: "Which of the two laundry detergents would you buy for yourself?" and "If a friend had asked you to purchase laundry detergent during your trip to the grocery store, but had not specified a particular brand, which one would you choose for him/her?" The order in which the dependent variables were asked was randomly assigned. Participants indicated their choice for themselves as well as others on a 7-point scale where 1 = *Definitely National Brand* and 7 = *Definitely Store Brand*. Lastly, participants responded to two questions, which served as the manipulation checks. The first question asked, "Which of the two brands of laundry detergent do you find more desirable?" The second asked, "Which of the two brands of laundry detergent do you find more feasible?" For both question, participants indicated their response on a 7-point scale where 1 = *Definitely National Brand* and 7 = *Definitely Store Brand*.

Results

Manipulation Checks. Participants indicated that the national brand was more desirable (M = 3.15), and significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (M = 4.0; $t(1, 287) = 8.44$, $p < .001$). As expected, participants indicated that the store brand was more feasible (M = 4.57), and was significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (M = 4.0; $t(1, 287) = 6.28$, $p < .001$). A paired t-test revealed that the two means were significantly different from each other (*paired t* $(1, 287) = 14.04$, $p < .001$).

Effects of Choice for Self vs. Other. As predicted, a significant main effect for self-other was found with participants indicating that they would be more likely to purchase the store brand for themselves (M = 4.23) than they would for others (M = 3.80; $F(1, 287) = 11.20$, $p = .001$). Individuals indicated a self preference for the national brand (M = 4.23) which is marginally

significantly different than the midpoint of the scale (M = 4.0; t(1, 287) = 1.72, p = .09). Other preference (M = 3.80) was not significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (M = 4.0; t(1, 287) = 1.58, p = .12) Thus, the self-other difference emerges as significant in the predicted direction, but neither self choice nor other choice is significantly different than the midpoint of the scale. Results are summarized in Table 1.

The order in which the participants chose for self and others was counterbalanced, and was found not to be significant (F (1, 287) = .01, p = .94, *ns*). The interaction between self-other and order was also not significant (F (1, 287) = .84, p = .36, *ns*). Consequently, order will not be discussed further.

Effects of Different Student Populations as Participants. A significant main effect of the sample population emerged (F(1, 286) = 44.37, p < .001) revealing that there are different perceptions of national and generic brands among the two sample populations (undergraduates vs. MBAs). However, the interaction between target (self vs. other) and sample population (undergraduates vs. MBAs) is not significant (F(1, 286) = 1.21, p = .27, *ns*). For self, undergraduates were more likely to choose the store brand (M = 4.80) as compared to the MBAs (M = 3.51; F(1, 287) = 24.18, p < .001). The undergraduates' self preference is for the Store Brand whereas the MBAs prefer the National Brand for themselves. For others, undergraduates were also more likely to choose the store brand (M = 4.49) than the MBAs (M = 2.91; F(1, 287) = 42.96, p < .001). Again, the undergraduates think that others would prefer the Store Brand whereas the MBAs think that others would prefer the National Brand. Although the self-other difference is robust among both of these sample populations, it is evident that both self and other preferences between these two

options (i.e., store vs. national brand) differ. These differences may have emerged due to different levels of income and affordability for the two sample populations.

Discussion

The results of this study show that individuals have a greater likelihood to choose the more feasible option for themselves than for others. This study also shows that the self-other effect is robust among different populations. In this study, the more desirable option was operationalized using a national brand, which are considered to be desirable due to higher quality perceptions and greater marketing awareness. Feasibility was manipulated by the cost of the product (i.e., affordability is a feasibility consideration). National brands are almost always costlier than store brands. Therefore, the use of national vs. store brands proved to be good stimuli in testing Hypothesis 1B.

In Studies 1A and 1B, preferences for self and others were the dependent variables. In Study 2, the likeliness to purchase for self and others served as the dependent variables. Both preferences and likelihood to purchase are direct measures of the importance of desirability and feasibility in people's own preferences and their prediction of others' preferences. Study 3 uses another dependent variable (i.e., the likelihood to return an item purchased for you) to test whether individuals place more importance on feasibility consideration than others, but predict that others value desirability considerations more than they do themselves.

STUDY 3: SWEATER STUDY

In the prior studies, price or value was the feasibility consideration. Study 3 tests Hypothesis 1A using another feasibility consideration (i.e., type of care needed to use the

product) to test whether individuals will predict that feasibility considerations are more important to themselves than they are to others. Desirability considerations are manipulated by the brand of the product (i.e., high-end or low-end designer label), and it is predicted that others will indicate that desirability considerations are more important to others than they are to themselves.

Study 3 also uses a new scenario in which people are told that they received an item as a gift. People are asked to assume that the item is already in their possession. Then, they are asked whether they would return the item to the store. Thus, the dependent variable in this study is likelihood to return, and it is a more indirect measure than preference or choice. Likelihood to return was chosen as the dependent variable in this study because it tests Hypothesis 1A in a scenario where an item presumed to be on a person's possession. Having the item in one's possession is not expected to significantly alter the self-other results, but rather provides another context in which to study the self-other effect. Although people may experience an endowment effect for self in this gift scenario (e.g., they may be more reluctant to return an item that has become part of their endowment; Thaler 1980), they will find it easier to return the non-feasible item than the non-desirable one. Thus, it is predicted that despite any overall endowment effect (which could produce lower overall likelihood to return for self than others), the self-other effect will continue to emerge with individuals predicting that others care more about desirability considerations than they do (i.e., others will return the non-desirable item rather than the non-feasible one), and indicating that they care more about feasibility considerations than others do (i.e., they will be more likely return the non-feasible item rather than the non-desirable one).

In this study, participants were asked to imagine either giving or receiving a gift. If they were asked about giving the gift, participants reported how likely they think the recipient is to return that gift. If they were asked about receiving the gift, participants reported how likely they would be to return the gift. When presented with two options, one highly desirable but less feasible and the other highly feasible but less desirable, it was predicted that people will think that others are more likely to return a high feasibility, low desirability item than they would be themselves.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a 2 (Recipient: Self vs. Other) x 2 (Condition: High Desirability/Low Feasibility vs. High Feasibility/Low Desirability) between-subjects design, and was run as part of an hour-long session for which the undergraduates were given 1 hour of course credit for their participation. One hundred forty-one undergraduate participants (45 females and 96 males) completed the study.

Condition was manipulated by changing the features of a product (i.e., sweater). Desirability was manipulated by the brand label of the sweater. The high desirability sweater was described as a "High-end designer label" and the low desirability sweater was described as a "Low-end designer label." Feasibility was manipulated by how the sweater could be cleaned. The high feasibility sweater was described as "Machine washable" and the low feasibility sweater was described as "Dry clean only." Therefore, participants evaluated two sweaters – one was highly desirable (high-end designer label) but not very feasible (dry clean only) and the other was highly feasible (machine washable) but not very desirable (low-end designer label). Both sweaters were described as a "Half-zip sweater, with contrast stripe at

interior neck," priced at $34.99, and presented with a simple black and white picture that was identical in both conditions.

Procedure. Participants were instructed to: "Imagine that it is your best friend's [your] birthday, and you have [your best friend] decided to give him/her [you] a gift. You [He/she] went shopping and selected the gift below as the gift for your best friend [you]." Then participants were presented with one of two sweaters. Half of the participants were asked to evaluate the sweater as a potential gift they were *giving* to their friend and the other half of the participants to evaluate the sweater as a gift they *received* from their friend. When giving the sweater as a gift (other recipient condition), participants were asked, "How likely do you think it is that your friend would return or exchange this gift?" When receiving the sweater as a gift (self recipient condition), participants were asked, "How likely do you think it is that you would return or exchange this gift?" Participants indicated the likeliness to return on a 7-point scale anchored by 1 = *Very Unlikely*; 7 = *Very Likely*).

Results

No significant main effect of recipient ($F(1, 140) = .04$, $p = .84$, *ns*) nor condition ($F(1, 140) = .01$, $p = .92$, *ns*) was found, but a significant interaction did emerge ($F(1, 140) = 4.46$, $p = .04$) where people predicted that their friend was more likely to return the sweater if was low on desirability whereas they were equally likely to return both of the sweaters. A series of simple effects tests revealed that those who gave the gift indicated that others would be more likely to return the low-end, machine washable sweater (low desirability/high feasibility) than the high-end, dry clean only sweater (high desirability/low feasibility) (*M*s = 3.54 and 2.87, respectively; $F(1, 76) = 2.95$, $p = .09$). Those who received the gift indicated that they would be equally likely to return the high-end, dry clean only sweater (high

desirability/low feasibility) and the low-end, machine washable sweater (low desirability/high feasibility; *M*s = 2.84 and 3.44, respectively; $F(1, 63) = 1.68$, $p = .19$, *ns*). See Figure 4.

Consequently, participants predicted that others would be more sensitive to the desirability of the gift; they predicted that others would be more likely to return the sweater if it was a low-end designer label even if it was very feasible (i.e., machine washable). For themselves, the means were directionally consistent with predictions that individuals would be more likely to return the less feasible sweater even if it was very desirable (i.e., high-end designer label). However, no significant differences were found. Individuals were equally likely to return the highly desirable, but less feasible and the highly feasible, but less desirable sweater.

Discussion

In addition to the prior two studies that used the prediction of others' preferences and choice for others, this study revealed the self-other effect using likelihood to return an item purchased for you by someone else. The study found that people think others are more likely to return a highly feasible gift that is not desirable whereas they are equally likely to return both a highly feasible gift that is not desirable and a highly desirable gift that is not feasible. The following study moves from consumer products to consumer experiences, and tests whether individuals think desirability considerations are more important, and feasibility considerations are less important, to others than to themselves.

STUDY 4: AMUSEMENT PARK STUDY

Study 1 tests whether social distance (self vs. other) will shift the importance of desirability and feasibility considerations in determining one's preferences (Hypothesis 1A). In the previous studies, scenarios pertaining to consumer products (i.e., laundry detergent and sweaters) were used as the stimuli to test the self-other effect. In this study, as well as Study 5, consumer experiences (selecting an amusement park) were used to determine whether the results extend to other consumer contexts. Desirability was manipulated using a feature of the experience rather than a brand name in order to see whether the results generalize beyond the desirability of brands. Feasibility was manipulated using driving time rather than cost or type of care needed. It is predicted that the self-other effect again will emerge, with individuals reporting a greater preference for an amusement park that requires less driving time (i.e., the more feasible option) than they think others do.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a simple 2 cell (Target: Self vs. Other) design with the one factor manipulated within subjects. Seventy-four participants (46 females and 28 males) completed the study as part of an hour session in return for one hour of course credit.

Procedure. Participants were presented with two amusement parks: Amusement Park A has several new rides, but is four hours away (high desirability/low feasibility) and Amusement Park B has no new rides, but is two hours away (low desirability/high feasibility). Participants were asked to indicate which amusement park they would prefer to go and also indicated what their friends' overall preference is. Participants indicated their preference as well as that of others on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park* A; 7 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park B*. Participants were asked several specific questions to tap into how important desirability and feasibility considerations are to them.

Specifically, participants were asked to indicate how important the newness of the rides is to them versus others and how important the driving distance is to them versus others. Participants provided their responses to both questions on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Not At All Important*; 7 = *Extremely Important*. Two manipulation checks were also included. The first asked participants which amusement park they would more enjoy spending the day at (1 = *Enjoy Amusement Park A More*; 7 = *Enjoy Amusement Park B More*). The second asked which amusement park is easier to get to (1 = *Amusement Park A Is Easier To Get To*; 7 = *Amusement Park B Is Easier To Get To*).

Results

Manipulation Check. Participants indicated that they would more enjoy spending a day at Amusement Park A ($M = 2.66$) compared to the scale midpoint ($M = 4.0$; t (1, 73) = 7.16, $p < .001$), but that Amusement Park B is easier to get to ($M = 6.20$) compared to the scale midpoint ($M = 4.0$; t (1, 73) = 14.78, $p < .001$). Therefore, participants viewed the two options consistently with the study design that Amusement Park A is more desirable option and Amusement Park B is more feasible option.

Effects of Preferences of Self vs. Other. Participants indicated that they were neutral between the two parks ($M = 4.01$), but that their friends would have a greater preference for the desirable, but further away Amusement Park A ($M = 3.69$; paired $t(73) = 2.29$, $p = .03$). Although it was predicted that participants would have a preference for the closer, but less desirable Amusement Park B (not be neutral between the two amusement parks), the direction of results is consistent with predictions with participants indicating that they would prefer Amusement Park A less than they think their friends would. Participants indicated that newness of the rides (i.e., desirability of the amusement park's features) is more

important to their friends (M = 4.81) than to themselves (M = 4.53; *paired t* (73) = 1.94, p = .06). Participants indicated that driving distance (i.e., feasibility to get to the amusement park) was equally important to themselves (M = 4.97) and their friends (M = 4.78); *paired t* (73) = 1.27, p = .21, *ns*). Means are directionally consistent with predictions that driving distance would be more important to self than others.

Discussion

It was found that individuals indicate that others will have a greater preference for a highly desirable albeit less feasible consumer experience than a highly feasible, but less desirable alternative. For themselves, individuals revealed that they were indifferent between a consumer experience that was highly desirable, but less feasible and one that was highly feasible, but less desirable. Therefore, choices involving consumer experiences show a similar self-other effect as consumer products. Individuals think others care more about desirability considerations than they do. Additionally, this study used different attributes than prior studies to manipulate desirability considerations (i.e., newness of the rides rather than brand name) and feasibility considerations (i.e., driving time rather than price or type of care needed), and again the self-other effect emerged.

STUDY 5: AMUSEMENT PARK STUDY WITH PUBLIC/PRIVATE MANIPULATION

Because people think others value desirability considerations more than they do, it may be the case that people change their own preferences in public to match those of others (Hypothesis 3). Previous research has suggested that people will alter their consumption choices if they expect that others will evaluate their decisions (Belk 1988; Calder and Burnkrant 1977; Ratner and Kahn 2002). It has also been found that individuals will make

decisions other than those they would privately favor when they expect others may form impressions of them based upon the decisions they make (Asch 1956; Deutsch and Gerard 1955; Diener et al. 1976; Schlenker, Britt, and Pennington 1996). Moreover, people engage in impression management behavior in order to communicate a desired persona to others (Goffman 1959). When behaviors are perceived to be private or anonymous, people feel less compelled to perform behaviors consistent with the opinions of others.

Therefore, Study 5 was designed to test whether people would report different preferences for a consumer experience depending on the social setting in which they were asked. If people report different preferences for themselves in public versus private settings, then the effect has real implications on the choices people not only make for others, but also for themselves. Using the same stimuli as Study 4, participants are expected to express a greater likelihood to vote to go to the more desirable, less feasible amusement park than to the more feasible, less desirable amusement park when their vote is public (versus private) due to their thoughts that others' preferences will also be for the more desirable option.. In private, participants will be more likely to express their true preference which will be for the highly feasible, but less desirable amusement park.

Method

Participants and design. The study was a simple 2-cell between subjects design (Response: Public vs. Private). One hundred eight undergraduate students completed the study (64 females and 44 males). A similar design was used to the previous Amusement Park Study (Study 4). Specifically, participants were asked to imagine that a group of their friends had decided to take a trip to an amusement park next weekend and to consider two amusement park alternatives. Amusement Park A (i.e., the highly desirable option) had new rides, but

was four hours away by car. Amusement Park B (i.e., the highly feasible option) had no new rides, but was only two hours away by car.

Procedure. Half of the participants were randomly assigned to the private condition and were asked: "If your friends were to take a secret ballot vote (where others would not know your preference), which option would you vote for?" The other half of the participants were randomly assigned to the public condition and were asked to answer the following question: "If your friends were to take a hand vote (where others would know your preference), which option would you vote for?" Participants indicated their responses by selecting either Amusement Park A or B. Two questions were asked as manipulation checks to confirm that participants perceived one amusement park as highly desirable and the other as highly feasible: "Which amusement park would you more enjoy spending a day at? (1 = *Enjoy Amusement Park A More*; 7 = *Enjoy Amusement Park B More*)" and "Which amusement park is easier to get to? (1 = *Amusement Park A Is Easier To Get To*; 7 = *Amusement Park B Is Easier To Get To*)."

Results

Manipulation Checks. Consistent with our intended design of the study, participants indicated that they would enjoy spending the day more at Amusement Park A ($M = 3.06$) compared to the scale midpoint ($M = 4.0$; $t(1, 107) = 5.63$, $p < .001$) and that Amusement Park B was easier to get to ($M = 6.16$) compared to the scale midpoint ($M = 4.0$; $t(1, 107) = 16.90$, $p < .001$).

Effects of Public and Private Conditions on Self Preferences. As predicted, in the public condition, more participants (63%) indicated that they would vote for the desirable Amusement Park A (N = 34) than Amusement Park B (N = 20) whereas in the private

condition more participants (61%) indicated that they would vote for the feasible Amusement Park B (N = 33) than Amusement Park A (N = 21; $\chi^2 = 6.26$, $p < .05$). See Figure 5. In other words, more participants chose the highly desirable amusement park in public when they knew that their friends would know which of the two amusement parks they were voting for. However, when they believed that their friends would not know their vote because of a secret ballot, more participants chose the highly feasible amusement park.

Discussion

This study shows that people report different preferences when in a public setting. Specifically, individuals were more likely to choose a more desirable, less feasible option in public, but a more feasible, less desirable option in private. This finding shows that people perceive others to care about desirability considerations, and report preferences to match those of others when asked to do so in public. As a result, the self-other effect impacts not only the choices individuals make for others, but also the choice they make for themselves. Two scales were also included in the data collection and analysis – social desirability and self-monitoring. Social desirability was included to rule out the possibility that one option was more attractive to those who scored high versus low on social desirability or that endorsing a particular option was driven by social desirability (i.e., not authentic). No significant social desirability results were found. Self-monitoring was included to determine whether the high self-monitors were more sensitive to the public manipulation than low self-monitors. No significant self-monitoring results were found.

One limitation of this study is that the scenario was hypothetical in nature. Participants imagined themselves voting for one of the two amusement park options either in public or private. An actual vote in a public versus private setting was not taken. Four

follow-up studies tested whether this public/private effect would replicate in an actual social setting (i.e., public vs. private). In all the studies, participants made actual choices between the two options where they actually received their choice if they were selected as the winner of a lottery. No significant public/private effects were found in any of the four studies.

In the first study, which asked participants to choose between a highly feasible, but less desirable coffee shop (Ram Café) and a highly desirable, but less desirable coffee shop (Starbucks), almost all the participants chose the highly desirable coffee shop regardless of condition (i.e., public or private). In private, 18 of 20 participants (90%) chose Starbucks over Ram Café; in public, 19 of 20 participants (95%) chose Starbucks ($\chi^2(1) = .36$, *ns)*. It was speculated that the highly feasible coffee shop may not have been perceived to be as feasible as the pretest indicated because the location of the pretest and study differed. Therefore, a second study was run in which the highly feasible coffee shop option was located in the same building as the study (Café McColl), and the highly desirable alternative was the same one as in the prior study (Starbucks). In this study, there was more variance in choice, but there were no significant differences in choice between the public and private conditions. In private, 18 of 23 participants (78%) chose Starbucks over Café McColl; in public 19 of 26 participants (73%) chose Starbucks ($\chi^2(1) = .18$, *ns*). Study 3 used the original coffee shop stimuli and was run in the same location as where the pretest was run and the highly feasible coffee shop is located. No signficant main effect of condition (public vs. private) was found. In private, 37 of 45 participants (82%) chose Starbucks over Ram Café; in public 32 of 46 participants (70%) chose Starbucks ($\chi^2(1) = 1.99$, $p = .12$, *ns*). Study 4 tested the same predictions with a different set of stimuli (i.e., soda). Participants were asked to choose between 12 cans of Coca-Cola (a highly desirable brand, but less

quantity) and 24 cans of Sam's Choice (a less desirable brand, but more quantity) in public or private. Again no significant differences in choice were found between the public and private conditions. In private, 42 of 62 participants (67.7%) chose Coca-Cola over Sam's Choice; in public 38 of 58 participants (65.5%) chose Coca-Cola ($\chi^2(1) = .07$, *ns*).

There are at least two reasons why the actual studies may not have replicated the results of the hypothetical study (Study 5). The first reason is the stimuli. The hypothetical study presented and varied the feasibility and desirability importance of only those two attributes. When there are only two attributes under consideration where one is highly feasible and the other is highly desirable, a significant public/private emerges. In actual study, numerous pretests were run to find a pair of actual stimuli that have two primary attributes that vary on the dimensions of desirability and feasibility. The sets of stimuli tested, but not chosen were Amusement Parks (Carowinds – a smaller park requiring less travel time vs. Walt Disney World – a larger park requiring more travel time), Mexican Restaurants (Cosmic Cantina - lower CitySearch rating closer to campus vs. Carrburritos Taqueria – higher CitySearch rating further away from campus), Movie Theaters (Carolina Theatre – lower CitySearch rating closer to campus vs. Southpoint Cinemas – higher CitySearch rating further away from campus), Southern Cuisine Restaurants (Mama Dip's – lower CitySearch rating closer to campus vs. Magnolia Grill – higher CitySearch rating further away from campus), Shopping Malls (University Mall – smaller mall closer to campus vs. The Streets at Southpoint – larger mall further away from campus), and Retail Stores (Wal-Mart – older store closer to campus vs. Target – newer store further away from campus). A significant self-other effect where people preferred the highly feasible option for themselves, but indicated that others would prefer the highly desirable option was not found

in any of these pretests. It is the case that real products and services have many attributes that vary in terms of feasibility and desirability considerations, as well as other unrelated attributes that may also be important and lead to purchase. Even though two attributes may appear to be the major distinguishing attributes or are made salient, it is not guaranteed that participants will use only these two attributes in making their decisions.

The second reason why the actual studies may not have replicated the results of Study 5 is the manipulation of the social setting (public vs. private). In the hypothetical study, participants were asked to imagine voting in private by secret ballot or in public by hand vote. No actual vote was taken. The question is whether participants are able to envision the public setting, and predict their behavior in such a setting correctly. In the actual studies, participants made their choices either in private by writing down their preference on paper and giving it to the experimenter along with other studies completed during an experimental session or in public by announcing their choice to the other participants in the experimental session. The public condition was very public because in most cases there were at least seven other people in the experimental session. However, it could have been the case that even though the private condition was perceived to be more private than the public condition, it was not perceived to be completely private. Thus, perhaps all participants saw their responses to be public to some degree and indicated that they preferred the highly desirable option.

STUDY 6: AMUSEMENT PARK STUDY WITH A "HOW" CONCRETENESS MANIPULATION

The series of prior studies all provide evidence that people perceive that desirability considerations are more important, and feasibility considerations are less important, to others

than to the self. Given this robust finding, the objective of this study was to show that the level of representation (concrete vs. abstract thinking) is the mechanism underlying this self-other effect. The CLT argues that the self is represented more concretely, while others are represented more abstractly. The self is more familiar, and naturally people think of themselves in very concrete ways. However, others are distant and less familiar, and thus people think of others in more abstract terms. The account argues that these representation differences are the reason why people are more likely to prefer the highly feasible alternatives for themselves, but indicate that others have a preference for the highly desirable alternatives.

Therefore, this study was designed to test whether the self-other effect will be attenuated as the representation of the other becomes more concrete (Hypothesis 4). Specifically, individuals will be more likely to choose the highly feasible, less desirable option for others when the other is represented concretely rather than abstractly. Because people naturally think about themselves concretely, the concreteness manipulation is not predicted to have as pronounced an effect on self preference (i.e., the self will prefer the feasibility alternative in both the control and concreteness manipulation conditions).

The following two studies (Studies 6 and 7) use the same Amusement Park stimuli used in Studies 4 and 5. Study 6 used a concrete representation manipulation from prior literature, which in this work will be referred to as the "how" manipulation (Freitas, Gollwitzer, and Trope 2004). This manipulation asked participants to complete an exercise that focused on how they could implement an activity (i.e., the process, not the outcome). In the "how" manipulation condition, it is predicted that the self-other difference will be attenuated. Specifically, the "how" manipulation will prompt participants to think about

feasibility considerations and by doing so will realize that feasibility considerations can be important to others. Consequently, participants in the "how" manipulation condition will report that others have a weaker preference for the highly desirable amusement park than those in the control condition. The "how" manipulation is not predicted to result in any significant changes to self preferences because the self is naturally predisposed to value feasibility considerations. In the control condition, it is predicted that individuals will report a greater preference for an amusement park that requires less driving time (i.e., the more feasible option) for themselves than they think others will have. This result will replicate the self-other effect obtained in the earlier studies.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a 2 (Condition: How vs. Control) x 2 (Target: Self vs. Other) between-subjects design. Data were collected from undergraduate students (N = 80; 56 females and 24 males) at a large southeastern university who were offered candy in exchange for their participation.

Procedure. Participants randomly assigned to the "how" manipulation condition began the study by completing a thought exercise, which asked them to consider how they do the things they do or in other words the process of how they do something. Created by Freitas and colleagues (2004) and modified to fit the context of this study (i.e., the amusement park scenario) this concrete mindset manipulation consisted of a two-part thought exercise. First, participants were asked to read a passage[4] that focused their attention on how they would

[4] For everything we do, there always is a process of how we do it. Moreover, we often can follow our broad life-goals down to our very specific behaviors. For example, like most people, you probably hope to find happiness in life. How can you do this? Perhaps finding a good job, or being educated, can help. How can you do these things? Perhaps by earning a

spend a day at an amusement park. Participants were then asked to identify three ways they could spend the day at an amusement park. After identifying the three ways, participants were then asked the following question "How much will engaging in this activity help you spend a day at an amusement park?" and were asked to answer this question in response to the three ways they listed on a 5-point Likert Scale anchored by 1 = *a little* and 5 = *very, very much*. Then, in the second part of the "how" manipulation, participants listed four specific process activities that would help them spend the day at an amusement park. The directions were: "To show how the goal of "Spending a day at an amusement park" can be met through specific activities, please fill in the 4 blank boxes below, in the series on the right. Beginning in the highest blank box (the one just below the box labeled "Spending a day at an amusement park"), fill in each box by answering the question "How I can meet the goal described in the immediately higher box?" Participants were given an example with completed boxes for the goal of attaining life happiness that served as a guide for their task. Participants in the control condition began the actual study without completing this exercise.

All participants were then asked to "suppose that a group of your friends has decided to take a trip to an amusement park next weekend" and were then presented with two amusement park options. Amusement Park A has several new rides, but is four hours away (high desirability/low feasibility) and Amusement Park B has no new rides, but is two hours away (low desirability/high feasibility). Participants were asked to indicate which

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college degree. How do you earn a college degree? By satisfying course requirements? How do you satisfy course requirements? In some cases, such as today, you participate in a marketing experiment. Research suggests that engaging in thought exercise like that above, in which one thinks about how one's ultimate life goals can be expressed through specific actions, can improve people's life satisfaction. In this experiment, we are testing such a technique. This thought exercise is intended to focus your attention on how you do the things you do. For this thought exercise, please consider the following activity:
"*Spending a day at an amusement park*"

amusement park they would prefer to go to and also which park their friends would prefer on a 7- point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park A*; 7 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park B.* For those in the self condition, participants were asked several specific questions to determine how important the desirability and feasibility considerations were to them. These questions were: 1. How important is the newness of the rides to you and 2. How important is the driving distance to you? For the participants in the "how" manipulation condition, participants were asked similar questions to determine how important they thought the desirability and feasibility considerations would be for others. These questions were: 1. How important do you think the newness of the rides is to your friends and 2. How important do you think the driving distance is to your friends? Participants provided their responses to these questions on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Not At All Important*; 7 = *Extremely Important*. Two manipulation checks for the stimuli were also included. The first asked participants which amusement park they would more enjoy spending the day at (1 = *Enjoy Amusement Park A More*; 7 = *Enjoy Amusement Park B More*). The second asked which amusement park is easier to get to (1 = *Amusement Park A Is Easier To Get To*; 7 = *Amusement Park B Is Easier To Get To*).

A set of questions measuring representation of the self and another set measuring representation of the other were also included depending on the condition to which the participants was assigned. Participants in the self condition answered the following set of questions measuring representation of the self: 1. How concretely did you imagine yourself going to the amusement park (1 = *Not At All Concretely*; 7 = *Very Concretely*)?, 2. In how much detail did you think about your own day at the amusement park (1 = *No Detail At All*; 7 = *A Lot of Detail*)?, and 3. How well were you able to visualize the day you would spend

going to the amusement park (1 = *Not Well At All*; 7 = *Very Well*)? Participants in the other condition answered the following set of questions measuring representation of the other: 1. How concretely did you imagine your friends going to the amusement park (1 = *Not At All Concretely*; 7 = *Very Concretely*)?, 2. In how much detail did you think about your friends' day at the amusement park (1 = *No Detail At All*; 7 = *A Lot of Detail*)?, and 3. How well were you able to visualize the day your friends would spend going to the amusement park (1 = *Not Well At All*; 7 = *Very Well*)?

Results

Manipulation Checks. Participants indicated that they would enjoy going to Amusement Park A (the more desirable alternative with the new rides) more (M = 2.94 vs. scale midpoint of 4.0; $t(1, 79) = 5.88$, $p < .001$). Participants indicated that Amusement Park B (the more feasible alternative closer to home) was easier to get to (M = 6.00) vs. scale midpoint of 4.0; $t(1, 79) = 11.36$, $p < .001$).

To test whether the "how" manipulation changed representation levels, two scales were created. The scale for representation of the self was created by averaging the three items designed to measure how concretely one thought of himself/herself going to the amusement park. The alpha for the self representation scale was .93, and the alpha would drop if any of the three items were dropped. The scale for representation of others was created by averaging the three items designed to measure how concretely one thought of her/his friends going to the amusement park. The alpha for the other scale was .85, and the alpha would drop if any of the three items were dropped. The self representation scale did not reveal any significant differences in how concretely participants thought about themselves going to the

amusement park between those in the control condition (M = 4.38) and manipulation condition (M = 4.83; $F(1, 39) = 1.60$, $p = .21$, *ns*).

The other representation scale did reveal a significant difference in how concretely participants thought about others going to the amusement park between those in the control condition (M = 4.25) and manipulation condition (M = 3.25; $F(1, 39) = 6.03$, $p = .02$). Inconsistent with predictions, participants in the control condition reported thinking about others more concretely than those in the "how" manipulation condition. In other words, the "how" manipulation reduced people's reports of how concretely they thought about others rather than increased them as the manipulation was intended to do. It may have been the case that participants' attempted to think concretely about others, but realized that this was difficult to do. Similar to the research conducted by Schwarz (1998) who found that listing 10 thoughts was perceived to be more difficult than listing 3 thoughts, it may be the case that the more participants thought about others, the more difficult, and thus less successful, they felt afterward, even though they in fact might have thought about others more concretely in the "how" condition than in the control condition. Consistent with predictions, participants did report that they thought about themselves (M = 4.61) more concretely than about others (M = 3.75; $F(1, 79) = 9.33$, $p < .01$).

Preferences for Self vs. Others. Consistent with predictions and results from prior studies, a marginally significant effect of target (self vs. other) emerged ($F(1, 79) = 3.59$, $p = .06$), such that participants indicated a greater preference for the highly feasible Amusement Park B for self (M = 4.53) than for others (M = 3.93). Self preference was for the highly feasible Amusement Park B (M = 4.53 compared to scale midpoint M = 4.0; $t(1, 39 = 2.77$, $p < .01$), but others were thought to be indifferent between the two amusement parks (M = 3.93

compared to scale midpoint $M = 4.0$; $t(1, 39) = .30$, $p = .77$, *ns*). In the control condition, participants indicated a greater preference for the highly feasible Amusement Park B for themselves ($M = 4.50$) than for others ($M = 3.60$; $F(1, 39) = 4.69$, $p < .05$). In the "how" manipulation condition, no significant differences emerged between self preferences ($M = 4.55$) and others' preferences ($M = 4.25$; $F(1, 39) = .39$, $p = .53$, *ns*). There was no significant main effect of condition (control vs. "how"; $F(1, 79) = 1.22$, $p = .27$, *ns*) nor a significant interaction between target and condition ($F(1, 79) = .90$, $p = .35$, *ns*). See Table 2 for results.

Inferred Choice from Preference Data for Self and Others. Preference data between the two amusement parks were collected on 7-point Likert Scales anchored by preferences for each Amusement Park. These data were cut so that responses of 1 – 3 were inferred to indicate choosing to go to the highly desirable Amusement Park A and responses of 5 – 7 were inferred to indicate choosing to go the highly feasible Amusement Park B. Reponses of 4 were considered to be indifference between the two amusement parks and were eliminated for this analysis. The pattern of results is consistent with predictions. For self, participants chose to go to the highly feasible Amusement Park B more than to the highly desirable Amusement Park A regardless of the condition ($\chi^2(1) = .08$, p = .54, *ns*). See Figure 6 for results. For others, a marginally significant effect emerged whereby participants indicated that they would choose the highly desirable Amusement Park A in the control condition, but would choose the highly feasible Amusement Park B in the "how" manipulation condition. ($\chi^2(1) = 3.45$, p = .06). See Figure 7 for results.

Importance of Rides to Self vs. Others. Consistent with predictions and results from prior studies, a marginally significant effect of target (self vs. other) emerged, such that

participants indicated that the desirability attribute, rides, are more important to others (M = 5.00) than to themselves (M = 4.43; $F(1, 79) = 3.01$, $p = .09$). There was no significant main effect of condition (control vs. "how"; $F(1, 79) = .69$, $p = .41$, *ns*) nor a significant interaction between target and condition ($F(1, 79) = .69$, $p = .41$, *ns*).

Importance of Driving Distance to Self vs. Others. No significant main effects of condition (control vs. "how"; $F(1, 79) = 1.33$, $p = .25$, *ns*) or target (self vs. others; $F(1, 79) = .59$, $p = .44$, *ns*) emerged nor did a significant interaction between the two ($F(1, 79) = .04$, $p = .85$, *ns*).

Mediation Analysis. Given that a marginally significant effect of target (self vs. other) emerged and target also was found to significant predict representation, a mediation analysis was performed to determine whether the level of representation mediations the effect of the target on preference (Baron and Kenny 1986). First, a marginally significant effect of the independent variable (target) was found on the dependent variable (preference; $t(1, 79) = 1.89$, $p = .06$). Second, the independent variable (target) was also found to significantly predict the mediator (representation; $t(1, 79) = 3.05$, $p < .01$). Third, when both the independent variable (target) and the proposed mediator (representation) are in the model predicting preference, target remains significant ($t(1, 79) = 1.99$, $p = .05$, but the proposed mediator is not significant ($t(1, 79) = .65$, $p = .52$, *ns*). Thus, there is no evidence that the level of representation mediates the effect of target on preference.

Discussion

Although the self representation scale did not reveal any significant differences in how concretely participants thought about themselves going to the amusement park between those in the control condition and concreteness manipulation condition, the other

representation scale did reveal a significant difference. Participants reported that they thought more concretely about others in the control condition than in the concreteness manipulation, which is completely counter to predictions. It was predicted that the concreteness manipulation would increase concrete thoughts of others, not reduce them. One possible explanation for why participants reported thinking less concretely about others after the manipulation is that thinking about others was difficult, and thus participants reported not being very successful at this task similar to the findings by Schwarz 1986). This manipulation has been used previously (Freitas 2004) to increase concrete thinking and there is a significant self-other effect, consistent with predictions, where participants report thinking about themselves more concretely than others. Also consistent with predictions, participants indicated a marginally greater preference for the highly feasible Amusement Park B for self than for others. The pattern of results from the inferred choice data is also consistent with predictions. For self, participants chose to go to the highly feasible Amusement Park B more than to the highly desirable Amusement Park A regardless of the condition, but for others participants indicated that they would be more likely to choose the highly desirable Amusement Park A in the control condition, but are more likely to choose the highly feasible Amusement Park B in the "how" manipulation condition. Also consistent with predictions, participants indicated that the amount of new rides (i.e., the desirability attribute) was more important to others than to themselves. However, participants did not indicate that driving distance (i.e., the feasibility attribute) was more important to themselves than others as was predicted to be the case.

These results indicate that the "how" manipulation had the intended effect. For self, the "how" manipulation did not produce significant changes preferences because self

preferences are naturally for the more feasibility alternative. However, for others, the "how" manipulation did shift others' preferences away from the highly desirable alternative and towards the more feasible one. Unfortunately, there is no evidence from the representation scales that these self-other differences are a result of a shift in representation created by the "how" manipulation. It may be the case that representation levels did shift, but these changes are not captured by the scales. Or another factor not yet identified is the reason why these effects occur.

The results from Study 6 provide evidence to support the predictions; however, it must be mentioned that two additional studies using the "how" manipulation found mixed results. The first study (Study 6 Follow-up Study A) included a "how" [5] concreteness manipulation and a "why" [6] abstractness manipulation in addition to the control condition. The context of these manipulations was in a different domain (i.e., learning a new language) from the stimuli (i.e., amusement parks). It was predicted that the "how" manipulation would shift others' preferences toward the highly feasible Amusement Park B, but have little to no effect on self preferences because people themselves would already prefer a highly feasible alternative for themselves. It was predicted that the "why" manipulation would have little to no effect on others' preferences because people would already think that others would prefer the highly desirable Amusement Park A, but would shift self preferences toward the highly desirable Amusement Park A. No significant effects were found of either

[5] The how manipulation asked them to perform an exercise, which involved identifying how (i.e., the process) one would learn a new language. The task was designed to induce a concrete mindset, which was predicted to carry over to the amusement park study.

[6] The why manipulation asked them to perform the same exercise as the how manipulation, but asked participants to identify why they should learn a new language. The task was designed to induce an abstract mindset, which was predicted to carry over to the amusement park study.

one of the two manipulations on self or other preferences. It could be the case that no significant results were found because the concreteness and abstractness manipulations did not carry over from one domain (i.e., learning a new language) to the other (i.e., amusement parks). Therefore, another study was designed to test whether the results of Study 6 can be replicated.

In the second study (Study 6 Follow-up Study B), the "how" condition was identical to Study 6 and a control condition was included. The closed ended manipulation checks revealed a marginally significant effect ($p = .07$) of the "how" condition on self representation with participants reporting that they thought about their own preferences more concretely in the control condition than in the "how" condition. This pattern of results is counter to the design of the study, and the closed ended manipulation checks did not reveal a significant shift in representation of others' preferences. When participants indicated their preference between the two parks, it was predicted that the how manipulation would shift others' preferences away from the highly desirable Amusement Park A toward the highly feasible Amusement Park B. There is a significant main effect where preference for the highly feasible Amusement Park B is greater among those in the "how" manipulation condition than in the control condition. Therefore, the "how" manipulation did have a significant effect, and did shift preferences in the predicted direction. However, no significant self-other effect emerged – the "how" manipulation shifted both self and other preferences toward the more feasible Amusement Park B. The two additional dependent variables – importance of rides to self and others and importance of driving distance to self and others – were included to provide supporting evidence, but unfortunately both give conflicting evidence. Looking at the importance of rides, a significant interaction emerged

between rides (importance to self vs. other) and condition. In the control condition, rides are equally important to self and others, but in the "how" manipulation condition rides are more important to others than to self. It was predicted that the "how" manipulation would make rides less important for others, not more important). Looking at the importance of driving distance, there were no significant differences between conditions although it was predicted that the "how" manipulation would make driving distance more important for others. Regardless of condition, participants reported that driving distance was significantly more important to others than to self, which is counter to predictions.

Taken together, Study 6 and Study 6 Follow-up Study B do not yield the same result using the exact same manipulation. Please see Table 3 for summary of all the studies examining the role of representation. Supporting predictions that self preferences would naturally be for the highly feasible alternative, and the "how" manipulation would have no significant effect on self preferences, Study 6 provides evidence that the "how" manipulation shifts only others' preferences (not self preferences) toward the highly feasible alternative. However, in Study 6 Follow-up Study B, the "how" manipulation significantly shifted self preferences (as well as others' preferences) more toward the highly feasible alternative. Even though it was not predicted, it is not unreasonable to find that the "how" manipulation strengthened self preferences for the highly feasible alternative. However, it is less than ideal to find that the "how" manipulation had a significant effect in one study, but not the other. As a result, there is a lack of conclusive evidence of the effect of the "how" manipulation on self preferences when the same context (i.e., choosing to go to an amusement park) is used for both the "how" manipulation and choice task. That said, both studies (Study 6 and Study 6 Follow-up Study B) do support the fact that the "how" manipulation did have the predicted

effect of shifting others' preferences toward the highly feasible alternative. The following study was designed to test the same predictions using the same representation scales, but with a different concreteness manipulation in order to determine whether a different concreteness manipulation will yield more significant results consistent with predictions.

STUDY 7: AMUSEMENT PARK STUDY WITH A NEW CONCRETENESS MANIPULATION

This study was designed with the same objectives as the prior study - to identify the level of representation (concrete versus abstract) as the mechanism underlying the robust self-other effect. Given that people think of others in abstract ways, a concreteness manipulation of representation was used to generate more concrete thinking about others. When thinking about others concretely, it was predicted that people would realize that feasibility concerns are also important to others as they are to themselves. As a result, they would be more likely to indicate that feasibility considerations are important to others in the concreteness manipulation condition, and this would result in an attenuation of the self-other effect. This would also provide evidence that shifts in representation are the underlying mechanism for the self-other effect.

A different concreteness manipulation of representation than the one used in Study 6 was developed to determine whether thinking about others more concretely would result in an attenuation of the self-other effect. This concrete manipulation is a highly modified version of a representation manipulation developed by Malkoc (2006). Whereas the Malkoc (2006) manipulation was designed to induce an abstract representation, the manipulation used in this study was developed to induce a concrete representation. It is predicted that the concreteness manipulation would shift others' preferences away from the desirability

consideration and toward the feasibility consideration. For self, the concreteness manipulation is not predicted to have a significant effect because by default the self is represented concretely.

Method

Participants and design. This study was a 2 (Condition: Concreteness Manipulation vs. Control) x 2 (Target: Self vs. Other) between-subjects design. Data were collected from undergraduate students (N = 60; 44 females and 16 males) at a large southeastern university who were offered candy in exchange for their participation.

Procedure. All participants were asked to "suppose that you and a friend have decided to take a trip to an amusement park next weekend" and were then presented with two amusement park options. Amusement Park A has several new rides, but is four hours away (high desirability/low feasibility) and Amusement Park B has no new rides, but is two hours away (low desirability/high feasibility).

Participants were randomly assigned to two manipulation conditions (concreteness vs. control). The concreteness manipulation used in this study was inspired by Malkoc (2006). The manipulation was reworded to fit the context of this study. Additionally, in Malkoc (2006), the manipulation was used to generate an abstract level of representation whereas in this study it was modified to create a concrete level of representation. Specifically, in the concreteness manipulation condition, participants were asked do the following: "Please take some time to visualize your friend's trip to the amusement park, and think carefully about the events that would comprise his/her trip. Please describe below in as much detail as possible all the steps he/she would need to follow, including activities involved in getting to the amusement park, spending the day there and returning home." They then were given space

to write about the steps involved in going to the amusement park. Participants in the control condition did not see instructions, but rather saw immediately the questions described below.

Participants were now asked several questions about themselves or their friend; depending on the target condition (self vs. other) to which they were randomly assigned. Participants in the self target condition were asked to indicate which amusement park they would prefer to go to on a 7- point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park A*; 7 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park B.* They were then asked several specific questions to determine how important the desirability and feasibility considerations were to them. These questions were: 1. How important is the newness of the rides to you and 2. How important is the driving distance to you. Participants provided their responses to these questions on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Not At All Important*; 7 = *Extremely Important*.

Participants in the other target condition were asked to indicate which amusement park their friends would prefer on a 7- point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park A*; 7 = *Strongly Prefer Amusement Park B.* Participants were asked several specific questions to determine how important the desirability and feasibility considerations were to others. These questions were: 1. How important do you think the newness of the rides is to your friends and 2. How important do you think the driving distance is to your friends? Participants provided their responses to these questions on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Not At All Important*; 7 = *Extremely Important*.

Four manipulation checks for the stimuli were also included. All participants were asked to respond to the following questions. The first asked participants which amusement park they would more enjoy spending the day at (1 = *Enjoy Amusement Park A More*; 7 =

Enjoy Amusement Park B More). The second asked which amusement park do you consider to be the more desirable alternative? (1 = *Definitely Park A*; 7 = *Definitely Amusement Park B).* The third asked which amusement park is easier to get to (1 = *Amusement Park A Is Easier To Get To*; 7 = *Amusement Park B Is Easier To Get To*). The last manipulation check asked which amusement park do you consider to be the more feasible alternative? (1 = *Definitely Park A*; 7 = *Definitely Amusement Park B).*

A set of questions measuring representation of the self and another set measuring representation of the other were also included depending on the condition to which the participants was assigned. Participants for whom the target was self answered the following set of questions measuring representation of the self: 1. How concretely did you imagine yourself going to the amusement park (1 = *Not At All Concretely*; 7 = *Very Concretely*)?, 2. In how much detail did you think about your own day at the amusement park (1 = *No Detail At All*; 7 = *A Lot of Detail*)?, and 3. How well were you able to visualize the day you would spend going to the amusement park (1 = *Not Well At All*; 7 = *Very Well*)? Participants for whom the target was others answered the following set of questions measuring representation of the other: 1. How concretely did you imagine your friends going to the amusement park (1 = *Not At All Concretely*; 7 = *Very Concretely*)?, 2. In how much detail did you think about your friends' day at the amusement park (1 = *No Detail At All*; 7 = *A Lot of Detail*)?, and 3. How well were you able to visualize the day your friends would spend going to the amusement park (1 = *Not Well At All*; 7 = *Very Well*)?

Results

Manipulation Checks. Participants indicated that they would enjoy going to Amusement Park A (the more desirable alternative with the new rides) more (M = 2.43 vs. scale midpoint

of 4.0; $t(1, 59) = 7.64$, $p < .001$). Participants indicated that they would consider Amusement Park A to marginally be the more desirable alternative ($M = 3.53$ vs. scale midpoint of 4.0; $t(1, 59) = 1.96$, $p = .06$). Participants indicated that Amusement Park B (the more feasible alternative closer to home) was easier to get to ($M = 6.33$) vs. scale midpoint of 4.0; $t(1, 59) = 6.47$, $p < .001$). Participants indicated that they would consider Amusement Park B to be the more feasible alternative ($M = 5.23$ vs. scale midpoint of 4.0; $t(1, 59) = 6.47$, $p < .001$).

To test whether the concreteness manipulation changed representation levels, two scales were created. The scale for representation of the self was created by averaging the three items designed to measure how concretely one thought of himself/herself going to the amusement park. The alpha for the self representation scale was .90. The alpha would increase to .94 if the item asking how well participants were able to visualize the day they would spend going to amusement park were dropped. This increase was not perceived to be very large, and thus all three items were retained in the self representation scale. The scale for representation of others was created by averaging the three items designed to measure how concretely one thought of her/his friends going to the amusement park. The alpha for the other scale was .77. The alpha would increase to .88 if the item asking how much detail did you think about your friends' day at the amusement park were dropped. This increase was perceived to be large; however, the results do not differ if this item is dropped or not. Therefore, in analyses that follow, the other representation scale retains all three items used in the study.

The self representation scale did not reveal any significant differences in how concretely participants thought about themselves going to the amusement park between those in the control condition ($M = 4.93$) and manipulation condition ($M = 4.93$; $F(1, 29) = 0$, $p =$

1, *ns*). The other representation scale also did not reveal a significant difference in how concretely participants thought about others going to the amusement park between those in the control condition (M = 4.00) and manipulation condition (M = 3.58; $F(1, 29) = .76$, p = .39, *ns*). However, consistent with predictions, participants did report that they thought about themselves (M = 4.93) more concretely than about others (M = 3.79; $F(1, 59) = 11.20$, p = .001).

Preferences for Self vs. Others. No significant effect of target (self vs. other) emerged ($F(1, 59) = .26$, p = .62, *ns*). However, a marginally significant effect of manipulation did emerge ($F(1, 59) = 3.80$, p = .06) where participants in the control condition had a greater preference (M = 4.17) for the highly feasible Amusement Park B than those in the concreteness manipulation condition (M = 3.27). This result is counter to the prediction that the concreteness manipulation would increase preferences toward the highly feasible Amusement Park B. Additionally, a significant interaction emerged between target and condition ($F(1, 59) = .26$, p = .04). The concreteness manipulation shifted self preferences toward the highly desirable Amusement Park A as compared to control condition, but did not have a significant effect on other preferences. See Table 4 for results. This pattern of results is also counter to predictions. The concreteness manipulation was predicted not to have a significant effect on self preferences because the self is already represented concretely. It was predicted that the concreteness manipulation would have a significant effect on others' preferences, shifting others' preferences toward the highly feasible Amusement Park B.

Inferred Choice from Preference Data for Self and Others. Preference data between the two amusement parks were collected on 7-point Likert Scales anchored by preferences for each Amusement Park. These data were cut so that responses of 1 – 3 were inferred to indicate

choosing to go to the highly desirable Amusement Park A and responses of 5 – 7 were inferred to indicate choosing to go the highly feasible Amusement Park B. Reponses of 4 were considered to be indifferences between the two amusement parks were eliminated for this analysis. Not surprisingly, but counter to predictions, the pattern of results replicate the results using the preference data.

For self, participants indicated that they would be more likely to choose the highly feasible Amusement Park B in the control condition, but be more likely to choose the highly desirable Amusement Park A in the concreteness manipulation condition. (χ^2 (1) = 7.81, p < .01). See Figure 8 for results. For others, participants indicated that they would be as likely to go to Amusement Park A as Amusement Park B regardless of the condition (χ^2 (1) = .04, p = .57, *ns*). See Figure 9 for results.

Importance of Rides to Self vs. Others. No significant effect of target (self vs. other) emerged ($F(1, 59) = .06$, $p = .81$, *ns*). However, a significant effect of condition did emerge where participants in the concreteness manipulation condition indicated that rides were more important ($M = 4.80$) than those in the control condition ($M = 3.83$; $F(1, 59) = 5.61$, $p = .02$). This result is counter to predictions. The interaction between target and condition was found not to be significant ($F(1, 59) = .79$, $p = .38$, *ns*)

Importance of Driving Distance to Self vs. Others. No significant effect of target (self vs. other) emerged ($F(1, 59) = .14$, $p = .71$, *ns*). However, a marginally significant effect of condition did emerge where participants in the concreteness manipulation condition indicated that driving distance was less important ($M = 4.39$) than those in the control condition ($M = 4.97$; $F(1, 59) = 2.80$, $p = .10$). This result is counter to predictions. The interaction between target and condition was found not to be significant ($F(1, 59) = 1.69$, $p = .20$, *ns*)

Discussion

No representation differences were found with the three-item representation scales that were created to measure representation of the self and representation of others. It was predicted that the concreteness manipulation would result in a change of representation (i.e., more concrete thinking) for others. However, a significant difference did emerge where people indicated thinking about themselves more concretely than others. This result is consistent with the thought that the self is naturally represented more concretely whereas others are more abstract. Yet, the question remains whether the concreteness manipulation did change representation levels, and that change was not captured by the scales or whether no change actually occurred. Given that the answer to this question is unknown, the results of this study need to be interpreted with caution. The concreteness manipulation has a significant effect, but it is unclear whether it is due to shifts in representation.

The preference choice data revealed that there was a marginally significant effect of manipulation, but the pattern of results was not consistent with predictions. Participants in the control condition had a greater preference for the highly feasible amusement park than those in the concreteness manipulation conditions. A significant interaction also emerged between the target (self vs. others) and condition (concreteness manipulation vs. control). It was predicted that the concreteness manipulation condition would shift others preferences toward the highly feasible Amusement Park B, but have little to no effect on self preferences which would already be for the highly feasible Amusement Park B. The results do not match predictions. The concreteness manipulation shifted self preferences toward the highly desirable Amusement Park A as compared to the control condition and did not have a significant effect on others' preferences. Given that the representation scales did not reveal

changes in representation levels between the control and concreteness manipulation conditions, it can not be argued that the change in representation is the underlying mechanism for these effects. However, the concreteness manipulation did result in a significant shift in preferences, but why this shift occurred is unknown.

The inferred choice data tell a similar story in that participants indicated that they would be more likely to choose the highly feasible Amusement Park B in the control condition, but be more likely to choose the highly desirable Amusement Park A in the concreteness manipulation condition for themselves. In the control condition, the results replicate prior studies where people are more likely to choose the highly feasible alternative for themselves. The concreteness manipulation was predicted to have little to no effect on self choice, yet there was a significant effect and it was in the opposing direction to predictions. It is unclear as to why the concreteness manipulation would shift self choice to the highly desirable alternative. For others, it was predicted that the concreteness manipulation would significantly shift choice away from the highly desirable option and towards the highly feasible option. However, the concreteness manipulation did not have a significant effect on others' choices.

The two attributes used to create the two alternatives were the number of new rides (no new rides vs. several new rides) and driving distance (two hours away vs. four hours away). Participants reported that rides would be equally important to self and others, but those in the concreteness manipulation condition indicated that rides were more important than those in the control condition, which is counter to predictions. Participants reported that driving distance was equally important to self and others, but those in the concreteness

manipulation condition indicated that driving distance was less important than those in the control condition, which is also counter to predictions.

In summary, the scales designed to capture changes in self and other representation did not reveal any significant differences between the concreteness and control condition. However, the concreteness manipulation did have a significant effect, but in an opposing direction to that of predictions. Therefore, it is unclear whether representation is playing a role and the scales are not capturing the changes in representation or whether the manipulation is changing something other than representation which is then resulting in these unpredicted effects.

The uncertainty in interpreting and generalizing the results from this study also are magnified by the fact that another study was run with a similar concreteness manipulation and the results from that study are inconsistent with the results of Study 7. Specifically, Study 7 Follow-up Study A used the same amusement park stimuli and had two concreteness manipulation conditions: "visualize"[7] and "imagine"[8] as well as control condition. The visualize condition is very similar to that of Study 7. The only difference was that the concreteness manipulation used in Study 7 was revised to focus more on concrete steps of going to the amusement park. The predictions in Study 7 Follow-up Study A were the same to those in Study 7. Specifically, both manipulations (visualize and imagine) were predicted to shift others' preferences away from the highly desirable Amusement Park A and toward

[7] Visualize your friend going and spending the day at the amusement park. Describe in as much detail as possible the events that would comprise his/her experiences. Make sure to talk about the various steps he/she would need to follow during the day, including activities in getting to the amusement park, spending the day there and returning home.

[8] Imagine your friend going to the amusement park as vividly as you can. Try to imagine all the details of the situation. Describe in as much detail his/her experience. You can also include any other information you think is relevant.

the highly feasible Amusement Park B, and result in an attenuation of the self-other effect. As compared to the control condition, the "imagine" manipulation shifted others' preferences towards the more desirable Amusement Park A. As compared to the control condition, the "visualize" manipulation did not significantly shift self preferences.

Why did the "imagine" manipulation shift others' preferences toward the more desirable Amusement Park A while the "visualize" manipulation did not have a significant effect on self or other preferences? To answer this question, the thoughts the participants listed as part of the manipulation exercise were coded as either desirable, feasible, both or neither. Desirable thoughts included phrases such as "Her favorite is Top Gun, which is the new, fastest roller coaster at the park" and "She will also smell different fast foods." Feasible thoughts included "First, he prints directions off Mapquest.com" and "The lines are going to be ridiculous." Some thoughts included both feasibility and desirability elements such as "Leave tired, but satisfied" and "Eat delicious, but expensive food." The number of desirability and feasibility thoughts was counted for each person. It was found that participants listed more desirability thoughts ($M = 5.31$) in the "imagine" condition than in the "visualize" condition ($M = 3.33$; $F(1, 105) = 13.61$, $p < .001$). Additionally, participants listed more feasibility thoughts ($M = 6.35$) in the "visualize" condition than in the "imagine" condition ($M = 3.79$; $F(1, 105) = 19.79$, $p < .001$). Given the greater average number of desirability (vs. feasibility) thoughts, in the "imagine" condition, it is not surprising that the others' preferences shifted toward the highly desirable amusement park. The "visualize" manipulation did not significantly shift self or other preferences. Given the fact that participants in the control condition did not complete the manipulation, it was not possible to

code their thoughts. However, it is believed that the average number of thoughts in the control condition would be similar to that of the "visualize" condition.

In addition to offering insight into why participants' preferences were different in the two conditions, Study 7 Follow-up Study A shows that elaboration cannot be considered to be the same as concrete thinking. Both the "imagine" and "visualize" manipulations required participants to elaborate on spending at day at an amusement park. If more elaboration shifted preferences, then the preferences would have shifted in the same direction in both conditions. Given that this was not the case, it must be the case that elaboration is not a substitute for concrete thinking.

In summary, the coding of the data in Study 7 Follow-up Study A does offer valuable insight as to why the "imagine" manipulation shifted preferences toward the highly desirable amusement park. However, in Study 7, a very similar "visualize" manipulation shifted self preferences toward the highly desirable Amusement Park A, but did not have a significant impact on other preferences. In Study 7 Follow-up Study A, the "visualize" manipulation shifted others' preferences toward the highly desirable Amusement Park A, but did not have a significant impact on self preferences. Therefore, there are some inconsistencies between the results from these two studies. Although the "visualize" manipulations in the two studies are not identical, in Study 7 there is a significant effect in the opposite direction for self and in Study 7 Follow-Up Study A there is a significant effect in the opposite direction for others. The inconsistencies in the results of not only Study 7 and Study 7 Follow-up Study A, but also Study 6 and Follow-up Studies A and B, do not allow for a conclusive argument to be made that the level of representation is the underlying mechanism of the self-other effect.

CHAPTER 3 - GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of eight studies show that social distance shifts construal levels similarly to temporal distance in that individuals predict that others value desirability considerations more and value feasibility considerations less than they do themselves. Consequently, individuals make different decisions for others than they to for themselves. Individuals are more likely to choose a highly desirable, but less feasible item for another person than for themselves. Additionally, because individuals perceive others to care about desirability considerations they express different preferences in different social settings. Specifically, individuals are more likely to indicate that their own preference is for a highly desirable option in public than they are in private. As a result, this effect has real implications for not only the choices individuals make for others, but also the choices they make for themselves. Two final studies explored the level of representation as the underlying mechanism for the self-other effect. It was predicted that the self-other effect would be attenuated when people think more concretely about others. Limited evidence was found to show that the level of representation results in that attenuation of the self-other effect.

Study 1A used several subscales to reveal that people indicated that they are more value conscious (i.e., a feasibility attribute) than others, but predicted that others are more brand conscious (i.e., a desirability attribute) than they are. Study 1B used two subscales from Study 1A to reveal that closeness of the relationship to the other moderates the self-other effect. People indicated that they were more value conscious than their friends, and that their friends were more value conscious than random others. Additionally, individuals

indicated that others were more brand conscious than they were themselves. In Study 2, participants viewed a store brand as a more feasible option (i.e., less expensive) and a branded product as a more desirable option (i.e., branded product is of higher quality). Consequently, people were more likely to choose the store brand for themselves than they were for others. In Study 3, participants were more likely to return a sweater that was not feasible because it had to be dry cleaned, but predicted that others would return a sweater if it was not desirable by having a name brand. In Study 4, individuals reported a greater preference for a consumer experience (i.e., an amusement park) that requires less driving time (i.e., the more feasible option), but indicated that others would have a greater preference for the amusement park with several new rides (i.e., the more desirable option). Study 5 showed that people report different preferences in public by being more likely to vote for the highly desirable option in public and the highly feasible option in private.

Studies 6 and 7 tested whether changing the level of representation of the other (i.e., thinking about the other more concretely) results in an attenuation of the self-other effect. Conflicting evidence was found between the two studies. In Study 6, a "how" concreteness manipulation shifted others' preferences (not self preferences) toward the highly feasible alternative, which is consistent with predictions. Study 6 Follow-up Study A partially replicated the results by showing that the "how" manipulation shifted others' preferences toward the highly feasible alternative. However, in the follow-up study, self-preferences were also significantly strengthened for the highly feasible alternatives. In Study 7, a different concreteness manipulation lead to a significant shift in the opposite direction to predictions for self preferences and no significant shift for others' preferences. Specifically, participants who completed the concreteness manipulation indicated a greater preference for the highly

desirable option, not the highly feasible one, for themselves. The concreteness manipulation did not shift others' preferences toward the highly feasible alternative as was predicted. Taken together, the role of the concreteness manipulation across these studies is mixed especially considering that the manipulation checks did not reveal a significant shift in representation between the manipulation and control conditions.

This research extends CLT from temporal distance to social distance, and establishes its applicability to decisions regarding consumer products and experiences. Specifically, it was found that individuals predict that desirability considerations are more important to others than themselves while feasibility considerations are more important to themselves than to others. This prediction error manifested itself in the prediction of others' preferences as well as when one is choosing on behalf of another person. The prediction error impacts subsequent actions, such as likelihood of returning an item to the store. The error is attenuated as the relationship to the other becomes closer. The prediction error also impacts the choices a person makes for oneself. Because people predict that others value desirability considerations, they are more likely to place importance on desirability considerations in public than in private, and thus make different choices given different social settings. Therefore, this research shows the impact of CLT on choices individuals make for others as well as for themselves. The level of representation was predicted to be the underlying mechanism of this effect, but unfortunately no conclusive evidence was found to support this prediction.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The prediction of others' preferences, as well as choosing for others, is an important avenue for future research. No less important is future research that studies the impact of the

self-other effect on individuals' own behaviors and choices. The consumer contexts, in which the self-other effect is studied, are also equally important. Contexts in which decisions have serious and important consequences for both self and others, such as health care and financial services, are very interesting areas for future research. Thus, future work in this area has potential to expand our knowledge about choices we make for others as well as ourselves, and the contexts of the choices we make for both self and others plays a very important role. These ideas and others can explored further to extend the CLT, and further examine the role social distance plays in driving individuals' perceptions of the tradeoffs between desirability and feasibility tradeoffs for self and others.

Public/Private Social Settings

Future research can further examine the different consumption choices individuals make in private versus public settings. Specifically, research can look whether individuals make different consumption decisions depending on how conspicuous their choices are to others in different channels (i.e., physical store, catalog, Internet, etc.). Additionally, research can investigate whether individuals feel comfortable and are likely to voice feasibility considerations when in public group settings. If it is found that individuals are less likely to raise feasibility considerations in such settings, then this behavior may possibly result in the "group think" phenomenon.

More specifically related to this research, more work needs to be done to test the public/private effect with actual products and services. If convincing evidence is found, it will show that the self-other effect is not only important in the choice people make for others, but also the choice they make for themselves (i.e., people make different choices depending

on the social setting). In this research, evidence for the public/private effect was found using a hypothetical scenario, but not with choices among actual products and service with a real social setting (public vs. private). There are at least three areas for improvement in future studies.

The first area for improvement is the selection of stimuli in order to find two options, which vary primarily on one feasibility dimension and one desirability dimension. The goal would be to first establish that people will indicate a self preference for the highly feasible option and that others would prefer the highly desirable option. The second area for improvement is the public/private manipulation. Specifically, making the participants in the private condition feel that their responses are really private is important to examine the differences in social settings (private vs. public). With the right set of stimuli and an effective public/private manipulation, it is predicted that the hypothetical results reported here will replicate in actual study. A significant public/private effect will not only increase evidence for the effect, but also show the importance of this phenomenon in real life decision-making. The third area for improvement would be to explore the role of accountability with respect to the self-other effect. It has been found that being held accountable for one's decision shifts people in the direction of what the audience's opinion, when the participant thinks he/she knows the opinion of the audience (Tetlock, Skitka and Boettger 1989). Therefore, an accountability manipulation may work in the same way as the public/private manipulation used in Study 5, such that those held accountable will indicate a preference for the highly desirable alternative because they think others prefer that option (although they privately prefer the highly feasible alternative). However, if participants were convinced that others share their feasibility concerns, then they may be likely to indicate their

preference for highly feasible option even when held accountable. Exploring the role of accountability may show similar patterns of results to the public/private manipulation, and may be another way to moderate the self-other effect.

The Level of Representation

Future research is also needed to establish that the level of representation is the underlying mechanism of the self-other effect. In this research, representation was manipulated in several ways (i.e., a "how" manipulation in Study 6 and visualization of steps in Study 7). New concreteness manipulations can be developed and tested, such as new variants of the visualize and imagine concreteness manipulations used in Study 7 and Study 7 Follow-up Study A that stress concrete thinking and actions. Moreover, future research may clarify why the visualization of steps manipulation in Study 7 generated a pattern of results opposite to predictions. Because the visualization instructions did ask participants to focus on all aspects of the day including going to, spending the day at and returning home, it may be the case the participants chose what to visualize. It may have be easier and more interesting to visualize the fun aspects of going to an amusement park such as riding the rides, playing the games, eating food, and spending time with friends as the coding of the responses in Study 7 Follow-up Study A showed.. Also, it may have been less interesting to visualize the long, boring car ride to and back from the amusement park. Moreover, even if participants did try to visualize the car ride, they may not have fully appreciated the time and hassle of the drive due to duration neglect (Fredrickson and Kahneman 1993). Therefore, participants may or may not have tried to visualize the feasibility considerations of making the trip to the amusement park, but regardless the desirability considerations may have

played a greater role in the visualization task. If this was the case, then it comes as no surprise that the visualize manipulation lead to a pattern of results opposite to predictions. Instead of shifting others' preferences toward the highly feasible alternative as predicted, the visualize manipulation in Study 7 significantly shifted self preferences toward the highly desirable alternative and did not have a significant effect on others' preferences because their preference was already for the highly desirable amusement park. Future research can explore in more detail why the visualize manipulation lead to results, which were counter to predictions.

Additionally, the question remains as to why the visualize manipulation in Study 7 significantly shifted preferences in the opposite direction of predictions, whereas a very similar visualize manipulation in Study 7 Follow-up Study A did not significantly shift self nor other preferences. It could be the case the instructions in the visualize manipulation in Study 7 asked participants to "Please take some time to visualize…" whereas the visualize manipulation in Study 7 Follow-up Study A began with "Visualize…" By taking more time, participants may have spent more time thinking about the fun they would have at the amusement park, and thus the manipulation shifted their preferences toward the highly desirable amusement park. The visualize manipulation in Study 7 Follow-up Study A may not have been strong or specific enough to focus participants on effective in asking participants to consider the feasibility considerations of the choice, and thus the manipulation did not have a significant effect. Lastly, the imagine manipulation in Study 7 Follow-up Study B, which was not very different from either of the visualize manipulations used in Study 7 and Study 7 Follow-up Study A, significantly shifted others' preferences toward the highly desirable alternative and did not have a significant effect on self preferences. Again, it

may have been the case the wording of the manipulation (Imagine) that lead the participants to focus more on the desirability rather than the feasibility considerations of their choice. Future research can explore the unique effects of these manipulations as well generate new manipulations of the level of representation which significantly shift preferences in the direction of predictions.

Other more indirect methods of manipulating levels of representation can be also explored. One such way would be to prime different processing levels (concrete vs. abstract) using supposedly unrelated word search puzzles to see whether concrete processing will attenuate the self-other effect (Semin and Fiedler 1998; Paivio 1971). Another indirect manipulation may be to manipulate individual's mood. Prior research has found that people in good moods process at a more abstract level than those who are in a bad mood (Bless, Bohner, Schwarz, and Strack 1990). Manipulating people's mood through watching video clips of happy or sad moments to induce different processing levels could be an interesting way to explore whether a concrete processing level attenuates the self-other effect. New manipulations, either direct or indirect, can be tried to determine whether the level of representation is the underlying mechanism of the self-other effect.

Another possible avenue would be to measure level of representation instead of or in addition to manipulating it. One way to measure the level of representation would be to use the Behavior Identification Form (BIF) developed by Vallacher and Wegner (1989) and used by Levy et al. (2002) which is 25-item dichotomous-response survey. For each of the items, participants must choose between an abstract representation such as "influencing the election" and a concrete representation such as "marking a ballot" to describe the action (e.g., voting). The scale measures individual differences in the level of representation of different

actions, and can be used in lieu of or in addition to the manipulation of the level of representation in future studies.

The challenge for future research will be the identification of a manipulation check, which will show a significant change in representation between the manipulation and control conditions. In this research, a scale was developed to measure the change in representation, but the scale did not show a significant change in representation between the manipulation and control condition. Either a change occurred and this change was not reflected in the scale or no significant change occurred. Thus both the manipulation and the manipulation check are critical components in establishing that the level of representation is the underlying mechanism of the self-other effect.

This research sought to establish that the level of representation is the underlying mechanism of the self-other effect though numerous direct manipulations of representation. It is unfortunate that the results from the studies are mixed and inconclusive. It is my belief that the level of representation is the mechanism for the self-other effect. In Study 6, the "how" manipulation significantly shifted others' preferences toward the highly feasible option, but did not significantly shift self preferences which were naturally for the highly feasible option. These results are consistent with predictions and show that a concrete manipulation significantly attenuated the self-other effect. Therefore, the results from Study 6 provide evidence that the level of representation is the mechanism for the self-other effect. In both Studies 6 and 7, it was found that the people indicated thinking more concretely about themselves than about others. This result is consistent with the CLT, which argues that that the self is represented concretely and others are represented more abstractly. Therefore, it should follow that shifting the level of representation should lead to the attenuation of the

self-other effect, as was shown in Study 6. These results support the CLT, and affirm my belief that the level of representation is the underlying mechanism for the self-other effect. Unfortunately, the two representation studies (i.e., Study 6 and 7) using two different concreteness manipulations (i.e., the "how" manipulation in Study 6 and the visualization of steps manipulation in Study 7) did not provide consistent evidence to that effect. Specifically, Study 7 used a different manipulation, which was intended to make representation more concrete, but unfortunately had the opposite effect. The representation scales were also not able to show that significant shifts in representation occurred. In addition to the level of representation, I believe that similarity or closeness of the relationship of the self to the other plays a significant role in the self-other effect. More specifically, I believe representation may not only have a main effect, but also a significant interactive effect with similarity which is discussed below.

The Role of Similarity to the Other

Further research can also explore in greater detail the role of similarity to the other to the self or in other words the closeness of the relationship between the self and the other. In this research (Study 1B), closeness of the relationship was manipulated. It was predicted that closeness of the relationship of the other would moderate the effect. Specifically, it was predicted that people would indicate that distant others would value brands more than their friends, and the results were directionally consistent, but not significant. It was also predicted and found that that individuals themselves would place a lot of importance on value, and think that value is less important to their friends and even less important to random others. Future research should look to provide further evidence that closeness of the

relationship is a significant moderator of the self-other effect. Future studies can measure closeness of the relationship in addition to or instead of manipulating it. One previously developed measure of perceived similarity by Phillips and Ziller (1997) consists of 20 items. This scale measures individual differences in perceived similarity between self and others as well as across members of different social categories. It can be used in future research to further test the moderating role of similarity on the self-other effect.

Additionally, future research can study perceived similarity of the other in more "real" contexts. One way to do so would be to use actual dyads, and ask participants to make choices for their actual partner and measure the closeness of the relationship of the two people comprising the dyad. By doing so, there will be a greater understanding of the role of similarity/closeness of the relationship because real relationships may provide nuances that manipulated relationships do not. For example, another may be perceived to be similar at a global level in terms of being a student in the same class. However, the same other may be perceived to be different at a personal level with a different personality or interests. These types of nuances can be explored using real relationships in future research. Additionally, having people make real choices for real people also provides for the opportunity to ask people about their satisfaction with the choices made for them. It is believed that people will be less satisfied when they received the highly desirable, less feasible option than when they receive the highly feasible, less desirable option. Lastly, asking people to make real choices for real people will show that the effect has important real-life implications.

The Interactive Effect of the Level of Representation and Similarity

Future research can also explore a possible interaction between representation and similarity (i.e., how similar they perceive the other person to be to themselves). There has

been limited research in this area; however, one known research paper has explored the interactive effect between the level of representation and similarity (Levy, Freitas and Salovey 2002). A significant interaction between the two was found such that abstract representations lead people to perceive more similarity between themselves and others than concrete representations. Not only were others perceived to be more similar, but also people were more likely to empathize with others, express willingness to help others, and donate money to help others in need when representation were abstract rather than concrete. This research can be extended by looking at this interaction between the level of representation and similarity in the context of feasibility and desirability tradeoffs. Specifically, it may be the case that similarity of the other will only have an impact when the level of representation of the other is abstract. When representation of the other is concrete, individuals will already be more likely to choose the highly feasible, but less desirable product for the other regardless of whether the other is similar or not. However, when representations of the other are abstract, individuals will be more likely to choose the highly feasible, but less desirable product for the other when the other is similar than when the other is dissimilar. Future research can test this prediction, and further examine the interaction between similarity of the other and level of representation.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, this research shows one important way individuals mispredict others' preferences, make poor choices for others, and mispredict how others will decide to return an item to the store. First, this paper finds that people mispredict the preferences of others by consistently indicating that others value desirability considerations

more than they do and value feasibility considerations less than they do. Second, individuals are more likely to make poor choices for others due to a focus on the desirability considerations of the product. Third, individuals mispredict the items another person is likely to return. Specifically, people indicate that they think others are more likely to return an item that in not very desirable when in reality individuals are more likely to return low feasibility items.

As a result of this research, managers can make a number of changes in the buying process. First, sales staff can be trained to ask consumers if they are buying for themselves or someone else. If buying for others, the sales staff can advise the customer to think of his or her own preferences to guide the selection process. Also, the sales staff can bring the issue of feasibility to the attention of the customer. This will result in better purchases for others, as well as less item returns. If the customer is buying for himself, then the shopping environment can be changed to create more private areas so that people are not influenced by others and thus more likely to be more guided by feasibility considerations. Semi-private rooms can be created where the product can actually be used. Through product trial, consumers could use the product, which would make feasibility considerations more salient in the retail environment.

Concluding Words

In summary, this research extends CLT by showing that social distance operates in a similar way to temporal distance in that individuals predict that others value desirability considerations more and value feasibility considerations less than they do themselves. Thus, individuals are more likely to choose a highly desirable, but less feasible alternative for

others than for themselves. In addition to making different choices for others than for themselves, this research shows that individuals also make different choices for themselves in different social settings. Specifically, individuals are more likely to choose the highly desirable option in public because they perceive that others care extensively about desirability considerations and want to make a favorable self-impression by choosing the option they think others prefer. Representation was explored at the underlying mechanism of this robust self-other effect; however, no conclusive evidence was found that the level of representation results in the attenuation of the self-other effect. Thus, representation, as well as its possible interaction with the similarity to the other, is a very important area for future research.

Table 1

Preference Means for the Different Sample Populations (Study 2)

	Undergraduates	MBAs	Combined
Self	4.80	3.51	4.23
Other	4.49	2.91	3.80

Note: Lower numbers indicate a preference for the National brand and higher numbers indicate a preference for the Store brand.

Table 2

Preference Means Between Conditions (Study 6)

	Control Condition	"How" Concreteness Manipulation Condition
Self	4.50_a	4.55_a
Other	3.60_b	4.25_a

Note: Lower numbers indicate a preference for the more desirable Amusement Park A and higher numbers indicate a preference for the more feasible Amusement Park B. Subscripts show which means differ from one another (i.e., the same subscript indicates that the means do not differ and different subscripts indicate that the means do significantly differ) in each column.

Table 3

Summary of the Representation Studies and Follow-up Studies

Study	Manipulation	Results
Study 6	Freitas et al. 2004 "How" Concreteness Manipulation in the context of "Spending a Day at an Amusement Park" (the same context as the amusement park stimuli)	*Marginally Significant Effect in the Predicted Direction* Manipulation marginally significantly shifted others' preferences toward the highly feasible Amusement Park B, and there was no significant effect on self preferences (participants preferred highly feasible Amusement Park B for themselves regardless of condition).
Study 6 Follow-up Study A	Freitas et al. 2004 "How" Concreteness Manipulation and "Why" Abstractness in the context of "Learning a New Language" (a different context than the amusement park stimuli)	*No Significant Effect* Neither manipulation had a significant effect on self or other preferences
Study 6 Follow-up Study B	Freitas et al. 2004 Manipulation of concreteness was identical to Study 6	*Significant Effect in the Predicted Direction* Manipulation significantly shifted both self and other preferences to the highly feasible Amusement Park B
Study 7	Visualize Manipulation inspired by Malkoc (2006): Please take some time to visualize your friend's trip to the amusement park, and think carefully about the events that would comprise his/her trip. Please describe below in as much detail as possible all the steps he/she would need to follow, including activities involved in getting to the amusement park, spending the day there and returning home.	*Significant Effect in the Opposite Direction* Manipulation significantly shifted self preferences towards the highly desirable Amusement Park A, and did not have a significant effect on others' preferences. In the visualization, participants may have focused on the many fun activities of the Amusement Park, and not spent a lot of time imagining the long and monotonous car trip. As a result, the self preferences shifted towards others' preferences (for the highly desirable Amusement Park A).
Study 7 Follow-up	Visualize and Imagine Manipulations inspired by Malkoc (2006):	*No Significant Effect with Visualize Manipulation and*

Study A	Visualize your friend going and spending the day at the amusement park. Describe in as much detail as possible the events that would comprise his/her experiences. Make sure to talk about the various steps he/she would need to follow during the day, including activities in getting to the amusement park, spending the day there and returning home. Imagine your friend going to the amusement park as vividly as you can. Try to imagine all the details of the situation. Describe in as much detail his/her experience. You can also include any other information you think is relevant.	*Significant Effect with the Imagine Manipulation in the Opposite Direction* Visualize manipulation did not have a significant effect on self or other preferences. Imagine manipulation significantly shifted others' preferences toward the highly desirable Amusement A, and did not have a significant effect on self preferences.

Table 4

Preference Means Between Conditions (Study 7)

	Control Condition	Concreteness Manipulation Condition
Self	4.53_a	2.67_b
Other	3.80_a	3.87_a

Note: Lower numbers indicate a preference for the more desirable Amusement Park A and higher numbers indicate a preference for the more feasible Amusement Park B. Subscripts show which means differ from one another (i.e., the same subscript indicates that the means do not differ and different subscripts indicate that the means are marginally different, $p = .08$) in each column.

Figure 1

Brand Consciousness and Value Consciousness Subscale Ratings for Self and Others (Study 1A)

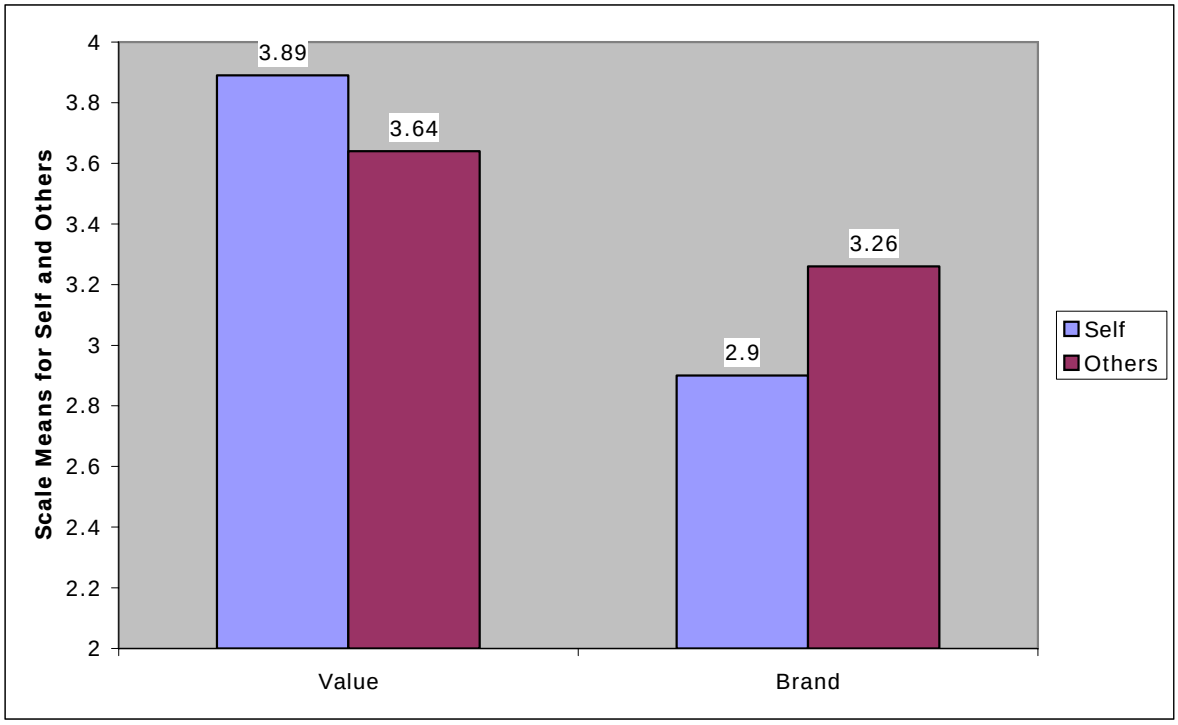


Figure 2

Brand Consciousness Subscale Ratings for Self, Friend and Random Others (Study 1B)

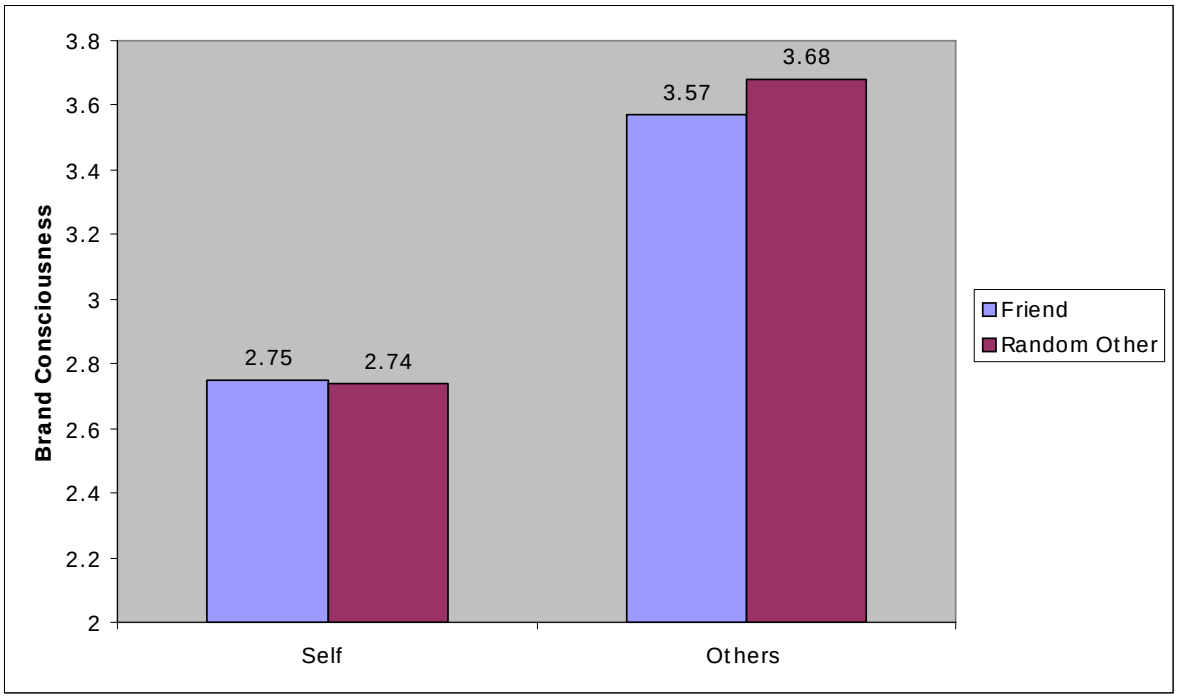


Figure 3

Value Consciousness Subscale Ratings for Self, Friend, Random Others (Study 1B)

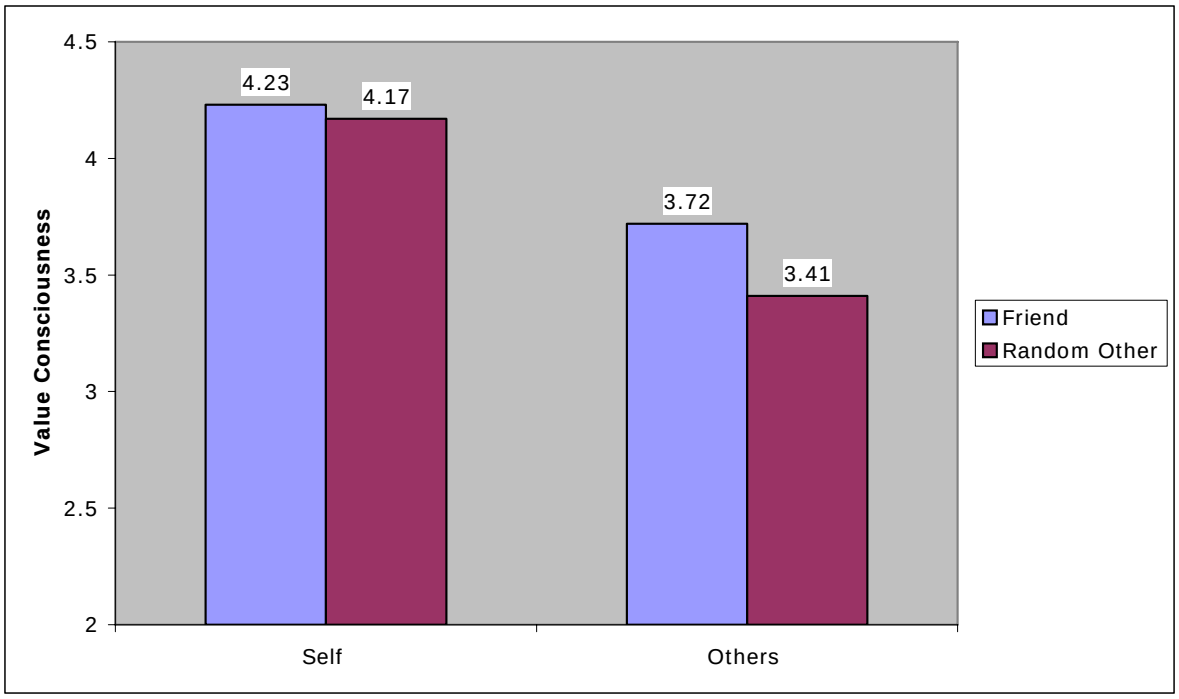


Figure 4

Likelihood to Return Ratings for Self and Others (Study 3)

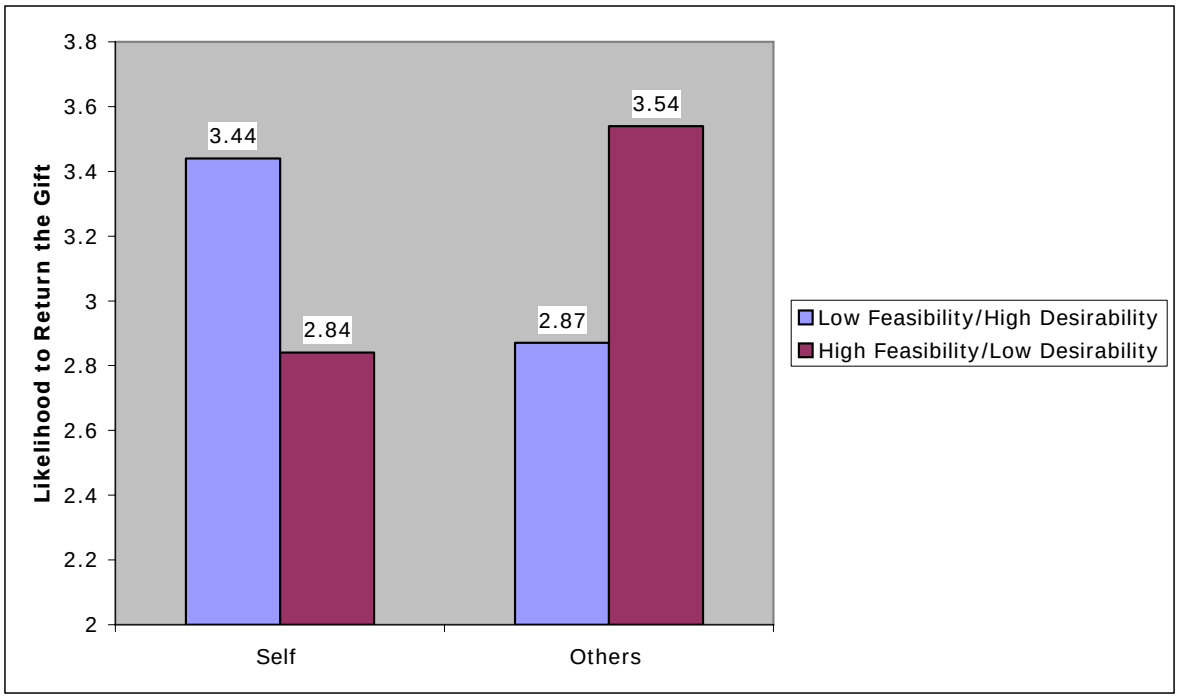


Figure 5

Effects of Making Votes in Private vs. Public on Preference for Desirable vs. Feasible Option (Study 5)

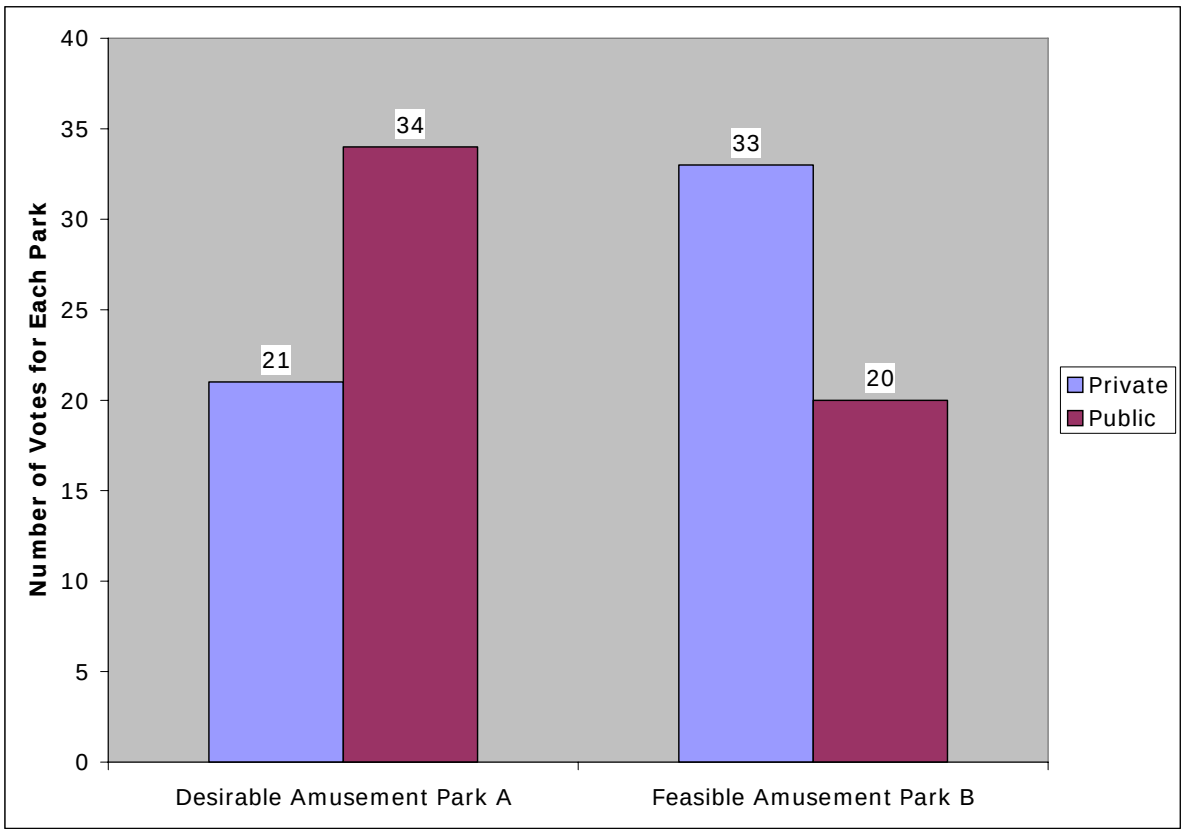


Figure 6

Effect of “How” Manipulation on Own Choice of Desirable vs. Feasible Option (Study 6)

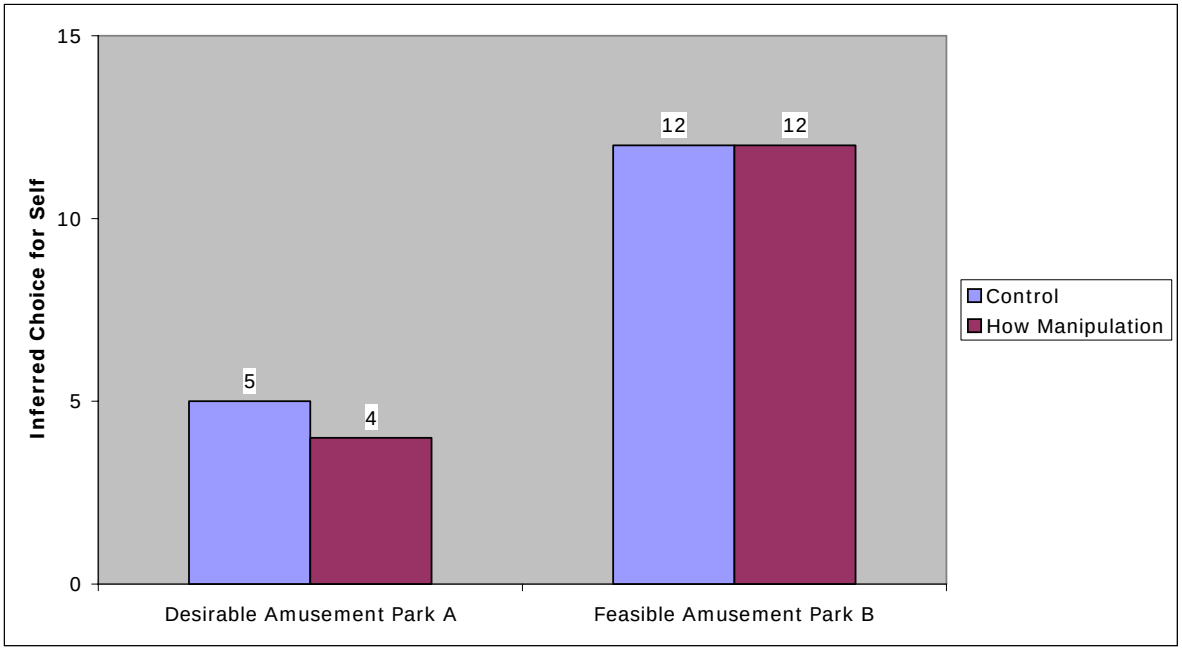


Figure 7

Effect of "How" Manipulation on Others' Choice of Desirable vs. Feasible Option (Study 6)

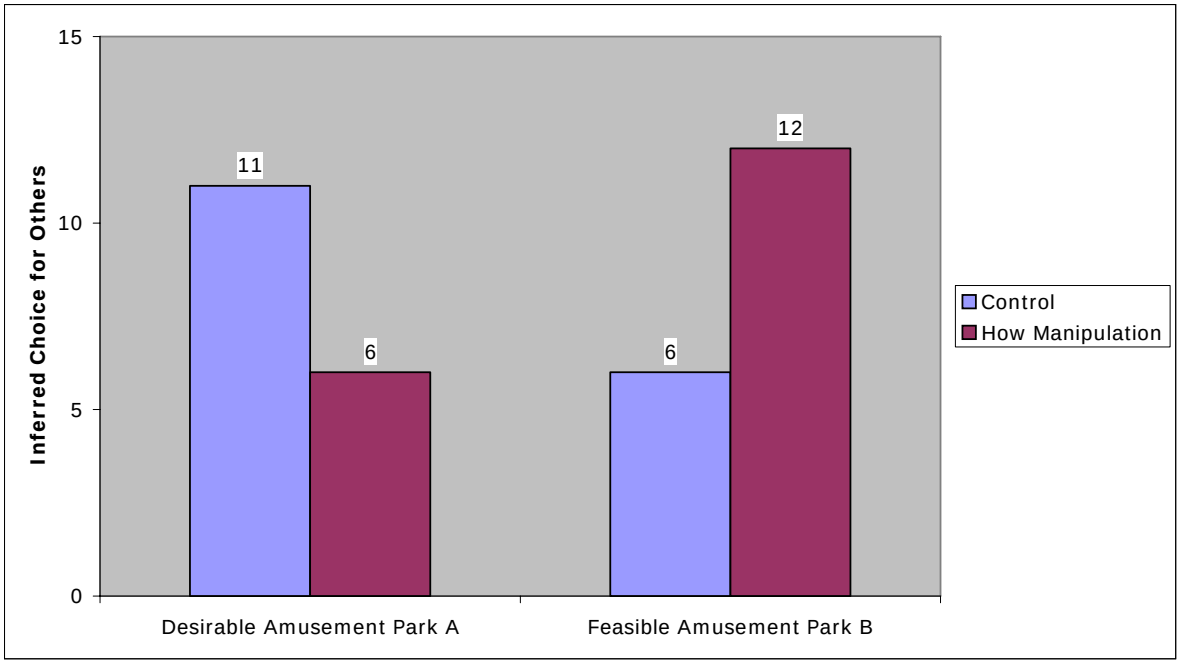


Figure 8

Effect of Visualize Manipulation of Own Choice of Desirable vs. Feasible Option (Study 7)

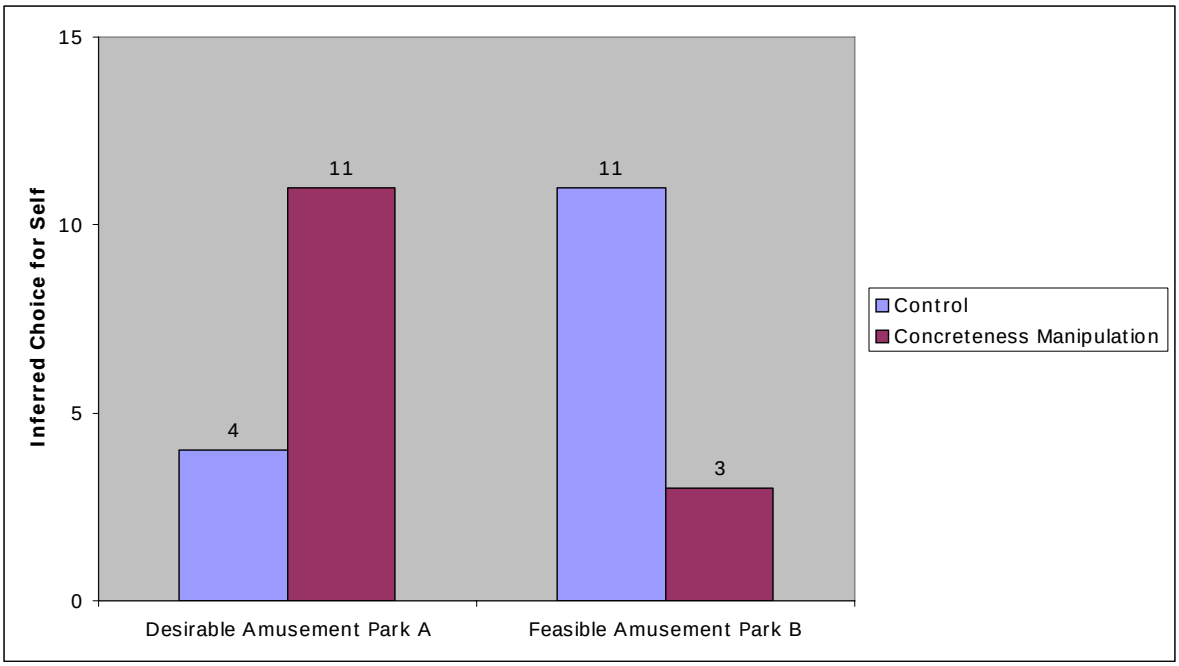
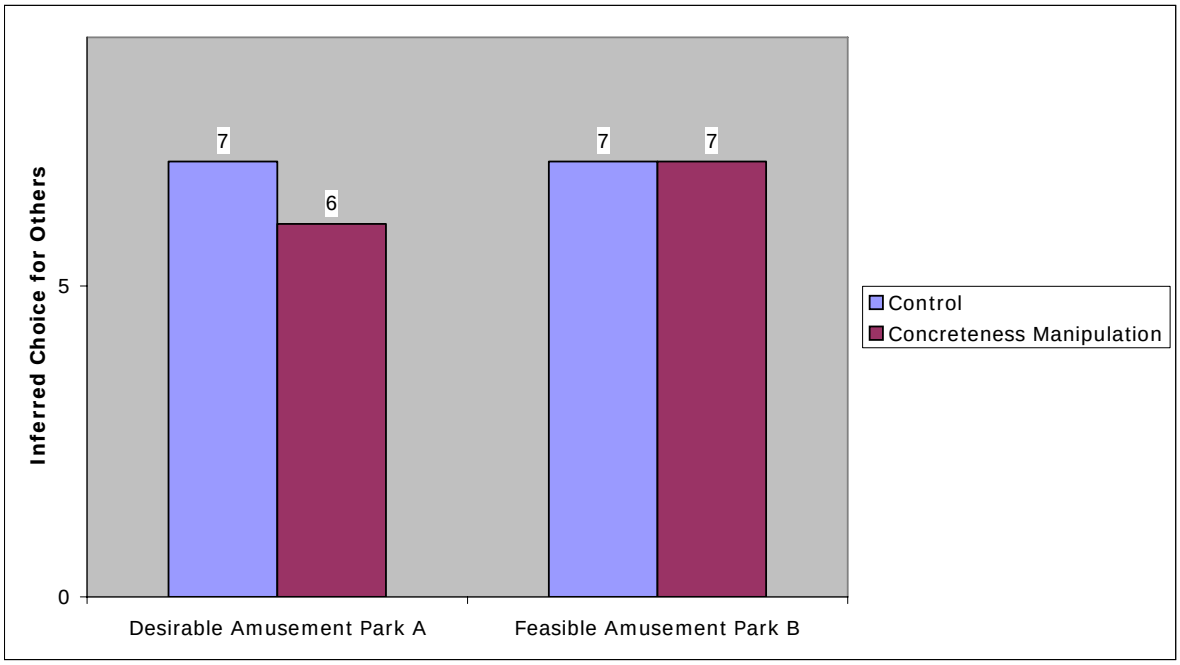


Figure 9

Effect of Visualize Manipulation on Others' Choice of Desirable vs. Feasible Option (Study 7)



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