

# Decomposing Focus-Role Fit in Price Negotiations

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## Abstract

In price negotiations, strategy is a commonality between regulatory focus and negotiator role. Manipulating strategy removes this commonality and eliminates focus-role fit. Instead, we find two types of classic regulatory fit between goal orientations and their matching goal-pursuit strategies: focus-strategy fit and role-strategy fit, both of which impact negotiators' subjective fit experience.

## Theoretical Background

### Why are some negotiators more comfortable in their roles than others?

- A match between chronic regulatory focus and negotiator role creates focus-role fit, which intensifies responses such as demand and subjective fit (Appelt, Zou, Arora, & Higgins, in press).
- Unlike classic regulatory fit between a goal orientation and its preferred goal-pursuit strategy (Higgins, 2000), focus-role fit is actually a match between two goal orientations due to their shared strategic preference.
- In a price negotiation, both a prevention focus and the buyer role prefer a vigilant strategy, and both a promotion focus and the seller role prefer an eager strategy (Appelt et al., in press).

### What if this strategic complementarity is removed?

- If a strategy is not shared by regulatory focus and negotiator role, focus-role fit should not materialize.
- Instead, we expected two separate sources of classic (orientation-strategy) fit: focus-strategy fit and role-strategy fit.
- Specifically, we predicted vigilant prevention negotiators and eager promotion negotiators would be in *focus-strategy* fit.
- Similarly, we predicted that vigilant buyers and eager sellers would be in *role-strategy* fit.

To test these hypotheses, we measured chronic regulatory focus and randomly assigned both role and strategy.

## Methods

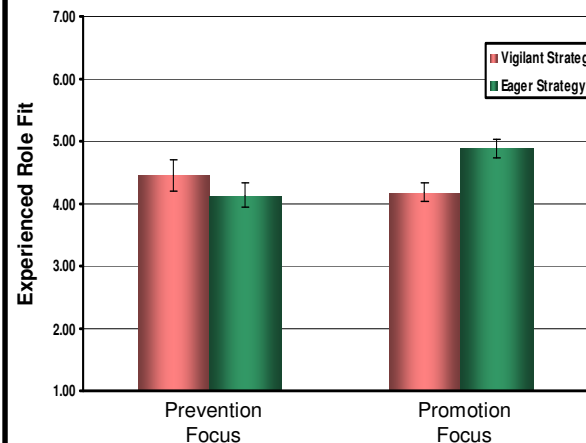
- Participants ( $N = 154$ ) completed "study 1," the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001).
- "Study 2" was a real (vs. hypothetical) negotiation. Participants were randomly assigned to both a role (buyer or seller) and a strategy (vigilant or eager).
- The buyer was given \$5; the seller was given a Columbia University notebook. The negotiation was real; the outcome (agreement or impasse) was binding.
- Before negotiating, participants rated how comfortable, engaging, right, and fitting their role felt. These items were averaged to create an experienced role fit variable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$ ).

## Results

### Experienced Role Fit

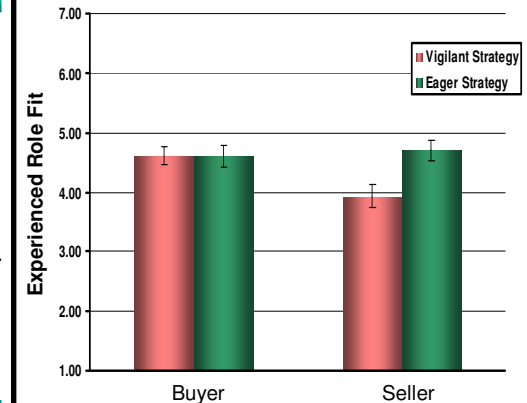
- We performed a 2 (strategy: vigilant vs. eager) x 2 (chronic regulatory focus: prevention vs. promotion) x 2 (role: buyer vs. seller) ANOVA.
- As predicted, the Regulatory Focus x Strategy and the Role x Strategy interactions were significant whereas the Regulatory Focus x Role interaction was not ( $F < 1$ ). The three-way interaction was also not significant.

### Regulatory Focus x Strategy



$F(1, 146) = 5.82, p = .02$

### Role x Strategy



$F(1, 146) = 4.11, p = .05$

## Discussion

The present study was designed to decompose focus-role fit.

•Our results confirmed our hypothesis that focus-role fit is due to the strategic commonalities between regulatory focus and negotiator role.

•In price negotiations, a prevention focus and the buyer role both fit a vigilant strategy whereas a promotion focus and the seller role both fit an eager strategy.

•Thus, when strategy is manipulated, negotiators experience focus-strategy fit and role-strategy fit, but not focus-role fit.

## References

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