

Theresa A. Kwon<sup>a</sup>, Peggy J. Liu<sup>a</sup>, Kelly L. Haws<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>a</sup> University of Pittsburgh, <sup>b</sup> Vanderbilt University

Questions?  
Session Zoom Link: <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/99110788251>  
Email: [theresa.kwon@pitt.edu](mailto:theresa.kwon@pitt.edu)

### Summary

Although it is well known that people do make consumption decisions on their own (e.g., Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and with others (e.g., Hamilton et al., 2021), little is known about **when and why people prefer to make consumption decisions on their own or with others.**

**Five pre-registered studies show that people exhibit a robust asymmetry in decision making preference across acquisition and disposal decision tasks, such that they prefer to involve others in decision making more so for disposal than for acquisition of household goods.**

This asymmetry holds across a variety of household goods and holds even when controlling for the final outcome (having one product at the end) and when the main product user is held constant (studies 1-4).

This asymmetry arises in part because people view disposal decision tasks as more permanent, which increases risk perceptions associated with solo decision making (study 3).

This asymmetry is particular to joint decision making with a household partner. **The asymmetry reverses when people consider decision making with a non-cohabitating other (e.g., a close friend): in these situations, people prefer joint (vs. solo) decision making more so for acquisition decision tasks than for disposal decision tasks** (study 4).

### Contributions

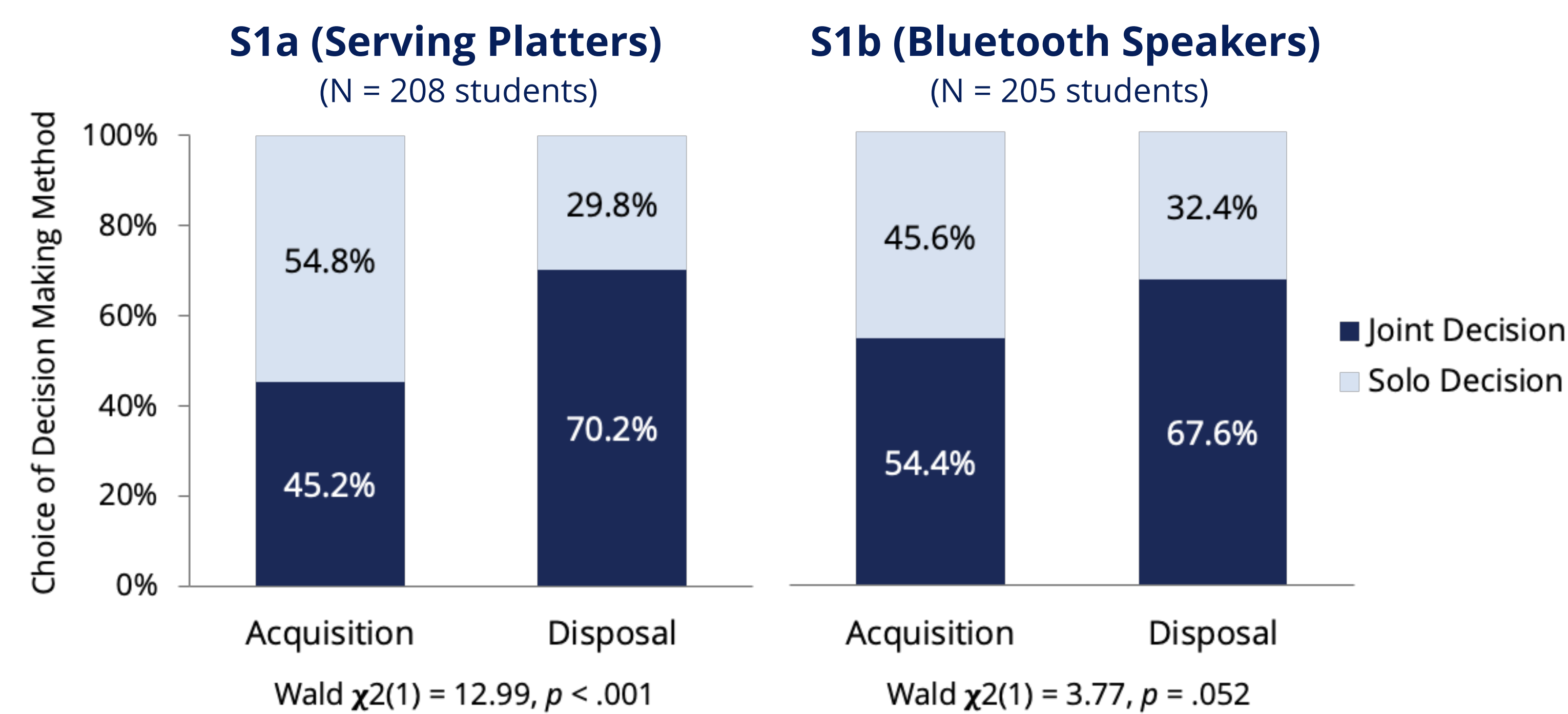
This research bridges the literature on decision tasks (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000) across the customer journey (Hamilton et al., 2021; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) with the literature on joint decision making (Dzhogleva & Lambertson, 2014; Lowe & Haws, 2014) to identify how consumers' choices for solo versus joint decision making differ by the decision task (acquisition vs. disposal).

This research contributes to understanding the disposal decisions by considering the social aspects of disposal tasks and comparing how much consumers prefer to involve others for disposal tasks relative to acquisition tasks.

This research offers a new perspective on why clutter accumulates: whereas it only takes one person to decide which new products to acquire, it takes two people to decide which products to discard.

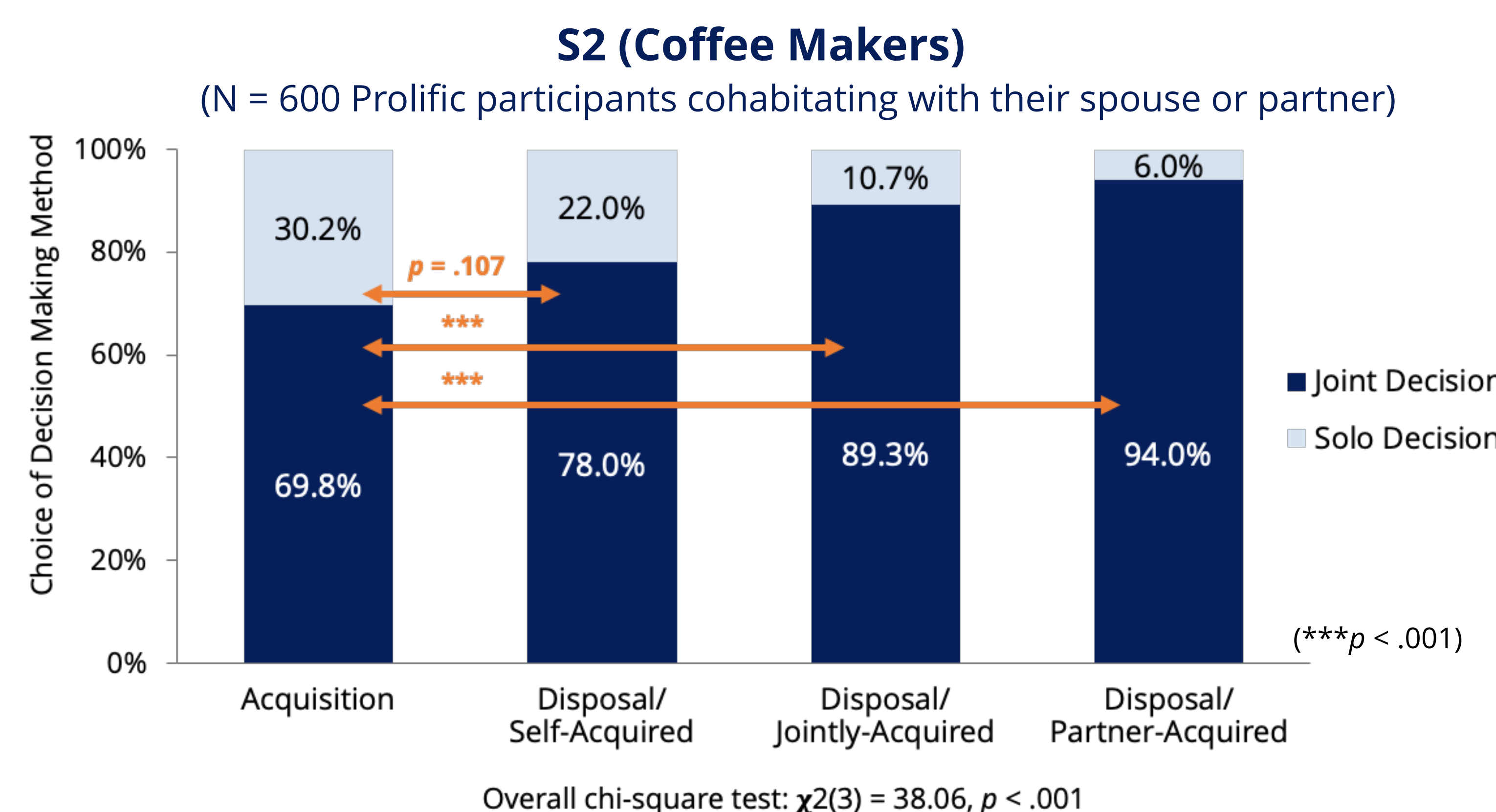
### Studies 1a-1b: Preference for Joint (vs. Solo) Decision Making Across Acquisition and Disposal Tasks

- Design:** 2 (acquisition vs. disposal) between-subjects; Participants considered making an acquisition decision (which of two products to buy) or a disposal decision (which of two products to discard) about a household product.
- Dependent measure (for all studies):** Preferred decision making method [make the decision by myself vs. make the decision with my roommate (S1a)/partner (S1b-S4)/a close friend of mine (S4)].
- Results:** Participants preferred joint (vs. solo) decision making more so for disposal decisions than for acquisition decisions.



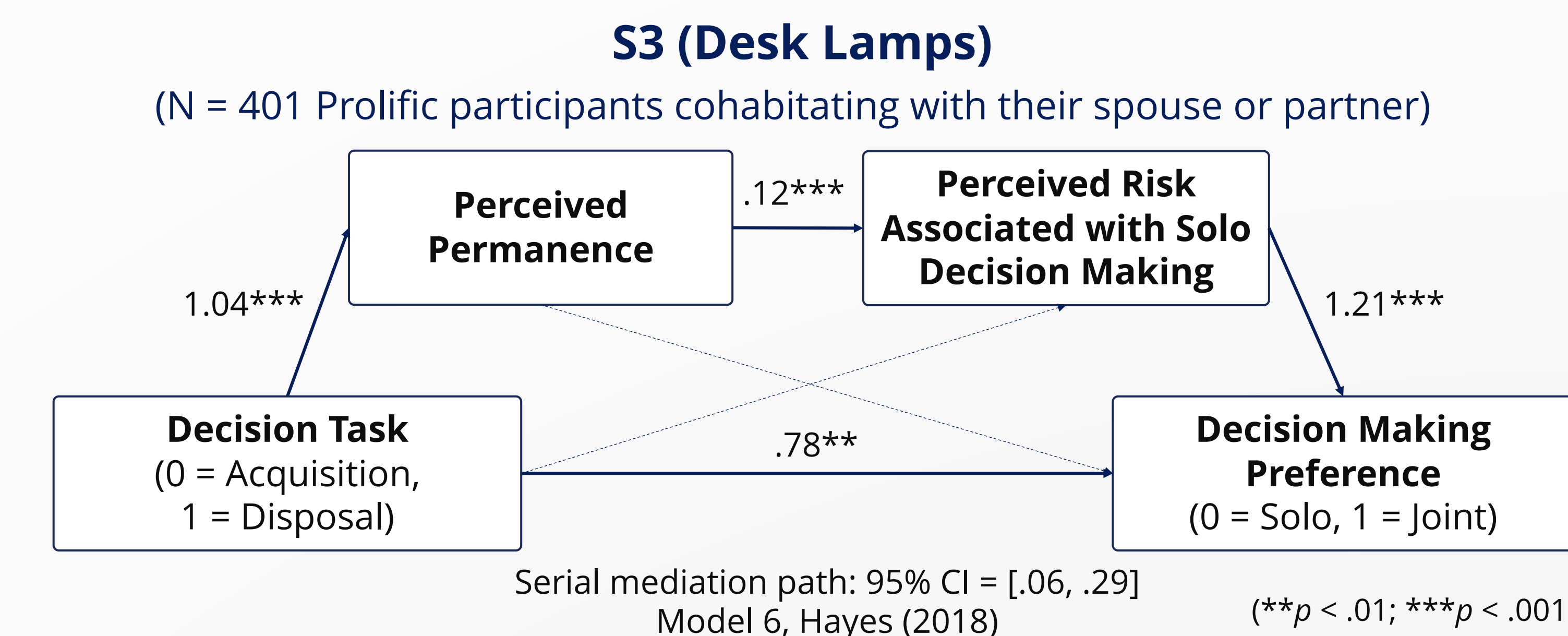
### Study 2: The Role of Earlier Acquisition Circumstances in Decision Making Preference for Disposal Tasks

- Design:** 4 (acquisition vs. disposal/self-acquired vs. disposal/jointly-acquired vs. disposal/partner-acquired) between-subjects; For disposal conditions, we further manipulated how products considered for disposal were acquired earlier.
- Results:** The gap between preferences for joint (vs. solo) decision making was larger when disposal decision tasks involved products jointly acquired or acquired by the partner.



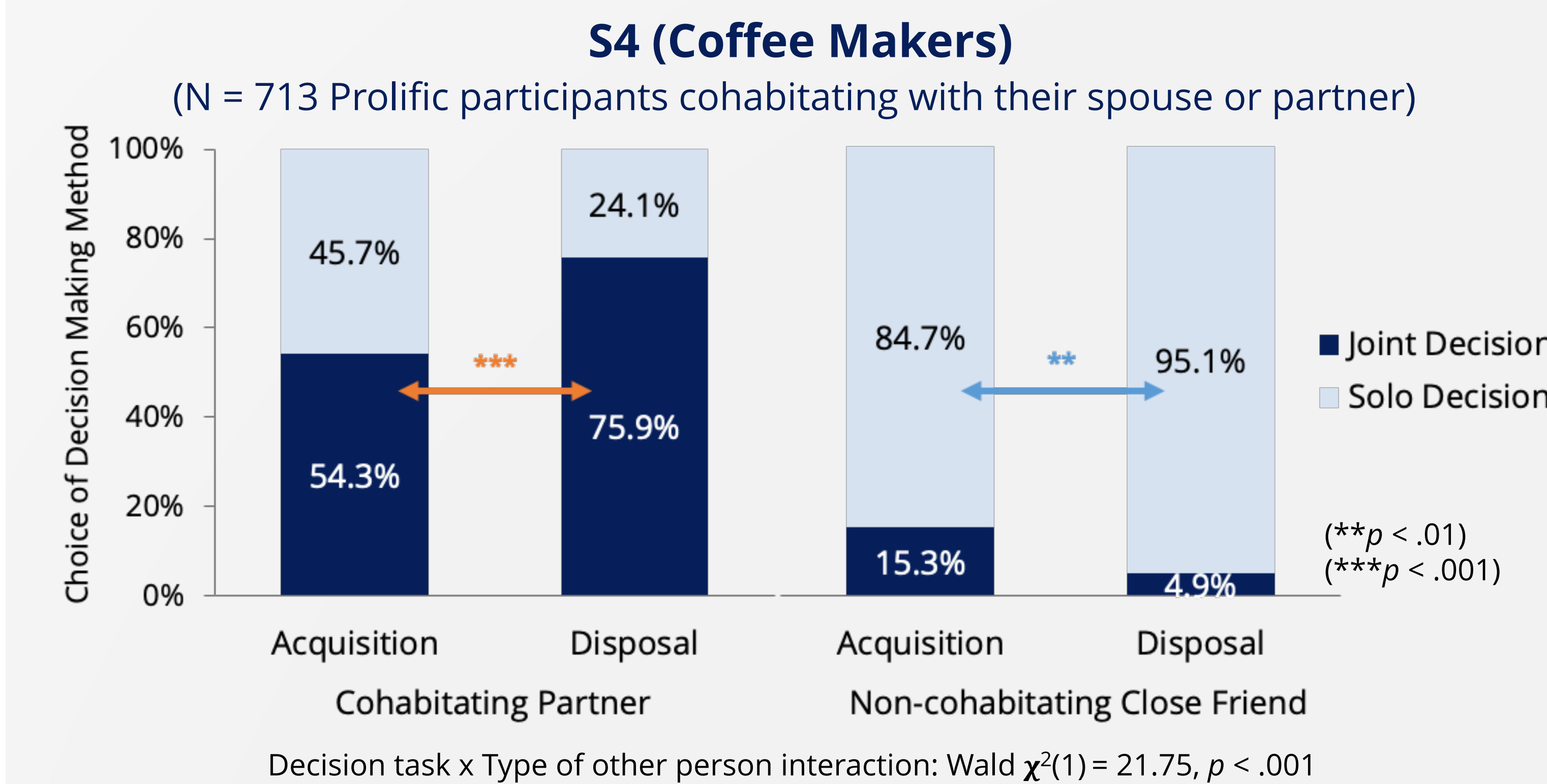
### Study 3: Underlying Process

- Design:** 2 (acquisition vs. disposal) between-subjects.
- Results:** Disposal (vs. acquisition) decision tasks are perceived as more permanent, which in turn leads to heightened perceptions of risk associated with solo decision making, thereby increasing preference for joint (vs. solo) decision making.



### Study 4: The Effect Reverses Based on Who the Other Is

- Design:** 2 (acquisition vs. disposal) X 2 (cohabitating partner vs. non-cohabitating close friend) between-subjects.
- Results:** When considering whether to make a decision with their cohabitating partner, participants preferred joint (vs. solo) decision making more so for disposal tasks than for acquisition tasks. However, this effect was *reversed* when they considered whether to make a decision with a non-cohabitating close friend. Study 4 thus addresses an alternative account based on decision difficulty.



### Conclusion

- People exhibit a robust preference for joint (vs. solo) decision making more so for disposal decision tasks than for acquisition decision tasks.
- This asymmetry occurs because disposal decisions are perceived to be more permanent than purchase decisions, thereby leading to increased perceptions of risk associated with solo decision making.