

# Decisions for Others Are More Creative Than Decisions for the Self

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## Abstract

Four studies investigate whether decisions for others produce more creative solutions than do decisions for the self and if construal level explains this relation. In Study 1, participants carried out a structured imagination task by drawing an alien for a story that they would write, or alternatively for a story that someone else would write. As expected, drawing an alien for someone else produced a more creative alien. In Studies 2a and 2b, construal level (i.e., psychological distance) was independently manipulated. Participants generated more creative ideas on behalf of distant others than on behalf of either close others or themselves. Finally, in Study 3, a classic insight problem was investigated. Participants deciding for others were more likely to solve the problem; furthermore, this result was mediated by psychological distance. These findings demonstrate that people are more creative for others than for themselves and shed light on differences in self–other decision making.

## Keywords

self–other decision making, creativity, construal level theory, psychological distance, social distance

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In 1978, Herbert Simon was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences—in his address, he declared that “all psychology is social” (Simon, 2001, p. 207), a view deduced from the fact that all human life is social life. It is assumed that human behavior, like decisions people make, takes place in a social context such that even when others are not actually present, our decisions continue to be influenced by others. Yet research in social psychology has been remiss in investigating decision making in social contexts. To be sure, the findings have been observed mostly by individual decision makers without accommodation of others’ views and preferences, much less the others themselves for whom decisions are made.

For example, researchers have asked what techniques people use to make decisions, whether decisions are affected by cognitive heuristics and biases, if emotions influence people’s decisions, and the role of free will in decisions, among many other interesting questions—too many to list here. Although these questions are important, there are other questions to be asked when we begin by acknowledging that decision making is a fundamentally social act. Understood in this way, decision making involves not just the self but the consideration of others. Moreover, because decision making is social, it is prone to manipulation by norms, the expectations of others, and expectations of one’s self. Indeed, decision making is a complex social exchange that depends on the degree of interaction one has with others, on what people believe others will do, on

how people judge others, and on how much people care about being judged. All of these factors may have tremendous impacts on making decisions and are ripe for deeper investigation.

In this article, we examine the difference between what people choose for themselves and what they choose for others. We propose a mechanism, construal level theory, as one factor contributing to the difference between self-choice and other-choice. The impact of construal level theory on decision making is well known. With few exceptions, research points to individuals representing psychologically distant events with abstract, general, decontextualized, high-level construals, while representing psychologically near events with concrete, contextual, incidental, low-level construals (for reviews, see Liberman & Trope, 1998, 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2003). In this vein, generating high-level construals among individuals has led to greater insight and success in solving creative problems as well as in generating more creative ideas overall (Förster, Friedman, & Liberman, 2004; Jia, Hirt, & Karpen, 2009). Such direct effects of construal level on creativity are

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often explained by *processing shifts* (cf. Schooler, Fiore, & Brandimonte, 1997) that describe the transfer of cognitive procedures from one task to another. In line with processing shifts, it has been found that high-level construals activate processes of abstraction that in turn facilitate creative problem solving and idea generation (Finke, 1995; Förster et al., 2004; Ward, 1995). That is, the higher the construal level, the more a shift in processing occurs with respect to creativity.

For example, consider the following scenario:

A prisoner was attempting to escape from a tower. He found a rope in his cell that was half as long enough to permit him to reach the ground safely. He divided the rope in half, tied the two parts together, and escaped. How could he have done this?

Research has shown that this insight problem is more likely to be solved (i.e., by dividing the rope lengthwise) provided individuals imagine solving the puzzle a year from now compared to tomorrow (i.e., temporal distance; Förster et al., 2004) or if individuals ostensibly believe that their responses benefit an organization that is 2,000 miles away compared to 2 miles away (i.e., spatial distance; Jia et al., 2009). That is, the greater the psychological distance (i.e., high-level construal), the more likely the problem is solved. There is, however, a third component of construal level identified by Liberman, Trope, and Stephan (2007) called social distance—the psychological distance between the self and others. In particular, compared with a decision on behalf of the self, might we expect a decision on behalf of another to elicit more or less creativity? It is this question that the present research was designed to address. Besides being an interesting question in its own right—examining social distance with respect to creativity has not been investigated—we were drawn to this issue because of the ubiquity of decisions that are made on behalf of others, but about which we know very little: CEOs make decisions on behalf of employees, parents on behalf of their children, physicians on behalf of patients, members of corporate boards on behalf of shareholders, lawyers and financial planners on behalf of clients, and one spouse on behalf of the other. Perhaps the clearest examples of self–other decision making in a creative problem-solving context occur in organizations where managers make decisions on behalf of employees or in marketing where copywriters generate and execute ideas on behalf of clients. Our work seeks to understand how, why, and under which conditions decision making affects creativity—juxtaposed to a context in which individuals generate creative solutions for themselves or for others.

### Self–Other Decision Making, Social Distance, and Creativity

Although much research has investigated creative problem solving, the research has focused on only one particular type

of problem—generating ideas or solutions that are for the self—and has not yet explored how generating ideas or solutions for others influences people's creativity. Based on research on construal level theory, we propose that people are more creative on others' behalves and consequently generate more creative ideas and solve more insight problems than people who carry out these creative activities for themselves. Indeed, research in construal level theory has established that with respect to socially distant selves, people perceive their future selves in more abstract terms than they perceive their present selves (Nussbaum, Trope, & Liberman, 2003; Wakslak, Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2008). In particular, people ascribe concrete variables (i.e., low-level construals) to their present selves' behaviors yet ascribe abstract variables (i.e., high-level construals) to both their future selves' and others' behaviors (Pronin & Ross, 2006). Of import, the decisions that people make for their future selves mirror the decisions that people make on behalf of others (Pronin, Olivola, & Kennedy, 2008). In one study, participants indicated how much of a disgusting liquid they would drink in the present moment or in the next semester; and in a separate condition, participants decided how much another participant would drink. To wit, participants who decided for others indicated the same amount as participants who decided for their future selves, whereas participants who chose for their present selves indicated they would drink a significantly smaller amount (Pronin et al., 2008, Study 1). From this perspective, research on construal level theory provides a foundation that explains the relation between self–other decision making and social distance. That is, in making decisions for others, the level of construal is higher than in making decisions for the self (Liberman et al., 2007). Given that individuals' cognition becomes more creative when they are induced into high-level mental representations (Förster et al., 2004; Jia et al., 2009), we suggest that individuals who solve creative problems on behalf of others are more creative than individuals who solve creative problems for themselves.

### Overview of Studies

In this regard, the current research examines self–other decision making in a creative problem-solving context and investigates whether construal level explains the relation between self–other decision making and creativity. In Study 1, participants carried out a structured imagination task by drawing an alien for a story that they would write or, alternatively, for a story that someone else would write. This drawing task has been used in previous creativity research (e.g., Ward, Finke, & Smith, 1995) and has the capacity to assess individuals' ability to go beyond existing category information and generate something novel. As previous research has shown a close relationship between creative cognition and generating novel ideas (Ward, 1994), we hypothesized that drawing an alien for someone else would produce a more creative alien than drawing an alien for the self. Next, Studies 2a and 2b were carried

out with two goals in mind. The first goal was to replicate the results of Study 1 using different manipulations and measures. The second goal was to test whether construal level moderates the relation between self–other decision making and creativity. To that end, self–other decision making and construal level were independently manipulated. Specifically, in Study 2a, participants generated ideas for themselves, close others, or distant others, with the expectation that creativity would improve with increased social distance. To complement this study, Study 2b was carried out to eliminate potential alternative explanations based on the amount of information people have of themselves and others, their confidence in self- versus other-knowledge, how emotionally involved people are in making their own versus others' decisions, and their mood. Because it is plausible that any of these variables vary between self-choice and other-choice, we included them in our analyses by (a) manipulating the amount of information people have of others (in addition to manipulating social distance) and (b) measuring the degree of confidence, emotional involvement, and mood that decision makers experience in generating ideas for either themselves or others. Finally, in Study 3, the insight problem quoted in the introduction was tested—participants imagined themselves in the tower and attempted to solve the problem or imagined someone else in the tower and attempted to solve the problem on their behalf. Moreover, mediation was tested statistically with the bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Thus, across four studies, participants faced three different kinds of creative decisions; furthermore, these decisions ranged from imaginative to brainstorming to problem solving. In short, we predict that decisions for others produce more creative choices than decisions for the self and that this relation is explained by construal level.

## Study 1

### Method

In exchange for extra credit, 262 undergraduates agreed to participate. In this study, participants carried out a structured imagination task by drawing an alien (Ward et al., 1995). In particular, participants were informed that they were drawing an alien for a story that they would later write or, alternatively, for a story that someone else would later write. The instructions emphasized that participants would have to draw and decide what the focal alien would look like and that participants would have 7 min. Following the drawing task, participants were thanked for their participation and informed that no one would be writing the corresponding story.

### Results and Discussion

Consistent with previous research (see Ward, 1994), we derived a creativity score by counting the number of times that unusual

(i.e., not earthlike) features appear in each drawing (e.g., having more than two eyes). Two coders carried out the counting, and their scores were averaged together to form one creativity score per alien—coders demonstrated high agreement ( $\alpha = .91$ ). As predicted, drawing an alien for someone else resulted in a more creative alien ( $M = 1.55$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) than drawing an alien for the self ( $M = 1.04$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ),  $t(260) = 3.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.45$ .

Study 1 demonstrates support for the relation between self–other decision making and creativity. Drawing an alien for someone else led to a more creative outcome than drawing an alien for the self. One limitation, however, is that among participants who drew aliens for others, no requirement of writing a story was provided. That is, among participants who drew aliens for themselves, advance notice was provided that they would have to write a story about their own alien, and it is conceivable that these participants were distracted by or preoccupied with writing their stories while drawing their aliens. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) writes that distraction interferes with creativity. Studies 2a and 2b were carried out to eliminate this alternative explanation as well as to shed light on whether construal level moderates the relation between self–other decision making and creativity. In particular, construal level was manipulated by instructing participants to generate ideas for either close or distant others (e.g., Liviatan, Trope, & Liberman, 2008).

## Studies 2a and 2b

### Method

In exchange for extra credit, 581 undergraduates agreed to participate. In Study 2a ( $N = 65$ ), construal level was manipulated such that participants generated ideas for themselves, close others, or distant others. If, as we predict, social distance influences creativity, we should observe the most creativity among participants who generate ideas for distant others, with diminishing creativity among participants who generate ideas for close others and for themselves.

Study 2b ( $N = 516$ ) extends 2a by manipulating the amount of information participants have of close and distant others as well as by measuring participants' degree of confidence, emotional involvement, and mood. These variables might otherwise explain why people make different decisions for others than they do for themselves. Together, the results of these two studies could indicate that the effect of self–other decision making on creativity is due to concurrent changes in construal level.

In Study 2a, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions of increasing social distance. In each condition, participants generated five gift ideas. In the first condition, participants generated ideas for themselves; in the second condition, participants generated ideas for a close other; and in the third condition, participants generated ideas for a distant other. We manipulated level of closeness (i.e., social distance) by instructing participants that they were generating ideas for

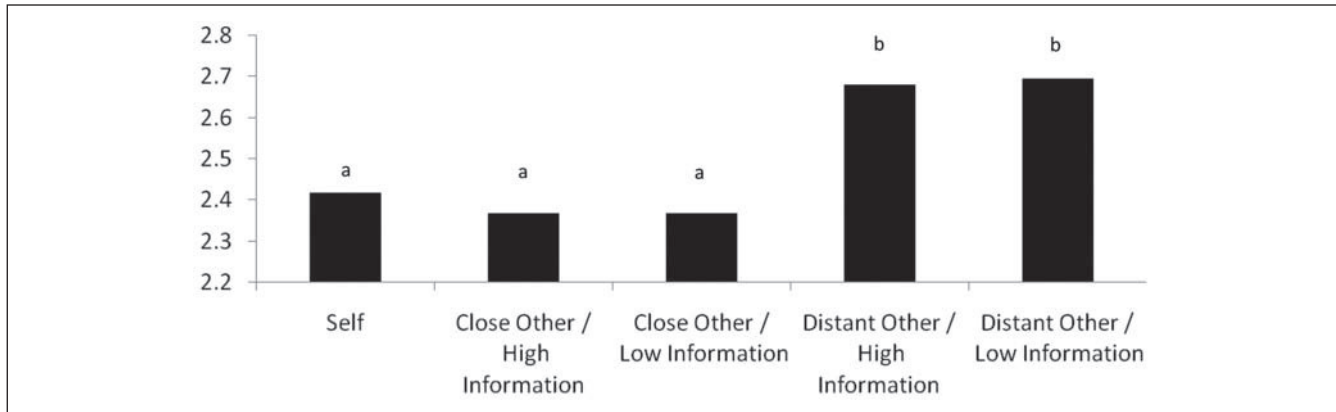
someone who ostensibly shares their birth month. Research has found that sharing a birthday, much less a birth month, with a stranger is sufficient to create a social bond and a feeling of closeness (Gunia, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2009; Miller, Downs, & Prentice, 1998). Thus, in generating ideas for close others, participants were led to believe they shared a birth month, whereas in generating ideas for distant others, participants were led to believe they were born in a different month. In this vein, choosing for the self represents a condition with zero social distance, choosing for a close other represents a condition with some social distance, and finally choosing for a distant other represents a condition with the most social distance. Because we predict that social distance influences creativity, we expect a linear trend of increasing creativity from the self to close other to distant other.

In Study 2b, we carried out the same steps and measures as in Study 2a, but with three major additions. First, we manipulated the amount of information that participants had of others. In particular, we provided participants with either one piece or six pieces of information about the person for whom they were generating gift ideas. Pieces of information were drawn randomly from a list of 68 personality traits identified by Saucier and Goldberg (1996; e.g., earnest, honest, etc.). Because the traits were drawn randomly, no participant received the same combination of traits. Next, we included additional measures that may plausibly underlie the effects of self–other decision making on creativity, namely confidence (“How confident are you in your knowledge of *this person* [*yourself*]?”) and emotional involvement (“How emotionally involved were you in coming up with birthday gift ideas?”). For both items, participants’ responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*extremely*). We also measured mood by asking participants to respond to the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), as well as included manipulation checks for closeness (“How close did you feel with *this person* [*yourself*]?”) and amount of information (“How much information did you have of *this person* [*yourself*]?”). Participants respectively responded from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*extremely*) and from 1 (*none*) to 4 (*a lot*). We were particularly interested in discovering whether self–other decision making would predict creativity above and beyond these variables. In a final departure from Study 2a, we also measured creativity differently. In Study 2a, we measured creativity by calculating participants’ dominance rank ratio (a low dominance rank ratio indicates high creativity; e.g., Leung & Chiu, 2010).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, in Study 2b, we measured creativity by collecting two coders’ assessments of each idea’s novelty from 1 (*not novel*) to 5 (*extremely novel*) and usefulness from 1 (*not useful*) to 5 (*extremely useful*). Because the coders demonstrated significant agreement in their ratings of the ideas’ novelty ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ) and usefulness ( $r = .22, p < .001$ ), their assessments were averaged together to form one composite score for creativity (e.g., Diehl & Stroebe, 1987). In all, we expect that participants generate more creative ideas when decisions are cast for distant others, regardless of the amount of information that participants have of distant others.

## Results and Discussion

The primary dependent variables for Studies 2a and 2b are the number of creative ideas generated as measured by dominance rank ratio (Study 2a) and the composite creativity score (Study 2b). As predicted, in Study 2a, participants who generated ideas for distant others generated more creative ideas ( $M = 2.91, SD = 0.52$ ) than did participants who generated ideas for close others ( $M = 3.50, SD = 0.45$ ), who in turn generated more creative ideas than did participants who generated ideas for themselves ( $M = 4.69, SD = 0.51$ )—evidenced by a linear contrast,  $F(1, 63) = 5.19, p < .05$ . What is more, Tukey tests show that participants who generated ideas for distant others generated more creative ideas than participants who generated ideas for themselves ( $p < .05$ ).

Would, however, the results hold after considering the amount of information, confidence, emotional involvement, and mood that participants experience in generating their ideas? To be sure, in Study 2b, we carried out three separate ANOVAs across five conditions (self; close other–high information; close other–low information; distant other–high information; distant other–low information) on participants’ closeness, amount of information, and average composite creativity of generated ideas respectively. The manipulation checks held, indicating participants in the self and close other conditions felt more close to the person for whom they were generating ideas compared to participants in the distant other conditions,  $F(4, 515) = 61.56, p < .001$ ; planned contrast (+1 self, +1 close other–high information, +1 close other–low information, –1.5 distant other–high information, –1.5 close other–low information),  $t(511) = 8.03, p < .001$ . Moreover, participants in the self and high information conditions reported having more information about the person for whom they were generating ideas than participants in the low information conditions,  $F(4, 515) = 93.01, p < .001$ ; planned contrast (+1 self, +1 close other–high information, +1 distant other–high information, –1.5 close other–low information, –1.5 distant other–low information),  $t(511) = 12.15, p < .001$ . Of import, however, is the main effect illustrated in Figure 1. Participants who generated ideas for distant others generated more creative ideas than either participants who generated ideas for close others or participants who generated ideas for themselves,  $F(4, 504) = 22.70, p < .001$ . Indeed, Tukey tests show that participants who generated ideas for distant others generated more creative ideas than participants in any of the three other conditions ( $ps < .001$ ). No differences were observed in any of the other conditions ( $ps > .40$ ). Crucially, including measures of confidence, emotional involvement, and mood as covariates did not substantially alter the findings—evidence that self–other decision making contributes unique explanatory variance in fostering creativity. Thus, these data help highlight the unique importance of construal level in the context of self–other decision making and creativity. Although differences exist between (a) the amount of information people have of themselves ( $M = 3.81, SD = 0.48$ ) compared to others ( $M = 2.38, SD = 0.78$ ),



**Figure 1.** Effects of closeness and information on creativity

Note: Bars with the same letters do not represent conditions with significantly different means. Confidence, emotional involvement, and mood were included in analyses as covariates.

$t(514) = 18.10, p < .001, d = 1.60$ ; (b) the degree of confidence people have of their knowledge ( $M = 3.77, SD = 0.44$ ) compared to others' knowledge ( $M = 2.09, SD = 0.96$ ),  $t(513) = 17.57, p < .001, d = 1.55$ ; (c) the experienced emotional involvement in self-choice ( $M = 2.81, SD = 0.92$ ) versus other-choice ( $M = 2.42, SD = 0.89$ ),  $t(514) = 3.97, p < .001, d = 0.35$ ; and (d) the reported negative affect in self-choice ( $M = 3.22, SD = 0.97$ ) versus other-choice ( $M = 3.01, SD = 0.86$ ),  $t(514) = 2.23, p < .05, d = 0.20$ ; these differences did not influence the creativity of decisions made on behalf of others in relation to decisions made on behalf of the self.

Taken together, the results of Studies 2a and 2b indicate two major findings. First, we found that construal level moderated individuals' creativity, such that individuals who generated ideas for distant others generated more creative ideas compared to individuals who generated ideas for close others and to individuals who generated ideas for themselves. What is more, we found that this effect is not due to the amount of information that people have of themselves or of others, nor is it due to the confidence, emotional involvement, or mood that people experience. Rather, it is construal level, and by extension social distance, that explains the greater creativity observed in decisions for others. Thus, these findings provide evidence for the relation between self–other decision making and creativity and, in particular, the role of construal level. To extend this finding, Study 3 was carried out to include a different measure of creativity as well as a statistical test of mediation.

### Study 3

#### Method

In exchange for extra credit, 137 undergraduates agreed to participate. In this study, participants attempted to solve the classic insight problem quoted in the introduction. However, the problem was modified such that half the participants were

instructed to solve the problem by imagining themselves in the tower, whereas the other half of participants were instructed to solve the problem on behalf of someone else in the tower. Next, participants responded to a question used in other research to measure psychological distance (e.g., Broemer, Grabowski, Gebauer, Ermel, & Diehl, 2008) by indicating how far the tower felt from 1 (*very near*) to 7 (*very distant*)—more distance is indicative of high-level construals.

#### Results and Discussion

As predicted, participants who generated a solution on behalf of someone else in the tower were more likely to solve the problem ( $M = 66\%, SD = 48\%$ ) compared to participants who imagined themselves in the tower ( $M = 48\%, SD = 50\%$ ),  $\chi^2(1, N = 136) = 4.41, p < .05, d = 0.37$ . By the same token, participants who generated a solution on behalf of someone else in the tower were more likely to indicate that the tower felt further away ( $M = 5.06, SD = 1.62$ ) compared to participants who imagined themselves in the tower ( $M = 4.21, SD = 1.87$ ),  $t(112) = 2.60, p < .05, d = 0.49$ . Thus, consistent with Studies 1 and 2, we observe that decisions for others are more creative than decisions for the self and yield high-level construals. In light of these findings, we carried out a bootstrapping procedure to determine whether psychological distance mediates the relation between self–other decision making and creativity (i.e., solving the puzzle correctly). Consistent with Preacher and Hayes's (2004) guidelines, mediation was tested by deriving bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals for the indirect effect of self–other decision making on individuals' creativity, through the mediator, psychological distance. To compute the indirect effect, 1,000 repeated random samples were taken from the original data. Mediation is said to occur if the derived confidence interval does not contain zero. Results of the bootstrap analysis indicated that the true indirect effect was estimated to lie between  $-.711$  and  $-.051$  with 95% confidence

(the confidence interval does not contain zero), confirming that psychological distance did act as a mediator—verified also by a Goodman test ( $z = 1.98, p < .05$ ). The overall chain thus supports the prediction that choosing for others engenders high-level construals, which in turn contributes to creativity.

The results of Study 3 converge with those of Studies 1 and 2 and suggest that decisions for others are more creative than decisions for the self. In the tower insight problem, people making a decision on behalf of someone else trapped in the tower were more likely to generate the correct and creative solution than people who imagined themselves in the tower and who were instructed to generate their own solutions. Moreover, as we predicted, psychological distance mediated this relation. Along these lines, research using the same insight problem has shown that temporal distance and spatial distance increased people's creativity (Förster et al., 2004; Jia et al., 2009)—we thus extend the findings of psychological distance on creativity to include social distance.

## General Discussion

A broad range of situational factors have been identified to influence creativity. For example, inducing a positive mood among individuals leads to greater creative performances on tasks such as the Remote Associates Test (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987). In other lines of work, unconscious thought, exposure to multiculturalism, and perspective taking have been found to increase creativity (Dijksterhuis & Meurs, 2006; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Likewise, research has investigated which factors stifle creativity, such as extrinsic rewards, avoidance motivation, and counterfactual thinking (Amabile, 1996; Friedman & Förster, 2000; Markman, Lindberg, Kray, & Galinsky, 2007). In the current research, we investigated whether a hitherto unexplored situational variable, self–other decision making, influences creative insight and idea generation.

Across four studies, decisions for others were found to be more creative than decisions for the self. This effect was observed in domains as varied as imagining and drawing an alien (Study 1), generating creative gift ideas (Studies 2a and 2b), and solving a classic creative insight problem (Study 3). Moreover, the effect of self–other decision making on creativity was explained by construal level, such that the social distance between deciding for the self and deciding on behalf of someone else led individuals to experience high-level construals and, hence, processes of abstraction that facilitate creative cognition.

These findings are hardly trivial, considering important and creative choices are often made on behalf of others (Yates, 1990). Indeed, the practical implications of our findings are striking in the extent of their reach. That decisions for others are more creative than decisions for the self is not only valuable information for researchers in social psychology, decision making, marketing, and management but also should prove of considerable interest to negotiators, managers, product

designers, marketers, and advertisers, among many others. Creativity is often seen as a means of artistic expression, a channel in which to pour an artist's creative talent, yet this type of work is not really in keeping with the industrial reality of world economies. Although creativity for the sake of itself exists, we cannot overlook that creativity and innovation also exist as a profession dedicated to the creation and ultimate consumption of products and practices by others.

Indeed, people are often hired, even elected, to make decisions on behalf of others—consultants, politicians, and board members are three examples. And the quality and success of their decisions depend on the amount and type of information that is considered during the decision process (Payne, 1976). In particular, consultants, creative or otherwise, are typically hired because they have access to certain information. Yet as the present studies show, decisions for others are more creative than decisions for the self irrespective of the amount of information that people have of others. These results lead to speculations about other studies that in some way or another deal with self–other decision making. We might think at first glance that people who make decisions on behalf of others are less enmeshed in decisions and therefore more objective in assimilating and construing information. Put differently, people who make decision for others may suffer fewer cognitive biases. A lawyer, for example, in a divorce proceeding may see the opposition's argument more clearly than a client, or a real estate agent may more accurately generate a selling price than an owner. We suspect, however, that the net effect of deciding for others is accompanied with greater, not fewer, systematic biases and that the two examples provided here represent exceptions to this rule.

For instance, Loewenstein (2005) asserted that parents may not adequately dress their children on wintry days if parents are hot from exertion—presumably because it is hard for parents to imagine someone else is cold when they themselves are hot. In another example by Loewenstein, a patient may be in an affectively hot, aroused state after receiving bad news despite the doctor being in a pain-free, affectively cold state—a difference that could cause the doctor to underappreciate the patient's pain and ultimately undermedicate. These examples suggest that people who make decisions for others ignore or do not sufficiently consider others' needs or preferences (i.e., empathy gap; Van Boven, Dunning, & Loewenstein, 2000). In contrast, research also shows that with respect to affective forecasting (e.g., overestimating the duration of affective reactions to negative events; Wilson & Gilbert, 2005), people anticipate feeling guilty if they make poor decisions on behalf of others. Called *other-induced regret* (Stone, Yates, & Caruthers, 2002), anticipated feelings moderate the choices that people make (Simonson, 1992). As an example, Casarett and Ross (1997) found that doctors sometimes make cautious decisions for their patients that are not consistent with patients' predilections, for fear of feeling guilty after making decisions that are consistent with patients' preferences. Notwithstanding the emotions that people experience in making decisions for

others (or lack thereof), a small but growing research stream has documented cognitive biases among decision makers who specifically choose on behalf of others and reported that omission bias (Zikmund-Fisher, Sarr, Fagerlin, & Ubel, 2006), confirmation bias (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2005), lexicographic weighting (Kray, 2000), and information distortion (Polman, 2010) are greater among decision makers who decide on others' behalves in relation to their own behalves. Our research builds on this general theme by exploring the effect of self–other differences on creativity—a veritably social process that bears on issues of biases in social judgment.

In this vein, fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977) and pluralistic ignorance (Miller & McFarland, 1987) both state that people make different inferences of their own behavior compared to others' behavior. In particular, Heath (1999) found that people believe they are motivated less by extrinsic rewards and more by intrinsic rewards, compared to how much they believe others are motivated by extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Likewise, Hsee and Weber (1997) found that people make less risky decisions for themselves than they predict others make for themselves. Moreover, studies by Vorauer and Ratner (1996), and recently by Shelton and Richeson (2005), found that in an unrealized interaction between two people, individuals attribute their failure to interact to a fear of rejection but others' failure to a lack of interest. Future research will benefit from extending these investigations into a self–other decision-making context.

It is important to mention how our results might relate to other areas of research that deal with making decisions for others, namely, perspective taking. It might be that perspective taking is invoked when people make decisions for other people or that overlap in mental representations between the self and others is increased. If so, then the effects of perspective taking may resemble, in a nontrivial way, the effects of making decisions for others. For example, taking the perspective of a negotiation opponent causes individuals to generate more creative agreements (Galinsky et al., 2008). Might perspective taking, therefore, contribute to the results we present here? We suspect that they do not, that in fact individuals who engage in taking others' perspective subsequently ascribe concrete variables to others (Kray, 2000; Wray & Stone, 2005), precisely the kind of variables that represent low-level construals, and hence diminished creativity. In this vein, variables unique to making decisions for others may moderate the effects of perspective taking among people who make decisions for others. As an example, people may experience feelings of power when they make decisions for other people, and when people feel powerful, they have a tendency to eschew perspective taking (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). What is more, perspective taking and other-choice are different in other ways; people who take others' perspective do not get to experience the outcomes of decisions, much less make decisions. Needless to say, future research should directly examine the effects of perspective taking among people who make decisions for others.

Also potentially worthwhile is considering the role of intrinsic motivation among people who generate creative solutions for themselves compared to people who generate creative solutions for others. Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to expend effort based on interest in and enjoyment of the work itself (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and is typically contrasted with extrinsic motivation—the desire to expend effort to obtain outcomes external to the work itself, such as rewards and recognition (Amabile, 1993; Brief & Aldag, 1977). Of import, extrinsic motivation has been found to dampen creativity (Amabile, 1985), yet it is potentially more representative among people who generate creative solutions for others, given they receive money or recognition in return. A plausible explanation for this discrepancy is based on prosocial motivation—the desire to expend effort to benefit other people (Batson, 1987). People who make creative decisions for others may experience the opportunity to have a positive impact on other people. In particular, people experience relatedness in connecting their decisions to outcomes that matter in the lives of other people (Grant, 2007). For example, when intrinsically motivated, a creative consultant's effort is based on the enjoyment of his or her work. Yet when prosocially motivated, the consultant's effort is based on a desire to help an organization, which provides meaning and fulfillment (Grant, 2008). This interpretation is consistent with evidence showing that intrinsic and prosocial motivations are related to construal level theory. When intrinsically motivated, people are present focused (Quinn, 2005); however, when prosocially motivated, people are future focused (Batson, 1998). Future research should include these variables to examine the relative contributions of intrinsic and prosocial motivations to creativity as well as to other outcomes of interest (e.g., Grant, 2008).

In spite of the current study's relatively encouraging findings, there are some limitations to bear in mind. First, the decision makers in our study did not know the persons for whom they were making decisions, other than that they were fellow students. On research in social judgment, Epley and Dunning (2000) suggested that individuals make different predictions for strangers or "averages persons" than they do for family members or friends (also see Hsee & Weber, 1997). The same could be said with making decisions, such that decisions vary according to whether the other is a close or distant other—as evidenced by the current research. Thus, we might expect differences in self–other decision making according to whom people are choosing (e.g., mother, friend, employee). Future research should directly investigate specific degrees of social distance such as choosing for subordinates versus superordinates, friends versus enemies, citizens versus foreigners, among possible other cases such as choosing on behalf of a group (e.g., Redelmeier & Tversky, 1990).

A second limitation is that without a control condition, we cannot conclude whether deciding on behalf of someone else facilitates creativity or whether deciding on behalf of the self inhibits creative output. That said, research shows that high-level

construals enhance creativity rather than low-level construals impeding it (Förster et al., 2004; Jia et al., 2009). Thus, we suspect that decisions for others are more creative. In particular, Restle (1962) reported that the success rate for the insight problem used in Study 3 is 50%, which is significantly less than the rate reported among participants who were instructed to solve the problem on behalf of someone else,  $z = 2.76, p < .01$ .<sup>2</sup>

In closing, given the ubiquity of decisions that are made on behalf of others, it is surprising how little research has been conducted on self–other decision making in marketing, management, and the psychology literature writ large. Relatively little is known about how people make decisions for other people, yet much is known about decision making in general. This was a natural place to begin, for without some basic understanding of decision making, one stands little chance of understanding the complex case of how people make decisions for other people. This is particularly the case with regard to decisions involving creativity. Researchers have studied creativity in a variety of settings, generating considerable research on motivation, groups, and general well-being (for reviews, see Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), and this astounding breadth of relevance makes it of immense benefit in the study of self–other decision making.

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### Notes

1. Following Ward, Patterson, Sifonis, Dodds, and Saunders (2002), we recorded each gift idea's ordinal position on its author's list and took the average output position across all participants who had listed this gift idea to form its rank. Next, for each idea, we obtained its output dominance score (the number of times an idea is generated across the entire sample). We then divided the dominance score of an idea by its rank to yield a dominance–rank score. Finally, for each participant, we computed the mean of the dominance–rank ratios of the five ideas generated.
2. Restle (1962) reported that the success rate increases as time spent on the problem increases. Specifically, if time spent on the problem is 200 s, the success rate is 50%. Participants in Study 3 spent, on average, 143 s; furthermore, there was no difference in time between groups,  $t < 1$ . Thus, comparing the success rate to 50% provides a conservative test of whether deciding on behalf of someone else facilitates creativity or whether deciding on behalf of the self inhibits it.

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