

Title: How regulatory focus in April 2021 related to expectations about that summer

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(439 words in the body of the abstract)

Introduction

On April 6, 2021, how did motivations for growth and security relate to participants' expectations about what they would do that summer? Promotion focus is a motivational orientation that serves the need for growth and excels at exploration, whereas prevention focus is a motivational orientation that serves the need for security and excels at commitment (e.g., Scholer et al., 2019; Vaughn, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2020). We predicted that, in April of 2021, promotion focus would relate positively to expecting to do different leisure activities outside the home in the summer, and prevention focus would relate positively to expecting to keep doing the same things to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Method

The 134 American participants were at least 18 years old. They participated via Prolific Academic on April 6, 2021.

The first questions were about their state promotion and prevention focus (Godollei & Beck, 2021), such as "Right now, I am focused on my hopes." Cronbach's alphas for promotion and prevention scales were .93 and .77, respectively.

Participants also answered questions about their likelihood of engaging in various activities in the summer of 2021. The "same things" dependent variable included three activities many people had been doing during the pandemic such as, "socially distancing from strangers" (Cronbach's alpha = .80). The "different things" dependent variable included five activities outside the home such as "travel outside your local area" (Cronbach's alpha = .78).

Results

We ran multiple regressions to assess relationships between regulatory focus and same activities and between regulatory focus and different activities. The first multiple regression analysis showed that state prevention focus related significantly to expecting to do same activities, $\beta = .29$, $p = .003$, but state promotion focus did not, $\beta = -.07$, $p = .462$. The second multiple regression analysis showed that state promotion focus related significantly to expecting to do different activities, $\beta = .37$, $p < .001$, but state prevention focus did not, $\beta = -.12$, $p = .190$.

Discussion

In April 2021, participants' prevention focus, which serves the need for security and excels at commitment (Scholer et al., 2019), related more strongly than promotion focus to expecting to continue to do these same activities. Promotion focus, which serves the need for growth and

excels at exploration (Scholer et al., 2019) related more strongly than prevention focus to expecting to do different activities outside their home.

Limitations of this study are that it cross-sectional and it did not have a representative sample of Americans. Future research either could be experimental (randomly assigning participants to a promotion versus prevention condition), or have a representative sample of Americans, who might be tracked longitudinally.

References:

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