The Effect of Regulatory Focus on Ethical Decision-Making

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Abstract

Regulatory focus is a goal attainment theory that states that people use one of two self-regulations to achieve their goals. The first self-regulation is promotion; promotion focused people are risk-takers, they are more likely to use heuristics or biases to make decisions, and they make decisions quickly. The other self-regulation is prevention; these people are risk-averse, they are more likely to use analytic reasoning to make decisions, and they make decisions slowly. In this study, the authors measured the participants’ work regulatory focus and then attempted to manipulate them into one of the two conditions (prevention or promotion). The manipulation was not strong enough to influence the participants’ regulatory focus. For this reason, the study was completed using the chronic work regulatory focus. The authors aimed to determine how the participants’ work regulatory focus affected their ethical decision making on three cases (two university situations and one career situation). Overall, promotion focused participants were more likely than prevention focused participants to partake in the unethical behavior. These results were only significant for Cases 1 and 2, which is believed to be because the students could relate better to these situations than the career situation (Case 3).
Chapter 1: Introduction

The topic of this research is the effect that regulatory focus has on ethical decision-making. Regulatory focus theory posits that people have two different self-regulatory states that direct goal attainment (Higgins, 1997; Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Förster, Higgins & Taylor Bianco, 2003). These two states are titled prevention and promotion. According to Crowe & Higgins (1997), a person in the prevention state is more interested in avoiding losses and, for that reason, will be more detail-oriented and careful. People in this state are motivated to achieve their “ought self” (Higgins, 1987, p. 336), or the person that they should be. A person in the promotion state is more focused on achieving gains, and will therefore be more risky. Promotion-focused people are motivated to achieve their “ideal self” (Higgins, 1987, p. 336), or the person they could be.

In order to test the effect of regulatory focus on ethical decision-making, an online survey was created via Qualtrics which was distributed to students at Ohio University. This survey manipulated the students’ regulatory focus to test how it affected their responses to three ethical case studies. While there has been some research on the effect of regulatory focus on ethics (Graham, Ziegert & Capitano, 2015; Chung, Kim & Sohn, 2014; Shao, Resick & Schaubroeck, 2011; Zhang, Cornwell & Higgins, 2014, etc.), none of the studies thus far have tested how a work regulatory focus could affect the ethical decision-making of students.

This study will contribute to the field by providing information on how the chronic and induced work regulatory focus of students affects their responses to
ethical situations they could face while in school. As the results show, a chronic
promotion work regulatory focus in students is associated with a higher likelihood of
making unethical decisions in university situations, but not in work situations (fraud).
The results of the study bring rise to possible future studies which will be discussed
later on in this paper.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Regulatory Focus

Regulatory focus theory has been introduced as an advancement on the hedonic principle, which has been in practice and had widespread acceptance since its development by the ancient Greeks (Crowe, 1997). In 1997, Crowe & Higgins introduced an alternate goal-attainment theory, called regulatory focus theory, to explain that people have a tendency to approach the things they find pleasurable and avoid the things they find painful. This can also be described as approaching a goal you wish to achieve and moving away from an outcome you wish to avoid. In the 1997 study, Crowe & Higgins determined that there are two different states of self-regulation that people use to guide their actions and cognition towards meeting their goals: prevention and promotion.

Through a series of experiments, Crowe & Higgins determined that prevention focused individuals are slower when confronted with difficult tasks and are more likely to repeat themselves and generate less alternatives. This is explained by the fact that the prevention focus is more concerned with being accurate than generating the maximum number of outcomes. These individuals are more concerned with losses than gains; they will do their best to maximize non-losses and minimize losses. This leads them to be more vigilant and take more time with their decisions and actions. Prevention-focused people are said to value quality over quantity. On the other hand, promotion focused individuals are mainly concerned with maximizing gains and minimizing non-gains. They want to generate the most hits (answers, ideas, etc.) and
they are not as worried about the quality of those hits. They are also more likely to take risks in order to reach their goals (1997).

Research has also shown that the two regulatory foci, promotion or prevention, elicit different strategies of achieving goals rather than these differences being attributed to a trade-off. Förster, Higgins & Taylor Bianco showed through three studies that promotion focused individuals achieve tasks faster but less accurately than prevention focused individuals. Prevention focused people are more concerned with maximizing the number of correct responses, which leads them to complete tasks more slowly. As the end of the task approached, promotion focused participants increased their speed and decreased their accuracy; prevention focused participants increased their accuracy and decreased their speed. Another important aspect to note from this study is that these results were found to be independent of the accuracy and speed effects in both chronic and situationally-induced regulatory focus. This shows that a person’s regulatory focus can be manipulated by framing the task in different situations, meaning any one person can be either promotion or prevention focused at any given time (2003).

Regulatory focus theory has been shown to have a widespread effect on many different topics. Since its development, it has been shown to influence many different facets of human nature and interaction such as group information processing and decision-making (Burtscher & Meyer, 2014), team dynamics (Dimotakis, Davison & Hollenbeck, 2011), follower cognition (Hamstra, Sassenberg, Van Yperen & Wisse, 2014), the impact of role models (Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda, 2002), treatment
perceptions (Oyserman, Uskul, Yoder, Nesse & Williams, 2007), firm acquisitions (Gamache, McNamara, Mannor & Johnson, 2015), investment decisions (Florack & Hartmann, 2007), workplace behavior (Kumar & Lee, 2014), and trusting others (Keller, Mayo, Greifeneder & Pfattheicher, 2015). As seen, there has been much research done showing the implications that regulatory focus theory has on many different topics; these topics and more will be discussed below.

**Regulatory Fit**

When a person’s chronic regulatory focus is in line with the type of goal pursuit they use, they are said to be experiencing regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000). For example, a person with a chronic promotion focus would experience regulatory fit with an advancement goal. Higgins found that participants perceived their decisions to be better when they experienced regulatory fit than when they experienced regulatory misfit. A person would be experiencing regulatory misfit if their chronic regulatory focus did not align with the current task or situation he was in. People experiencing regulatory fit are also more motivated, expect that they will feel better about making a desirable decision, and are more alert when they make decisions. The process of achieving a goal is more enjoyable for a person experiencing regulatory fit than a person in regulatory misfit (2000). Lee & Aaker (2004) found that regulatory fit can also influence the persuasiveness of a message. When a message is promotion focused, a gain-framed appeal was shown to be more persuasive, whereas a loss-framed appeal is more persuasive for a prevention focused message.
While regulatory fit has been shown to have a positive impact on performance in individuals, Memmert, et al. showed that this positive relationship extends to dyadic groups. Beyond skill level, the authors show that team regulatory fit significantly predicted performance (2015).

As mentioned above, regulatory fit increases motivation. Spiegel, Grant-Pillow & Higgins (2004) found that when participants experienced fit with an assignment, specifically an essay, they were more likely to turn the assignment in. For example, a promotion focused participant who was asked to write about his eagerness was more likely to turn in the assignment than a promotion focus participant who was asked to write about his vigilance, and vice versa for prevention focused participants. In a second study completed by Spiegel, Grant-Pillow & Higgins, the participants viewed an ad urging them to eat more fruits and vegetables and then were asked to imagine either the benefits or costs of complying with the ad. When the participants experienced fit with what they were asked to imagine (promotion/benefits, prevention/costs), they were 20% more likely than those experiencing misfit to eat more fruits and vegetables during the following week (2004).

Regulatory Focus and Groups

Regulatory focus has been shown to have a number of effects on group or team dynamics. For example, Scheepers, Ellemers & Sassenberg showed that groups that have a lower status are more likely to make promotion or improvement goals while groups with a higher status make prevention, or maintenance, goals. These decisions only resulted in action in people with power and accountability in the groups (2013).

Dimotakis, Davison & Hollenbeck (2012) studied the effect of regulatory fit on team performance, helping behaviors, positive feelings, and task satisfaction. In this case, regulatory fit refers to the groups’ regulatory focus and the task given. The researchers structured the teams either divisionally (members have a broad roles) or functionally (each member has a clearly defined role) and gave the teams promotion or prevention oriented tasks. Divisionally-structured teams with promotion tasks and functionally-structured teams with prevention tasks were experiencing regulatory fit; these teams performed better and were more satisfied with their tasks (partially mediated by positive affect and helping behaviors). In a similar study, Burtscher & Meyer looked at the relationship between group regulatory focus and the use of distal information (information that is not readily available to the team) and decision quality. Promotion focused groups had better decision quality than prevention focused groups because of their more frequent use of and positive attitude towards distal information (2014).

**Regulatory Focus and Relationships & Treatment Perceptions**

Regulatory focus has even been shown to have an effect on our relationships and feelings towards others. Keller, Mayo, Greifeneder & Pfattheicher showed that the prevention focus, both chronic and situationally induced, has a negative relationship with generalized trust. Research results showed that prevention focused individuals show less trust in general than those in the promotion focus. The authors note that this effect could be decreased if tasks or situations are framed in a promotion manner (2015). Similar to generalized trust, Oyserman, Uskul, Yoder, Nesse &
Williams studied how regulatory focus affects a person’s perception of unfair treatment. They cued the potential for unfair treatment by making stigmatized social groups salient to the participants, which caused an increase in prevention focus in the participants. They also found that inducing a prevention focus in participants heightened their sensitivity to unfair treatment and their responses to the situation, such as withdrawal from the situation (2007).

Regulatory fit with our role models determines who would be most influential in guiding us. Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda found that role models who encouraged strategies that were in the same regulatory focus as the participant’s goals elicited greater motivation than the presence of no role model while role models who encouraged strategies that were not in the same regulatory focus elicited less motivation than having no role model (2002). Pfattheicher showed that prevention focused individuals are also shown to care more about what others think of them. These individuals are more concerned about their reputations and those with a high prevention focus were more likely to increase actual donations when a reputational cue was given (2015).

The way that individuals make judgements about different things can also be determined by their regulatory focus. Avnet & Higgins (2006) found that feelings are used by promotion focused individuals whereas reasons are used by prevention focused individuals to make judgements. Along the same lines, Friedman & Förster (2000) determined that promotion focused people are more inclined to use creative reasoning while prevention focused people prefer analytic reasoning.
Regulatory Focus and Business

Regulatory focus has been shown to have an impact on multiple business, workplace, and consumer aspects. Gamache, McNamara, Mannor & Johnson were interested in determining whether CEO regulatory focus influenced the company’s acquisitions. It was found that CEO regulatory focus has a significant impact on the acquisitions that the firms complete. CEO promotion focus has a positive association with the number of acquisitions and the value of the acquisitions a firm undertakes, while CEO prevention focus is negatively associated with these things. It was also found that stock options can reverse the negative effect that the prevention focus has on number and value of firm acquisitions (2015). Florack & Hartmann studied the relationship between regulatory focus and investment decision-making. It was determined that groups induced in a promotion focus were more concerned with potential gains while groups who were induced with a prevention focus were more concerned with potential losses. Riskier investment decisions were also made by promotion focused groups in comparison with prevention focused groups; however, these results were only observed when the groups were given ample time to discuss their decisions (2007). Regulatory focus also impacts individual investments; the driver of the disposition effect was found to be prevention focused individuals. Their tendency to want to maintain the status quo motivates them to hold on to losing investments too long and their risk-averse nature motivates them to sell winning investments too early (Kim & Ha, 2016).
Hsu (2015) found that regulatory focus affects the likelihood of a person becoming an entrepreneur. Contrary to what the author hypothesized, the promotion focus was not related to entrepreneurial intention, but prevention focus was negatively correlated with entrepreneurial intention. This means people lower in prevention focus were more likely to become or want to become an entrepreneur.

Some aspects of general workplace behavior are also explained by regulatory focus. Kumar & Lee (2014) studied the effect of regulatory focus on workplace conscientiousness and organizational deviance. The results showed that the prevention focus predicted workplace conscientiousness, but gender moderates the relationship between regulatory focus and organizational deviance. Xie & Kahle found that, in personal selling attempts, promotion focused consumers are more likely to adopt a seeker tactic (asking for more information) or a “seeker-and-sentry” tactic (bargaining) in both chronic and situationally induced conditions. The seeker-and-sentry tactic was also observed in prevention focused consumers, but only when the focus was situationally induced. Consumers perceive reviews of products and services differently because of their regulatory focus, as well (2014). Kim and Lee found that promotion focused consumers react better to positive and evaluative reviews than prevention focused consumers. The prevention focused consumers preferred to use negative reviews, while both prevention and promotion consumers thought factual reviews were useful (2015).

Similar to a workplace situation, regulatory focus can predict performance on academic tests. Rosenzweig & Miele found that prevention focused participants
performed better on tests with non-difficult time constraints (the test was easily completed in the time limit given). These results were consistent even when the test was considered to be stressful and important (2016).

**Regulatory Focus and Leadership & Power**

Differences in leadership strategy relating to regulatory focus have an effect on the value of a leader. Leaders who maintain a positive strategy (promotion) have lower quality results than a leader who employs a mixture of positive and negative (prevention) strategies (Antes & Mumford, 2012). Regulatory fit between leaders and their followers makes the followers feel more valued than if they experienced misfit with the leader (Hamstra, Sassenberg, Van Yperen & Wisse, 2014). Specifically, promotion focused leaders exhibited transformational qualities and prevention focused leaders exhibited transactional qualities. When these qualities aligned with the regulatory focus of their employees, or followers, the employees experienced regulatory fit and were more likely to feel valued.

Along with leadership in organizations, personality dominance has been shown to elicit regulatory focus in individuals. Anderson & Berdahl found participants who were low in dominance were more likely to inhibit themselves and experience negative emotion (prevention focus) than those high in dominance. High dominance individuals had an activated approach system (promotion focus). This study also showed that lower power participants underestimated how much their partner liked them and overestimated threatening emotion felt towards themselves. High power participants were correct in their estimations of how much their partner liked them and
underestimated threatening feelings felt towards themselves (2002). Maner, Gailliot, Butz & Peruche found that participants assigned to a power position were more likely to make risky decisions, indicating a promotion strategy, when their power was stable and unlikely to be taken away. When the power was unstable, participants with high power motivation were more likely to make conservative decisions, indicating a prevention strategy. The authors note that this is most likely due to the fact that individuals high in power motivation want to stay in positions of power (2007).

**Regulatory Focus and Health Behaviors**

Regulatory focus can also affect health behavioral intentions (Bui & Krishen, 2015). Specifically, individuals are more likely to meet their health or weight goals if they experience regulatory fit with the goal they are attempting to reach. The authors found that prevention focused participants are less likely to reach an “ideal” weight goal because their chronic regulatory focus is more inclined to reach a responsibility or expectation, not an ideal.

With high-risk drinking being a concern on college campuses, Park & Morton researched the effectiveness of ads against high-risk drinking from a regulatory focus perspective. The results showed that promotion focused ads against high-risk drinking were more effective; these advertised living a healthier lifestyle rather than displaying the negative side effects of drinking in excess. The authors hypothesized that this is because the negative side effects of high-risk drinking aren’t as salient as other unhealthy behaviors, such as unsafe sex (2015).
As shown through the literature review above, regulatory focus has been found to have an effect on many different aspects of human decision-making. This research is necessary for the understanding of the topic and contributes to the foundation of my research. This study of regulatory focus relates to work and employee situations and the ethics related to business situations; therefore, this literature review also discusses research on work regulatory focus and studies surrounding regulatory focus and ethics.

**Work Regulatory Focus**

Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Chonko & Roberts (2008) argued that the regulatory focus scales being utilized in previous research lacked context. In their study, the authors aimed to determine how regulatory focus mediates initiating structure and servant leadership on employee behavior. Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Chonko & Roberts (2008) developed their own Work Regulatory Focus Scale (WRF) because, until then, there was no scale that incorporated regulatory focus evoked in a work-setting for individuals. The scale that they developed incorporates security, ought, and loss factors for prevention and achievement, ideal, and gain factors for promotion. The authors argue that previous scales have lacked the incorporation of all six of these factors. In order to test the validity of the scale, an exploratory factor analysis and a content adequacy assessment were performed on the 18-item scale. The WRF scale can be found in the measures section below.

According to Lanaj, Chang & Johnson, 40% of the variance in work attitudes and behaviors can be explained by work-related regulatory focus, while only 12% can be explained by chronic regulatory focus. With the increased interest in and relevance
of regulatory focus as it relates to work settings, it is important to understand the effectiveness and validity of the measures being utilized (2012). Akhtar & Lee (2014) analyzed the concurrent validity of the Work Regulatory Focus Scale with the Chronic Regulatory Focus Questionnaire. Through their analyses, the authors concluded that the Work Regulatory Focus scale is “a valid and a reliable measure of work-related prevention and promotion focus” (p. 146).

**Regulatory Focus and Ethics**

To date, there have been few studies that look at the relationship between regulatory focus and ethics. As Friedman & Förster (2001) stated, regulatory focus, situational or chronic, can predict behaviors and judgments. This has clear ethical implications that will be discussed in the findings of research on the topic.

Cornwell & Higgins completed one of the most recent studies on regulatory focus and ethics dealing with how one’s regulatory focus affects his judgment of incest. The case deals with “nonprocreative sibling incest” (p. 338) and how the differences in focus affect a person’s feelings towards the act. Promotion focused individuals are more likely to rely on heuristics to make decisions, while prevention focused individuals use careful deliberation and facts to assist their judgment process. The actual incest case can be seen below:

A brother and a sister are alone in the house and decide to make love just once. The sister is already taking birth control pills and the brother uses a condom. They both enjoy the act but decide not to do it again. They promise each other to keep it a secret (p. 338).
Participants induced into a promotion focus thought the action described was significantly more wrong than prevention focused participants, and this was shown to be because intuitive feelings were used as a moral judgment tool in the promotion focus. Further studies found that these results could be extrapolated to cases of cannibalism and the consumption of the family dog (2016).

Shao, Resick & Schaubroeck researched the effect supervisors had on employee ethical behavior. They found that ethical leadership related to both an ethical prevention focus (doing the right thing because of rules and regulations) and an ethical promotion focus (striving to do what is morally right) in employees, which were found to mediate employee deviance and employee altruism (2011). Graham, Ziegert & Capitano examined unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB); specifically, the relationship between how leaders in the organization communicate, their leadership style, how they frame problems, and employee interpretations and UPB. Research showed that transformational leaders, more than transactional leaders, would have a higher likelihood of eliciting UPB in their employees because they encourage more pro-organizational behavior overall. When loss framing was used transformational leaders elicited UPB in their employees, which is thought to be because losses represent threats to the organization. Individuals with a high promotion focus were less likely to commit UPB under loss conditions with a transformational leader than low promotion individuals. Low promotion individuals were more likely to partake in UPB under loss conditions with a transformational leader than a transactional leader (2015). Zhang, Cornwell & Higgins also found that having a
chronic or situationally induced prevention focus leads to repetition of prior actions, even when the prior action was unethical. The repetition was not limited to unethical behavior, however. Prevention focused individuals were more likely to repeat their initial action regardless of whether it was ethical or not. For example, the prevention focused participants were more likely to overstate their performance on a task in a second round of the task when they overstated their performance in the first round (2013).

Gino & Margolis found that a situationally induced promotion focus triggers more dishonesty in an induced promotion focused than an induced prevention focus. This difference was explained by the differences in risk perception between the two foci: the promotion focus elicits more risky behavior while the prevention focus is more inclined to avoid risk. Interestingly, participants with a promotion focus who were dishonest in the study were also more likely to perform virtuous behavior in future studies, known as compensatory ethics (2011). Brebels, de Cramer & Sedikides showed that promotion focused individuals are more likely than prevention focused individuals to retaliate when treated unfairly, in both chronic and situationally induced regulatory focus. This was explained by the fact that the promotion focus leads to more individual self-awareness than the prevention focus. In a subsequent study, the prevention focused participants were made individually self-aware and this led them to be just as retaliatory as the promotion focused participants, both in the chronic and situationally induced regulatory foci (2008).
Based on the prior research done in this field and described above, five hypotheses have been developed. The first two relate to the regulatory focus manipulations (described below) and the literature on situationally-induced regulatory focus:

**Hypothesis 1**: Participants in the prevention condition (i.e., those exposed to the prevention regulatory focus manipulation) will respond to the regulatory focus questions in each case in more of a prevention manner than those in the promotion condition (i.e., those exposed to the promotion regulatory focus manipulation).

**Hypothesis 2**: Participants in the prevention condition will be less likely than the participants in the promotion condition to complete the unethical act described in each case.

Hypotheses were also developed based on each participant’s chronic work regulatory focus:

**Hypothesis 3**: Participants with chronic prevention work regulatory focus will respond to the regulatory focus questions in each case in more of a prevention manner than those in the chronic promotion work regulatory focus.

**Hypothesis 4**: Participants with a chronic prevention work regulatory focus will be less likely than the participants with a chronic promotion work regulatory focus to complete the unethical act described in each case.
Based on the research that regulatory focus affects decisions, behaviors, and actions, we also expected that the participant’s responses to the regulatory focus questions on each case would predict whether or not they would commit the unethical acts described.

**Hypothesis 5**: The participants who respond in a prevention manner to the regulatory focus questions on each case study will be less likely than those who respond in a promotion manner to commit the unethical act described in each situation.
Chapter 3: Method

Participants

Participants were students studying at Ohio University. The online questionnaire (described below) was sent directly to these students through public email listings. A total of 93 participants completed the online questionnaire. The gender distribution was: 35 male, 56 female, 1 transgender, and 1 other. 55 participants were between the ages of 18-20, 34 were between the ages of 21-23, three were between the ages of 24-26, and one was 30+. The race of the participants is as follows: four Asian, one Black or African American, 86 White, and two participants preferred not to answer. Three of the participants identified as Hispanic or Latino, 82 identified as not Hispanic or Latino, and eight preferred not to answer. A breakdown of the demographic information of the participants can be seen in Tables I through IV below:

Table I

Summary of Participant Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table II

Summary of Participant Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III

Summary of Participant Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VI

Summary of Participant Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Answer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures and Procedure

Procedure

Each participant completed an online survey. First, they completed the consent form (Appendix A) for the study. They then responded to the Work Regulatory Focus
scale. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental manipulation. That is, participants read a scenario that was intended to trigger either a prevention or a promotion regulatory focus. The participants then read three ethical case studies and answered questions regarding their regulatory focus toward each specific case and how they would respond to the ethical situation in the case studies. The last portion of the survey consisted of demographic information. Following the survey, there was a debriefing (Appendix B) where the participants were informed of the actual purpose of the study and were given the option to withdraw their participation.

**Measures**

**Work Regulatory Focus Scale**

The main focus of this research is to determine how a person’s regulatory focus affects their ethical decision-making, both in university and work situations; for this reason, we are using a work regulatory focus scale. The scale used was developed by Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Chonko, and Roberts (2008) and is described in the literature review. This scale was developed in order to assess chronic regulatory focus as it relates to a work setting. Higher responses on the promotion line items equated to a higher work promotion focus while higher responses on the prevention line items equated to a higher work prevention focus. A copy of the scale can be found below:
Figure 1: Work Regulatory Focus Scale (Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Chonko, and Roberts, 2008)

Please rate the following sentences from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Please respond to these sentences as you are now and not how you hope to be in the future. Relate work to any job you currently have or had in the past. If you have never had a job, please consider school your job.

1. I concentrate on completing my work tasks correctly to increase my job security.

2. At work I focus my attention on completed my assigned responsibilities.

3. Fulfilling my work duties is very important to me.

4. At work, I strive to live up to the responsibilities and duties given to me by others.

5. At work, I am often focused on accomplishing tasks that will support my need for security.

6. I do everything I can to avoid loss at work.

7. Job security is an important factor for me in any job search.

8. I focus my attention on avoiding failure at work.

9. I am very careful to avoid exposing myself to potential losses at work.
10. I take chances at work to maximize my goals for advancement.

11. I tend to take risks at work in order to achieve success.

12. If I had an opportunity to participate on a high-risk, high-reward project I would definitely take it.

13. If my job did not allow for advancement, I would likely find a new one.

14. A chance to grow is an important factor for me when looking for a job.

15. I focus on accomplishing job tasks that will further my advancement.

16. I spend a great deal of time envisioning how to fulfill my aspirations.

17. My work priorities are impacted by a clear picture of what I aspire to be.

18. At work, I am motivated by my hopes and aspirations.

**Manipulations**

There were two manipulations utilized in this study, which were both adapted from the manipulations developed by Wu & Kao (2011). These manipulations were adapted based on a pilot test to ensure the manipulation worked on the students at Ohio University. The pilot test was administered to students in the College of Business. The full versions of the adjusted manipulations can be seen below:

**Promotion Condition**: This scenario depicts a character named Andy who welcomes challenges and unfamiliar situations. He plans on investing in one of three investment options (stocks, mutual funds, personal banking) for a
family trip in the coming year. He ends up choosing stocks because he is not intimidated by risks and wants to make the most profit for his trip.

Andy is an active, self-confident guy who likes to be exposed to unfamiliar people and matters and creates opportunities for various challenges. Andy is a very spontaneous person who approaches life by welcoming opportunities and saying: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” Andy welcomes challenges. In fact, he is going to invest in one of three opportunities below to obtain the maximum profit in the hopes of taking a whole-family trip next year. He tries to research the potentials of the investment alternatives to increase his knowledge during the investment period in the future:

1. **Stocks**: The stock market tends to fluctuate tremendously due to uncertain factors (such as political, economical, environmental). However, an investor can make a huge profit by choosing the correct investment targets.

2. **Mutual funds**: An investor has to evaluate the risk of marketability, exchange rate, and fund liquidation.

3. **Personal banking**: Both the risk and the profitability of bank savings are lower than stocks and mutual funds.

Andy is concerned about the profitability and so he finally chooses stocks as his investment tool to fund his whole-family trip. Andy never feels frustrated even though he has to spend much time and effort on those
unfamiliar matters. He knows he will successfully achieve his financial goals soon.

**Prevention Condition:** This scenario depicts a character named Bill who avoids challenges and unfamiliar situations. He is deeply intimidated by risks. Bill faces the same investment opportunities as Andy, but he ends up investing in the personal banking option because it is the least risky.

Bill is a steady, responsible guy who feels compelled to be around familiar people and avoids challenges. Bill is a very stable person who leads his life by avoiding risks and saying “Better safe than sorry.” Bill avoids challenges. In fact, he is going to invest in one of the three alternatives below to obtain the maximum profit in an effort to take a whole-family trip next year. He tries to evaluate the risks of the investment alternatives to decrease the possibility of uncertainties during the investment period in the future.

1. **Stocks:** The stock market tends to fluctuate tremendously due to uncertain factors (such as political, economical, environmental). However, an investor can make a huge profit by choosing the correct investment targets.

2. **Mutual funds:** An investor has to evaluate the risk of marketability, exchange rate, and fund liquidation.

3. **Personal banking:** Both the risk and the profitability of bank savings are lower than stocks and mutual funds.
Bill is deeply concerned about the potential losses to his investment, which may deplete his whole-family trip fund, and so he finally chooses the personal banking option. Bill often feels stressed and intimidated and has to spend much time and effort on these unfamiliar matters. Bill is attempting to reach his financial goals soon.

Ethical Case Studies

Three case studies were developed for use in this article. Two of the cases were related to situations the student participants may encounter while studying at university and the third dealt with a situation that would be encountered during a possible career. The participants were asked to answer a series of questions (using a 7-point Likert scale with 1 being *Strongly Agree* and 7 being *Strongly Disagree* on the first case and a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being *Strongly Agree* and 5 being *Strongly Disagree* on the second and third cases). Each case had three questions related to the prevention focus, three questions related to the promotion focus, and one question assessing the likelihood that the participant would complete the unethical act addressed in the case. A short description of the ethical case studies, the full case studies, and the associated questions can be seen below:

*Case #1:* This subject of this case is signing a friend’s names on an extra credit sheet, even though they did not earn the extra credit.

*Please read the following and respond to the questions below (1 = Strongly Agree, 7 = Strongly Disagree):*
You and your friends are all management majors. As a college of business requirement, you are currently taking an introductory accounting course that has been known to be difficult. None of your friends are doing as well as they would like in the class. The professor is offering extra credit for attending a presentation from a university alum, and you and your friends were planning on attending. At the last minute, two of your friends backed out and asked you to sign their names on the attendance sheet. You know they could really use the extra credit, but you’re worried that this might not be the right thing to do.

1. You would make your decision based off of the safety that comes from not writing your friends names down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. You would make your decision based off approaching the goal of being a better friend by helping your friends with their grades.

3. You would make your decision based off avoiding an undesired outcome, such as your friends getting bad grades.

4. You would make your decision based off the opportunity of getting your friends better grades.
5. You should follow the phrase “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” in this situation.

6. You should follow the phrase “Better safe than sorry” in this situation.

7. Overall, you would sign your friend’s names on the attendance sheet.

Case #2: This case relates to working with another team on a project for a class that specifically states the teams are not supposed to collaborate.

Please read the following and respond to the questions below (1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree):

You are in an upper level accounting course, of which the focus is on teamwork and collaboration. The professor has mentioned multiple times that you are not to work with or talk to other teams about the projects. You were also required to sign an ethics pledge at the beginning of the semester that said cheating could potentially get you kicked out of the class. You and your team are having a hard time getting the financial statements correct, and the rest of your team wants to ask the team working in the next room some questions.

1. You would make your decision based on the goal of advancement in the class.
2. You would base your decision on your responsibility to maintain ethical behavior in the class.

3. You would do whatever it takes to get the most amount of right answers.

4. You would avoid the situation once the threat of cheating was brought up.

5. You are willing to accept the risk of getting kicked out of the class if it means getting the right answers on the project.

6. You are likely to focus on securing your status in the class by acting in compliance with the ethics pledge.

7. Overall, you would ask the other team for help with your ethics project.

**Case #3:** The subject of this case is staying on a client when it is almost certain there is fraud involved.

**Please read the following and respond to the questions below (1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree):**

You are a manager at a public accounting firm. You were just recently assigned to a brand new client, which has promise to bring in a large amount of revenue for the firm. There was a lot of responsibility placed on you to lead the audit and communicate effectively with management of the company. During your first conversation with the CEO and CFO, you got the impression that they were being secretive about a recent merger that the
company was involved in. After a few more inquisitive questions, you were fairly certain that the company was committing fraud. Your firm’s procedure for this is to quit the engagement, but you know your company is relying on the revenue associated with it.

1. You should base your decision on the possible advancement of your career associated with keeping this engagement.

2. You should base your decision on the possible job security associated with following company policy.

3. You should approach the situation with the phrase “Opportunity doesn’t knock twice”.

4. You should approach the situation with the phrase “Look before you leap”.

5. You would assume the risk associated with continuing the engagement in hopes that your instinct was incorrect.

6. You should be vigilant and avoid the risk associated with continuing the engagement.

7. Overall, you would stay on the client engagement.
Chapter 4: Results

Experimental Manipulation Results

A series of independent sample t-tests were conducted to determine if the manipulation influenced participant’s regulatory focus responses to the three case studies. We did this by combining and taking the mean of the first six questions for each case. These questions assessed each participants’ regulatory focus toward that specific case study. These questions determined if participants took more of a promotion or prevention focused approach toward that specific situation; higher numbers indicate a more promotion mindset and lower numbers indicate a more prevention mindset. These six questions will be referred to as “specific case regulatory focus questions” from here on in the study. Participants in the promotion condition (means and standard deviations for each condition can be found in Table V) did not differ from participants in the prevention condition on their responses to the specific case regulatory focus questions, Case 1: \( t(91) = 0.54, p = .588 \), Case 2: \( t(91) = 0.14, p = .886 \), Case 3: \( t(91) = 0.36, p = .722 \). Based on these results, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

An independent samples t-test was performed on the participant’s willingness to commit the unethical acts described in each case. Neither the promotion manipulation (means and standard deviations for each condition can be found in Table V) nor the prevention manipulation, influenced the participants’ willingness to commit the unethical acts, Case 1: \( t(91) = -0.08, p = .941 \), Case 2: \( t(91) = 0.64, p = .522 \), Case 3: \( t(91) = -0.26, p = .797 \). Therefore, the participant’s manipulated regulatory focus
was not a predictor of the participant’s ultimate decision on the ethical case and
Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

**Table V**

*Results of Experimental Manipulation (Mean, SD)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1:</th>
<th>Specific Case Regulatory Focus Responses</th>
<th>Willingness to Commit Unethical Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>4.40 (0.74)</td>
<td>4.18 (1.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>4.32 (0.69)</td>
<td>4.21 (2.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 2:</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>3.56 (0.48)</td>
<td>3.71 (1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.54 (0.68)</td>
<td>3.54 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 3:</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>3.68 (0.62)</td>
<td>3.80 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.64 (0.57)</td>
<td>3.85 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chronic Work Regulatory Focus Results**

The chronic work regulatory focus, using the scale developed by Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Chonko, and Roberts (2008), of each participant was used to predict their responses to each of the three ethical case studies. There were 62 participants with a chronic prevention focus and 22 participants with a chronic promotion focus. The remaining nine participants were equally prevention and promotion focused. It was predicted that participants who were prevention focused would answer the
specific case regulatory focus questions in each case in more of a prevention manner and the promotion focused participants would answer the specific case regulatory focus questions in each case in a more promotion manner. It was also hypothesized that the promotion focused individuals would report a higher likelihood of committing the unethical acts described in each case than the prevention focused participants.

A series of independent sample t-tests were performed to determine if the participant’s chronic work regulatory focus influenced his responses to the specific case regulatory focus questions for each of the three cases. Significant results were found for Case 1, \( t(82) = 2.47, p = .016 \), and Case 2, \( t(82) = 2.27, p = .026 \), meaning that the chronic work regulatory focus was a predictor of the participants' responses to the specific case regulatory focus questions (means and standard deviations can be found in Table VI). These results were not consistent with those of Case 3, however, \( t(82) = 0.48, p = .635 \). Hypothesis 3 was supported for Cases 1 and 2, but not for Case 3.

Independent sample t-tests were also run to determine if the participant’s chronic work regulatory focus predicted his likelihood of committing the unethical acts described in each case. The results proved to be significant for Case 1, \( t(82) = 3.85, p = .001 \), and Case 2, \( t(82) = 2.49, p = .015 \). The results for Case 3 proved not to be statistically significant, \( t(82) = 1.30, p = .196 \). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported for Cases 1 and 2, but not for Case 3.
### Table VI

**Results of Chronic Regulatory Focus (Mean, SD)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Specific Regulatory Focus Responses</th>
<th>Willingness to Commit Unethical Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Promotion</em></td>
<td>4.48 (0.65)**</td>
<td>4.69 (1.80)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prevention</em></td>
<td>4.07 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.05 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Promotion</em></td>
<td>3.61 (0.53)*</td>
<td>3.79 (1.16)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prevention</em></td>
<td>3.30 (0.65)</td>
<td>3.05 (1.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 3:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Promotion</em></td>
<td>3.70 (0.59)</td>
<td>3.95 (0.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prevention</em></td>
<td>3.63 (0.58)</td>
<td>3.64 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, a simple linear regression was performed on each of the ethical cases to determine if the participant’s answers to the specific case regulatory focus questions regarding a specific case predicted the likelihood that he would engage in the unethical behavior.

**Case 1:** A significant regression equation was found for Case 1, $F(1,91) = 28.464$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .238$. The participant’s answers to the specific case regulatory focus questions in the first case significantly predicted how likely he would be to sign the attendance sheet for his friends. Participants who indicated that they took a more
promotion focused approach to the case study were more likely to engage in the unethical act.

**Case 2:** A significant regression equation was found for Case 2, F(1,91) = 14.583, p < .001, $R^2 = .138$. The participant’s answers to the specific case regulatory focus questions in the second case significantly predicted the likelihood with which he would ask the other team for help on his group project. Participants who indicated that they took a more promotion focused approach to the case study were more likely to engage in the unethical act.

**Case 3:** A significant regression equation was found for Case 3, F(1,91) = 33.422, p < .001, $R^2 = .269$. The participant’s answers to the specific case regulatory focus questions in the third case significantly predicted the likelihood with which he would stay on the client engagement. Participants who indicated that they took a more promotion focused approach to the case study were more likely to engage in the unethical act.

Based on the results of the linear regressions performed, Hypothesis 5 was supported for all three cases.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The intention of this study was to determine if a manipulated regulatory focus would influence a person’s responses to regulatory focus questions and the likelihood of that person to engage in unethical behavior. In order to do this, a survey was distributed that assessed chronic work regulatory focus and attempted to then manipulate the participant’s regulatory focus. Three ethical case studies and associated questions followed.

Participants in the promotion condition did not differ from those in the prevention condition with regards to the questions that assessed participant’s regulatory focus toward the specific case studies. This suggests that the experimental manipulation did not work. If the manipulation was effective, one would expect participants in the promotion condition to have more of a promotion focus in response to the specific case regulatory focus questions in comparison to the participants in the prevention condition. The results also indicated that participants in the promotion condition did not differ from participants in the prevention condition in terms of how likely they would be to engage in the unethical acts. However, these results are most likely due to the failure of the experimental manipulation.

It is believed that the manipulation did not work because the participants had a difficult time relating to the characters in the manipulations. In both manipulations, the characters were older, had established careers, and had families. This did not match the demographics of participants at Ohio University who participated in this study. Since the manipulations did not work, it was decided to conduct the same
analyses using the participant’s chronic work regulatory focus instead of the manipulations.

Participants with a chronic promotion focus significantly differed from participants with a chronic prevention focus with regards to the questions that assessed participant’s specific regulatory focus in the first two case studies (specific case regulatory focus questions). The results for the first two case studies also indicated that chronic work regulatory focus was a predictor of the likelihood of committing unethical acts. Participants who had a higher promotion work regulatory focus were more willing to commit the unethical acts than the participants who had a higher prevention work regulatory focus. Neither of these results were consistent with those of Case 3, however. It is believed that the last ethical case study did not have statistically significant results for a similar reason that the manipulations were not effective: the student participants had a hard time relating to a professional situation. The first two ethical case studies were scenarios that the students could have encountered during their time at university, but it is unlikely that any of them have experienced serious fraud in their places of employment.

Lastly, linear regressions were run to determine if the participant’s responses to the specific case regulatory focus questions in each case were an indicator of the likelihood of the person committing the unethical acts described. For each case it was found that the responses to the regulatory focus questions significantly predicted the participant’s willingness to act unethically. The more of a promotion work regulatory focus a participant had, the more likely he would be to commit the unethical act.
Overall, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported in this study as the experimental manipulation did not work. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported in cases 1 and 2, as participants with a chronic promotion focus answered in more of a promotion manner to the regulatory focus questions than prevention focused participants. Promotion focused participants were also more likely to engage in the unethical acts described in those two cases. Finally, Hypothesis 5 was supported by this study; the participant’s responses to the specific case regulatory focus questions in each of the three cases predicted their likelihood to commit the unethical acts.
Chapter 6: Limitations and Strengths

One limitation of this study is that the experimental manipulation was not effective. For this reason, the study had to rely on the chronic work regulatory focus of each participant instead of the intended manipulations. As mentioned above, it is speculated that the manipulation was not effective mainly due to the fact that the student participants could not relate to the characters (Andy and Bill) in the two manipulation scenarios. In both cases, the characters were older, had established careers, and had families. They were attempting to make investment decisions, which is not a typical concern of university students. After speaking with a few of the participants, it was also determined that the students were more concerned with the actual investment decisions than the way the decision was made. Two new manipulations have been developed for use in future studies which are believed to be more effective for student participants, which can be seen below. In order for the students to relate better, the pronoun “you” was utilized instead of the names Andy and Bill and a job search scenario replaced the investment scenario.

Promotion Focus:

You are an active, self-confident person who likes to be exposed to unfamiliar people and matters, and you create opportunities for various challenges. You are a very spontaneous person who approaches life by welcoming opportunities and saying: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” You welcome challenges. In fact, you are trying to decide between three different job
opportunities you have been offered for after graduation from your university. These different options can be seen below:

1. **Developing Apps in Silicon Valley**: This job has the potential for huge success and earnings, but the company is also at high risk of going out of business soon as it is a start-up.

2. **Information Technology at a Small, Local Company**: This is a happy medium between the two other job opportunities. There is not as much risk that the company will go out of business, but it still has opportunity for growth.

3. **Computer Programming at a Large, Established Company**: You would have good job security and benefits, but there isn’t as much room for growth here as there is in Silicon Valley.

You are mainly concerned about fast returns and growth, and achieving your goals in any way possible. For this reason, you choose to work for the developing company in Silicon Valley, even though there are risks involved.

**Promotion Focus Alternative:**

Please describe a goal you wish to achieve within the coming year and list ways that you will reach it.

**Prevention Focus:**

You are a steady, responsible person who feels compelled to be around familiar people and avoid challenges. You are a very stable person who leads
his life by avoiding risks and saying: “Better safe than sorry.” You avoid challenges. In fact, you are trying to decide between three different job opportunities you have been offered for after graduation from university. These different options can be seen below:

1. **Developing Apps in Silicon Valley**: This job has the potential for huge success and earnings, but the company is also at high risk of going out of business soon, as it is a start-up.

2. **IT at a Small, Local Company**: This is a happy medium between the two other job opportunities. There is not as much risk that the company will go out of business, but it still has opportunity for growth.

3. **Computer Programming at a Large, Established Company**: You would have good job security and benefits, but there isn’t as much room for growth here as there is in Silicon Valley.

You are mainly concerned about job security and being able to provide for yourself. For this reason, you choose to work for the large, established company as a computer programmer, the option with the least amount of risk involved.

**Prevention Focus Alternative:**

Please describe an outcome in your life that you wish to avoid. List the risks associated with this outcome.
Another option for the induction of either a promotion or prevention regulatory focus would be to use the Regulatory Focus Induction Instrument (Freitas & Higgins, 2002). Both the promotion and the prevention manipulations from this instrument can be seen below:

**Promotion:**

For this task, we would like you to think about how your current *hopes* and *aspirations* are different now than what they were when you were growing up. In other words, what *accomplishments* would you *ideally* like to meet at this point in your life? What accomplishments did you ideally want to meet when you were a child? In the space below, please write a brief essay describing how your hopes and aspirations have changed from when you were a child to now (p. 295).

**Prevention:**

For this task, we would like you to think about how your current *duties* and *obligations* are different now from what they were when you were growing up. In other words, what *responsibilities* do you think you *ought* to meet at this point in your life? What responsibilities did you think you ought to meet when you were a child? In the space below, please write a brief essay describing how your duties and obligations have changed from when you were a child to now (Freitas & Higgins, 2002).

Another limitation of this study is that there were significantly more prevention focused participants than promotion focused participants in the chronic work regulatory focus, which could have skewed the results. This inequality could be due to the fact that students are more likely to be prevention focused in work situations or
it could be due to an uneven distribution of prevention versus promotion students at Ohio University. An effective manipulation would combat this limitation.

The final limitation to this study is that the third ethical case study did not reflect the results of the first two case studies. As mentioned previously, this is believed to be because it was not a situation with which the students could relate. In order to prevent this limitation, all three case studies should have been situations that the students could encounter at school. Otherwise, older participants could have been used, in which case all of the situations should be focused on workplace ethics.

While this study had its limitations, it also had strengths. The manipulation had a random, equal assignment, meaning that the promotion and prevention manipulations were distributed evenly and arbitrarily. The survey was also anonymous; this was communicated to the participants through the consent form. Therefore, the participants would feel safe responding to the ethical case studies in an unethical way because their answers could not be traced back to them.

Another strength of the study is that two of the ethical case studies utilized were indicative of situations that the students possibly have or could have faced during their time at Ohio University. This gives the study real-life implications, and universities can use the findings to alter the way they talk to their students about assignments and ethics.
Chapter 7: Future Directions

The results of this study bring rise to many other questions that can be answered by future studies. Another study could be done to address the limitations mentioned previously; the adjusted manipulations could be used and all three of the ethical case studies could be situations that students may face in their time at school. Another study could be done using the original manipulations while using older participants who have careers and families. In this case, all of the case studies would need to be work-related ethical situations.

Studies could also be done to see if these results translate to ethical situations outside of school or work. For example, the case studies could depict situations around community service or random acts of kindness. These studies should utilize a regulatory focus scale that is not contextualized for work. Another study that would add value to the literature around this topic is one that assesses actual behavior. For example, it could be observed whether a person in the promotion focus would be more likely to cheat on a test or steal when given the opportunity. This would offer results on whether work regulatory focus affects actual ethical behavior. It may also be interesting to observe the legal issues of companies with promotion focused corporate management teams (ex. Enron) compared to the legal issues of prevention focused corporations (highly-regulated, e.g. insurance companies).

While many different options for further research have been considered, there is one follow-up that will be completed to further explain the results of the study completed above.
Follow-Up Study

A follow-up study will be conducted by the authors of the current study, using participants who are established in their careers. The Regulatory Focus Induction Instrument, described above, will be used to manipulate the participant’s regulatory foci into either a prevention or promotion focus. The first two cases shown in the Measures section above will be adjusted to reflect working situations that the participants could experience at their places of employment. The third case study on fraud will not be altered in order to study whether the lack of significant results from the study performed above were a result of students being unable to relate to the case. The same analyses will then be run to determine if Work Regulatory Focus has the same effect on working individuals in work situations as it does students in university situations. The participants for this study will be recruited using mTurk through Amazon. The two revised case studies for use in the second study are shown below:

Case 1 (Revised): This subject of this case is reporting incorrect results because you know that reporting the correct results will create much more work for you in the future.

Please read the following and respond to the questions below (1 = Strongly Agree, 7 = Strongly Disagree):

As you are finishing up a lengthy project for work, you realize that you forgot to include a significant portion of the project. You can fake the research to complete the project, which would take you much less time
than actually doing the research, and you don’t think your boss will notice. The deadline for the project is tomorrow, and you know that if you complete the project with the correct research you will not be done on time. You are currently looking to get a promotion at your company and know your chances of getting the promotion will be much lower if you don’t finish the project on time. You’re sitting at your desk contemplating which option you will pursue.

1. You would make your decision based off of the safety that comes from using real research to complete the project.

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
   | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

2. You would make your decision based off approaching the goal of moving up in the company by using the incorrect research and finishing the project on time.

3. You would make your decision based off avoiding an undesired outcome, such as not getting the promotion you want because you didn’t finish your project.

4. You would make your decision based off the opportunity of getting the promotion by finishing the project on time using incorrect research.
5. You should follow the phrase “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” in this situation.

6. You should follow the phrase “Better safe than sorry” in this situation.

7. Overall, you would use fake research to complete the project.

Case 2 (Revised): The subject of this case is being asked to lie about your sales results to meet a goal set by management of your company.

Please read the following and respond to the questions below (1 = Strongly Agree, 7 = Strongly Disagree):

You have been working for a sales company for a few years now, and have never had a problem meeting your sales goals. However, management at your company has recently increased your goal for the year and you don’t think you will be able to meet it. You are contemplating fudging the numbers to make it look like you are over the sales goal for the year and tell yourself that you will work harder to actually meet the goal for the next year. You know that if you are caught doing this you could get fired, but if you don’t meet your goals, your company might demote you.

1. You would make your decision based off of the safety that comes from using your real sales numbers.
2. You would make your decision based off approaching the goal of moving up in the company by lying about your numbers in order to meet your sales goal.

3. You would make your decision based off avoiding an undesired outcome, such as getting fired for lying about your sales.

4. You would make your decision based off the opportunity of being promoted if you meet your sales goals.

5. You should follow the phrase “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” in this situation.

6. You should follow the phrase “Better safe than sorry” in this situation.

7. Overall, you would lie about your sales numbers in order to meet the sales goal.

After collecting the data from the mTurk participants, the same analyses will be run to determine if the hypotheses tested above prove true for working individuals and workplace ethical situations. It would be expected that participants who were manipulated into a promotion focus would answer the specific case regulatory focus questions for each case in more of a promotion manner than the participants.
manipulated into a prevention regulatory focus. The study would also hypothesize that the manipulated promotion focused participants would be more likely to commit the unethical acts described in each case and that the answers to the specific case regulatory focus questions would predict the participants likelihood of conducting the unethical acts.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Based on previous research, it was predicted that a promotion work regulatory focus would lead to a higher likelihood of participants partaking in the unethical acts described in the case studies. This was not shown to be true in the experimental manipulation study; however, this is believed to be because the regulatory focus manipulation did not work. When conducted with chronic work regulatory focus, this hypothesis was shown to be true for the case studies that related to situations with which the student participants could relate. Since a work regulatory focus scale was used in this research, the results lead to the conclusion that the work promotion focus leads to more unethical behavior than the work prevention focus in school situations. Further research is needed to determine whether these results would be replicated with older participants in career settings.
Bibliography


Rosenzweig, E. Q. & Miele, D. B. (2016). Do you have an opportunity or an obligation to score well? The influence of regulatory focus on academic test


Appendix A: Consent Form

Title of Research: Effect of Money on Ethical Behavior

Researchers: Justice Solgos and Amy Taylor-Bianco (advisor)

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to participate in this study. You may print a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because we are trying to determine whether the idea of money has an effect on a person’s ethical decision-making.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the following survey. This includes questions about your work habits, ethical decisions, and demographics/other information.

You should not participate in this study if you are under the age of 18.
Your participation in the study will last approximately 10 minutes.

**Risks and Discomforts**

You may experience some emotional discomfort while responding to the ethical situations. Keep in mind that you may discontinue the survey at any time.

**Benefits**

This study is important to science/society because it will provide further insight into how money and/or the idea of money can influence a person’s ethical behavior. This has implications in academics and the workplace.

**Confidentiality and Records**

By not recording your name or any other identifying information, your study information will be kept confidential.

For maximum confidentiality, please clear your browser history and close the browser before leaving the computer.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the investigator, Justice Solgos, js933711@ohio.edu, (216) 973-3529 or the advisor, Amy Taylor-Bianco, ataylorbianco@gmail.com, (740) 593-2054.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740) 593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;

- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;

- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;

- you are 18 years of age or older;
· your participation in this research is completely voluntary;

· you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Version Date: [insert 11/12/15]
Appendix B: Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation in our study! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Purpose of the Study:

Earlier in our consent form, we informed you that the purpose of the study was to determine the effect of money or the idea of money on ethical behavior. In actuality, our study is about the effect of regulatory focus (a goal attainment theory) on ethical behavior. You either read a short scenario about Andy or Bill, the husband attempting to save as much money as possible for his whole-family trip. The scenario you read was meant to induce either a promotion focus (Andy) or a prevention focus (Bill). We will then look at how this manipulation affected your responses to the three ethical case studies.

Unfortunately, in order to properly test our hypothesis, we could not provide you with all of those details prior to your participation. This ensures that your reactions in this study were spontaneous and not influenced by prior knowledge about the purpose of the study. The manipulation involved either the case of Andy or Bill making investment decisions. If we had told you the actual purpose of our study, your ability to respond to the ethical case studies could have been affected. We regret the deception but we hope you understand the reason for it.
Confidentiality:

Please note that although the purpose of the study has changed from the originally stated purpose, everything else on the consent form is correct. This includes the ways in which we keep your data confidential. As a reminder, your responses through Qualtrics are anonymous and no panel information or IP addresses are collected.

Now that you know the true purpose of the study and are fully informed, you may decide that you do not want your data used in this research. If you would like your data removed from the study, please discontinue this survey and do not hit the “Next” button at the bottom of this page.

Please do not disclose these research procedures to anyone who might participate in this study in the future as this could affect the results of the study.

Final Report:

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of this study or a summary of the findings when it is completed, please feel free to contact us.
Appendix C: Results of Experimental Manipulation (Means, Standard Deviations)

Table 1: Results of Experimental Manipulation (Mean, SD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1:</th>
<th>Specific Regulatory Focus Responses</th>
<th>Willingness to Commit Unethical Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>4.40 (0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>4.18 (1.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>4.32 (0.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>4.21 (2.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2:</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>3.56 (0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.71 (1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.54 (0.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.54 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3:</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>3.68 (0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.80 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.64 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.85 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Results of Chronic Regulatory Focus (Means, Standard Deviations)

Table 2: Results of Chronic Regulatory Focus (Mean, SD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1:</th>
<th>Specific Regulatory Focus Responses</th>
<th>Willingness to Commit Unethical Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>4.48 (0.65)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>4.07 (0.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2:</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>3.61 (0.53)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.30 (0.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3:</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>3.70 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>3.63 (0.58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Significant at the .05 level

** = Significant at the .01 level

*** = Significant at the .001 level