

**More Rational or More Emotional than Others?
Lay Beliefs about Decision-Making Strategies**

Noah VanBergen^a

Nicholas H. Lurie^b

Zoey Chen^c

^a Noah VanBergen (vanbernh@ucmail.uc.edu) is Assistant Professor of Marketing, University of Cincinnati, 2376 Lindner Hall, 2906 Woodside Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45221-0145.

^b Nicholas H. Lurie (lurie@uconn.edu) is Professor of Marketing, University of Connecticut, 2100 Hillside Road Unit 1041, Storrs, CT 06269-1041.

^c Zoey Chen (zchen@bus.miami.edu) is Assistant Professor of Marketing, University of Miami, Jenkins 314 J, 5250 University Dr., Coral Gables, FL 33146.

Correspondence should be sent to Noah VanBergen (vanbernh@ucmail.uc.edu), Department of Marketing, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0145.

Abstract

Research demonstrates that people utilize both reasoning and feeling in decision making and that both strategies can be advantageous. However, little is known about how people perceive their decision making *relative* to others. Despite research findings and popular appeals supporting the use of affective decision processes, across a series of studies, we find that individuals believe they rely more on reasoning, and less on feelings, than others. These effects are driven by the motivation to self-enhance where, in most contexts, individuals believe the use of reasoning is superior, and self-enhancing, compared to the use of feelings. Consistent with this mechanism, beliefs that one's decisions are more rational than others' are: (a) stronger for those who exhibit greater beliefs in the superiority of reasoning (vs. feeling), (b) attenuated when the decision context precludes motivational thinking about the self or the self is affirmed, and (c) reversed when the use of feelings is perceived as more self-enhancing. We demonstrate downstream consequences (e.g., decision delegation), rule out alternative explanations, and discuss practical implications of these lay beliefs.

Keywords: Decision making; interpersonal comparisons; rationality; biases; delegation

More Rational or More Emotional than Others?

Lay Beliefs about Decision-Making Strategies

A great deal of work studies how individuals make decisions (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Lee et al., 2009; Schwarz, 1990; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981); yet little is known about people's lay beliefs about if and how their decision making differs from that of others.

Researchers have identified advantages and disadvantages of using feelings versus reasoning to make decisions (Allen, 2002; Mikels et al., 2011; Shiv et al., 2005; Wilson & Schooler, 1991). Other research has identified individual differences in lay rationalism (i.e., the extent to which people believe they use reasoning versus feelings to make decisions; (Hsee et al., 2015; Park & Sela, 2017); yet it is unclear whether people view their own decision making as more emotional or rational than that of others. Lay beliefs about the emotionality versus rationality of one's own decision making relative to that of others are likely to have a number of downstream consequences, ranging from whether a marketing manager decides to launch an emotional versus rational ad, to how people decide to allocate emotional versus rational tasks to themselves and others. It is therefore important to understand whether, why, and when people believe they rely more on reasoning or feelings in their decision making than others.

The present research asks whether, and in what way, people perceive their decision making to be different from that of others. While people can simultaneously use feeling and reasoning for decision making, and both are necessary for cognitive reasoning (Damasio, 2005), laypeople tend to see a trade-off between the two approaches (Barchard, 2001; Epstein, 1994; Hsee et al., 2015; Levine et al., 2018). As such, we focus on 1) individuals' perceptions of the extent to which, relative to others, they use reasoning versus feelings to make decisions, 2) when and why differences might arise, as well as 3) downstream implications of these perceived

differences. We follow prior research and examine perceptions of decision making through a lay belief lens. Rather than taking an economic approach, where rationality is defined as the extent to which people follow formal rules and emotions are treated as inputs to utility (Loewenstein, 2000), our research looks at people's perceptions of the extent to which their decision making is based on reasoning versus feelings (Barchard, 2001; Hsee et al., 2015).

Our studies show that people often believe their own decisions are more based on reasoning (vs. feelings) than others' decisions, but this depends on the extent to which they believe that using reasoning leads to better decisions than using feelings. These findings are important as decisions are often made with others (or with others in mind), and beliefs about one's own (vs. others') decision making bode downstream consequences. Our studies show implications for decisions such as deciding between rational (vs. emotional) advertisements and deciding whether to delegate a rational (vs. emotional) task to another person.

By providing insights into beliefs about how the self (vs. others) makes decisions, the current work makes a number of contributions. First, although prior research has studied how different decision approaches lead to different outcomes (Bechara et al., 1997, 2005; Lee et al., 2009; Payne et al., 1993; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999; Wilson et al., 1993; Wilson & Schooler, 1991), and finds individual differences in consumer's lay beliefs about their use of reasoning (vs. feelings; Hsee et al., 2015; Park & Sela, 2017), little is known about how people believe they make decisions relative to how they believe others make decisions. The current work addresses this question and shows that, in general, people believe they rely more on rationality (vs. emotionality) in their decisions than others.

This work also contributes to research on the better-than-average effect (Alicke, 1985; Brown, 2012). While prior work shows that individuals perceive themselves as superior to others

in many domains (Chambers & Windschitl, 2004; Dunning et al., 2004), it is less clear whether people will perceive greater use of reasoning versus feeling as superior. In other words, while it seems intuitive that people may believe they are better decision makers than others, it is unclear whether and when they would believe their use of reasoning or feelings in decision making is greater than that of others, given that both processes could be beneficial for decision making (Shiv et al., 2005; Wilson and Schooler, 1991). Our research sheds light on this question by showing that, while in general individuals perceive themselves as above-average in their use of reasoning—because they perceive reasoning to be more self-enhancing—in contexts where they perceive feelings to be more self-enhancing, the effect is reversed. Our research also has a number of downstream implications including the delegation of different types of tasks to others and decisions about whether to use rational versus emotional persuasive appeals in advertising.

Theoretical Background

Decisions Based on Reasons versus Feelings

Findings from multiple literatures show that the use of reasoning and feeling can both benefit and hinder decision making. For example, some research (e.g., Payne et al., 1993) suggests that logical and reasoned incorporation of all information leads to the best (utility maximizing) decisions whereas other research shows that careful reasoning can harm decision quality and satisfaction (Wilson et al., 1993; Wilson & Schooler, 1991). Research on the use of feelings also yields contrasting effects. Greater reliance on emotions can be beneficial for preference consistency (Lee et al., 2009; Pham et al., 2001) and decision making under risk (LeDoux, 1998, 2012). Yet feelings can also adversely affect choices (Shiv et al., 2005), particularly when feelings are unrelated to the focal task (Leith & Baumeister, 1996; Lerner et

al., 2004) and when they preclude people from processing feeling-inconsistent information (Kuhnen & Knutson, 2011).

More recently, a small yet growing body of research has started to explore people's *beliefs* about their own decision making. Hsee et al. (2015) examine people's beliefs about how they make decisions and show individual differences in the extent to which people believe that they "use reasons rather than feelings to guide decisions" (Hsee et al., 2015, p. 124). Ma-Kellams and Lerner (2016) look at empathic accuracy—the extent to which people can correctly perceive others' feelings—and show that people hold the (erroneous) lay belief that using intuition provides greater empathic accuracy than using systematic thoughts. Finally, other research examines lay beliefs about others' ability to control their own mental states and actions (Cusimano & Goodwin, 2019) as well as lay beliefs about how others' emotions control their intentional behavior (Ong et al., 2016). The present research extends this literature by looking at people's lay beliefs about their decision making *in comparison* to that of others.

Comparing Oneself to Others

People often compare themselves to others in decision-making contexts. When purchasing identity-relevant items, for instance, people tend to choose items that are not chosen by a majority of other people (Berger & Heath, 2007). In the same vein, individuals consider who else has adopted a product (e.g., an ingroup vs. outgroup member) when making product abandonment decisions (Berger & Heath, 2008). More generally, people often compare their behavior with that of others in an effort to understand themselves (Festinger, 1954; Suls et al., 2002; Wood, 1989). As such, individuals are likely to compare their decision processes to those of others. However, as a variety of literature suggests, judgments about the self (particularly in relation to others) are often systematically biased (see Dunning et al., 2004 for a review).

One dominant explanation for why perceptions of the self may differ from perceptions of others is that people are motivated to view the self favorably (Brown, 2012; Epley & Dunning, 2000; Kunda, 1990). This explanation is supported by research showing that people are often positively biased when it comes to judgments of the self relative to others (e.g., Brown, 2012). In addition, differences in judgments of the self versus others are most pronounced in contexts with greater personal relevance and ego-involvement (such as job performance; Brown, 2012; Brown & Gallagher, 1992; John & Robins, 1994) and on traits and characteristics that are more valued by one's culture (Sedikides et al., 2003). Thus, to the extent that either the use of reasoning or feelings to make decisions is personally or culturally more valued, individuals' beliefs about their own decision strategies (relative to others' decision strategies) may be systematically biased. However, although perceiving oneself as a better decision maker than others is consistent with ego enhancement, it is unclear whether using reasoning versus feelings to make decisions is more self-enhancing.

Reasoning as more self-enhancing. An argument can be made that using rationality in decision making should be seen as more favorable than using feelings. Two observations rooted in culture and socialization support this possibility: First, the enlightenment philosophy of rationalism—in which truth is determined through reason and deduction, rather than through faith and intuition (Honneth, 1987; Lutz, 1988; Reck, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c)—forms the basis for the English Bill of Rights, the American and French Revolutions, and well known documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke drew on Aristotle's ideas that rationality is a unique characteristic of humans and that, without a natural law of rationality, humans would have no virtue (Locke, 2002). Similarly, Rousseau (2018, p. 267) wrote that “[A] Christian only

needs logic in order to have virtue.” These ideas are reified in educational systems, whose mission in a democracy includes developing students’ ability to use reason as a basis for decisions and to connect premises to deductions through thoughtful reflection (Moshman, 1990). Notably, the importance of rationality is reinforced by standardized tests assessing students’ ability to develop logical arguments, identify logical flaws, and engage in scientific reasoning (Bao et al., 2009; Milewski et al., 2005).

Second, terminology related to rational inputs tends to have more positive associations than terminology related to emotional inputs. The word “rational” has positive connotations, as shown by synonyms such as “sensible,” “reasonable,” and “prudent” (Thesaurus.com, 2019), enhancing its appeal as a descriptor of the self. On the other hand, synonyms for “emotional” suggest both positive (e.g., “passionate;” “exciting”) and negative connotations (e.g., “hysterical;” “spontaneous”). This suggests that, to the extent people seek positive associations with the self, they may be more likely to self-identify as rational (vs. affective) decision makers.

Emotions as more self-enhancing. An argument can also be made that perceiving oneself as a more affective decision maker than others can be self-enhancing. In particular, drawing on and expressing felt emotions enhances authenticity (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). Being true to oneself (i.e., in an authentic state) is an emotional, rather than rational, experience (Cooper et al., 2018; Lenton et al., 2013; Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Showing varied emotions enhances authenticity perceptions (Slepian & Carr, 2019) and those who rely on emotions to make decisions are viewed as more authentic and likeable by others (Barasch et al., 2014; Levine et al., 2018). Given that people strive to be viewed as authentic (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018), perceiving oneself as using feeling more than reasoning to make decisions may be positively associated with individuals’ beliefs about themselves.

People are also motivated to maintain a unique identity (Berger & Heath 2007) and make decisions to maintain identity-consistent emotional states (Coleman & Williams, 2013). They may therefore believe that they rely more on emotions than others because this enhances the self by maintaining perceptions of uniqueness, given that emotional judgments are often perceived as more unique to the decision maker than reason-based judgments (Pham et al., 2001).

Furthermore, the potential superiority of feelings over reasoning is also reflected in both individual communication as well as popular adages. For instance, coaches, leaders, and experts often attribute their success to gut feeling (Collins et al., 2016; Dane & Pratt, 2007). Sayings such as “follow your heart” or “do what feels right” are common advice across a number of domains (including business, test-taking, career-choice, and picking romantic partners; Klein, 2004; Myers, 2004), suggesting that there are shared beliefs that emotions and feelings can be good for decision making, perhaps by enhancing perceptions of authenticity (Barasch et al., 2014).

To summarize, based on prior literature as well as cultural observations, it is unclear whether people believe that using reasoning or feelings to make decisions is more self-enhancing, making it an important empirical question that we address in a series of studies.

Overview of Studies

Across a series of studies (3 of which are pre-registered), we examine the questions of how, why, and when individuals perceive their own decision strategies to differ from those of others. Study 1a tests our basic question of whether people perceive their own decision making to be more rational versus affective than others'. We find initial evidence that individuals perceive their own choices to be based more on reasoning, and less on emotions, than the choices of others. Study 1b conceptually replicates these findings in an advertising context that speaks to

the practical implications of these effects. Study 2 uses a diary approach and generalizes our results to real world decisions made by participants, increasing the external validity of the effect. Study 3 replicates our core finding and sheds light on the underlying mechanism, showing the effect is driven by the motivation to associate the self with decision-making approaches that are seen as superior and thus more self-enhancing. Study 4 examines a boundary of these effects: When a decision context dictates that rational decision strategies be used, and it is hard to engage in motivated thinking about the self relative to others, differences in beliefs about the rationality versus emotionality of decisions made by the self versus others are attenuated. Study 5 examines downstream implications by testing whether there are differences in delegation of rational (vs. emotional) tasks to the self versus others, and whether this is moderated by self-affirmation (as expected if the effect is due to the desire to bolster the self). Consistent with this reasoning, individuals are more likely to delegate emotional (vs. rational) tasks to others, but this tendency disappears under self-affirmation. Finally, study 6 replicates and reverses our effect by boosting people's perception that emotionality is self-enhancing.

Study 1A: Book Choice

The goal of study 1a is to test our basic question of whether people perceive their own decisions to be based more on reasons or emotions, compared to the decisions of others.

Method

Participants and design. Eighty participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) took part in study 1a. Nine participants failed the attention check (Oppenheimer et al., 2009) leaving a final sample of 71 ($M_{\text{age}} = 33.7$ years, 40.8% female). Study 1a used a single factor between-subjects design, manipulating whether participants responded to a choice scenario involving themselves versus another person.

Procedure. We informed participants they would be taking part in a study on how decisions are made. We manipulated whether the decision being investigated was a decision made by themselves or another person. We showed participants five books accompanied by a short description of the book, its author, genre, publisher, and Amazon rating (see the Methodological Details Appendix [MDA] for details). In the self-decision condition, we asked participants to imagine they were choosing a new fiction book from a set of five novels. Then, we asked participants to “think about how you would make this decision.” In the other-decision condition, the stimuli and scenario were identical, except participants were asked to imagine that another person was choosing a book and to think about “how someone else would make this decision.”

After the self (vs. other) manipulation, we asked participants to indicate how this choice would have been made. The dependent measure was the average of three items ($\alpha = .90$) adapted from Shiv and Fedorikhin (1999), asking, “To what extent would you (someone else) make this decision based on:” 1 = *My head (His/Her head)*, 7 = *My heart (His/Her heart)*; 1 = *The rational side of me (of him/her)*, 7 = *The emotional side of me (of him/her)*; 1 = *My thoughts (His/Her thoughts)*, 7 = *My feelings (His/Her feelings)*. We reverse coded the score such that higher values indicated relatively greater reliance on reasoning than feelings. As a manipulation check, we asked participants to indicate who they imagined making the book decision (1 = *Myself*; 7 = *Someone else*). Participants in our studies also responded to additional items that are not focal to our analysis; these variables are available upon request.

Results

An ANOVA on responses to the manipulation check shows that our manipulation of decision locus (self vs. other) had its intended effect: $M_{\text{self}} = 1.95$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.61$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 5.39$,

$SD_{\text{other}} = 2.00$; $F(1, 69) = 64.69$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .48$. Results for the decision strategy ratings (dependent measure) revealed a significant effect of decision locus ($F(1, 69) = 13.53$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .16$). Participants thought their own choice process would involve relatively more rationality ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.72$) than participants who imagined another person making the decision ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.10$). Of note, this difference was observed despite using an indirect, between-subjects measurement of self versus others (i.e., participants did not directly compare their decision making to the decision making of others when making their ratings), and the procedure did not involve measures of decision-making abilities or decision quality.

Discussion

Study 1a provides initial evidence that individuals perceive themselves as more rational (vs. emotional) than others when thinking prospectively about decisions. In our next study, we generalize these results to another decision context that highlights the practical implications of our findings: managerial preference for a rational versus emotional advertising campaign.

Study 1B: Ad Choice

Study 1b is a pre-registered study (<https://aspredicted.org/cj2h7.pdf>) that tests a downstream consequence of believing that one is a more rational decision maker than others in an advertising context. Study 1b also addresses an alternative explanation based on social desirability concerns.

Method

Participants and design. A total of 375 undergraduate business students participated in study 1b. Nineteen (5%) failed our attention check, resulting in a final sample of $N = 356$ ($M_{\text{age}} = 19$ years, 41.9% female). Study 1b used a single factor between-subjects design with two levels,

manipulating whether participants were asked to indicate their preference based on what would be most likely to persuade themselves versus another person.

Procedure. Participants imagined they were a marketing manager for a company and needed to decide which of two ads to run for a new ad campaign. They were told that “one ad is based on reasoning and uses rational appeals; the other ad is based on feelings and uses emotional appeals.”

We manipulated how participants were instructed to form their preference. In the self-focused (other-focused) condition, the scenario continued, “You approach this decision by thinking about which ad would be more successful at persuading you, personally (the average person).” Our dependent measure in the self-focused (other-focused) condition asked, “Which ad would you choose to persuade you (the average person) to purchase your brand?” (1 = *Strongly prefer the rational ad*; 7 = *Strongly prefer the emotional ad*). We reverse-coded responses so that higher values indicate greater preference for the ad based on rational (vs. emotional) appeals. Later, as a manipulation check, participants were reminded of their task and asked, “What were you asked to do?” (1 = *Choose the ad that would persuade me, personally*; 7 = *Choose the ad that would persuade the average person*).

We also explore an important alternative explanation based on social desirability. Namely, one might argue that individuals do not actually believe they are more rational than other people, but rather indicate greater rationality in order to maintain a favorable impression to observers (i.e., the researchers). As such, participants completed the 8-item (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*) impression management subscale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form (BIDR-16; $\alpha = .71$; Hart et al., 2015), which taps into people’s propensity to provide socially desirable responses by asking them about the extent to which they

engage in common socially undesirable behaviors (e.g., lying, eavesdropping; see MDA for items). Finally, we measured perceived decision time and effort which did not differ between conditions (see MDA for items and analysis).

Results

An ANOVA on the manipulation check indicated that those in the self-focused condition approached the decision considering what would persuade themselves ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 2.11$), while those in the other-focused condition considered what would persuade others ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 2.37$; $F(1, 354) = 191.43$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .35$).

An ANOVA on ad preferences (the dependent measure) revealed a significant effect of decision locus ($F(1, 354) = 15.94$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .04$). Those in the self condition indicated greater preference for the rational ad ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.90$) than those in the other condition ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.73$).

Our manipulation did not influence responses to the impression management scale ($p > .72$), and impression management had no main or interactive effect on ad preference ($ps > .50$); our effect was unchanged ($p < .001$) when controlling for impression management.

Discussion

Study 1b demonstrates a downstream managerial implication of the effect. In particular, we show that believing that one is a more rational decision maker, while others are more emotional decision makers, can affect choice of persuasive ads. In this case, the belief that others are more emotional (vs. rational) when making decisions translates to preferring an emotional ad when the goal is to persuade others (vs. oneself).

Study 2: Yoked Food Diary

Study 2 is a pre-registered study (<https://aspredicted.org/vt5jh.pdf>) that tests the effect in people's real decisions. Namely, we employ a yoked diary approach where half of the participants (those in the self condition) are tasked with writing down all of their food decisions for the previous day and evaluating the rationality versus emotionality of those decisions; the other half of the participants (those in the other condition) are each yoked to a randomly selected participant from the self condition and tasked with reading and evaluating that participant's food decisions. In addition to involving multiple real decisions, in which the stimuli for evaluation are created by the participants themselves, this yoked design further enhances external validity since each participant pair evaluates a different set of decisions.

Method

Participants and design. A total of 200 undergraduate students participated in study 2 for course credit. Twenty-six failed our attention check (13%), resulting in a final sample of $N = 174$ ($M_{\text{age}} = 19$ years, 41.4% female). Study 2 used a yoked design with two levels (decision locus: self vs. other). Participants in the self-decision condition listed and rated the rationality (vs. emotionality) of choices made by themselves. Participants in the other-decision condition were each yoked to one (randomly-selected) participant from the self-decision condition and rated the food decisions made by the participant from the self condition.

Procedure. We informed participants that study 2 was about eating habits. In the self-decision condition, we asked participants to list everything they ate yesterday, from the time they woke up until the time they went to bed, including "breakfast, lunch, dinner, and any snacks," being "as thorough and specific as possible." In the other-decision condition, we yoked each

participant to a randomly selected participant from the self-decision condition and showed them the food choices made by that participant (see MDA).

Participants in both conditions then rated the extent to which their (the other student's) food decisions were based on reasoning versus feelings. In the self-decision (other-decision) condition, we asked, "Considering the foods listed above, please indicate the extent to which your (this student's) food decisions are based on:" (1 = *My head (His/Her head)*, 7 = *My heart (His/Her heart)*; 1 = *The rational side of me (of him/her)*, 7 = *The emotional side of me (of him/her)*; 1 = *My thoughts (His/Her thoughts)*, 7 = *My feelings (His/Her feelings)*; $\alpha = .81$). We reverse-coded responses such that higher values indicate greater rationality. To examine the potential role of perceived effort, we asked: "How much effort do you (does this student) put into the decisions you (they) make about what to eat?" (1 = *Very little effort*; 7 = *A lot of effort*) and "How much time do you (does this student) spend deciding what to eat?" (1 = *Very little time*; 7 = *A lot of time*).

Results

An ANOVA showed a significant effect of decision locus ($F(1, 172) = 5.08, p = .03; \eta^2 = .03$), where participants rated their own decisions as more rational than another person's decisions ($M = 4.27, SD = 1.45$ vs. $M = 3.81, SD = 1.28$). ANOVAs on perceptions of time and effort revealed that participants did not attribute significantly different amounts of time for self-made versus other-made decisions ($p > .51$) but did attribute greater effort to their own choices ($M = 4.44, SD = 1.73$) than choices made by another student ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.75; F(1, 172) = 6.63, p = .01; \eta^2 = .04$). One possible explanation is that participants in the self-decision condition had to recall and list all their choices from the previous day, which objectively required

more effort than those in the other-decision condition who had to just read a list of decisions. We further examine this result in a post-test described in the discussion.

Discussion

Study 2 demonstrates that people attribute greater rationality to their own decisions than decisions made by others, even when judging an identical set of choices. Thus, this study shows that lay beliefs about decision rationality not only impact perceptions of hypothetical decisions but also decisions made in the real world. This is particularly noteworthy given participants in both conditions were rating the exact same decisions. Furthermore, in our previous studies, the other condition referred to a nondescript “other” person, whereas the current study yoked the participant to one specific other person. As such, the current study casts doubt on the possibility that our effects are due to a higher-level construal when thinking about others than the self, where thinking about others leads to desirability/emotional associations while thinking about the self leads to feasibility/rational associations (Liberman & Trope, 1998).

Effort explanation. To examine the possibility that differences in perceived effort can explain our effect—that is, that people associate higher effort with greater use of reasoning (vs. feelings)—we conducted a post-test. We recruited 100 participants from Mturk, 95 of whom passed our attention check ($M_{\text{age}} = 39.3$ years; 55.8% female). We randomly assigned participants to one of two between-subject conditions (effort: low vs. high). In the low- (high-) effort condition, we asked: “Think about a decision that involved a little effort (lot of effort). What kind of choice do you think this was?” (“Rational” vs. “Emotional” vs. “Neither/Both” with order of the first two response options randomized). For the effort alternative explanation to hold, those in the high effort condition should be more likely to categorize the decision as rational than those in the low effort condition.

Results revealed no significant effect of effort on choice type ($\chi^2(2) = 3.98, p = .14$; low effort: 57.8% rational, 17.8% emotional, 24.4% neither/both; high effort: 44% rational, 36% emotional, 20% neither/both). Interestingly, the pattern of means is opposite what an effort-based explanation would predict: When the decision was framed as high- (vs. low-) effort, a lower proportion of participants indicated the choice was rational (high effort: 45.8% vs. low effort: 54.2%). These results cast doubt on the idea that our effect is driven by differences in perceived effort.

Study 3: Vacation Package

The purpose of study 3 is twofold. First, we aim to provide insights into the underlying process. The results of our prior studies suggest it may be more enhancing for individuals to associate the self with the use of reasoning. If beliefs about one's own (vs. others') decision strategies are driven by the motivation to associate the self with positive traits, then beliefs that one decision strategy is superior to the other should moderate the effect. Accordingly, in study 3 we measure beliefs about the superiority of rational versus affective decision processes and test whether these beliefs moderate our basic effect. The second purpose is to test the alternative mechanisms of greater knowledge of the self and the challenge of imagining how someone else's decisions are made (Chambers & Windschitl, 2004; Giladi & Klar, 2002). We explore these alternative explanations by measuring individual differences in perspective taking (which taps individuals' motivation to understand others' behavior and choices) and ease of imagination.

Method

Participants and design. A total of 305 participants were recruited from MTurk to complete study 3. Thirty-six participants failed the attention check, resulting in a final sample of

269 ($M_{\text{age}} = 33.8$ years, 36.8% female). We used a single-factor design (decision: self vs. other) and measured participants' beliefs that it is better to base decisions on emotions versus reasons.

Procedure. Similar to study 1a, participants were recruited to take part in a study of how decisions are made. Participants imagined that they (vs. another person) had chosen a vacation package (see MDA). We then asked the extent to which the choice involved emotions versus rational thought using the same three-item scale described in study 1a and study 2, again recoded so that higher values reflect more reliance on reasons (vs. feelings; $\alpha = .89$).

After rating the decision strategy, participants responded to a manipulation check asking who they imagined making the vacation decision (1 = *Myself*, 7 = *Another person*). We then collected beliefs about the superiority of rational versus emotional decision making: "In general, do you think it's better to base decisions on emotions and feelings versus reasoning and thinking?" (1 = *Emotions definitely better*, 7 = *Reasoning definitely better*). If the difference between perceptions of decisions made by the self versus others is driven by the need to see the self in a positive light, then our effect should strengthen (attenuate) among consumers who more strongly believe that rational decisions are superior (inferior).

To test the alternative accounts that participants rate others' decisions as less rational and more emotional because people struggle to take others' perspectives or imagine others' reasons for decisions, we measured perspective-taking using Davis's (1980) 7-item measure (e.g., "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective;" "Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place;" 0 = *Does not describe me very well*; 4 = *Describes me very well*; $\alpha = .87$; see the MDA for complete wording of all items) and ease of imagination using the average of three items ($\alpha = .76$), "How vividly did you imagine the decision-making process?" (1 = *Not at all*; 7 =

Extremely), “How specific were the reasons you imagined being involved in the decision?” (1 = *Not at all specific*; 7 = *Extremely specific*), and “How hypothetical vs. real was the decision in your mind?” (1 = *Completely hypothetical*; 7 = *Completely real*).

Results

The self versus other manipulation worked as expected ($M_{\text{self}} = 2.08$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.53$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 5.51$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 1.87$; $F(1, 267) = 270.35$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .50$). The manipulation did not affect beliefs about the superiority of rational versus emotional decision making ($p > .39$). For the focal analysis, we regressed participants’ decision strategy ratings on the decision locus condition, beliefs about the superiority of rational versus emotional decision making ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.29$), and their interaction. We used PROCESS (Model 1; Hayes, 2018) with mean-centered variables. Thus, in our analysis, the decision locus variable is effect-coded ($-0.5 = \text{other person}$; $+0.5 = \text{self}$) such that main effects of each variable can be interpreted directly (Spiller et al., 2013).

Consistent with our prior results, there was a significant main effect of decision locus ($M_{\text{self}} = 3.44$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.44$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 3.02$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 1.04$, $b = .45$, $t(265) = 3.02$, $p < .01$) in which participants in the self-decision condition rated the vacation choice as involving significantly more rationality than those in the other-decision condition. (Results hold if beliefs about the superiority of rational decisions are not included in the model.) We also found a main effect of beliefs about the superiority of rational decisions ($b = .17$, $t(265) = 2.97$, $p < .01$), such that participants tended to perceive more rationality in the vacation decision as beliefs that reasoning is superior increased.

Importantly, these effects were qualified by a two-way interaction ($b = .31$, $t(265) = 2.64$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .03$; see Figure 1). Analysis of simple slopes shows that an increase in beliefs about

the relative superiority of reasons-based (vs. feeling-based) decision-making strategies was associated with greater perceived rationality of decisions made by the self ($b = .33$, $t(265) = 4.16$, $p < .001$) but not perceptions of decisions made by others ($p = .80$). Floodlight analysis (Spiller et al., 2013) shows participants rated decisions made by the self as involving significantly more rationality than decisions made by others when beliefs about the superiority of rational decisions were at or above 4.81 on the 7-point scale (i.e., the Johnson-Neyman point occurs at .35 SD below the mean superiority beliefs, such that the effect of decision locus is significant when decision superiority beliefs are greater than or equal to 4.81). These results support our proposed self-serving mechanism: Greater beliefs about the importance of rationality are accompanied by greater beliefs that one's own decisions are more rational than decisions made by others.

Alternative explanations. If the results are driven by alternative explanations of perspective-taking or ease of imagination, then the effect should attenuate as perspective-taking or ease of imagination increases (i.e., these accounts predict significant interactions between decision locus and perspective-taking/ease of imagination). As such, we reran the model reported above, replacing beliefs about the superiority of decision strategies with the individual differences corresponding to these alternative mechanisms. When individual differences in perspective-taking were included, results revealed only a significant main effect of decision locus ($b = .42$, $t(265) = 2.74$, $p < .01$), but no main or interactive effects of perspective-taking ($ps > .55$). A similar analysis conducted using ease of imagination also showed only a main effect of decision locus ($b = .42$, $t(265) = 2.77$, $p < .01$) but no additional effects of ease of imagination ($ps > .51$).

Discussion

Study 3 conceptually replicates our earlier studies in a vacation decision context, showing that others' decisions are perceived to be less based on reasoning than one's own decisions. In support of a motivational self-enhancement mechanism, results show this effect is strengthened for those who hold stronger beliefs that rationality is superior in a decision-making context. Our results suggest that people view hedonic choices as involving relatively more emotional processes (Pham, 1998) since the means are below the scale midpoint. However, even in such contexts, we find people believe their own decisions are more rational than those of others because the use of reasoning is still self-enhancing. Moreover, the current study casts doubt on alternative explanations for the effect based on greater knowledge of the self or greater ease of imagining decisions made by the self than others. Although one might argue that the belief that one is a more rational (vs. emotional) decision maker than others stems from the inability to view issues from others' perspectives or, alternatively, because it is easier to imagine one's own decisions than those of others (Chambers & Windschitl, 2004; Giladi & Klar, 2002), our results do not support these arguments.

Study 4: Boundary Condition

While people are motivated to see themselves in a positive light, they are also motivated to maintain an accurate perception of themselves and often balance these two goals (Kunda, 1990; Sedikides, 1993). And so, while people might engage in motivated perception of the self in relation to others in most situations, this judgment is likely to be tempered in contexts that make these perceptions unrealistic. Study 4 examines a boundary condition based on this logic; specifically, differences in judgments of one's own (vs. others') decision-making rationality should be reduced when the decision context necessarily dictates the use of reasoning (vs.

feeling) where it is difficult to engage in motivated thinking about the self (relative to others). In other words, it is difficult to hold the rosy belief that the self is more rational than others in a context where everyone naturally uses reasoning.

Method

Participants and design. A total of 197 undergraduate students participated for partial course credit; 164 passed the attention check and were retained in the final sample ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.8$ years, 40.9% female). The study employed a 2 (decision locus: self vs. other) x 2 (perceived need for rationality: high vs. control) between-subjects design.

Pretest for class descriptions. A separate sample of 152 students from the same population as the main study completed a pretest to validate the class type manipulation led to differences in perceived need for decision rationality. Participants were randomly assigned to read about one of the two classes described in the main study. Specifically, we described a class called “CIM 310, Introduction to Game Design” (see MDA) and manipulated the context in which the class was chosen. In the high perceived need for rationality condition, participants imagined the class was being chosen because “a useful and rigorous class for one’s major is needed.” In the control condition, the context did not involve a reason for choosing the class, but the same details about the class were provided. Participants were then asked, “Which is more important for this class decision—the use of emotions or the use of rational thoughts?” (1 = *Emotions more important*; 4 = *Equally important*; 7 = *Rational thoughts more important*). Consistent with our expectations, participants reported that the class required for their major necessitated significantly more decision rationality than the control ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.34$ vs. $M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.31$; $F(1, 150) = 5.94$, $p = .02$; $\eta^2 = .04$).

Procedure. In the main study, students were told that the study was investigating how students choose classes. As in the pretest, we showed all students a class description called “CIM 310, Introduction to Game Design” (see MDA). We manipulated decision locus by manipulating whether participants were asked to imagine themselves or “another student” choosing the class. We manipulated class type as in the pretest. Participants indicated the extent to which the choice would have been based on emotions versus reasons using the same three-item scale described in study 1a ($\alpha = .90$), again reverse-coded such that higher values correspond to greater reliance on rationality. We also included a manipulation check for decision locus as in previous studies.

Results

Manipulation check results revealed only the expected main effect of decision locus ($M_{\text{self}} = 3.20$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 2.17$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 4.09$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 2.21$; $F(1, 160) = 6.93$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .04$).

A 2 (decision locus) x 2 (perceived need for rationality) ANOVA on participants' decision strategy ratings revealed a main effect of decision locus ($F(1, 160) = 8.28$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .05$). Participants who imagined choosing the class for themselves ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.46$) reported more decision rationality than participants imagining another student choosing the class ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.45$). Participants also imagined more decision rationality for a class required for their major ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.50$) than when the choice context was unspecified ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.43$; $F(1, 160) = 4.25$, $p = .04$; $\eta^2 = .03$). Importantly, these main effects were qualified by the predicted two-way interaction ($F(1, 160) = 3.90$, $p = .05$; $\eta^2 = .02$; see Figure 2).

When the class type was unspecified, results replicate our earlier findings and show that people rated themselves as relatively more rational than others ($M_{\text{self}} = 4.84$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.43$; $M_{\text{other}} = 3.76$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 1.22$; $F(1, 160) = 11.34$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .07$). However, when the necessity of rationality was heightened by framing the chosen class as a useful and rigorous requirement for

one's major, there was no longer a difference ($M_{\text{self}} = 4.86$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.51$; $M_{\text{other}} = 4.66$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 1.51$; $F(1, 160) < 1$, $p = .52$). Looked at differently, increasing the need for rationality for the class decision increased the level of rationality perceived in others' class decisions ($F(1, 160) = 7.84$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .05$) but had no effect on perceptions of one's own class decisions ($F(1, 160) < 1$, $p = .95$). In other words, if the decision context dictates that everyone is likely to be rational, accuracy concerns (Kunda, 1990; Sedikides, 1993) make it difficult to engage in motivated thinking about the self relative to others.

Discussion

Study 4 shows that the tendency for individuals to perceive their own decisions as more rational (vs. emotional) than others' decisions is moderated by the decision context. When the decision context necessitates the use of rational thought, and it is hard to engage in motivated thinking about the self (vs. others), the tendency to view oneself as a more rational decision maker is reduced. In our next study, we aim to provide further evidence that lay beliefs about decision rationality have implications for consumers' behavior.

Study 5: Task Delegation

Study 5 looks at a behavioral consequence of the documented effect while providing an additional test of the underlying mechanism. We employed a delegation task where participants were asked how likely they would be to delegate two types of tasks (a task involving rationality/logic and a task involving emotion/intuition) to a partner. Results of the previous studies predict that participants should be relatively less likely to delegate the rational task to someone else. In addition, we test the self-enhancement motivational mechanism by manipulating self-affirmation. Namely, if people show differential delegation preference as a way to bolster the self, this tendency should be reduced when the self is affirmed (Steele, 1988).

Method

Participants and design. One-hundred and three MTurk participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 35.50$, 36.6% female) took part in study 5 for nominal compensation. The design was a 2 (self-affirmation: affirmation vs. none) x 2 (delegation preference: rational task vs. emotional task) mixed design, where affirmation was manipulated between-subjects and delegation was measured within-subjects. The procedure of study 5 did not include an attention check; all participants with complete data are included in the analyses.

Procedure. Participants were told the study involved separate tasks combined for convenience. The first task manipulated self-affirmation. Following prior research (Cohen et al., 2000; Steele, 1988), participants ranked the importance of 11 values and characteristics. Those in the affirmation condition then wrote about the most important value and why it was important to them. Those in the no affirmation condition wrote about the 7th ranked value and how it might be important to the average person (Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009).

Participants were then told to imagine being paired with another participant where the two of them have to complete some tasks. Each task would be completed by one person from the pair and so it was necessary to divide up the tasks. Participants were then told that they were in charge of the task assignment and were asked to indicate their likelihood of delegating a task that requires rationality/logic to their partner (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *very likely*) and their likelihood of delegating a task that requires emotions/intuition (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *very likely*). Question order was counterbalanced. Two participants had missing data on the dependent measure (delegation of task) and were excluded from analyses.

Results

There was no significant main or interactive effect of task order ($F(1, 97)$'s < 1.62 , p s $> .21$) so we collapsed across task order conditions. A 2 (self-affirmation) x 2 (delegation preferences) mixed ANOVA showed no significant main effects of delegation preferences ($F(1, 99) = 1.45$, $p = .23$) or affirmation ($F(1, 99) = 2.29$, $p = .13$), but showed the predicted interaction of delegation preferences and affirmation ($F(1, 99) = 5.00$, $p = .03$; $\eta^2 = .05$; see Figure 3). Consistent with the prior studies, and supporting the idea that rationality is tied to self-enhancement, in the absence of self-affirmation, participants were more likely to delegate an emotional than a rational task to another participant ($M_{\text{emotional}} = 4.59$, $SD_{\text{emotional}} = 1.58$; $M_{\text{rational}} = 3.70$, $SD_{\text{rational}} = 1.77$; $F(1, 99) = 6.66$, $p = .01$; $\eta^2 = .06$). However, in support of the proposed self-serving process, there was no significant difference in the delegation preferences after self-affirmation ($M_{\text{emotional}} = 4.33$, $SD_{\text{emotional}} = 1.65$; $M_{\text{rational}} = 4.60$, $SD_{\text{rational}} = 1.71$; $F(1, 99) = .47$, $p = .49$). A different set of contrasts shows that the interaction was driven by movement in the delegation of the rational task, which was significantly affected by self-affirmation ($F(1, 99) = 6.71$, $p = .01$; $\eta^2 = .06$). Affirmation had no effect on the delegation of the emotional task ($F(1, 99) = .63$, $p = .43$). That is, while participants were always willing to delegate the emotional task to another participant, they were only willing to give up the rational task after self-affirmation.

Discussion

Study 5 provides additional support for the self-enhancement motivational process and shows downstream consequences of the effect. At baseline, people are more willing to assign themselves to a rational task than an emotional task. However, when the self is affirmed—reducing the need to engage in behaviors that enhance the self—the difference disappears.

This study is important in a number of ways. First, the self-affirmation manipulation underscores the mechanism of self-enhancement in driving this effect. Second, the study shows an important downstream consequence of the effects shown in our prior studies: Beliefs about decision strategies affect how people allocate tasks to themselves and others. Third, this study provides additional evidence that rationality is more self-enhancing than emotionality in decision making since self-affirmation has a stronger effect on the delegation of rational than emotional tasks. Finally, by using a different paradigm, the current study shows the robustness of the effect in a new context.

Study 6: Importance of Feeling versus Reasoning

Study 6 is a pre-registered study (<https://aspredicted.org/s4gp8.pdf>) that further elucidates the boundaries of our effect. In this study we again examine task delegation as a downstream outcome of the belief that one is a more rational (vs. emotional) decision maker than others. Specifically, in this study, we directly manipulate people's perception of reasoning versus feelings as self-enhancing, providing a strong test of our underlying framework. If differences in delegation preferences are driven by self enhancement, then preferences to keep a rational (vs. emotional) task for the self, versus delegating it to one's partner, should reverse when participants are led to believe that reliance on feelings is more beneficial, important, and hence more self-enhancing. Study 6 tests this idea.

Method

Participants and design. A total of 361 undergraduate students participated in study 6 for partial course credit. Nineteen failed our attention check (5.3%), resulting in a final sample of $N = 342$ ($M_{\text{age}} = 19$ years, 46.8% female). Study 6 used a two-factor mixed design: 2 (emphasis:

rationality vs. emotionality) x 2 (delegation preference: rational task vs. emotional task), where emphasis was manipulated between-subjects and delegation was measured within-subjects.

Procedure. Participants were told that the goal of the study is to understand how people make decisions and that a common method for categorizing decisions is the extent to which they require emotional intelligence versus rationality and reasoning. Participants in the rationality-emphasized condition read that people with greater rational abilities tend to make better decisions and be more successful than those with greater emotional intelligence. Thus, the rationality-emphasized condition serves as a baseline for which we should replicate our prior results. In the emotionality-emphasized condition, the passage described the benefits of emotional intelligence for decision making and success (see MDA). Next, participants were told they were partnered with another student of the same gender and the two of them needed to complete two tasks. One task was emotional and required emotional intelligence; the other task was logical and required rationality and reasoning. Each task was to be completed by one person so the participant had to divide the two tasks between themselves and the other student.

Our dependent measure comprised two items (counterbalanced): “How likely are you to delegate (assign) the task that requires emotional intelligence to the other student?” and “How likely are you to delegate (assign) the task that requires rationality and reasoning to the other student?” (1 = *Not at all likely*; 7 = *Very likely*). As a manipulation check, we asked: “According to this study, which is more important in life: rationality and reasoning, versus emotional intelligence?” (1 = *Rationality & Reasoning are much more important*; 4 = *They are equally important*; 7 = *Emotional Intelligence is much more important*). We also included questions in which we asked participants to rate how much time and effort they would spend on the emotional task and the rational task (1 = *Very little effort*; 7 = *A lot of effort*), as well as how much effort

their partner would spend on the two tasks. Impression management was measured as in study 1b using Hart et al.'s (2015) short form BIDR (see MDA).

Results

Manipulation check. Participants in the rationality-emphasized condition reported that rationality and reasoning were more important ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.48$) than participants in the emotionality-emphasized condition ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.50$; $F(1, 340) = 118.96$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .26$). Mean responses for both conditions significantly differed from the scale midpoint, labeled “they are equally important,” in the predicted directions ($|t|s > 7.4$, $ps < .001$).

Delegation preferences. There were no significant main or interactive effects of the order in which we measured delegation preferences ($ps > .46$), so we collapsed across question order conditions. A 2 (emphasis: rationality vs. emotionality) x 2 (delegation preferences: rational task vs. emotional task) mixed ANOVA revealed only a significant two-way interaction between emphasis and delegation preferences ($F(1, 340) = 13.17$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .04$; other $ps > .26$; see Figure 4). Analysis of simple effects showed that participants in the rationality-emphasized condition were significantly more likely to delegate the emotional task ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.68$) than the rational task ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.69$; $F(1, 340) = 11.33$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .03$), conceptually replicating the findings of study 5. However, this pattern reversed in the emotionality-emphasized condition, such that participants were marginally more likely to delegate the rational task ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.67$) compared to the emotional task ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.72$; $F(1, 340) = 3.13$, $p = .08$; $\eta^2 = .01$). Looked at differently, delegation preferences of both the rational task ($F(1, 340) = 9.25$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .03$) and the emotional task ($F(1, 340) = 11.31$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .03$) were significantly affected by the emphasis manipulation, such that participants were less likely to delegate a given task when it required the emphasized abilities.

Perceptions of time and effort. Participants perceived their own effort to be higher ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 0.99$) than that of the other student ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.98$; $F(1, 340) = 132.64$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .28$) across all conditions (rational emphasis / rational task $M_{self} = 5.64$ vs. $M_{other} = 4.87$; rational emphasis / emotional task $M_{self} = 5.03$ vs. $M_{other} = 4.70$; emotional emphasis / rational task $M_{self} = 5.28$ vs. $M_{other} = 4.80$; emotional emphasis / emotional task $M_{self} = 5.36$ vs. $M_{other} = 4.51$). These main effect results do not match the interaction we observe in task delegation, and thus cannot explain our findings. Furthermore, the focal interaction between emphasis and delegation preferences remained significant when controlling for effort ($F(1, 336) = 7.22$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .02$).

Impression management. Counter to an explanation based on socially desirable responding, the emphasis manipulation did not affect impression management ($p > .93$), and the two-way interaction between emphasis and delegation preferences held when controlling for individual differences in impression management ($F(1, 339) = 13.14$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .04$).

Discussion

Study 6 replicates the delegation findings from study 5 and also demonstrates conditions under which delegation preferences reverse. These results are consistent with our theoretical model and suggest additional implications of our results—the willingness to perform certain behaviors may be based on the extent to which these behaviors draw from skills and abilities that are perceived to be self-enhancing.

General Discussion

Six studies demonstrate that individuals believe their own decisions are based more on reasoning and less on feelings than the decisions of others. This effect is documented across multiple domains, involving choices of books (study 1a), advertisements (study 1b), food (study

2), vacations (study 3), classes (study 4), as well as unspecified tasks (study 5, 6). The effects are also robust across both hypothetical choices and actual decisions made by participants in their own lives. Moreover, these beliefs have downstream consequences such that people prefer a rational advertisement to persuade themselves but an emotional ad to persuade others; in addition, people are less likely to delegate rational tasks than emotional tasks to others (study 5) unless they are led to believe that emotional abilities are more self-enhancing than rational abilities, which then reverses delegation preferences (study 6).

Our studies also provide support for a motivational process whereby beliefs about one's own (vs. others') decisions are driven by the motivation to enhance the self. In particular, the extent to which individuals perceive their own decisions to involve more reasoning than those of others is stronger when they believe that rationality is superior (to emotionality; study 3). Further attesting to a motivational mechanism, we show that the effect is attenuated when people are unable to self-enhance by judging the self as more rational than others (study 4) or when the self is affirmed (study 5), and reverses when emotional abilities are perceived as more enhancing than rational abilities (study 6). We also rule out several alternative explanations for our findings. We show that these effects are not driven by construal level theory, effort, perspective taking, ease of imagination, or social desirability.

To further examine the idea that perceived differences in decision strategies for the self versus others are self-enhancing, we conducted an additional study testing the importance of rational versus emotional abilities for the self (see Appendix). Consistent with our other studies, we find that the use of reasoning in decision making is more important to the self than the use of feelings. As described in the theoretical background, because one can make arguments for why people may perceive themselves as either relying more on reasoning or on feelings in their

decisions than others, our approach was largely empirical. Figure 5 presents a nomological network based on our theory and results, including the downstream consequences and moderating factors that follow from our theory; for the sake of generating future research, we also identify additional downstream consequences in Figure 5.

Contributions and Implications

Our research makes a number of contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to work on decision making by investigating interpersonal comparisons in decision making. Although the decision-making literature is vast, this is the first study that examines people's beliefs about how they make decisions relative to how others make decisions. While there are advantages to rational decision processes from a normative standpoint (Kahneman, 2011), other research shows the benefits of relying on affect (Allen, 2002; Bechara et al., 1997, 2005; LeDoux, 1998, 2012; Lee et al., 2009; Wilson & Schooler, 1991). Thus, it is unclear which decision processes are more likely to be viewed as more self-enhancing. We empirically show that, on average, participants tend to believe that reasoning is more optimal than feeling and therefore tend to associate themselves with greater use of reasoning.

Our work also contributes to the literature on lay beliefs. Previous work on identity shows that people vary according to the importance of the different roles they inhabit (e.g., parent; colleague; American citizen; Berger & Heath, 2007, 2008; White & Dahl, 2007). We add to this literature by demonstrating that people also vary in their beliefs about whether using reasoning versus feelings to make decisions is superior. We find that this influences individuals' lay beliefs regarding how they (vs. others) make decisions.

We also add to the decision delegation literature. Although prior research has shown people often prefer not to delegate decisions to others (Botti & Iyengar, 2004), and that decision

delegation can threaten self-esteem (Usta & Häubl, 2011), our research shows that willingness to delegate depends on type of task. In particular, people are more willing to delegate decision tasks that involve emotion to others than decision tasks that involve rationality. Importantly, these differences in task delegation are no longer significant after self-affirmation, and reverse when emotional abilities are seen as more self-enhancing than rational abilities.

In addition to contributing to the academic literature, our research also has practical implications. For example, given that individuals may benefit from incorporating emotion into their decision making in many contexts (e.g., Allen, 2002; Bechara et al., 1997, 2005; Lee et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 1993; Wilson & Schooler, 1991), the belief that greater reliance on reasoning than feeling leads to better decisions may be harmful. As suggested by study 1b, this belief can also interfere with strategic marketing decisions by biasing attempts to persuade others towards emotional appeals. Similarly, believing that one uses more rational decision processes than others may affect how likely people are to seek others' advice, how receptive people are to others' recommendations, or how accepting people are of others' preferences and decisions. As such, individuals may not take advantage of the opportunity to learn from others' choices and may depart from others' selections when making their own decisions as a way to exhibit the use of more rational decision strategies.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As an initial investigation into lay beliefs about decision making, we leave a number of avenues for future research. While we looked at multiple decision domains, future research can explore boundaries based on decision contexts. For example, to the extent that emotional decisions are seen as more authentic (Barasch et al. 2014), and therefore more self-enhancing, our effects may be attenuated when individuals consider choices that are authentic

representations of themselves (e.g., choosing which nonprofit organization to donate to; Barasch et al. 2014). While study 3 shows that our effect holds in a hedonic context, where decision making is relatively more emotional (Adaval, 2001; Pham, 1998), there may be decision domains and contexts, such as the choice of required classes (study 4), in which differences between the self and others are no longer observed. Our studies also involved comparisons to similar others (e.g., an individual from the same university in studies 2, 4, and 6) and our findings may be qualified if comparisons involve decision makers with distinguishing characteristics such as expertise in the decision domain. In addition, our samples were taken predominantly from populations whose culture and education may contribute to their motivation to see themselves as more rational and less emotional than others. People from other cultures, those who are highly religious, or those whose professions entail engaging with feelings when making decisions (e.g., artists, musicians, therapists) may have different beliefs about the importance of reasoning and be less likely to believe they are more rational than others.

In addition to different beliefs about what is superior and thus self-enhancing, there are cultural differences in the extent to which people may be willing to perceive others as similar to the self (Heine & Lehman, 1995; Heine et al., 1999), which may also moderate our effect. For instance, in cultures where it is more important to fit in than to stand out (e.g., interdependent cultures; Aaker & Lee, 2001), self-other discrepancies—such as our documented effect—might attenuate. Thus, investigating whether the effect shown in the present research translates to other populations, cultures, and demographic groups is an important future research direction.

Future research can also build on our work by studying additional downstream consequences of the belief that one is a more rational and less emotional decision maker than others. For example, while we show that this bias impacts decision delegation and ad choices, it

would be fruitful to examine whether and when these beliefs affect variables such as trust and willingness to accept others' recommendations. To illustrate, it could be that people are less willing to accept others' recommendations for search goods (which may be more amenable to logical assessment) and more willing to accept others' recommendations for experience goods (which may be more amenable to emotional assessment). However, as emotional responses are also assumed to be more unique than reason-based responses (Pham et al., 2001), understanding how individuals in recommendation contexts balance the belief that others are more emotional with the belief that emotional experiences are unique and idiosyncratic is an interesting future direction. It would also be interesting for future research to examine how willingness to delegate different types of decisions translates to satisfaction with the delegated decision. As delegating a hedonic choice reduces satisfaction to a greater extent than delegating a utilitarian choice (Botti & McGill, 2011), delegation decisions based on the relative importance of emotions (vs. reasons) for a given choice may adversely affect satisfaction. Future research could examine how beliefs about one's own rationality relative to others, the need for self-enhancement, and task type affect willingness to delegate different types of tasks to others (Botti & Iyengar, 2004). If people can choose whether or not to delegate a task to others, our results suggest that likelihood of delegation should be lower for rational than emotional tasks unless emotional abilities are perceived as more self-enhancing.

Another intriguing avenue for future research involves whether the more-rational-than-others effect is moderated by others' group membership (in-group vs. outgroup). For example, within a voting context, our results suggest that one is likely to believe their own voting decisions are based more on reasoning and less on feeling than those of others, and one possibility is that this effect is exacerbated (mitigated) when the other voter belongs to an out-

group (in-group). More generally, and outside of the voting context, if members of out-groups are perceived to be less rational and more emotional than members of in-groups, this could have important implications. For instance, a job applicant whose alma mater was the rival of a hiring manager's alma mater may be assumed to be less capable of logical reasoning than someone who shares the same alma mater as the hiring manager. Investigating these and related questions can build on the present work, furthering our understanding of how individuals' decision-making beliefs influence their perceptions of themselves and others.

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Figure 1. Study 3 results. Higher Y-axis values indicate greater reliance on reasons (vs. emotions); higher X-axis values indicate stronger beliefs that reasons lead to superior decisions than emotions. The dashed vertical line indicates the Johnson-Neyman (JN) point at 4.81, which is .35 standard deviations below the mean (5.26) decision strategy belief, where the effect of decision locus transitions from nonsignificance to significance ($b = .31, t(265) = 1.97, p = .05$). The shaded area depicts where the effect of decision locus is significant.

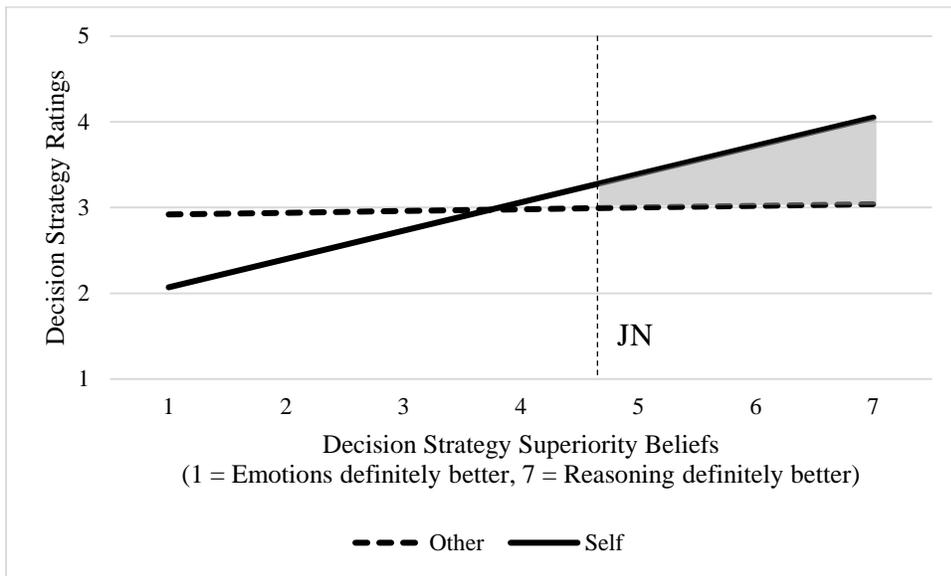


Figure 2. Study 4 results. Error bars represent one standard error.

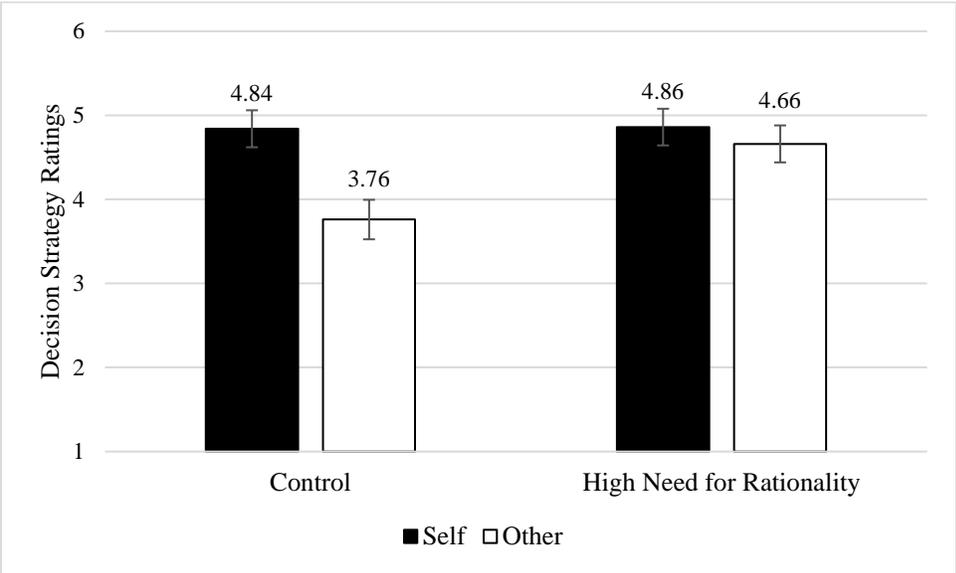


Figure 3. Study 5 results. Error bars represent one standard error.

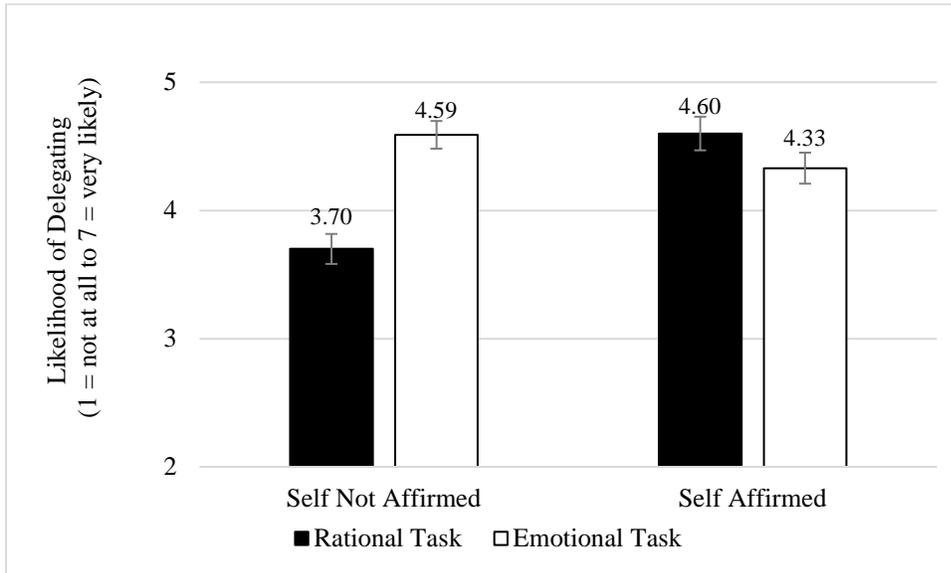


Figure 4. Study 6 results. Error bars represent one standard error.

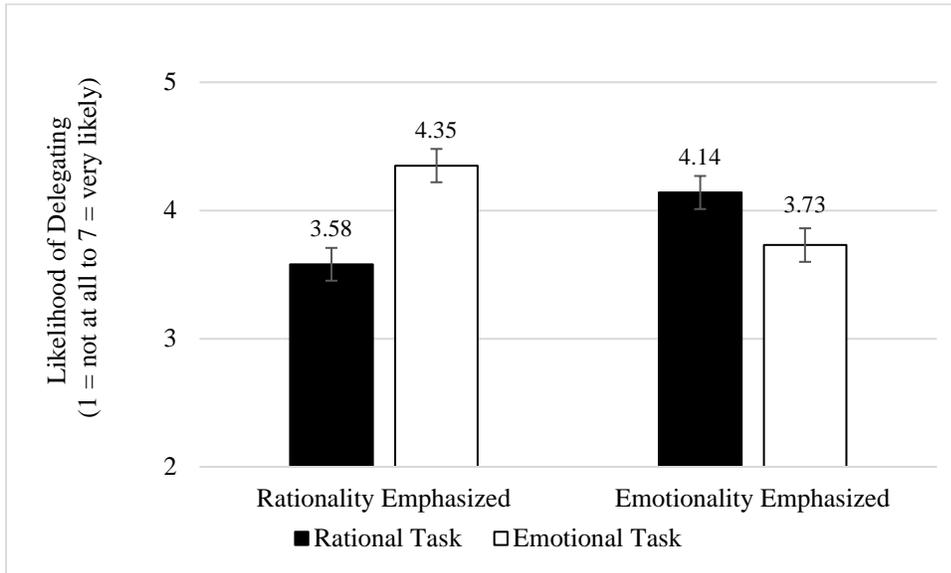
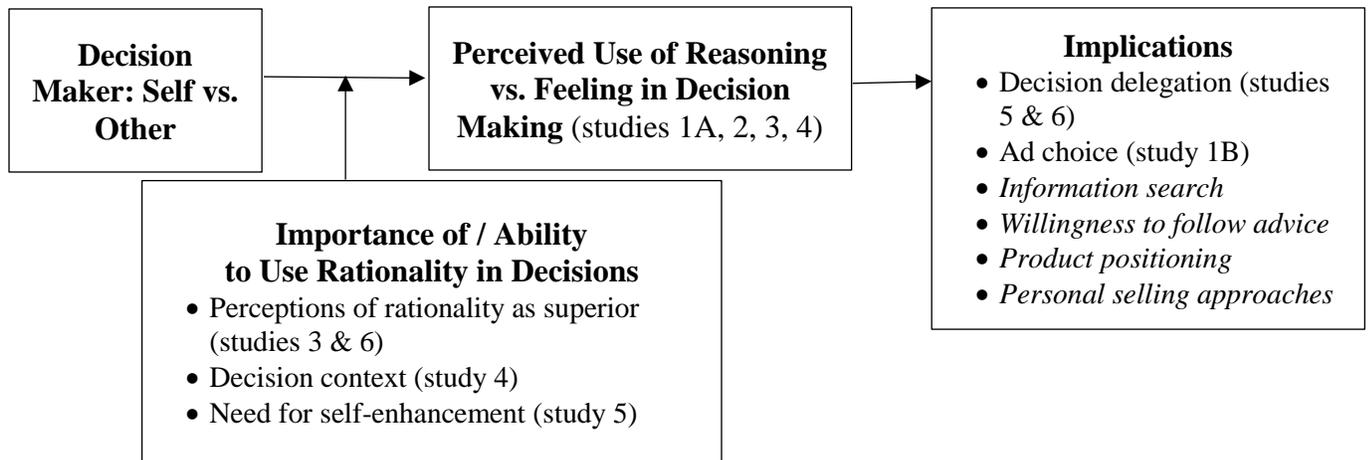


Figure 5. Nomological network. Moderators and consequences of the decision maker (self vs. other) that are tested in our empirical package are indicated by a reference to the corresponding study. Additional downstream consequences that follow from our conceptualization, but were not tested empirically in the current paper are shown in *italics*.



**Methodological Details Appendix (MDA)
More Rational or More Emotional than Others?**

Throughout the MDA, words in [brackets] appeared only in the self-decision condition and words in (parentheses) appeared only in the other-decision condition.

Study 1A: Book Choice

Participants were first provided the following instructions.

Decision-Making Study

This research is interested in how people make decisions. On the following page we will describe a choice situation and ask you to imagine [you were] (someone else was) faced with the decision in real life. Then we'll ask some questions about how [you would] (you think someone else would) make the choice.

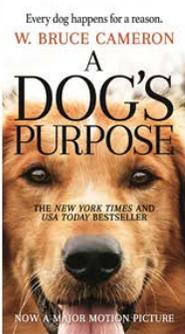
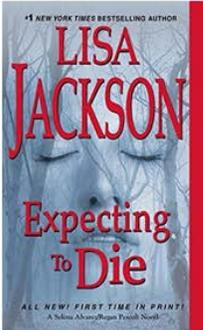
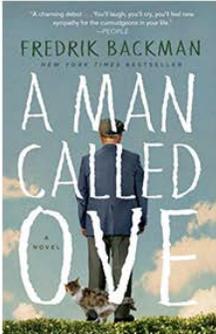
Thank you in advance for your time and attention.

Next, we provided the following instructions, along with the accompanying stimuli:

Book Choice

Imagine [you are] (someone is) looking for a new fiction book to read and [are] (is) choosing from the five books below. Please take some time to consider each of the options, and think about how [you would] (someone else would) make this decision.

Once you have thoroughly imagined (someone else) facing the decision-making scenario, click ">>>" and we will ask some questions about this process.

 <p><i>Big Little Lies</i> by Liane Moriarty</p> <p>Liane Moriarty #1 New York Times–bestselling author of THE HUSBAND’S SECRET</p> <p>Big Little Lies</p>	 <p><i>A Dog's Purpose</i> by W. Bruce Cameron</p> <p>Every dog happens for a reason. W. BRUCE CAMERON</p> <p>A DOG'S PURPOSE</p> <p>THE NEW YORK TIMES AND USA TODAY BESTSELLER</p> <p>NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE</p>	 <p><i>Expecting to Die</i> by Lisa Jackson</p> <p>#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR</p> <p>LISA JACKSON</p> <p>Expecting to Die</p> <p>ALL NEW! FIRST TIME IN PRINT! A New Orleans/Queen Beche Novel</p>	 <p><i>A Man Called Ove</i> by Fredrik Backman</p> <p>FREDRIK BACKMAN NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER</p> <p>A MAN CALLED OVE</p> <p>NOVEL</p>	 <p><i>The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity</i> by William P. Young</p> <p>THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER OVER TWENTY MILLION COPIES SOLD</p> <p>THE SHACK</p> <p>WHERE TRAGEDY CONFRONTS ETERNITY</p> <p>W.M. PAUL YOUNG</p>
<p>Genre: Thriller Publisher: Berkley (2015) Amazon rating: 4.5 / 5 stars Description: "Who will end up dead, and how, when three mothers with children in the same school become friends?"</p>	<p>Genre: Family Life Publisher: Forge Books (2016) Amazon Rating: 4.8 / 5 stars Description: A canine narrator undergoes a series of reincarnations.</p>	<p>Genre: Mystery/Police Thriller Publisher: Zebra (2017) Amazon Rating: 4.1 / 5 stars Description: Alvarez and Pescolli are back, dodging a reality-TV crew while tracking a serial killer stalking the woods of a remote Montana town.</p>	<p>Genre: Literary Fiction Publisher: Washington Square (2015) Amazon Rating: 4.6 / 5 stars Description: A curmudgeon's gruff exterior masks a generosity of spirit. Originally published in Sweden in 2014.</p>	<p>Genre: Religion & Spirituality / Thriller Publisher: Windblown Media (2007) Amazon Rating: 4.7 / 5 stars Description: A man whose daughter was abducted is invited to an isolated shack, apparently by God.</p>

Participants then responded to the following items:

Dependent Measure

- “To what extent would [you] (someone else) make this decision based on:”
 - o 1 = [My head] (His/Her head); 7 = [My heart] (His/Her heart)
 - o 1 = [The rational side of me] (The rational side of him/her); 7 = [The emotional side of me] (The emotional side of him/her)
 - o 1 = [My thoughts] (His/Her thoughts); 7 = [My feelings] (His/Her feelings)

Manipulation Check

- “Who did you imagine making the “Book Choice” decision?”
 - o 1 = Myself; 7 = Someone else

Study 1B: Ad Choice

Participants were first provided the following instructions.

Please carefully read the following:

You are a marketing manager at a company. Your advertising team has brought you two options for an advertisement to run for a new ad campaign. You must decide which ad to use.

One ad is based on reasoning and uses rational appeals

The other ad is based on feelings and uses emotional appeals

Participants then responded to the following items:

Dependent Measure

- “You approach this decision by thinking about which ad would be more successful at [persuading you, personally] (persuading the average person).

Which ad would you choose to persuade [you] (the average person) to purchase your brand?”

- o 1 = Strongly prefer the **rational** ad; 7 = Strongly prefer the **emotional** ad

Effort

- “How much effort did you put into the choice?”
 - o 1 = Very little effort; 7 = A lot of effort

Time

- “How much time did you spend on the choice?”
 - o 1 = Very little time; 7 = A lot of time

Manipulation Check

- “Please think back to the ad decision you made earlier. What were you asked to do?”
 - o 1 = Choose the ad that would persuade me, personally; 7 = Choose the ad that would persuade the average person

Impression Management (from Hart et al.’s (2015) Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form):

Each item was measured on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree). Reverse-scored items are marked with an asterisk.

- * “I sometimes tell lies if I have to.”
- “I never cover up my mistakes.”
- * “There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.”

- * “I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.”
- * “I have said something bad about a friend behind his or her back.”
- “When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.”
- “I never take things that don’t belong to me.”
- “I don’t gossip about other people’s business.”

Results for Decision Effort and Time

Results for decision effort and time are not included in the manuscript because they do not assess a potential alternative explanation based on beliefs about the amount of effort and time participants expected themselves (vs. others) to spend evaluating the ad. Rather, these measures relate to potential differences in task involvement across conditions. Participants reported spending similar effort ($M_{\text{self}} = 4.67$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.63$; $M_{\text{other}} = 4.84$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 1.50$) and time ($M_{\text{self}} = 3.20$, $SD_{\text{self}} = 1.52$; $M_{\text{other}} = 3.34$, $SD_{\text{other}} = 1.52$) on the decision in the self- and other-focused conditions ($ps > .31$).

Study 2: Yoked Food Diary

Participants in the **self-decision** condition were provided the following instructions:

A Food Diary for Yesterday

“We would like to know everything you ate yesterday for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and any snacks. List everything you ate from the time you woke up yesterday morning to the time you went to bed last night.

Please take your time, and **be as thorough and specific as possible**. For example, don't just write "a sandwich," write down what kind of sandwich it was.

List what you ate yesterday for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and any snacks in the space below:”

—*Free Response Box*—

Participants in the **other-decision** condition were provided the following instructions:

A Food Diary for Yesterday

“In one of our other studies, a separate group of students completed a food diary in which they wrote down everything they ate the day before for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and any snacks. They were asked to list everything they ate from the time they woke up until the time they went to bed.

We asked them to take their time, and to be as thorough and specific as possible.

Today, your job is to read one student's list of foods, and to answer some questions about their eating habits.

When you are ready, click the arrow to proceed.”

Participants in the **self-decision** condition then read the following:

“Now, we are interested in understanding how you make decisions about what to eat.

Below is the list of everything you ate yesterday. Please read through this, and then answer the questions that follow.”

{Piped Text from Free Response Box}

Participants in the **other-decision** condition then read the following:

“Below is one student's list of everything they ate the day before, shown in bold.

We are interested in understanding how this particular student makes decisions about what to eat.

Please read through the list of everything this student ate the day before, and then answer the questions that follow.”

{Piped Text}

Participants then responded to the following items:

Dependent Measure

- “Considering the foods listed above, please indicate the extent to which [your] (this student's) food decisions are based on:”
 - 1 = [My head] (His/Her head); 7 = [My heart] (His/Her heart)
 - 1 = [The rational side of me] (The rational side of him/her); 7 = [The emotional side of me] (The emotional side of him/her)
 - 1 = [My thoughts] (His/Her thoughts); 7 = [My feelings] (His/Her feelings)

Effort

- “How much effort [do you] (does this student) put into the decisions [you] (they) make about what to eat?”
 - 1 = Very little effort; 7 = A lot of effort

Time

- How much time [do you] (does this student) spend deciding what to eat?”
 - Very little time; 7 = A lot of time

Study 3: Vacation Package

Participants were first provided the following instructions.

Decision-Making Study

This study is interested in how consumers make decisions. We will describe a scenario about deciding on a vacation package, and we'll ask you to imagine [you] (someone else) chose to go on the vacation we describe. Then we will ask some questions about how [you] (the other person) would have made this choice.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention. Please click ">>" to continue.

Next, we provided the following instructions, along with the accompanying stimuli:

Please imagine [yourself] (someone else) in this scenario:

Imagine [you have] (another person has) some vacation time coming up and [you] (they) are planning to take a trip. [You] (They) find a package for a trip to Key West, FL, and [you] (they) decide to purchase it. The details on [your] (their) chosen package are shown below.

Key West Vacation Charters



Length of stay: 5 nights

Excursions: Two excursions included. Choose from:

- Snorkeling
- Sunset cruise
- Bike tour
- Key lime pie tasting
- And more!"

Please imagine [yourself] (another person) making this choice. On the next page we will ask you some questions about it.

Participants then responded to the following items:

Dependent Measure

- “To what extent was [your] (their) vacation choice based on:”
 - o 1 = [My head] (His/Her head); 7 = [My heart] (His/Her heart)
 - o 1 = [The rational side of me] (The rational side of him/her); 7 = [The emotional side of me] (The emotional side of him/her)
 - o 1 = [My thoughts] (His/Her thoughts); 7 = [My feelings] (His/Her feelings)

Manipulation Check

- “Who did you imagine making the vacation package choice?”
 - o 1 = Myself; 7 = Another person

Beliefs about Superiority of Rational vs. Emotional Decision-Making

- “In general, do you think it’s better to base decisions on emotions and feelings versus reasoning and thinking?”
 - o 1 = Emotions definitely better; 7 = Reasoning definitely better

Perspective Taking (Davis 1980)

Each item was measured on a 5-point scale (0 = Does not describe me well; 4 = Describes me very well). Reverse-scored items are marked with an asterisk.

- “Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.”
- * “If I’m sure I’m right about something, I don’t waste much time listening to other people’s arguments.”
- “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.”
- “I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.”
- * “I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other person’s” point of view.”
- “I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.”
- “When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to “put myself in their shoes” for a while.”

Ease-of-Imagination

- “How vividly did you imagine the decision-making process?”
 - o 1 = Not at all; 7 = Extremely
- “How specific were the reasons you imagined being involved in the decision?”
 - o 1 = Not at all specific; 7 = Extremely specific
- “How hypothetical vs. real was the decision in your mind?”
 - o 1 = Completely hypothetical; 7 = Completely real

Supplementary Table 1. Additional details from study 3 regression analyses

Variables	Mean*	Standard Deviation
Decision locus (IV)	Self: 49.1% (n = 132) Other: 50.9% (n = 137)	-
Decision strategy superiority beliefs (Moderator)	5.26	1.29
Decision strategy ratings (DV)	3.23	1.26
Perspective-taking (alternative explanation)	3.69	0.83
Ease of imagination (alternative explanation)	4.96	1.25

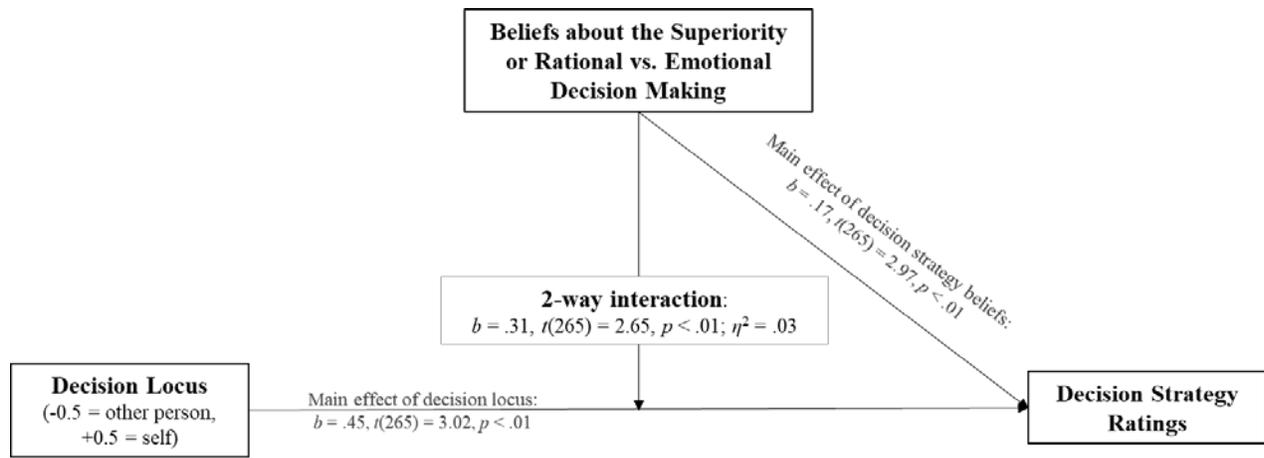
*Note: Proportions are given instead of means for categorical variables

Supplementary Table 2. Correlations for variables included in study 3 regression analyses

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Decision locus	1				
2. Decision strategy superiority beliefs	-.05	1			
3. Decision strategy ratings	.17**	.18**	1		
4. Perspective-taking	-.07	-.03	-.05	1	
5. Ease of imagination	-.02	-.02	-.04	.36**	1

Note: ** = significant at $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Supplementary Figure 1. Study 3: Decision locus, decision strategy superiority beliefs, and decision strategy ratings



Study 4: Boundary Condition Pretest for Class Descriptions

Participants were first provided the following instructions.

Class Decisions

This study is interested in decisions students make about the classes they take. We will describe the decision to take a class and ask you some questions about this choice.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention. Please click “>>” to continue.

We then presented the class choice scenario, shown below. The underlined portion appeared only in the high perceived need for rationality condition.

Imagine the class below is being chosen because a useful and rigorous class for one’s major is needed. Please think about this choice as you answer the questions that follow.

In all conditions, the following course description followed the choice scenario:

CIM 310, Introduction to Game Design, 3 Credit Hours

This is an introductory course about game design, theory, and development, and how games align themselves as a lens of study for all interactive media.

Components: LEC.

Grading: GRD.

Typically Offered: Fall & Spring.

Participants then responded to the following:

- “Which is more important for this class decision—the use of emotions or the use of rational thoughts?”
 - 1 = Emotions more important; 4 = Equally important; 7 = Rational thoughts more important

Study 4: Boundary Condition Main Study

Participants in study 4 were first provided the following instructions.

Class Decisions

This study is interested in how students make decisions about the classes they take. We will show you a class and ask you to imagine [you] (another student) chose the class for [your] (his/her) schedule. Then we will ask some questions about how [you] (the other student) would have made this choice.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention. Please click “>>” to continue.

We then presented the class choice scenario, shown below. The underlined portion appeared only in the high perceived need for rationality condition.

Please imagine [you have been scheduling your classes] (another student has been scheduling his/her classes) for next semester, and [you] (they) chose the class below.

Imagine [you] (the student) chose this class because [you] (they) needed a **useful and rigorous class for [your] (his/her) major.** Please think about this choice, and on the next page we will ask some questions about it.

In all conditions, the following course description followed the choice scenario:

CIM 310, Introduction to Game Design, 3 Credit Hours

This is an introductory course about game design, theory, and development, and how games align themselves as a lens of study for all interactive media.

Components: LEC.

Grading: GRD.

Typically Offered: Fall & Spring.

Participants then responded to the following items:

Dependent Measure

- “To what extent was [your] (the other student’s) class choice based on:”
 - 1 = [My head] (His/Her head); 7 = [My heart] (His/Her heart)
 - 1 = [The rational side of me] (The rational side of him/her); 7 = [The emotional side of me] (The emotional side of him/her)
 - 1 = [My thoughts] (His/Her thoughts); 7 = [My feelings] (His/Her feelings)

Manipulation Check

- “Who did you imagine made the choice for what class to take?”
 - 1 = Myself; 7 = Another student

Study 5: Task Delegation

Participants were first provided the following instructions for the affirmation manipulation task.

Part One

There are two separate parts in this study. In the first part, you will be asked to rank values and then answer a question.

Please click the "next" button to start.

The next page provided the following instructions and stimuli:

Below is a list of characteristics and values, some of which may be important to you, some of which may be unimportant. Please rank these values and qualities in order of their importance to you, from 1 to 11 (1 = most important item, 11 = least important item). Use each number only once.

- Artistic skills/aesthetic appreciation
- Sense of humor
- Relations with friends/family
- Spontaneity/Living life in the moment
- Social skills
- Athletics
- Musical ability/appreciation
- Physical attractiveness
- Creativity
- Business/managerial
- Romantic values

On the following page, depending on condition, one of the values from the list above was presented again:

In the **affirmation** condition, the value ranked first was shown again, and participants were asked, "Please explain why this value is important to you and describe a time in your life when it has been particularly important."

In the **no-affirmation** condition, the value ranked seventh was shown again, and participants were asked, “Please explain why this value might be important to the average person.”

A free response box appeared below this prompt in both conditions.

After completing the affirmation task, participants were directed to the second part of the study, “Job Delegation,” and provided the following instructions:

In the current study, we are curious about how people make decisions when doing tasks in pairs. Imagine you are paired with another mturk participant (same gender as yourself) and the two of you need to complete a number of tasks.

Each task will be completed by one person and so you guys will need to divide up the different tasks between the two of you. For each of the subsequent tasks, please indicate the extent to which you’d prefer to do it yourself or delegate to this other person.

Participants then responded to the following items. The items appeared on separate pages, and the order was counterbalanced. Each page also re-presented the above instructions.

How likely are you to delegate (assign) a task that draws on emotion/intuition to this other person?

How likely are you to delegate (assign) a task that draws on rationality/logic to this other person?

Both items were accompanied by the following scale:

1 = not at all
likely



7 = very likely

Study 6: Importance of Feeling versus Reasoning

All participants were first provided the following instructions:

Job Performance and Delegation

Welcome! Our research is interested in how people behave and perform in cooperative contexts. Specifically, this study is interested in people's decisions to perform tasks themselves versus delegate tasks to others.

On the following pages we will describe a scenario, and ask you how you would respond. There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your true, honest opinions.

Please click the arrow to continue.

Those in the **emotional emphasis** condition were then asked to read the following:

“A common method for categorizing different types of tasks is the extent to which they require *emotional intelligence* versus *rationality and reasoning*.

In recent years, a lot of research has shown that there are incredible benefits of emotional intelligence, which entails relying on feeling and emotions to make decisions and evaluations.

Greater emotional intelligence is one of the strongest predictors of success and well-being for many reasons—people who are high in emotional intelligence are able to read others' body language, to judge trustworthiness, and to intuitively navigate complex situations.

In addition, when people are better able to understand their own feelings and emotional reactions, they can use those reactions to make better decisions—decisions that are more likely to make them happy—without being distracted by irrelevant details. They are also able to more accurately perceive emotional reactions in others, which carries a number of advantages.

In fact, this research commonly shows that people who are high in emotional intelligence tend to be much more successful than people who excel at logic and reasoning, because being a highly rational person is not all that critical for many important aspects of life.”

Those in the **reasoning emphasis** condition were then asked to read the following:

“A common method for categorizing different types of tasks is the extent to which they require *emotional intelligence* versus *rationality and reasoning*.

In recent years, a lot of research has shown that there are incredible benefits of rationality and the ability to reason, which entails using logical analysis and objective criteria to make decisions and evaluations.

Having greater rational abilities is one of the strongest predictors of success and well-being for many reasons—people who are highly rational are able to understand complex information, make choices that are free from bias, and identify sources of bias in others.

In addition, when people are better able to apply a logical, well-reasoned approach to decisions, they can use this information to make better choices—choices that are more likely to maximize utility—without being distracted by irrelevant details. They are also able to more accurately assess the decisions of others, which carries a number of advantages.

In fact, this research commonly shows that people who have higher rational abilities tend to be much more successful than people who have higher emotional intelligence, because having higher emotional intelligence is not all that critical for many important aspects of life.”

Participants were then provided the following instruction for the delegation task:

“Now, we'd like to know how people make decisions in groups. Imagine you are paired with another UM student (same gender as you), and the two of you need to complete two tasks.

Both tasks are based on activities that marketing managers must often perform. Specifically, both tasks involve analyzing a brand's advertising strategy.

However, one task is emotional in nature and requires emotional intelligence.

The other task is more logical in nature and requires rationality and reasoning.

Each task will be completed by one person, and so you will need to divide the two tasks between the two of you. For each of the two tasks, we are interested in whether you would prefer to delegate (i.e., assign) the task to the student you are paired with, versus complete the task yourself.”

The dependent measure consisted of the following two items, measured on separate pages with the order of measurement counterbalanced:

- “How likely are you to delegate (assign) the task that requires emotional intelligence to the other student?”
 - o 1 = Not at all likely; 7 = Very likely

- “How likely are you to delegate (assign) the task that requires rationality and reasoning to the other student?”
 - o 1 = Not at all likely; 7 = Very likely

Participants then responded to the following items:

Time and Effort

- “How much time and effort would you put into completing the task that requires emotional intelligence?”
 - o 1 = Very little effort; 7 = A lot of effort
- “How much time and effort would you put into completing the task that requires rationality and reasoning?”
 - o 1 = Very little effort; 7 = A lot of effort
- “How much time and effort would the student you are partnered with put into completing the task that requires emotional intelligence?”
 - o 1 = Very little effort; 7 = A lot of effort
- “How much time and effort would the student you are partnered with put into completing the task that requires rationality and reasoning?”
 - o 1 = Very little effort; 7 = A lot of effort

Manipulation Check—Emotional vs. Rational Emphasis:

- “According to this study, which is more important in life: rationality and reasoning, versus emotional intelligence?”
 - o 1 = Rationality & Reasoning are much more important; 4 = They are equally important; 7 = Emotional Intelligence is much more important

Impression Management (from Hart et al.’s (2015) Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form)

Each item was measured on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree). Reverse-scored items are marked with an asterisk.

- * “I sometimes tell lies if I have to.”
- “I never cover up my mistakes.”
- * “There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.”
- * “I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.”
- * “I have said something bad about a friend behind his or her back.”
- “When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.”
- “I never take things that don’t belong to me.”
- “I don’t gossip about other people’s business.”

Additional Study (see Appendix)

Participants were first provided the following instructions.

Decision Strategies

Life involves a lot of decisions, and different decisions require different strategies. Different people also make decisions in different ways.

For example, some people tend to make decisions based on what feels right—they rely on emotions or intuition and use their “gut.” Other people tend to make decisions by thinking logically about the options and reasoning what the best choice is.

Both strategies can result in good decisions. The purpose of this study is to understand how important it is for you to see yourself as a person who primarily makes decisions using one strategy or the other.

With this in mind, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the below statements.

Participants then responded to measures of the importance of rationality for their self-concept and the importance of emotionality for their self-concept. These two sets of statements appeared on separate pages. The full wording of each item appears below.

Importance of rationality for self-concept:

- Relying on **thinking and reasoning** to make decisions has a great deal to do with how I feel about myself.
- Relying on **thinking and reasoning** to make decisions is an important part of my self-image.
- Relying on **thinking and reasoning** to make decisions is important to my sense of the kind of person I am.
- I feel a strong need to rely on **thinking and reasoning** when making decisions.
- I strongly identify with being a person who uses **thinking and reasoning** for decisions.

Importance of emotionality for self-concept:

- Relying on **emotions and feelings** to make decisions has a great deal to do with how I feel about myself.
- Relying on **emotions and feelings** to make decisions is an important part of my self-image.
- Relying on **emotions and feelings** to make decisions is important to my sense of the kind of person I am.
- I feel a strong need to rely on **emotions and feelings** when making decisions.
- I strongly identify with being a person who uses **emotions and feelings** for decisions.

Participants responded to each item using the following scale:

Strongly disagree Disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Agree Strongly agree

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Appendix

Additional Study

Our theory posits that judgment of how the self (vs. others) makes decisions is driven by self-enhancement. Our studies support this proposition. As an additional test, we conducted a study to see whether using reasons or using feelings in decision making is more important to the self.

Method

Participants and design. The study used a within-subject design with two levels (importance of using reasons vs. emotions to make decisions). One hundred participants from MTurk participated. Six participants failed the attention check and were excluded from the analyses, leaving a final sample of 94 ($M_{\text{age}} = 36.8$, 59.6% female).

Procedure. Participants were told that some people tend to make decisions based on what feels right—they rely on emotions or intuition and use their “gut.” Other people tend to make decisions by thinking logically about the options and reasoning what the best choice is. Both strategies can result in good decisions and the purpose of this study was to understand how important it is for participants to see themselves as a person who primarily makes decisions using one strategy or the other (see the MDA for details).

The importance of rationality and emotionality to the self were measured separately, each by five 7-point Likert scales (adapted from White & Dahl, 2007; see MDA). Sample rationality items are “Relying on thinking and reasoning to make decisions has a great deal to do with how I feel about myself” and “Relying on thinking and reasoning to make decisions is an important part of my self-image” ($\alpha = .92$). For emotionality, terms related to rationality were replaced with “emotions and feelings” ($\alpha = .95$). The order in of the two sets of measures was counterbalanced.

Results

A mixed ANOVA with importance of rationality and emotionality as the within-subject factor and order of measurement as the between-subject factor showed that the use of reasoning was rated as significantly more important to the self ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.09$) than the use of emotions and feelings ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.52$; $F(1, 92) = 45.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .33$). Similar results were observed when only examining the first set of ratings ($M_{\text{reasons}} = 5.55$, $SD_{\text{reasons}} = .88$; $M_{\text{emotions}} = 4.65$, $SD_{\text{emotions}} = 1.40$; $F(1, 92) = 14.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$). Results also revealed a significant order effect, such that the first set of measures—regardless of content—was rated more highly than the second set of measures ($F(1, 92) = 10.18$, $p < .01$; $\eta^2 = .10$). Results also showed a significant interaction between order and type of measure ($F(1, 92) = 6.51$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$), where the effect of reasoning over emotionality was higher when participants responded to the reasoning measure first. That said, rationality was rated as more important than emotionality in both order conditions ($ps < .01$).

Discussion

This study demonstrates that, on average, people think it is more important to see themselves as someone who uses rational processes to make decisions than someone who uses emotional processes to make decisions. This is consistent with the idea that judging the self as relying more on reasoning (vs. feeling) in decision making than others is self-enhancing.