

# Regulatory Focus and Goal Emphasis: Setting Minimal, Maximal, and Aspiration Level Goals

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## What is Regulatory Focus?

- Self-regulation Principle:  
people approach pleasure and avoid pain in different ways
- Promotion Focus vs. Prevention Focus

- Higgins, 1997

## Promotion

- Accomplishments, aspirations
- Ideals
- Gains/Nongains
- Eager approach means
- Goals of advancement

## Prevention

- Safety, responsibilities
- Oughts
- Losses/Nonlosses
- Vigilant approach means
- Goals of necessity

## Goals

- Future and Change
- Previous studies
  - ◆ Lewin: level of aspiration
- Current study
  - ◆ Darts as a means of goal setting
    - ◆ Participants set goal dart scores: minimal, maximal, level of aspiration
    - ◆ Participants assigned goal score

## Questions

- Regulatory Focus affects Goal Setting
  - ◆ Variation in overall goal scores
  - ◆ Variation in level of aspiration

## Questions

- Regulatory Focus affects Performance
  - ◆ Variation in assignment conditions
- Regulatory Focus affects Enjoyment and Motivation
  - ◆ Variation in assignment condition

## Method

- Participants
  - ◆ 90 college students
- Questionnaires
  - ◆ Mood and Instrumentality (MI)
- Measures
  - ◆ Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ)

## Procedure

- Darts: 5 practice shots
  - ◆ Scoring: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50
  - ◆ move closer if score  $\leq 50$
  - ◆ move farther if score  $\geq 120$



## Procedure

- Assess Goals for next 3 shots
  - ◆ Minimal Goal
  - ◆ Maximal Goal
  - ◆ Level of Aspiration
- Darts: 3 shots

## Procedure

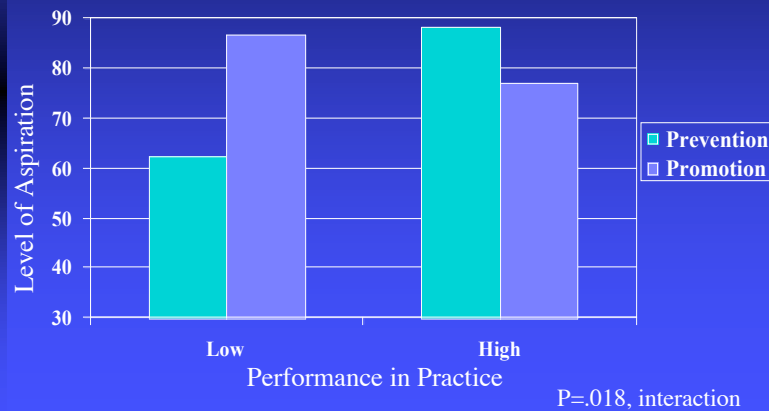
- Randomly Assign Goals for next 3 shots
  - ◆ Minimal, Maximal, or Aspiration Level Goal
- Darts: 3 shots

## Results

- Goals: effects of Regulatory Focus
- Performance: effects of Regulatory Focus and Goal Assignment
- Enjoyment and Motivation: effects of Regulatory Focus and Goal Assignment
- Assignment Preferences

## Results

Figure 1: Level of Aspiration by Practice Performance and Regulatory Focus



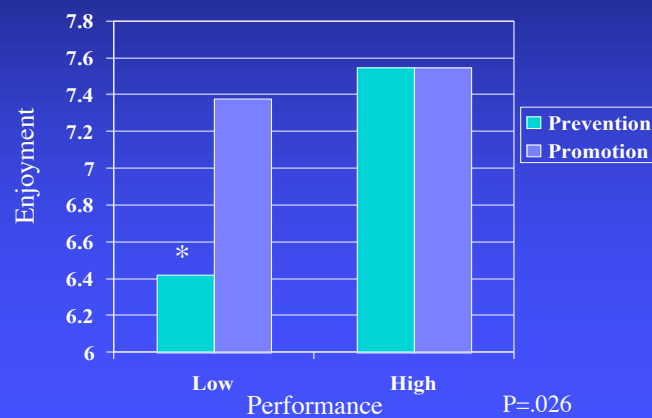
## Results

### ■ Performance

- ◆ Trend in interaction of PRM x Goal Assignment (minimal vs. level of aspiration),  $p=.08$ 
  - ◆ As promotion increased in people assigned their level of aspiration, their performance increased
  - ◆ As promotion increased in people assigned their minimal goal, their performance decreased

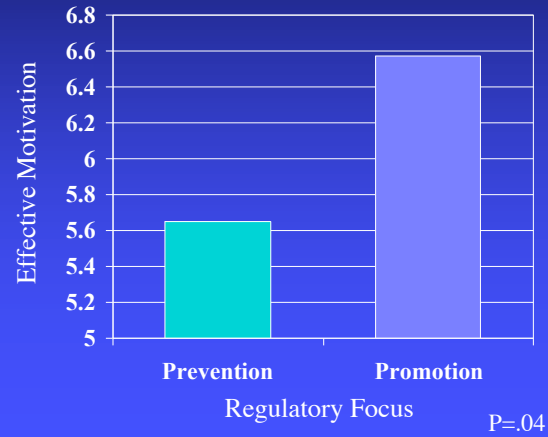
## Results

Figure 2: Task Enjoyment by Performance and Regulatory Focus



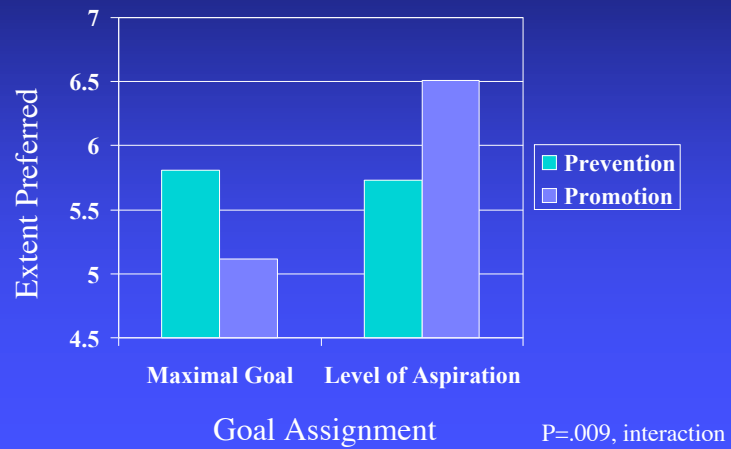
## Results

Figure 3: Effectiveness of ANY Goal on Motivation by Regulatory Focus



## Results

Figure 4: Preference for Goal Assignment by Regulatory Focus



## Discussion

### ■ Questions

- ◆ No difference in goal scores
- ◆ No difference in performance in **minimal** and **maximal** goal conditions

## Discussion

### ■ Promotion

- ◆ Performs better in **level of aspiration** than in **minimal** goal condition
- ◆ Prefers **level of aspiration** assignment
  - ◆ Promotes eagerness

### ■ Prevention

- ◆ Prefers **maximal** goal assignment
  - ◆ Promotes vigilance

## Discussion

- Information used differently
  - ◆ Prevention: Performance critically affects Goal Setting and Task Enjoyment
  - ◆ Promotion: Performance effect not seen

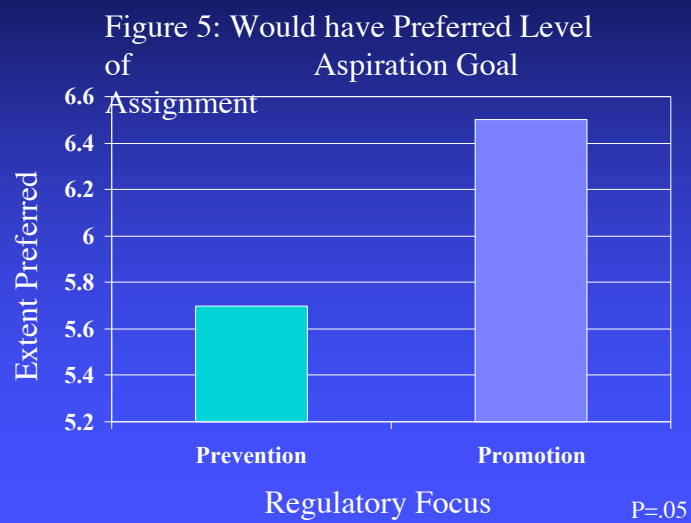
## Future Directions

- Goal Assignment and Enjoyment
- Defensive Pessimism Measures

## Acknowledgements

- Tory Higgins
- Vanessa Bohns
- Joe Cesario
- Higgins Lab
- Bob Krauss, Lois Putnam, Jim Magnuson
- Honors Seminar

## Results



## Results

- Preference for Maximal Goal Assignment
  - ◆ As prevention increases, preference for maximal goal increases ( $p=.08$ )